

Maya Symposium focuses on royal tombs

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The 12th annual Maya Symposium gathered a wide variety of experts in specialties such as archaeology, art history, cultural anthropology, epigraphy, ethnohistory and linguistics. (Photo illustration by Marian Herbert Bruno)

New archaeological approaches and discoveries have helped scholars understand how the ancient Maya viewed death and the afterlife.

"In the Maya world, it's not 'he's dead and buried,'" said William Fash, a Harvard University professor of archaeology and ethnology. "In the Maya world, it's 'he's dead, and he's still very much alive, and he's still very much a part of our living

community now, and as a matter of fact you better watch what you do and say.”

Fash gave the keynote address at the 12th annual [Maya symposium](#) to an audience of over 200 at the New Orleans Museum of Art on March 20. The events were organized by the [Middle American Research Institute](#) (MARI) and the Stone Center for Latin American Studies at Tulane University,

The four-day symposium, titled “Royal Chambers Unsealed: Tombs of the Classic Maya,” explored the significance the ancient Maya placed on the death of their divine rulers.

“In the past decade, scholars have found some of the most wonderful tombs in the Maya area, and we thought our symposium would be a wonderful venue to have them discussed publicly, in some cases, for the first time. I would say it was one of most successful symposia yet,” said MARI director Marcello Canuto.

In collaboration with MARI, the Consulate of Mexico in New Orleans hosted a reception for a photographic exhibit by artist Jay A. Frogel, who mixes drawings of ancient Maya sites with contemporary photographs. A portion of the exhibition is on display at MARI on the third floor of Dinwiddie Hall at the Tulane uptown campus.

Among this year's highlights:

• A teacher's workshop included basic introduction to Maya archaeology and culture for the K-12 classroom.

• Academic talks on the uptown campus were streamed to universities in Mexico and Guatemala.

• A hieroglyphic forum and workshops were held in Dinwiddie Hall.

Mary Sparacello is a communications specialist in the Office of Development Communications.

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