

Archaeological Institute of America – Los Angeles Society



Founded in 1903 the AIA – LA society is one of the oldest AIA chapters in the USA.

Member Spotlight

This is part of an ongoing series of profiles presenting the many talented and diverse members of AIA-LA.

Luis Rodriguez-Perez

Luis is enrolled in the graduate archaeology program at UCLA, which puts him in an excellent position to be our graduate student liaison. He knows first-hand how difficult it is to maintain that overworked student life while developing a budding career path of fieldwork and publications.



Born in the Old Havana district of Cuba’s capital, Luis came to the USA when he was seven and brought with him a love of drawing. At a young age he began to make sketches of the beautiful decadence into which Old Havana had fallen. And he then imagined how other cities would have looked long ago, drawing more sketches to make them come alive. London, Rome, Paris, Alexandria and Rhodes sprang from his pencil points in all their glory. Somewhere along the line he became captivated by archaeology and the discovery of how people had lived in those days.

That was how he came to be doing fieldwork on the Columbian islands of Providencia and Santa Catalina in 2019 when a truly moving experience happened. His team’s ethnographic investigation required them to obtain oral histories from people on the islands. In those private sessions they heard so many touching stories that family-like relationships arose with the people there. If he could have one wish, it would be for everyone to experience how fieldwork can be about more than things—it can be about the people who still live in these places and their heritage.



When Luis talks with college students now, he assures them the great experiences of working in the field are not out of reach. Resources are there to help them, including those at AIA-LA.

He was also able to do a year abroad as an undergraduate at USC. That time in Greece took him to excavation and survey sites on the Cyclades islands and at Aigai, the first capital of the kingdom of Macedonia. It was like living in another world. He wants every student to have days like that. And when you hear the sincerity in his voice, you just know he will be helping to make it happen.

— Interview by Sanford Holst