

Museum Education

Joan D. Barghusen

The academic year 1988-89 brought a challenging new project to the Museum Education Office when I was invited to help create a temporary exhibit to feature the field work of the Oriental Institute. This cooperative venture with exhibit designer Jim Richerson began with the earliest stages of decision-making and continued through the final installation of the exhibit in the gallery. Since most activities of the Museum Education Office are based on the interpretation of already existing exhibits, this effort represented a radical departure from business as usual. The opportunity to share ideas and rationales as the exhibit developed and to modify plans in response to this dialogue was an experience valued by both departments. Both concept and design were strengthened by the interaction.

The exhibit "Digging the Ancient Near East" opened in October 1988 with a dual theme: the work of archaeology itself and the work of the Oriental Institute, past and present. We are indebted to Doug Esse, who contributed expertise, creative ideas, and a good deal of time to design the schematic model of stratigraphic levels based on the excavations at Megiddo. We are also grateful to Janet Helman, who researched the sites of Oriental Institute excavations for the display map, as well as to the entire Museum staff, all of whose efforts contributed to the mounting of this exhibit.

In the spring of 1989, we again participated in exhibit design, this time working with preparator Phil Petrie to create a display to stand in for the three mummies which were removed from the Egyptian gallery to the Museum's climate-controlled organics storage room for the hot and humid summer months. The purpose of this exhibit was to convey basic information about the process of mummification, a topic of high interest to visitors, and to answer the question "Where Have the Mummies Gone?"

"Sacred Places: Sacred Rites" was the title of the second annual symposium for the public offered by the Museum Education Office jointly with the Membership Office. Its theme of temples and temple rituals in the ancient Near East attracted approximately 240 people. Speakers Richard Zettler, Harry Hoffner, Robert Ritner, Douglas Esse, and Dennis Pardee

examined temples and rites of the Mesopotamians, Hittites, Egyptians, Canaanites, and Israelites; Ioan Culianu of the Divinity School reflected on the presentations from the perspective of a historian of religion. The enthusiastic response to our public symposia confirms our impression that there is a substantial audience with a serious interest in opportunities to learn about the ancient Near East. The single-day format is appealing to many whose schedules do not permit them to commit to programs with multiple meeting-dates, such as the Members' courses.

◆ **E**leven Members' courses offered on a quarterly basis drew a total of 199 participants who selected one or more of the following topics: *Introduction to Archaeology, Egypt by Armchair, Introduction to Hieroglyphs, Hieroglyphs: Part II, Ancient Egyptian Religion, Akhenaten and His Times, History and Archaeology of Mesopotamia (2 quarters), and Ancient Egyptian Literature*. These participants range from students who regularly take a course each quarter to those who come only for a specific interest or topic. In addition, twenty students took the introductory *Hieroglyphs-by-Mail* course and eleven took the advanced course during the

past academic year.

Programs for adults were expanded this year by the addition of summer special interest tours given in the galleries on Fridays in July and August. These tours are a project of the Friday morning docents, whose captain Debbie Aliber proposed them as a regular offering at 11:30 on Fridays in the summer months. Since this is a time when the docents are not occupied with the usual heavy demands for school group tours, it gives us an opportunity to explore new initiatives such as these tours on special topics designed to draw in new adult visitors.

A companion project to the adult special interest tours are the children's special interest tours offered on Thursday mornings in July and August. These have been on-going under the leadership of Thursday morning captain Kitty Picken for several years and now enjoy a rewarding attendance rate as well as a fine reputation among young museum-goers and their families.

Docents Kitty Picken and Georgie Maynard and volunteer Joan Hives were again the

The "Digging the Ancient Near East" exhibit opened in October, 1988. (Photograph by Herb Barghusen)



mainstays of the Saturday morning winter workshops for children, which are tour and craft programs for 6-12 year olds. Four 2-hour workshops were offered in which the children created cardboard pyramid models, made sock-doll mummies and decorated mummy cases, constructed a crown of Osiris to wear, and fashioned cartouches with their own names in hieroglyphs. These popular workshops are regularly filled to capacity. For the past two years children have attended from the Dumas School, located across 67th Street from the Oak Woods Cemetery, which has "adopted" the school and pays the registration fee for the students who attend. The Cemetery Association is particularly involved with offering outside cultural opportunities for these inner-city school children and have had a particular interest in the Oriental Institute since an exhibit of Oriental Institute Nubian materials was held at Oak Woods in connection with Black History Month in 1987.

◆ The Sunday film series was enlivened in the summer months with two slide presentations by Institute graduate students discussing their field work. Ray Johnson of the Epigraphic Survey talked on the topic of *Tut-ankh-amun and Re-used Blocks at Luxor Temple* and Manuela Lloyd spoke on *Underwater Archaeology* based on her work with the Institute of Nautical Archaeology.

The Education and Volunteer Guide Offices have always welcomed requests to work with visitors who have special needs. This past year we began working with Camille Vogel, a representative of Horizons for the Blind, to develop a more formal program for visitors with visual impairments. Horizons for the Blind will then take responsibility for making known

this program to the appropriate audiences, which should result in an increase in our services to this population.

The Museum Education Office works hand in glove with the Volunteer Office and enjoys the cooperation and inspiration of the remarkable corps of eighty-some guiding docents, each with a special skill and enthusiasm to offer. It is impossible to imagine the range of educational programs mentioned in this report without the participation, initiative, and creativity of the docent guides. It is equally impossible to imagine this work without the talented, steadfast, and cheerful support of Janet Helman, the volunteer chairman, who oversees the docents and provides support in all aspects of the work of the Education Office.

The Museum Education Office also benefits from many other minds and hands. We are indebted to all the Oriental Institute staff and faculty who participate in activities of the Education Office and lend continuing support and expertise. We also acknowledge the very able assistance of our work-study student Lisa Boulden, who shared much of our administrative load over the past academic year.



This mask of the Mesopotamian goddess Ninursag was decorated in one of the Children's Winter Workshops. (Photograph by Herb Barghusen)