

## Monuments

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than Muhammad. Traboulsi is quick to challenge this mindset.

"They are literalists who are against everything that is new. They destroy shrines because they are doing what the 'prophet told them,'" Traboulsi said. "What these guys are doing is a very blind, destructive movement. Some Sufi shrines that they have destroyed are active sites of worship and this ideology is clearly saying that these sites should not be venerated."

There is a hypocrisy, Traboulsi said, of the destruction of these sites, specifically pillaging, indicating that ISIS' actions are not so much religiously rooted as they are economically and politically rooted.

"That's what they want by destroying Palmyra, which is the temple of the god Bel," Traboulsi said. "All of these have disappeared and there's no root, plus another thing is the hypocrisy of them actually selling all of the looted artifacts, which was a major funding for the movement. So, there's a hypocrisy here. You claim that you're destroying the images that at the same time you're selling."

Bares is very enthusiastic about ensuring more awareness can be created amongst student populations and talked excitedly about virtual exhibitions where visitors can see interactive videos of what the monuments once looked like.

"I think we're working on creating more and more experiences like this for Islamic art," Bares said. "There's actually a person that has gone around to many mosques, buildings, palaces, anything that is at all associated with Islamic art and architecture around the world and has taken 360 degree videos, the same way that real-estate people take videos, except this is technology where you can actually zoom in, so you have really high-resolution detail that you can focus on and you can really sort of navigate yourself and move through the space almost as if you were there."

For Bares, this is the starting point of a tremendous project that may revolutionize the way we understand history.

"We cannot understand the past if we assume the present to be the past state," Bares said.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY LOOKOUT OBSERVATORY

## Observatory

One of the first pictures rendered by Lookout Observatory features the M13 Globular Cluster

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The observatory owes some of the popularity to the community outreach efforts, including working with local public, private and charter schools, along with various groups within the community.

"We've also done work with RAs on campus who have gotten in their halls and got a group together and we arrange star gazes for them," Hart said. "We try to reach out to the community as much as we can and it's been quite successful, more successful than anyone ever imagined."

In addition to public viewings, the observatory provides UNCA students with an opportunity to work together with faculty to perform research and gain understanding of the equipment.

"Because the observatory is so new, a lot of research has been done by students just to determine the limits of what the equipment can do, which is very interesting and will be very useful for students to come," Hart said.

The students who work with the observatory perform many different jobs during an event, including driving the shuttles, running the telescope, narrating the indoor slideshow and interacting with the public. Hart said student involvement keeps the observatory running smoothly.

"We would not be able to do any of

this without our students," Hart said. "They're definitely a key component of making it all happen."

One of those students, 22-year-old Dylan Cromer, started working at Lookout Observatory in the summer of 2014 shortly before construction was complete. Part of his responsibilities as a guide includes showing guests through the night sky.

"We try to make sure people know what they're looking at and if they do ask a question, like 'How far away is this object?' or 'What is this? Is it a star or a galaxy?' We try and be ready to answer those types of questions," Cromer said. "Sometimes people don't know what to ask, so we usually are reciting one or two little cool things about them."

Cromer said providing details and facts about celestial objects enhances the experience for visitors.

"Each object kind of has its own cool thing and so we just make sure that we let people know what that is so they don't miss it," Cromer said.

Cromer, a senior physics and math student, said the observatory provides a way to combine his passions and share his knowledge.

"Sometimes people just ask 'How does this star even function?' or 'What are the objects doing?'" Cromer said. "I like those questions a lot because

I'm a physics major and I'm actually studying how these objects work in some courses and that's where some of my interests are. I love talking about the physics of what's going on the most."

For Cromer, one of the most fascinating celestial objects in the sky is one that is sometimes overlooked: the moon.

"I mean, you think 'I've seen the moon once, I've seen it a million times; But it's different through a telescope,'" Cromer said. "It's not what people expect when they're looking at it. It really is the most shocking thing to look at."

As far as the passionate response from the public, the driving force could simply be curiosity.

"I think people have an idea of what's out there but they always want to learn more," Cromer said. "Going to the observatory is a way people can ask questions that they've always had but never really had time to answer for themselves."

Cromer said he encourages students and staff to take advantage of what Lookout Observatory offers.

"I think everyone at UNCA should go up there at least once," Cromer said.

For more information on the next public star gazing event and to sign up for the Lookout Observatory mailing list, visit <https://lookoutobservatory.unca.edu/>