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## Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field School Scholarship

### Field Report: Villa del Vergigno Archaeological Excavation 2016

During the summer of 2016, I had the incredible opportunity to intern at the Villa del Vergigno Archaeological Project in Italy. As a classical studies major I was thrilled to spend five weeks in Italy experiencing hands on archaeology for the first time. The site of the excavation is located near Montelupo Fiorentino in the mid-Arno valley, approximately 15 miles outside of Florence. The Villa del Vergigno dates from the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.E to the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE with adjacent agricultural sectors. The villa's initial period of activity concurs with the prosperity of northern Etruria during the last two centuries B.C.E. and first century C.E. It's close proximity to Florence may suggest that it was built during the Roman colonization of Florence that occurred between 82 B.C.E. and 30 B.C.E. This indication is supported by the ceramics found in the residential complex's foundation levels near its first walls. After several centuries of habitation and prosperity, the site was abandoned in the 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E.

The site's residential sector with adjoining bath complex was first excavated from 1989-1994. The site's excavations reopened in 2012 with the excavation of the agricultural sectors where oil, wine, ceramics, and amphora production occurred. The Villa del Vergigno Archaeological Project is collaboration between Project Director Dr. McKenzie Lewis of Concordia College and University of Wyoming along with Coopertiva ICHNOS, and Sistema Museale di Montelupo. I was under direction of Dr. Lewis who is also my professor and advisor at Concordia College.

This season the areas 1000, 4000, 5000, 7000, 11000, and 12000 were opened up for excavation. Most of the areas opened up were predominantly from the agricultural sectors with 11000 and 12000 being from the residential sector. My initial days at the site consisted of the massive task of unbackfilling, cleaning, and opening area 11000 for the first time. However, since my internship had a specific focus on conservation, restoration, and illustration I soon shifted my efforts to working in the artifact lab both on and off site.

Primarily I spent my first two weeks washing, categorizing, and cataloguing the pottery fragments and special finds. Extra care had to be taken when washing the fragments because the more delicate fabrics would melt upon contacting water. It was important to never let the fragments ever be submerged in the water for this reason. I would clean the dirt off the pieces by gentling rubbing it off with my fingers after applying a small amount of water; or if the piece was constructed out of a sturdier fabric, as is cookware pottery, I would softly use a toothbrush. After the pottery was dried I would then spend the afternoon sorting them. I would sort the pottery into types such as Acroma Grezza, Acroma Depurata, Semi-Depurata, Terra

Sigilata, Ceramica Figulina, Ceramica Grigia, Amphora, and Impasto Chiaro. After sorting the fragments I would then identify the pieces as rims, handles, bases, or walls and note the amount along with the weight of each type in their respective stratigraphic layer's cataloging form.

My next task that I was able to do in the off-site laboratory was consolidating the pottery fragments. This was the first season of the dig that the lab was able to consolidate the pottery. When sorting the fabrics back at the site I would group pieces that were clearly from the same object and fit together in its own individual bag. Then upon transporting the pottery bags to the off-site lab I was able to easily identify and remove those pieces that fit together and begin the consolidation process. Under the direction of Dott. Fausto Berti of the Museo Montelupo and lab supervisor Emma Anderson I learned the proper consolidating technique. An alcohol solution needed to be added to the adhesive to increase its viscosity to allow it to be carefully spread along the edges of the fragments with a thin brush. Then after the adhesive was applied to the edges, the alcohol solution that was initially mixed with the adhesive needed to be burned away allowing the adhesive to become more adherent. Upon doing this I was able to fit the pieces together and let the adhesive dry, thus binding the pieces back together.

The last part of my internship was learning the proper methods of archaeological illustration under the direction of field supervisor Andrea Violetti from the Coopertiva ICHNOS. Archaeological illustration appealed to me strongly since I have a substantial background in art illustration and design outside of my education in the classics. I learned that careful measurements needed to be taken of the fragments before the piece could be drawn. I used instruments like a triangle metric ruler, compass, contour gauge, caliper, metric graph paper, tracing paper, soft to hard pencils, and inking pens. After taking the correct measurements, I would create an illustration shaded in pencil, and then when I had the illustration drawn correctly I would create an ink illustration shading using the pointillism technique. All my illustrations were drawn in a one-millimeter to one-millimeter scale.

After spending a few days practicing these techniques, I created illustrations of the special finds that were found this season. The special find illustrations that I enjoyed making the most were two complete stamped terra sigilata bases, a stamped dolium fragment, and a terracotta statuette head. My illustrations will hopefully contribute to an artifact catalogue and database of the area, and may be featured in an exhibition for the site.

The stamped pieces provide valuable information about the economy of the region as those stamped names can trace the trade of the area. The first terra sigilata base was stamped "LNONFL" representing, Lucius Nonius Florentinus who worked out of Pisa in the first half of the second century C.E. The second terra sigilata base is stamped "SPE" where the P and E are merged together representing "Sextus Pe—" (it is unknown what a merged PE stands for) and was from around 40-20 B.C.E. from Arezzo. The stamped dolium piece is fragmented where only "ROCRIN

ARTIALIS" is visible, but we can infer that the creator's name is Subocrinus Martialis, the approximate date and location is unknown. However, the terracotta statuette head is definitely my favorite piece found this season, because so much detail still exists on the piece including the hairstyle and facial features of the woman. The approximate date given to the head is probably between the early 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. to the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E.

Of course, I also had the opportunity to experience Italy's rich history outside of my work at the Villa del Vergigno. I spent my weekends seeing the impeccable Florence, Fiesole, Rome, and Pompeii. While this wasn't my first time being in Italy, the history, art, and culture never cease to amaze me. I loved seeing Pompeii again since my upcoming senior thesis project is on the conservation of wall paintings at Pompeii, and Rome is my favorite city in the world.

This summer was truly an incredible opportunity. Without the aid of the Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field School Scholarship I'm not sure that I would have been able to have this experience as the scholarship helped pay for my field school tuition. My deepest gratitude goes out to the Archaeological Institute of America for selecting me, along with the entire staff at the Villa del Vergigno. I hope to use the skills and knowledge I learned this summer to further my education in archaeology.



Fig. 1: Unbackfilling area 5000



Fig. 2: Spending a rainy morning washing the pottery on-site





Fig. 3, Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Fig. 6: Me, demonstrating the consolidation process at the off-site lab



Fig. 7: Using the triangle ruler to have accurate measurements of the stamped dolium fragment



Fig. 8: Using the contour gauge to have an accurate representation of a particular side of the dolium fragment





Fig. 9: The first terra sigillata base I drew, stamped LNONFL (Lucius Nonius Florentinus)

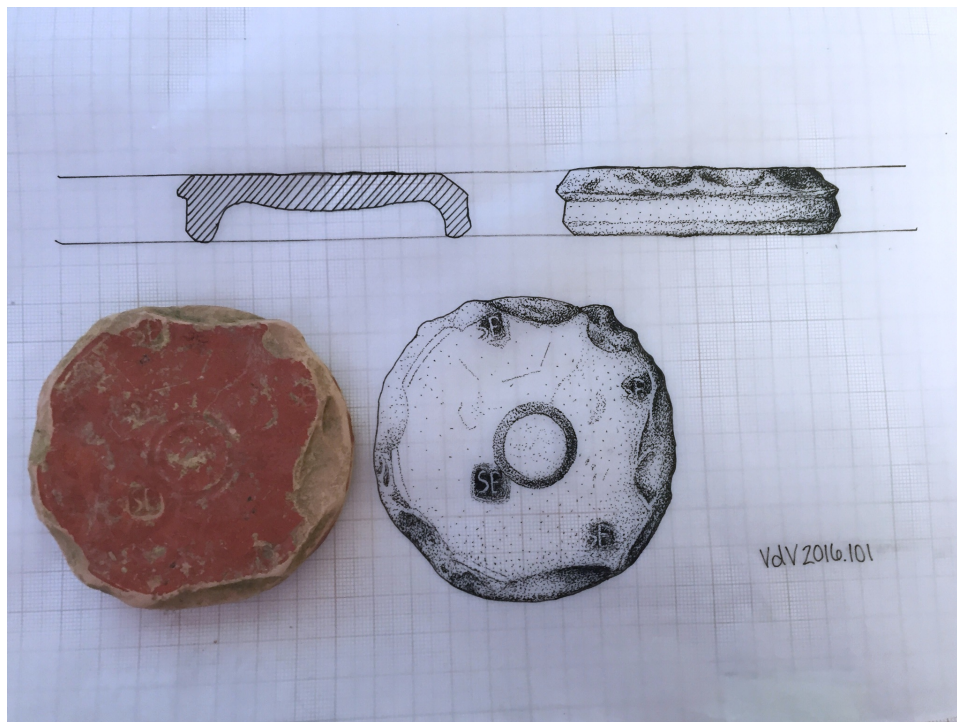


Fig. 10: The second terra sigillata base I drew, stamped SPE in four spots



Fig. 11: The Terracotta statuette head against graph paper

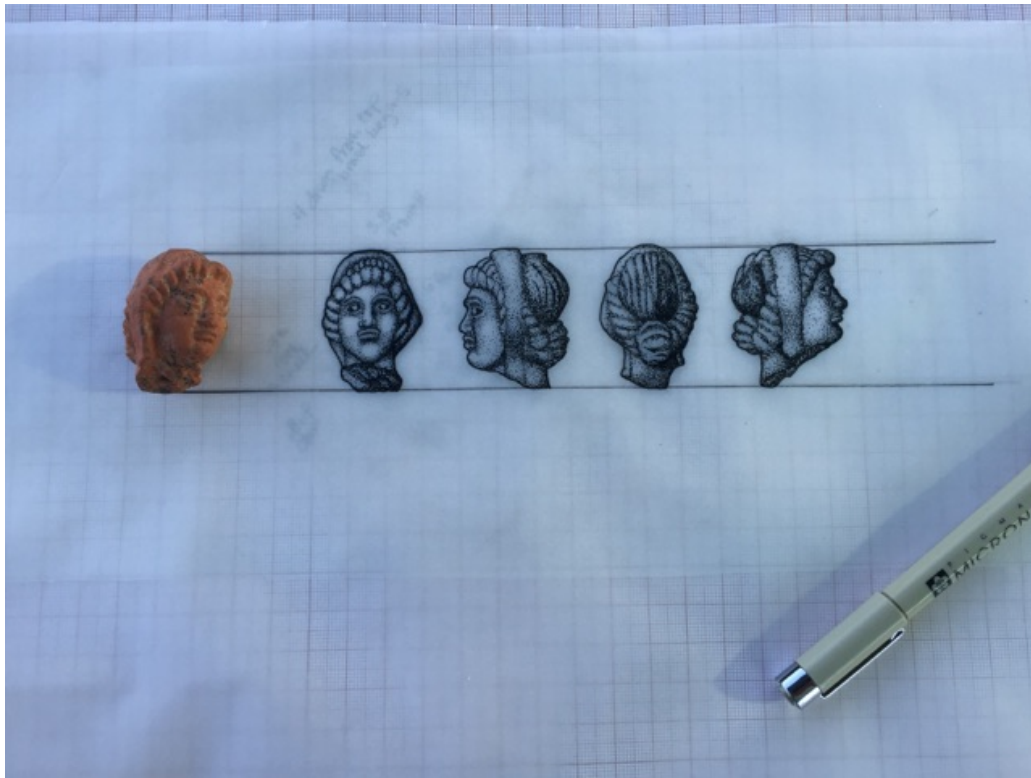


Fig. 12: My final illustration of the terracotta statuette head





Fig. 13: Me finally getting to see the Villa of the Mysteries after it being closed for conservation the last time I was in Pompeii



Fig. 14: The 2016 Villa del Vergigno Excavation Team