

PREPARATION

Markus Dohner

The year has been a very ambitious one for us in the exhibit preparation department. In the early fall last year we completed a two-year installation of the Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery, finishing the work on three of five galleries slated for reinstallation. Here is a list of accomplishments for the department that are noteworthy:

- Completed on deadline the installation of over 1,000 ancient objects in the Mesopotamian Gallery, including numerous custom-made mounts or brackets that hold and protect the objects. Articles in newspapers on the exhibit have featured photographs of our finished display.
- Created case layout designs using software for construction design, which gave us the benefit of being able to rapidly edit and test new designs for display cases.
- Worked closely with graphic designer on wall texts and object-label integration. Employed Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines or best practices in label and space design.
- Coordinated object conservation with in-house conservation unit. This often involved making last-minute aesthetic decisions regarding the condition of many objects. Observed conservation practices for case construction using approved materials, particularly finishes and fabrics. Lighting of artifacts followed conservation illumination standards.
- The exhibit's quality of design, fabrication, and conservation supports the Oriental Institute's mission to make the new exhibits more accessible and attractive for all types of visitors.
- The reinstallation of the Syro-Anatolia and Megiddo galleries in the East Wing is under way. At the time of this writing we have planned the whole exhibit and installed approximately 40%. The exhibit preparators are fabricating the interiors of the display cases and mounting all the objects that go inside cases. The pace of work will increase after the arrival of our museum-quality display units, which are custom-built to engineering standards by a firm in Baltimore.

Presently, we have three full-time staffers working on the reinstallation of the Syro-Anatolia and Megiddo Halls. Erik Lindahl, Exhibit Preparator, continues fabrication of the mounts (fig. 3), or oversees their fabrication, as well as the carpentry and finishes for the display cases and final installation of the artifacts. With his unyielding efforts we were able to meet the milestone of cleaning out all the overstock pedestals and unused display furniture that had accumulated in the new gallery space. Our second preparator Brian Zimerle started at the Oriental Institute this May after working as a preparator at a Chicago art gallery. An expert brazier, he is producing many of the mounts for the Megiddo and Syro-Anatolian galleries. Markus Dohner, Museum Installation Manager, has been working closely with the museum director and faculty curators to develop exhibit ideas into working plans for gallery construction. Not only is he working with the staff on the East Wing installation, he is also involved in the installation planning and design for the future Nubia Gallery.
