

MUSEUM

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In a postpandemic era, the main challenge of a museum is to bring its audience back to its galleries in person and for special exhibitions. To that end, as stated in last year's annual report, the ISAC Museum pursued expanding our activities throughout the year. Thanks to the dedicated team of Museum and communications staff, guards, and volunteers, we were able not only to maintain our current opening hours but also to create a new time slot for the public on Friday evenings from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. The idea behind these extended hours was simple: to allow after-work opening hours concurrent with consistent programming. Between July 2022 and June 2023, the Museum galleries hosted 26,529 visitors—an increase of 6.37 percent over the previous twelve-month period. From April 2023 (when the new Friday open hours began) through June 2023, more than 300 visitors enjoyed these evening hours in a calm and welcoming environment. Creating new habits takes time, of course, and fall 2023 will definitely offer a good test to confirm whether the audience is responding well to our offer. As expected, peak attendance on weekends easily exceeded 150 visitors, confirming that our policy and engagement were fruitful. We were able to gather this helpful data thanks to the initiative of Kate Hodge, youth and family program manager. In 2022 she created an attendance-tracking method that allows the Museum team to measure the impact of our programming and gallery outreach. Strengthened by the numbers and new staff members, we continued striving toward the main goal of the Museum team stated in last year's annual report: to reach and surpass pre-COVID-19 attendance numbers.

We pursued docent- and curator-led tours of the Museum galleries and were particularly pleased to start, in partnership with the communications department, refresher tours for the docents led by faculty and Museum staff for each section of the main galleries. In February 2023, Marc Maillot, as the Museum's new associate director and chief curator, and ISAC Museum curator Kiersten Neumann offered in-person tours alongside our virtual options. Regarding the latter, special recognition goes to Tasha Vorderstrasse, continuing education program manager, for her consistently high-quality adult education courses based on our collection. Also in February, Laura D'Alessandro, head of Museum conservation, gave a tour of the permanent galleries and special exhibition with a focus on the evolution of conservation procedures based on the highlights of our collection (see Conservation section below). And Maillot gave a lecture in Breasted Hall to present to the docents and volunteers the vision that the Museum staff wishes to implement in the forthcoming years, with particular emphasis on schools and the greater Chicago area.

In January we welcomed an Uzbek delegation for a tour of the Museum's galleries and visits with Conservation and Museum Archives staff as part of the US Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program On Demand on cultural heritage, organized through WorldChicago (a nonprofit organization whose mission is to facilitate citizen diplomacy initiatives between Chicagoans and US government-sponsored international visitors). We pursued a similar collaboration with WorldChicago in March, when we welcomed a museum delegation from the Balkans led by Julia Sosnivka, program officer at WorldChicago, and Marija Bjelopetrovic, head of public diplomacy at the embassy of Serbia in the United States. Senior curator Evgenija Blanusa and curator Jana Toskovic of the National Museum of Serbia were particularly interested in the connection between ISAC's activities overseas and their impact on the

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Museum's collection in a very demanding time in terms of cultural-heritage management in areas experiencing armed conflicts. This visit was particularly timely for the Museum team, since a presentation on ISAC activities had just been given in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, for the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH) Forum 2023. A nonprofit organization, ALIPH is dedicated to protecting cultural heritage in conflict areas, which is a growing worldwide concern because antiquities trafficking constitutes a considerable source of income. The ISAC Museum has a prominent role to play in such a scope, and the forum allowed us to be identified as a reference institution for years to come.

In the same spirit of reinforcing our partnerships at a national and international level, the Obama Foundation's director of development, Sali Maghoub, visited ISAC on multiple occasions and specifically on March 22, 2023, for a tour of the Nubian galleries and to discuss shared programming with ISAC upon the planned 2026 completion of the Obama Presidential Center in Chicago. The critical question of commuting from downtown Chicago to the south side is a shared goal for both institutions, and the Obama Center will inevitably become a focal point on multiple grounds in the next five years. In March, the Museum team also welcomed Her Excellency Lianys Torres Rivera, Cuba's ambassador to the United States.

In accordance with the Oriental Institute's name change to "Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures—West Asia and North Africa" on April 4, 2023, the Museum changed its name as well—to the "Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures Museum." In recent years, ISAC has worked to develop a more accurate way of describing the nature of its work and collections. To avoid confusion regarding the focus of our permanent galleries and the pejorative connotation of the word "Oriental" in modern parlance, the Museum alongside the Institute wished to reflect a grounded and familiar image for the constituents of Chicago. As this name change sets the path for years to come, it obviously had an important impact on the Museum itself, requiring an ongoing renewal of gallery didactics, a change of the museum store's name to "ISAC Museum Shop," and a demanding update of the database and nomenclature for our entire collection. Indeed, of the more than 350,000 artifacts in ISAC's inventory, fewer than 2 percent are on display in the Museum, and each of them required an updated database entry to maintain its public access to researchers and a general audience. This requirement also applies to ISAC publications: the referencing protocols of the artifacts had to be updated in forthcoming Museum volumes.

The event announcing the name change took place in the Museum's galleries, where we were honored to welcome University of Chicago President Paul Alivisatos and Provost Katherine Baicker. More than 150 guests attended this milestone in the history of our institution. That very day, the ISAC Museum was featured in several news media, including CBS, WTTW, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and PBS and WBEZ radio, where a complete overview of the name change and its implications was presented through an interview with Maillot. *Chicago* magazine expressed particular interest in the ISAC Museum Shop, as shown by its June 2023 issue, and the Museum also appeared on the *Chicago Tribune's* 10 Museum Must-Sees list for summer 2023.

In May 2023, we had the privilege of welcoming His Excellency Dr. Sameh Aboul-Enein, the Consul of Egypt in Chicago, and his delegation, along with Prof. Zahi Hawass, former Minister of State for Antiquities Affairs of Egypt, for a tour of the Egyptian gallery and ISAC premises. Thanks to this visit, we were able to propose ISAC as the next hosting institution for the celebration of Egypt's independence day (National Day of Egypt); we commemorated the event with a conference and reception on July 29.

Throughout the year, the ISAC Museum reinforced its international dimension through these multiple initiatives, one of its best expressions being the consistent presence of the French consulate particularly in April and May 2023. In April, a reception for the French consulate was given in the galleries to further the expanding partnership between the University of Chicago and the French National Research Center, leading to the official launch of an international research center both in Paris and on the University of Chicago's campus during the week of June 5 under the patronage of President Alivisatos, Executive Vice President Juan de Pablo, and Prof. Antoine Petit, chairman and CEO of the French National Research

Center. The ISAC Museum was present to lay the groundwork for an ambitious participation in the fields of art history and archaeology, with the hope of further developing our already close relationship through the France–Chicago research center in Paris in forthcoming years. French congressman Christopher Weisberg’s visit to ISAC on May 15 demonstrated that interest at the highest diplomatic level.

The stated intention of connecting our members and audience to the latest news in the field of heritage management was aptly illustrated by the first screening of the documentary film *Hadda: Rescuing Early Buddhist Art in Afghanistan* at a member event on June 14, 2023, in Breasted Hall. After the premiere, a panel composed of Rowe Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Studies Gil Stein; Madhuvanti Ghose, inaugural Alsdorf Associate Curator of Indian, Southeast Asian and Himalayan Art in the Art Institute of Chicago’s Arts of Asia department; and Maillot engaged with the public on challenges faced by museums in conflict areas and the universal dimension of the institution in crisis times. Beginning with a case study—the curation and conservation of 7,600 sculptural fragments from Hadda carried out by ISAC and the Chicago Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation—the discussion allowed for confronting experiences in a broad geographical sphere and reflecting on the nature of the museum and its role in modern society.

On a personal note, I (Marc Maillot) wish to express my gratitude to the ISAC family for a warm welcome when I arrived in January as associate director and chief curator of the ISAC Museum. During my first eight months in this role, I particularly appreciated the “little things” everyone did to ensure the best possible conditions for the start of my tenure. I was impressed by the quality of the work and the dedication of the ISAC community to this institution and the city of Chicago. As chief curator, I would like to underscore the marvelous work accomplished by the Museum’s staff to maintain the outreach by and well-being of the collection in difficult times, especially during the pandemic. Being able to present two special exhibitions per year and managing the permanent collection for general audiences and researchers right after the COVID-19 crisis does not result from improvisation. I see myself merely as the spokesman of their engagement.

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

The ISAC Museum’s special exhibitions program hosted two markedly unique and engaging shows this year. We closed the special exhibition *Joseph Lindon Smith: The Persepolis Paintings* on August 28, 2022, and installed *Making Sense of Marbles: Roman Sculpture at the OI*, which ran through March 12, 2023 (<http://isac.uchicago.edu/marbles>) (fig. 1). Cocurated by ISAC Museum curator Kiersten Neumann and Roko Rumora, doctoral candidate in the University of Chicago’s Department of Art History, this exhibition displayed to the public for the first time ISAC’s full collection of Roman sculpture. In the 1950s, ISAC’s sixth director, Carl H. Kraeling, expanded the museum collections with nine marbles, being motivated to develop “a representative collection” of classical sculpture for the city of Chicago. Because this group was assembled through acquisitions from both ISAC’s Libyan excavations at Ptolemais (1956–58) and the international art market, it was ideal for an exhibition tackling such timely topics as collecting practices, provenience and provenance, and archaeology and the art market. With their provenience remarkably well documented, the marbles from Ptolemais showcased the diverse roles sculpture played in the lives of the city’s residents. We also displayed original archival documents related to this group: the license for the first season’s archaeological excavations at Ptolemais, granted by the newly founded United Kingdom of Libya, and a June 1957 license to export five of the objects, granted by the Department of Antiquities of the Provincial Government of Cyrenaica. This abundance of contextual information allowed the Ptolemais marbles to be placed in sharp contrast with the Roman works purchased by Kraeling from the antiquities market. Because those objects lack provenience, their study was limited to provenance (ownership history) research, technical examination, and stylistic analysis. The aim of the exhibition overall was to showcase how we can make sense of marbles with divergent histories and the fundamental importance of archaeological context in telling an object’s story.

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Figure 1. *Making Sense of Marbles: Roman Sculpture at the OI*, which ran through March 12, 2023.

We hosted a series of programs in connection with the exhibition, kicking things off with an exclusive members' preview on September 14, 2022. In October, Neumann and Rumora delivered a hybrid lecture titled "Revisiting Roman Sculpture at the OI: Ptolemais and Beyond." Looking at the conservation work connected with the exhibition, ISAC conservator Alison Whyte delivered a virtual talk in the fall quarter titled "Venus with Cupid: Discoveries from the Conservation Lab," and in the winter quarter Laura D'Alessandro toured a group in the galleries for "To Restore or Not to Restore—Who Makes the Decision? Restoration at the OI from the 1930s to the Present," which culminated with the male statue from Ptolemais (see Conservation section below). In February 2023, Katharine Raff, the Elizabeth McIlvaine Associate Curator of the Arts of the Ancient Mediterranean and Byzantium at the Art Institute of Chicago, contributed a fascinating hybrid talk on related collections in Chicago titled "From Plaster to Marble: The Evolution of Ancient Mediterranean Sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago." Also in winter, Neumann presented "From Ancient Quarries to New Inquiries: Exhibiting the OI's Roman Sculpture Collection in an Age of Greater Transparency" for the Archaeological Institute of America's Chicago lecture series at the Hopleaf Bar. Promotion of the exhibition included four postcards featuring new photography of the Ptolemais marbles (fig. 2) and coverage in several media outlets, including the *Hyde Park Herald* and *Chicago Sun-Times*.

On April 5, 2023, we opened our special exhibition *Artifacts Also Die*, which featured the work of internationally acclaimed Iraqi-British artist and academic Hanaa Malallah and was curated by Neumann (<http://isac.uchicago.edu/artifacts>) (fig. 3). On display through August 27, *Artifacts Also Die* was the third public display—and the first America-based viewing—of media from the ongoing research project *Ruins, Rubble, and Renewal: Co-existent Ruins—Exploring Iraq's Mesopotamian Past through Contemporary Art*. This interdisciplinary, collaborative project seeks to address how it might be possible for local Iraqi artists in postconflict Iraq to have renewed engagements with ancient Mesopotamian heritage sites (Babylon, Nimrud, Nuffar, and Ur), as well as the Iraq Museum in Baghdad. Participating artists included Mohammed Abd Alwasi, Reyah Abd Al-Redah, Fatimah Jawdet, Betoul Mahdey, and Rozghar Mustafa. Augusta McMahan, ISAC professor of Mesopotamian archaeology and director of ISAC's Nippur Expedition, also contributed to the section on Nuffar. The displayed components included two films, shown via projectors, featuring content related to the ziggurats at Ur and Nuffar and five monitors showing footage captured at Babylon, Nimrud, Nuffar, Ur, and Baghdad; three of these videos included audio components. A series of prints of both photographs and drawings connected with these sites and of artifacts in the Iraq Museum and the British Museum were also on view. Making this exhibition of the *Ruins, Rubble, and Renewal* project unique in comparison with its previous viewings in London and Karbala was the inclusion



Figure 2. Marble statuette of a ram from the Roman Villa at Ptolemais, Libya. ISACM A30920.

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of archaeological material—principally artifacts excavated by ISAC’s Iraq Expedition in the 1930s to 1950s—and associated original archival documents. The section on Nuffar also featured a model of the dig house created by exhibition design and production manager Josh Tulisiak (see Exhibition Design and Production section below). Additionally, *Artifacts Also Die* included an installation in the ISAC Museum’s orientation area that focused on the third-millennium BCE alabaster Warka Vase.

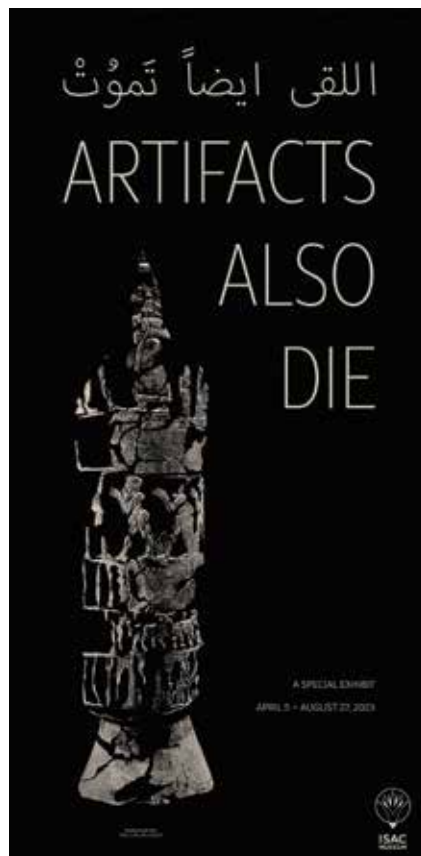


Figure 3. The special exhibition *Artifacts Also Die* opened on April 5, 2023.

The installation was composed of two banners with edited images of the vase, a video of the vase falling to pieces, 3D-printed replica fragments of the vase, and a large-scale print of the archaeological site (fig. 4). Here, Malallah interrogated our relationship with the planet, both emphasizing the vase's depiction of the Mesopotamian ecosystem in its carved hierarchical registers and challenging the present disregard and destruction of the planet's natural system. The installation also recalled the looting of the vase during the 2003 United States–led invasion of Iraq and its subsequent return in fragments and restoration in the Iraq Museum.

Programming held in connection with *Artifacts Also Die* included an exclusive exhibition preview on April 4, which coincided with ISAC's name-change celebration; a private, after-hours viewing took place the following week as part of EXPO Chicago. In addition to numerous exhibition tours, a series of lectures, teacher workshops, and film screenings was held during the course of the exhibition, including a virtual conversation with Malallah and Neumann on Mesopotamian ruins and contemporary art and a screening of *Letters from Baghdad*, a documentary directed by Sabine Krayenbühl and Zeva Oelbaum and narrated by Tilda Swinton that tells the dramatic story of the British spy, explorer, and political powerhouse Gertrude Bell. Promotion of the exhibition included a complimentary booklet—which recorded each component of the exhibition with title, attribution, and a thumbnail image—and coverage in several media outlets, including the *Chicago Tribune*, *Hyde Park Herald*, and *Urban Matter*.

Two additional 2022–23 exhibitions are worthy of note. Extended through winter 2024 is the satellite exhibition *Sealing Practices in Ancient Mesopotamia*, located in the lobby of the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business. Here we present a case study of the administrative practices of the Inanna Temple



Figure 4. The Warka Vase installation displayed in the orientation area as part of the special exhibition *Artifacts Also Die*.

at Nippur as evidenced by administrative records and sealings excavated at the site by ISAC archaeologists in the 1950s. And for the name-change celebration on April 4, we installed in the lobby of the ISAC building a case containing a display curated by Anne Flannery, head of Museum Archives, of archival objects that document ISAC's earliest beginnings (see Archives section below). The exhibition included the Haskell Museum Register of objects 1–2500, circa 1895; a letter from University of Chicago president William Rainey Harper to James Henry Breasted establishing the leadership of the Haskell Oriental Museum on April 27, 1896; a letter from John D. Rockefeller Jr. to James Henry Breasted dated May 2, 1919, establishing funding for the Oriental Institute; and a photograph of the groundbreaking ceremony for the building of the Oriental Institute, located at 1155 East 58th Street, on April 28, 1930.

EXHIBITION DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

Our primary projects for 2022–23 were the design and production of the Museum's special exhibitions, *Making Sense of Marbles: Roman Sculpture at the OI* and *Artifacts Also Die* (see Special Exhibitions section above), and the design and fabrication of graphics for the Institute's name change and identity.

In fall 2022 we opened *Making Sense of Marbles: Roman Sculpture at the OI*, featuring the Museum's Roman marble collection. The handling and installation of the sculptures was a collaborative effort across ISAC Museum departments, with the assistance of an external specialist who fabricated a new mount for the portrait statue of a young boy (A30907). New plinths were added for the female statue (A30922) and male statue (A30921) (fig. 5), and new pedestals were fabricated to present the portrait statue of a young boy (A30907) and the statuette of Venus with Cupid (A30908) (fig. 6). These new pedestals, built to be modular and reusable, are strong enough to support heavy objects safely and can also be dismantled and reconfigured for future use. Custom welded-steel and wooden guard rails were also fabricated to help protect the artifacts. Another case held smaller objects, for which new mounts were also fabricated. Chosen for the main color of the exhibition walls and promotional material was a classic shade of navy blue, which contrasted with the light-colored marble sculptures while also evoking a majestic presence in the gallery and in the artwork itself. The didactic material and graphics were designed and produced in-house. The text was strategically set away from the majority of the objects to keep visitor and aesthetic focus on the objects themselves but was complemented with images and substantial information. The design and typography of the didactic material also hinted at the carved lettering created during the period in which the sculptures were created. Tunable lighting was used to best capture the marble's natural look, with optimal lighting levels established with Conservation to preserve the remaining pigment (see Conservation section below).

The second exhibition opened in spring 2023. *Artifacts Also Die* featured a large quantity of modern media—multiple monitors, projections, 3D prints, and a handmade model (fig. 7). Much of the physical content for this exhibition was produced and fabricated in-house. A new, four-sided wall was constructed to house various media, including projectors, speakers, and a built-in display case featuring custom lighting that housed a selection of Mesopotamian cylinder and stamp seals (fig. 8). The walls were painted white for a more modern feel, while lighting was set to a warm color temperature to enhance this aesthetic. We collaborated with both the University of Chicago's Materials Research Science and Engineering Center (MRSEC) and Stratasys (an industrial 3D-printing manufacturer) to accomplish the goal of fabricating a to-scale, fragmented version of the Warka Vase, which was then hand-painted to replicate the look of alabaster (fig. 9). Using photographs, a scaled-down model of the Nippur dig house was fabricated by hand using a variety of materials (fig. 10). Because of the vast number of media displays, the didactic materials were simplified to better accommodate the space and to fit in with the contemporary theme.

With the Institute's adopting a new name, logo, and aesthetic this year, we invested much effort in designing and fabricating new graphics and signage to communicate our new identity. Our lotus-inspired



Figure 5. Exhibition view showing the introduction mural and new plinths and guard rails for the two larger marble sculptures.



Figure 6. Exhibition view of two smaller marbles—on newly built modular, reusable pedestals—and exhibition text.

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Figure 7. Large, four-sided wall housing multiple projectors, media players, speakers, artwork, and artifacts.



Figure 8. Custom-lighted display showing cylinder and stamp seals from the ISAC Museum's collection.



Figure 9. 3D-printed replica fragments of the Warka Vase in the process of being painted.



Figure 10. Model of the Nippur dig house.

Figure 11. New name and identity display on the east facade of the ISAC building.



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Figure 12. Orientation area of the galleries displaying the ISAC Museum's new name and logo.

logo evokes a sense of profound history while accentuating our existing architectural aesthetic and underlining this recurrent motif in our collection. For the lobby, new banners and an updated information panel near the visitor services desk were created. Semipermanent decals of the new ISAC icon were installed on the floor in both the lobby and the galleries. Banners were created for the exterior entrance to the building, as well as for our east-facing facade and the kiosks flanking the pedestrian walkway (fig. 11). The orientation area of the Museum was also updated to include our new name and logo, setting the path for the ongoing update of the permanent gallery didactics (fig. 12).

CONSERVATION

The year began with a continuation of the work of the University of Chicago's capital project delivery group, which underwrites building improvements on campus and has been working on projects on both the interior and exterior of the ISAC building. Vibration monitoring also continued to ensure that the collections were protected throughout the extensive work period. We appreciate that the university's facilities services continued to maintain open communication with the departments impacted during these periods so that everyone's questions and concerns could be answered in a timely manner. At the conclusion of the courtyard facade work in August 2022, the Nefermaat stela was returned to its permanent location in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery.

The Museum loaned objects to several museums and libraries for special exhibitions this year: the Louvre Museum (Paris), J. Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles), Morgan Library & Museum (New York City), and University of Chicago's David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art. The work to prepare a loan involves

most of our Museum staff, and the Conservation staff typically play a major role, starting with assessing the objects for travel and display. Once the loan has been approved, objects requiring treatment are identified and conserved. Formal condition loan reports are then prepared for insurance purposes, and Conservation undertakes the packing of the loaned objects or oversees their packing by a fine arts contractor for transport. Objects made of organic materials are particularly subject to damage when traveling, so the requirements for packing and transport are stringent to ensure the borrowed objects travel safely and the borrower follows all conservation protocols while the objects are in their care. D'Alessandro and Whyte served as couriers for the return of the four loans, and all the objects arrived back at ISAC in good condition. Material on loan from the University of Chicago's Regenstein Library was also returned by Conservation.

During spring and summer 2022, Whyte worked on several of the Roman-period stone sculptures selected for display in the ISAC Museum's fall 2022 exhibition *Making Sense of Marbles: Roman Sculpture at the OI*. One particularly intriguing object was ISACM A30908, Venus with Cupid (fig. 13). Using a combination of analytical tools including the Conservation laboratory's ultraviolet light, digital microscope, and portable X-ray fluorescence (pXRF) spectrometer, Whyte found both gold decoration and two different red pigments on its surface (fig. 14). Justin Jureller, MRSEC technical director, analyzed a small sample from the sculpture using Raman microscopy (see below) and was able to confirm the presence of cinnabar, a red pigment containing mercury and sulfur. (This work made use of the shared facilities at MRSEC supported by the National Science Foundation under award number DMR-2011854.) In November, Whyte presented a lecture on the analysis and conservation treatment of the sculpture as part of the *Making Sense of Marbles* exhibition programming; "Venus with Cupid: Discoveries from the Conservation Lab" is now available on ISAC's YouTube channel.

Raman microscopy is a nondestructive analytical technique that can be used to identify a wide variety of materials in cultural heritage studies, such as ivory, pigments, dyes, and organic compounds. Over the past year, D'Alessandro and Whyte began training on MRSEC's Horiba confocal Raman microscope. Access to this equipment will allow Conservation to expand its analysis of the collections in identifying both the materials from which objects are made and the chemicals used on them historically (prior to the establishment of the Conservation lab). As with many museums, early treatments carried out on our collections were rarely, if ever, documented. Many conservators are left with the task of attempting to determine not only the composition of objects but also any prior chemicals used on them. This step is particularly critical when choosing the optimal treatment for an object to ensure the treatment will be compatible with the chemically altered object.



Figure 13. Venus with Cupid (ISACM A30908).



Figure 14. Digital microscope image of red and gold surface decoration.

Whyte traveled to Uzbekistan in early September 2022 to participate in the fourth workshop of the C5 Cultural Training Partnership in Artifact Conservation (CTPAC) organized by Gil Stein, Rowe Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology and director of the Chicago Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation. Whyte presented a week-long workshop on the conservation of glass objects with participants learning about glass composition, manufacturing techniques, degradation processes, conservation treatments, and preventive care (fig. 15). In mid-September she traveled from Tashkent to Málaga, Spain, to lend conservation support to ISAC archaeologist David Schloen's excavation of the Phoenician site of Cerro del Villar. While there, she helped the archaeologists excavate fragile material while also conserving small objects, maintaining records in the site's database, and ensuring proper storage of finds.

Also in the fall, D'Alessandro and Whyte, along with other ISAC collections staff, attended a workshop organized by the University of Chicago's Office of Risk Management and Huntington T. Block insurance agency on fine-art loss prevention that provided helpful information on better protecting the university's collections. The participants were staff from the university departments responsible for artwork on campus.

In December, Giovanni Verri and Ken Sutherland, conservation scientists from the Art Institute of Chicago, visited the Conservation lab to continue their investigations of the ISAC Museum's Fayum portraits for the APPEAR (Ancient Panel Painting: Examination, Analysis, and Research) project sponsored by the Getty.

The modern art sculptures on loan from Mohamad Hafez—*Hiraeth*, *Collateral Damage*, and *Baggage #5*—were deinstalled in late December 2022 and early January 2023 and packed in their shipping crates with the assistance of Museum lead preparator Robert Bain and exhibition design and production manager Josh Tulisiak. The delicate details on all of Hafez's works required extra care in packing for their return trip. Conservation applied removable structural supports to one of the larger minarets to aid in its safe transit.

In March 2023, the Conservation lab hosted Moritz Jansen, a researcher involved in a collaborative project with Chicago's Field Museum, to investigate the composition of a selection of gold artifacts in ISAC's Mesopotamian collection. Jansen brought his own pXRF spectrometer to conduct the analyses. We modified one of our Bruker stands to provide a stage for his equipment to minimize the handling of our fragile gold objects. Whyte assisted by handling the more fragile objects as Jansen carried out the pXRF analysis. D'Alessandro packed the more than forty gold artifacts in individual boxes to protect them during their transport to the Field Museum. She worked with Jansen to load and unload the most fragile objects

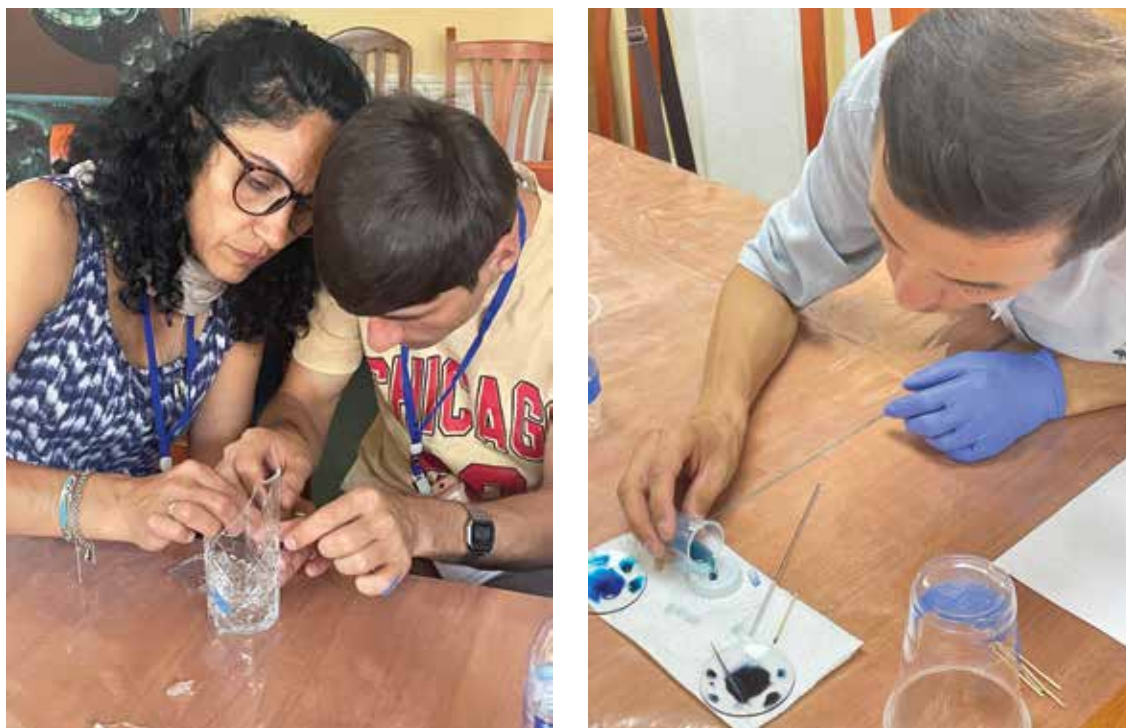


Figure 15. Participants in the CTPAC glass conservation workshop experiment with reconstruction and loss compensation techniques for glass artifacts.

into the chamber of the Field Museum’s analytical equipment (a type of mass spectrometer that analyzes minute samples in solid state). At the conclusion of the analysis, all objects were safely returned to ISAC. Associate registrar Susan Allison’s photography of the gold artifacts before they left ISAC was important in confirming that the objects were visibly unchanged.

In February, D’Alessandro presented a gallery talk titled “To Restore or Not to Restore—Who Makes the Decision? Restoration at the OI from the 1930s to the Present.” The tour included the restoration history of the Assyrian reliefs from Sargon II’s palace, the statue of Tutankhamun, the head of the colossal statue from Tell Tayinat, the Persian bull from Persepolis, and the male statue (ISACM A30921) in the special exhibition *Making Sense of Marbles*. During the year, D’Alessandro conducted a discussion on handling fragile materials in a museum setting to a class taught by Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) lecturer Kathryn Bandy on approaches to the ancient Near East. D’Alessandro also took part in a class taught by Mehrnoush Soroush, assistant professor of landscape archaeology, on ancient empires by providing information on the treatment history of the Persepolis tablets and issues involved in the modern conservation and packing of the clay tablets for their return to Iran. The topic was timely, as the packing of the second shipment of Persepolis Fortification tablets was also completed this year. The crates holding the 3,506 tablets were held in museum storage while awaiting shipment to the National Museum of Iran in Tehran.

A significant portion of the year involved Conservation’s preparations for the 2023–24 special exhibition *Back to School in Babylonia*. Whyte focused on the assessments of the tablets and casts slated for the exhibition and determined that seventeen of the tablets would require stabilization to ready them for display (fig. 16). In spring and summer 2023 she spent much of her time on treating this important collection. For the exhibition catalog, the Conservation team contributed an essay on the historical background of the early field treatment of ISAC’s tablet collection, current conservation treatments, and issues faced today.

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Figure 16. Alison Whyte working on a tablet for the *Back to School in Babylonia* special exhibition.

And last, but certainly not least, this year we welcomed our new Museum director, Marc Maillot, who will take the Museum (and Conservation) in new directions. We look forward to what the next years will bring under his exciting leadership.

REGISTRATION

This year, recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic continued with an increase in research visits and loans. The Museum's registration staff responded to more than eighty-five requests this year. Staff and student helpers carried out more than 10,000 object movements, and more than 450 objects were registered and photographed. Recently registered material included Iron Age potsherds from Alishar Höyük (Turkey), bronze arrowheads from Persepolis (Iran), and flint tools from Palegawra (Iraq).

Collections Research Grant Recipients and Other Researchers

Two more of our 2019–20 Collections Research Grant recipients were able to visit and carry out their research. Bart Vanthuyne (postdoctoral researcher, University of Cologne, Germany) came for two weeks in August and September 2022 to study and photograph ceramics from Quibell's excavations at Ballas (Egypt). He had already been able to clarify which pots came from the site through his study of the tomb numbers marked on the pottery from photographs taken by the registrar in 2020 and by comparing the corpus to the Petrie records. Moritz Jansen (German Mining Museum, Bochum, Germany) came for three weeks in March 2023 to study a selection of Mesopotamian gold objects. He also accompanied them on loan to the Field Museum to carry out laser ablation inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS) analysis under the auspices of Laure Dussubieux, manager of the Field Museum's Elemental Analysis Facility. In late February another loan went to the Field Museum for LA-ICP-MS analysis and Raman spectroscopy. This loan consisted of garnet beads, mostly from Nubia. The researchers on this project—Joanna Then-Obłuska (University of Warsaw, Poland), Albert Gilg (chair of engineering geology, Technical University of Munich, Germany), and Dussubieux—hope the analysis will allow the source(s) of the garnet to be identified.

Other research visits were as follows: Alexander Nagel (residential research associate, Department of Anthropology, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution) visited in July 2022 to study stone blocks and paper squeezes of inscriptions from Persepolis (Iran). Daniel Ruprecht (PhD student, University of Chicago) studied the *Iliad* fragment (E2058) and the Hadrian letter (E8349). Tasha Vorderstrasse (ISAC's continuing education program manager) made several visits to study Carthaginian coins in the Mannheimer collection. Douglas Baird (University of Liverpool, United Kingdom), who gave the Braidwood lecture in February 2023, got an overview of the flint tools from Palegawra excavated by Bruce Howe; Baird also has worked at Palegawra and is preparing a publication of his own excavations at the site. Abbas Alizadeh (ISAC research associate) came to study Lapuii ware from Tall i-Bakun (Iran) in March. His work enabled us to improve the descriptions of some Bakun sherds. Mark Garrison (Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas) and Christina Chandler (PhD student, Trinity University) visited several times during the year to study clay sealings from Persepolis. Savanna Buelman-Barbeau (PhD student, University of Toronto, Canada) came in May to study pottery from Chogha Mish (Iran) and the Diyala sites (Iraq). Marta Zingale (PhD student, University of Manchester, United Kingdom) came for three weeks in May and June to study Early Dynastic and Akkadian-period pottery from the Diyala and Nippur (Iraq).

Loans

Some outgoing loans returned to us in summer 2022. Two objects from the Museum's Robert F. Picken Family Nubia Gallery—the Pekartror stela fragment (E6408) and the God's Wife Amenirdis I relief fragment (E14681)—returned from the Louvre Museum (Paris). They had been part of the exhibition on the Napatan kings that ended in July 2022 (*Pharaon des Deux Terres: L'épopée africaine des rois de Napata*). Several Persepolis objects returned from the J. Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles), where they had been part of the *Persia: Ancient Iran and the Classical World* exhibition; the loan objects included the lion-and-bull relief (A73100), a stone lion head (A24089), a gold roundel (A28582), and the Xerxes tablet (A24120), all from displays in the ISAC Museum's Robert and Deborah Aliber Persia Gallery.

New loans also went out this year. In July 2022 a selection of Archaic Susiana and Early Susiana-period potsherds from Chogha Mish (Iran) were sent on loan for analysis to Emmanuelle Casanova (Marie Skłodowska-Curie research fellow, Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris). The analysis being carried out focuses on detection of lipids, indicating the use of milk. Samples from the sherds will be subjected to gas chromatography and mass spectrometry, as well as radiocarbon dating. In October 2022 a selection of Mesopotamian objects was loaned to the Morgan Library & Museum (New York City) for the exhibition *She Who Wrote: Enbeduanna and the Women of Mesopotamia*. (ISAC registrar Helen McDonald served as the courier for this loan on its way out.) The loaned objects included Diyala female sculptures (A11441, A12334, A12412A–B), cylinder seals (A7123, A17131, A27902, A27903), and a plaque (A12417). Most of these objects are usually on display in the Museum's Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery. The loan returned in February. In February 2023 we loaned two Mesopotamian objects—a piece of silver coil money (A9543) and a stone tablet, known as the “Chicago Stone” (A25412)—to the David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art on campus for the *Metropol Drama* exhibition.

In January 2023 we returned a loan of modern art pieces to the artist Mohamad Hafez (see Conservation section above). His works had been part of the centennial exhibition on display in the Museum's Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery.

Class Use

With the assistance of Conservation, a selection of clay sealings from the Nubian site of Serra were made available for a class taught by CMES lecturer Kathryn Bandy: “Approaches to the Ancient Near East.” In February 2023, Foy Scalf—head of ISAC's Research Archives and Integrated Database Project—taught a class for Dominican University that included a selection of inscribed material (both tablets and manuscripts). In

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fall 2022 a selection of sealings and coins was made available for “Ancient Empires,” a class on Achaemenid administration taught by Mehrnoush Soroush, assistant professor of landscape archaeology.

Other Events

In July, McDonald organized the hosting of a meeting of the Chicago Collections and Registrar Specialists group at ISAC. In September, McDonald and associate registrar Susan Allison attended the Axiell conference in Chicago; Axiell is the company responsible for the collections management software used for the ISAC integrated database. In October, both registrars (along with the rest of the Museum’s collections staff) attended a workshop on fine-art insurance organized by Candace Walters, risk management claims specialist at the University of Chicago.

Photo Permissions and Photography

More than 150 photo permission requests were processed during the 2022–23 year, including new external and internal photography requests. More than 2,000 images, new and existing, have been added to the database. More than 40 objects were photographed, including both publication photography and study photos. Conservation condition photography was done for an additional 120 objects.

Acknowledgments

We thank the University of Chicago students who helped in Registration this year. In summer 2022, Hannah Griffin helped unpack and rehouse some of the material received from the Detroit Institute of Arts. During the academic year, we had the help of three students: Hannah Yang served as photography assistant and Madeline Conigliaro-Nguyen as photo archives assistant (helping with photo permissions, adding images to the integrated database, and updating the information for the objects on display in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery), and Evangelia Koronios, who joined us in the winter quarter, registered Iron Age sherds from Alishar Höyük (Turkey). Our volunteer helpers Terry Friedman and Toni Smith also returned in late spring 2023 and have been making a valuable contribution.

MUSEUM ARCHIVES

The Museum Archives worked diligently this year to bring in new collections, provide access to researchers, and promote the collections online and in person through outreach, classes, and tours. Work continued on the ISAC Digital Archives with the preparation of curated and cataloged archival content; the Cultural Heritage Experiment finished another successful year; and efforts to implement the Institute’s new name across documentation and database entries began and are ongoing.

New Acquisitions and Collection Processing

The Museum Archives acquired a large amount of material this year through donation and active solicitation. Examples include the research and/or papers of ISAC professors emeriti McGuire Gibson, Edward Wente, and John Wilson and ISAC associate Carol Meyer. These collections will prove incredibly important to future researchers. Because of their size and scope, some of these collections are still undergoing processing.

Continuing to make photographic material more accessible to the public, PhD student and Museum Archives assistant Ling Chan contributed to linking photographic data to bibliographical references and scanning more than 25,000 photographic cards and cataloging them in the database. This process makes more digital photographs available online and provides references to works in which they are published. Master’s student and Museum Archives assistant Apollo El-Khatib continued to process the papers of the

late former ISAC Sumerologist Miguel Civil, while recent PhD graduate Colton Siegmund assisted with salvaging Civil's digital collection during spring 2023.

General Overview of Research Requests

The Museum Archives fielded research requests both online and in person, assisting researchers such as Domenico Andreucci, Douglas Baird, Elvan Cobb, Peter Der Manuelian, Anne Dunn-Vaturi, Allyson Gonzalez, Colin Halverson, Eva Rose Miller, Alexander Nagel, Rahim Rabenou, Emilie Sarrazin, Kathleen Sheppard, David Wengrow, and Meredyth Winter.

Requests came from institutions as varied as the University of Arizona, Harvard University, Hong Kong Baptist University, Indiana University, University College London, University of Liverpool, Metropolitan Museum, Missouri University of Science and Technology, Philadelphia Museum of Art, University of Potsdam, and University of Turin.

Collections that were accessed include, but were not limited to, the ISAC Directors Correspondence; the Papers of Robert and Linda Braidwood, James Henry Breasted, Henri Frankfort, and Helene Kantor; and the records of the Mendes, Nippur, Persepolis, and Rayy excavations.

Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures Digital Archives

Started by former ISAC archivist John Larson in 2010 with the inaugural publication *Letters from James Henry Breasted to His Family, August 1919–July 1920*, the formerly named Oriental Institute Digital Archives (OIDA—now ISACDA) is a digital series that strives to promote the Museum's archival collections by exploring ISAC's history through archival documentation. Two digital projects are currently nearing publication. The first is a collection of letters from John Wilson's first year as director of the Institute in 1936. In conversation with Foy Scalf, archivists Claire Makrauer-Madden and Hilarie Pitman Pozesky selected and transcribed letters from the Directors Correspondence, gathering them in a volume highlighting the financial struggles faced by Wilson and the Institute during this critical moment in its history. The second project comprises German transcriptions and English translations of Uvo Hölscher's Medinet Habu excavation notebooks, prepared by ISAC associate and retired curator Emily Teeter with the expert linguistic assistance of Anne Schumacher and Barbara Jillson. These volumes are in the final stages of preparation and will cover the four notebooks, each of which will be published in two parts: one with a scan of the original German and a German transcription, the other with a scan of the original German and an English translation.

Special Projects and Outreach

The Museum Archives continued its commitment to reaching out to our campus community and engaging with scholars beyond Chicago. This outreach includes undergraduate engagement, graduate instruction, conferences, and exhibition support. This year, the Cultural Heritage Experiment took place in person and enjoyed a record turnout: sixty-two undergraduates participated by borrowing an archival object to live with for the academic year. Students provided in situ photographs throughout the year (fig. 17) and participated in ISAC archival tours and a lecture on the history of archaeological photography by Tasha Vorderstrasse, ISAC's continuing education program manager.

ISAC Museum archivist Anne Flannery supported graduate students who might want to enter the field of archives and special collections by teaching the University of Chicago's graduate course "Managing the Past: Careers in Archives and Special Collections" in fall 2022. This course covered a short history of archives while introducing students to archival and museum practices, concepts, and contemporary challenges. In addition to weekly classes, students participated in informational interviews and created portfolios that highlighted their new skills and resources.

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Figure 17. Examples of objects in the homes of students.

The Museum Archives continued to cooperate with local institutions to encourage research and communicate ISAC's history. Working with North Central College (NCC) in Naperville, Illinois, the Museum Archives provided photographs and documentation for the poster presentation of NCC anthropology student (now graduate) Megan Sands. The presentation examines the work of James Henry Breasted (also an NCC graduate) and will remain on display at the college (fig. 18).



Figure 18. Megan Sands of North Central College presenting her archival research.

In honor of the name-change event on April 4, 2023, the Museum Archives created a small exhibit (see Special Exhibitions section above). The exhibit case contained essential documentation relating to the history of ISAC, including the original Haskell Museum Register, the Rockefeller letter granting funding for the Institute’s establishment, and a photograph of the groundbreaking ceremony for the building that currently houses ISAC (fig. 19). In addition, the Museum Archives supported the special exhibitions program by contributing original documents for the fall 2022 show titled *Making Sense of Marbles: Roman Sculpture at the OI*.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to everyone who supports the ISAC Museum Archives, including all staff and especially Susan Allison, Rob Bain, Ling Chan, Vick Cruz, Apollo El-Khatib, Helen McDonald, Mariana Perlinac, Josh Tulisak, and Catie Witt. Foy Scalf offered invaluable expertise to the Museum Archives

this year through consultation and continued assistance with the Robert K. Ritner Papers. And thank you to Brendan Bulger, Marc Maillot, Matt Perley, and Theo van den Hout for administrative support of Museum Archives.



Figure 19. Archival mini-exhibit.

ISAC MUSEUM SHOP

This year the ISAC Museum Shop (formerly the Suq) had opening hours on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Sales rates were steady, but maintaining and expanding them will require a full week of opening hours. The Museum team is currently working on solutions for returning the shop to a prepandemic schedule of opening hours.

As part of the celebration of the Institute’s name change on April 4, 2023, the shop created dedicated retail for the event and reserved a space for an “Oriental Institute” overstock sale during this milestone in the history of our institution. The shop’s name also changed to match the new name of the Institute and maintain consistency in our branding.

The shop’s product line benefited from many people throughout the year. We particularly wish to express our deepest thanks to Christine Amirian—whose parents were dear friends of the ISAC Museum shop for more than forty-five years—and to Nike Whitcomb, who donated special treasures from her husband, James McKechnie.