

## M U S E U M



## The Oriental Institute Museum

*John Carswell*

As I have been actively engaged in research for the second year running, my responsibilities as Curator have been nominal, which has perhaps made me more than usually aware of the great amount of activity among the museum staff, the details of which I can only begin to outline. First I must put on record my profound thanks to Barbara Hall, who as Acting Curator has assumed an enormous responsibility on top of her normal work as the Institute's Conservator. This has been no easy task, and the continued smooth operation of the Museum has been largely due to her energy and wise counsel.

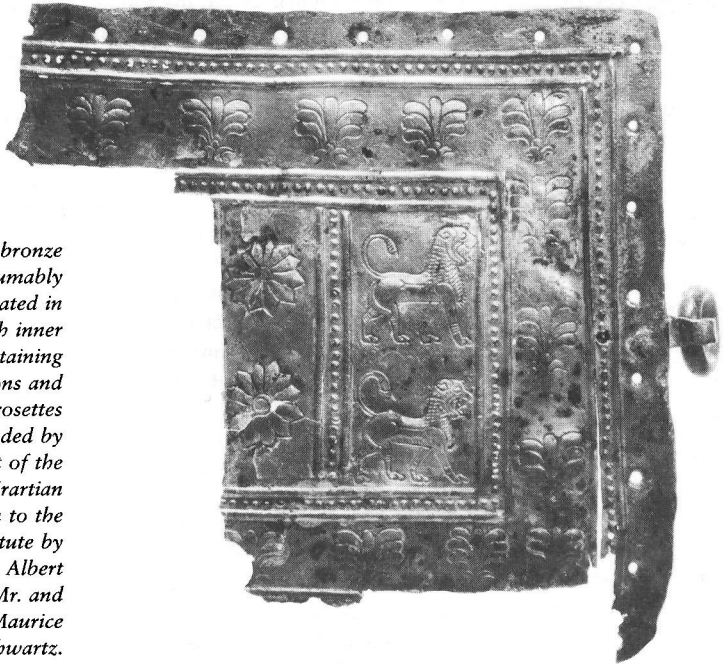
The most important event—as usual—was the securing of yet another Institute of Museum Services grant for the past year. As this can be used for general operating support, it not only serves to free funds which otherwise would have to be spent for necessary services, but also allows us to implement projects of immediate impact on the quality of the museum operation. For instance, almost half of this year's grant was spent on additional staff, and to augment the hours of permanent staff. Salaries were provided for graduate assistants, which meant that we could profit from their special areas of expertise.

Besides augmenting human resources, funds were provided for significant technological advance, and two Macintosh computers were purchased during the past year. This has transformed both the operation of the Museum Office (this machine is also being used by the Suq, and the Docents), and the Office of the Registrar. In the first instance, this has led to vastly improved and more efficient accounting procedures; in the second, it has allowed a greatly expanded documentation of records pertinent to the collections, and their correlation and manipulation in a manner unthinkable even five years ago. A major project is the computerization of gallery records, with appropriate graphic records of object distribution within the cases.

Physical improvements included the repainting of the archaeological laboratory in the basement, which means that more than 75% of the basement area has now been reha-

bilitated, either to provide new and better work areas, or modernized storage. Even more impressive has been the re-organization of the Archives on the second floor. Long a dumping-ground for what everyone agrees has to be kept, but no-one could agree as to where, this highly important aspect of the Oriental Institute's responsibility to its own past history has now received the attention it deserved. New cabinets and shelving have endowed the archives with an impressive facility, and a sharp critical appraisal has been made of the multiplicity of problems inherent in the preservation of many different types of archival material, and appropriate action taken. An increasing interest in original field records has led to their consultation by numerous scholars; the Megiddo, Alishar Huyuk and Amuq material have been examined by visiting scholars, and research associates have been actively working on archival material from Iraq, Iran, Palestine and Nubia.

*Urartian bronze fragment, presumably a belt, decorated in repoussé with inner panels containing standing lions and pointed-petal rosettes surrounded by palmettes. Part of the collection of Urartian bronzes given to the Oriental Institute by Mr. and Mrs. Albert F. Haas and Mr. and Mrs. Maurice D. Schwartz.*



Although there has been no major program of exhibitions, mini-exhibitions associated with the Members' Lecture Series have been a great success, and a reinstallation and reinterpretation of the Khorsabad material in an alcove of the Assyrian Hall is in progress. On a more mundane but equally important level, is a study now underway to upgrade the building's fire alarm and detection system, and a plan is being



*The ancient Egyptian  
funerary statuette  
donated to the  
Oriental Institute by  
Mr. Eugene Chesrow.*

drawn up for the installation of smoke detectors and sprinklers throughout the building. For this, a substantial sum of money must be sought in the near future, so that the Institute's priceless collections are no longer at hazard from fire.

The Museum participated with the Renaissance Society as an exhibitor at the Chicago International Art Exposition at Navy Pier in May; and a member of the staff was also invited to participate in a panel on public relations at the annual general meeting of the American Association of Museums in Detroit. Other staff members taught courses in Egyptology, researched objects for Museum publicity, participated in the Docent training courses, presented a joint workshop with the Adler Planetarium, and participated in excavations in the Jordan Valley and in Israel.

It is a pleasure to record gifts to the Museum, notably a collection of Urartian bronzes, the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Albert F. Haas and Mr. and Mrs. Maurice D. Schwartz, whose long established interest in the Institute has been manifested in this generous manner; we are also most grateful to Mr. Eugene Chesrow for the gift of a wooden ushabti of the New Kingdom, in favor of Ken-Amun.

Loans have been made from the collections to the Art Institute of Chicago, and to San Diego State University, and others are under consideration.

We should also thank those volunteers who have generously given their time: Lilla Fano, Diana Grodzins, Marsha Holden, Georgie Maynard, Luciana Stefani, Peggy Wick, who have assisted the Registrar, as well as interns Walter Palmer and Debbie Schwartz. Lillian Cropsey, Joan Rosenberg and Harold Rantz have also worked on special projects for the Archivist. Karen Bradley has been Assistant to the Registrar, and Michael Berger, Assistant to the Archivist.

There have been some major staff upheavals in the Museum. Myrna Simon, our Secretary, has left after eight years dedicated service; we welcome Eileen Caves in her place. Joseph Greene has resigned in order to finish his dissertation, in anticipation of an ASOR Fellowship to work in Jordan next year, and Raymond Tindel has taken his place. Barbara Hall has also resigned, after twelve years as Conservator, during which she has built a magnificent Conservation Laboratory, trained numerous interns and performed invaluable work on the Museum's collections, not only through her expertise with individual objects but also through her knowledge of object handling and collections management; internationally recognized for her professionalism, she will be sorely missed and difficult to replace. To all of these departing members, our thanks for their services and our very best wishes for their future careers and prosperity.

As I myself am leaving to become Director of the David and Alfred Smart Gallery at The University of Chicago, this is my last annual report and takes on a somewhat valedictory note. I sincerely thank those of my colleagues who are remaining, Anita Ghaemi, Registrar; John Larson, Archivist; Jean Grant, Photographer; and Honorio Torres and Jim Richerson, Preparators, for their loyalty and hard work, and wish them also every future success. I should also put on record my deep appreciation of the fruitful relationship which we have had with the Volunteer Program, and my warm personal thanks to Peggy Grant, Chairman for most of the time that I was also Curator. Another pleasant duty is to thank Denise Browning, Manager of *The Suq*, for her skilful integration of the museum store into many of the museum's activities.

Finally, I heartily greet my successor as Curator, Thomas J. Logan. Tom did graduate work at the Institute, taught Museology and Egyptology at New York University, Hunter College and Seton Hall University, and was Associate Curator in the Egyptian Department of The Metropolitan Museum of Art for seven years, where he was responsible for Phase II of the brilliant reinstallation of the Egyptian collection. Since 1981 he has been Director of Monterey Peninsula Museum of Art, and with his wide variety of professional, teaching and museum experience, we welcome him back to Chicago.