



**THE 2007 SEASON OF EXCAVATION AND STUDY AT VILLA A (“OF POPPAEA”) AT OPLONTIS
(TORRE ANNUNZIATA, SOPRINTENDENZA ARCHEOLOGICA DI POMPEI):
NEW EVIDENCE FOR FOURTH-STYLE RENOVATION**

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The Oplontis Project's third excavation season, 20 May-9 June, 2007, focused on documenting invasive disturbances of modern construction crews engaged in waterproofing the perimeter of the building, constructing large basins to capture runoff from the modern roofs, as well as conservators cleaning and consolidating frescoes and mosaic floors. These crews opened eight undocumented trenches during our absence. We first re-cleaned the most important of these, a trench opened in the floor of oecus 15 by workmen searching for an ancient water conduit; remains of second century CE pottery suggest that post-eruption activity, perhaps the digging of a well, was responsible for the lacuna in the pavement evident at the time of excavation (1964-70). We opened two new trenches: one which investigated the strata under the cocchiopesto pavement of swimming pool 96, and another which studied the area to the southwest of the swimming pool. Despite the complex stratigraphy and disturbed archaeological contexts, we were able to document and date restoration phases of the ancient villa. Among numerous fragments of ceramics, stucco, marble, and painted plaster, the most remarkable find was a part of the original Third-Style decoration of room 8, found at the depth of 1.5 m. It was part of the frieze zone of the original version of either the east or the west wall of 8, the portions now decorated in imitation of the original Third Style visible on the north and south walls. Like the original frieze, the ground is porphyry red, not black as in the imitations. Until now, all of the fragments have been datable to the Fourth-Style decoration. We now know that at least one Third-Style wall, firmly dated to 1-15 CE, was also demolished and transported 100 meters to fill an area at least 1.5 m. lower than the CE 79 terrace to the south of the pool.



