

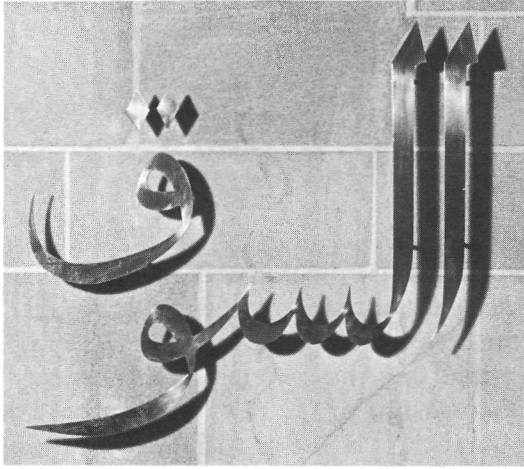
## THE SUQ

*Ruth Marcanti*

**T**H E R O L E of museum shops has changed greatly in recent years. Shops have emerged from dark corners in museum lobbies into public view. Many museums throughout the country are creating new shops or expanding present ones. It has always been realized that museum shops contribute a great deal of capital to their institutions, but a shop is more than just a fund raiser: it is there also to assist the museum in the dissemination of knowledge. It is there to preserve the interest the museum has sparked in an individual by offering mementos to take home with him, from post cards to mummy-bead necklaces. Every item the Suq carries is one which bears some relation to the Oriental Institute's collections or scholarly work. The merchandise falls into several categories—reproductions from our artifacts and other museums', imports from the Near East including contemporary crafts, and of course books, posters, and the like. Our docents learn as much as they can about each item's history, creator, and so on, and pass along this information to their customers.

Fortunately, besides performing an educational service we do make money! Our income for the past three years shows substantial growth. In 1975/76 our gross sales totaled \$62,500. Then in 1976/77 we jumped almost 60% to \$98,700, this increase largely due to the Tutankhamun show. We followed in 1977/78 with \$103,600, an increase of almost 5% over the previous year. Next year we'll try to beat that! Profits from these sales go to underwrite expenses for the Institute's library, the Research Archives.

I think several factors are responsible for our increase in sales: increased exposure to the public, through the Tutankhamun show and the Chicago Transit Authority's Culture Bus; sales from our very first large-format catalog; our



“The Suq” in polished brass Arabic lettering; calligraphy by John Carswell, metalwork by Raymond D. Tindel and Mr. Carswell

new 10% discount to our members, faculty, and staff; our first public sale, which began on Members’ Day; and, most of all, our wonderful volunteers, who really know how to sell our merchandise!

In May of 1978 I attended the Museum Store Association convention in Seattle: the Suq has been a member of this organization for many years. The annual meeting gives museum shop people a chance to meet with one another to discuss common problems and solutions, to listen to informative lectures, to visit other museum shops, and to attend a major trade show open only to dealers with museum-related merchandise. This year’s meeting was extremely enlightening, and I hope we have been able to put into practice at the Suq some of the suggestions passed around there.

The Suq was fortunate to have Georgie Maynard join the office staff as a volunteer and we thank her for all her marvelous help. We also want to thank all our other Suq volunteers—Leonard Byman, Peggy Carswell, Susan Duda, Evelyn Dyba, Agatha Elmes, Barbara Frey, Kay Ginther, Susan Goldhamer, Mary Irons, Jo Jackson, Mable Jackson, Cindy Johnson, Irene Koinis, Mary Schloerb, Mary Schulman, Karen Shymkus, Gert Silberman, Joyce Smith, Frances Studebaker, Opel Sucharetza, Barbara Watson, and Mary White; and a special thanks to Eleanor Swift.