

As a classical studies major, I devoted four years to intense study of the ancient Mediterranean world, its art, and its archaeology from books in the classroom. This summer, thanks to the AIA Jane C. Waldbaum Scholarship, I was able to get hands-on archaeology and conservation experience with the Rutgers Archaeological Field School in Italy. I participated in the Upper Sabina Tiberina Project under Dr. Gary D. Farney, which looks to uncover and track the development of villas in the area that the ancient Sabines held before they were subsumed into Rome. This program has an excavation and a conservation portion. I took part in both so I could gain wider range of experiences in the physical aspects of archaeology.

Our site in the small town of Vacone has a very complex history and has many issues with modern intervention. The villa still retains its terracing, with a cryptoporticus, 'main level,' and built-up cistern composing the area that is currently excavated; the villa may extend above the cistern, and exposing those areas is one of the goals for next season. The cryptoporticus and cistern had undergone emergency conservation in the 1980's including structural repairs and paving over the roofs of these areas, which disrupted the stratigraphy. The area was also plowed and planted with olive trees around that time.

The agricultural trenches were both a blessing and a curse to the site. The one advantage they gave to the excavation was that they revealed earlier phases of the villa without us having to damage later phases to uncover them. However, the trenches also

contributed heavily to the instability of the site, and much of the conservation program was devoted to stabilizing areas around the trenches.



The above photograph is of Rooms VIII and VII of the villa (left and right, respectively), and demonstrates the effect of agricultural trenches on the site. The mosaics around the edges of the trenches were extremely fragile, and for conservation we applied mortar to these areas (a mixture of 3.5 Natural Hydraulic Lime and sand aggregate of various sizes in a 1:2.5 ratio). This was the situation in four of our five open trenches this season, and nearly all conservation efforts went toward mosaic stabilization. The wall plaster that remained also needed to be cleaned and stabilized with mortar. All plaster fragments that were no longer attached to a structure were removed, logged, and taken to the site lab where they would be cleaned and stored.

We opened an entirely new trench and did considerable expansion on all open trenches on the site. This season we uncovered and logged more ceramic fragments

than the first two seasons combined, which is very important for dating the phases of the villa at Vacone, and for the research aims of understanding life in the Sabinum.

On two of the weekends I went in to Rome, and visited as many museums and cultural sites as I could. As I hope to be a museum professional for classical art, it was important to me to see all the different ways that various museums presented their artifacts. I went to the Museo Nazionale Romano at Termini, the Forum and Colosseum, the Ara Pacis Museum, the last Friday night tour of the Vatican Museums, the Capitoline Museums and the Villa Giulia.

My favorite of all the exhibits I saw was the room for *The Boxer* at the Museo Nazionale; the detail shots placed on the opposing wall really allowed me to see everything that makes this bronze statue so brilliant. I was also very impressed by the Villa Giulia and its organization. As a student, I am very appreciative of the decision to arrange the Etruscan objects on exhibit by what tombs they came from, rather than by type of object or material. It made it very easy to understand the grave assemblages and to relate different graves from the same period.

I had a wonderful and very informative experience both in Rome and out of it. My time in Italy this summer allowed me to discover the path ancient objects take, from recovery to display. I am very grateful to the Waldbaum Scholarship committee for helping me finance this experience. It helped me to decide my path and give me the experience needed to start down it.