

The Oriental Institute Museum

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According to the official records of attendance, the Museum received its two-millionth visitor on Tuesday, November 27, 1973, and this notable occasion was celebrated with photographs and with token gifts to all present. The records show further that the highly esteemed volunteer docents gave scheduled tours to groups from one public and one parochial elementary school in Chicago, and to others from Northbrook, Mt. Prospect, and Cicero, Illinois, on that day—a fairly typical sample of geographical distribution.

Progress has been made in the reinstallation of the exhibits of Egyptian art. Arrangements in the two large new cases have been completed: one now shows the sculpture of Dynasties IV–XII, and the other, the sculpture of Dynasty XVIII to the Ptolemaic Period. In order to give the best of our collection the space it needs, an additional alcove will be devoted to sculpture and painting, and a policy of rotation may prove necessary.

It is a special pleasure to report that, as a result of support and encouragement from many sides, there have been solid advances in the area of the preservation of the collection.

Through the efforts of Directors Hughes and Brinkman, the University was persuaded to establish the position of Museum Conservator, and the quest for a suitably qualified person has been active for a considerable time. It was Mr. Brinkman who, on a visit to London, eventually found the answer. Miss Barbara J. Hall visited us last spring and assumed the position in September. Miss Hall is a graduate of Bucknell University; she has pursued graduate studies in Near



Visitors on November 27, 1973, the celebration of the Museum's achievement of 2,000,000 in recorded attendance. Photo by Jean Grant

Eastern art and archeology at Columbia; she received the Diploma with Distinction in the conservation and restoration of archeological materials from the Institute of Archaeology, University of London, and thereafter worked in this field at the British Museum for two years. In Chicago, she has undertaken programs in the treatment of Egyptian limestone reliefs and of the entire collection of metals and has treated many other objects as needed for exhibition or study purposes. In addition, she has begun an investigation of the difficult problems of the preservation treatment of leather, and has planned programs for the improved conservation and storage of textiles, cuneiform tablets, and metals.

Work of this kind requires adequate and well equipped laboratory space. Upon the designation of a suitable location in our preciously scarce basement work area, Miss Hall planned such a laboratory, which was made possible by a most generous and deeply appreciated gift of \$10,000 from the Women's Board of the University of Chicago. By this means, the space was enclosed and provided with utilities, proper furniture, and the basic equipment necessary for the work. There remains a need for certain pieces of equipment, but the



Statue of the confectioner Tjen-enti, of the Fourth or Fifth Dynasty installed in the revised exhibit of Egyptian art. Photo by Ursula Schneider

laboratory was essentially complete and ready for a visit of the Steering Committee of the Women's Board, with exhibits of work in progress, on June 7, and for an Open House for faculty, staff, and students later the same day.

Other generous contributions to the conservation program have been made, in this year and preceding years, by Mr. and Mrs. Leigh B.

Block, Mr. and Mrs. Isak V. Gerson, and Mr. and Mrs. John Livingood. These gifts are gratefully acknowledged.

The survey of the climate control, security, and storage needs of the Museum, mentioned last year, was completed in October, 1973. This project was supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a federal agency, and by an equal grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. A feasible plan for the climate control of the existing building was developed; the estimated cost, at 1974 prices, came to \$2,429,800. The problem of storage was found to consist of overcrowding and lack of sufficient space for current and future needs, both in storage and exhibit areas, but short-term remedies to certain specific needs have been applied or are in progress. It appeared from the study of the problem of physical security that a thorough solution must await the time of more extensive work on the building; however, by the end of the year, work was under way on improvements made possible by additional University funds.

The consultants for the above survey were Alfred Jakstas, conservator of paintings, The Art Institute of Chicago, Edward J. Walsh, associate university architect, and Howell Engineers, Inc., of Chicago.

There have been several changes in the Museum staff during the year. Mrs. Ursula W. Schneider retired after many years of valuable and devoted service as the Oriental Institute's photographer. Because of her husband's appointment to the Institute's Luxor staff, Mrs. Susan J. Allen left her position as office secretary. For similar reasons, Mrs. Linda T. Kastan could not continue as reference secretary.

We are fortunate in having these places capably filled by Miss Jean Grant, photographer, Mrs. Cherrye Frink, office secretary, and Mrs. Ruth T. Marcanti, reference secretary.

The work of the Museum was ably advanced by the part-time assistance of three students through all or the greater part of the year. Mr. Edward J. Brovanski assisted in the office, specializing in Egyptological matters. Miss Wendy Keeney assisted Miss Franke in the care of the collection. Mr. Raymond Tindel continued with the conservation of cuneiform tablets and assisted Mr. Hanson in the preparation of exhibits.