

The Restorative Power of Digital Archaeology



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This semester, the Sterling Memorial Library Exhibits Corridor highlights the research of four extraordinary Yale students. Maria de las Mercedes Martinez (Trumbull College '16), a recent Yale graduate with a degree in Archaeological Studies, explores how new technology can allow archaeologists to create three-dimensional representations of destroyed historical sites.

Martinez's display focuses on three monuments destroyed by ISIS in 2015. Located in Palmyra, Syria, these buildings were both historically and culturally significant. Using data and models available in the public domain, Martinez created three-dimensional prints of these structures, revealing details lost in two-dimensional images. Martinez's project extends beyond archaeological interest, however; rather, she views the new field of digital archaeology as a an opportunity to preserve cultural heritage and provide a path for healing.

Throughout her research process, Martinez has made extensive use of physical artifacts and archaeological books and periodicals available through the Yale Babylonian Collection. She discovered the collection during a search for a specific book. Martinez explained her project to Ulla Kasten, an Associate Curator in the Babylonian Collection, and Kasten offered her a student position in the Collection. Kasten and Agnete Lassen, another Associate Curator, provided significant support and guidance throughout Martinez's research process.

Martinez's research is ongoing. Through the Erasmus Mundus program, Martinez will be continuing her studies in digital archaeology and archaeological sciences at the University of Evora in Portugal, the University of Sapienza in Rome, and the University of Aristotle in Thessaloniki. Learn more about Martinez's research by visiting her display in the SML Exhibition Corridor!

Written by Hilary Purrington