Karanog, Wealthy Capital of a Lower Nubian Province

Karanog, a provincial capital of the Merotic kingdom during the 3rd and 3rd centuries A.D., provides our richest glimpse into a culture found only in Lower Nubia. It was partially excavated by C. Leonard Woolley and D. Randall Maciver for the University Museum in 1907. The excavated area of the town contained both elite and lower order houses. From the cemetery came a vast array of objects representative of Merotic daily life. Most of these objects were made in Nubia, but some were imported from Roman Egypt.

The models shown here, part of the exhibit Ancient Nubia: Egypt’s Rival in Africa, were fabricated by Chris Ray, in collaboration with David O’Connor and Stacie Oboe, from plans and descriptions of the 1907 excavations. They vividly evoke the setting, in life and death, of the people—the princely governor who stood at the peak of the social pyramid in Lower Nubia.

Christopher Ray started making things at an early age. Since graduating from Reed College with a degree in biology, he has managed exhibition programs, taught, and constructed models and dioramas for a number of public and private institutions. In 1983, he formed Ray Museum Studios, and since that time has completed several models for the University Museum, including a Northwest Indian village and temples from the Mayan site of Tikal, Guatemala, in addition to those for the Nubia exhibit.