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The Laboratory Processing of Block-lifted Finds from Graves

To reconstruct and gain knowledge about early medieval clothing, archaeological research relies on the examination of the organic remains preserved in close proximity to metal burial finds. Lifting the finds at archaeological sites as a block enables the recognition and identification of all preserved information, ensuring safe excavation and careful investigative cleaning in the conservation laboratory. This "excavation en miniature" is a particular challenge to conservators and is well suited to the didactical imparting of the basic principles and skills of archaeological conservation. For this reason, practical studies in processing block-lifted finds are of significant value in the curriculum of the Objects Conservation Course at the *Academy of Art and Design Stuttgart*. The *Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Baden Württemberg* provides appropriate finds with all records from the field treatment for these studies.

The cleaning of metal finds with associated organic remains is an irreversible process, determining whether information is preserved or irrecoverably lost. Only a systematic examination and treatment, including a stratigraphical excavation of all structures and layers, comprehensive documentation and the identification of the nature of organic remains, can provide optimal basic data for research.

The careful documentation is of scientific importance, because most of the organic remains will be destroyed after the objects are taken out of the block. This includes a written report, drawings and photographs. The process of drawing several plana trains one to recognise delicate and sophisticated details. Drawing details is learning to see – and learning to see is learning to understand!

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