



Museum Education

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An abiding concern of the Museum Education Program is to enlarge its audience. Reaching a teacher who, in turn, reaches entire classrooms of students is a primary avenue to this goal. For example, one educator who regularly attends our teacher's workshops, is an art coordinator in a suburban school system. She reaches nine hundred students each week. With this ripple effect in mind, a major concentration of the Education Program continues to be teacher education.

A special Teacher's Day was held in the Spring, in order to acquaint teachers with our programs and resources. By invitation, workshops were given for public school elementary teachers through the cultural organization, Urban Gateways, and for high school social studies department heads through the Chicago Board of Education Curriculum Bureau.

Other workshops given at the Museum focused on another major concern of the Education Program — broadening the knowledge of teachers about specific aspects of ancient Near Eastern culture and, at the same time, helping them to see ways in which this information may be used in their classrooms. This past year art projects were emphasized as a way to integrate material into the curriculum. The process of creating an art work based on an object seen at the Museum helps the student to "see" that object with a fuller understanding than is gained by visual apprehension alone. Further, it offers a way for the student to make that artifact a part of his or her own experience in a very personal and memorable way. Most teacher workshops throughout the year, therefore, included an art component; teachers learned to make cylinder seals using self-hardening clay, a replica of the Megiddo game board, copies of Egyptian amulets, cardboard pyramid models, and a colored paper mosaic lion patterned after the lion from the Processional Way in Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon.

A special Teacher's Workshop was held in conjunction with the temporary exhibit "Quest for Prehistory" with a talk and tour of the exhibit by the archaeologists Robert and Linda Braidwood. Background materials and suggested classroom activities were distributed to the teachers attending. To encourage docents to incorporate this important display into their school tours information



A drawing of King Tut done by a St. James School fourth-grader following their museum visit.

was likewise made available to them. For visiting children, a complete-the-drawings booklet was produced, guiding them to objects in the permanent collection which are related to agriculture in the ancient Near East — grinding stones from Iran, scenes of food preparation in Egypt, the husking tray from Iraq — all directed toward illustrating the concept of food production as the basis of human life. Often we find that our young visitors, whose lifestyles in modern high-technology society are far removed from those of early food producers, are not even aware that their daily bread begins as grain.

A third grant from the Illinois Arts Council funded in part several projects of the Education Program in 1982-83. It enabled the development of slide sets with narrative scripts for rental to teachers as a classroom tool. Parent-child workshops and the Sunday free films for the general public both have been supported by this grant.

The work of the Education Program goes hand in hand with that of the Volunteer Guides — the gallery teachers — under the direction of Peggy Grant. Specialized tours or multiple visits by the same group of students may require special knowledge on the part of the docents. Research and development of these programs is the responsibility of the Education Coordinator who plans them with the teacher, suggests classroom preparation, and at the same time prepares materials and suggests techniques for the docents who are to lead the group. Such specialized programs provide learning opportunities for the Education and Volunteer staff; for example, we were surprised and gratified to find that we could develop a highly worthwhile tour stressing the uses of energy and environment in the ancient Near East *once we looked at the collection with that topic in mind*. While not the usual fare, these programs result in new insights that then enrich the typical every-day tour of a more general nature.

The most ambitious of special programs this year was planned for a local public school second grade class who visited the Museum six times during their study of ancient Egypt. In addition to the special tours and classroom projects, drawings the students made from Museum objects furnished the preliminary studies for a class mural rendered finally in a variety of cloth colors and textures and hung in the classroom to which docents and the Education Coordinator were invited for a feast Egyptian style and an original class play entitled “Royal Death in Ancient Egypt.”

In addition to the topics mentioned above, the Education Program continued efforts in the several directions of its work. Almost one hundred Teacher’s Kits were sold throughout the school year, numerous slide talks given, many consultations shared with teachers, children’s workshops offered, special interest tours scheduled. Special acknowledgment goes to the docents whose participation makes possible the Saturday children’s workshops — Kitty Picken and Jackie Bagley, to the Thursday afternoon docents who worked with the Ray School project — Elizabeth Spiegel, Laurie Fish, Janet Helman and Anita Greenberg, and indeed to all the docents, and especially Peggy Grant, without whose efforts the Museum Education Program would be a mere shadow of its present self.