**In Search of an Ancient City**

*by Rebekah K. Murray*

**IN 700 B.C.E.,** Italians would gather in Gabii’s forum to conduct business, administer laws, and discuss their neighbors over in Rome, another city-state that was expanding rapidly. Eventually, Gabii was swallowed up by Rome, but remnants of its existence endure.

Nic Terrenato, a native of Rome and an LSA associate professor of classical archaeology, is preparing to lead a major excavation of Gabii that starts in the summer of 2009, in the countryside outside Rome. But first, with the help of a few graduate students, he is surveying the ground. His team is using instruments such as a magnetometer, which measures magnetic fields, to gain a sense of the city’s layout.

To help in that effort, the team has a rough sketch of Gabii from the 1700s. It was made by an English arts dealer who dug in a small area of the ancient city, looking for artifacts to sell. The Englishman’s unsystematic dig turned up “amazing stuff,” Terrenato says, including portraits and sculptures on display in the Louvre in Paris. So the expectations for UM’s dig are high, especially since the dig will be conducted in an area untouched in modern times, thus with a greater potential for ancient layers to be found intact.

Additionally, some of the artifacts may be brought back to UM to be displayed in the Kelsey Museum’s new exhibit hall on central campus. Terrenato explains that since many Italian museums are bursting with artifacts, new government regulations allow approved artifacts to be loaned to American universities—with a renewable contract of 99 years.

Along with ancient artifacts, including perhaps sculptures and pottery of the same quality as those found centuries ago, Terrenato is hoping to find Gabii’s ancient marketplace. It would be a unique find, Terrenato says, to see the origins of the forum, what became an essential Roman icon, from such an early period in history.

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