

The Museum Education Program

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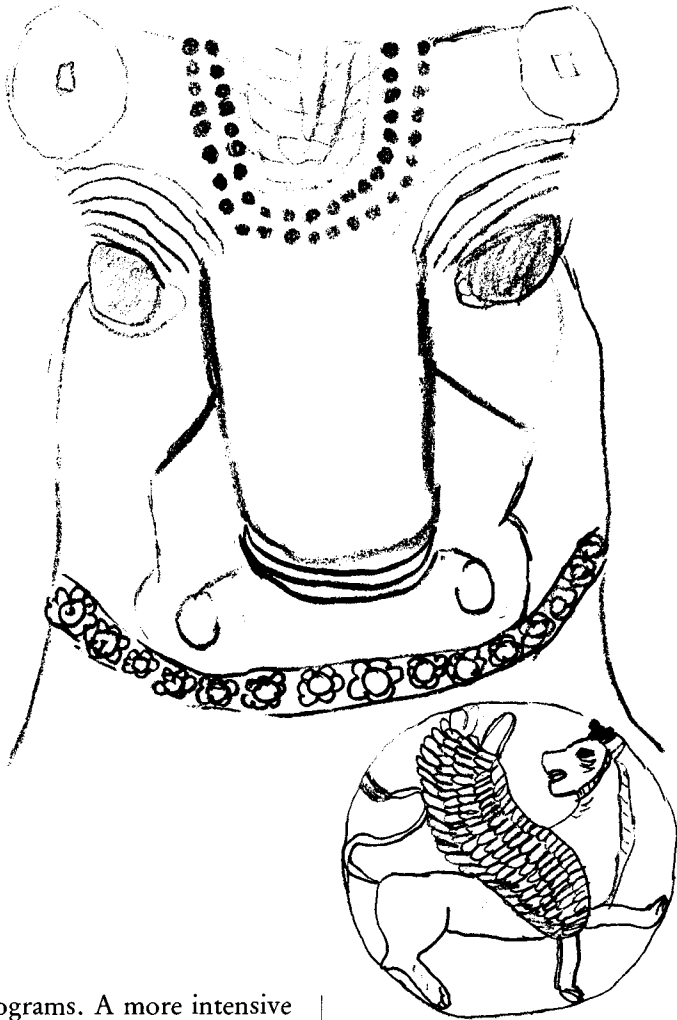
The 1981–82 academic year marked the second full year of the Museum Education program, funded in part by a gift from the Women's Board of the University. It was a year of continuation and expansion of programs directed toward our primary educational goal: helping teachers and students to a finer appreciation of the Museum collection and a fuller understanding of the civilizations it represents.

With the support of a grant from the Illinois Arts Council the Advanced Level Teacher's Kit was completed in November, 1981. This manual of educational materials, designed specifically for high school teachers and students, is a companion to the Elementary Teacher's Kit developed during the previous year. Both Kits contain materials to be used at school in preparation for a visit as well as gallery guide sheets students can use at the Museum.

Over 300 of these Kits have been purchased by teachers, and during the past year more than 1200 students used guide sheets from the Kits as a supplementary educational activity after their gallery tour.

Another kind of educational material piloted this year is a collection of slides with accompanying narrative that teachers can borrow to use in their classrooms. "Introduction to Mesopotamia" is the first of a series which will include cultures and topics related to the Oriental Institute collection. These will be an important resource adaptable to classes of various ages and interests and will be useful either as preparation for a visit or as an alternative for classes unable to make a Museum trip.

Workshops for teachers constitute an important part of the work of the Education Coordinator. Over the past year several workshops were given to acquaint teachers with the Museum and its educational potential and



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programs. A more intensive 32-hour workshop featuring a "Survey of the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East" was offered in conjunction with the Members Course of the same title, which consisted of eight 2-hour lectures by Professors Gibson, Brinkman, Kantor,

Drawings from a children's workshop.



Children's Workshop on Archaeology. This boy samples an archaeological task as he pieces together the sherds of a plate.

Baer, Wentz, and Stager. In each afternoon workshop session, open to teachers only, we discussed any questions arising from the morning lectures, surveyed the history of the culture or time period involved, and spent an hour in related gallery study. Workshop attendees included elementary school teachers,

high school art, humanities and history teachers, and two college teachers, reflecting the range of educators who use the Museum as a resource for professional growth.

The popular Saturday morning Children's Workshops were offered again in January, with the introduction of new topics in this

Archaeology workshop. A smile of satisfaction attends completion.



series. Each workshop includes gallery work related to the topic and student participation in a project or activity that reinforces some aspect of the gallery work. These sessions are not just educational experiences for the children who participate; they are testing grounds for the development of new educational ideas and programs for our work with teachers.

Another proving ground for new ideas is the summer program of Special Interest Gallery Tours for children, pioneered by Thursday morning docents led by captain Kitty Picken. These half-hour gallery talks focus on a topic of special interest to children and attract both occasional and regular attendees. The less fully scheduled calendar during the summer months permits the luxury of programming at our own initiative, giving us opportunities to explore with visitors a more limited topic in greater depth. The success of these publicly announced tours for children led to the scheduling of similar special interest tours for adults. Both programs, begun in Summer, 1981 are being repeated and expanded for Summer, 1982.

Educational service to the public means making the Museum available to the widest possible range of visitors, including those who are handicapped. Among the disabled, the visually handicapped are perhaps the most difficult to integrate at the Oriental Institute where none of the artifacts can be touched. As a result of two interviews taped with CRIS (Chicagoland Radio Information Services, which broadcasts on a special wave-length to handicapped persons), a blind visitor requested a tour. The visitor was offered a number of reproductions to handle at appropriate times during the tour to help him understand the descriptions and comments of the guide. While our preparation for this visit had concentrated on enabling the visitor to "see" the Museum objects through description and handling of reproductions, docent Terry Friedman reported that he was equally or more interested in her commentary on the cultures related to the objects. Thus we are reminded of the value to visitors of the well-informed volunteer teacher, whose

interpretive remarks put into historical and cultural context the objects displayed in the Museum.

As the preceding paragraph attests, the educational programs developed and instituted by the Education Coordinator are, in large part, carried out by the docents, who are the primary gallery educators. To all of them for their cooperation, invaluable ideas and perceptive comments, this office offers not only its thanks but

its admiration. Special acknowledgment is extended to Jackie Bagley, Joan Bessey, Georgie Maynard, and Kitty Picken, docents who have helped with Children's and Teacher's Workshops in addition to their regular gallery duties. It is only with the continued cooperation of the docents and the Volunteer Chairman, Peggy Grant, that the work of the Education Coordinator expands and develops in its outreach to students and teachers.