

# MUSEUM EDUCATION PROGRAM

**JOAN · D · BARGHUSEN**

**T**he Museum Education Program was initiated in fall 1980 with the mission of developing the Museum as an educational resource. Today, seven years later, the Oriental Institute maintains a comprehensive Museum education program offering materials and services for children and adults, individuals and groups, school audiences and the general public. This past year was one of consolidation as we worked to refine the projects that make up the basic program.

The Saturday morning workshops in January and February were highlights of our program for young visitors. These two hour workshops had literary themes, with myths from ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia retold especially for the children and tours and craft projects related to the stories. Projects included making replicas of Egyptian crowns, construction of a three-dimensional cardboard model of the god Marduk in his chariot drawn by a team of dragons to illustrate the creation myth "Enuma Elish," and a hand puppet inspired by the serpent god in the Egyptian tale "Shipwrecked Sailor." The creative staff that makes these programs possible includes Joan Hives, artist and craft consultant, Kitty Picken, who assists in planning and developing programs as well as in their implementation, and Georgie Maynard, Peggy Grant, and Laura Barghusen. Special interest tours offered in July and August, also for young visitors, often draw upon ideas developed for the workshops; the special interest tours, given on Thursday mornings, are followed by pencil and paper activities in the galleries. The Thursday morning docents, under the leadership of Kitty Picken, are responsible for these popular tours, which sometimes draw as many as thirty youngsters.

The Children's Adventure Sheets, gallery activity and sketching guides available to young visitors to use as part of a family visit, were improved and printed in quantity this past year with the help of funds directed to the Education Office from the Museum's grant from the Institute for Museum Services, a federal agency. Artist Melissa Gol-

ter, who came to us from the Cooperative Education Program of The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, helped with the drawings for these, as did Laura Barghusen, a long-time friend of this office. These much-used children's guides include a search for lost objects, another for lost animals, an Egyptian crossword puzzle, and a mummy case to be decorated. The addition of drawings to these guides gives the searchers better clues and provides an interesting memento for children to take home from their museum visit.

Institute of Museum Services grant funds also helped to purchase two new films which are now being shown as part of the Sunday Free Film Series. "Champollion: Egyptian Hieroglyphs Deciphered," which explores in detail the achievement of the man credited with deciphering ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, helps visitors appreciate the inscriptions they see in the Egyptian gallery. "The Royal Archives of Ebla," which includes comments by Robert Biggs and the late I. J. Gelb of the Oriental Institute, informs visitors about recent important finds at the site of Tell Mardikh, where archaeologists uncovered an ancient city with language and trading links to Mesopotamian cities of the third millennium B.C. Two slide talks by graduate students were introduced as part of the Sunday Series this summer, giving visitors an opportunity to learn about on-going field work of the Institute from young scholars in training at the University. Rick Schoen spoke about the site of Ashkelon, where he excavated in 1986, and Lorelei Corcoran talked about her work as an epigrapher at Chicago House. Sundays bring a large number of visitors attending the Museum as individuals or families rather than as part of an organized tour group; the audiovisual activities help to expand their historical and cultural perspectives on the ancient Near East.

The statue of Tutankhamun was the subject of the Featured Object brochure prepared for fall 1986. Written by William Murnane, then senior epigrapher at Chicago House, the brochure was available for several months for visitors to pick up from a stand located next to the statue in the gallery, thus calling attention to the statue and giving visitors current and authoritative information about the sculpture and its significance. It even answered the question so familiar to our docents, "What is he holding in his hands?" The next Featured Object, a Lydian coin from the time of King Croesus, was brought out of storage for showing in connection with the exhibit "Twenty-five Years of Discovery at Sardis." This finely cast and well-preserved silver stater from one of the world's most

ancient coinage systems, was minted in the country of Lydia in western Anatolia and later carried to Persepolis, where it was excavated by the Oriental Institute's Persian Expedition. Featured Object brochures are one of several Museum programs directed to individual adult visitors, many of whom show a serious interest in Museum objects. We are grateful to Bill Murnane, author of the Tutankhamun brochure and to Ronald Gorny, who wrote the Lydian coin text, for their assistance in these endeavors.

Our program especially for teen-aged students, "Sketching Is Seeing," had a successful third year with artist Myra Herr returning as instructor for a second year. With a large enrollment of twenty students (several more had to be turned away), artist Eileen Lynch was hired to assist. This program brought Chicago area students, ages 12–18, to the Museum for six three-hour sessions of drawing instruction and sketching, working from Museum objects. The participants came to us through notices sent to art teachers in the public and private schools. Support for this program from an Illinois Arts Council grant keeps the cost to individual students at a level affordable by almost everyone. The program attracts very hardworking and often very talented students; for some of them this course represents the first drawing instruction available to them since many schools have cut art programs in response to economic pressures. We are proud of this project which reaches out to an age group that is not often attracted by more usual museum offerings. Our contacts with high school teachers through the regular program of tours by the volunteer guides, the Summer Teacher Institutes and other outreach activities for the education community, have been helpful in developing the sketching program since most students come to us through the recommendation of their teachers. Thus our education projects build upon each other. Not only the sketching program, but all the programs mentioned above are supported in part by the Illinois Arts Council, which has generously granted funds to the Museum Education Program since it began in 1980.

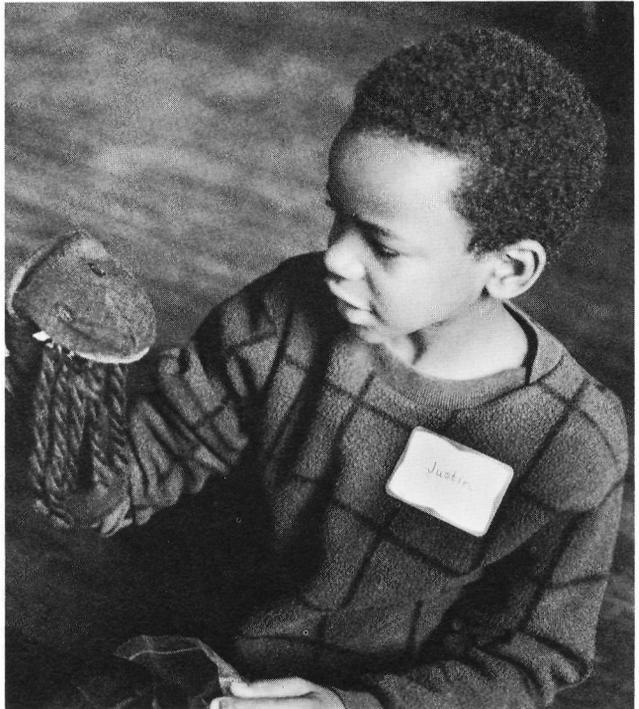
The fall of 1986 marked the end of the Summer Teacher Institute "Before the Greeks: Origins of Civilization in the Ancient Near East" which met for its final seminar on October 25. This Institute, funded by a grant from the Illinois Humanities Council, brought 25 Chicago area high school and junior high school teachers to the Oriental Institute for an intensive workshop on the history and culture of the ancient Near East with a special emphasis on the Museum collection and use of the Museum as an edu-

cational resource. This was the second Teacher Institute offered in conjunction with the Illinois Humanities Council. We were gratified by the enthusiastic response of the teachers who participated and by the recognition of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the federal agency which funds the Illinois Humanities Council, which featured this Teacher Institute in a two-page article in its national publication *Humanities* for October, 1986.

The Museum Education Program received further publicity in a *Chicago Tribune* article focusing on the museum education coordinator. The program of the Education Office is, by its nature, a highly visible one for the Museum, the Institute and the University; the continuing press attention both reflects and attracts the larger public interest that is our "raison d'etre."

Adult education courses this past year saw the innovation of a series of courses on Egyptian history which will give participants an in-depth survey of that ancient civilization from its archaic period to the Roman conquest in 30 B.C. The series will take two years to complete and is enrolled to its maximum capacity. As an experiment in offering our

- A young participant gets acquainted with the sea serpent hand puppet he has just made in one of the Children's workshops.



class participants more detailed material than the usual one-quarter format allows, it has confirmed our impression of a serious level of interest among many of our adult education students. Other adult education courses throughout the year included topics on Hittite Anatolia, Archaeology of the Holy Land, and Ancient Elam. Hieroglyphs-by-Mail has continued with offerings of the Introductory Hieroglyphs, the Advanced Hieroglyphs which deals with the verbal system, and a Hieroglyphs Reading course for approximately ten hardy souls who had completed their grammar study and were ready to move on to reading actual texts.

Part of my work as museum education coordinator is to meet with teachers, administrators and other educators, including museum educators. Besides teacher institutes which meet here at the Museum, I participated in a panel discussion on using museum resources in teaching social studies at the Chicago Metro Social Studies Conference which met in April, 1987 at the Field Museum and attracted over 200 teachers. At the Midwest Museums Conference held in Springfield, Illinois, I was a presenter in the Marketplace of Ideas, an exchange of project and program ideas by museum educators.

Each year in this report I confess the enormous debt of the Museum Education Program to the many individuals who give support and encouragement in myriad ways. The debt increases with the years. I thank especially Janet Helman, the chairman of volunteers, whose daily presence and aid on all fronts is simply indispensable. This year our day to day activities enjoyed the able assistance of our work-study student Ping Hin Yu. The volunteer guides, of course, provide the foundation on which the Education Program builds; in addition, many of them help the Education Office in special ways such as those docents mentioned above who work with the children's programs, and Mary Jo Khuri, who continues to be our outreach docent to senior citizen centers. I would like to commend all the docent guides for their enthusiasm and dedication, their knowledge and their willingness to extend themselves to meet the needs and interests of their listeners. Finally, we depend on the advice and support of other Oriental Institute Museum staff and on the help of many faculty members who take time for our activities and interest in our work with the public. The Education Program combines resources from all parts of the Oriental Institute in its efforts to develop audiences and promote the Museum as an intellectually exciting place that is responsive to its many and diverse visitors.