

## Abbey Perez's Experience at the Horrea Agrippiana Archaeological Field School

This summer, I was finally able to participate in an archaeological excavation. Archaeology was a discipline that I had studied for going on two years, but I had yet to do any field research or study it outside of Houston, where I go to school.

Due to the Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field School Scholarship, I was able to do archeology for a full summer in the heart of Rome. The Horrea Agrippiana Archaeological Field School was in the middle of the Roman Forum, in one of the most famous archaeological parks in the world, just a short 10-minute walk from the Colosseum. Rome was a city I had always wanted to visit, and Italy was a country that I have loved learning about since my first history class, so I was incredibly excited to discover new things about an area with such a rich history.

The Horrea Agrippiana is such a fascinating site because it was used and reused a period of over two thousand years. Regrettably, early archaeologists, only concerned with the remains of structures from the Roman Empire and discounting any use of the land since then as primitive and unworthy of study, dug through many layers of medieval and early modern refuse in order to reveal the Horrea, which was used as a warehouse for ancient Romans. Thankfully, not all traces of life after the ancient Romans was eradicated; I spent much of my first week on site excavating and then cleaning a kiln from the Renaissance in order to prepare it for photogrammetry, or its 3D digital documentation of a site.

However, what the excavation really hoped to uncover actually existed below the 2,000 year old concrete floor of the Roman warehouse. We spent the majority of our time on site getting through the Roman concrete foundation for the Horrea (which was impressively hard to break through after all this time). We were hoping to find evidence of a residential area below the foundations of the massive warehouse. Whatever time we were not actively digging, we were using to prepare the site for photogrammetry.

Everything we dug through was absolutely full of artifacts, and I am extremely proud of the work we did and what we were able to discover as a team. Near the end of the excavation season, we discovered a well from the area's residential past, which was filled with whole amphorae during the construction of the Horrea. Some of the largest and most complete ancient pottery that I have ever seen came out of that well. Almost simultaneously, members of our excavation team were able to break through the last bits of concrete and lift massive stones to uncover a beautiful abstract ground mural. These discoveries left all of us in awe of what we had been able to accomplish.

Arriving in Italy I knew that I was about to be emerged in an academic field that I knew a lot about in theory but next to nothing about in practice. However, by the time I was getting ready to leave, I felt like I had learned quite a bit about archaeology and I had been doing it for

much longer than just a summer. In six weeks, I learned about stratigraphy, photogrammetry, mapping a site, finds analysis and data management. I also learned how to use a pickax and trowel.

I discovered that I was particularly interested in photogrammetry and site mapping. I found it fascinating to learn how archaeologists use both drawings and digital programs to create a 3D image from multiple 2D images.

Judging from this experience, I would very much like to continue going to field schools and learning about field archaeology, especially the parts of the process that I was unable to experience this summer, such as the processing and detailed analysis of artifacts, which will be done for the Horrea Agrippiana in the following years. I would love to continue to learn about history and archaeology. I want to go to other parts of the world and continue to learn about cultures other than mine. Hopefully, one day, I can even contribute to the writing of history myself.



Here is the whole team on the last day of our excavation, sitting on one of the piles of dirt that we moved.



Here is me on the last day of our excavation. We had matching shirts so that tourists walking by could tell that we were supposed to be behind the gates.