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ARCHAEOLOGY

**VOLUME 3 / 2019**

*Topic of the Year: Museum Archaeology*



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# *NEWS*



# In Jordan, public archaeology is a solid reality

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## Abstract

31 January 2019

Public archaeology was the protagonist at the recent International Conference on Jordan's History and Archaeology.

Open Access Translated by: James Bishop

Keywords: public archaeology, Jordan, ICHAJ



Fig.1. The booklet of the conference  
(photo: Marta Lorenzon).

The 14th International Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan (ICHAJ) has just finished in Florence. For a whole week a fantastic and heterogeneous group of Jordanian and foreign researchers, gathered together by the University of Florence and the Jordanian Department of Antiquities (DOA), have been discussing aspects of Jordan's archaeology, and the conservation and development of its cultural heritage.

## Culture in times of crisis

The conference's title, Culture in Crisis: Flows of People, Artifacts and Ideas, prompted the participants to consider both the current political reality and the progressive drying up of cultural debate – which we cultural heritage specialists often have to confront and fight against.

In the opening session, held in the Salone dei Cinquecento in Palazzo Vecchio, the discourses

of the speakers – including the organizer Guido Vannini, professor of medieval archaeology in Florence, the authorities and Prince El Hassan Bin Talal, under whose patronage this event is being held – highlighted how cultural heritage enhancement represents an interdisciplinary and multicultural job opportunity that is often underestimated.

At the conference, the interventions concentrated on four main areas: Jordan's history and archaeology, public archaeology and sustainable development, scientific methods applied to archaeology, and Jordan in history. The sessions presented the recent developments of ongoing projects, numerous perspectives on the interpretation of archaeological finds, and different methods of analysing and developing historical and archaeological heritage.

Some of the sessions were particularly striking for their innovative approaches to the contemporary cultural landscape. In particular, the presentations regarding 'dark heritage' and the relationship between public archaeology and sustainable development struck me as emblematic and concrete examples of archaeology's importance for moving beyond the boundaries of 'cultural heritage' to deal with matters of social and economic importance.

## Italian archaeology in Jordan

The conference was also the occasion of the inauguration of the exhibition The Land of

Jordan: an Italian Perspective, which presents Italian archaeological projects in Jordan, with panels explaining their importance and history, archaeological finds and 3D reconstructions. The display was designed as a travelling exhibition, and after Italy it will begin its journey to Jordan.

I was delighted to see the progress of the numerous Italian missions in Jordan, especially (as a former student of Florence University) the Florentine ones, continuing the long tradition of collaboration between our two countries. In addition, I was impressed by the 3D reconstructions of some of the finds on display, which are designed to be used also by visitors with disabilities.

### **Cultural heritage development**

The conference was attended by archaeologists, art historians, architects and conservation specialists, some who have been

working in Jordan for decades and others who have only recently started projects in the country. The 14<sup>th</sup> ICHAJ was a valuable experience both for me and for my current research centre, CoE Ancient Near Eastern Empires of the University of Helsinki, as a forum for sharing ideas and projects, and identifying possible future research directions.

Notwithstanding the great variety of presentations, the interventions were linked by a clear common denominator, namely the enhancement of Jordanian heritage as a starting point for integration and overcoming the cultural heritage crisis. Probably, given the continuing cuts in culture funding, not all projects will achieve significant success, but together they can hope to tip the balance in the right direction.

It will be interesting to see in three years time, at the next ICHAJ conference, whether culture will still be 'in crisis' or whether we are slowly overcoming these difficulties.

# Classical Pop: a surprising exhibition

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## Abstract

12 February 2019

*In Rome in Palazzo Massimo and Crypta Balbi, a beautiful, curious but also refined exhibition. Classical Pop is the 'classic' for everyone.*

Open Access  Translated by: James Bishop

 Keywords: exhibition, copies, pop, Palazzo Massimo, Giovanni Volpato



*Fig.1. An installation by Giovanni Volpato (photo: Teodoro Teodoracopulos).*

It's called Classical Pop and keeps its promises. It is a beautiful exhibition - in Rome at Palazzo Massimo and the Crypta Balbi - curated by Mirella Serlorenzi with Marcello Barbanera and Antonio Pinelli - which explains how serial artistic production is not only modern, but timeless. We've always been 'pop', if by this we mean artforms that have made seriality their paradigm. Since the world began, there have always been Andy Warhols who have been standard-bearers for 'technical reproducibility'.

And the whole show is truly 'pop'. At Palazzo Massimo especially, colourful installations show ancient works as you've never seen them before. Placed in a more dynamic context than the traditional uninspiring setting, they reveal

all their 'pop' soul. Because they were also made in series, starting from the many objects in bronze or clay - even refined ones - that were made using the same mould.

## Long live copies!

Of course there was no shortage of true masterpieces, unique works, but what about all the copies that the Romans made of Greek masterpieces to decorate their villas and gardens? Just like today, when Americans and Chinese order marble copies of Michelangelo's David. So in order to understand what the (long lost) ancient originals were really like, we moderns found ourselves putting together what remains of the copies. Myron's famous

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Discobolus – on display – helps us to grasp this mechanism.

However, the Discobolus also serves to remind us that before ancient statues were correctly identified, some copies of them were interpreted and restored as something else. In fact, other body parts were added to some Discobolus statues before its correct identification at the end of the eighteenth century, obtaining figures such as one of the sons of Niobe killed by the arrows of Apollo and Artemis. In short, the torso of a tense athletic figure was rotated to obtain a dying one.

What about all those modern masterpieces inspired by antiquity? Especially after Johann Winckelmann decreed the superiority of ancient Greek art, which we can but imitate. So what about Antonio Canova? But not only; the same images and the same compositional schemes, perhaps rotated, adapted or updated, have come down to the present and will perhaps never abandon us.

People flock to the installations at Palazzo Massimo. They're amazed, have fun, and take selfies. They certainly appreciate the general sense of an exhibition, but perhaps not its different facets. Too short a break between one show and another means not leaving enough time to admire the works and read the panels that explain their meaning. And they are, after all, panels written in a very complex language.

### **Volpato, father of Classical Pop**

But the exhibition's true meaning is actually captured at the Crypta Balbi where the discovery of the workshop of Giovanni Volpato, the inventor of the modern souvenir, is narrated. This is where exhibition took its cue: archaeological excavation, conducted

during restoration work on a building in Via Urbana in Rome, brought to light the remains of a porcelain workshop, which in the late 18th century made reproductions of ancient objects and modern creations inspired by antiquity.

Of course Volpato produced his souvenirs for wealthy Grand Tour clients, and therefore – although made in series – they were extremely refined. And Volpato also received orders from kings and emperors; he knew how and what to propose and produce so that everyone could have a little taste of ancient Italy in their own home. His strength was due to his good taste, as well as having become a reference point for the Rome of his time. It was he who pointed Canova in the right direction.

The circle closes: with Canova and Volpato, one exhibition refers to another. But the Crypta Balbi halls are truly fascinating. With figurines and waste trimmings found in the factory, drawings by Volpato himself and Piranesi, and other porcelains and various objects and furnishings in series by Richard Ginori and Fornasetti, inspired by antiquities. And with videos and installations that magnify everything.

Here, however, there is something of a gap between the excellent videos and the panels, which are a bit cryptic for most. Furthermore, the exhibition is not advertised inside the museum, so visitors tend to come across it by chance. And the location of the Via Urbana workshop is not indicated on any map, which would have been very useful. In short, it seems that in both locations the exhibition curators did not put themselves in the visitors' shoes quite enough. They concentrated on telling and surprising, neglecting certain details. However, the exhibition's aim is brilliantly achieved; just a little more attention would have sufficed.

# Sea of Hope: a graphic novel that links together ancient and modern migrations

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## Abstract

10 September 2019

A work by pupils of the Liceo Pilo Albertelli in Rome. And on October 3, Remembrance Day for those who died at sea, the film that tells how it was made will be presented

Open Access Translated by: James Bishop

Keywords: graphic novel, Liceo Pilo Albertelli in Rome, migration, hospitality, integration

## Far-off voices from the sea

“Amal, we need to talk... The ships!... What are we doing here? Are they taking us all on a trip?”

Strange voices speaking Arabic, Latin and ancient Greek echo from the ancient walls of the Liceo Pilo Albertelli in Rome, in the centre of Rione Monti, a stone's throw from the church of Santa Maria Maggiore. Whose are they and where do they come from? They come from the pages of the story of Amal and Damis, two young Syrian refugees who ended up on the desks of Class III E – where I teach – because they are the protagonists of the graphic novel *Sea of Hope*: a fictional story (but not entirely), written and illustrated by the children.

She: *Amal*, her name means ‘hope’ in Arabic, set out in 2012 from Homs, one of the cities most affected by the war, leaving her boyfriend Nidal, who had become a fundamentalist. In search of a better life, on her own she followed the terrible, but now familiar steps of the journey made by Syrians seeking asylum in Europe: from home to Kobane, then to Turkey, then crossing the Bosphorus in an inflatable boat to reach Greece, from there to Albania and then again by sea to Italy.

After staying in a CAS hostel in Puglia, Amal falls under the sway of local organized crime and is forced to do hard labour in the fields. She is rescued by the police and transferred to Rome where she is helped and supported in her studies

by the Baobab Centre; she graduates from university and publishes her autobiographical story *Sea of Hope*.

Amal's tale is just in writing, but the story of the young male protagonist is a comic strip.

He: *Damis*, kidnapped on the beach of Latakia in Syria by a naval ‘joint venture’ of Syrians, Egyptians and Cypriots specialized in finding slave labour, is transported by sea to the island of Delos.

In the largest market in the ancient world, Damis is bought by *Philostratos*, a wealthy Italian merchant, and shipped to the port of Puteoli (Pozzuoli). In Italy, in the company of other young slaves, the little boy reaches a rustic villa near Rome and after months of continuous work, he dies, worn out by exhaustion.

Two parallel stories: both Amal and Damis departed from Syria and arrived in Italy. Two journeys distant in time, one set in the present, the other in the 1st century AD, but close by in space, following routes across the Mediterranean that have remained unchanged over the centuries.

## History at school

*Sea of Hope* is the result of our participation in the Good Sense competition organized with foresight by Giuseppe and Bianca Laterza in the 2017-18 school year for nine state schools in Turin, Rome and Bari. The theme: migration, hospitality and integration.

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Fig. 1. A strip of the graphic novel *Sea of Hope* (Liceo Pilo Albertelli in Rome).

Our commitment took the form of creative writing based on actual events, interlinking the stories on two parallel levels: one geographical, coinciding in the vicissitudes of Damis and Amal, and one chronological, completely different with regard to the 'story date' which differs by centuries for these two events, but alike with respect to 'narration time', because the duration of the two protagonists' journeys is similar.

Months of preparation were needed to teach this recent history; I suggested articles, monographs, documentary films and websites to the students. In particular, we made use of data provided by the Open Migration website in order to make Amal's account as realistic as possible, while concerning the theme of forced labour, we had to pay homage to Alessadro Leogrande, journalist and writer who died in 2017 who always fought for those at the bottom of the pile, everywhere in the world, and whom we would have liked so much to have known.

For the ancient part, along the lines of my PhD thesis in history, the pupils reconstructed Mediterranean trade and created the story's main characters by reading Latin and Greek literary sources and inscriptions.

The identity of *Philostratus* of Ascalona/*Neapolis*, one of the key characters, was based on the Delos inscriptions referring to the noted *mercator/negotiator* and his family; the names of all the characters were taken from Greek inscriptions from Rome relating to slaves. The

*instrumentum* was studied and added to the story to make the narrative even more realistic (e.g. the *bulla* worn by *Damis*, inspired by CIL XV, II 1, 7194); foreigners' Roman funerary inscriptions were used to write the epitaph of the young protagonist.

Furthermore, every aspect of the comic strip has a historical basis: the occasion of the protagonist's kidnapping is referred to on the calendar of Caere, of which there is a copy in the Museum of Roman Civilization; the representation of the cargo ships is inspired by the well-known Sidon sarcophagus; the landscapes of Delos (the Agora of the Italians, the Syriac temple, the Lions' Road) derive from photographs of the sites; the skyline of the port of Puteoli is that engraved on a glass flask, a souvenir from Odemira; the prayer said by the young protagonist *Damis* is a quote from Apuleius's *Metamorphosis*.

### Nearby voices in the sea

At the end of this path, the pupils have acquired two things: the first is a better knowledge of some economic aspects of the ancient world, and the awareness that immigration is a long-term phenomenon and not just a current emergency as today's accounts would have us believe. The second is that many of the foreigners we meet in the street have taken part in a terrible journey inspired by hope, like Amal.

The graphic novel has entailed many pleasant experiences: meeting the graphic artist Takoua

Ben Mohamed, an expert in intercultural issues; making the Rai Scuola Special Film - Look Yourself in the Eyes, the Common Sense Project; a beautiful presentation in the Roman bookshop L'altracittà, and especially the theatrical interpretation by foreign children of the CIES Matemù Theatre Laboratory in Rome, shot by our partner film company Hirya Lab.

Thus these young actors' real travel stories came into contact with the 'literary' ones of Amal and Damis. History, ancient as well as modern, is also the result of connection between stories and this is to everyone's advantage.

All this work may be seen in a film by Hirya and will be discussed at a round table at Palazzo Merulana in Rome at 15:00 on 3rd October, remembrance day for immigration victims. In order not to forget them, we will inaugurate a room in the new library of our school dedicated

to Mediterranean victims, with popular support and strongly sustained for years by our director Antonietta Corea, now achievable thanks to 'Monitor 440' funding from MIUR and MiBAC.

Our work concludes with the words of Amal: "Listening to my voice pronouncing words in another language, I think I can tell my story to the world – and with it those of millions of other people, with different itineraries, languages and diverse destinies, who over the centuries have made similar crossings in search of peace. Now they are a mute chorus of voices that populate the earth, the sky and the sea. A proverb from my beloved, unhappy country says: *نم لـضفا ملوقتس ام نـا اذكتم تـنك اذا طقفو مـلكة: ...ت وكسلا* 'Speak only when you're sure that what you'll say is more beautiful than silence'. Now I'm certain that I'll beat the silence with that beautiful refrain".



# A dive into the blue: fighting autism at Paestum Museum

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## Abstract

13 May 2019

*Stimulating reactions and feelings in autistic people with a visit to a museum depository: it was called A dive into the blue and was a truly innovative project carried out in 2019 at the Paestum Archaeological Museum, every third Sunday of the month.*

 Open Access  Translated by: James Bishop

 **Keywords:** autism, children, Paestum, museum deposits, archaeology and wellbeing



Fig.1. A frame of the initiative (photo: Cilento4all).

“Hi, I’m an archaeologist. Would you like to come with me? I’ll give you a notebook that will be very useful. Right, let’s go!”

Thus began the visits to the deposits of the Archaeological Museum of Paestum run by A dive into the blue, a project for people with autism. It was organized by Cilento4all in collaboration with specialists from Naples Parthenope University for planning the visit itineraries and Naples Federico II University for monitoring. It was a new and different idea that, by means of precise and constant evaluation of the results, was designed to continually evolve and improve. And to understand better the benefits that autistic children derive from contact with works of art.

## The beauty of the depository

We at Archeostorie, who contributed to these daily visits to the deposits of the Paestum Museum, are really delighted that these storerooms were chosen for A dive into the blue. But we are also curious to understand why. Isn’t it more difficult to wander around the narrow corridors of the deposits than through the museum’s display halls?

“In truth, the museum rooms are too large and dispersive, while the deposits have the advantage of being a more intimate environment”, explained Giovanni Minucci of Cilento4all to Archeostorie. “And certain features, among the many chosen for the daily tour, seemed perfect for our purpose”.

Hence, every third Sunday of the month a handful of autistic children, each in the company of an expert (the self-styled archaeologist), went down the stairs and ventured into Paestum Museum’s underbelly: its deposits. They had the run of them for about 50 minutes. In their notebook, the children first find a map of the deposits indicating the ‘stations’ where they can carry out activities: inviting them to look for the individual stations, the guide tests their sense of orientation.

## **Find the object!**

At each 'station' the child is given an object and told: let's go and look for it! For example a fluffy dog – which might be found somewhere on the frescoed walls of the Finanza Tomb, after which the guide tells the stories recounted on the tomb. At the end of each station the child is asked to choose the images they liked and stick them into their notebook, and to evaluate the overall experience with emoticons: I liked it, it makes me cry, it makes me angry, it scares me.

In this playful way, we want to capture the kids' attention, motivate them as much as possible, and ensure that their attention remains high

throughout the visit. Thanks to the notebook, objective data are also obtained on the results of the visit and these, combined with observations made on the spot by a specialist, are used to make a general assessment of the project's effectiveness.

“And if the child reaches the tomb at the last station, and recognizes the same dog on its wall as the one in the Finanza Tomb, bingo! They've made the connection! This is the greatest satisfaction”, exclaims Minucci. At the end of all this effort, there's also a nice reward: a short potsherd decoration workshop. And the designs that come out are really interesting.



