



Art Conservation *and working together*

With a major in objects, a minor in painted surfaces, plans for an independent study in furniture, and pre-program experience that included work as a mason, Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC) Fellow Nick Pedemonti clearly has many interests. He was able to pursue a number of them this summer during an eight-week internship in Italy that exposed him to many different facets of archaeology and archaeological conservation.

A highlight of Nick's internship was spending three weeks at an excavation site near the city of Alghero on the northwestern coast of Sardinia, where he worked with renowned conservator Roberto Nardi and others from the Centro di Conservazione Archeologica (Center for Archaeological Conservation). A primary goal was to continue excavating a large mosaic floor depicting the head of Medusa that was uncovered last summer at the Roman Villa of Sant'Imbenia and prepare it for transport to the Center's conservation labs near Rome. Nick, whose duties also included helping to open the site for the season and assisting with project management, supervised undergraduate students from the University of Delaware and Randolph College in Virginia. The students helped excavate and prepare the mosaic for transport, a process that involved consolidating and facing fragments with a reversible adhesive and cotton cloth. Each fragment was placed onto a board using clay to stabilize uneven surfaces of the fragments. This gave the mosaics temporary support to insure safe transport. The mosaic is ultimately destined to be on exhibition at a new museum in Alghero.

While at the villa, Nick was able to put his masonry skills to use as he spent two days applying mortar to a crack in a Roman vault. The mortar Nick used, similar to that in use when the vault was built, was prepared by mixing naturally hydraulic lime, lime putty, sand, and water with crushed and pulverized terracotta produced and found at the site. Nick also used traditional application techniques by adding broken fragments of local terracotta to bulk and stabilize the thick mortar joint to prevent cracking during the curing process.

Much of the work at the Roman Villa and the nearby Nuragic village at Sant'Imbenia, which was inhabited between the 14th and 7th century BCE, was extensively documented. Nardi, a passionate advocate of sharing information about conservation, will use imagery, plans, and videos to continue promoting the significance of cultural heritage sites and their preservation needs.



ARTC Spotlight—September 2013

The University of Delaware's Art Conservation Department educates and trains professional conservators in the treatment, analysis, documentation, and preventive conservation of individual artifacts and entire collections. Our students are powerful public spokespersons for cultural heritage and its preservation. For more news about our students and other department activities visit our web site at <http://www.artcons.udel.edu>.

Top: WUDPAC Fellow Nick Pedemonti and a team of UD undergraduate students inspecting joints at the Roman vault; Inset: The UD team organizes their findings. Above: Nick wraps fragments of fresco in poultice to weaken calcareous deposits and encrustations; Inset: Part of the Roman ceiling fresco during treatment. Left: A fragmented section of the ceiling fresco being prepared for mortar consolidation, and a schematic of the fragmented fresco. Photos: Maria Giovanna Perrottu (above) and Centro di Conservazione Archeologica.

