Outreach Efforts Steam Ahead while the Museum is Closed to the Public

Although the sign on the front door of the Kelsey reads “...Galleries will be closed until September 2009,” our closing has not hindered us from sponsoring an array of exciting educational outreach activities. In fact, through the efforts and imagination of Todd Gerring, Community Outreach Supervisor, we have been quite busy!

Activities have run the gamut from Family Days, webcams, on-line exhibitions designed by young students, to the creation of special reproduction kits, and an ambitious exhibition planned for the summer of 2008 at the Ann Arbor Public Library. Below are details on some of our programs past and future.

On Sunday, March 9, fifty children streamed into the University of Michigan’s Stearns Collection on North Campus to participate in an unusual Family Day event. Family Days have become an annual staple of Kelsey outreach programs. This Family Day, however, was a departure from our now well-known “eviscerated Barbie doll” mummy-making sessions. For the first time we joined forces with the Stearns Collection, one of the largest collections of historical and contemporary musical instruments in North America. The event, which was part of the citywide Ann Arbor Family Days weekend, was called Greatest Hits BCE—Music of the Ancient World. Examples of ancient instruments from the Stearns Collection were brought out for viewing as well as replicas for impromptu performances.

Stearns collections curator Christopher Dempsey was also on hand for questions and demonstrations. Activities included making a wooden clapper or a buzzer or fashioning a necklace with a cat amulet representing the Egyptian goddess of music, Bastet. With a roll of dice, or knucklebones, as they are called, the Oracle of Apollo was also available for a musical consultation.

The past few months also marked another new partnership for the Kelsey Museum. Again through the efforts of Todd Gerring, we connected with “826michigan,” which is a local branch of a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping students ages six to eighteen develop creative and expository writing skills. Initially founded in San Francisco, 826 has chapters in Los Angeles, Boston, New York, Chicago, and Ann Arbor. Our project used several sets of archaeological objects (reproductions) to inspire the participants. Students were given an imaginary collection of grave assemblages from the ancient world and were asked to consider who was buried in the tomb, how the objects were used, why the objects were placed in the tomb, and how the person may have died.

Working with local children’s author Jacqui Robbins, students put themselves into the role of someone who lived in antiquity and were asked a series of questions to help create a character—questions such as: Who is your greatest enemy? What do you cherish most? What is your biggest fear? With their characters fleshed out, the students penned a dramatic end to their ancient persona with the story of their eventual demise.

In addition, we are working with Jessica Dooley and her two fifth grade classes at the Academy of the Sacred Heart in Bloomfield Hills on a webcam project to facilitate their studies of the ancient world. The webcam archaeology project takes place in real time in the Kelsey Museum classroom and Ms. Dooley’s class at the Academy. Using artifact reproductions, students view the objects projected on a screen in their classroom and are also able to ask questions as they take notes. So far they have had classes on Egypt and...
Field Conservation 101 for Archaeologists

What is the best way to deal with salty ceramics at your site? How will you know if you have active corrosion on your excavated metal objects? What do you do about it? What are the consequences of bad storage at your site? Have you thought about how to archive your excavation records?

These questions and more were addressed by Curator of Conservation Suzanne Davis and me during a semester-long seminar examining the fundamentals of field conservation during the Winter Term 2007.

The seminar was organized at the request of several students in the Kelsey-based Interdepartmental Program in Classical Art and Archaeology (IPCAA) who were interested in learning more about field conservation and who work on archaeological projects in various parts of the world. The IPCCA students were joined by several graduate students in anthropology.

Conservation is an essential component of archaeology and should be at the core of all archaeological strategy and planning. Modern field conservation is not just about piecing together a ceramic pot or lifting a fragile human burial—although these activities are an essential component of the care of freshly excavated objects. Planning for adequate conservation of finds is often a less than clear process for archaeologists who have never worked with a conservator before.

The workshop was conceived as a way to address these issues and to provide students with information to use in the field on their own projects. The conservators also hoped to encourage students to speak to their project directors about conservation and preservation issues at their sites, especially if conservation support was not available.

The monthly seminars we presented addressed issues that archaeologists face as they plan for fieldwork. The seminar series began with an introductory topic of the work conservators do and how they are trained. Further topics explored hiring a professional conservator for your project, finding funding, providing good on-site storage, and planning for overall site preservation. Several sessions of the workshop concentrated on preservation of specific materials such as ceramics and metals.

Claudia Chemello

Senior Conservator Claudia Chemello teaches the field conservation seminar.
Conservators Prepare for Moving (but not Shaking)

Preparations for the move of the Kelsey collections to the Upjohn Exhibit Wing have been a true team effort. The Museum’s curators worked hard early on to choose objects for their new exhibits so that we would have time to pack the collection, and the registrars conducted a collection-wide inventory and developed a moving plan. Claudia Chemello and I, the Museum’s conservators, were charged with packing the collection and ensuring all objects were stable enough to be lifted and handled during the move.

When we began our work two years ago, we weren’t sure who might be transferring objects to the new storage area in the Upjohn Wing. At any given time, we might have volunteers, students, or fine-art movers handling the Kelsey’s artifacts. We had to make sure that even our most fragile items could survive the trip, and we knew that some portions of our collection would need significant help.

We started by identifying the objects that would need treatment in order to move. This was a daunting task because the Museum contains about 100,000 accessioned artifacts. To record the condition of each object quickly and easily, we created a criterion-anchored rating scale (CARS) condition survey. On our 1–5 scale, a ranking of 1 meant “Please help me now, or I will never make it!”; a 4 was, “I’m fine, I don’t need any work”; a 5, “It’s too late for me, so just move on.”

The first artifacts to be surveyed were those housed in the Kelsey’s basement. Many of the ceramic vessels stored there contain water-soluble salts, and as a result they’ve suffered damage from the fluctuating environment. (The salts in the ceramic crystalize and solubilize as the ambient humidity changes, breaking the pot apart.) As we suspected, we found that many of these vessels would require treatment prior to the move.

The next items we looked at were the Museum’s large and impressive collection of limestone funerary stelae. Although these objects have been housed in the Sensitive Artifact Facility and Environment (SAFE), many still have extensive condition problems.

When we had identified the objects most in need of treatment, we began to stabilize them. Although all of these objects would benefit from individual conservation, preparing them to move safely was our primary concern. For this reason, we chose to use a quick, if temporary, stabilization treatment.

The treatment we chose involves cyclooctadecane, a hydrocarbon wax that is used extensively in archaeological field conservation to lift fragile artifacts during excavation. The melted wax is applied by brush and allowed to cool and harden, rendering the previously fragile surface strong and robust. The most impressive characteristic of this wax is its ability to sublime, or evaporate, at room temperature. Following treatment, each object is carefully wrapped in plastic to prevent sublimation of the wax. Once the wax is no longer needed, following our move, for example, or when we are ready to perform a thorough conservation treatment, the object is simply unwrapped, and the wax is allowed to sublime.

In addition to the temporary conservation we performed, we also developed custom packing for different types of artifacts within our collection. Two particularly challenging materials to pack were glass and cartonnage. Broken and cracked glass objects were carefully wrapped and supported to prevent structural collapse. For the cartonnage mummy masks, we built protective, padded enclosures to keep the delicate, gilded masks from being crushed during transport.

Conservation’s preparation of the collection for moving was ably assisted by Lorene Sterner. After two years of planning, preparation, and teamwork, we look forward to a safe, successful move.

In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Dr. James A. McLean, a long-time Associate of the Kelsey, a valued member of the Kelsey Associates Board (1987–1993), and part of the first Kelsey Museum docent class. Jim was not only an exceptional contributor to the Kelsey but an extraordinary individual. As a captain in the U.S. Army, he was stationed in Augsburg, Germany, during the Korean War, serving as chief of medical services for the 11th Field Hospital. After the war, he returned to Ann Arbor (where he had received his medical degree) and joined the faculty at the University of Michigan. Retiring in 1986 after thirty years of service, Jim turned to his long-time passion for archaeology. His timing was perfect since we were starting our first docent class in 1987. He was the only man in the group but seemed to enjoy that role. Indeed, we often kidded him about his “harem” at the Museum! He was, in addition, a great ambassador for the Museum and a tireless fundraiser.

Full of humor and an incredibly hard worker, Jim became a great docent and continued to give tours to school groups until he no longer could. Even after a stroke, he managed to come to events at the Museum and always stayed connected with us by phone, calling to talk about archaeology, interesting archaeological news in the papers, or his progress on various Kelsey projects. Jim was particularly interested in the ancient Near East and was one of the main creators of the Kelsey’s Near Eastern Civilizations-in-a-Crate kit that travels to schools and other venues. We are now in the process of transferring his wonderful slide shows on the Near East into PowerPoint presentations, giving his work a new life for the digital age.

At one point Jim decided to clear out his many books on archaeology and very generously donated his collection to us. They are now part of the Kelsey’s library. I was touched to read in his obituary that he asked for donations to be sent to the Kelsey in his name. I know the Kelsey meant a lot to him, but he meant even more to us.

All of us on the staff who knew Jim miss his presence, but he left a part of himself here not only in the form of his books and the Near Eastern crate but in the wonderful memories we have of him. He will be fondly remembered.

Suzanne Davis

Lauren Talalay

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The Kelsey Museum Associates sponsor the Museum’s outreach and development activities and provide program support. The public is encouraged to join the Associates and participate in Museum activities. For more information call 734.763.3559.

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Hellenistic and Roman Curator Elaine Gazda (right) describes plans for the Villa of the Mysteries room in the Upjohn Wing to Associates who attended the “hard-hat party” in December 2007. Associate Ginny Moss (center) came especially well prepared![image]
Staff Update

Hellenistic and Roman Curator Elaine Gazda made presentations on Pisidian Antioch for the U-M Institute for the Humanities and the U-M symposium “Archaeology and the Cities of Asia Minor in Late Antiquity.” She chaired a session on Roman art at the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) annual meeting in January. In February she was a Visiting Scholar at the University of Colorado–Boulder, where she lectured on the Kelsey’s watercolors of the Villa of the Mysteries murals by Maria Barosso and conducted a graduate seminar on Roman painting. She continued in her roles as Trustee of the American Academy in Rome and chair of its Publications Committee, as head curator for planning the Upjohn Wing installation, and as director of IPCAA.

Curator for Dynastic Egypt Janet Richards delivered the annual Brinkley Lecture on Ancient Greece and Egypt at the College of William and Mary, entitled “Lost Tombs and Provincial Politics at Abydos, Egypt.” She also gave a talk on “the archaeology of biography” to the U-M Knight-Wallace Journalism Fellows and presented papers at a workshop on ancient Egyptian historiography at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and at the annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt in Seattle. She continues to be immersed in planning for the Upjohn Wing.

Curator for Greece and the Near East Margaret Root published an article entitled “Reading Persepolis in Greek: Gifts of the Tauna” in C. Tuplin (ed.), Persian Responses: Political and Cultural Interaction within the Achaemenid Empire (2007). Numerous additional articles are in press. She lectured this academic year at the Getty Villa and at the University of Colorado–Boulder. Her work on the Near East gallery for the Upjohn Wing included securing a major long-term loan of artifacts from the excavations of Seleucia on the Tigris from the Toledo Museum of Art. She offered her course “Exhibiting Mesopotamia: Art, Politics and the Museum” again this year and is working to integrate the new Kelsey displays into the teaching of History of Art 101.

Graphic Artist Lorene Sterner started working as the Kelsey Gift Manager in November 2007, taking over the work previously done by Michelle Biggs. She also works on the final publication of the Tel Anafa volumes, for which more manuscripts continue to accrue.

In November Academic Outreach Curator Lauren Talalay presented “Split Decisions: Half-body Figurines from Neolithic Greece” at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association in Washington DC. She has been invited to give a talk this September on Malta at the meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists. She also served as a member of the visiting committee that evaluated Bryn Mawr College’s art and archaeology collections.

Curator for Graeco-Roman Egypt Terry Wilfong lectured at the Oriental Institute Museum, University of Chicago, on “Anxious Egyptians: Personal Oracles as Indices of Anxieties in the Later Periods.” He also received a Michigan Humanities award to work on the project outlined in this lecture, which he will use while on sabbatical in Fall Term 2008. His summer will be spent working on his portions of the permanent installation in the Upjohn Wing.

IPCAA Kudos

Students in the Interdepartmental Program in Classical Art and Archaeology (IPCAA) continue their dazzling achievements. Emily Holt received a Fulbright Grant to study in Italy in 2008–09, and Lisa Cakmak won a Barton Fellowship in Jerusalem for fall 2008.

After helping to organize the 25th International Congress of Papyrology in Ann Arbor last August, James Cook spent three months in Egypt. As member of the UCLA/University of Groningen Fayum Project, he conducted archaeological survey and excavation on the Graeco-Roman period irrigation system around Karanis. He expects to return to Egypt for three months this year. James published a review in the Journal of Roman Archaeology and delivered a paper at the Canadian Archaeological Association annual meeting. He has participated in a Rackham–Center for Research on Learning and Teaching Mentorship Program at Oberlin College. This summer he may join the Pompeii Archaeological Research Project: Porta Stabia, run jointly by the University of Cincinnati and Stanford University.

Lorraine Knop presented papers on the archaeological and literary evidence for millers and bakers in the Italian pen-insula at conferences in Cincinnati and New York and coorganized a workshop at the annual AIA meeting for recent PhDs and future archaeology professors on how to teach archaeology courses. She will be excavating this summer at an imperial bath complex at the Palazzo Imperiale at the site of Portus (Ostia), ancient Rome’s seaport, under Dr. Joanne Spurza of Hunter College (CUNY).

After a summer at Persepolis in Iran, funded by an American Philosophical Society grant, Alex Nagel presented the first results of his research on the polychromy of the site in lectures at the Technische Universitaet, Darmstadt, Germany, and the University of California–Irvine. At Trnava University in Slovakia, he spoke on material from Stratos in Greece. He has also presented papers at the annual meeting of the American Oriental Society, in Rome at the 6th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, and at the University of Reading, UK. He hopes to continue working in Iran and Greece this summer, as well as at the Museum of Western Asiatic Antiquities, in the Pergamonmuseum, Berlin.

Among IPCAA alums, the following recently attained tenure-track positions: Bjorn Anderson at Minnesota State–Morehead, Jen Gates at the University of Texas–Austin, Molly Swetnum-Burland at the College of William and Mary, and Elizabeth Colantoni at the University of Rochester. Mark Garrison (IPCAA 1988) was named the Alice Pratt Brown Chair in Art History at Trinity University, San Antonio.

Pedley Award Winner

IPCAA is pleased to announce that Emily Holt is the 2008 recipient of funds from the John Griffiths Pedley Travel and Research Endowment. She will use the award this summer to conduct archaeological survey on the Middle Bronze Age site of Siddi Plateau in central Sardinia. Her project will involve taking GPS points on the seventeen monumental structures on the plateau as well as on natural resources in the area, particularly rock outcroppings and water sources. Analysis of the spatial relations among the monuments and the surrounding resources will help her determine what the primary concerns of the Middle Bronze Age builders were, which in turn will help answer important questions about how societies develop more complex power structures. Emily will report on her project in the Fall Newsletter.
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The Kelsey Museum of Archaeology

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Sharon Herbert, Greek and Hellenistic
Janet Richards, Dynastic Egypt
Margaret Cool Root, Greece and Near East
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Closed to the public until 2009

New Kelsey Dig Diary
Check out this Web site to join the Kelsey Museum’s conservators on site at the 2008 Tel Kedesh excavations in Israel (May 31–July 17)!

http://sitemaker.umich.edu/kelseymuseum.digdiary

http://www.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey/