



Archaeology

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Aphrodisias from east, South Agora and pool at center

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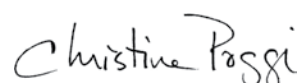
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Message from the Director

This year's edition of the Institute's *Archaeology Journal* presents the many exciting discoveries and achievements made by our remarkable site directors and ambitious students during the 2017 dig season, as well as personal accounts by students and supporters of their experiences at our dig sites. In my inaugural year as the Judy and Michael Steinhardt Director of the Institute of Fine Arts, I am thrilled to share with you our community's inspiring contributions to research that continues to build and redefine the cultural history and heritage of our four archaeological sites.

In Abydos, new findings in previously unknown royal monuments are revealing details about royal ritual practices in ancient Egypt. Aphrodisias was among the most recent sites added to UNESCO's World Heritage Sites. Additionally, in Samothrace, the team encountered a torrential rainstorm that uncovered new architectural findings, while excavations in Selinunte, Sicily led to discoveries that captured glimpses of the ancient Greek colony's daily life. The work of Professor Clemente Marconi and his colleagues led to the inauguration on September 22, 2017 of the Selinunte Museum, in celebration of ten years of fascinating discoveries.

The Institute's archaeology program offers invaluable research and scholarship by our esteemed faculty and students, whose impact extends beyond the scope of academia. We are so grateful for our donors whose contributions and support are essential to making our archaeology program possible. I am eager to continue watching the program grow and thrive.



Christine Poggi

Judy and Michael Steinhardt Director
Institute of Fine Arts

Abydos, Egypt



Fig. 1

With the recent retirement of David O'Connor, the Lila Acheson Wallace Professor of Egyptian Art and Archaeology, it seems an opportune moment to reflect on some of the notable achievements of the Institute's Abydos Project during his distinguished tenure.

The Institute took up the project when Professor O'Connor joined its faculty in 1995. It had already been established as one of the most prominent archaeological projects in Egypt during his previous tenure at the University of Pennsylvania. Operating on a more regular basis and considerably larger scale under Institute sponsorship, the project's results in the years since have changed our understanding not only of the history of Abydos, one of Egypt's most important ancient sites, but of ancient Egypt more broadly.

At the heart of its significance to both ancient Egyptians and modern scholars is its unique status as Egypt's first great royal necropolis and correspondingly as an arena for royal monumental expression at the beginning of Egyptian history, the systematic investigation of which has been one of the project's major research goals and has resulted in some of its most significant results.

While the early royal tombs were located at a remote desert site and were provided with only very modest above-ground components, these same kings also built monumental and highly visible cultic structures, in the form of massive walled enclosures open to the sky, on a broad desert terrace overlooking the ancient urban center. These have been a major focus of the excavation's work. Although the existence of some was known previously, the excavation's efforts have established these structures to have constituted the visible monumental component of each king's funerary complex and likely the signature monuments of each king's reign. Previously unknown royal monuments have been discovered, important new details have emerged about known constructions, and much about the nature of royal ritual practice has been defined, including the highly controversial question of the sacrificial burial of courtiers and retainers. These discoveries

are redefining our understanding of the emergence of monumental architecture as an essential component in the definition and expression of Egyptian kingship.

Only one royal enclosure, built by King Khasekhemwy, ca. 2700 BCE, is still standing, and the project is engaged in a systematic program of architectural conservation to preserve it. Its mud brick walls were gravely affected by a host of structural instabilities and at risk of catastrophic collapse. Working with preservation architects, the excavation has developed methodologies for addressing the many serious structural threats while preserving the monument's existing character.

With Professor O'Connor's retirement, the Abydos Project is beginning a promising new phase. The Institute is entering a partnership with Princeton University's Department of Art and Archaeology to continue the fieldwork program and build on the achievements of recent years. Institute students will continue to have the opportunity to be part of interdisciplinary international teams that include the broad range of activities and technical specialties integral to the practice of modern archaeology and to contribute directly to the production of important new knowledge about ancient Egypt.

Figure 1: The royal enclosure of King Khasekhemwy, ca. 2700 BCE. Photo by Greg Maka

Figure 2: Excavating a human burial at the enclosure of King Aha. Photo by Robert Fletcher

Figure 3: Institute students Ileana Selejan and Elizabeth McGovern with Abydos Field Director Matthew Adams at the enclosure of King Khasekhemwy. Photo by Greg Maka

Figure 4: Institute student Tara Prakash and senior excavator Ashraf Zidan Mahmoud excavating at the Khasekhemwy enclosure. Photo by Greg Maka

Figure 5: Conservation work at the enclosure of King Khasekhemwy. Photo by Robert Fletcher



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Aphrodisias, Turkey

The NYU team worked at Aphrodisias from late June to the end of August on a variety of projects – Stadium, Sebasteion, North Agora, Temple of Aphrodite, Tetrapylon Street, and Bronze Age material from the Theater Hill. The main focus however was the great *Mica and Ahmet Ertegun South Agora Pool Project*.

POOL The excavation of the pool was completed as planned and brought a sharp light to bear on ancient and medieval life in and around it. The South Agora complex was laid out in the Tiberian period (AD 14-37) with a 170m-long ornamental pool at its center surrounded by palm trees and marble colonnades. The pool was completely renovated in c. AD 500 and kept functioning into the early seventh century. It was then gradually filled in on both sides, with successive layers of rubble and building debris from the surrounding buildings.

FINDS Dense and important finds came from the lowest of these layers, close to the pool floor. The range is impressive: pottery, lamps, roof tiles, wooden planks, marble architecture, statuary, inscriptions, bronze coins, reliquary crosses, lead tablets, gold-glass ornaments, and a variety of iron weapons.

HEADS Among several high-quality finds of marble portrait statuary – an Aphrodisian speciality – two pieces are of special importance. A remarkably preserved bearded male portrait head, probably of a provincial governor, has the hairstyle and technique of the Theodosian period (c. AD 400). It also bears a tiny covert Christian three-letter inscription added by the sculptor on its neck under or ‘behind’ the long beard: XMG. This was an abbreviation of the Greek for ‘Christ was born to Mary’ that marked emphatically the faith of the person writing it.

The second find is a masterpiece from the very end of ancient statue production. It has a stubble beard, bald skull, and a Constantinopolitan ‘mop’ hairstyle of the early sixth century AD. The portrait combines personal truthfulness in its unflinching baldness with the best contemporary fashion in its deeply drilled crown of curls. Even the very last statues at Aphrodisias remained undiminished in technique and effect.

TAIL A horse’s tail of blue-grey marble excavated on the south side of the pool was an unexpected discovery. It was found to join break to break to the rear of the blue-grey marble horse and group of Troilos and Achilles excavated earlier in the Basilica and now mounted in the Aphrodisias Museum. The tail was carved in one piece with the body of the horse – a bravura sculptural performance in a huge block of difficult local marble.

The Ertegun pool produced an abundance of exciting finds, and its completed excavation and thorough documentation were due to the extraordinary hard work of the student team and the local workforce. Aphrodisias was formally inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site at the 41st Session of the World Heritage Committee held in Krakow, Poland, on July 10, 2017.

Figure 1: Students Miriam Farooqi and Katherine Halcrow at work in pool excavation

Figure 2: Marble portrait head of c. AD 400 found face-up at bottom of pool

Figure 3: Fragment of Diocletian’s Price Edict found in pool

Figure 4: Blue-grey marble tail fragment found in pool re-attached to horse in museum

Figure 5: Professor Katherine Welch gives seminar in Stadium

All Aphrodisias images © The Institute - NYU



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

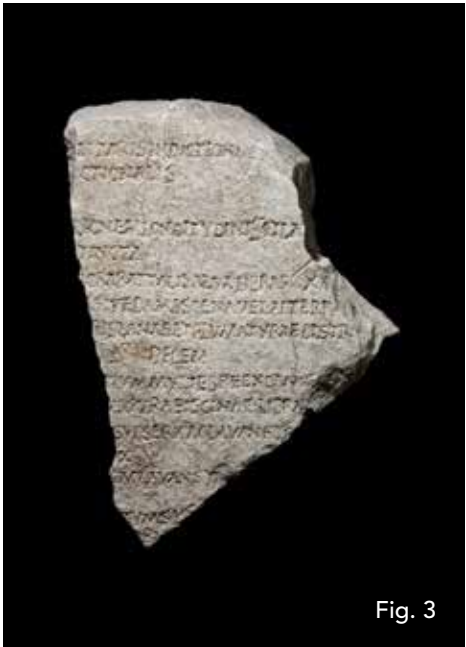


Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Samothrace, Greece

Excavations in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods offer a rare glimpse into the seminal role this mystery cult played in the widely connected Hellenistic world. In accordance with our NEH collaborative research grant, research in 2017 continued to center on the region of the Sanctuary hinging around the famous Winged Victory: the Stoa, Nike Precinct, and Theater. We concentrated especially on architectural documentation of the Stoa, excavated in the 1960s under the direction of James R. McCredie. As the largest building in the Sanctuary and the only major building composed entirely of local limestone, the Stoa offers an excellent opportunity to examine local Samothracian masons at work in both design and construction. Key initiatives included investigating routes of access to this region, cataloguing for publication more than two thousand blocks belonging to the superstructure of the building, creating an inventory of the types and quantities of metal devices used to secure the blocks, investigating the design of the massive wooden roof tree, revising the catalogue of context pottery, and preparing the drawings for publication.

We also worked on the marble remains of honorific and votive monument displayed in front of the Stoa. In addition to the well-known column erected by the Macedonians in honor of Philip V, we now know that there was also an impressive Ionic column monument that likely supported a portrait statue as well. We also worked on photogrammetric modeling of the Nike Precinct and aerial photography for the Stoa (fig. 3) and the Sanctuary.

We continued our initiative that began last season to understand how the central ravine was channeled and bridged, particularly between the Theater and Altar Court. Working with new survey data, photogrammetric modeling, and archaeological records from the 1923 French-Czech excavation, we revised our 3D reconstruction of the region to reflect the complex changes in elevation.

On July 17th, a torrential storm with local flash flooding vividly demonstrated how powerful natural forces have both shaped and given meaning to the Sanctuary. (fig. 2) Within hours, rushing water crested nearly to the top of the central ravine's deep retaining walls. A section of the modern retaining wall built in the 1950s collapsed to reveal the ancient underpinnings upon which an earlier restoration was set, while further downstream, an Ionic marble base was revealed, making a welcome new addition to the architectural remains of the Milesian Lady's Banquet Hall.

In addition to assessing storm damage and preparing objects for the renovated museum, the conservation team worked on a treatment for the removal of disfiguring biofilm from marble blocks. (fig. 1)

Our regular field season was augmented by our Partner University Fund collaboration with the Université de Bordeaux-Montaigne, investigating northern Aegean architectural networks. This year the team spent three weeks in June working on Thasos, Samothrace, and in the Cyclades, examining material, technical, and stylistic properties that connect the ancient Greek architecture of these islands.

Figure 1: Andy Wolf cleaning a marble block from the large Orthostate monument in front of the Stoa. Photo by Bonna Wescoat

Figure 2: Storm water cresting in the Central Ravine. Photo by Bonna Wescoat

Figure 3: Aerial view of the Stoa. Photo by Michael C. Page

Figure 4: Team party on the 4th of July, including the McCredie family. Photo by Bailey Green



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Selinunte, Sicily



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5a



Fig. 5b

In May and June 2017 we carried out our tenth excavation campaign in the main urban sanctuary (fig. 1). This season has produced important new findings underneath the main chamber, or cella, of Temple R, which contribute significantly to our knowledge of the different use phases of our area, and, more generally, to our understanding of ritual actions associated with the construction of temples in the ancient Greek world.

Work this season consisted of the excavation of Trench Q, at the center of the cella of Temple R (fig. 1). By the end of this season, we excavated the Hellenistic, Classical, and Archaic layers, eventually reaching the level corresponding to the time of the foundation of Selinus, ca. 628 BCE.

Our work opened with the excavation of the Hellenistic fill (ca. 300 BCE) which has completely sealed the Archaic and Classical phases inside the temple. This fill consisted—like in Trenches O and P—of earth and stones, along with a large number of transport amphoras, mainly placed near the bottom of the deposit, and tiles and architectural terracottas, mainly at the top. This fill also included a significant amount of material related to the life of the sanctuary in the Archaic and Classical periods, including several fragments of Archaic polychrome roofs, terracotta figurines, votive metal tools including a sickle (fig. 2), the forearm of a kouros made of Parian marble, and another fragment of an Attic white-ground lekythos in the style of Douris featuring Eros and a youth.

The Hellenistic fill sealed the Archaic and Classical levels across the entirety of the trench. It was thus possible to identify the floors and floor levels associated with Temple R's main phases, including the clay floor from the original construction in 590–580 BCE, the new floor of ca. 500 BCE, which appears to have been covered by a fine layer of white stucco, and the floor belonging to the late fifth century renovation of the temple after its partial destruction in 409 BCE. For all these phases we were able to identify a series of votive dedications and ritual actions made immediately before laying the floors. One may mention a deposition made in the fifth century floor after 409, divided between two areas: one for the dedication of plants or liquids, surrounded by tiles; and the other for the dedication of piglet remains, marked by a bowl placed upside down (fig. 3). Particularly significant, in this regard, was the discovery of part of the foundation deposit associated with the original construction of Temple R. Before laying the clay floor, the builders placed towards the top of its foundation, along the inner walls of the cella, a number of objects, including pottery, weapons, and jewelry (figs. 5a–b). Part of the same deposit was found in 2012, and we can now expect to find more of it in future campaigns. It is significant that we not only found in this foundation deposit a large number of objects, but particularly that we can precisely map their location in relation to the rest of the deposit and the building. Also, this foundation deposit did not simply consist in the laying of votive objects, but also involved a number of ritual actions including animal sacrifice and ritual meals. The bowl placed upside down containing the remains of a piglet is one such example (fig. 4).

The most significant discovery this summer came from the level underneath the foundations of Temple R. Here, as elsewhere in our excavations inside and outside of Temple R, we found the layer associated with the first generation of the Greek colony's life. This summer, this layer contained a significant amount of pottery, including vases from Megara Hyblaea (Selinus' mother city), but also three iron spearheads, remnants of spears planted blade-first into the ground, two of which crossed (fig. 6). These weapons were clearly a form of votive offering to the warrior deity to which the future Temple R belonged (we know from the inscription of Temple G and the weapons dedicated at Malophoros that both Demeter and Kore were closely associated with war at Selinus). They are also a clear symbol of appropriation of the new land by the first generation of colonists.

Once again, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to our sponsors, to the Sicilian Ministry of Culture, and to the Director of the Archaeological Park of Selinunte, Arch. Enrico Caruso. As well, we are very grateful to all those students, experts, and colleagues who have contributed to the success of this year's season: in particular, the students Ellen Archie, Giulia Coppola, Flavio Ferlito, Davide Giubileo, Alba Mazza, Caterina Minniti, Rebecca Sausville, Silvia Scardovi, Laura Schepis, Hannah Smagh, Anna Verde, Laura Volpe, and Xin Wang; among the experts and colleagues Linda Adorno, Claudia Antonetti, Babette Bechtold, Massimo Cultraro, Raffaele Franco, Lorenzo Lazzarini, Massimo Limoncelli, Debora Messina, Roberto Micciché, Filippo Pisciotta, Flavia Puoti, David Scahill, Anna Serotta, Valeria Tardo, Caterina Trombi, Pietro Valenti, and Andrew Ward; and our workmen Nino Vultaggio and Giovanni Etiopia.

Figure 1: Aerial view of Temple R during excavation

Figure 2: Iron sickle from the Hellenistic fill

Figure 3: Deposition made in post-409 phase

Figure 4: Bowl from foundation deposit placed upside down with piglet bones

Figures 5a and 5b: Trench Q with foundation deposit still *in situ*

Figure 6: Iron spearheads planted blade-first into the ground

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Fig. 6

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This list includes contributions to the projects received from September 1, 2016 – October 31, 2017.

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Since 1938 the Institute has had an active archaeology program. Contribute to research, excavation discoveries, and conservation work at one of our current sites by visiting <https://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/fineart/support/>



Students excavating in South Agora pool, Yağmur Başaran from Turkey and Hannah Kate Simon

For information on how you can support the Institute’s Archaeology Program, please contact the Development Office by calling 212-992-5804.

Student Spotlight



Xin Wang

As a PhD student in modern and contemporary art, I deeply appreciate the open and accepting environment in which I learned about archaeology at the Institute’s excavations at Selinunte, Sicily. It was a rare chance to explore aspects of Art History utterly outside of my specialization, yet there was never any doubt that it will inform my own practice in unexpectedly meaningful ways. Incidentally, this year’s Documenta identified its theme as “Learning from Athens,” drawing upon the country’s storied past and troubled present, yet spending six weeks digging down two centuries at an Ancient Greek site at a locale fraught with its own geopolitical complexities—from the Carthaginian invasion, the diasporic evidence of a Pan-Arab past, Fascist propaganda through reconstruction of fallen temples, to today’s seafaring routes of refugees—revealed something immensely richer. It was at once stimulating and humbling to acquire a wide range of experiences and skills: the tactility of different tools in response to different material culture, the classification of tiles, pottery, bones, and metal, the way archeologists infer and speculate, not to mention abundant lessons on the canon and quirks of Classical Antiquity. It was amusing to learn that archeologists in the 19th century used to prop up columns at certain angles to construct a picturesque ruin, and that archeology today—augmented with drones, iPads, and photogrammetry—still engages in the art of staging, presenting a pristine site of uncovering important finds for the very first time.



Andrew Wolf

This past summer, I had the opportunity to work alongside conservators and archaeologists at the Sanctuary of the Great Gods in Samothrace, Greece. Because Samothrace has a long history of excavation, I was able to spend time with objects that had been excavated and treated decades before. It amazes me how well certain types of materials fare during burial, only to face accelerated deterioration when they are finally exhumed centuries later. Learning to undo old, harmful pottery treatments and redo them with reversible, reliable, and inert materials was a constant and concrete reminder of how the theory and practice of conservation have evolved and will surely continue to evolve in the service of preserving cultural heritage.

Beyond the objects I addressed, I was also able to assist in the preservation of the architecture in the site itself, parts of which were endangered due to erosion and land instability. Working with conservators Stephen Koob and Michael Morris and with the director Bonna Wescoat, I assisted in drafting a report that we submitted to the relevant authorities for approval and funding. Conservation as a collaborative, communicative process is a far cry from the romantic idea of a conservator alone at the bench with their object, and I am glad to have contributed to a complex group effort.

From individual objects and their fragments to entire swaths of land, the scope of archaeological fieldwork is breathtaking. I am extremely grateful to have been part of the effort in Samothrace.

Donor Spotlight: Alicia and Norman Volk



Mankind has always been curious about what the world and civilization were like before they themselves were born. Discovery of the past has always motivated people to explore. Archeology, which is the systematic recovery of historical evidence is key to that quest.

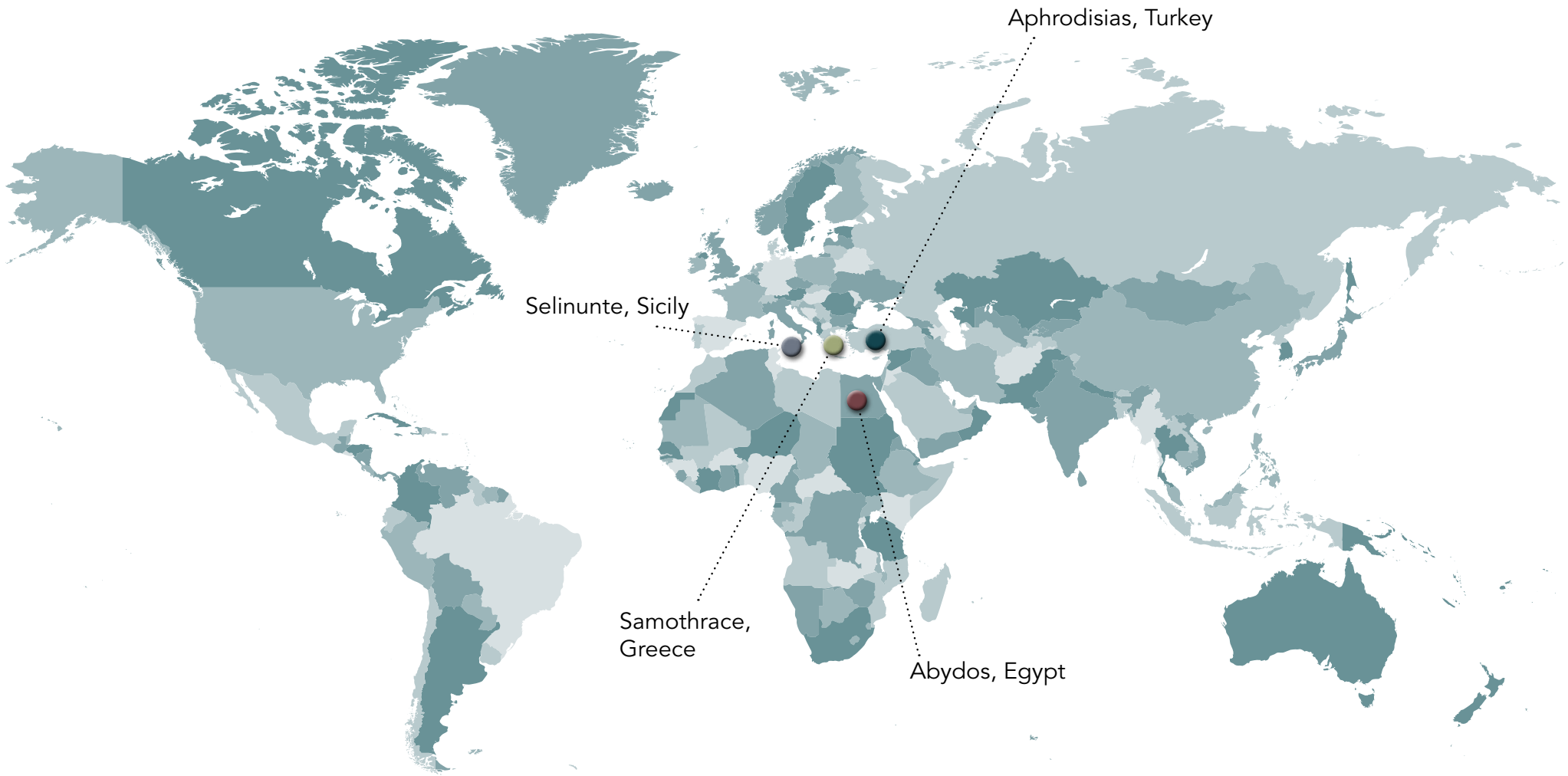
In June 2012 we had the opportunity to visit the archeological dig at Selinunte in Sicily, which we learned about at a program at the Institute of Fine Arts. It was a privilege to witness the excavation of the ancient site of the Selinunte Acropolis project. The Director Clemente Marconi worked tirelessly in leading his team to dig, discover, classify, decipher and preserve. It was an incredible opportunity for the students. It allowed them to participate at the intersection of scientific learning and critical thinking. Professor Marconi, an amazing scholar, is a treasure himself by leading this project over the years. The spirit and dedication that he and his wife Rosalia bring to the team was a joy to witness.

The scholarship of the team is enhanced by a mid day break from the sun and heat by meeting at the water’s edge for luncheon discussions and respite before going indoors for further scientific analysis of the objects that the team uncovered.

We are grateful to be able to help support this important archeological program at the Institute of Fine Arts.

Sincerely,
Alicia and Norman Volk

The Institute's Archaeology Excavation Sites



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