

*Museum
Education
Program*

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A colleague of mine once remarked, commenting on the difficulty of initiating something new, that it takes about three years for an idea to

become a reality. According to this timetable, the Oriental Institute's first symposium for members and teachers, presented in the fall of 1987, was right on schedule. For just about three years, the staff of the Membership Office and the Museum Education Office had discussed the idea of a symposium directed to the general public, designed especially with members and teachers in mind; it would be a program that would furnish a comprehensive and authoritative overview of the chosen topic, with presentations appropriate for an interested audience without prior background in the subject. ▼ Breasted Hall, with its 272 seats, was filled to capacity when the day-long symposium "Egypt of the Amarna Period" became a reality on November 7, 1987, under the joint sponsorship of the Membership and Museum Education Offices. Seven Egyptologists surveyed the topic from perspectives that included archaeology and political history as well as religious and artistic changes. Immediate and enthusiastic inquiries about when the next symposium would occur confirmed our impression that this kind of educational event should be among the Institute's programs for the general public. A second annual symposium was planned for the fall of 1988. ▼ Inauguration of new programs and resources has been a hallmark of the Museum Education Office since its origin eight years ago. Now a roster of projects, some on-going, some seasonal, attracts a variety of audiences including children and adults, teachers and school groups. ▼ Children 6-12 years old participate in several kinds of activities intended to educate in an enjoyable manner. This past winter children in the Saturday morning workshops learned about artifacts and made crafts related to the ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian worlds. They made sock doll mummies with their own coffins, replicas of Egyptian amulets, models of the Mesopotamian demon Pazuzu as a hand puppet with movable wings, masks of the Egyptian gods Anubis and Sekhmet, and replicas of Egyptian royal jewelry. These popular Saturday tour and craft workshops depend for their successful planning and implementation on the knowledgeable and innovative help of

volunteers Kitty Picken, Joan Hives, and Georgie Maynard. Tours on topics of special interest to children are given on Thursday mornings in the summer months of July and August by the team of Thursday morning docents under the leadership of

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*Children at a craft activity
in the Winter Saturday
morning workshops.
Photo by Herb Barghusen.*

Kitty Picken. This past year a group of 15-30 children and parents gathered in the lobby each week for these tours.

The interest of young people in Museum activities is further indicated by their use of more than 5000 Children's Adventure Sheets over the past year; these are gallery activity guides meant to be used by children visiting the Museum with their families.

Approximately 300 children stood in line on a sunny September afternoon to have their names written in hieroglyphs by Education Office scribes as the Oriental Institute participated in the First Annual 57th Street Children's Book Fair. A dramatic retelling of ancient Near Eastern stories was also presented at this community event celebrating the return of students to school in the fall.

The Sketching Is Seeing program, a six-session drawing workshop for teenagers, enjoyed its fourth season with its usual capacity enrollment. This workshop allows students to



sketch objects on display in the Museum under the guidance of an artist. For most of the participants it is their first exposure to the Oriental Institute and for many it is their first professional artistic instruction as well, since many schools have cut art programs in response to budget restrictions. The support of the Illinois Arts Council has made it possible to keep costs to participants at a minimal level, making it possible for students from a wide range of economic backgrounds to take part in this project. The workshop is taught by artist Myra Herr, assisted by artist Eileen Lynch.

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The Sunday film series was enriched this summer with the addition of two slide talks by advanced graduate students in the University's Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. Augusta McMahon talked about her recent work in Syria and Ray Johnson presented the results of several years of research at Luxor in Egypt.

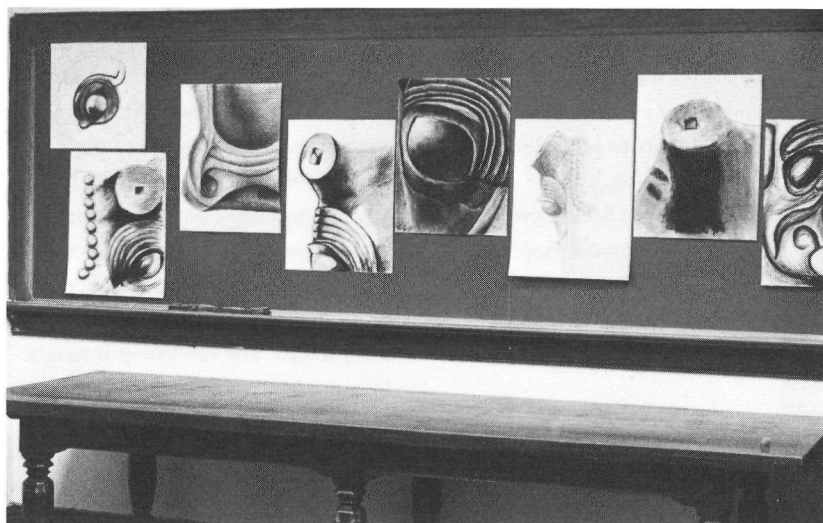
The current Featured Object brochure, number 7 in the series, was authored by Lorelei Corcoran and discusses the mummy mask shown on the cover of the new Museum brochure released in the fall of 1987. The mask has recently been placed on display, with copies of the four-page Featured Object brochure located next to it in the gallery. These

brochures are available free of charge to Museum visitors and can be sent to Oriental Institute members upon request.

Spring of 1988 saw the conclusion of a two-year sequence of Egyptian History classes offered in the Members' Course program. Of the original class of approximately 35 students, 20 students completed the six-quarter sequence, giving them a total of 96 class hours under the tutelage of instructor Frank Yurco, and reminding us once again of the serious interest of many of our program participants. Other Members' courses given throughout the year included "Queens of Ancient Egypt" (given



A display of drawings from the Sketching Is Seeing workshop for teenagers. Photo by Herb Barghusen.





Artist Myra Herr demonstrating a sketching technique to a student in the Sketching Is Seeing workshop for teenagers. Photo by Herb Barghusen.

twice in order to accommodate the large number of interested participants), "Anatolia after the Hittites," "Modern Turkish" (a year-long course), "Ptolemaic Egypt and the Hellenistic World," "Egyptian Hieroglyphic Calligraphy," and "Introductory Hieroglyphs-By-Mail," which attracted 28 students including one from England and one from Spain.

An important part of the work of the Museum Education Office is providing resources for teachers. This past year a new slide talk was added to the series, now numbering 11 titles, which makes available to teachers sets of 50-75 slides with narrative scripts for classroom use. The new slide talk, "Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt," was developed with the help of Peggy Grant, former Volunteer Chairman and continuing supporter of the

Museum Education Office programs, and the advice of faculty member Robert Ritner. Last year these slide sets were used by over 100 teachers. The mini-Museums, collections of replicas accompanied by information cards, were borrowed by 14 teachers. Sixty Teacher's Kits were sold. Several speakers were arranged for school and other groups, and a number of special programs were planned. The most ambitious of the special programs was for a group of 200 Latin students from throughout northern Illinois; the students came here for a special "Alexander in the East" tour and then participated in a competition to test the knowledge they had acquired in the galleries while using materials from the Advanced Level Teacher's Kit.

The Elementary Teacher's Kit developed in 1980 was revised this year, primarily to accommodate changes in gallery displays, necessitating changes in the guide sheets which are part of the Kit. This Kit, along with the Advanced Level Kit, is designed to help teachers prepare their students for a visit to the Oriental Institute Museum, and to date over a thousand of these Kits



have been purchased by teachers and school districts. Evaluation sheets returned by group leaders indicate that approximately one third of visiting groups used these materials either at school or while visiting the Museum.

For the past year programs of the Education Office were supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council. Many teacher resources and public programs have been developed over the past eight years with seed monies from Illinois Arts Council grants. We are grateful for the Council's interest and for its long-standing support.

The counsel and cooperation of Janet Helman, the Volunteer Chairman, is deeply appreciated. Her on-going support is crucial to all aspects of the Museum Education Program.

The extremely able assistance of work-study student Lisa Boulden, who joined our office this past year, has eased the administrative burden

of our work and we look forward to Lisa's return for the next year.

The participation of the Museum docents is the foundation of gallery programs for the public. I commend their abilities and their willingness to rise to whatever task is asked of them, whether it is a tour on a special topic or a tour for a group with special needs, such as children with learning disabilities.

In the process of building bridges between the scholarly world and the world of the general public, the Education Office enlists the cooperation and participation of volunteers, staff, and faculty at the Oriental Institute. We thank the many individuals who have contributed their talents, time and interest to programs of the Education Office.