



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.

### **Maria Carolina Zensen-Simoës**

Maria Carol, as she is known to her friends, is a sophomore at USC majoring in archaeology. She also serves as the undergraduate student liaison for AIA-LA. It was easy for her to pick up this AIA role in September from Lauren Malkoun because they were friends at USC.



Even though she is from Brazil, Maria Carol has adjusted to life in Southern California fairly quickly. This adaptability naturally grew from her many travels to Europe from Rio de Janeiro when growing up. She even lived in Italy as an exchange student during 2019 and became fluent in Italian. It was supposed to be a full year in Southern Italy but that was cut short by the Covid crisis. Even so, she remembers Italy fondly because it was there that she fell in love with the excavations of remarkable Roman and Greek finds in the Apulia region, Pompeii and Rome. And right away she knew she wanted to do more with archaeology. That is how she came to be at USC.



But there is another side to Maria Carol. She is a bit of an activist by nature and likes to do things. In 2020 she was involved with the Latin American Leadership Academy and had to carry out a project of some kind. So she jumped into the public agitation over leveling an indigenous village within Rio de Janeiro to make it into a parking lot for the massive Maracanã soccer stadium.

If you know the soccer frenzy in Brazil, you know a project like this cannot be stopped. But they were not counting on Maria Carol and her friends. She worked with other activists to block the leveling of that village which sits on land with 500 years of history. The final victory has not been won yet, but three years later the village is still there. So keep in mind when you give Maria Carol a project, you may get much more than you expected.

— Interview by Sanford Holst