

A Quaint & Curious Volume

Essays in Honor of John J. Dobbins

edited by

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Preface: J.J. Dobbins e il Foro di Pompei

Gli anni passati, ormai trascorsi senza possibilità di ritorno, si presentano talvolta agli occhi della memoria con forti contrasti, vividi talvolta, oscuri altra volta. Così i visi, i personaggi, gli avvenimenti, i luoghi: obbedendo ad una logica della quale non è mai immediato afferrare la *ratio*. In questo gioco di memoria talvolta potremmo quasi toccare con mano qualcosa di quel passato. Mentre sappiamo, anche se non lo ricordiamo più, che qualcosa di diverso è accaduto: ma per noi, oggi, è come se non fosse stato, tanto pesante è la coltre dell'oblio che, capricciosamente, si è adagiata su parti della nostra vita passata. Ed è così che degli anni passati ad essere responsabile di Pompei alcuni di questi sono ancora vividi nella mia memoria; altri no; di altri ancora non potrei assicurare la perfetta corrispondenza a quanto realmente è avvenuto.

Il settore del Foro e tutti gli archeologi che ci hanno lavorato rientrano a pieno titolo nella categoria della memoria viva. Perché quel settore urbano è la cerniera di gran parte dell'urbanizzazione di Pompei. Assume, inoltre, il Foro la funzione di essere un condensato della storia che l'antica città ha attraversato. Da quando si è per la prima volta strutturata una vita organizzata sul pianoro che dominava la foce del fiume Sarno e la costa del Golfo di Napoli a quando, spentasi la fase parossistica dell'eruzione che ha distrutto la città seppellendola con le sue ceneri e i suoi lapilli, i superstiti hanno cercato, a cominciare dal Foro, di recuperare quanto ancora possibile salvare per assicurarsi un domani.

J. J. Dobbins è fra quanti, operando nel Foro e sul Foro senza risparmiare impegno e fatica, hanno contribuito a darcene una conoscenza più approfondita di quanta finallora se ne avesse. Nel confronto con ricerche analoghe condotte da altri si potranno rilevare interpretazioni differenti delle stesse antiche realtà. Ma è proprio da differenze del genere che la conoscenza procede in avanti, conquistando, per poi superare, traguardi sempre più avanzati. Fra i miei ricordi non oscurati dal tempo da allora trascorso sono le discussioni che si accendevano quando si visitavano i luoghi e i monumenti sui quali si operava. E quelle, non meno apprezzate ed utili, che si sono intrecciate in occasione degli incontri di studio organizzati proprio per confrontare i risultati ottenuti. Discussioni e confronti che sono proseguiti, ed ancora proseguono, nelle pubblicazioni nel frattempo elaborate e diffuse. Pubblicazioni di dettaglio ed altre di sintesi generale: come quel *The World of Pompeii* che J. J. Dobbins ha organizzato e curato insieme a P. W. Foss. In questo ampio e dettagliato panorama su una Pompei, della quale si offre un'aggiornata visione nelle sue parti componenti, il capitolo sul Foro informa e fa riflettere. A proposito dell'essere specchio della vita sociale ed economica della fase tra il terremoto del 62 e la finale eruzione del 79. Questo vuole essere solo un esempio degli spunti che sembra possibile trarre dai lavori del Pompeii Forum Project.

Sono grato a J. J. Dobbins di aver voluto indirizzare la propria attenzione ad aspetti tanto significativi dell'architettura, dell'urbanistica, della storia sociale di Pompei antica. Se i superiori responsabili avessero voluto dedicare solamente una parte della passione e della cura riposte da studiosi, italiani e no, nello studio di Pompei antica, di sicuro la sua situazione contemporanea non avrebbe attraversato periodi di sconcertante desolazione e di lenta ed irreversibile consunzione, come di frequente è accaduto.

Pier Giovanni Guzzo

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Preface: J.J. Dobbins and the Forum of Pompeii

Bygone years, now passed with no possibility of a return, sometimes leave strongly contrasting memories in our mind's eye, vivid on occasion, or at times hazy. So it is with the faces, people, events, and places of the past. Their recollection obeys an intangible logic that defies clear *ratio*. In this game of memory, sometimes it seems as though we could reach out and touch the past. At the same time, we know that something different must have happened, even if we no longer remember it. For us today, however, it is as if it never was, so heavy is the blanket of oblivion capriciously covering parts of our own past lives. And so it is for the years when I was responsible for Pompeii—some things are still vivid in my memory, others not so much, and for a few, I couldn't be perfectly sure about what really happened.

The forum of Pompeii and the archaeologists that worked there fall squarely into the first category—a living memory—because this area of the city is in large part the lynchpin of Pompeian urbanization. In a sense, the forum represents a microcosm of Pompeii, condensing the city's ancient history, beginning from the time when organized life first appeared on the plateau that dominated the mouth of the Sarno River and the coast of the Gulf of Naples, until the paroxysms of the eruption destroyed the city, burying it in ash and lapilli, and after which survivors attempted to recover whatever could be saved to begin anew, starting from the Forum.

J.J. Dobbins is among those tireless figures who spared no effort or fatigue to bring a greater understanding to the area in and around the forum than those before him ever had. In comparison to research conducted by others, he was able to reach different interpretations from the same ancient realities. But it is precisely because of such differences that knowledge can move forward, setting and then overcoming increasingly lofty goals. Among my memories—those that have not been obscured by the passage of time—are the discussions ignited by our visits to the places and monuments we studied. The conversations woven through our study meetings, which themselves were organized precisely to compare the different results we obtained, were no less appreciated or useful. Debates and comparisons continued, and still continue, in the many resulting publications—specific and general—that have appeared in the meantime. One such example is *The World of Pompeii*, which Dobbins organized and edited together with P.W. Foss. In this broad yet detailed panorama of Pompeian scholarship, which offered an updated look at all of the city's parts, Dobbins' chapter on the forum was informative and provided reflection. Indeed, Pompeii's forum was a mirror of the state of social and economic life of the city at a whole between the earthquake of 62 and the final eruption in 79. This is only one example of the many ideas that can be drawn from Dobbins' Pompeii Forum Project.

I am thankful to J.J. Dobbins for having wanted to give appropriate attention to so many significant aspects of architecture, urbanism, and the social history of ancient Pompeii. If the authorities had dedicated only a fraction of the passion and care for Pompeii that the scholars, Italian or not, have shown in their study of the ancient city, it is certain that the current situation would not have gone through such periods of disheartening neglect and slow and irreversible desolation, as has so frequently been the case.

Pier Giovanni Guzzo

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(Translation by D.K. Rogers and C.J. Weiss)

Introduction: John Dobbins as Archaeologist, Teacher, and Mentor

Dylan K. Rogers and Claire J. Weiss

John Dobbins arrived at the Department of Art of the University of Virginia (UVa) in 1978, rose to the rank of Professor of Roman Art and Archaeology, and retired in 2019, having had a career of nearly 40 years at the University. Those who have worked or studied with John will know of his high standards in the field and in the classroom. Indeed, his reputation as an archaeologist, teacher, and mentor stretches far beyond Charlottesville and UVa, especially given his involvement with the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA). In this introduction, we explore John's career, not only to situate him within the wider field of Roman archaeology, but also to demonstrate the impact he has made on the study of Roman and Pompeian archaeology, other scholars in the field, and, perhaps most demonstrably, his students. Indeed, his influence can be seen clearly through the following chapters, each written by one of his former graduate students. The topics of these papers span the field, from numerous aspects of Pompeian research, to innovations in Roman baking, numismatics, and Roman sculpture and mosaics. John's approach to scholarship, whether through his teaching or research, is reflected in his own students' work, and therefore we take this opportunity to explore how John himself developed as an archaeologist to appreciate his understanding of the ancient Mediterranean world.

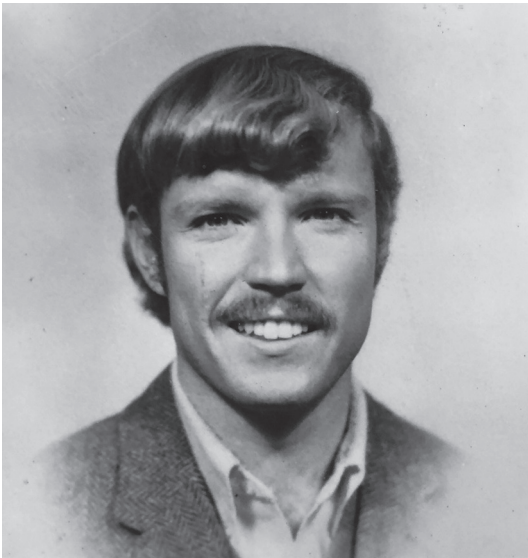
Dobbins before Pompeii

Born in Lynn, Massachusetts, in 1946, John Dobbins attended St. Mary's Boy's School before matriculating at the College of the Holy Cross in 1964 where he received a BA in English literature, with a minor in Classics. Upon his graduation in 1968, he attended Boston University, receiving an MA in English literature. Such training paved the way for him to teach at St. John's Preparatory School in Danvers, Massachusetts, from 1969-1971, while also teaching English at the Berlitz School of Languages in Boston during the summers. His background in English literature would stay with him for the rest of his life.

Although focused on English, John's passions for archaeology also began to grow in this period. In the summer of 1968, John participated in the Bryant Foundation Excavation at Cadiz and Pollentia in Spain. In 1971, he was a volunteer excavator closer to home at the Danvers Historical Society Excavation of the Samuel Parris House in Salem Village, Massachusetts. These experiences would set the stage for his joining the PhD program in Classical Archaeology at the University of Michigan. Very early on in his time as a student at Michigan, John became involved in the Michigan and Dumbarton Oaks Excavations at Dibsī Faraj in Syria, where he dug from 1972-1974 (Figure 1). The excavations were directed by Richard Harper. Evidently, the experience working with Harper was a seminal moment in John's early career, as he would be assigned to publish the Roman lamps from the site, the subject of which became the basis of his PhD dissertation, 'Terracotta Lamps of the Roman Province of Syria'. Indeed, John's



Figure 1: John and team in Syria, 1975. (Courtesy K. Dobbins)



*Figure 2: John's 1974 passport photo.
(Courtesy ASCSA Archives)*

field expertise in Syria was noted by John Pedley, one of his advisors at Michigan, who stated that John 'has benefitted enormously from association with and instruction from Richard Harper who has directed the excavation [at Dibsī Faraj] and from whom he has acquired a familiarity with and admiration for the precise manner of British archaeology'.¹ Anyone who has collaborated with John will immediately recognize his admiration for precision in archaeology.

John's training as a Classical Archaeologist was further strengthened when he participated in the Regular Member Program of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (ASCSA) for the 1974-1975 academic year (Figure 2). The Archives of the ASCSA retained

¹ ASCSA, Archives, Administrative Records, Box 109/17, Dobbins, Pedley to Lang, 21 December 1973.



Figure 3: Corinth Excavation Team at Hill House, Spring 1975. Top row (left-right): Robin Rhodes, John Dobbins, Donald Baronowski, Rob Guy; Charles K. Williams, II (in red); bottom row (left-right): Cynthia Patterson, Stella Bouzaki, Nancy Bookidis, Joan Fischer, Alan Shapiro. (Courtesy H.A. Shapiro)

John's application and supporting materials, which reveal a great deal about him at such an early stage in his career, when he was an aspiring teacher and professional archaeologist. Letters of recommendation from John's professors were warm and full of praise, both in terms of his research trajectory and his character. T.V. Buttrey would report:

There is no doubt of both his seriousness and his capabilities, and he is a stable character who is getting through his graduate program without the familiar crises. I hope that you can take him into the School, for I have no doubt that he is to be a solid member of the next generation of archaeologists, a credit both to the School and Michigan.²

John Pedley would go on to say that John 'is a highly gregarious type, and in my view, would contribute a great deal to the School not simply in terms of knowledge and expertise but also in terms of his friendliness, approachability, willingness to help in a million ways, and general bonhomie'.³ In his own purpose statement to the admissions committee about his reasons for seeking to study at the ASCSA, John expressed the following:

I hope to attain a teaching position in a college or university while continuing to excavate during the summers. It is evident that the requirements of an archaeologist within a university framework are substantially different from his duties in the field. The close examination of the monuments of Greece through the program of the American School will provide a dimension which is essential to effective teaching. Research (e.g., on the Roman pottery and lamps from Corinth and the Agora excavations) would directly

² ASCSA, Archives, Administrative Records, Box 109/17, Dobbins, Buttrey to Lang, 8 January 1974.

³ ASCSA, Archives, Administrative Records, Box 109/17, Dobbins, Pedley to Lang, 21 December 1973.

contribute to my current work on a Roman site in Syria, in terms of the comprehension of stratigraphy and the interpretation of data.⁴

Indeed, Dobbins' year in Greece would be life changing, especially for his professional life. In a 2017 brochure about the Regular Member Program, John appeared in a special quote, stating 'my year at the American School transformed me and was one of the most important years in my life'.

John arrived in Athens in September 1974, a volatile period in Greece, following the recent fall of the military dictatorship, which had been in power since 1967. Despite the tense time in Greece politically, the Regular Program still provided a vibrant and exciting year to the students. John's student cohort included the likes of Jack Davis, Cynthia Patterson, Robin Rhodes, Alan Shapiro, and Robert Sutton, amongst others (Figure 3). Fellow Romanists, Fred and Diana Kleiner, were in residence at the School during this time period, too. Led by C.W.J. Eliot, the academic program made the traditional school trips to Central Greece and Thessaly, the Northwest (with the island of Corfu), the Deep Peloponnese, and the Argolid and Corinthia. In addition to Eliot, the program was also led by James McCredie, the Director of the ASCSA, and Charles Williams, the director of the Corinth Excavations. As students traditionally give a site report each trip, John was assigned to present on the Tholos at Delphi, Pleuron in Aetolia, the sculpture of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, and Acrocorinth. Further, when the academic program was in Athens and Attica, in true American School form, the students were toured around by luminaries of the field: Judith Binder, Oscar Broneer, Eugene Vanderpool, Brunhilde Ridgway, Alan Boegehold, Merle Langdon, John Camp, and the late Angelos Delivorias of the Benaki Museum. There were also numerous Associate Members floating around the School, such as Alison Frantz, Virginia Grace, Timothy Gregory, Susan Rotroff, Jeremy Rutter, Vance Watrous, and Jim Wright, who are likely to have influenced John's approach to antiquity. John also used his time in Athens to work on his dissertation, writing up his lamp catalogue in the School's Blegen Library, in addition to consulting comparative collections in the Benaki Museum, the Agora Museum, and at Corinth.

The second half of John's academic year would, arguably, have an impact on his future trajectory as an archaeologist. In April 1975, he participated in the excavations at Corinth, first in the training season, then winning a coveted spot in the regular excavation season under Charles Williams' direction. It can be suggested that the dedicated time in Corinth, with exposure to Williams' meticulous eye for architecture, informed the way in which John would approach architecture thereafter. Indeed, as was common for Regular Members at the time, John completed an end of the year paper, the goal of which was to provide students the chance to engage more critically with monuments, sites, or other material culture or texts. And John did just that, partnering with his fellow student Robin Rhodes, with whom he presented a paper entitled, 'A Re-examination of the Sanctuary of Artemis Brauronia on the Athenian Acropolis'.⁵ Their goal with the paper was 'to present a new plan and sequence of building phases based upon 1) the observations of cuttings not previously recorded and 2) a reinterpretation of the evidence'.⁶ After working on the material for a few more years,

⁴ ASCSA, Archives, Administrative Records, Box 109/17, Dobbins, Admission Application, 4 January 1974.

⁵ ASCSA, Archives, Administrative Records, Box 113, School Papers 1974-1975.

⁶ ASCSA, Archives, Administrative Records, Box 109/17, Dobbins, Report of Program during Academic Year 1974-1975.



Figure 4: John (at center) pickaxing at La Befra, 1980. (Courtesy K. Dobbins)

Rhodes and Dobbins would go on to publish their new findings on the Sanctuary of Artemis Brauronia in 1979 in *Hesperia*, the journal of the American School.⁷ In this article, they provided new observations about cuttings in the bedrock of the Acropolis that allowed for new interpretations regarding the phasing of the construction of the sanctuary, especially of the eastern and southern walls. Up until this point, significant attention had not been paid to the bedrock, especially with an eye toward parsing out the chronology of the building. With strict autopsy and the assistance of Williams, Rhodes and Dobbins were able to identify three distinct phases of construction from the evidence of the cuttings in the stone. The impact of the article on subsequent readings of the topography of the Athenian Acropolis cannot be understated. Their careful examination of the chronology of the sanctuary is still cited in any work that engages with the monuments of the Acropolis.⁸

After the American School, John continued to work on his dissertation research, which he would ultimately defend in 1977 in front of committee entirely comprising other Johns: John Pedley, John Eadie, John Humphrey, and John Hayes. And by the time of his defense, John had turned his attention to the Italian peninsula. In 1976, the Etruscan Foundation contacted John, asking if he would direct excavations at a site a few miles away from Mulro at La Befra. He agreed and carried out excavations in the summers of 1976, 1977 and 1980 (Figure 4). These excavations would be John's first time as the sole director in the field, a role that required him to organize a small team of scholars, students, and local help, and eventually had him bringing

⁷ Rhodes and Dobbins 1979.

⁸ E.g., Hurwit 2004, 194-98.

the project to completion through the publication of a monograph on the excavations—all skills that he would put to great use in the upcoming years of work in Italy.⁹ It was during this time serving as director of the La Befa excavations that John also accepted a teaching position in the Art Department of the University of Virginia in 1978. In the early 1980s, John would also begin to participate in the excavations at Morgantina (Sicily), directed by UVa colleague Malcolm Bell. His attention to detail, especially in terms of architecture, would prove to be useful, as he would become the Director of Theater Research at the site, studying the theater during the summers of 1980 and 1982, and excavating portions of the structure in 1983, 1985, and 1992.

Pompeii and Dobbins

John is certainly most widely known for his interest in Pompeii; his concentrated study of the city began during his years at Michigan. At the suggestion of his graduate advisor, John D'Arms, John spent time in Pompeii and in the Eumachia building specifically, examining the architectural fabric of the structure. Such scrutiny ultimately resulted in a career of 'close looking' at the forum of Pompeii, breathing new life into the understanding of the site's center of religious, civic, and economic life. John's attention to the changes evident in the remains of the forum buildings, especially the eastern range of structures, led him to realize that the accepted history of the forum as promulgated by August Mau and Amadeo Maiuri—two of the biggest names in Pompeian archaeology—could not stand as presented. Under the aegis of the Pompeii Forum Project (PFP), John began to rewrite the history of the forum, finding that it was not an abandoned ruin, the leftovers of the desolation caused by the earthquake of AD 62, as had been the prevailing view, but rather an active construction yard, a city-scale project of enormous rejuvenation and revitalization made possible as a result of the unexpected opportunity that came from the earthquake's destruction.¹⁰

With the publication of his watershed 1994 *American Journal of Archaeology* article, John expanded the project and his research by bringing on colleagues and students under his direction, including several of the authors of chapters in this volume. Supported by the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities (IATH) at UVa, private donations, the team itself, and eventually a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, the Pompeii Forum Project came into its own in the mid-1990s.¹¹ John and his team employed a mixture of traditional methods and then-cutting-edge digital technology to record and investigate the forum. That mix occasionally was more literal than categorical—John tells a story of having the advanced recording power of an 'electronic theodolite and attached electronic distance measuring device (together called a total station)', but early enough in the history of total station use that the machine they used required a reflector to take each point.¹² What this means in practice is that a reflective object, normally a prism, had to be hand held at the location of every recorded point in the survey.¹³ For ground plans, such a requirement presents little difficulty since walking around the bases of walls is no trouble, but for the height of many vertical structures, gaining the necessary access to the tops of walls often

⁹ Dobbins 1983.

¹⁰ Dobbins 1997, 86-87.

¹¹ Dobbins 1994, 629, n. *.

¹² Dobbins 1996, 'Computer Use'.

¹³ Hanna 1996, 'Survey Work Report: Overview'.

employed the use of a ladder. Considering the fragile nature of Pompeian walls, or especially in the case of longer walls with prohibitive heights, ladder access is not always possible. Even for those walls that would have been surmountable by ladder, climbing up a ladder, taking a point, climbing down the ladder, replacing the ladder along the next point of the wall, taking the point, and so on was inconvenient and time consuming. John and team devised a method of stringing the prism from a fishing pole in order to take points, thereby extending the reach of a single ladder set up and continuing the survey more rapidly than otherwise would have resulted. His innovation was therefore not only in the application of new technology to the field of Pompeian studies, but also in the specific manner in which that technology was married to archaeological ‘MacGuyvering’.

John’s non-invasive, observational methods were paired with targeted excavation in a few locations around the forum, with strategically placed trenches, with the hopes of finding answers to specific questions of the forum’s history. Knowing full well that the conclusions he had reached about the late dates for the construction of several buildings around the forum’s central court would be met with incredulity from the old guard of Pompeian scholarship, especially the Italian scholars who held (and still hold) the earlier conclusions of Maiuri sacrosanct, John chose his locations such that if the material discovered fell in line with his conclusions, the evidence would be sufficient to refute any doubts.¹⁴ Indeed, a *saggio* that incorporated the construction trench for the northwest corner of the Temple of Apollo’s precinct wall, which intruded into the roadbed of the vicolo del Gallo, another on the opposite side of a domestic structure’s outer wall that had been affected by these ancient interventions, and a third against one of the eastern pier walls of the precinct, were placed exactly for this reason.¹⁵ The excavations brought up exactly the evidence needed—*terra sigillata* pottery in the right deposits and at the appropriate depths—to bolster John’s argument that a substantial reconfiguration of the sanctuary, including its tuff colonnade, was Augustan or later.¹⁶ Some giants can be felled by the smallest sherds, but only after we have stood on their shoulders to find those sherds.

It was during this time—the late 1990s to early 2000s—that John rose to prominence as a Pompeian expert and spokesperson, even breaking into popular media coverage. 1998 saw him featured in *History’s Mysteries*, a History Channel documentary series, which earned him an IMDb listing.¹⁷ Alongside other Pompeian luminaries, including Ann Koloski-Ostrow, James Franklin, Jr., Haraldur Sigurdsson, and Joseph Deiss, John showcased the then ‘cutting-edge computer technology’ used by the PFP while he talked about the immediacy of Pompeii’s ruins for understanding ancient life.¹⁸ At this same time, John and Pedar Foss collaborated on *The World of Pompeii*, a substantial edited volume of papers that brought together the who’s who of Pompeian scholarship at the time.¹⁹ The volume, fittingly dedicated to August Mau, Francis W. Kelsey, and John D’Arms, was envisioned as the modern response to (but specifically *not* replacement of) Mau’s *Pompeii: Its Life and Art*, one of the most influential, all-encompassing

¹⁴ Greater detail about the reception and response to the PFP’s findings are given by Poehler in this volume. Ball and Dobbins (2013) summarizes the past and present scholarship, as well as the contributions by the PFP.

¹⁵ Dobbins, *et al.* 1998, 743-44.

¹⁶ Ball and Dobbins 2017, 470-78; Dobbins *et al.* 1998, 756

¹⁷ Internet Movie Database 1998. The series was also known by the name ‘Ancient Mysteries’, and John’s episode is viewable on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pps8VFWq3co>.

¹⁸ History Channel 1998.

¹⁹ Dobbins and Foss 2007.

monographs to cover Pompeii.²⁰ *The World of Pompeii* responded to that single authority and brought in the breadth and depth of knowledge of no fewer than 39 scholars from nearly 10 different countries, demonstrating how the study of Pompeii cannot, and indeed should not, rest on the word of a single individual alone, but rather benefits from the voices of many disagreements and debates.²¹

Collaboration between archaeological neighbors has always been a feature of John's public comportment, often times including the use of materials in the field. For excavations in 1997, the Pompeii Forum Project borrowed a wheelbarrow and tools from Andrew Wallace-Hadrill and the British School at Rome.²² In 2001, tool assistance and space was provided by Rick Jones and the Anglo-American Project in Pompeii.²³ The Via Consolare Project has housed several items of the PFP's field kit, including a ladder, drafting board, and desk lamp, which has helped both projects in turn.²⁴ John has always been an example of collaboration between colleagues, a quality he encourages alongside fostering discussion and friendly disagreement. He invites reassessment of past 'accepted truths' with new information, new opinions, and new personalities joining the field and conversation. His focus on the forum of Pompeii has demonstrated time and again that new conclusions can be reached from the long-exposed areas of the city. Although he and the PFP have not conducted excavations in the forum for two decades, the work of the project has continued to find new evidence of changes to the city's center that has gone previously overlooked, perhaps a result of the lack of distraction that excavation brings.²⁵

Although John's strongest focus has been on the forum in Pompeii, his view of what constituted the 'neighborhood of the forum' did not stop at the edges of the buildings that defined the space. Instead, his efforts brought to attention the need to understand the thoroughfares that lead up to and away from the forum, as well as the proximal buildings that served as additional nodes of activity and urbanization in the layout of the city as a whole.²⁶ John's work in many ways presaged the insula-sized, or city-wide scope, that Pompeian studies would turn to after centuries of concentrating on a single, often luxurious building or feature in ignorance of the way that one piece fit into the whole of the city. Indeed, the expansive nature of John's interest and research has been evident in the many and varied sub-fields on which he has dedicated portions of his time and effort through the full span of his career.

Further afield

Beyond Pompeii, John has a number of research interests, many going back decades. One such ongoing project has been the study of Roman mosaics, especially at the site of Antioch-on-the-Orontes. Inevitably, having spent so much time in the Roman East early in his career, especially at the excavations at Dibsi-Faraj, John was exposed to Roman mosaics *in situ*, understanding their meaning from their original context. While still in coursework, John

²⁰ The volume was conceived of as a work to be published first in English, and therefore Mau's *Pompeji in Leben und Kunst* manuscript was expertly translated by Francis W. Kelsey in 1899. Dobbins and Foss 2007, xxvii.

²¹ Dobbins and Foss 2007, xxviii.

²² Dobbins 1998, 739, n. *.

²³ Ball and Dobbins 2017, 467, n. 1.

²⁴ Weiss, personal knowledge.

²⁵ See Ball and Dobbins (2013), especially Ball and Dobbins (2017, 472).

²⁶ Dobbins 2016.



Figure 5: Digital model of House of the Drinking Contest. (Courtesy E. Gruber)

took a seminar with John Clarke, who was a Visiting Assistant Professor at Michigan in 1973–1974. Clarke’s methodology of reconstructing a room’s superstructure through intricate black-and-white mosaics on the ground would serve John well later, applying the same ideas to the mosaics of Antioch and Pompeii in his own teaching and research.²⁷ Throughout the 1980s, John went on to lecture on the mosaics from the houses of Antioch at numerous venues across North America, especially at invited AIA talks. Because of the spotty preservation and excavation of these houses, John’s goal in his lectures and his publications during this period was to situate the mosaics back in their architectural context, something that was not often done in Antiochene scholarship before, as the mosaics were often just studied in terms of their iconography and style.²⁸ Further, John’s membership in the North American branch of the L’Association internationale pour l’étude de la mosaïque antique (AIEMA) would provide him with a tangible connection to other international scholars who were also interested in Roman mosaics. Indeed, he helped organize AIEMA’s 6th Colloquium on Ancient and Medieval Mosaics and Painting that took place at the University of Virginia in 1992.

As time progressed and new technologies developed in the late 1990s and early 2000s, John’s interest in the architectural context of the mosaics of Antioch continued to blossom. John participated in the organization of the groundbreaking 2000 exhibition, *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, organized by Christine Kondoleon, and he provided an instructive catalogue chapter on the houses of Antioch.²⁹ Drastically updating the work of Stillwell from the 1960s, John recontextualized the mosaics within the Antiochian homes themselves.³⁰ For example,

²⁷ On this methodology, see Clarke (1979). For examples of John’s interest in applying this technique at Pompeii, see Gruber and Dobbins (2013b).

²⁸ See Dobbins (1982a; 1982b). The latter article explores the Antiochene mosaics found in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, an hour east of Charlottesville, where the University of Virginia is located.

²⁹ Dobbins 2000.

³⁰ Stillwell 1961.

in his discussion of the House of the Drinking Contest from Seleucia Pieria, he successfully drew attention to how the mosaics provide information, not only about how space was used, but also how those spaces interacted with other parts of the complex, especially through the use of sightlines. John's work on this house in particular culminated in a collaboration with his former graduate student, Ethan Gruber, at the time a Web Applications Developer and 3D Modeler at the University of Virginia. John, with Gruber's technological expertise, would model the House of the Drinking Contest (Figure 5). The work allowed for the reintegration of all the original mosaics, which had been widely dispersed to museums throughout the world after excavation, and allowed for the simulation of natural and artificial light to understand better the interaction between the natural landscape and its impact on the actual use of these rooms.³¹

In addition to mosaics, John has maintained a range of scholarly interests that he has explored in new and exciting ways over the years. Since his student days at Michigan, he has had a passion for Roman numismatics. John took a numismatics seminar with T.V. Buttrey and worked on the coins of Roman Alexandria held in the Kelsey Museum. Buttrey mentioned in John's ASCSA recommendation letter that John investigated 'patterns of coinage control from varieties in the late third century material; and he came up with conclusions which are certainly publishable'.³² John would later use this material in a talk given at the American Numismatic Society in August 1979: 'The Organization of the Roman Mint at Alexandria during the Tetrarchic Period'. John's interest in numismatics would reemerge at Virginia, where he worked with the University's art museum to acquire Greek and Roman coins to build a strong teaching collection for students. This work culminated in a numismatics seminar in 2008, the students of which began to digitize the University's coin collection and laid the groundwork for an innovative digital platform to make the objects accessible to the public.³³

Perhaps even further afield, athletics have often appeared in John's scholarship, probably stemming from the fact that he himself is a fencer and has been involved for years with the University of Virginia's Fencing Club. This interest in sports evidently informed John's reading of some objects of ancient Greco-Roman art, especially those he routinely taught Art History 101 at UVa. One of the pieces that he constantly grappled with was the famous Athenian red-figure krater of Euphronios that depicts the wrestling match between Herakles and Antaios.³⁴ He noted that the Louvre's explanation of the image—that the fight is at a point near its end—differed by comparison with the reading given in Kleiner's text book—just before the famous lift during which Herakles triumphs—but that neither made any effort to examine the specifics of the wrestling hold show on the vessel in any detail.³⁵ In order to investigate whether the artist had rendered the wrestling moves realistically, and to determine at what point in the match the antagonists had reached, John worked with Steve Garland and Trent Paulson, head and assistant coaches of the University of Virginia's Wrestling Team, to determine what precisely was depicted in the image, and what moves might have preceded and followed the captured pose (Figure 6). Through this collaboration, they were able to conclude that the vase

³¹ Gruber and Dobbins 2013a.

³² ASCSA, Archives, Administrative Records, Box 109/17, Dobbins, Buttrey to Lang, 8 January 1974.

³³ See: <http://coins.lib.virginia.edu>. On the development of this project, see Gruber in this volume.

³⁴ Paris, Musée du Louvre, Collection Campana, G 103.

³⁵ Kleiner 2013, 122-23, fig. 5-22.



Figure 6: Dobbins observing the University of Virginia wrestling team, in order to understand how Euphronios depicted a similar move on a red-figure krater, 2018. (Courtesy S. Suchak, University of Virginia Communications)

depicts an under hook, a hold that is a preparatory move for a lift, and to explain better the point in time of the ancient fight between the two mythological figures.³⁶

Finally, John has served the wider archaeological community with dedication and passion for decades. With ties to the Etruscan Foundation stemming back to his excavation at La Befra, he served on its advisory board from 1991-2005, with a stint as its chair from 2001-2005; he also served on the editorial board of the foundation's journal, *Etruscan Studies*, from 1991-2005. John has also promoted the activities of the North American branch of AIEMA over the years, including serving as their Secretary and Treasurer, in addition to encouraging students to present original research at their colloquia.³⁷ As for the Archaeological Institute of America, John has been an indefatigable champion of the organization's mission of the promotion of archaeological inquiry and the public dissemination of archaeological knowledge. As such, John served as the Charlottesville Society's president for the remarkable total of 37 years (1980-1987; 1989-2019). In addition to numerous presentations at the AIA's annual meetings over the decades, John has participated as a travelling lecture for the organization (1982-2003; 2008; 2014-2020), speaking on his research interests, including the Athenian Brauronia, Antiochene mosaics, Pompeii, and Digital Humanities—making these important subjects approachable to a variety of audiences. Many of these have been named lectures, most importantly the prestigious Martha Sharp Joukowsky Lectureship with its 13 talks over the course of a year.³⁸ Further, John has always offered additional lectures and seminars for local societies, providing them with even more access to archaeology. Within the wider Charlottesville community,

³⁶ Dobbins presented this in a paper at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the AIA: 'Euphronios Knew How to Wrestle'. The collaboration was also covered by *UVAToday* (Reid 2018).

³⁷ For example, at the 10th AIEMA North America Colloquium (held at Princeton University in 2011), Tracy Cosgriff, Alicia Dissinger, Elizabeth Molacek, and Dylan Rogers presented: 'The House of the Boat of the Psyches at Antioch: A New Reading via a 3D Digital Model'. Part of this research is presented in this volume by Molacek and Rogers.

³⁸ John held the Joukowsky Lectureship in 2007-2008. Since then, he has held the following named lectureships: Frieda Renne Lectures (2014-2015); Edward J. Bader Lecture (2015-2016); Ahmanson Foundation Lecture, Dorinda J. Oliver Lectures (2017-2018); Richard Hubbard Howard Lectures, John H. & Penelope Biggs Lecture (2019-2020). We thank Laurel Sparks, AIA Lecture Coordinator, for providing this information.



Figure 7: John cutting into Rome's birthday cake, *capite velato*, 2016. (Photograph by C.J. Weiss)

he has, over the years, provided talks and discussions with various groups, ranging from school groups to retirement communities. His passion for archaeology and especially for sharing his knowledge of archaeology knows no bounds.

Professor Dobbins

While John's research has left a lasting and significant mark in the field of Roman and Pompeian studies, perhaps his greatest legacy is his students and the impact that he has had on them. This volume is a testament to the work that he has directly or indirectly inspired, guided, and fostered: a collection of papers written by his graduate students on the event of his retirement. For the authors represented by the current volume, as his graduate students, our first encounters with John began with, 'Call me John', and explanations about how he saw us, not as his students, but as his younger colleagues. Interactions with John are and have always been based on the foundation of collegiality.

John's passion for teaching began first and foremost with the undergraduate students. Early on in John's tenure at UVa, he co-founded the Interdisciplinary Archaeology Program with colleagues from the Anthropology and History Departments. Thanks to John's efforts, the program continues to thrive, with a cohort of majors and minors graduating every year, along with opportunities for students to gain archaeological experience in Virginia, the USA, and across the globe. Over the years, John has fostered the interest of generations of UVa undergraduates, often sparked by their enrollment in John's legendary Art History 101 lecture course. Other courses that John has taught include Introduction to Classical Archaeology, Etruscan and Roman Art, Roman Sculpture, Roman Architecture, and, of course, Pompeii. He furthered his direct engagement with students through his rigorous seminars, including Roman Coins, Roman Painting and Mosaics, Antioch and the Roman East, and the Age of Augustus, which he taught with John Miller, a colleague in the Classics Department. Such dedication to his students is also reflected in John's receipt of UVa's prestigious All University Teaching Award in 2006. Whether bringing in large-scale plans of the sites and structures that would form the basis of unstructured discussions, holding annual birthday parties for Rome on April 21st, complete with cake and toga, worn appropriately *capite velato* (Figure 7), or holding class out on the lawn of Jefferson's Academical Village with the purpose of measuring and drawing elevations of the Pavilions as both a practical and theoretical lesson in archaeological recording, John has always sought to pull his students out of the textbook and into the practical hands-on of the field. Indeed, in the fall of 2005, John was a 'Mead

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Figure 8: John hands a trowel to undergraduate student, Abigail Staub, during fieldwork in Pompeii in 2019. (Photograph by J. Dunkelbarger)



Figure 9: John teaching about the modern reconstructions of the upper walls of the Sanctuary of the Genius of Augustus, 2010. (Photograph by S. Pearson)

Honored Faculty Member' of UVa's Mead Endowment, which seeks to fund initiatives that bring faculty and undergraduate students together outside of the traditional classroom. With this charge, in his seminar, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art*, John and his students gathered after class to have dinners (their version of the *convivium*) at local Charlottesville restaurants, especially to understand the importance of conviviality for the Pompeians themselves.³⁹

Even when in Pompeii, an opportunity for a lesson in the urban development of the city was never missed. Undergraduate and graduate students have joined John in the field over the years, occasionally as their first experience with fieldwork in Pompeii (Figure 8). As is the custom in Pompeii, a site with many projects running synchronously during the summer, John and the PFP would exchange site visits with neighboring researchers. On occasion, these exchanges included conversations about the modern reconstructions of the upper walls of the Sanctuary of the Genius of Augustus (Figure 9), learning about John's visions of how the forum's eastern buildings must have been intended to look by embodying missing columns across the frontage of the Imperial Cult Building, or less formal discussions over barbecue dinners and *bocce* back at camp in the evening (Figure 10). As he was fond of saying in the introduction to the first class of Art History 101, and as he included in his Reflective Teaching Philosophy Statement when applying (and subsequently receiving) the 2010-12 Richard A. & Sara Page Mayo National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Distinguished Teaching Professor Award, John's most fundamental goal as an educator was to change his students' lives.⁴⁰ It seems at once obvious and necessary to point out that he certainly changed many of ours.

Shortly before John's retirement in the spring of 2019, a symposium sponsored by the Department of Art was held in his honor at the University of Virginia, and event affectionately titled the 'Dobbinalia'. Coordinated by then-Chair of the Art History Department, Carmenita Higginbotham, and organized by John's former PhD students Claire Weiss and Daniel Weiss (no relation), presenters spanned the full range of past PhD students and colleagues who have worked with John, including Jared Benton, Kevin Cole, Steve Gavel, Anne Laidlaw, Ismini Miliareisis, Elizabeth Molacek, Eric Poehler, Dylan Rogers, Peter Schertz, and C. William Westfall (Figure 11). The event celebrated John's far-reaching impact on his students, the field, and beyond. While each of our careers, finding their foundation in John's ministrations, have been molded in part by John's archaeological influence, his background in English literature may be the aspect for which he is better known among the undergraduate community at UVa, including his ability to recite whole passages of famous English literature from memory, such as *Beowulf* as an introduction to his Carolingian lecture in Art History 101, as well as the entirety of Edgar Allen Poe's poem, 'The Raven'. Indeed, whenever any of the graduate students in the department were selected for a fellowship interview from the University's Raven Society (an organization that, among its many activities, keeps up Poe's old dormitory room on the West Range of the Academical Village), John gathered faculty and students together for group recitations of the poem at Poe's doorstep for good luck. The many ways that this poem connects with John specifically and UVa in general led us to select the second line from 'The Raven' as the title of this Festschrift, 'a quaint and curious volume'. We have enjoyed writing and editing these papers of not yet 'forgotten lore' over the two years since

³⁹ <https://www.meadendowment.org/dobbins-john>

⁴⁰ This Reflective Teaching Philosophy Statement was provided by J.J. Dobbins.

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Figure 10: John partaking in less formal discussions over a 4th of July barbecue dinner hosted by the Via Consolare Project in 2016 at Camping Zeus, Pompeii. (Photograph by C.J. Weiss)



Figure 11: Dobbins' 2019 retirement symposium participants, from left to right: back row K. Cole, E. Molacek, C. Weiss, J. Benton, D. Rogers, D. Weiss, B. Gorham, S. Gavel; front row S. Layton Kim, I. Miliareisis, S. Tenant, J. Dunkelbarger, J. Dobbins, E. Poehler.

John's retirement, and, in the words of Kelsey from the preface of the first edition of his translation of Mau's *Pompeii: Its Life and Art*, 'the preparation of ... the volume, undertaken for reasons of friendship, has been less a task than a pleasure'.⁴¹ We can say no less of this volume undertaken to honor John.

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⁴¹ Kelsey 1899, vii.

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