AIA News from the New York Society

Pandemic and the Way Forward

Plague! Lucius Aelius was worried. The ancient Roman Legionnaire had fretted about his posting away from the warmth, family and comforts of Rome to the cold, the unknown and the hardships of the barbarian north. Londinium turned out better than expected but now his return to Rome was fraught with...plague! Had the emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus already seen his co-regent, Lucius Verus, die of the plague? And what of the army? Lucius Aelius is a fictitious person but no doubt the fears expressed were common among soldiers and the general population of the Roman empire. We today know this as The Antonine Plague of 165 to 180 C.E., which reappeared in 189 C.E. with a virulence that decimated the population of the empire and the army. Pandemic—what about us?

My generation may be the first to grow up without fear of a pandemic. Polio was quickly vanquished and the HIV/AIDS crisis, while serious was not easily spread. So here we are with a virus that spreads and for which there is no current reprieve. How will we respond? There are many diverse answers with varying consequences. What about the response of archaeologists? Let me suggest one point about which to think.

Archaeologists seek and focus on evidence but they also bring their contemporary perspectives, without which they would be blind and unable to understand the evidence. This does not make their endeavor an exercise in personal fictitious subjectivity. Individual archaeologists work within a current peer community and one which changes through time. Future scholarship may reject, modify or accept current knowledge but perhaps this does not falsify previous understandings but rather another aspect is seen. And so, I would suggest, it will be with the current pandemic. Scholars, indeed all of us, will have a deeper sense of the life of our past fellow human beings, a deeper understanding of the predicament of Lucius Aelius.

Adaptation is a hallmark of our species and so it is for the NY City academic community (see Joanne Spurza's article inside) and for the AIA-New York Society. We had to cancel the end of last year's lectures but our 2020–21 season starts with online, webinar presentations. On September 21 Dr. John Hopkins will speak about the "Biographies of Ancient Mediterranean Objects." In October the NY Society teams up with the Egyptian Art Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the American Research Center in Egypt with a lecture by Dr. Mark Lehner. Dr. Lehner is the foremost archaeologist working on the Giza Plateau and the discoverer of the village of the workmen who built the pyramids. He will give us his latest thoughts about these matters. In November, for the NYS's

In This Issue:

Haupt Lecture, Dr. Steven Ellis returns us to the Punic-Roman world with "New Questions and New Excavations for a Major Port Town in Sardinia." For all these you will receive an email detailing how to access the online webinar. Also inside are some reflections about another organization founded by the AIA: the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Further inside there is information about the Friends of the NY Society, a group special to archaeology and the NY Society. If you are interested to join, please see the enclosed article.

As always, we thank you for your membership in the AIA and the AIA-NY Society.

- *Jeffrey Lamia*
President, AIA New York Society

AIA New York Society Fall 2020 Lecture Series

Decapitated: Reassembling the Biographies of Ancient Mediterranean Objects

John North Hopkins
Assistant Professor, Department of Art History & The Institute of Fine Arts, NYU

Ancient objects typically have long and complex lives. Their many uses (and re-uses) in Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Greek or Roman contexts imbue them with extraordinary significance for the study of the past, but their modern rediscoveries and uses by looters, dealers, collectors, museums and academics often provide further twist to their (hi)stories. Often, important moments from their biographies are lost or purposefully hidden. While such obscurity can limit their value and do irreparable harm, new methods and perspectives in archaeological and museological research have opened some interesting doors. This talk will introduce a large-scale project to reassemble the biographies of ancient Mediterranean objects held at the Menil Collection, a prestigious art museum in Houston. After an overview of the purposes, practices and initial results, I will focus on one example from the collection and the value regained by opening up archives, acquisition records and museum files in a collaborative new effort between museums and the academic community. One example from the collection and the value regained by opening up archives, acquisition records and museum files in a collaborative new effort between museums and the academic community.

September 21 at 6:30 pm
Webinar (details forthcoming)

The People Who Built The Pyramids - How We Know

Mark Lehner
President, Ancient Egypt Research Associates (AERA)

Thirty years of AERA excavations at the Giza Pyramids Plateau has reveled the settlements and everyday life of people who built the pyramids, their workshops, bakeries, barracks, and the houses of those who administered the pyramid projects. Reconstruction of buried waterways and harbor basins matches information from the Wadi el-Jarf Papyri and Journal of Merer, the leader of a team who delivered stone for Khufu's Great Pyramid. A royal port and palace city sprawled below the Giza Pyramids. Here's how we know.

(Co-sponsored with the Egyptian Art Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and ARCE New York)

October 17 at 6:00 pm (tentative)
Webinar (details forthcoming)

The Social, Economic, and Commercial Networks of Punic-Roman Tharros: New Questions and New Excavations for A Major Port Town in Sardinia

Steven Ellis
Associate Professor, Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati

In this presentation we take a 'behind-the-scenes' tour of the latest (and still ongoing) excavations of the Punic and Roman city of Tharros, on the west coast of Sardinia. Considered one of the most spectacular archaeological sites in the Mediterranean, perched as the city is along a narrow peninsular into the sea, Tharros has long attracted visitors to its shores, from Phoenicians and Carthaginians to Romans and Spaniards, all of them taking advantage of its prime location and protected harbor. As a commercial center, Tharros serviced one of the most important trading routes of the Mediterranean, that between Carthage and Marseille. Early results from the excavations by the University of Cincinnati show that this movement of people and material made an important impact on the livelihoods of the town's local inhabitants; new foods were consumed, new cultural customs were adopted, and new ideas in architecture were developed. But these discoveries are so new that the presentation is less about showcasing results and answers as it is about exploring the various ways in which the team is approaching an archaeological excavation of this type, one that is focused on questions of the social and structural making of a long-lived city. Paired as the project is with Cincinnati's excavations at Pompeii, the presentation will also examine the extent to which two related projects of two different cities can connect both information and methodologies to help form a richer understanding of Roman urbanization.

(AIA-NY Society Ira Haupt II Lecture)

November 12
Webinar (time and details forthcoming)

As always, please check your email or consult our website (http://aia-nysociety.org/events) for any last-minute program changes.

Shared Founder, Shared Goals

The AIA and the American School of Classical Studies at Athens

The American School of Classical Studies at Athens (ASCSA) and the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) share a founder, Charles Eliot Norton. Through him, they also share a goal:

> ...that, by the establishment of [the AIA], the interests of classical scholarship in America might be advanced, and especially that it might lead to the foundation of a school of classical studies in Athens ...

Among Norton's earliest supporters in this endeavor were Frederic J. de Peyster, a New York lawyer who had made four trips to Greece starting in 1867, and Thomas Ludlow of Yonkers, who had travelled with de Peyster in 1879–80.

Soon after its founding in 1881, the ASCSA's leadership expressed the hope of cooperation "with the AIA in conducting the exploration and excavation of classical sites."

The ASCSA's first excavations, in 1886 at the early theater at Thorikos in southern Attica, were indeed jointly funded by the AIA ($200) and the ASCSA ($100).

On a larger scale, and again a collaboration between AIA and the ASCSA, was Charles Waldstein's excavation at the Argive Heraion (Temple of Hera). Waldstein was born in New York and earned his degrees from Columbia and Heidelberg. Excavations at the Heraion took place between 1892–1895 and were published in two monumental volumes in 1902 and 1905.

Even in these early days of American archaeology in Greece, the AIA and ASCSA set their sights high. In the 1880s until 1890, there was considerable rivalry between the French and the Americans over the right to excavate at Delphi. The costs would be enormous due both to the sheer size of the site and the fact that a village would have to be relocated off the site. Norton set about raising the funds privately (supporters included Cornelius Vanderbilt II), but ultimately French diplomacy won out (perhaps related to the French government's reduction on the tariff on Greek raisins!), and the French have excavated at Delphi ever since.

Fig. 9. — Drum and Capital from Second Temple, as found behind the South Stoa.

Notwithstanding this setback, American archaeological research in Greece grew and still thrives as an enterprise of scholars driven by curiosity and supported in many different ways, as Norton envisioned, by the membership of local societies of the AIA. The work of the ASCSA and affiliated institutions grew to include ancient Corinth (starting in 1896) and the Athenian Agora (since 1931), Samothrace, Pylos, Gournia, Nemea, Isthmia, and countless others. The results of this work have informed and entertained AIA audiences for more than a century and continue to inspire future generations of the world's archaeologists.

- *Mark L. Lawall*
Academic Trustee of the AIA, 2014–20;
Chair of the Managing Committee of the ASCSA, 2017–present

Friends of the New York Society

The Friends of the New York Society is a group of professionals and lay archaeological enthusiasts who support all the New York Society's work and programming. Indeed, among other aspects, the support of the Friends is critical for the NY Society's scholarships to university students in NY City for their participation in an archaeological expedition. For their crucial support, the Friends benefit from special private programs at which they can mix with professionals and those of similar interests.

Last year the Friends enjoyed several exciting events in the Fall. We started with a visit to the Rubin Museum to see *Relics from an Ancient Stupa* and a special lecture at the Metropolitan Museum with Dr. Kim Benzel, Curator in Charge, Department of Near Eastern Art, who spoke about the exhibition *Alien Property* and the artifacts included.

The 2020–21 forthcoming season for the Friends of NY Society begins with a zoom online lecture in mid-September. Dr. Terence N. D'Altroy, the Loubat Professor of American Archaeology at Columbia University, will present a PowerPoint presentation and lecture on the World Heritage Site of Machu Picchu. On October 4, we have a special in-person (socially distanced) tour of the Persian garden in the Untermyer Garden Conservancy with the Conservancy President, Mr. Stephen Byrns. Later in October, we will have another online lecture with Dr. Edward González-Tennant who will give us a virtual tour of a project entitled *The Rosewood Massacre*, the incredible history of an African American town in Rosewood Florida. We will also have other special lecturers and a visit to the Metropolitan Museum in 2021.

To inquire about joining the Friends please contact
Heidi James-Fisher by email (hjames@studiolxiv.com) or by telephone (917-270-2786).

Virtual Archaeology

Teaching in the Time of Pandemic

That moment in mid-March, when all New York closed down, just happened to coincide with the start of my usual run of class visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, much to my dismay. One of the great glories of teaching archaeology in New York City is the superabundance of museums all around, so much so that for many of us, direct study of ancient artifacts and monuments becomes an indispensable cornerstone of our course instruction. A panel of Egyptian faience tiles or a Gudea statue, an Attic black-figure amphora or a Roman marble sarcophagus: the chance for students to examine these in person, at first hand, far surpasses any textbook illustration we can show them, or any PowerPoint image on a screen.

For some students, these group visits are revelatory first-time experiences in a museum, their very first chance to examine and discuss artworks and artifacts, together with others. Then they return on their own, for further work on individual writing projects, learning to develop an eye for close observation, to acquire skills in visual analysis and description. In recent semesters, as proof of these later visits, (far better than admission stickers or ticket stubs), each student includes a selfie with the assignment. It may be force of habit or social conditioning, but remarkably, everyone in their photos is smiling, everyone looks happy.

At the time of writing (late August), several museums are poised to reopen, under strict health and safety protocols, so we very much hope for the best. In thinking about how our pedagogy has evolved and changed in response to the quarantine, I dwell on this issue of museum access, because it represents such a particular, genuine asset of teaching here—as the study of material culture is at the heart of archaeologyand its loss is so keenly felt, on par with other ways our efforts are hamstrung at this time. We're unable to teach in classrooms, do research in libraries, inspect monuments in museums; in this past summer, very few of us were doing fieldwork (or in archives or laboratories) of any kind.

Museums closed, so we relied instead on the websites of museums, and they are hardly pale substitutes. Today, museum websites thrive as rich, encyclopedic resources in their own right; many museums now have also made their exhibition catalogues and other publications available online. When libraries are closed, and book research cannot be conducted in the customary fashion, digital publications reign supreme—as does the entire universe of online resources, ebooks, lectures, blogs, 3-D reconstructions, etc. It's ironic, though, how the whole rubric has flipped. Previously, our standard advice to students was: "please don't just look at the website – go to the museum and see the thing itself." Now, instead, we point them to their laptops, tablets and phones.

As for actual class time? Archaeology courses, taught with PowerPoint lectures plus discussion, tend to fare better than many disciplines in this respect since they're easily convertible to Zoom formats (or similar platforms). Well before the pandemic, most college-level courses already incorporated digital/online components in their curriculum, to some extent. Still, what made the sudden springtime switch such a Herculean task was the speed of conversion to all-online, and the steepness of the learning curve. We suffered no lack of assistance or instruction for the digital pivot: that was part of the problem. The endless influx of webinars, workshops, discussion boards, blogs, lists of lists—all well-intentioned, some useful—became a Lernaean hydra of advice: each one led to two (or six or a dozen!) more. The struggle was just to keep up.

For the fall, online prospects look better. Gone is the initial, daily panic—like teaching on the Titanic, or teaching in a new foreign language, as one colleague put it. By now, we've had time to prepare more properly, to acquaint ourselves with the capabilities and shortcomings of remote technologies.

Of course, we've attended even more instruction sessions; we've bought new webcams. Zoom meetings, once foreign to most, now are a fixture of everyday life.

We made it through last spring, we made our forced marches to the realm of remote learning, but core concerns about this form of education have not gone away. We mourn face-to-face meetings. Debate may continue as to how or whether remote learning represents a lesser alternative, an inferior solution. Certainly, though, it's here to stay, even if it's certainly not for everyone, but best befits a small demographic of intellectually mature, more advanced students, who have the motivation and self-discipline to work on their own. The power, the effectiveness of in-person instruction and the group experience cannot be overestimated. Otherwise, why in the world, under normal circumstances, would we insist on braving Chicago's polar vortex and Boston's bomb cyclone blizzard, to attend the Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America in January in person, to sit together in darkened rooms while colleagues read their papers to us? Will we ever do it this way again?

There looms ahead another semester or more of the new normal—disembodied teaching, via a small screen, connected to the internet, displaying postage-stamp images of our students' faces. Above all, our challenge will be this: what can we do to connect and engage, to overcome the distractions and ennui usually far more curable in the close confines of the classroom? A sharp reminder stays with us from last spring: however arduous pandemic teaching seemed for instructors, far worse were the hardships for the students.

A very great deal of the darker aspects of that time I haven't touch on at all in these comments; but neither have I mentioned some of the newly-discovered small victories and significant advantages of life online. A student's visit to the office is not so different on Zoom (though one may not be able to pull down that particular book from the shelf). Recorded class meetings now can be shared routinely, for review. Specialist colleagues from across the seas now easily can "drop in" to class for a twenty-minute cameo appearance. Lectures or symposia that once attracted an audience of dozens, now can number a worldwide participant group in three figures, or possibly four. As surely as this pandemic persists, so also will it continue to foster an unforgettable time of adaptation, innovation and of immense learning—perhaps some of it even devoted to archaeology.

- *Joanne Spurza*
Associate Professor, Department of Classical & Oriental Studies, Hunter College

First Year of Excavations on the Athenian Agora (June 1931) with Temple of Hephaistos in background. Read about the founding of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens in this issue.

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