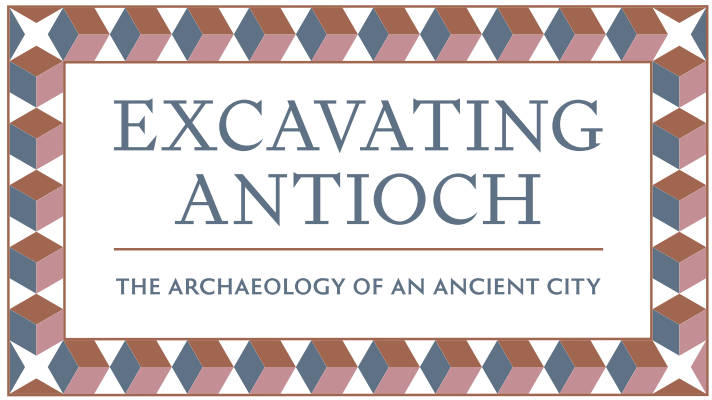
EXCAVATING ANTIOCH

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF AN ANCIENT CITY



Edited by
Nicole Berlin and Elizabeth Molacek


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UCLA COTSEN INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY PRESS

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Figure A.6. CEAV personnel and local officials and notables, standing by raised mosaics, July 5, 1936. Front row, left to right: Muhammed Yusuf, Haider Wazan, Rashid Bey Barrakat, Nassib Arzouzi [Arsuzi], Richard Stillwell, Khalil Zarawend, Najm ed Din bey Wajihi Basha, Mahmoud Tukhani, Charles Rufus Morey, Zaki Arzouzi [Arsuzi], Fadil Ghabousi, and Suleiman Hindi. Back row, left to right: Mustafa Yusuf, Jean Lassus, Adib Ishak, Apostolos Athanassiou, Hal Noble, Reis Berberi Mahmud Isa Rifai, Joseph Numani, William A. Campbell, Ibrahim Agha Tukhani, Suleiman Wazan, Samaan Yacoub Totah, and Ali Agha Tukhani. Photo © Antioch Excavation Collection, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University.

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Ava Wilcox, Wellesley College, Class of 2025

Foreword

Amanda Gilvin, Interim Co-Director, Sonja Novak Koerner '51
Senior Curator of Collections and Associate Director of Curatorial Affairs

For several years at the Davis Museum, we have been developing what we call a "Wellesley Method for Today" in order to reexamine our collections and how we approach them. Hearkening to the "Laboratory Method" of Alice Van Vechten Brown (1862–1949), a Wellesley art history professor, our approach is similarly object based, teaching students through original works of art and offering a range of curricular and extracurricular hands-on learning opportunities. Just as importantly, today's Wellesley Method is human-centered. We recognize that scholarly rigor must go hand in hand with ethical rigor.

Excavating Antioch: The Archaeology of an Ancient City grew as a central project of this new framework. Envisioned and led by Nicole Berlin, Associate Curator of Collections, this exhibition and catalogue represent the best of our aspirations as we rethink our theoretical and pedagogical approaches at the Davis. Both the exhibition and this accompanying catalogue ask fundamental questions about how we see, feel, and imagine history—and each other. The project also raises timely questions about what institutions such as museums and universities have done in the past in the name of education—and what we choose to do now to reckon with that legacy.

As you will learn here, institutions in Europe and the United States grew their collections through collaborative excavations around the world, and divided what they found in a system euphemistically called "partage." *Partage* means "sharing" in French. What irony to name a system of colonial expropriation with so gentle—and even moralistic—a term! Wellesley was not an official institutional participant in the Committee for the Excavation of Antioch-on-the-Orontes and Its Vicinity, but contributed significant resources and staffing, and in return received two mosaics. One, from the fifth-century-CE Villa of Daphne, has been a signature artwork for the college ever since it arrived in Massachusetts in 1936. The following year, students worked with Venetian mosaicist Ettore Moro-Lin to reassemble it. Until 1992, generations of Wellesley students, staff, faculty, and visitors walked, sat, and socialized on the mosaic. Today, it remains a showstopper at the Davis, and it is a key to our thinking about communities of engagement around this exhibition.

The making of *Excavating Antioch* has given us a unique opportunity to reinvent what global institutional collaboration—indeed, sharing—can look like. We are thankful to the many partners who have made this exhibition possible. We are especially grateful to Hatay Mustafa Kemal University and the Issos-Epiphaneia Archaeological Research Project, which help sustain the study and understanding of this historically layered region, ensuring that its stories remain part of global scholarly discourse. Scholars Banu Özdilek and H. Onur Tıbıkoğlu continue to be generous supporters and interlocutors, and we are proud to host their research findings in this publication and at the Davis.

The Baltimore Museum of Art, Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard Art Museums, Princeton University, and Worcester Art Museum have not only enthusiastically lent numerous artworks and archival materials, but their staff have contributed to the intellectual work of the project. Likewise, Wellesley student Gladys Baker (Class of 1932), who participated in the Antioch excavations and authored the definitive study of its coins, already has several successors, with more certain to follow. Wellesley students have participated in the development of *Excavating Antioch*, and more will contribute to the generation of new scholarship sure to result from this catalogue and the exhibition. We remain grateful to the staff and faculty from across Wellesley who collaborated in vital ways, and to every single member of the Davis staff who lent their expertise to the success of this singular project.

Through the spaces of the exhibition and in the pages of this book, we invite you to imagine walking down the streets and soaking in the baths of ancient Antioch in, say, 550 CE. Picture a resourceful artisan in a marble workshop completing a customer's order. Or go shopping for some new beaded jewelry at a night market illuminated by bright oil lamps.

On that same visit to the Davis, we also ask you to close your eyes and shift to 1933. Step aboard a boat at the Boston Harbor after your Wellesley graduation to travel to a town in the French Mandate of Syria and Lebanon (now Antakya, Hatay, Türkiye) to study Antioch's Roman coins. Or you might be a resident of the Hatay region who finds a sculpture fragment on your land and sells it to the international team excavating nearby. And, if you were Fadil Saba, a photographer from Palestine, how would you frame archaeological sites that offer glimpses into history—before your photographs themselves became part of that history?

You will read how water could emphasize the colors of a mosaic, acting as a natural, fluid lens. So, too, these essays magnify our visions of the past. Our access remains necessarily fragmented into thousands of tiny tesserae, but from them, *Excavating Antioch* has assembled images and stories that connect us to these histories and can help build our understanding of the future.

Acknowledgments

Excavating Antioch: The Archaeology of an Ancient City has been shaped by the efforts of many collaborators and supporters.

At Wellesley College, students played a central role in the project. Mabel Zawacki (class of 2024) and Ava Wilcox (class of 2025) conducted systematic cataloguing of over 120 Antioch artifacts across four US institutions, reconnecting them with excavation records in Princeton University's archives for the Excavation of Antioch-on-the-Orontes. Wilcox also coauthored the Object Catalogue and contributed to the essay on Gladys Baker. Jade Doerksen (class of 2026) and Berit Raines (class of 2027) provided essential project support.

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symposium that will accompany the exhibition and helping to shape the international scholarly dialogue around Antioch.

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Nicole Berlin wishes to express her personal gratitude to her parents—Pam Berlin and Michael Berlin—and especially to her husband, Ben Crowther. She thanks Amy Miranda, her constant cheerleader and favorite Roman mosaics collaborator, and Amanda Gilvin, whose belief in and support of this project from the very beginning made it possible.

Elizabeth Molacek warmly thanks Susanne Ebbinghaus, Peter Schertz, and Amy Brauer for their personal and professional guidance, as well as John Dobbins, whose seminar on Antioch sparked her obsession. She also expresses gratitude to her family Wendy Sepponen, Henry Molacek-Fond, her favorite companion in curiosity, and her husband, Aaron Fond.

Finally, we offer our sincere thanks to Christine Kondoleon for her steady encouragement and thoughtful guidance of this project and line of inquiry.

About the Editors

Nicole Berlin is the Associate Curator of Collections at the Davis Museum, Wellesley College, specializing in ancient Mediterranean art and archaeology. Her research focuses on Roman houses and mosaics. She co-leads the international *Excavating Antioch* project and serves as curator of the corresponding exhibition. Berlin has curated numerous exhibitions at the Davis, from early archaeological photography to ancient jewelry. Her research includes peer-reviewed publications on Roman mosaics, archaeological archives, and curatorial practice, with contributions to *Antioch-on-the-Orontes* (co-authored with Amy Miranda; Cambridge University Press, 2023), *Trends in Archive Archaeology* (Brepols, 2024), *A Second Gaze: Intertextuality and Transient Meaning in Roman Texts and Objects* (German Archaeological Institute, 2024), and *Sensory Experiences in the Roman North* (special issue, *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal*, 2023). With Elizabeth Molacek, she is currently studying wall paintings, stucco, and mosaics from Antioch held at the Princeton University Art Museum. Berlin previously held fellowships at the Walters Art Museum; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and Johns Hopkins University Archaeological Museum. Her research has been supported by Dumbarton Oaks, The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, the Kress Foundation, and the Albright Institute (Wellesley College). She holds a PhD and an MA from Johns Hopkins University and a BA from Northwestern University.

Elizabeth Molacek is an art historian specializing in ancient Mediterranean art and archaeology, with a focus on Roman wall paintings, mosaics, and collection histories. She co-leads the international *Excavating Antioch* project and serves as contributing curator of the related exhibition. She has curated and contributed to exhibitions and ongoing research initiatives, including the *Roman Domestic Art* installation and the *Tethys Project* at the Harvard Art Museums. Her work includes research on ancient mosaics and their modern past including contributions to *Archaeology of Daphne* (Brepols, 2026), *Antioch-on-the-Orontes* (Cambridge University Press, 2023), *A Quaint and Curious Volume: Essays in Honor of John Dobbins* (Archaeopress, 2021), *Animal-Shaped Vessels from the Ancient World* (Yale University Press, 2018), and *The Berlin Painter and His World* (Princeton University Press, 2017). She is also the author of "(Re)discovering Roman Wall Painting at Harvard" (*Studies in Conservation*, 2020). In collaboration with Nicole Berlin, she is studying wall paintings and other surface decoration from the 1930s Antioch excavations held at the Princeton University Art Museum in preparation for publication. Molacek has held positions at the Harvard Art Museums, the University of Virginia, and the University of Texas at Dallas, and has worked with collections at the Dallas Museum of Art and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. She holds a PhD and an MA from the University of Virginia and a BA from Rice University.

A Note to the Reader

The archaeological excavations conducted between 1932 and 1939 at Antioch-on-the-Orontes, Syria (modern-day Türkiye) were overseen by an academic consortium known as the Committee for Excavation of Antioch-on-the-Orontes but also as the Committee for the Excavation of Antioch-on-the-Orontes and Its Vicinity (CEAV). As the latter usage is more commonly used, we have employed it in this catalogue.

Cataloging of the archives of the CEAV is ongoing. The inventory identifiers used herein were current at the time of publication.

Frequently Used Abbreviations

AEC	Antioch Excavation Collection, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University
BMA	Baltimore Museum of Art
CEAV	Committee for the Excavation of Antioch-on-the-Orontes and Its Vicinity
DO	Dumbarton Oaks
HAM	Harvard Art Museums
PU	Princeton University
WAM	Worcester Art Museum

Reflections on Curating Antioch: The Lost Ancient City

Christine Kondoleon

Editors' Preface

This essay grew out of a conversation we had with Christine Kondoleon about her experience curating *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City* at the Worcester Art Museum in 2000. We wanted to hear directly about the choices and challenges involved in creating the first US exhibition devoted entirely to Antioch, and about how the project brought the city's mosaics, monumental buildings, and urban culture vividly to life for the public while fostering new scholarly and institutional connections.

In her contribution, Kondoleon offers a compelling account of the exhibition's design and execution, revealing the creative innovations in display and international collaboration that made it a landmark event. Her essay provides an essential window into curatorial practice and underscores why *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City* remains significant in ongoing discussions of museums, cultural heritage, and the interpretation of archaeological material. This work is also closely tied to the complex acquisition history—particularly the partage system—discussed by Elizabeth Molacek in Part II of this catalogue (pp. 71–78). We have sought to preserve her distinctive voice, allowing her personal narrative to resonate within the broader themes of this volume.

My interest in Antioch (modern-day Antakya, Türkiye) grew from the city's unique position as one of the richest sources of Roman mosaics in the Eastern Roman Empire. As a student at Harvard, I studied under Ernst Kitzinger and George Hanfmann, two renowned scholars of early Byzantine and Roman art. My dissertation on the mosaics of the House of Dionysos in Cyprus set the stage for a career-long engagement with mosaics as windows into ancient domestic, civic, and religious life. Antioch's unparalleled collection, coupled with its importance for understanding the transition from Roman to early Byzantine culture, drew me deeply into its world.

In the mid-1990s, when the Worcester Art Museum received a significant grant from the Lila Wallace Foundation to reinstall its antiquities collection, I was invited to consult. That consultancy soon evolved into a full-time position curating the installation of the Greek, Roman, and Egyptian galleries as well as the design and execution of a major exhibition dedicated to Antioch (FIG. 0.1). The project became a natural convergence of my scholarly interests and curatorial practice.

At the turn of the millennium, digital media were only beginning to enter the museum world. We needed to think creatively about how to bring Antioch to life for