

SPECIAL EXHIBITS

Emily Teeter

“A Cosmopolitan City: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Old Cairo,” which opened February 17, continued on view through September 13, 2015. For that exhibit, see the *2014–2015 Annual Report*, pp. 240–42. “Persepolis: Images of an Empire,” curated by Kiersten Neumann and designed by Josh Tulisiak, opened to our members on October 11, 2015, and to the public two days later. Members and their guests filled Breasted Hall to hear Professor Matthew Stolper speak about the site and its history (fig. 1). The presentation was followed by hors d’oeuvres in the Mesopotamian Gallery and a viewing of the exhibit.

For the Persepolis show, the gallery was painted a dark royal purple that contrasted with the black and white images (figs. 2–3). Quotes from early visitors to the site ring the top of the walls. A stunning panoramic view of the stairway of the Apadana that Josh flawlessly stitched together from five separate negatives covered almost one whole wall. A large panel addressed different opinions about the function of Persepolis, with quotes from Gil Stein, Abbas Alizadeh, Donald Whitcomb, and Matt Stolper. A small display case contextualized the expedition, with a vintage typewriter and pages from the photographic register. A large box camera on a tripod, similar to that used by the expedition (sourced on-line by Erik Lindahl), gives our visitors a deeper appreciation of how laborious photography used to be. Kiersten worked with Matt Stolper and with Emily Hammer and Jennifer Altman-Lupu of our CAMEL lab on a 12-minute video on the topography of the site that is shown in a continuous loop in the gallery (it is also available on the exhibit’s website). A brochure, rather than a catalog,



Figure 1. Professor Matthew Stolper speaking at the members’ opening of the Persepolis exhibit



Figures 2-3. Views of “Persepolis: Images of an Empire” (photos: Austin M. Kramer)

was issued in conjunction with the show. “Persepolis: Images of an Empire” was made possible by generous support from Guity Nashat Becker, the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America, the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago, and the Iran House of Greater Chicago, as well as the continued support of the members of the Oriental Institute. In kind support was kindly provided by Darioush Winery.

We continued to show an abbreviated version of “Our Work: Modern Jobs, Ancient Origins,” photos by Jason Reblando, on the lower level of the institute through August 15, 2015. A selection of the images was loaned to the Bade Museum at the University of California at Berkeley where it will be on view to the end of 2016.

“Don’t Take My Stuff. Tell My Story.” went on display in the lower level on May 1, 2016, and continues through October 30. This show (fig. 4) is composed of forty-eight colorful works, each 24 × 24 inches on paper or fabric by K through 12 students from a variety of schools, most



Figure 4. View of the “Don’t Take My Stuff. Tell My Story.” exhibit (photo: David Turner Photography)

in the Chicago area, but also farther afield. Each piece is accompanied by a statement about the work that reflects the student's response to the impact of the looting of archaeological sites and the data that is lost (hence the name of the show). One statement reads:

“Title: Missing a page torn from a book of fairy tales.

Stained, vandalized and missing several words, this piece is symbolic of the importance of artistic and context. It is only through fully intact works and collections that we can achieve understanding of the literal and cultural meaning of art.”

— Cecilia Lira, Skinner West Classical Fine Arts and Technology School, Chicago
(for her artwork, see fig. 3, lower left)

The project created valuable new links between Chicago-area educators and the Oriental Institute. The project was organized by Dream Rocket and coordinated by Moriah Grooms-Garcia and Carol Ng-He in our Public Programs office.

“A Threatened Heritage,” a series of panels that address threats to cultural heritage through the Middle East, continue to be displayed in the galleries. “Doing Business in the Ancient World,” featuring artifacts that relate to commerce and trade and finance, presented in the lobby of the Booth School of Business, was also renewed for another loan term.

The 50th anniversary of the foundation of our volunteer program was marked by the placement of a small display in the lobby. Designed by Josh Tulisniak and Erik Lindahl, the display features photos that reflect the many roles that our volunteers play for the Institute, including assisting faculty research, giving tours, working in the shop or Research Archive, acting as a spokesman for us, and participating in field work. The anniversary was also commemorated by a banner at the front door (fig. 5) and the production of lapel buttons designed by Josh. The celebration continues through 2016, culminating with a special program on December 4.

The special exhibits program will temporary slow down so that the museum staff can focus on the project to refresh the permanent galleries (see Museum report). The Persepolis exhibit will be extended into the new year. But planning for the future still proceeds. We are working on an exhibit on the Egyptian Book of the Dead (curated by Foy Salf) that opens for our members on October 2017, and we are already giving thought to our exhibit for 2019 — our centennial year.

The special exhibits program continues to fulfill its goals: promoting research on the collections; expanding our library of new photography; giving faculty, staff, and students the opportunity to curate an exhibit; and of course, encouraging the public to return to our galleries to see what is “new.”

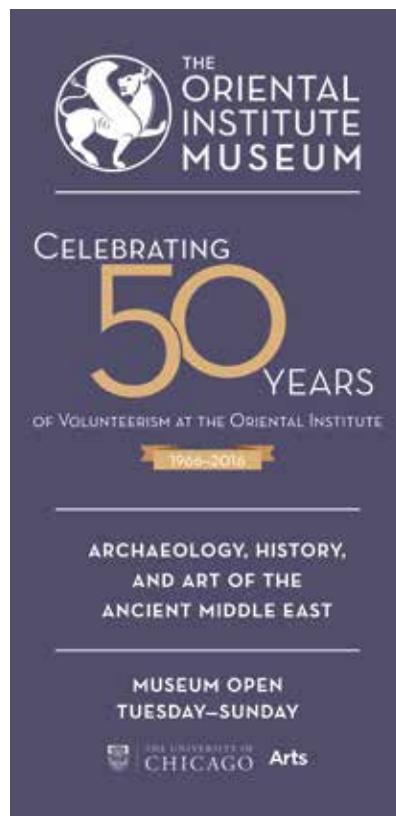


Figure 5. Banner by front door announcing the Volunteers' 50th anniversary and mini-exhibit, designed by Josh Tulisniak