

New Pompeii finds highlight middle-class life in doomed city

August 7 2022, by FRANCES D'EMILIO



A picture provide by the Pompeii Archeological site press office, showing the latest discoveries in the ancient city of Pompeii which is enriching knowledge about the everyday lives of middle-class households. The director of the archaeological site, Gabriel Zuchriegel, said on Saturday, Aug. 6, 2022, that excavations of rooms in a home first unearthed in 2018, revealed the environment of ordinary citizens of the city, which was flourishing before being

destroyed by the volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D. Credit: Parco Archeologico di Pompei via AP

A trunk with its lid left open. A wooden dishware closet, its shelves caved in. Three-legged accent tables topped by decorative bowls. These latest discoveries by archaeologists are enriching knowledge about middle-class lives in Pompeii before Mount Vesuvius' furious eruption buried the ancient Roman city in volcanic debris.

Pompeii's [archaeological park](#), one of Italy's top tourist attractions, announced the recent finds on Saturday. Its director, Gabriel Zuchtriegel, said the excavation of rooms in a "domus," or home, first unearthed in 2018 had revealed precious details about the domestic environment of ordinary citizens of the city, which was destroyed in 79 A.D.

In past decades, excavation largely concentrated on sumptuous, elaborately frescoed villas of the Pompeii's upper-class residents. But archaeology activity in the sprawling site, near modern-day Naples, has increasingly focused on the lives of the middle class as well as of servants and other enslaved people.

"In the Roman empire, there was an ample chunk of the population that struggled with their [social status](#) and for whom 'daily bread,' was anything but a given," Zuchtriegel said. "A vulnerable class during political crises and [food shortages](#), but also ambitious about climbing the social ladder."

The finds unveiled on Saturday include furnishings and household objects in the domus, which was dubbed the House of the Larario for an area of a home devoted to domestic spirits known as lares. The home

unearthed in 2018 has one in the courtyard.



In this image provide by the Pompeii Archeological site press office, archeologists work on the site of a new discovery. The latest discoveries in the ancient city of Pompeii are enriching knowledge about the everyday lives of middle-class households. The director of the archaeological site, Gabriel Zuchtriegel, said on Saturday, Aug. 6, 2022, that excavations of rooms in a home first unearthed in 2018, revealed the environment of ordinary citizens of the city, which was flourishing before being destroyed by the volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D. Credit: Parco Archeologico di Pompei via AP

Zuchtriegel noted that while the courtyard also had an exceptionally well-adorned cistern, "evidently, the (financial) resources weren't enough to decorate the five rooms of the home." One room had unpainted walls and an earthen floor apparently used for storage.

In a bedroom, archeologists found the remains of a bed frame with a trace of fabric from the pillow. The kind of bed is identical to three, cot-like beds unearthed last year in a tiny room in another residence that archeologists believe doubled as a storeroom and sleeping quarters for a family of enslaved inhabitants of Pompeii.

The bedroom findings announced Saturday also included the remains of a wooden trunk with an open lid. Although the weight of beams and ceiling panels that crashed down in the wake of the volcanic explosion heavily damaged the trunk, among the objects found inside was an oil lamp decorated with a bas relief depicting the ancient Greek deity Zeus being transformed into an eagle. Nearby was a small, three-legged round table, similar to the accent tables in vogue today.



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Exposing the storeroom revealed a wooden closet, its backboard still intact but the shelves caved in. Archaeologists believe the closet had at least four panel doors and held cookware and dishes for the nearby kitchen. The excavators found a hinge from the enclosure.

Other objects found in the house include a large fragment of what had been a translucent, rimmed plate in brilliant hues of cobalt blue and emerald, and a well-preserved incense burner, shaped like a cradle.

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