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Message from the Director

At The Institute of Fine Arts, studies in archaeology and the ancient world remain an integral part of our academic and research programs. It is with great enthusiasm that I present to you Issue 11 of the *Archaeology Journal*, featuring notable discoveries, rigorous analysis, and student experiences that took place during the 2024 season. As you will read in these pages, our annual projects serve to improve our understanding of these ancient sites while granting IFA students practical, hands-on encounters with historical objects.

Our collaboration with other institutions has been central to the huge success of these programs as well. Bonna Wescoat reports on the reopening of the Archaeological Museum of Samothrace as well as preparations for an exhibition at the American School of Classical Studies this year. The Selinunte excavations continue to foster a crucial partnership with the Archaeological Park of Selinunte, Cave di Cusa, and Pantelleria. Other aspects beyond the excavations themselves are also in evidence, such as a significant archives project undertaken by the Abydos team to publish the last 30 years of the project's archaeological data. As you will also see, our projects are continually evolving and entering into new phases in research, like the Housing and Urban Living area of focus taken on by Aphrodisias.

Of course, the many accomplishments have been made possible due to the support of our community, including our generous donors, alumni, and participants in our public programs, in addition to the faculty, students, and colleagues who bring such crucial discoveries to light. I hope you will find these remarkable advances in research and education a testament to the strength of archaeology at the IFA.

Joan Kee

Judy and Michael Steinhardt Director

The Institute of Fine Arts



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Abydos, Egypt

Archives rather than fieldwork have been the location of recent excitement for the IFA's Abydos Expedition. In November of 2024, Laurel Bestock (IFA PhD 2007) became the Executive Director of the project, with Prof. Kathryn Howley serving as Associate Director. A reorganization of records in the archives in the basement of Duke house followed, and the start of a major push to publish the last 30 years of excavation data. With the help of students Kechu Huang (ISAW), Marisa Sanquini, and Aaren Zhou, the project began digitizing the archive into Kiosk, a software platform designed for archaeological recording. The results are already bearing fruit! The team started with the 1997 season, the first led by David O'Connor as a professor at the IFA, and immediately discovered that some of the unpublished data contained real surprises. Most importantly, that excavation season provided information that contradicted a long-standing and oft-repeated theory about the early royal monuments that have been at the heart of the IFA's Abydos research for decades. Previously, it had been accepted that each such monument had been deliberately and ritually "killed" shortly after the king who built it died. But the IFA's team in 1997 discovered solid evidence to the contrary: at least one such First Dynasty monument, known as the Western Mastaba, seems to have stood for centuries.

Both the particular finds of 1997 and the plans for digitization and publication were presented to a packed house at the annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt. The response of colleagues was overwhelming. In addition to this presentation and a lecture at the IFA in the winter, work has proceeded on preparing a "preliminary report" (delayed, but still necessary and appropriate) for 1997. Additional reports and monographs will follow.

The chance to involve IFA students and colleagues in a pivot for the IFA's Abydos project has been a delight. There is such an enormous wealth of unpublished material that is

of real significance for our understanding of ancient Egypt. For students to have not only access to these records but a hand in helping make them public is key. Thanks to the digitization into Kiosk, which means that old records are not just scanned but linked in ways that allow contextual recording, photographs, and drawings all to be queried together, we are opening new opportunities for research at the IFA and beyond. Already, scholars from other institutions have asked for and been granted access to this wealth of knowledge. And while a shift to publishing old data has been necessary and is exciting in its own right, it is far from an abandonment of the commitment to excavate at Abydos. Renewed relations with our Egyptian colleagues, as well as the archival work, have laid the grounds for field research for years to come.

Figure 1: A view of the areas under excavation in the 1997 season. The season focused on an early royal temple known as the "Western Mastaba." While that monument has been destroyed down to foundation level and was found only in footprint, its somewhat later cousin, the temple of Khasekhemwy that today goes by the name the Shunet ez Zebib, can be seen standing in the background.

Figure 2: Three generations of directors of the IFA's Abydos project. Right to left, Laurel Bestock, David O'Connor, and Matthew Adams.

Figure 3: Getting to work scanning records in the archives. Right to left: Kathryn Howley, Marisa Sanquini, Aaren Zhou, and Kechu Huang.

Figure 4: Digitizing records into Kiosk allows us to query the data ourselves, but also to give access to the data to anyone who wants it. The process of inputting records has been key to preparing both for publication and for future fieldwork.

Figure 5: Amongst the archival records digitized in 2025 are spectacularly detailed plans of the mudbrick architecture, nearly 5000 years old, drawn in 1997 by Andy Leung. This plan shows the bricking up of a doorway into the early royal temple known as the Western Mastaba.

Figure 6: Mudbrick debris from the destruction of the wall of the royal temple known as the Western Mastaba demonstrates that it was a standing monument far longer than previously assumed. While excavated in 1997, these unpublished data were a surprise that was a bit of a jolt in Egyptology.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

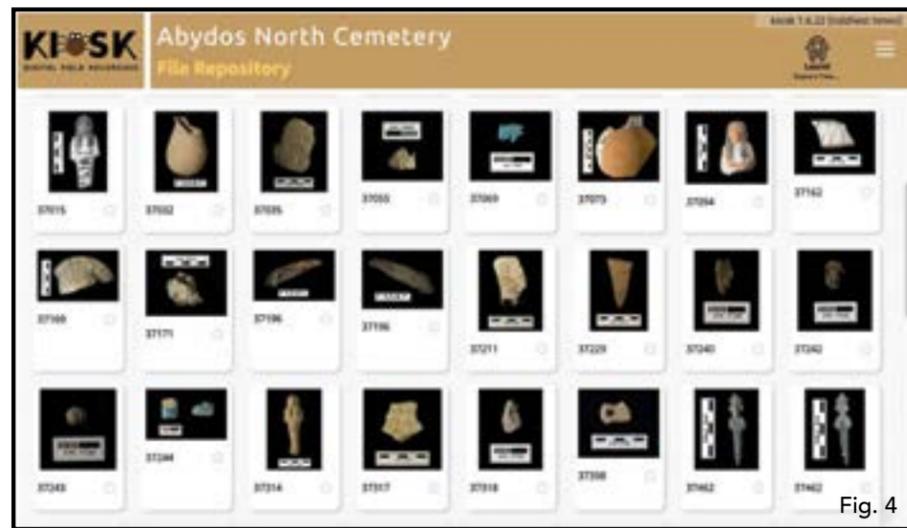


Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Aphrodisias, Turkey

The 2024 Aphrodisias season was rich in interesting and unexpected discoveries – not least in the House of Kybele and the Governor’s House, both parts of a new research focus on Housing and Urban Living.

Zeus. The first surprise came early in the season. A colossal bearded marble head (height: 66 cm) was discovered northwest of the Temple of Aphrodite. It stands forward in high relief from a moulded console or bracket behind.

Hairstyle, beard, and diadem, identify the subject as Zeus, an important local god in the city. The brilliant drill work in the hair and beard are those of a top Aphrodisian workshop. Portrait sculpture techniques were used to give the classic image of Zeus a contemporary effect – of a real, breathing divinity.

Kybele House. The House of Kybele project, begun 2022, is investigating a city neighbourhood inside the northeast City Wall. It includes a warehouse, workshops, a street, and a restaurant, as well as the house itself. In 2024, a remarkable complex was excavated behind the apsidal reception room.

It consists of a long, vaulted underground chamber, built of high-quality brickwork. At its east end, an entranceway led down into a series of underground chambers and tunnels that followed a U-shaped route around and beneath the basement chamber. The tunnel walls were deliberately encrusted with thick sinter to give a cave-like appearance.

Whatever was going on in this chamber was still in full operation through the 5th and 6th centuries and into the early 7th. The finds show that the activities were of a committed pagan character.

Several high-quality small marble cult figures of 5th-century manufacture were found in a thick assemblage against the north wall of the chamber and strewn violently across the floor: Aphrodite, Apollo, Asklepios, Athena, and Kybele. The mother goddess Kybele was present in no less than three of the finest figures. Attendant apparatus included copper-alloy lamps, miniature ceramic lamps, ceramic vessels, copper-alloy jugs, and many small stands for candles and incense-burners. The evidence for a private pagan cult complex functioning into the early 7th century is difficult to go around.

Governor’s House. In coordination with new geophysical prospection in the northern part of the site, excavation in 2024 in the Governor’s House, next to the Sanctuary of Aphrodite, explored the peristyle at the eastern edge of the property and the range of rooms on its northern edge. The date of construction of the surviving house after c. AD 300 was confirmed, and new evidence showed extensive re-modelling after c. AD 600.

Other projects. There was also work on the conservation of the Tetrapylon, anastylosis in the Sebasteion, documentation of the Temple of Aphrodite, conservation of the Place of Palms, and the study of bones, ceramics, coins, glass, inscriptions, marbles, and mosaics. A major new monograph was published, *Aphrodisias XIV: The Place of Palms: An Urban Park at Aphrodisias* (Wiesbaden 2024).

Figure 1: Colossal head of Zeus

Figure 2: IFA student Emma Capaldi takes survey points

Figure 3: House of Kybele, excavated parts

Figure 4: IFA student Claire Davis at work in House of Kybele

Figure 5: Small marble cult figure of Kybele

Figure 6: Tetrapylon pediment conserved

Figure 7: North Building of Sebasteion, under restoration

Figure 8: IFA student Yilu Zhuang sorts ceramics

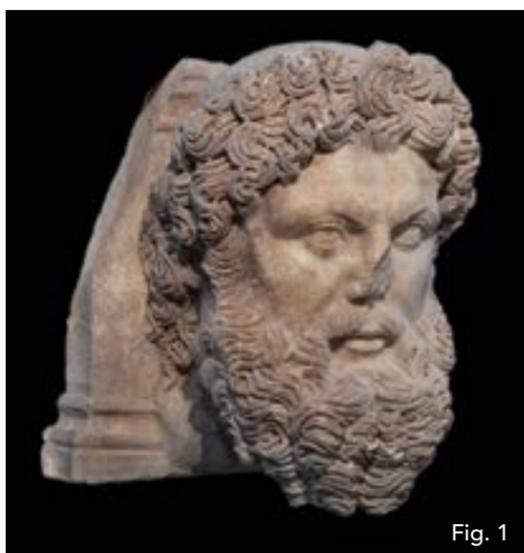


Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

Samothrace, Greece



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

On Samothrace, we conducted the final season of our five-year excavation permit with very interesting results. At the city wall, we uncovered several more cuttings for stelai at the newly discovered West Gate. Clearly a place of high communication, the West Gate must mark the sacred passage connecting the sanctuary to the city. Within the sanctuary, we confirmed the existence of an unusual structure with large plaster moldings to the east of the Hieron, evidence for which was found in the last week of James McCredie's excavation season in 1995. On the western side of the sanctuary, on the Stoa Plateau, we found more of the high-quality Attic painted pottery that was first found there in the 1960s and early '70s, including joining fragments that likely belong to a spectacular bell krater by an artist near the Pronomos Painter.

Supervisor of Excavations Andrew Ward (IFA PhD) undertook the challenging excavation of Space K in the area of the dining rooms, finding its floor level (and some very fine pottery) on the last day of excavation. It was an exciting year for the conservators, including Elizabeth Torres (IFA MS/MA candidate), as many types of objects in diverse materials crossed their paths. Meghan Doyle (IFA MA) was instrumental in working for two seasons to uncover the West Gate and other passages connecting city to sanctuary. Jasmine Smith (IFA PhD candidate) worked with the registrar, cataloguing objects and documenting the excavation. Rebecca Salem (IFA PhD candidate) completed photogrammetric models of the trenches, Tower A, and fragments of sculpture for a project reconnecting the pedimental sculptures of the Hieron now divided between Samothrace and Vienna.

In addition to excavation, we continued our geospatial survey of the area of the sanctuary and ancient city. As part of the Samothrace Lidar Project, we conducted our first ground-truthing season to verify the anthropogenic and natural features this remarkable technology now makes visible.

We were joined by excellent colleagues and students from several other institutions, including Emory University, Princeton University, Case Western Reserve University, Brown University, Western Ontario University, Free University Brussels, Cardiff University, Texas Tech, and the Universities of Ioannina, Maryland College Park, Missouri, North Carolina Chapel Hill, Notre Dame, and Pennsylvania.

In early July, the Archaeological Museum of Samothrace reopened with great celebration. Our team provided most of the graphic material that now accompanies the displays.

Concurrently, co-curators Bonna Wescoat, Ellen Archie (IFA MA; PhD candidate, Emory University), and Rebecca Salem (IFA PhD candidate), with the help of Dimitris Matsas and Maggie Popkin (IFA PhD), are preparing the exhibition, *Imag(in)ing Samothrace: From Homer to the HoloLens*, which will open in the Makriyannis Wing of the American School of Classical Studies on February 20th, 2025. It will be accompanied by the symposium, "Three-Dimensional Experiences of Ancient Environments," co-sponsored by the American School of Classical Studies and Case Western Reserve University.

Figure 1: New Display featuring the Hall of Choral Dancers, Archaeological Museum of Samothrace.

Figure 2: 2024 American Excavations Samothrace team.

Figure 3: Aerial view of structures to the east of the Stoa (seen to the left), 2024 excavation.

Figure 4: Orthophotography and Lidar imagery of the region of Christos, Samothrace.

Figure 5: Joining fragments of an Attic red-figure bell krater.

Figure 6: American Excavations Samothrace team members who studied at the IFA, Left to right: Elizabeth Torres, Meghan Doyle, Rebecca Salem, Andrew Farinholt Ward, Ellen Archie, and Jasmine Smith.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Selinunte, Sicily



Fig. 1

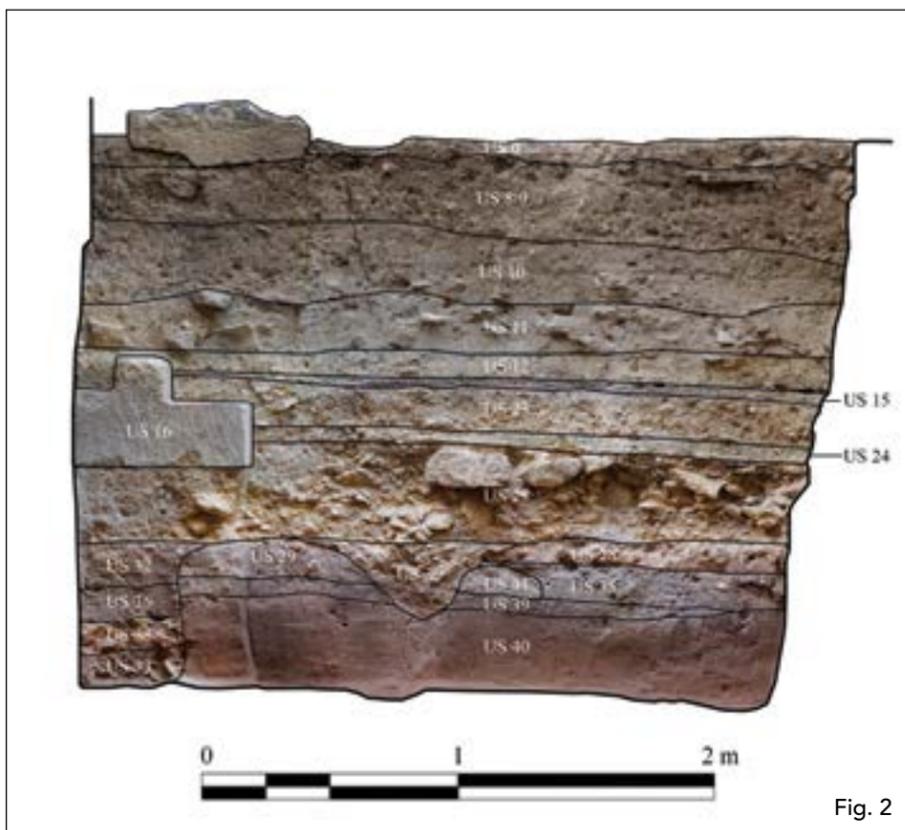


Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

In 2024, archaeological research in the main urban sanctuary of Selinunte (Figure 1) conducted by the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University and the University of Milan, in agreement with the Archaeological Park of Selinunte, Cave di Cusa, and Pantelleria, took place from May 26 to July 12. The campaign involved sixty collaborators and students and, thanks to a renewed agreement, was able to operate in several areas of one of the most monumental cultic complexes of the Archaic and Classical Greek world.

Excavation activities focused on the cella of Temple R (SAS T and SAS Y), the southern side of the sanctuary's peribolos wall (SAS V), and the north-western corner of the sacred area (SAS W).

In the cella of Temple R, work continued in SAS T, opened in 2023 at the northeast corner of the temple, and began in SAS Y, whose excavation will be completed in 2025. In 2024, SAS T was excavated down to bedrock where possible, allowing a detailed investigation of layers associated with the construction of Temple R (Figure 2). The emptying of the foundation trenches confirmed the temple's construction date in the transitional phase between Middle and Late Corinthian (580–570 BCE). A large posthole (c. 0.60 m in diameter), part of two parallel rows inside the cella, can be related to lifting and hoisting devices used during the construction of the superstructure. Ritual actions connected with the building process were also identified, including the deposition of an iron spearhead associated with abundant faunal remains.

The excavation further documented layers belonging to the first fifty years of the settlement of Selinunte (ca. 628–570 BCE). A brown sandy walking surface associated with the earliest Greek occupation yielded substantial ceramic material dating from the late seventh to the early sixth century BCE. Above this surface, a short north-south stretch of wall with a superstructure of rammed raw clay mixed with ash and vegetal fibers was identified, comparable in technique to structures previously found before the façade and in the adyton of Temple R.

Along the southern side of the peribolos wall (SAS V, Sector 6), excavation clarified the organization of a Punic-period stoa for commercial activities built along Plateia SB and reusing the peribolos wall as its façade. One plastered room of the stoa was uncovered, with traces of painted plaster and a clay floor. At its center, a circular well was discovered, probably constructed and filled in the Hellenistic period. The well yielded material ranging from the Archaic to the fourth century BCE, including slag and tools related to bronze, copper, and glass working, vessels and shells reused as containers for red ochre, and a large painted terracotta pinax in the shape of a lotus (Figure 3).

The most significant results came from SAS W, near the north-western corner of the sanctuary. Here, three phases were identified: a post-Hellenistic occupation, a multi-phase Hellenistic occupation rich in finds (including coins, figurines, and jewelry), and the Archaic phase corresponding to the construction of the peribolos wall. The latter included the discovery of a monumental access to the sanctuary, formed by a right-angled bend in the peribolos wall and a gate with housings for large hinges. This entrance, to be fully excavated next season, represents the best-documented access to the sanctuary to date (Figure 4).

Finally, systematic cleaning north of Temple D revealed numerous Archaic and Classical buildings, including a small temple-like oikos (Figure 5) and rooms for ritual banquets, demonstrating that the northern sector of the sanctuary was far more monumental and ritually significant than previously assumed.

Figure 1: Main urban sanctuary of Selinunte, viewed from the north. Drone photo by Filippo Pisciotta.

Figure 2: SAS T: South section with indication of the stratigraphic units. Orthophoto by Andrea Bertaiola and Agnese Lojacono.

Figure 3: Terracotta, polychrome pinax from SAS V. Photo by Pietro Raimondo Giardini.

Figure 4: SAS W at the end of season. View from the south. Photo by Kate Minniti.

Figure 5: Oikos in the area north of Temple D. Photo by Rebecca Salem.



Fig. 5

Student Spotlight



M. Claire Davis

In 2024, I joined the IFA-Oxford Aphrodisias excavations for my third season, working as an archaeologist and researcher. Before attending the IFA for my master's and Ph.D., I had not participated in archaeological fieldwork, and Aphrodisias was an exceptional place to start this aspect of my academic career. I excavated at the Kybele House during my three seasons and was able to see how an archaeological project develops over time. In my first year, I learned the fundamental skills necessary for good archaeological work, but each season made it clear that excavation is a constant learning process. Even when working at the same location over multiple years, the stratigraphy always presents novel issues and questions you have not dealt with before. Because the House of Kybele was partially excavated in the past, my work there also highlighted the importance of good record-keeping; what seems obvious or unimportant today might not be in the future. Aphrodisias is ideal for anyone interested in legacy archaeological data. The site documentation offers opportunities to explore how processes and interests have changed, and the depots are full of object-based projects awaiting the right researcher. I have been lucky enough to continue working with this legacy material outside of the excavation season. As the Aphrodisias archive assistant, I helped with ongoing efforts to digitize the thousands of records held at the IFA, and I am currently working on a project on the site's mosaics.

My seasons at Aphrodisias have been invaluable experiences, introducing me to fieldwork and to a network of international scholars and Ph.D. students who have enriched my work and become lifelong friends. In a time when our attention is pulled in a million different directions every day, each eight-week season reminded me of the value of hard work, long-term focus, and the simpler joys of life.



Cleaning architectural fragments for end-of-season photography in the House of Kybele warehouse.



Jasmine Smith

During the summer of 2024, I participated in the American Excavations at Samothrace as a member of the registrar team. This was my first time working on an excavation in Greece, so it was great to be able to see the types of material culture coming into the registrar's office. As a registrar, I helped keep track of the finds that came into the office daily from the various trenches being excavated across the site. Keeping track of everything was no small task and required my two fellow registrars and me to create systems and documentation for keeping the office organized. Beyond these organizational tasks, a normal day in the registrar's office included washing pottery and pulling finds from previous seasons that were in storage so they could be studied by specialists. One of our big projects during the 2024 season was to create new labels for the storage crates from previous seasons. In doing so, we updated over 500 records in the project's object database. One of the most rewarding aspects of working as a registrar was the opportunity to practice my interests in the organization and management of archaeological data. Further, it provided an opportunity to speak with most of the teams working in the field and see what they were finding every day. Our office was also connected to the conservation lab, so the registrars were able to see our conservation colleagues working their magic throughout the day. I am grateful to have worked with such an amazing team, and super grateful for the support of the IFA in allowing me to have this experience.



Jasmine in front of architectural remains at the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, Samothrace, Greece.

Student Spotlight

Alexa Kline

I joined the Selinunte archaeological project in 2024 as a member of the conservation team while enrolled in the IFA Dual Degree Program (MS/MA) in conservation. The program's integration of archaeological research and conservation practice was a key factor in my decision, while Selinunte's deep ties to the Phoenician and Punic worlds and its position within broader eastern Mediterranean networks strongly resonated with my background in ancient Near Eastern archaeology.

As a conservator, my responsibilities include the documentation, stabilization, and long-term preservation of unearthened artifacts. Much of this work takes place in the conservation lab, but at times occurs directly on site, where the conservation team is called to extract objects rendered fragile by exposure and highly vulnerable to handling. What I find most impressive at Selinunte is the high level of interdisciplinary collaboration: specialists share expertise openly, all perspectives are carefully considered, and substantial work is completed under strict time constraints, reflecting the dedication of both supervisors and students. Over two excavation seasons, I had the opportunity to work with materials spanning centuries, from the Archaic foundations of Selinunte's acropolis through the Punic period. Being entrusted with the care of objects that have not seen the light of day for more than two millennia is a unique and humbling experience, one that brings a profound awareness of time. I am immensely grateful to be part of this team, working alongside extraordinary people at such an exceptional site.

Figure 1: Conservator Alexa Kline cleaning a ceramic fragment in the conservation lab.

Figure 2: Conservators Amalia Criscione and Alexa Kline extracting an iron knife in Temple R.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

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The Institute's Archaeology Excavation Sites



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