

The Museum

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◆ The past fiscal year coincided almost exactly with my first year at the Museum, and it has been a busy time for everyone. While I was struggling to learn the ropes, Museum business proceeded apace, in what seemed like a rush of exhibit preparation, grant proposal writing, and endless series of meetings.

The exhibition "Digging the Ancient Near East" was in the advanced stages of planning when I arrived on August 15. Curated by education coordinator Joan Barghusen, it opened smoothly on October 24, thanks to her efforts and the work of exhibit designer James Richerson and assistant preparator Philip Petrie. The exhibition has proven to be a popular "advertisement" of Oriental Institute projects and a successful means of educating the public about archaeological methodology and "life on a dig." Oriental Institute assistant professor Douglas Esse selected the objects and wrote the text for the Megiddo stratigraphy wall, which many docents find to be a valuable addition to their tours. Because of the success of "Digging the Ancient Near East," we decided to make it a "continuing" exhibition while we focussed our attention on other projects of the type that often are shunted aside during the press of exhibition preparation deadlines.

One of the major focuses of Museum staff time and attention over the past year was the climate-control project. The Oriental Institute building, completed in 1931, has never been provided with air conditioning, let alone the more sophisticated systems (standard in modern museums) necessary to control temperature and humidity fluctuations and the presence of noxious chemicals and airborne particles. As temperature and humidity rise and fall throughout the year, physical and chemical changes occurring in our objects are causing some literally to self-destruct. With the help of a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Institute contracted in July of 1988 with a firm of energy consultants and design engineers (Grumman/Butkus Associates) to prepare cost estimates and specifications for upgrading the building with respect to climate control, fire suppression, security, and monitoring of mechanical failures. A committee consisting of Janet Johnson, Gretel Braidwood, Laura D'Alessandro,

Kim Coventry, Pat Monaghan, Raymond Tindel, and myself, worked over the course of the year with Dave Grumman, other members of his firm, and representatives of the University's Facilities Planning and Management department to draw up specifications for climate-controlling the entire Oriental Institute building. The preliminary estimate indicated that this work and associated general construction would be very costly—which raises the question, as yet unanswered, of whether it would not be more cost-effective to construct new climate-controlled facilities for the Museum, thus freeing up present Museum space for use by the Oriental Institute for other purposes.

◆ While these climate-control decisions were pending, the mummies—which are among the Museum's most popular and fragile objects—were moved down into the basement for the summer and placed in the special climate-controlled organics storage room to protect

them from the rapidly rising relative humidity levels in the galleries. The Museum's conservator, Laura D'Alessandro, is currently working on modifications to the mummies' display cases that will provide a buffer against destructive shifts in relative humidity. She hopes to place one mummy (probably the brilliantly painted Meresamon) back on display in October in a modified case and, if that proves successful, to return all the mummies to view over the next year. To explain to the public why the mummies had disappeared, Joan Barghusen and Phil Petrie designed a small exhibit entitled "Where Have the Mummies Gone," which will remain on display in the Egyptian gallery until all the mummies have returned.

The Museum mounted two other exhibitions during the past year. "Travelers in Ancient Lands: Members' Photographs of the Near East" opened November 13. We extend our special thanks to Herb Barghusen, who

James Richerson at work on the exhibit "Digging the Ancient Near East."



generously volunteered his time and aesthetic sensibilities to assist Phil Petrie in hanging the exhibit. In conjunction with the annual dinner, a display titled "The Chicago Hittite Dictionary" opened May 15. Institute professors Hans Güterbock and Harry Hoffner worked long and hard with Jim Richerson on the content and design of this exhibit, which showcased the art of the ancient Hittites and the work of the Chicago Hittite Dictionary.

Throughout the year, I have been meeting with the Centennial Arts Subcommittee, a group that is discussing and planning cultural events for the University of Chicago's Centennial year, which will begin in October of 1991.

♦ **W**e have decided that during the Centennial year, the Oriental Institute Museum will mount three exhibits, each of which will occupy the present Palestinian hall. The first, tentatively titled "Kish, An Ancient Mesopotamian City," will be an exhibition of archaeological artifacts borrowed from Field Museum of Natural History. The second, "The Arts of Ancient Nubia," will highlight objects drawn primarily from our own extensive collection and is scheduled to open during Black History Month (February) of 1992. The third exhibit "Megiddo—The Biblical Armageddon," will be drawn from our share of the division of materials from the pre-World War II excavations at Megiddo. This exhibit will remain up after the Centennial year as the re-installation of our Palestinian hall. Much of the Museum staff's time over the next three years will be taken up by the planning and execution of what we hope will be a spectacular series of exhibits.

Each year, the Oriental Institute Museum receives from other institutions requests to borrow objects for exhibition or, more rarely, study. Loaning objects is a way of publicizing the Oriental Institute and its collection and of sharing with the public items that usually lie buried in our basement. However, all loans require exposing the objects to the stress and dangers of travel and handling by strangers. For this reason, a Loan Committee (consisting of the curator, assistant curator, conservator, registrar, and museum archivist) was established last fall. This group has set up written guidelines governing loans and meets to consider each request on its own individual merits. During the past year, the Museum sent out three exhibition loans: one to the Kresge Art Museum at Michigan State University for the exhibit "Frankincense and Myrrh: Objects from the Red Sea Routes during the Roman Empire"; a second to the Emory University Museum of Art and Archaeology in Atlanta, Georgia, for the exhibit "The Fragrant Past: The Perfumes of Cleopatra and Julius Caesar"; and a third to the Birmingham Museum of Art for their exhibition "Through Ancient Eyes: Egyptian Portraiture." We also loaned thirty-two examples of Egyptian glass and glazing to the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania for analysis in a research project on ancient glass and glazing and negotiated loans for the coming year to the Louisiana Arts and Science Center, the Art Museum of Princeton University, the Witte Museum in San Antonio, and the San Antonio Museum of Art. In addition, forty-six Egyptian objects that had been on loan to the Museum of Science and History in Jacksonville, Florida, since 1973 were returned to Chicago.

During the winter two other committees were formed to advise and assist the museum. Both are subcommittees of the Oriental Institute's Visiting Committee. The Long-range Museum Planning Committee, chaired by Albert Haas, has as its members Bowen Blair, Mary Gray, Mrs. John Livingood, Joan Rosenberg, and Mrs. Theodore Tieken, while the Friends of the Museum Committee, chaired by Janet Helman, includes Helen Goodkin, Diana Grodzins, Thomas Heagy, Barbara Rollhaus, and Alice Rubash. These committees have been meeting jointly over the past year to discuss long-range plans for the Museum as well as fund-raising possibilities and are looking forward to beginning work on specific projects after the arrival of the Institute's new director, William Sumner, on October 1.

The past year was one of approaching milestones in registration. Not only did our registrar, Raymond Tindel, finish his dissertation, but the physical inventory of the registered collections is now virtually complete. This means that it is possible to locate almost any object in the collection by looking up its registration card, on which is noted its present location. In March the entry on computer of basic data concerning the Egyptian collection, a total of 29,808 registered objects, was also completed. This has immensely facilitated requests for loan materials (almost always Egyptian items that are wanted for a show on mummification) and requests for materials to study by visiting scholars. Never content to rest on their laurels, those in registration immediately began the basic data entry on the Asiatic collection and are now about one-third of the way through the 35,000 objects. With the assistance of Prof. Dr. Ursula Kap-

lony-Heckel of Phillips University in Marburg, West Germany, Ray is recataloguing and updating descriptions on the Oriental Institute's collection of nearly 3,000 ostraca from Medinet Habu, on loan from the Department of Antiquities of Egypt. In addition, he is auditing currently outstanding loans, some made more than fifty years ago, and bringing loan agreements, assessed values, and details of insurance coverage up to date.

♦ It is a pleasure to acknowledge and thank all those who make all this work in registration possible: Debbie Aliber, Rebecca Binkley, Ruth Caraher, Irv Diamond, Lilla Fano, Margaret Foorman, Leila Foster, Leanne Galvin, Joan Margolis, Georgie Maynard, Lillian Schwartz, Betty Tieken, and Peggy Wick.

Both Ray and Laura gave an interested group of Medical School Alumni a behind-the-scenes tour of Museum storage and the conservation lab on June 7. Laura conducted a workshop for Ron Gorny's introductory archaeology class in December and another for the docents in May to explain why the mummies had been taken off exhibit. In January she submitted a proposal to the Institute for Museum Services for a Conservation Support Grant to purchase cabinets in which to store the Institute's Manuscripts/Papyri collection, which needs to be removed from the second floor vault and placed in the organics storage room. In addition to keeping up with the day-to-day conservation work required by the collection, Laura—assisted by assistant curator Kim Coventry—moved the majority of the organic materials into the organics room and simultaneously completed a conservation survey and repacking of these fragile and valuable objects. She began a conservation survey of



Terracotta head of a woman, Egypt, Dynasty 26 (c. 685-525 B.C.). gift of Mrs. Keith Seele.

the registered stone items with help of volunteer Dave Anderson, who did most of the actual moving of objects as well as the photography, and began a gallery survey of the collection on display.

The photo lab was also a busy place this year, until Jean Grant's unfortunate automobile accident in April. We are pleased to report that Jean is recovering well and is actually able to put in a few hours work each week at the time of this writing. We wish to thank all her volunteers, who put in so many hours prior to her accident and who also helped hold the lab together after it. Joe Denov, Adam Nadel, Kate Grodzins and Carol Johnson donated countless hours to the project of duplicating out-dated and out-moded lantern slides in a 35 mm format. Ria Ahlström did a bit of eve-

rything, from house-keeping to printing to duplicating negatives.

◆ In December 1988 archivist John A. Larson marked the beginning of his ninth year as a member of the Museum staff. Much of the progress in the continual effort to upgrade the storage condition of the collections under John's supervision can be attributed to the considerable and much appreciated contributions of time made by his volunteers. It is a pleasure to be able to take this opportunity to recognize them and to thank them all. Five volunteers in the Museum archives have continued from previous years. Until his hospitalization in the autumn, followed by a period of convalescence, Hertsell Conway continued his task of re-sleeving the large-format black-and-white negatives in the Oriental Institute's photographic archives. Lilian Cropsey is working on a physical inventory of the Khorsabad Expedition field negatives, and Kay Ginther has completed the first phase of her project to computerize the data pertaining to the negatives and prints in the Megiddo Archive by completing a computerized "Field Register" for the first two thousand Megiddo photographic images. Dividing her time between the photographic archives and the photo lab, Kate Grodzins has done much to improve the condition and appearance of the Institute's slide library, and we shall soon be in need of additional storage cabinets to house our growing collection of 35 mm color transparencies. Joan Rosenberg continued to work with the surviving records from the excavations at Medinet Habu, which were conducted by the Architectural Survey under the direction of Uvo Hölscher in the 1920s and 1930s. Joan has also conducted several searches in the archives for material related to specific research topics.

Carolyn Livingood, one of the “most tenured” of all the Oriental Institute’s many volunteers, began working with John in the photographic archives this year. Her wide-ranging background in Institute-related activities is a real asset to her work in the photographic collections. In January, 1989, John welcomed a new volunteer in the archives, Sandra Jacobsen. Sandy has nearly finished re-sleeving the large-format black-and-white negatives in the “Museum” series of the photographic archives, a project left uncompleted by the illness of Hertsell Conway.

Assisted by Margaret Schröder, the museum secretary, John processed more than 130 requests for photographs and reproduction permissions between July 1988, and June 1989. In December 1988 Professor Jack Balcer of Ohio State University came to the Institute’s archives to do research into the history of the Institute’s excavations at Persepolis. In April 1989 Mr. T.G.H. James, recently retired from the position of Keeper in the Department of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum, visited Chicago to do background research for a biography of Howard Carter.

◆ On October 27, 1988 Gary Albright, a conservation specialist in photographic materials from the Northeast Document Conservation Center in Andover, Massachusetts, spent the day in the photographic archives collecting information for a professional conservation report which was made possible by a grant from the Institute for Museum Services, a federal funding agency. The project came in slightly under budget, and we were able to apply the balance toward the purchase of a safety cabinet for the temporary segregation and storage of our cellulose nitrate negatives

until funding can be obtained to duplicate them onto safety film for long-term archival preservation.

The papers of Klaus Baer were left to the Oriental Institute archives upon his death in May 1987. Through the generosity of Miriam Reitz (Mrs. Klaus Baer), an inventory of the Baer papers is being prepared by Terry Wilfong, who was one of Klaus’s graduate students in Egyptology. The papers of Charles Francis Nims have been donated to the Oriental Institute archives through the kindness of his widow Myrtle.

◆ A small temporary exhibit of interesting items from the Oriental Institute archives was organized in the Assyrian hall for the Chicago Manuscript Society on May 25. In June, John sent a selection of photographs duplicating part of the Oriental Institute Museum’s exhibition “Digging the Ancient Near East” to Rockford, Illinois, for a photographic display sponsored by the Rockford Society of the American Institute of Archaeology in the Discovery Center Children’s Museum at Rockford.

John Larson has also been busy outside the archives. Together with Peggy Grant, he conducted a special tour of the Museum for the Birmingham Art Gallery Association on Saturday, October 15. In November, John was invited by Jeffrey Abt, acting director of the David and Alfred Smart Gallery, to serve on a planning committee for a proposed Smart Gallery exhibition on the University’s collections for the upcoming Centennial commemoration. On Saturday, May 20, John shared his thoughts on “How to look at ancient Egyptian art” in a slide talk for the docent training

course and between July 1, 1988 and June 30, 1989, he examined Egyptian antiquities brought in for evaluation by nine of our members.

The year saw two staff members leave to pursue their careers along slightly different lines. John Kirulis, visitor control supervisor since November 1987, resigned in May to take a position as director of the Reynolds Club. Jim Richerson, our exhibit designer, also left in the spring after eight years in the Museum, to pursue other interests. We extend to both John and Jim our best wishes for success in their new pursuits.

◆ **Phil Petrie**, assistant preparator, was promoted to preparator to replace Jim. We welcome on board as assistant preparator Greg Aprahamian, who just received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Greg has worked in the department of prints and drawings at the Art Institute and as a preparator at the N.A.M.E. Gallery here in Chicago.

Our new visitor control supervisor is Scott Neely—a familiar face, who served as a guard and assistant visitor control supervisor for a year under John Kirulis while working toward his M.A. in art history at the University of Chicago. Scott is currently on a leave of absence from school. Our sincerest thanks go to both Manuella Lloyd and Margaret Schröder,

who generously stepped in to serve as acting visitor control supervisors while we were interviewing applicants.

◆ **Kim Coventry**, assistant curator, attended a four-week pilot course on “Collection Care and Management” at the Art Institute of Chicago, sponsored by the Bay Foundation. She also participated in a one-day colloquium on the ethical, legal, and political issues involved in collecting antiques, and a two-day symposium on small-scale bronze sculpture at the J. Paul Getty Museum. Kim began a catalogue project on a collection of Roman and Etruscan objects given to the Museum in 1945 and completed the organics room storage project with Laura. While doing all this and handling most of the production details for the new Museum guide, she also made sure that all-year listings appeared in the *Tribune* Friday and Arts Sections, *Inside Chicago Magazine*, *Chicago Magazine*, *Sun Times*, *Travel Guide*, and *Chronicle*. Several stories were also written about the Museum in the *Hyde Park Herald*, *Hyde Park Citizen*, and Travel Section. Thanks to Kim’s P.R. efforts, a feature story on me appeared in April in the *Sun Times*.

As has been true for each of the past three years, not only the Museum Office but also the entire Oriental Institute building were held together by our office manager, Pat Monaghan. Characteristically, she managed to keep everything running smoothly and at the same time to always have a smile on her face.

The Oriental Institute Museum received a very special donation this past year – a beautiful Late Period Egyptian terracotta head, given by Mrs. Keith Seele, who donated some rugs and various other items as well. Mrs. Merriam Mattar also generously donated four hematite cylinder seals and a bronze bracket, which she had acquired in Saudi Arabia.

And last, but not least, the entire Museum staff wishes to thank our volunteer Dr. Harold Dunkel for taking on the burden of answering the telephones two mornings a week to free up the office manager to attend to other duties.