

MUSEUM

Karen L. Wilson

The past year was the second of actual construction for the renovation and expansion project — and, thankfully, promises to have been the last (give or take a few months). As the year drew to a close, the pace of construction activity tapered off and focused on finishing up final details on items such as the computer program that runs the climate control system. The need for hard hats dwindled, parking spaces were once again available in the back lot, and museum staff were able to begin to get back to their jobs as they were before groundbreaking on 15 August 1996. It has been an interesting, and often exciting, time for all of us, but we are very much looking forward to unpacking the collection, installing the new galleries, and opening our doors once again both to the public and to visiting colleagues from around the world.

Hectic and disruptive as the construction has been, however, it has been well worth the effort. We are delighted with both the new wing and the renovated portions of the 1931 building and with the climate control systems, which are maintaining steady temperatures and relative humidities in all of the spaces. The equipment that air conditions both Breasted Hall and the Reading Room was turned on just in time for the onslaught of summer, and the new LaSalle Banks Education Center and the Archaeology Laboratories in the renovated basement will be ready for use some time in August. None of this could ever have been accomplished without our project manager, Joseph Auclair, and his unwavering attention to every detail of the project and his unstinting drive to always obtain the best results for us. And we owe special gratitude to the other members of the Oriental Institute project team, too numerous to name individually, from the firms of Hammond Beeby & Babka, Inc., Landmark Facilities Group, Inc., and Turner Construction Company.

During the month of April, with workmen still in the galleries, we moved our monumental statue of King Tutankhamun from his old home in the shadow of the Khorsabad bull into his new location at the entrance to the new Egyptian Gallery. It was determined that the safest way to accomplish the move was to keep Tut in a vertical position, as we were unsure what structural strains would be put upon him if he were laid down horizontally. In order to move the statue vertically, it was necessary both to raise the heights of the doorway openings between the galleries and to cut the statue into two shorter pieces (figs. 1–2). The cutting was done through the statue's lower legs (which are completely modern restoration), and the move was successfully completed at the beginning of May (figs. 3–4). Tut now provides a dramatic first encounter with the new Egyptian Gallery and can, for the first time, be viewed from all sides.

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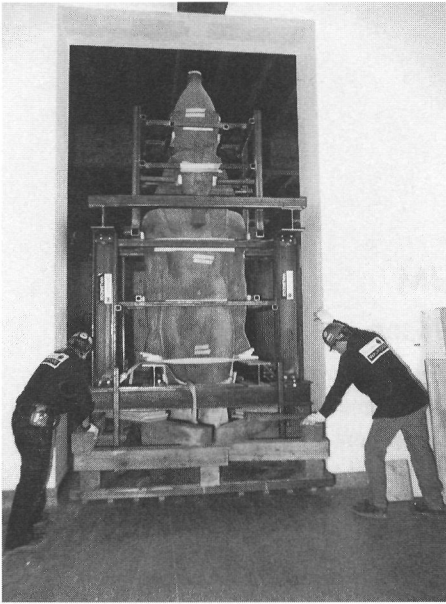


Figure 1. Upper portion of statue of King Tutankhamun in its reinforcing steel cradle, being moved by Belding/Walbridge through doorway into new Egyptian Gallery. Photograph by Jean Grant

Museum staff continue to work with Vinci/Hamp Architects, Inc. on the design of the new Egyptian Gallery, under the curatorship of Associate Curator Emily Tetter. Like all the new galleries, the Egyptian one will combine a chronological and a thematic approach to the materials on display. The gallery will begin with a chronology section that will highlight the most characteristic objects of each time period, showing the visitor how pottery styles, scripts, and many other aspects of ancient Egyptian culture changed over time, and giving an appreciation of the long range of that time. Following the chronology section, specific themes will be investigated, including the gods and personal religion; kingship; mummification; social structure; occupations; writing; and technology. We are extremely pleased with many aspects of the new gallery design, including the limestone and bronze cases that will add an updated touch and yet harmonize with the architec-

ture of the building; and the new system of shades for the windows, which keep out enough light to satisfy conservation's stringent standards, but still allow one to see the sky, buildings, and trees outside.

In spring 1998, as work crews vacated the basement and secure conditions were again established, museum staff began to unpack artifacts for the Egyptian Gallery. Usually, curators have the luxury of being able to see their entire collection while making selections for exhibitions, but such is not the case here, as everything was packed up during construction, and we do not have new cabinets into which to unpack the collections. As a result, Emily is relying on photographs of the old galleries, publications, and her own notes to steer her toward the best objects for exhibition.

As groups of objects are unpacked, they are examined by members of the museum staff, who advise Emily on refinements, if any, to her selection. Pieces then go on to the Conservation Laboratory, where their conservation needs are assessed and they are treated. If an object is judged to need too much work to be ready for our spring 1999 opening, a different object is selected. As this process continues, Emily is writing labels and didactic materials for the gallery, and the preparators have started to design maps and timelines. These materials will be reviewed by other members of the museum staff for both content and presentation prior to final production.

Registrar Ray Tindel and his stalwart volunteers spent the first part of 1997/98 in exile in the old Egyptian Gallery, waiting. They sat in semi-darkness surrounded by the collections — some 4,500 boxes and crates of artifacts so tightly packed that visitors almost inevitably compared the hall to the final scene in *Raiders of the Lost*

Ark — the great anonymous government warehouse in which the Ark of the Covenant was stored. Finally, early in 1998, the word came, “You can move.” There followed a couple of months of frenetic activity, during which the collections were moved into their new homes in the basement and on the first floor of the new wing and in the renovated basement of the 1931 building. Cartload after cartload of boxed artifacts and unit after unit of temporary shelving were relocated, some to the old Palestinian Hall but most to the new storage areas. At the same time, Ray and the conservators had to move everything from the old Organics and Metals storage rooms into their new homes. None of this could have been accomplished without Preparator Joe Scott (who rejoined the museum staff in September after three and a half years as Collections Manager for the Thorne Miniature Rooms, European Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the Art Institute) and Assistant Preparator Randolph Olive. Thanks to their efforts, plus the assistance of some very able object handlers from ICON Fine Arts Services, the moves came off virtually without a hitch. This fall, Ray will move the tablet collections down from the third floor into new climate-controlled conditions. When that process is complete, every artifact in the care of the

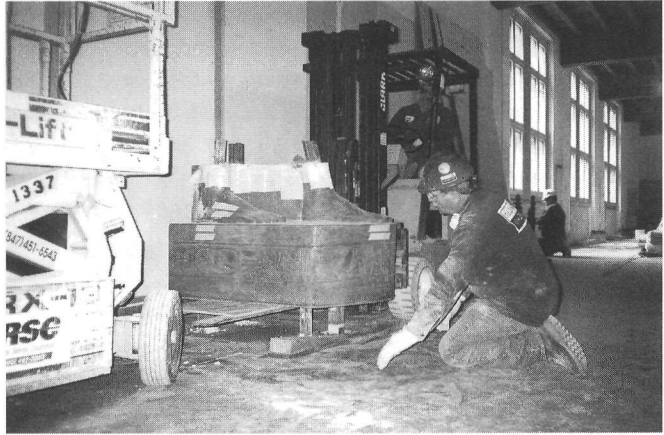


Figure 2. Bill Allison and Doug Mertes of Belding/Walbridge lifting King Tutankhamun's feet and base. Steel beams that tied statue to support in basement have been cut below floor level and are visible as base is lifted above floor. Photograph by Conservation

Oriental Institute (except for the Khorsabad bull and the monumental sculptures in the Persian Gallery) will have been moved at least once during the past three years.

Registration's new quarters are bright, clean, and well lighted, so much so that it is difficult to remember what it used to be like down there. The temperature is 68° in office and work areas and a brisk 62° in object storage areas; the relative humidity is a comfortable 45% — conditions that will be maintained year round. Ray and his crew still have an enormous amount of unpacking and reorganizing to do, but thanks to the new environmental stability, the antiquities entrusted to our care should survive to enlighten future generations for centuries to come. We are most grateful to all of those whose contributions have made this possible.

While all of this was going on, Ray and his volunteers also managed to retrieve forty-three objects from the highly successful exhibit “In the Presence of the Gods: Art from Ancient Sumer in the Collections of the Oriental Institute Museum,” which had been on display at the Smart Museum, and began processing six objects for a major international traveling exhibition organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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In addition, during the past year the museum received two generous donations. The first, a very handsome Isin-Larsa period lapis lazuli cylinder seal from Mr. Ambrose C. Cramer of Charlottesville, Virginia, bears the inscription "Ada'a, son of Dada'a." Along with the seal, Mr. Cramer donated to the museum the original correspondence, dated 17 December 1916, between his father (also Ambrose C. Cramer) and Ludlow S. Bull, here at the University. The second donation is a very fine Coptic textile generously given by Mr. and Mrs. Issac S. Goldman of Chicago in honor of Mrs. Robert (Janet) Helman (fig. 5).

We extend our warmest thanks and most grateful appreciation to the Registry volunteers whose help has made all of this possible: Debbie Aliber, Leila Foster, Peggy Grant, Mary Grimshaw, Janet Helman, Georgie Maynard, Dick Watson, and Peggy Wick.

Conservator Laura D'Alessandro, Associate Conservator Barbara Hamann, and Contract Conservator Susan Holbrook spent most of their time this year working on the backs of the Khorsabad reliefs — cleaning, stabilizing, and cementing them prior to framing. In December, assisted by Joe and Randolph, they were able to move into their glorious new laboratory, which is four times the size of the old one and incomparably cleaner and more fully equipped (fig. 6). In May, Laura, Barbara, and Susan were proud to show off their new digs when they hosted a meeting of the

local Chicago Area Conservation Group.

Beginning in April, Conservation's main task was working with Belding/Walbridge to move King Tutankhamun (figs. 1–3). They have now begun the process of restoring the parts that were removed for the move (fig. 4). In addition, thanks to Laura's grant-writing capabilities, the museum received two grants: an IMLS Conservation Project Support Grant to be used to purchase new storage cabinets for the Mesopotamian collection, as well as 2 HEPA-filter vacuums and archival storage supplies; and a Getty Postgraduate Internship award to support two sequential one-year post-graduate conservation training internships. We are all extremely excited that, as a result of the Getty's generos-



Figure 3. King Tutankhamun in place in new Egyptian Gallery. Photograph by Conservation

ity, the Oriental Institute Museum will once again be providing internship training opportunities for recent graduates of conservation programs. In addition, Laura gave a lecture at the Art Institute about our building project and associated conservation activities in October and went to Argonne Laboratories with Aslihan Yener in April to observe the analytical work being conducted on one of our Amuq figurines. In May, conservators began working on objects for the new Egyptian Gallery.

Archivist John A. Larson began his nineteenth year on the museum staff in June 1998. On August 1, Anne Yanaway replaced Paul Spruhan, who went off to law school in New Mexico, as Museum Office Manager. At that time she took over responsibility for the photographic services provided by the museum. Under John's supervision, Anne prepares the necessary paperwork and handles other details involved in processing the requests that we receive for photographic images and reproduction permissions — a total of 167 transactions during

fiscal 1997/98. Our home page on the World-Wide Web continues to be a statistically important source of these image requests as well as a means of public contact for the Oriental Institute while the galleries are closed.

As a result of the building project, the Museum Archives also received a new home — on the first floor of the new wing — and John moved into new office quarters in the basement adjacent to Registration. Since John and his volunteers began moving in February, 3,200 cubic feet of archival records on paper, in addition to the collections of prints, negatives, and transparencies in the Photographic Archives, all have been successfully moved and reorganized.

In July 1997, through the good offices of Nina M. Cummings, Photograph Archivist of the Field Museum in Chicago, we received a gift of fifty-seven early twentieth century lantern slides of Egyptian subjects. These were once the lecture slides of Welsh artist and archaeologist (Ernest) Harold Jones (1877–1911), who worked with several Egyptological excavations from 1903–1911. We would like to thank Mr. David Sprake-Jones, Harold Jones's nephew, for this donation.

In September, the Papers of Edgar James Banks were received as a generous gift from his daughter Daphne Banks (Mrs. James) McLachlan. The Banks Papers are especially welcome, as they add to our holdings of original field records from the first archaeological expedition (1903–1904) sponsored by the University of Chicago in the Middle East — the excavations at the site of Bismaya (ancient Adab) in Iraq, which were conducted by Banks.

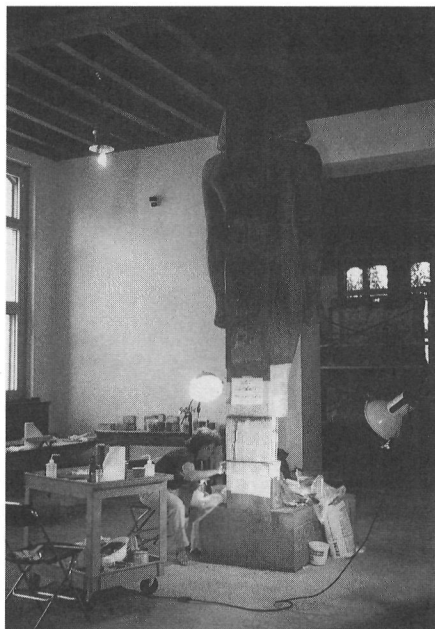


Figure 4. *Conservator Laura D'Alessandro setting back into place portions of modern restoration that were removed in order to cut statue and move it. Photograph by Jean Grant*

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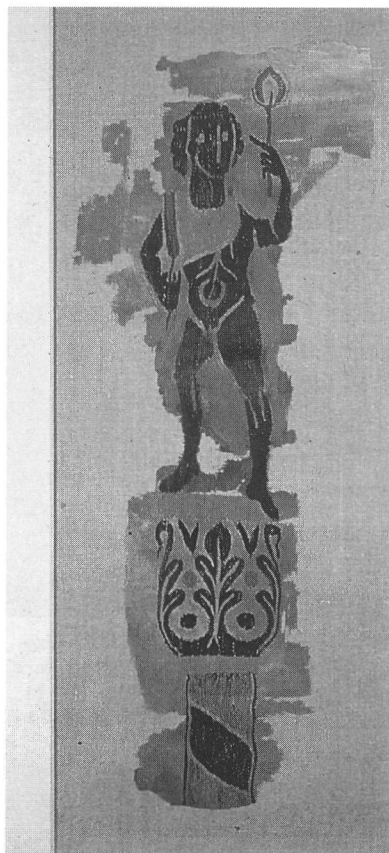


Figure 5. Coptic textile fragment donated by Mr. and Mrs. Isaac S. Goldman in honor of Mrs. Robert (Janet) Helman

In May 1998, Eleanor Betz delivered to the Oriental Institute a collection of prints and negatives made by her brother-in-law, photographer Edgar M. Peterson. Mr. Peterson was one of several photographers employed by the late Professor Helene J. Kantor to photograph objects from Chogha Mish for publication. The Peterson gift consists of a number of duplicate prints and variant negatives, and we are pleased to be able to add these materials to the existing photographic documentation for the objects from Chogha Mish. In June, we received three boxes of records pertaining to a long-term study of the Greek ostraca from Medinet Habu, conducted by the late Prof. Allen P. Wikgren. Prof. Wikgren's son Burt has placed most of his father's papers in the University Archives, but he felt that the Medinet Habu material should be at the Oriental Institute with the other Medinet Habu records.

For 1997/98, the volunteers working with John in the Archives were Hazel Cramer, Patricia Hume, Sandra Jacobsohn, Janet Kessler, Lillian Schwartz, Helaine Staver, and Pamela Wickliffe. Carole Yoshida contributed some of her volunteer time to the Archives, in addition to her work for the Diyala Project. Peggy Grant and Mary Shea worked at home on a project related to the Papers of Helene J. Kantor. We are pleased to record the names of these dedicated volunteers and to thank them for their continuing efforts. Without their enthusiasm and generous support

of the Archives, many important long-term projects would not be possible. Their dedication has been especially appreciated throughout the unusual working conditions of the renovation project. In addition to the regular Archives volunteers, Alison Carter, a student from Oberlin College in Ohio, volunteered in the Archives for two days a week during summer 1998.

During all of this, Margaret Schröder and her staff protected the collections and the building by monitoring the goings-in-and-out of innumerable construction workers, engineers, and consultants, and by keeping them all in touch with one another via walkie-talkies. On February 12, Margaret gave a paper entitled "Building for Eternity: The Oriental Institute Under Construction" at a Smithsonian Museum conference in Washington, D.C. entitled Optimizing Security with Minimum Resources: The National Conference on Cultural Property Protection.

With camera in hand and hard hat on head, photographer Jean Grant continued to capture our activities in many hundreds of images. In February, Jean was forced to move out of her office and dark rooms so that they could be renovated and climate controlled, and therefore had to cease most of her regular operations. How-

ever, she continued to record what we were doing and graciously undertook other duties that included escorting workers in and out of secure storage areas and “baby-sitting” them while they worked. Jean would like to thank all the Photographic Laboratory volunteers for their continued friendship and support.

We continue to be pleased with the amount of coverage that the museum has received during the last year, despite the galleries being closed. Most of the coverage is, as usual, due to the indefatigable efforts of William Harms, Senior

News Writer in the University’s News and Information Office. His tireless efforts and impeccable sense of what is newsworthy ensures that the museum (and the Institute as a whole) remain in the public eye. The relocation of the Tutankhamun statue saw a burst of media interest, with coverage locally and nationally. We are heartened by the advance interest that the media has expressed in the new Egyptian Gallery, with several major magazines reserving prominent coverage for the opening event. Six months before the opening, *Chicago Magazine* proclaimed that the new Egyptian Gallery is one of the “Ten Exciting New Things to Do in Chicago.” To take advantage of the media interest, Bill Harms and Emily have developed a press packet to garner coverage for the opening.

The new Egyptian Gallery will open to the public in spring 1999, preceded by a week of special events for supporters and members — which will be a most exciting time. We would like to thank everyone who has made and is making this tremendous progress possible and look forward to seeing you at the festivities.

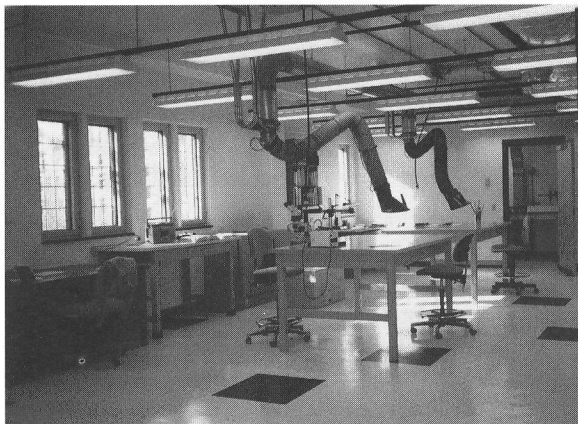


Figure 6. New Conservation Laboratory. Two work tables in center are equipped with moveable exhaust systems; explosion-proof room in background serves for treatments involving larger quantities of potentially dangerous chemicals. Photograph by Conservation