

## THE PLUTONIUM PROJECT, HADRIAN'S VILLA, TIVOLI (COMUNE DI TIVOLI, PROVINCIA DI ROMA, REGIONE LAZIO)

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The Universities of Pavia and Oxford continued their investigations in Villa Adriana, in the area called *Plutonium*, traditionally interpreted as a reproduction of the Underworld, and located on one of the highest rises of the complex, in the east part of the villa.<sup>1</sup>

The excavations took place from 27 June to 16 July 2022.<sup>2</sup> A team of eight graduate students and doctoral researchers, from both Oxford and Pavia Universities, took part in the project (F. Sorbello; C. Muscas; A. Schrag; S. Lisowski; B. Risposi; C. Ak; T. Mytaloulis; J. Rosebrook). Gilberto Montali, from the University of Palermo, supervised the architectural survey and documentation of the archaeological structures, and conservator Mario Colella consolidated and restored specific parts of the monument, following the directives of the Istituto Villa Adriana e Villa D'Este (Villae).

Two trenches were opened in areas already subject to cleaning and documentation in previous years:

(1) Trench T, located in the northwest part of the built-up complex, within the north side of the structure on a high podium.

(2) Trench D, providing the connection between trenches (C and B) opened in previous years and intersecting the semicircular structure projecting southwest of the front of the *Plutonium*.

### *Trench T*

Trench T measuring *c.* 5 × 3 m, is located in the centre of the most distinguished room of the complex, characterized by a temple-like façade. The research question connected to this investigation was that of clarifying whether the floor level of the room was still preserved and associated with diagnostic materials. This was particularly pressing in view of the fact that this part of the building seems to be the only one not previously excavated, and this room, in particular, had been left standing at the time of the massive destruction of the site in order to create arable land. From the medieval period onwards, it had probably been used for storage or to house animals. In Trench T we removed *c.* 1 m of filling, characterized by abundant architectural materials, including high-quality coloured marbles (*porfidus*, serpentine, rosso antico, Numidian yellow- and other lithotypes such as slate, granite, breccia, etc.), fragments of stuccoes and wall

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of previous research in the area: Gorrini and Melfi, 2019; Gorrini, Melfi and Montali, 2020; Gorrini, Melfi, Montali and Schettino, 2020.

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Fig. 1. Trench T, floor preparation.

paintings, mosaic tesserae and pieces of *opus sectile*. This level not only attests the rich decoration of the building, but might well be the result of an accumulation of debris coming from various parts of the complex. In the north side of the room, it covered what was left of a floor in *opus sectile*: a concrete preparation with visible marks left by the marble slabs. The find of some matching geometric fragments in yellow, red and white marbles allowed the reconstruction of the original decorative pattern as a sequence of conjoined dodecagons, with a hexagon in the centre (Fig. 1). In addition to this, the excavated part of the walls of the rooms was revealed to have been covered in marble, at least for up to 1 m from the level of the floor, as demonstrated by the remains of mortar beds and fragments of grey marble slabs within, all along the base of the southeast and northeast walls. This set-up singles out the room from the others in the complex, where the lower part of the walls was simply lined with slate.

The south part of the floor of the room is not preserved because it seems to have been purposefully removed, judging from an artificial, straight cut, oriented northwest–southeast, that goes through the whole length of the room. It is not yet clear when the spoliation of the *opus sectile* and the cut of the floor took place, and whether they were the result of the same action, but judging from the few fragments of pottery found in the archaeological layers and from the typical mix-up of materials, it most likely dates to modern times.

### *Trench D*

The second excavation area reconnected with the archaeological layers of previous years and allowed us to bring to light the full extent of the large semicircular structure, possibly the



Fig. 2. Trench D, view from SW.

foundation of a portico, projecting southwest of the complex (Fig. 2). In particular, the continuation of the excavation clarified that a quadrangular room, lined with high-quality marbles, and found razed to the floor level in previous years (trench B), might be interpreted as the main access to the vast circular area (c. 40 m in diameter) enclosed by the portico, and extending in front of the main façade of the building. The excavation of the two external curved walls and their internal concrete substructure confirmed the pattern identified in previous years, where all structures were built at the same time as part of the same building programme, but must have fallen out of use by the end of the third century AD, judging from the ceramic finds. They were then subject to massive spoliations (including the stripping of all marble and mosaic revetments, of metal clamps and pipes), abandonment and only sporadic frequentation (probably linked to the episodes of spoliation) until at least the early medieval period. In later periods, probably late medieval, all walls were razed to foundation level, possibly in order to create flat, ploughable land. The trees that characterized the site later, in Renaissance and early modern documentation, also left large cavities in some of these excavated structures.

At the same time as the excavations, the restoration of the structures brought to light in Trench T took place. The mortar bed bearing the marks of the *opus sectile* underwent a consolidating and protective treatment (bio-protective); the brickwork, the plaster and lining of the walls were similarly consolidated and minimally repaired, especially in the areas where the marble lining was found *in situ*.

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## THE FALERII NOVI PROJECT: THE 2022 SEASON

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The summer of 2022 saw the continuation of a multi-year fieldwork programme initiated in 2021 at the site of Falerii Novi, in the Middle Tiber Valley. A four-week campaign built upon the results of the previous season (Bernard et al., 2022), as well as long-standing exploration of the site by means of non-invasive methodologies (Keay et al., 2000; Verdonck et al., 2020). The 'Falerii Novi Project' (FNP) explores the development of this substantial urban site over the *longue durée* from its Republican origins through Imperial and late antique transformations and the reoccupation in the medieval period. The FNP is driven by socio-economic historical questions and by a desire to evaluate urban changes within their broader regional landscape (Andrews et al., 2023). The campaign from 30 May to 24 June 2022 consisted of stratigraphic excavation in three locations within the intramural area. This work represented a multi-institutional collaboration between the British School at Rome, Harvard University and the University of Toronto, along with researchers from Ghent University and the University of Florence, under the authorization of the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per la Provincia di Viterbo e per l'Etruria Meridionale.

Using the results of earlier magnetometry (Keay et al., 2000) and more recent ground-penetrating radar (GPR) (Verdonck et al., 2020), three trenches were strategically located within the intramural area in order to capture evidence from a range of urban activities and spaces. One trench covered what was interpreted as a *macellum* structure (Area 1); a second explored a large *domus* south of the forum (Area 2); and a third investigated a mixed-use streetside intersection along the Via Amerina close to the South Gate (Area 3). The campaign also included restudy of the standing remains immediately west of the forum (Area 4), which were excavated by the Soprintendenza from 1969 to 1975; further GPR to the south of the city, east of the Via Amerina; and further coring within the walls.<sup>1</sup>

Excavation in Area 1 was located over a structure that could be identified as a *macellum* due to its form in the GPR survey. Investigation of this area aims to understand how the

<sup>1</sup> For the location of the trenches, see Andrews et al., 2023: fig. 3.