

herculaneum archaeology

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Bronze sculpture from the Villa of the Papyri , Museo Archeologico Nazionale Napoli

Defining beauty - the body in Ancient Greek art

A Review of the recent exhibition at the British Museum by Alistair Thorley Head of Classics, Stockport Grammar School



Defining beauty is about as easy as raising children or trusting politicians and so the latest superstar British Museum exhibition is ambitious in its scope. The first darkened room showcases five of Classical Greece's best attempts to define the indefinable, all dramatically spotlit. Ilissos, the river god whose turbulent course has flowed from Athens to London and then, most recently, to St. Petersburg and back, has a beauty where flesh, drapery and water coalesce across his body. Apoxyomenos radiates a self-confidence in his muscular body. Doryphoros (via Georg Römer's stunning bronze copy) finds beauty in mathematical perfection. The beauty of the Townley Diskobolos lies in the grace he achieves despite his clenched crouch.

However, newspaper coverage of the exhibition has focused on the one female statue amidst the buff young males. The opening of the exhibition is Aphrodite's bottom. The statue is turned 180 degrees from the angle at which she is normally first encountered on the way to the Duveen Gallery. It is easy to see why we start this way. For the Greeks, beauty and eroticism, like heroism and nobility of character, were as much about context as about the body itself. Apoxyomenos, Doryphoros and Diskobolos are each kalos kai agathos: kalos because of their physical perfection, agathos because they can bring glory to their state through sport or war. Aphrodite's narrative is different: the messages

she sends out are far more mixed. Her back and her crouch push us away, her waving fingers and glance over her shoulder beckon us forward. The viewer wants to protect, flee from and take their chances with her, all at the same time. None of her roommates offer the viewer such a complex and developed dialogue.

The rest of the exhibition is grouped into loose categories: men like gods, giving form to thought, rites of passage, beauty and the beast and shock of the new. Each collection offers some of the intrigue of "defining beauty" and the curators have enjoyed juxtaposing chronology, media and form. Heracles achieves his accession to Olympus on vases showing his superhuman efforts: defeating the Nemean lion, fighting with Geryon and capturing the Erymanthian Boar. He is certainly more kalos kai agathos than the last time I saw him in a special exhibition at the British Museum, urinating in a Pompeian garden after some drunken revelry. A tiny dancer whirls, wrapped in tight drapery which responds and emphasises her beautiful sweeping motions. Aphrodite acrobatically removes her sandal, showing her creator's mastery of a turning, twisting body. A marble figure lies in a post-coital slump, eyes closed, leg lazily waving, offering a little surprise to those who examine closely.

So beauty is discovered in nude and clothed figures, in vigorous life and in pitiful death, in conflict and in congress. I left with no clear definition of beauty but knowing that I would rather look like Apoxyomenos than the pot-bellied runaway slave; must start going to the gym, or at least throwing a discus.

A first hand experience of the Apolline Project

Iona Hampson - 3rd yr student of Ancient History & History
University of Nottingham



For those who went on the bi-annual society trip last year, you would have been fortunate enough to see the site of Masseria De Carolis in the rural village of Pollena Trocchia, six miles east of Naples. The villa and bath complex was buried in an eruption in AD 472 and after being used as an illegal refuse dump in the 1980s was excavated and preserved by the project from 2005 onwards. The project is a big part of the village's identity and the "locals" were buzzing with excitement about the international archaeologists in town and what they had found. When buying items from the local grocers, we were always welcomed warmly even though we were wearing the grubbiest of clothes and had rather dirty faces after a long day on site!



When talking to one archaeology student, she pointed out the best part of the project for her was that unlike her experience in some field schools, you actually get to find artefacts on the Apolline project. Within my block were found several small coins, oil lamps and brooches and, during excavation also revealed an exquisite mosaic floor, and some beautiful frescos such as the one I am uncovering in the photo. Most memorable moments of the excavation for me includes the great reveal of a fresco wall that had fallen face-down in the eruption and had been recovered by a team of conservationists, as well as the moment a friend excavating next to me found a Roman die. Having seen such a small die in the British museum exhibition, it was quite moving to hold a newly found dirty die in your hand, still in perfect condition which had been played-with so many years before.



We also spent some valuable time in the lab examining finds and learning about different post-excitation techniques. However the fun didn't stop with the excavating! A combination of spontaneous archaeologists, very cheap train fares and the weekends-off led to some incredible adventures in the local area. All the most famous sites such as Herculaneum, Pompeii and Oplontis as well as the National Archaeology Museum in Naples were all accessible via train which made visits to the sites as students very easy (and were free to all those with proof of studying archaeology!). Although I had been to the sites and the museums several times before, having spent some time excavating in the region, it helped me look at things with a fresh perspective. I was also fortunate enough to visit the National Library in Naples where, having gone through a labyrinth of rooms and corridors, I at last got to see the Herculaneum papyri. It was an amazing experience to see them and observe where some of the painstaking work to conserve and analyse them takes place. I also visited the island of Ischia, an understated jewel of the region; the Catacombs in Naples and visited the ancient site of Somma, a large and inspiring villa. I had never seen anything like it before and was mesmerised with its majestic architecture and unique wall paintings.



I really had an absolutely wonderful time being part of the Apolline Project. There is no denying that the manual work 8:30am-4:30pm in the Naples Summer heat is exhausting, but the experience both on site and in the class-room was brilliant and I learned so much in the time I was there. The friends I met and the treasures we uncovered made all the hard work well worthwhile. I would thoroughly recommend the project to any student or recent graduate. It really was an experience like no other and one that has only increased my appetite for learning more about this wonderful region.

(from top to bottom) 1. Iona Hampson,
2. & 3. at work,
4. the 2014 cohort of participants
Photos: Manal Khan

The Ancient Graffiti Project

Rebecca Benefiel, Director & Jacqueline DiBiasie, Assistant Director
Washington and Lee University

The goal of the Ancient Graffiti Project is to document and make accessible the first-century, handwritten inscriptions from Herculaneum and Pompeii. Our first field season took place in Herculaneum in summer 2014. This summer we will digitize inscriptions at the Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington DC, and prepare for our return to the field in summer 2016.

The project has three main objectives: 1) to locate, record, and fully document extant graffiti in Herculaneum, 2) to digitize these inscriptions and their contextual information and contribute to the epigraphic databases of EDR (Epigraphic Database Roma) and EAGLE (Europeana Network of Ancient Greek and Latin Epigraphy), and 3) to create a search engine that allows a user to search and research ancient graffiti by context rather than just content.

In our fieldwork, we search for extant graffiti and fully document those still visible. (In so doing, we rely on CIL vol. IV and Antonio Varone's *Titulorum Graphio Exaratorum qui in C.I.L. Collecti Sunt: Imagines*, vol. I-II (2012)). Our team employs multiple methods to record these graffiti, including RTI (Reflectance Transformation Imaging), which has already proven to be advantageous in documenting difficult to photograph inscriptions. We plan to experiment with and implement other technologies in future seasons in order to document the inscriptions and digitally preserve them for the future. This work is crucial. Wall plaster containing these graffiti is fragile. Even with the superb work of the Herculaneum Conservation Project over the past decade, many wall-inscriptions are still at the mercy of the elements. Our aim is to act now and document these inscriptions for future scholars and researchers before they are lost forever.

Another goal of the project is to digitize these inscriptions and create an online database to make these fascinating texts more widely available to scholars and the public. To that end, our team has collaborated with the EDR, a sophisticated database that will make these inscriptions and accompanying photographs available to scholars around the world (<http://www.edr-edr.it>). EDR is one of the main prongs of EAGLE, whose goal is to publish all Greek and Latin inscriptions up until the 7th century AD. EDR is the branch of this project responsible for the inscriptions of Italy, Sicily and Sardinia (excluding Christian inscriptions).

Paqui Toscano, '16, From a participant's perspective:

After having participated in the Herculaneum Graffiti Project, I have begun to see the Classical world and the remnants of it now left to us in a completely revitalized light. That I was a part of preserving this information and contributing to Classical scholarship, especially as an undergraduate, is an opportunity I do not take for granted. Being within Herculaneum, amidst the Suburban Baths, the mosaic of Neptune and Amphitrite, the House of the Telephus Relief, and the *gravitas* of what could be the College of the Augustales—even the seemingly banal tally marks—brought to life a community and people I had only studied in the abstract. By studying epigraphy we can indeed come to realize that the people of Herculaneum were grappling with many of the same emotions and concerns with which we still are struggling today. Such is the consistency of the human condition, which I suppose is both a disconcerting and consoling realization. But it is one that has unequivocally informed how I think about the Classical world for the better—as has the opportunity to learn from my fellow field team members. The relationships I bolstered and newly forged have tremendously impacted my own life, as has the knowledge I gained—or perhaps more aptly, experienced—as a part of HGP 2014.

The final goal of the project is the development of a “smart” search engine to aid in the study of ancient wall inscriptions. Search engines are generally designed to perform text searches, but textual content is only one characteristic of ancient graffiti. Our search engine allows the user to perform different types of search including text searches, context queries, to searches for specific types of graffiti. Users will be able to search for and study all the inscriptions found in one house, for example, or search for graffiti found in a category of properties, such as tabernae.

We were very pleased with the results of our first field season. The project located many graffiti extant in Herculaneum. Participants learned how to find ancient graffiti, document them,



The 2014 Ancient Graffiti Project cohort in the House of the Augustales

use standard epigraphic conventions, and contribute to an international database. Technological methods such as RTI aided in photographing these graffiti so scholars from around the globe will be able to “view” the graffiti firsthand. In addition, each team, responsible for an individual insula, compiled a preservation report for their area. Beyond training participants as epigraphists and researchers in this area, work on this project has created advocates for the preservation of ancient graffiti.

Our team was an international group of thirty participants, including undergraduates, graduate students, and professors, representing seventeen different academic programs and six countries. The HGP differs from most field schools as professors and students of all levels work together in a team rather than in a supervisor-student format. In this way, students gain valuable experience working with professors and graduate students directly. In addition, the entire team benefited from a series of lectures by leading epigraphists who generously shared their time, including Professors Silvia Orlandi and Silvia Evangelisti of the EDR, Professor Giuseppe Camodeca of L’Università di Napoli, “L’Orientale,” and a question and answer session with Dr. Antonio Varone of the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma. The project will return to the field in the summer of 2016. We would like to express our sincere thanks to Christian Biggi of the Herculaneum Study Centre, and to the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Culturali di Pompei, Ercolano, e Stabia, especially Dottoressa Maria Paola Guidobaldi, Direttrice degli Scavi di Ercolano.

<http://ancientgraffiti.wlu.edu/about-us/herculaneum-team/>

2014 Southeastern College Art Conference
Lisa Gastrell, Graduate student
George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia

Three members of the American Friends of Herculaneum (AFoH) board had a session at the 2014 annual meeting of the Southeastern College Art Conference (in Sarasota, Florida, Oct 8th-12th). The theme of the conference was NEXUS: From Handmade to HighTech, and the AFoH session not only provided an update on current research at the site, but also proved to be an excellent opportunity to promote new membership for AFoH.

The session was chaired by Carol Mattusch, of George Mason University, Chair of the trustees board of the AFoH, and Roger Macfarlane of Brigham Young University, Secretary of the board, opened the session, “From Ancient Roman Herculaneum to the Ringling Museum: Handmade or High-Tech?” with remarks about the history of the Bay of Naples and the rediscovery of Herculaneum.

Erika Zimmermann Damer of the University of Richmond, also discussed her collaborative project at the session. Damer along with Rebecca Benefiel (Washington and Lee University) and Holly Sypniewski (Millsaps College) have pioneered the Herculaneum Graffiti Project, the only American epigraphical field school open to undergraduates and one with a large component focused on the digital humanities. The ongoing project exemplifies the very essence of this year’s conference theme – From Handmade to High Tech. In her presentation, Herculaneum Graffiti for the (Twenty-) First Century, Damer outlined the process of carefully recording and digitizing ancient inscriptions located on the exterior walls of the buildings of Herculaneum. The summer of 2014 marked the inaugural season for a team of undergraduates who traveled to the Bay of Naples to begin work on this innovative project. The hands-on project included finding, photographing and recording

inscriptions that were then reimaged, analyzed and placed in two databases for ancient graffiti, the Epigraphic Database Roma, Europeana Network of Ancient Greek and Latin Epigraphy and Fasti Online. Damer emphasized the urgency to document the ancient inscriptions before they degrade any further. She also compared the results of the initial findings to ancient graffiti in the neighboring city of Pompeii.

In the presentation, *All Those Sculptures: How Herculaneum Changed the History of Art*, Carol Mattusch considered the effects of J.J. Winckelmann's pioneering publications of the sculptures unearthed in the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum. Winckelmann visited Naples four times to investigate the celebrated archaeological finds that were housed in the King's summer palace at Portici. In Winckelmann's *History of the Art of Antiquity* (1763/64), he developed a new categorization, a stylistic chronology, which, said Mattusch, "still resonates in teaching and scholarship about Greek and Roman art". Winckelmann observed that the bronzes from Herculaneum were among the "most remarkable pieces," and many art historians and archaeologists still consider Greek bronzes to be unique works, designating Roman marbles as copies. Mattusch believes that by discussing bronzes separately from marbles in his history of ancient art, Winckelmann set up a chain reaction that is still present in the discourse today. She argued that this thinking all began with the extraordinarily rich collection of bronzes found in one home at Herculaneum, the Villa of the Papyri.

David Sider of New York University, Vice President of the board of AFoH, focused on the ancient papyri from Herculaneum in a paper entitled *Papyri as Archaeological Objects*. When uncovered during the Bourbon excavations of the 18th century, the vast library of more than 1,000 book rolls from the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum were brittle and carbonized, "steamed and charred." Sider described the difficulties encountered in trying to open the damaged scrolls and noted that Padre Antonio Piaggio invented a device known as "Piaggio's unrolling machine" which slowly pulled the individual papyri apart. Most of the texts were written in Greek, and some were in Latin. None of the procedures to open the scrolls to date have been extremely successful but there are high expectations with a new process using Computerized Tomography (CT scan).



(from left to right) Erika Zimmermann-Damer, Carol Mattusch, David Sider, Roger Macfarlane after the AFoH panel at the SECAC Sarasota, FL session in Oct 2014

The final lecture of the Herculaneum session entitled, *E Tenebris Clarum Lumen: Illuminating the Herculaneum Papyri*, was presented by Roger Macfarlane. Over the past decade, experimentation at Brigham Young University with multi-spectral imaging (MSI) has provided enormous gains in the quest to elucidate the ancient scrolls from the Villa of Papyri. Macfarlane reiterated the notoriously difficult task of unraveling and deciphering the fragile scrolls, which has challenged researchers through the years. The work of the MSI project at BYU has led to several important discoveries, bringing some of the texts from the library at Herculaneum back to life. Digital imaging has played a major role in helping to bring the pieces together in this collaborative project. Macfarlane agreed with David Sider that the future will rely on the new research that is currently being conducted with X-Ray Phase-Contrast Tomography at the European Synchrotron Facility, Grenoble.

In closing, an invitation to all present was extended to join the American Friends of Herculaneum Society, and questions were taken from the large and appreciative audience.

The First Herculaneum Summer School

Sarah Hendriks, Independent Scholar
CISPE

The first Herculaneum Society Summer School took place in Herculaneum from 22-26 June this year. A small but lively group with a broad range of interests and backgrounds joined Joanne Berry, Christian Biggi and Sarah Hendriks for a week of site visits, lectures, and guided visits by experts and local guides.

Based at the Villa Signorini, backing on to the gardens of the Royal Palace at Portici and just down the road from the Herculaneum excavations, the group enjoyed fabulous surrounds, delicious food, and wonderful proximity to the key sites.

The week began with an introductory lecture by Jo Berry and a site visit and tour of the Herculaneum Scavi. In addition to the site, we were also granted special access to the boat, the suburban baths, and the boathouses along the ancient shoreline: all sites that are otherwise inaccessible to the public. After a fabulous Italian lunch at a family-run trattoria, we ascended the heights of Vesuvius on what happened to be the clearest day of the year. A special guide led the more intrepid adventurers of the group along the upper ridge of the volcano and even down into the top of the crater itself.

Tuesday saw a full day at Pompeii, covering all the key sites of the city as well as some of the more fantastic sites off the regular tourist trail. This also included a visit to the temporary exhibition of the casts, housed in a curious pyramid-like structure in the amphitheatre, and a visit to the Villa dei Misteri to see the recently restored frescos. The evening contained a lecture on the Villa of the Papyri by Sarah Hendriks.

Wednesday morning took the group to Naples and to the Officina dei Papiri where Sarah showed the group the papyri and outlined some of the current research being conducted on the collection. After a pizza lunch at Starita, probably the best pizzeria in the city, the group descended on the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli where they explored the expansive collections from Pompeii and Herculaneum and the current exhibition 'Pompeii e l'Europa'.

Thursday took the group even further afield, this time to Baia and Cumae. Site visits included the Piscina Mirabilis, the Baia Archaeological Park, the Sibyl's cave and the Acropolis of Cuma. Our able driver Francesco deftly navigated Neapolitan traffic to reach the Serapeum at Pozzuoli, followed by gelato by the sea. That evening Estelle Lazer presented a lecture on the body casts from Pompeii and gave updates on her latest research.



(from top to bottom) 1. With Jo Berry at Herculaneum
2. At Stabiae with Thomas Howe
3. Model of Pompeii, Museo Archeologico Nazionale
4. Farewell dinner at Tubba Catubba
Photos: Sarah Hendriks

The final day of the school also took us a little off the beaten tourist track, this time to Oplontis, Boscoreale and Stabiae. At Stabiae we were treated to a special tour by Thomas Howe, Coordinator general of the Restoring Ancient Stabiae Project, once again being granted access into otherwise closed parts of the site. The week concluded with a further presentation by Jo Berry on the history of the excavations in Pompeii and the work of Maiuri. This was followed by a celebratory dinner complete with live traditional Neapolitan music at a local trattoria.

Congratulations and thanks must be extended to all those who made the week possible and contributed to its smooth running and success: from the organisers themselves to the drivers, site managers, lecturers, and local staff who all went out of their way to provide a fantastic week for the participants. A wonderful success!

For those who were unable to attend this first School, or whose interest has now been piqued, the Herculaneum Society is organising another in **March 2016**.

Two of our trustees have recently been honoured by the British Academy.



Nigel Wilson FBA won the Kenyon Medal for Classical Studies and Archaeology for 'his significant contributions to the study of Greek palaeography and the history of Byzantine and later scholarship, and his editing of Greek texts'. Robert Fowler was elected a Fellow of the Academy, and his work *Early Greek Mythography vol. 2: Commentary* was awarded one of the three British Academy Medals for 'a landmark academic achievement in any of the disciplines supported by the Academy, which has transformed understanding of the subject'.



STOP PRESS

HERCULANEUM CONGRESS 2016

The Herculaneum Society is organising the 6th Congress in Herculaneum in 2016 for its members. As soon as details are available they will be posted on our website: www.herculaneum.ox.ac.uk and Facebook and Twitter. If you haven't already Liked us or Followed us on social media, please do so as this ensures that the latest news gets to you fast.

SCHOOLS COMPETITION

We have had a fantastic response to our latest Schools Competition and will share the winning entries with you in our next issue of *Herculaneum Archaeology*. A special thanks to Alistair Thorley, Head of Classics, Stockport Grammar School for his help.

For more information about the Society, or if you have any comments, suggestions or ideas for articles for the next edition of *Herculaneum Archaeology*, please feel free to contact the office at:

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You can find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/HerculaneumSociety>

To join the Society visit our website: <http://www.herculaneum.ox.ac.uk>

Memberships start from as little as £15/year

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