

# VATICAN-LOUVRE COFFIN PROJECT

Total Cost € 160.000,00

NON-DESTRUCTIVE METHODS INCLUDE:

- X-ray radiography
- Visible reflected light and UV fluorescence light
- "False-color" infrared digital photography
- X-ray fluorescence u-spectroscopy (XRF)

MICRO-DESTRUCTIVE METHODS INCLUDE:

- Optical microscopy using visible and ultraviolet light
- Scanning Electron Microscope—Energy Dispersive Spectroscopy (SEM-EDS)
- Fourier Transform Infra-Red Spectroscopy (FT-IR)
- Gas and Liquid Chromatography—Mass Spectrometry (LC MS and CG MS)

PROJECT INCLUDES:

- New analytical tools for the study, characterization and understanding of the materials which make up the sarcophagi and to define their conservation status € 55.000,00
- Professional computer system and software relative to the amount of data and processing associated with this project € 15.000,00
- Missions Conference for comparison and collaboration with other scientific facilities involved € 15.000,00
- External specialized experts for two year contracts € 75.000,00

The Ancient Egypt and Near East Department of the Vatican Museums houses a rich collection of twenty-two decorated coffins dating to the Third Intermediate Period (21<sup>st</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, 1070-712 BC) from West Thebes, now known as Luxor. They are all classified as "Yellow Coffins", as they display these formal identifiable characteristics: the external decorations of the cases feature designs in blue, red, light and dark green on a yellow background, all covered in a translucent yellow varnish. They also contain representations of hands carved into their covers and hands and often have "mummy-board" copies of their outer coffin lid.

As of 2007, the Vatican Museums have been working on the *Vatican Coffin Project*, directed by Dr. Alessia Amenta, Curator of the Ancient Egypt and Near East Department. It is a team project, involving the Ancient Egypt and Near East Department of the Vatican Museums, the Diagnostic Laboratory for Conservation and Restoration of the Vatican Museums, restorer Giovanna Prestipino, wood expert Victoria Asensi Amoros, and the *Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France (C2RMF)*, all who are currently collaborating with the Department of Egyptian Antiquities of the Louvre Museum in Paris.

The project has three primary goals: the study of the techniques used for coffin making, including coffin construction, assembly of its parts, and painting techniques; the identification of any "maker's mark" or workshop illustrations; and to create a protocol of intervention in collaboration with other museums and collections.

Our intention is to develop a database documenting coffin making techniques to make available to the international research community, as well as to create a code of conservation for interventions and restorations.

The Vatican Coffin Project proposes a comprehensive methodology of non-destructive and micro-destructive methods of analysis.

