

**GREGORY ALLICAR
MUSEUM OF ART**

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

POMPEII ARCHIVE:

RECENT PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM WYLIE

JAN 16 – APR 21, 2018

THE GRIFFIN FOUNDATION GALLERY

**POMPEII ARCHIVE:
RECENT PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM WYLIE**

January 16 – April 21, 2018
Gregory Allicar Museum of Art
at Colorado State University

October 25 – December 5, 2018
Fine Arts Gallery
Vanderbilt University

January 18 – April 21, 2019
The Fralin Museum of Art
at the University of Virginia

Cover image:

William Wylie, detail from *Body cast, Macellum (VII.9.7), Pompeii*, 2015

Right Image:

William Wylie, detail from Plaster relief, *Gymnasium C, Stabian Baths (VII.1.8), Pompeii*, 2015





Giorgio Sommer, #1282, *Impronte Umane*, 1870-1890

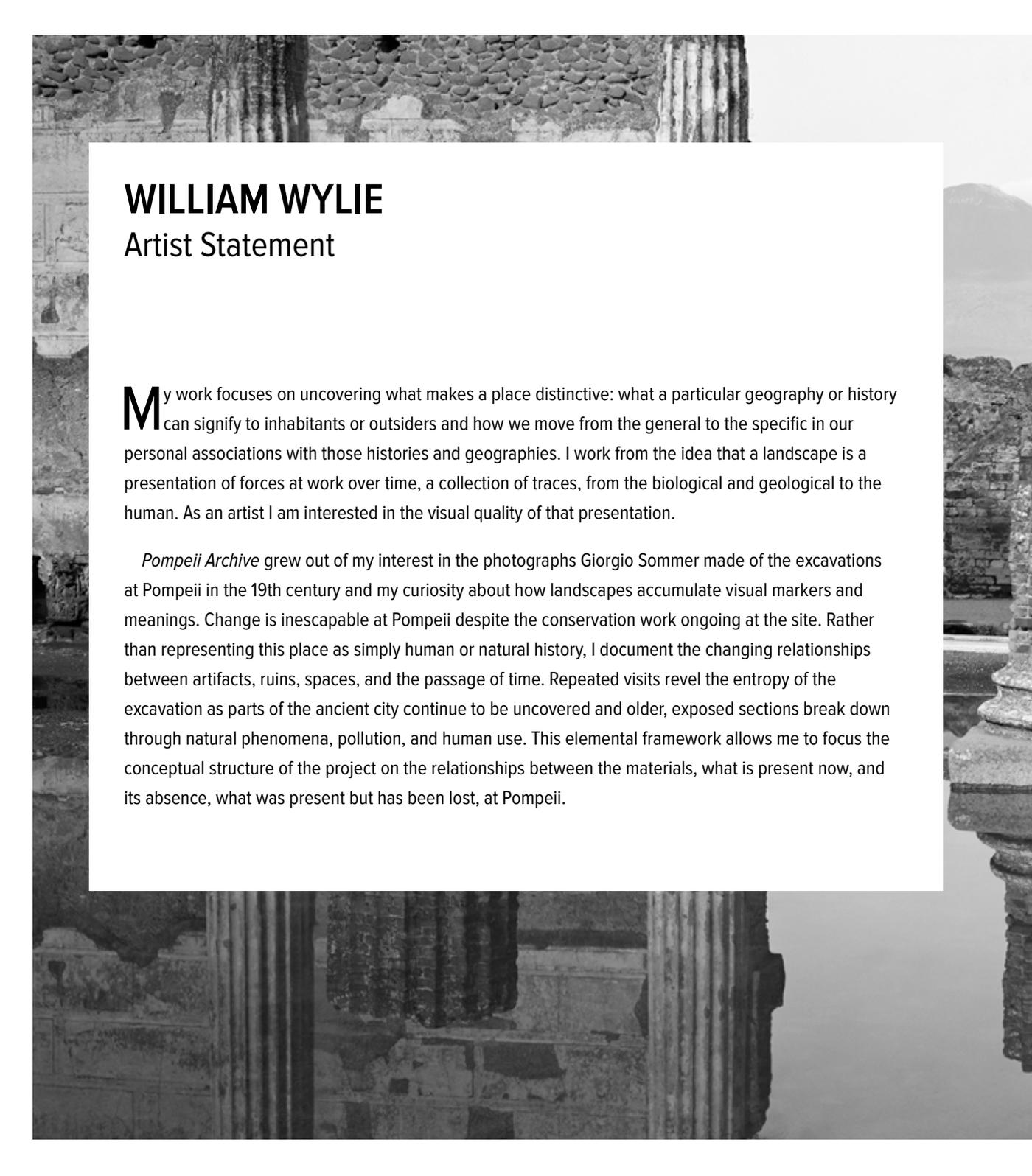
At Colorado State University, we take rightful pride in our alumni, so many of whom go on to do great things. William Wylie is one such an alumnus, and the Gregory Allicar Museum of Art could not be more pleased to have organized this exhibition of his recent work. Wylie is Professor of Art at the University of Virginia where he teaches photography, serves as Director of the Studio Art Department, and coordinates the Studio Art Study Abroad Program in Italy. He received his MFA from The University of Michigan and his BFA from Colorado State University.

Wylie's interest in the contemporary state of Pompeii was prompted by the work of Giorgio Sommer (1834–1914), a German photographer who documented the excavation of the site in the mid-nineteenth century. An avid historian and collector, Wylie began assembling Sommer's images and researching his work, particularly Sommer's strategic use of photography to flatten the picture plane and create layered and stratified images that evoked archeological processes. Offering engaging insights into the acts of discovery, restoration, and collection at the site, these photographs connect the ancient and contemporary worlds, with an art historical stop in the nineteenth century along the way. It is the kind of complex yet compelling exhibition that is exactly what we look for in our programming. We are grateful to William Wylie for the opportunity to present this important body of work.

We also thank Jae Emerling for the essay contributed to this publication. Olatz Pascariu and Francisco Leal provided Spanish translations for our exhibition texts, coordinated by Silvia Soler Gallego, and we are deeply grateful for their help. None of this would be possible without the indefatigable staff at the museum, Suzanne Hale, Keith Jentzsch, and Silvia Minguzzi, along with support throughout the university. There are far too many people to name in full here, but special thanks are due to Maggie Seymour, Kathleen Chynoweth, and Sally Alexander. In this and in all things at the museum, we are especially and eternally grateful to our founding director and chief curator, Linny Frickman, my predecessor. Her curatorial vision and strong leadership were the driving force and impetus behind this project, and indeed, everything we do.

This ongoing research, and the body of work that has resulted, was supported by Yale University's Doran Artist in Residency awards at the Sol and Carol LeWitt estate in Praiano, Italy, where Wylie was a resident in 2012 and 2015. This exhibition, part of the *Critic and Artist Residency Series*, is made possible by the FUNd at CSU.

Lynn Boland
Director and Chief Curator
Gregory Allicar Museum of Art



WILLIAM WYLIE

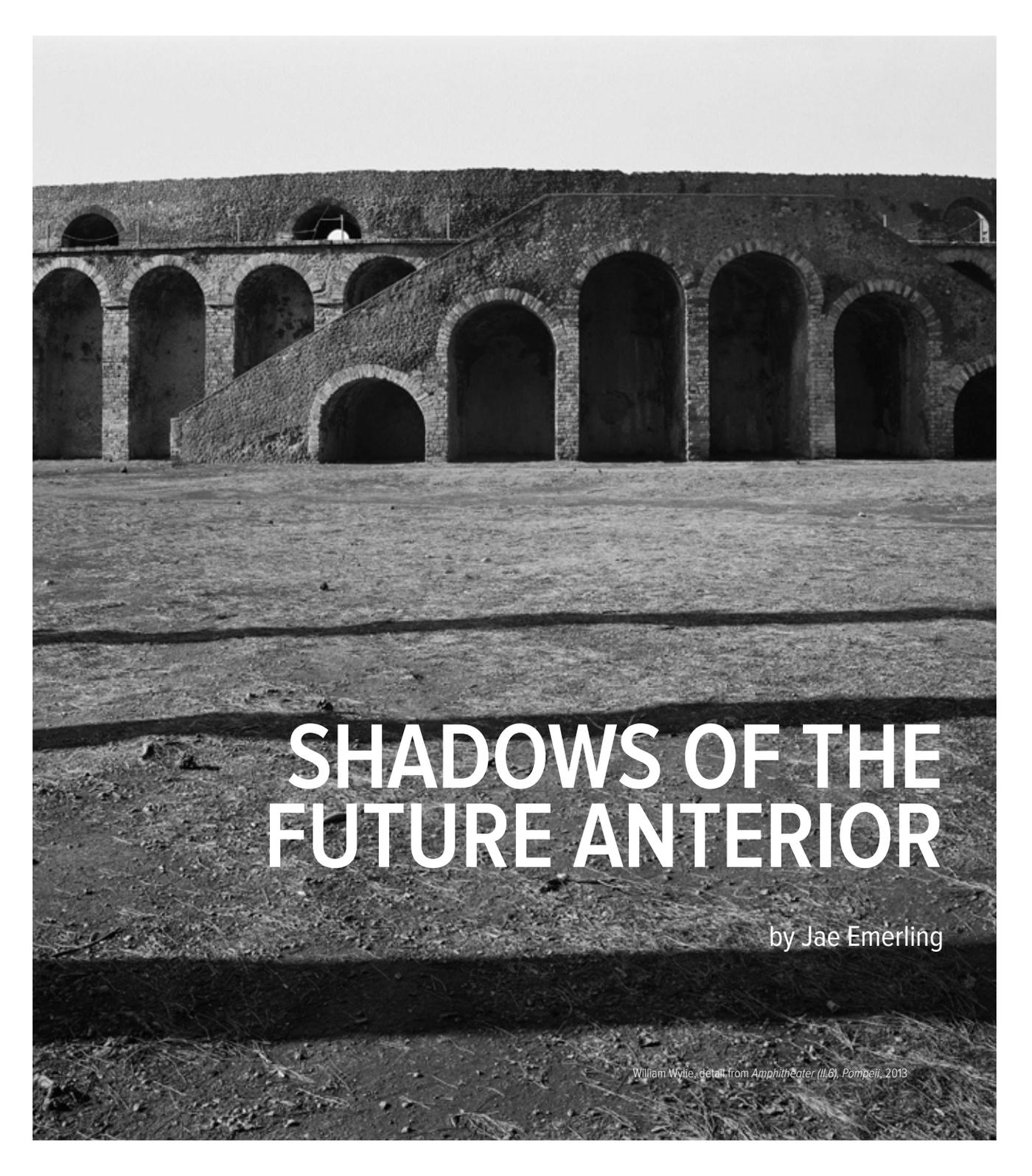
Artist Statement

My work focuses on uncovering what makes a place distinctive: what a particular geography or history can signify to inhabitants or outsiders and how we move from the general to the specific in our personal associations with those histories and geographies. I work from the idea that a landscape is a presentation of forces at work over time, a collection of traces, from the biological and geological to the human. As an artist I am interested in the visual quality of that presentation.

Pompeii Archive grew out of my interest in the photographs Giorgio Sommer made of the excavations at Pompeii in the 19th century and my curiosity about how landscapes accumulate visual markers and meanings. Change is inescapable at Pompeii despite the conservation work ongoing at the site. Rather than representing this place as simply human or natural history, I document the changing relationships between artifacts, ruins, spaces, and the passage of time. Repeated visits reveal the entropy of the excavation as parts of the ancient city continue to be uncovered and older, exposed sections break down through natural phenomena, pollution, and human use. This elemental framework allows me to focus the conceptual structure of the project on the relationships between the materials, what is present now, and its absence, what was present but has been lost, at Pompeii.



William Wylie, detail from *Basilica (VIII.1), Pompeii*, 2013



SHADOWS OF THE FUTURE ANTERIOR

by Jae Emerling

William Wylie, detail from *Amphitheater (II.6)*, Pompeii, 2013

...the question of the archive is not, we repeat, a question of the past...It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what that will have meant, we will only know in times to come... What happens when a historian promises to keep a secret on the subject of an archive? Who does this? Is he still a historian? To whom does he promise?

Jacques Derrida

Of course, this is one of the really important things about art, that you can make more than you can understand at the moment the thing is being made. But the gap between what we recognize inside ourselves – our feelings – and our ability to trust ourselves and to trust exposing ourselves to those ideas can be great.

Emmet Gowin

Encountering an archive such as this is a transformative experience. William Wylie's Pompeii Archive is an encounter in the truest sense because it belies simple reading or viewing pleasure, which is not to say that it is experimental, abstruse, or visually displeasing. Far from it. Rather, it is untimely. One encounters this collection of images like a message from the nineteenth century that has only just belatedly arrived in another millennium,

in another world. Intimate, haunting, elliptical – Wylie's archive offers us nothing of the past. On the contrary, it presents us with an intensified aesthetic experience, one that complicates documentary strategies, whether historicist or conceptual. It offers an experience at once aesthetic and epistemic, sensible and intelligible because each image is an intense play of light and shadow that renders the presumed solidity of the present a supreme fiction.



William Wylie, *Sanctuary of Apollo (VIII.7.32), Pompeii*, 2013

Here we have an archive that understands how and why it is incapable of archiving Pompeii: the actual archaeological site and its metaphoricity within a Western cultural imaginary. Images of Pompeii inhere and form an inexhaustible archive that becomes part of the event itself. The eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE, the disappearance of the buried site, “frozen in time” as they say, until its re-discovery in 1748, its primacy in the nineteenth-century Romantic mind as *memento mori*, its postwar presence as the most moving image in Rossellini’s *Viaggio in Italia*, and as a contemporary tourist image repeated ad infinitum across social media. Working with and against all of this, Wylie’s art work gives us the duration of an event: the future anterior becoming of Pompeii, as a proper name, as a transmitted memory image. Wylie has given us untimely, beautiful, temporal-cartographic images for the twenty-first century: images of a future anterior.

Wylie’s vision coalesces here into a set of images of Pompeii as we have seen and imagined it, but they are traversed by what it will have become for us after encountering his archive of images. His images of

Pompeii and its representations (the archaeological taxonomic cases, the vitrines and casts, the geological effacements) situate us within the duration of an event, within a threshold between historicist and aesthetic images. Wylie’s photographs allow us to understand that an event undergoes becoming (it becomes otherwise, unfolds, redoubles and splits off) right before our eyes and yet always partially out of frame. They allow us to acknowledge that we become part of an event and change ourselves through our encounter with it. The archive as what you will have become. In doing so Wylie forces us to recollect that the future anterior is the one tense that renders an artwork vital for this millennium. For an artwork to be vital, relevant and revenant, it operates following a simple yet generative and affective logic that Sol LeWitt would have admired: a photograph is a past-future temporality. Encountering the logic of these images one is also left assured that Wylie is capable of transmitting how and why art still remains, still affects, and still generates sense-events that force us to think and to feel beside ourselves.





William Wylie, detail from *Peristyle, House of the Colored Capitals (VII.4.31), Pompeii*, 2015

Contemplating Wylie's Pompeii Archive I was struck by how Pompeii expresses the entire prehistory of photography. All of the language we use to understand Pompeii anticipates that of photography: stasis and movement, a moment frozen in time, presence and absence, the relation of surface and depth, the play of light and shadow (intensified chiaroscuro), a framed vignette instigating often fictional narratives, displaced and mistaken desire for positivist meaning, and a complex, immanent temporality. Simply put, the manner in which we talk about Pompeii is precisely how we discuss a photographic image. Wylie senses this secret link: Pompeii as a photographic image of thought.

For this reason, he labors to convey the expressive singularities of the materials that compose Pompeii: the texturology of surfaces, the indifferent ennui of sunlight, the weight of shadow traversing a scene like a gravitational force pulling all of the objects, lines, and surfaces into new, unique arrangements. Erosion and reflection. Structure and façade. Fragments and openings. Collections and bones.

The gestures of the figures and the handles of the amphora. Series of columns and passages. Scaffolding and nature. All of this assembled into photographs, artworks of the highest order. Artworks that situate us within the labyrinth of an event that erodes any notion of a preexisting, independent reality.

An event is inseparable from its representations and yet cannot be reduced to them. It is this relation of immanence between an event and its representations (images, discourse) that defers even its own archival completion. To complete an archive would mean to reduce the virtual to the actual, the event to its representations. This would mean death. Instead Wylie maintains an opening between an event and its representation, an opening as ellipsis, a duration, a becoming. He gives us an artwork as a temporal passage transmitting an event to an unknown future. Wylie composes and deframes an archive in order to render each individual photograph an aesthetic passage that allows the event and its representation, past and future to become a vital, mutable, interdependent, anachronistic, porous, affective ensemble.



William Wylie, *Walls (Pompeian building)*, Pompeii, 2013

Thus Wylie's archive offers us an aesthetic life, one that Italo Calvino expressed as being "*conceived from outside the self, a work that would let us escape the limited perspective of the individual ego, not only to enter into selves like our own but to give speech to that which has no language, to the bird perching on the edge of the gutter, to the tree in spring and the tree in fall, to stone, to cement, to plastic*"... to life as such.

The promise of this archive requires the historian to remain silent, to keep the secret of this ellipsis in admiration of and in confidence with an artist possessing such an aesthetic vision. Wylie's elliptical archive bears within it the ontological and temporal promise of art. It evokes what it will have been for us if only we keep its subterranean logic secret. It remains to be seen.

Jae Emerling is a Professor of modern and contemporary art in the College of Arts +Architecture at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte. He is the Director of the College of Arts + Architecture Honors Program. In 2011 he was visiting professor of contemporary art in the Faculty of Arts at VU Amsterdam. He received his Ph.D. in Art History from the University of California, Los Angeles. He is the author of *Theory for Art History* (2005) and award-winning *Photography: History and Theory* (2012), both published by Routledge. His work has also appeared in the *Journal of Visual Culture*, *History of Photography*, *CAA Reviews*, *Journal of Art Historiography*, and the Los Angeles based magazine *X-TRA: Contemporary Art Quarterly*.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

WILLIAM WYLIE

All works courtesy of the artist unless otherwise specified

Walls (Pompeian building), Pompeii, 2013

Archival pigment print
37 x 45 in.

Basilica (VIII.1), Pompeii, 2013

Archival pigment print
37 x 45 in.

Inside the Cella, Sanctuary of Apollo (VII.7.32), Pompeii, 2013

Archival pigment print
37 x 45 in.

Amphitheater (II.6), Pompeii, 2013

Archival pigment print
45 x 56 in.

Sanctuary of Apollo (VIII.7.32), Pompeii, 2013

Archival pigment print
37 x 45 in.

Triclinium, House of Apollo (VI.7.23), Pompeii, 2013

Archival pigment print
37 x 45 in.

Find trays, Granary (VII.7.29), Pompeii, 2015

Archival pigment print
19 x 24 in.

Room 6 from Atrium, House of Epidius Rufus

(IX.1.20), Pompeii, 2015
Archival pigment print
37 x 45 in.

Looking east, Amphitheater (II.6), Pompeii, 2015

Archival pigment print
19 x 24 in.

Stairs and columns (Pompeian building), Pompeii, 2013

Archival pigment print
19 x 24 in.

Plaster relief, Gymnasium C, Stabian Baths

(VII.1.8), Pompeii, 2015
Archival pigment print
37 x 45 in.

Body cast, Macellum (VII.9.7), Pompeii, 2015

Archival pigment print
37 x 45 in.

Room 9, House of the Ceii (I.6.15), Pompeii, 2015

Archival pigment print
19 x 24 in.

Peristyle, House of the Colored Capitals (VII.4.31), Pompeii, 2015

Archival pigment print
45 x 56 in.

Atrium and garden, House of the Dioscuri (VI.9.6), Pompeii, 2017

Archival pigment print
37 x 45 in.

Body casts, House of the Golden Bracelet (VI.17.42), Pompeii, 2017

Archival pigment print
37 x 45 in.

Molds to form body casts, House of the Golden Bracelet (VI.17.42), Pompeii, 2017

Archival pigment print
37 x 45 in.

Artifact storage, Granary (VII.7.29), Pompeii, 2017

Archival pigment print
19 x 24

GIORGIO SOMMER

#1281, Sanctuary of Apollo, 1870-1890,

Albumen print
8 x 10 in. framed to 14 x 17 in.
From the collection of John and Kathy Dobbins

#1255, Strada Mercurio, 1870-1890,

Albumen print
8 x 10 in., framed to 14 x 17 in.
From the collection of John and Kathy Dobbins

#1217, Teatro Greco, 1870-1890,

Albumen print
8 x 10 in., framed to 14 x 17 in.
From the collection of John and Kathy Dobbins

#1269, Sanctuary of Apollo, 1870-1890,

Albumen print
8 x 10 in., framed to 14 x 17 in.
From the collection of John and Kathy Dobbins

#1225, Basilica, 1870-1890,

Albumen print
8 x 10 in., framed to 14 x 17 in.
From the collection of John and Kathy Dobbins

#1246, Mausoleo nella Casa Epi di Sabina, 1870-1890,

Albumen print
8 x 10 in., framed to 14 x 17 in.
From the collection of John and Kathy Dobbins

#1286, Pompeii, 1870-1890,

Albumen print
8 x 10 in., framed to 14 x 17 in.
From the collection of William Wylie

#1202, Pompeii, 1870-1890,

Albumen print
8 x 10 in., framed to 14 x 17 in.
From the collection of John and Kathy Dobbins

Grid of six albumen prints, 1870-1890,
8 x 10 in., each framed to 14 x 17 in.

#1279, Impronte Umane

#1287, Impronte

#1238, Impronte Umane Trovato

#1234, Impronte Umane

#1282, Impronte Umane

#1250, Impronte Umane

From the collection of William Wylie

Pompeii, 1870-1890

Album of 50 mounted albumen prints
From the collection of William Wylie



William Wylie, *Looking east, Amphitheater (II.6), Pompeii*, 2015



Giorgio Sommer, #1217, *Teatro Greco*, 1870-1890

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