

SE04EP08

Curating Ancient Treasures

Jamie Fontana and Nina Perdomo

H: Welcome to Noles Abroad, a podcast by Florida State University International Programs! I'm Hannah

Z: And I'm Zoe! And we are your hosts. On this podcast we'll talk about study abroad from the perspective of the students, faculty, staff, and alumni who make it an experience worth sharing. We'll also bring you travel tips and fun facts from around the globe.

Z: On today's episode, we talk with Jamie Fontana and Nina Perdomo, two classical archaeology students who recently studied abroad in Florence, Italy. Nina and Jamie discuss the museum exhibit that they curated at the Florence study center, receiving the Rodney Reeves Scholarship Award, and what their goals are for after graduation. Let's go to our conversation with Jamie and Nina now.

Z: How are you guys doing today?

Jamie (J): I'm good.

Nina (N): I'm good, how are you?

Z: Good ,doing well! we're excited to talk to you about your experiences abroad today. First off, can you each go ahead and introduce yourselves? Jamie we'll start with you.

J: Yeah of course, thank you for having us, I'm Jamie Fontana I studied abroad in Florence and I currently study Archeology, Italian, and Anthropology.

N: I'm Nina Perdomo, I studied abroad in Florence as well and I major, I double major in Classical Archeology and in Italian and I minor in Anthropology and English.

H: Why did you each choose to study abroad in Florence? Nine we'll hear from you first.

N: For me personally it's mostly because of the classical archaeology ties. Obviously, a lot of classic stuff is related to Italy so having a study abroad opportunity in Florence is such a big deal. And also because I speak Italian I feel like it all was pretty much perfect. It all kind of fits together very well.

J: Yeah I have pretty similar reasons to Nina. I've just always wanted to study abroad in Italy and I knew that FSU had like the archaeology program but they haven't been able to do that for the past 2 summers because of COVID, and I've also like studied Italian since high school and so having the chance to study abroad is just like a great opportunity to practice language and all of that.

Z: Very cool, so Dr. de Grummond and her team at the Archaeology in Tuscany study abroad program discovered some ancient coins during a dig a few years ago. Can you tell us what you know about those and the significance of some of the artifacts found at the site? And Jamie, this time start with you.

J: Yeah so the coins that they found, they found them in a small vessel at the site and there were 194 Roman silver coins inside of it. And one of the cool things about these coins is that you never see Octavian depicted as Augustus and so it helps date the coins like to the latest 27 BCE. And also at the site they have Etruscan, Roman, and medieval time periods there so there were a lot of artifacts from all of that and you

could see different materials like bronze from the Etruscan and glass from the Romans that were found in some of the wells.

N: Yeah, those coins are really cool. As Jamie already mentioned, they are from before Octavian became Augustus and a couple of them are from the Battle of Actium which is this huge battle between Octavian and Marc Anthony, so we have some coins depicting that and some of them depicting Cleopatra which is really interesting, it's like really unique. And yeah there's just a bunch of votive cups and little votive reliefs, you know the sanctuary of what this site used to, well it used to be the sanctuary. There's also what used to be an artisans quarter so there's a bunch of wool working artifacts that have been found there and things of that nature. So it's a really rich site but those coins are like the main, the stars of the show. They're really cool.

H: Yeah so y'all have gotten to have a pretty unique experience with those artifacts and with those coins that were found in that dig, so can you tell us about the museum project that you were responsible for during your time in Florence? And Nina, we can start with you this time.

N: Yeah, so we got the opportunity to curate this exhibit and everything in the exhibit at the study center was either a 3D printed replica of an actual vessel so everything is just replicas and we have images of the coins but these really, really nice images so you can look at them really closely and things like that. But yeah it was crazy to be able to place everything and curate the whole exhibit. Even though it wasn't the original artifacts, most of the 3D printed replicas look really real. All of them, except for two, were student made and they were painted and you know like they look like the texture of the real deal so it was all done really well.

J: Yeah and for the coins, the images that we showed, we were only able to show 24 images and it didn't include like 24 coins because we had the obverse and reverse of different sides of the coin. So it really narrowed it down because like as we said it was 194 coins that were found so we really had like pick which coins we thought people would enjoy the most and what people would be most interested in. And for the 3D reconstructions, with the fragments that were found at the site they had the dimensions that were able to recreate the entire like vessel or pot or whatever the object was and so that was really helpful for putting on like the whole exhibit because you could see the object fully instead of it like being chipped in places, which is really cool to see.

H: Just take a little more detail, you mentioned that this exhibit is in the study center. So students are able to go and view the curation that y'all put together, like what is that like?

N: Yeah it is in this study center which is where all the classes and things are and it's in the gallery room which is like the second floor and so it's open, everyone can go inside and take a look at it. Jamie and I had to do tours which is also really cool because we got experience curating and we got experience you know speaking in public and giving tours about everything. So we did give tours to the students and the staff but now we're not there anymore, unfortunately, to give anymore tours but we have information you know everywhere. If you take your time and read all the little things then you'll get the gist of it. So yeah it's open for people to look at, but I think they'll be taking it down in the Fall or something like that like it won't be, it's not a permanent exhibit.

J: Yeah so people are able to just go in on their own time and look at it. Because there was even someone during the trip he had like broken his nose during a soccer game and he was signed up for a tour but he

wasn't able to go to that tour eventually because he had like a doctors appointment, but he like told us later he went in by himself and he was able to read all of our signs and it was it was nice to know that he went on his own time and like looked at all of it because so we put in a lot of hard work to it.

Z: Yeah that's very cool. It's awesome that you're able to get the hands on experience with the curation and giving tours and all of it. That's awesome I wish I could go see it. Cool well, so shifting a little bit you're both selected to receive the Rodney Reeves Scholarship Award from the FSU Classics Department, can you tell us a little bit about the award and what it meant to you? And Jamie we'll hear from you first.

J: Yeah so the Rodney Reeves Scholarship Award, it gave us that opportunity to work on creating the museum displays and working as the tour guides for the exhibit once it like opened. And so we gave the tours to the class is an people able to sign up for those certain time slots and this whole experience meant a lot to me because if it weren't for Dr. Reeves I'm not sure I would have ever been able to study abroad or had this whole experience. And it was really like life changing because I've always been nervous with public speaking and all of that and so having to practice doing all the tours - and we did a lot of them in one day - it really helped me like grow and feel confident in my speaking skills.

N: Yeah and it's really similar for me. I've always you know, you hear about studying abroad and you're like wow like that's such a faraway concept, like that sounds so cool like I'd never be able to do that you know. So if it wasn't for Rodney Reeves also like I don't think that's something I would have been able to do, so it was it was something so special. And I also just really love working with Dr. De, I've been working with her since the Fall. I've just helped her you know work on little things like I helped her, I worked on some research for her online virtual museum for Cetamura and so then that kind of led to this opportunity and so this is all thanks to Rodney Reeves so I'm so grateful. I've always known I wanted to do Archaeology and Classics and museum related things but because of COVID you know there haven't really been any internship opportunities and I was supposed to go dig an archaeology site but you know COVID kind of took that chance away so I've just been nervous because I'm like, 'oh I graduate soon like you know what I'm gonna do? What if I don't like this?' But I got the chance to do a museum internship and it worked out, I really liked it so I'm glad I had this opportunity.

H: Yeah it's great to know that you that you like what you're pursuing as a career, it's good to get that experience first and it's awesome that you were able to do that in Florence and in such a place that is so connected to the field of study that you're in. But speaking of Florence you both mentioned that you're both studying Italian. How did becoming immersed in the language while you were in Florence help you learn the language or deepen your understanding or what was that like? Jamie we can start with you this time.

J: It definitely helped me realize what I had to work on because it's different from being in a classroom setting because everyone obviously speaks a lot faster than if you were just in the classroom because everyone's learning it together, we're speaking a little bit slower. So I really had to like just focus on every word that was being said but I was I was really happy with how much I could understand. I had a little trouble, difficulty with responding back but it's obviously something I'm just going to work on but I had so much fun being able to try to like converse with actual native Italian speakers and it really was just like an amazing experience to be able to do it outside of the classroom setting, in the real world.

N: Yeah I think it made me more confident in my Italian abilities because I've been studying Italian since I was 15 and I'm taking now like advanced level Italian courses so I was always like okay obviously you

know I can speak it but I didn't know how well I would thrive in a native environment. And so being there and being able to use it and having people respond to me in Italian not automatic automatically be like, 'oh you're not from here, let me just speak to you in English,' that was so satisfying. And to use it every day, it was it was great. It did jumble my brain a little bit though. I always tell my friends, it was just funny because I would speak Italian when I'm outside you know, buying things and doing that, and then I would speak in English with my friends and I would go home and then my mom would call me and she doesn't speak English, she speaks Spanish and so we would speak Spanish and by that point my brain is just scrambled and I'm saying all sorts of things. But it was it was so cool to be able to have that experience and use everything so that was satisfying for me.

Z: Very cool, that's the life of a polyglot, right? You get all your words mixed up sometimes and it gets scrambled.

N: It hurts.

Z: Right, exactly. Okay so we're interested in knowing what each of you are wanting to do after graduation. And Nina, you can start.

N: Oh well I'll definitely be going to grad school. That's a really funny and scary question because I have to start applying relatively soon, but I'll definitely go to grad school and continue with the classical archaeology museum path. And I just really like school, so I'll probably be in school until the day I die. Also because I'm terrified of going into the working world but for now that I feel like that's the plan.

J: Yeah I definitely want to go to grad school afterwards but I would love to just be able to like work on excavations or just work in a museum. Ever since I was little, I could picture myself just working in a museum. It just feels like that kind of atmosphere is for me and I could really see myself there.

H: That's great. We have one final question for each of you today and that is what advice do you have for students who are considering studying abroad? And Jamie we can hear your advice first.

J: If you're able to study abroad I would definitely say to go do it because you will meet so many different people from so many different places because a lot of people who study abroad, they are also like out of state so you meet people from out of state, meet people from the country that you're in, and it's just really worth your while.

N: I guess for advice I would say, you know go there with an open mind will be ready. Italy is very, especially you know the Florence experience our professor, Dr. de Grummond, she would always tell us, 'when you go to Florence is you know it's very good with the flow. It's you're going to have to be on your feet and like ready to you know make, to change your plans and whatever...' and I was like 'okay I mean I guess we'll see,' and when I got to Florence it was exactly like that. You know, you can have a perfect schedule and then it is ruined by like 8 in the morning. So just be light on your feet, like be open to making changes in your schedule you know, don't be so like stiff. Just kind of go with the flow and get your work done but definitely be like ready for a change.

H: Flexibility is definitely key when it comes to traveling and studying abroad. Flexibility as quickly learned when you are traveling for sure. Well Jamie and Nina thank you so much for your time today and for sharing about this incredible museum installation that y'all were able to curate and all the work that you

did for that, to be able to share it with other people at the study center and to be able to display these coins. Thank you for that work and thank you for sharing your story with us today we really appreciate it.

N: Thank you so much!

J: Of course, thank you so much.

Z: Before we disembark, let's talk about scholarships!

There are plenty of scholarships available to fund your study abroad experience. From departmental scholarships at FSU to IP scholarships to outside awards, we believe the world is within your reach. Bright Futures, Florida PrePaid, and other funding you might already have can count towards your study abroad experience.

H: You can find these scholarships listed on our website on the "students" page, under the "money matters" tab. You can also meet with a member of IP's financial team to find out how you can afford to study abroad. Visit international.fsu.edu for more information!

Z: Thanks to Jamie and Nina for talking with us today, and as always, thanks for listening!

H: This podcast is a production of FSU International Programs. The music for this podcast was composed by John Bartmann. Our logo was designed by Vanessa Guirey, who also does our sound engineering. Editing, transcription, and research is done by us, Hannah Meister and Zoë Crook.