

THE MUSEUM

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A view of the exhibit "Another Egypt: Coptic Christians at Thebes (7th-8th centuries A.D.)"

From face-lifts in the galleries to milestones in registration, the past year has been one of exciting new changes for the museum. None of this would have been possible without the tremendous enthusiasm and dedication of the entire museum staff, all of whom are to be thanked for their combined efforts which have led to the success of so many projects!

Perhaps the most noticeable changes have taken place in the galleries, the public face of the museum that is really just the tip of the iceberg in terms not only of visible objects but also of museum operations in general. Colorful new banners, designed by preparator Mary Carlisle, now mark the entrance to each hall, providing a festive introduction to the materials on display. The Egyptian gallery has been completely repainted, and new lighting throughout the museum has added both drama and clarity to many of the exhibits. Expanded labels for the Assyrian reliefs have been produced to show the visitor the original position of each fragment, and Assistant Curator Emily Teeter has begun a program of upgrading cases and labels in the Egyptian hall.

The east end of the Egyptian Gallery, the Oriental Institute Museum. Photograph courtesy of John Broughton.

In the Syro-Palestinian gallery, the exhibit "Another Egypt: Coptic Christians at Thebes (7th – 8th centuries A.D.)" opened on October 3 in conjunction with the first of the Oriental Institute members' lectures. A beautiful design and installation by Phil Petrie and Mary Carlisle highlighted the objects chosen by co-curators Lorelei Corcoran and Terry Wilfong, a graduate student in NELC. October 3 also marked the beginning of a new program of evening hours for the museum, which is now open every Wednesday until 8:30. Although evening attendance was low at the beginning, it has steadily increased over the year, and has proven especially successful during the summer months.

In conjunction with the members' symposium on November 3, two special cases were installed in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian galleries featuring the magic and medicine of those two ancient civilizations. These small displays proved to be so popular with docents and visitors alike that we decided to make them part of the permanent exhibits.

The most obvious, and perhaps most widely publicized, event that took place this past year in the museum centered on the Khorsabad bull. As anyone reading this is undoubtedly already aware, the Musée du Louvre sent a world-famous maker of large-scale casts from Paris to Chicago to make a mold of our bull. Michel Bourbon and three assistants worked in the Egyptian gallery from mid-April to mid-May, applying layers of a silicone-based molding compound to the entire surface of the sculpture. As the color of each layer of silicone changed, so did the bull, who went from a rosy pink to pastel yellow as it disappeared

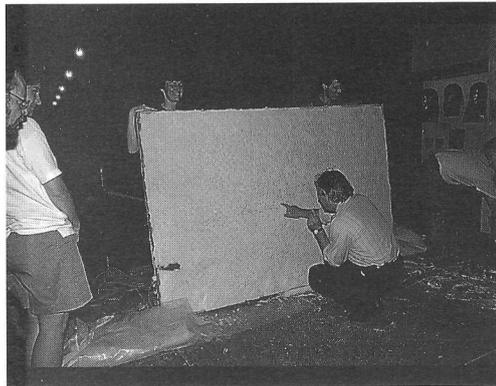


Michel Bourbon and his crew applying the outermost layer of silicon, strengthened by the application of squares of gauze.

beneath its shiny coating. After the silicone, the entire sculpture was encased in plaster-impregnated gauze, reinforced with a metal armature, to make a rigid casing for the pliable silicone mold. On May 9, in front of a crowd of invited guests and reporters, Michel removed the first piece of the mold from the



Removing the sections of the mold



Michel Bourbon examining a plaster cast of the inscription on the back of the bull that he made for the Oriental Institute Museum before his departure

Khorsabad bull's head. This evidence of the successful completion of his task was celebrated at an elegant luncheon in a tent pitched next to the Institute. The company sponsoring the entire project, Lafarge Coppée, provided flowers, food, and music, and even flew magnums of champagne in from France bearing special labels that read "Khorsabad Bull, May 9, 1991."

The mold is now in Paris where it will be used by Michel Bourbon to cast an exact visual duplicate of the bull to be installed in the Louvre's new Khorsabad Court in 1993. There it will stand next to the heroic figure that flanked it in antiquity, facing other human-headed winged bulls from the same site.

However, the many activities so visible in the galleries are only a small part of what goes on within the museum itself. Probably the greatest amount of activity centers on the care and conservation of the collections — both the objects stored in the basement and the photographs,

negatives, and paper records in the museum archives on the second and third floors. In registration, for example, there are always an array of projects being conducted by registrar Raymond Tindel and his devoted crew of volunteers. Over the past year, the registration of the important collection of Nubian material, obtained through salvage archaeology before the construction of the Aswan high dam, has continued at a steady pace. Due to the registration of almost 4000 Nubian artifacts, the "Egyptian" collection has reached over 35,000 objects. In addition, the computerized Egyptian database has been edited, so that each entry now contains a description, dimensions, and information on

publications for each object. Assistant registrar Glenn Carnagey has spent much of his time updating and correcting the information in this database. He is also providing cataloguing information for each piece: its date according to period, dynasty, reign, and calendar date; its material; its cultural origin; and its inscriptions, if any.

Each year many scholars from all over the world come to use the collections of the museum for research, and it is the responsibility of those in registration to make the pieces they wish to examine available to them. During this past year more than sixty visitors, from both home and abroad, came to study objects in the basement.

All this work in registration would be impossible without Ray, Glenn, and many dedicated and talented volunteers: Lisa Albers, Debbie Aliber, Aimee Drolet, Lilla Fano, Leila Foster, Peggy Grant, Shehla Khawaja, Dan Levine, Georgie Maynard, Megan McCartle, Lance Reed, Patrick Regnery, Lillian Schwartz, and Peggy Wick.

While those in registration are keeping track of, registering, and cataloguing the collections, the museum's two conservators are busy seeing to the proper care and conservation of more than 70,000 objects. The forms that their attentions to the collection take are many and varied. For example, last summer the Institute of Museum Services awarded the museum a Conservation Grant of \$25,000 for new cabinets in the Organics Room, thanks to the grant-writing acumen of conservator Laura D'Alessandro. The collection of manuscripts is now stored under proper climate-controlled conditions in state-of-the-art cabinets containing banks of drawers that greatly diminish the handling of these fragile papyrus and paper documents. Laura and the new assistant conservator, Barbara Hamann, are now conducting a conservation survey of these pieces to see which are in need of immediate treatment. On a more mundane level, the conservators have been busy setting up fans in non-climate-controlled storage areas during the summer, to provide air circulation and prevent the growth of molds, and using donated Purafil coupons to test the different concentrations of gaseous pollutants throughout the galleries and storage areas. They have also made formal arrangements with the Department of Geophysical Sciences to conduct analytical work on items in the collection on a regular basis. The department is donating time on their Cameca electron microprobe, and the museum is paying a graduate student to carry out sample preparation and analytical work. And, of course, the bulk of Laura and Barbara's attention is focused on treating objects for up-coming displays and loans, as well as providing emergency treatments for some of the most seriously troubled pieces.

On the second floor, work on the photographs, negatives, and paper documents that form the collections of the museum archives has continued steadily throughout the year. Museum archivist John Larson has continued to implement some of the recommendations that were made by a professional photographic conservator who surveyed the photographic collections in 1988. Archives volunteer Sandra Jacobsohn has completed a project to re-sleeve the 47,000 black-and-white negatives in the main "museum" numbering system. As a temporary conservation measure, all of the stable negatives in this group have been placed in archival ("acid-free") envelopes, and the unstable cellulose nitrate and

di-acetate negatives have been isolated. Sandy has now begun to check and re-sleeve the archaeological field negatives from Persepolis, Luristan, and the Aerial Survey of Iran.

Carolyn Livingood is seen in the archives almost daily, completing the physical inventory of the print files for the archaeological sites in the Diyala Region and thereby bringing order to an almost bewildering jumble of images generated between 1930 and 1938. Based on the finding aid that was compiled for the papers of Klaus Baer by Egyptology graduate student Terry Wilfong, Joan Rosenberg has completed the physical inventory that will enable us to transfer this important record group into the archives. And as part of an on-going



Will this patient make it? Emily Teeter, Mary Carlisle, and staff members of Mitchell Hospital look on as Laura D'Alessandro wheels the mummy of Petosiris along a hospital corridor.

computerization program, volunteer Kay Ginther continues her data entry project for the Megiddo Expedition field negatives. In May, John welcomed Melanie Petroskey as a new archives volunteer. Melanie has been a docent since 1983 and continues to serve in that capacity as well.

In addition to this immensely dedicated group of volunteers, the archivist was pleased to have the assistance of Michelle Buhrmester, an intern from Illinois State University during June, July and August. Michelle assisted John in classifying, labeling and filing photographs, negatives, and transparencies, organized the museum curatorial files for the period from 1930-1939, and produced an archives finding aid for the correspondence files of that decade. From the end of August 1990 until January 1991, Paula A. Brodsky, a senior at Lake Forest College, also served as an intern, compiling background information on many past Oriental Institute expeditions and projects.

Museum secretary Margaret Schröder has continued to assist John on a part-time basis in the day-to-day operation of the Photographic Services pro-

gram. During fiscal year 1990-1991, she received and processed nearly 200 requests for photographic materials and reproduction permissions — an indication of how valuable the collection is to both scholars and publishers.

The Oriental Institute Archives has been fortunate to receive as a gift some of the personal papers and memorabilia of the late Richard A. Martin, a long-time curator at Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, who was associated with the Oriental Institute's field expeditions in Anatolia during the early 1930s. These items were generously donated by his daughter Ricarda A. Perez and her family in memory of her mother.

Photographer Jean Grant, and all the museum staff, regret the loss of Joe Denov, a volunteer for nine and a half years, who was forced to retire because of ill health. More than his photography skills, Joe and his nearly constant presence are greatly missed in the basement. Another long-time photography volunteer, Ria Ahlstrom, was joined during the year by Alan Greene, Elizabeth Kopecky, and Lisa Wall; they all helped keep things clicking on the lantern slide project.

Occasionally, museum staff members are called upon to perform unusual tasks, as they were on May 30th. At midnight that night, Laura, Emily, Mary, and Phil escorted the mummy of Petosiris across campus for a medical test — specifically, a CT (computed tomography) scan. This high-tech radiologic examination at the University of Chicago Hospital marked the beginning of a new joint adventure to examine and document the Egyptian mummies in the museum collection. The macabre scheduling was not related to the mystique of mummies but was, instead, dictated by the fact that the CT scanners are used less at that time and no patients would be inconvenienced by the procedure. To date, three Oriental Institute mummies have been CT scanned, and the on-going study of the resulting images is revealing hitherto unknown details about gender, pathology, and the methods by which mummification was carried out.

Nothing that happens in the museum would be possible without security supervisor Scott Neely and his constant attention to the safety of everyone and everything within the Oriental Institute building. Thanks to Bill Sumner and the university administration, Scott was able this year to implement a program of 24-hour guards for the building, thus greatly increasing the security of the collections and of those who work here during non-business hours.

And, last but not least, museum office manager Regina (Gigi) Weitzel stands behind every project as the person who does the ordering and billing, keeps the building in working order, and oversees all budgetary aspects of the operation.

All of the operations over the coming year will be greatly facilitated by a generous General Operating Support Grant recently received from the Institute of Museum Services — the first such grant awarded to the museum since 1986. As the University's centennial year approaches, work busily continues on the fall exhibit: "Sifting the Sands of Time: The Oriental Institute and the Ancient Near East," which will open on October 6, 1991. Thanks to Mary Carlisle and the new assistant preparator, Joe Scott, plans for the show — which will include an interactive computer display — are going well, and we all are looking forward to it with great excitement.