

Roman ruins come to Chazen

BY JACOB STOCKINGER

It continues to live on in legend and lore of the ancient Classical world, a cataclysmic volcanic eruption that snuffed out a whole city by surprise and remains a symbol of nature's power and civilization's fragility.

When Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 A.D. and buried Pompeii deep in ash, a town and all its citizens were wiped out.

But over centuries the worldliness and beauty of Rome have also been emerging from the ruins.

A fine-looking, family-friendly piece of that history and art will go on display Saturday at the UW-Madison's Chazen Museum of Art, 800 University Ave.

"In Stabiano" explores the ancient seaside luxury villas of the Roman elite who were, like their peasant counterparts, killed in the eruption. (The region of Stabiae was located on the Bay on Naples.) Consider it a glimpse into the lives of the rich and famous more than 2,000 years ago.

The touring show promises to be popular and impressive. It features statues, frescos, sculpture, architecture and household furnishings excavated from the site. An entire reconstructed room from one of the five seaside villas is included in the show.

It is not the largest show to go into the Chazen, says museum director Russell Panchenko. But logistically it stands as the most complicated. That's because the current Chazen — which will expand around 2010 — has no loading dock and no freight elevator. And yet huge wooden crates weighing 1,500 pounds had to be carefully un-laded (in snowy and wet



This painting offers a view of the type of seaside villa that dotted the coast at Stabiae. Photo from Stabiano Antiquities Museum.

weather, no less), brought into the museum and hoisted up to the interior galleries of the museum. The Chazen hired Reynolds Transfer movers to do the job.

In addition, the Chazen staff could not even touch or unpack the crates. Five couriers and installers from Italy came in to set up the show and will return to take it down when it ends June 3.

The artifacts go on display this weekend and should draw crowds from the beginning. But a lavish public reception, with live music, refreshments and attendants dressed as Romans, will take place Friday, March 23, from 6 to 8 p.m. The event is free to Chazen members, \$5 for UW students and \$8 for non-members, with children under 13 getting in for free.

There will also be several lectures by the touring show's cu-

lator and others on Thursday, March 22, at 7 p.m.; Wednesday, April 25, at 7 p.m.; and a family event, "Dress like a Roman," that will take place on Saturday, April 21, at 2 p.m. and again on Sunday, April 29, at 2:30 p.m. (The free event for children in grades 3-6 requires advance registration. Call 263-2246 or e-mail alam-bert@chazen.wisc.edu.) Drop-in tours are slated for Tuesdays at 4 p.m. from April 10 through May 29.

A 160-page color catalog is available for \$50.

The Chazen is open Tuesday-Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and it is closed Mondays. For more information, call 263-2246 or visit www.chazen.wisc.edu.

Reach Jacob Stockinger of *The Capital Times* at 252-6480 or jstockinger@madison.com.