

The Oriental Institute Museum

GUSTAVUS F. SWIFT, *Curator*

The Museum was happily able to introduce a measure of variety into its exhibits during the past year. The season opened on October 7, with a one-day Chicago premiere showing of lunar samples which had been assigned for study to University of Chicago scientists. The object was to give the University community an opportunity to see these materials, and the Museum was the best place to accommodate the expected crowd securely. As a result, over 1700 visitors waited in line up to forty minutes to view a special display in the Babylonian Hall. The exhibit was prepared under the direction of the Field Museum, where it was next shown.

A week later, the Museum participated in the Institute's annual reception for its members by opening a month-long show of the work of Martyl, the Chicago painter who had visited our work sites in Turkey and Iraq. Her paintings were a record of the experiences of these archeological travels.

A beginning was made, through the efforts of Robert Hanson and Judith Franke, on the revision of some of the more permanent exhibits. The two alcoves devoted to Nippur were improved by the addition of new material and by rearrangement. Also, space



Museum staff members Janice Caplan and Gerri Hannum enjoy a preview of the lunar samples exhibit in the Babylonian Hall. *Photo by David W. Nasgowitz*

was found in which to plan a more comprehensive display of our finds from Khorsabad. These steps are parts of a broader scheme for adapting available space to the present collections.

At the request of the Peoria Art Museum, in the Lakeview Center for the Arts and Sciences, Peoria, Illinois, a long-term loan exhibit consisting of over eighty Egyptian objects, as well as several pieces of Sumerian sculpture, was prepared and is now being shown there.

Coming mainly from the Oriental Institute's own excavations, the collections of cuneiform tablets, which are under the direct supervision of Professors I. J. Gelb and R. T. Hallock, form one of the most valuable parts of the Museum collection as a whole. Many thousands of these tablets, whole or fragmentary, have received only

preliminary care and treatment in the field. The unfired clay of which they are made has absorbed, during centuries of burial, salts which, in Chicago's alternating humidity and dryness, re-crystallize at the surface and tend to crack and chip it away. The standard treatment is to give the tablets a permanent firing, mend them, and then soak the salts away in many changes of water. It is a pleasure to report considerable progress in this work during the past year, through the efforts of Mr. Aage Westenholz, Mr. Craig Umland, and Mr. Abdolmazid Arfae. Nearly two thousand tablets and fragments have been processed. Special thanks are offered to Professor Harold Haydon, Director of the Midway Studios, who very kindly agreed to the use of his kilns, far more capacious than our own.

Changes in the Museum staff have been fairly numerous during the year, but fortunately, in each case, it has been possible to find replacements fully as capable as those who found it necessary to leave. David Nasgowitz's several years of part-time Museum Office work prepared him to take over when Janice Caplan's husband took her off for a year in France. Judith Franke, a specialist in Mesopotam-

Martyl's paintings on exhibit in the Museum interpret her trip to Turkey and Iraq with the Oriental Institute's Prehistoric Project. *Photo by Ursula W. Schneider*



ian archeology, transferred from another University position to fill the vacancy as Registrar when Joan Gartland had to return to Michigan. Archeology student Susan Allen came back to Chicago just as Gerri Hannum moved to the office of the Department Secretary.

Museum attendance totaled 51,727 in the past year. Now and then, the Curator reflects upon the significance of such a figure. The Museum's clientele consists of our learned colleagues all over the world, of the University community, and of thousands of elementary school children, to name a few segments. One wonders how best to serve their interests through the content and presentation of exhibits.

Along another line, one knows that much of this attendance would disappear but for the enthusiastic and knowledgeable help of the volunteers who make our guide service possible and who staff our thriving museum shop, The Suq. In overall charge of this program, Mrs. John Livingood has not only organized another annual training course for the volunteer, but has also launched, as a very promising new venture, a late-afternoon lecture course in Mesopotamian civilization for laymen, presented by Professor John A. Brinkman. Our warmest thanks are due to Mrs. Charles Shields, who has just handed over to Mrs. Richard Frank the chairmanship of the guide service, and to Mrs. Ezra Hurwich, who has assumed the responsibility of the shop.