

## Photographic Laboratory

### *Jean Grant*

A long-awaited item is on sale right now! For only \$3.75 plus \$1.45 to cover the cost of shipping, the Suq will send you the new Oriental Institute Guidebook. It contains but a small representation of the work done in the past year in the Photo Lab. The pictures that were published, you see, are only the visible portion of the large amount of photography done for the guidebook. Although the guidebook was a proportionally larger part of the year's work in the Photo Lab, it was by no means all.

During the past year the Museum required several large photography projects: the costumes which went on loan to Tulsa (we did about 35-4x5 B&W negs, 175 prints, and hundreds of 35mm slides), Peter Daniels' membership lecture on the Moritz collection (thanks to Joe Denov and Barbara Hall all the necessary slides got to Breasted Hall on time), The Heritage of Islam loan (6 bookbindings required 77-

8x10 prints, 12 B&W negs, and 37-4x5 transparencies, and this work does not include the foundation stone that was requested and photographed, but finally not sent), three items loaned to the Jewish Museum and all the Islamic bookbindings (in 35mm color slides) after they came from display (which was certainly a major job in itself).

On short notice (no time to clean their desks), we had to ask the scholars who were represented in the "Publishing the Past" exhibit to pose for pictures to be used in the exhibit's audio/visual unit.

Now is a good time (as is any time) to give my volunteers a public mention of gratitude. Joe Denov—thank you very much for your inspiration and your perspiration! The guidebook photography was a project which couldn't have been done without you, or at least the amount of the work completed would have been much less. Together we sweated over the "needed" list, it seemed that either the list was

too long or too little time was allotted to do it.

Major photography such as the above certainly benefits the museum and its archives, but when *the* one person in the photo lab is doing museum photography work, the outside photo requests get delayed—often for weeks and sometimes months. To those people I can only apologize. My thanks to John Larson, our museum archivist, who did his best to fill print needs from our files. He and Sam Wolff (Museum Assistant) delivered and picked up photo orders at an outside lab. Thanks to you both and to John Carswell, Museum Curator, who suggested that they do it; this kept the load off our backs while we worked on the guidebook.

But museum photography often requires many people—sometimes all the staff gets involved because objects are involved. I need the Registrar, Anita Ghaemi, who has to keep track of the object. Along with one of the preparators we set a time when the museum is closed, then they gather up gloves, padding, cart, props, cards, etc., and we all can then pro-

ceed to get an object out of the museum. The Conservator, Barbara Hall, may discover that something needs her attention, or Anita or I may notice something and ask her about it. All of this can increase the time the object is out of the case in the museum. Meanwhile, the docents are counting almost every minute it is missing for their lectures. (Naturally most, if not all, of the objects chosen by the Curator, John Carswell, were those which should be of interest to many.) The Archivist, John Larson, has also often helped at these times. Being a small organization with very few extra helpers, the available staff has to be willing to help when a job calls for several hands and the proper hands are busy. So you can say the photography was a team effort even if just Joe Denov and I took the pictures, and Joe delivered the film to the processor.

And did we take pictures! In 4x5 format we took B&W and color transparencies (not only one view of an object but as many as we thought needed) and were aided by previewing some of them on a Polaroid. A single view is

very seldom a good record photographically of an object. We also want to show the condition of the artifact. It is easier on the object to do all the photography at once because the more often it gets moved the more likely it is that something will happen. At the time, it is more work for the Photo Lab, but, we hope, easier on the object in the long run. Besides, Murphy's Law says that the angle that doesn't get photographed will very shortly be requested by someone.

We also moved a lot of lighting equipment around the museum—mostly on Mondays when the museum is closed. Unfortunately, our equipment is of limited quality and we are not equipped for such heavy work. So we panicked a little when two main lamps burned up in short succession, when the Polaroid holder broke a screw, and when our film order was long overdue—to mention a few of the “frantic” moments. Does anyone know where we can get any Hollywood studio donations?

There was only one easy photograph in the guidebook that I can recall,

the fish palettes on page 22, figure 10. (Horus on the opposite page still needs his picture redone!) The photo that gave us the most trouble isn't even an artifact—it's a painting (page 72). We had to shoot it three times. The first time we tried, the canvas was wrinkled and the wrinkles showed. After being cleaned, conserved and revarnished by Barbara Hall, the canvas picked up a glare on our second try. The third time was OK! One photo we thought would be easy to shoot was the Megiddo capital (page 122, figure 56), but the simple light necessary for shooting it to best advantage made it the same color as the wall, so we had to put up a lot of cardboard to shade the wall and make it darker. Then they went and outlined it in the guidebook anyway. You can't win!

Well, I could go on about the guidebook photography (we hope to, as there is still more on the list to do), but I'll give you “the bottom line” (it *really* is because I added them up). The Museum Archive will get, as of today, new photography of 55 objects (plus a group of Persepolis sherds) and 12

Museum installations. This adds up to approximately 206 views on 420 B&W 4x5 negs and 325 color transparencies, also in 4x5 format. The burden of what to do with them in the Museum office will then be on John Larson (his next year's report?). We hope to make 35mm duplicates from those transparencies (watch this space for our report next year).

The Photo Lab was also fortunate to have other willing and talented hands this past year. We had our first intern; Sally Teisman spent the fall term with us on a work-study program from Calvin College in Grand

Rapids, Michigan. Chris Bragg, a second-year student, had his work-study time cut back to nine hours a week, but he still made good progress on collating hundreds of tablet photos. He left for us this summer a master list to check everything by and a large portion of the completed prints put into notebooks.

We'd like to leave you this year with another mention of the guidebook. The boat, page 37, figure 24, is a good example of what the Photo Lab wants to do in the year to come. Make small waves, but mostly model photography!