Stop flaming long enough to see Pompeii

By Karen Hladik

With end of term panic rapidly setting in, it's hard to imagine MIT students dropping everything to visit a museum. However, it's also hard to imagine anyone passing up a truly exceptional exhibition now on at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. "Pompeii AD/79?, a collection of over 300 relics from the ancient city, has been heralded as the "most comprehensive display of the relics of Pompeii that can be seen outside of Italy," On its recent tour of European cities the exhibit drew record-breaking crowds, and for the MFA to snare top honor of hosting the American debut of this show is quite an accomplishment.

The exhibition consists of a series of galleries depicting various aspects of life in Pompeii. Each gallery is devoted to a particular feature, such as the House, the People, and Cults and Beliefs. One room is reconstructed as a garden portico, providing a natural setting for several sculptures and paintings. Other rooms include magnificent displays of jewelry, mosaics, wall paintings, and even plaster casts of the original victims of volcanic ash and flames.

While wandering through the exhibit, one can stop in either of two small theaters for a short sound and slide show on Pompeii. The museum has also arranged special lectures, slide presentations, and films on certain topics of life and art in Pompeii. A special number, (617) 267-0600, has been set up to answer questions about viewing the exhibition, and it was stressed that definite measures have been taken to ensure against overcrowding.

A complimentary exhibition of prints and paintings depicting Mt. Vesuvius is also on display at the MFA, including the works of such artists as Turner, Degas, and James Hamilton. The Pompeii exhibition runs through to July 16. So, if you get a few free hours some day, or even if you don't, drop by and visit the museum — it'll be well worth it!