NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

These notes come to you from the airport, as I wait to embark on the first leg of a journey that will take me by air from Detroit to Izmir on the west coast of Turkey, then by land from Izmir to the seaside site of Naxos, a largely unexplored ancient Greek town. This summer will be the first season of a new Kelsey-sponsored archaeological project at Naxos; our initial task will be to map the site using a variety of different techniques, including aerial photogrammetry, conventional surface mapping, and geophysical prospection. The start of a new field project is a great moment in the life of an archaeologist, and my colleagues and I are very excited and not a little nervous to see how things turn out. Stay tuned for a future newsletter!

It has been an exciting year in many ways at the Kelsey Museum. The Fall and Winter semesters saw two successful special exhibitions—"Discovery," highlighting current Kelsey-sponsored research projects, and "Life in Minuscule," featuring objects from Seleucia-on-the-Tigris in Iraq. Our current summer exhibition, "Ancient/Modern," juxtaposes artifacts from the Kelsey collections with contemporary objects of similar form and/or function (see article on facing page by Collection Managers and Exhibition Curator, Sebastián Encina). In addition to Naxos in Turkey, another new Kelsey-sponsored field project was launched at Olynthos in Greece (the Olynthos Research Project, led by Professor Terrenato and Kelsey Research Associate Lisa Nevett), and fieldwork continues at El Kurru in Sudan (see article on pages 4–5 by Project Director and Kelsey Research Scientist, Geoff Embiricus), and at Rome (Saint-Obono) and Cahu in Italy (under the direction of Classics Professor and Kelsey Research Associate Nicola Terrenato).

Collections research by Curator for Graeco-Roman Egypt Terry Wilfong has borne fruit in the form of a monograph on what is surely the Museum's most popular single object: the coin of the seventh- or sixth-century BC Egyptian priest Djehutynose, and the forthcoming publication of Karanis Revealed: Discovering the Past and Present of a Michigan Excavation in Egypt.

On the teaching front, an important new initiative was the incorporation of the Kelsey collections into the curriculum of a popular course on the history of ancient Israel/Palestine, taught by Professor Michael Stoler. One assignment required working as a docent at an art museum. Cathy Person, one of the Kelsey's strengths is its vast collection of everyday objects from ancient Greece and Rome, which do not inevitably follow function. A Karanis brooch may be indistinguishable from a modern example, yet a Greek kylix and the modern wine goblet both serve the same function, despite their distinct forms in drink. Drinking wine from a kylix may seem as strange to us as does the fact that Greeks and Romans re-chipped on couches at formal dinner parties.

Elsewhere in the exhibition, we see other examples of tools that serve the same function but through different forms. The modern carpenter has power drills that can easily drill through wood. FACED with the same demand, the ancient carpenter could create many of the same shapes and decorations by using a bow drill. The bow drill may be more cumbersome to use, but a master craftsman could use it to make fine furniture, exquisite boxes, and sturdy architectural elements.

A third category of objects, "Ancient/Modern" shows forms that are similar, yet their functions might be starkly different. The large child figurine excavated at Seleucia looks to us like a doll, but, unlike an American Girl doll, it probably was not intended for play. Instead, the Seleucid "doll" may have been used for votive, ceremonial, or religious purposes. It was likely too fragile and awkward to be used as a plaything. Perhaps, with its arm reaching out to viewers, it was meant to be more a display piece than a toy. "Ancient/Modern" brings all these artifacts together to encourage viewers to think about connections between our time and the past. In many cases, we share the same needs and often employ the same solutions as people in bygone eras. As Frances Kelsey, the Museum's name-sake, once asked, "where does the ancient stop and the modern begin?"}

NEW STAFF MEMBER

Once you know a little about Cathy Person’s background, it seems almost inevitable that she would be the Kelsey Museum’s new Educational and Advocacy Outreach Coordinator. Inspired by a high school Latin teacher, she decided to study classics. In college, an introductory archaeology course and another class that required working as a docent at an art museum further refined her interests.

So by the time Cathy started work on her PhD in Classical and Near Eastern archaeology at Bryn Mawr, she knew her goal was to work in an archaeology museum. More museum experience at the University of Pennsylvania Archaeology and Anthropology Museum confirmed this direction, and a stint in visitor services at the Philadelphia Museum of Art made it clear she wanted to work with the public.

Perhaps this exact fit between Cathy’s training and her new position helped her hit the ground running when she arrived in Ann Arbor in November. She quickly began training IPCAA students to serve as Kelsey docents and will mount a regular class for volunteer docents in September. She organized an April family day that drew 167 participants. And she has assembled an ambitious roster of summer events, special tours during Art Fair, Sunday drop-in tours led by Kelsey curators, gallery conversations with experts in fields related to the special exhibition, and a program called “Read and Look” for 4-6-year-olds. She also manages the Museum’s Facebook page and its weekly blog posting. Soon she hopes to update our popular Civilizations in Craye and design some K-12 lesson plans.

It’s a pleasure to welcome Cathy Person to the Kelsey staff.
El Kurru in northern Sudan is well known as the site of a royal cemetery of Kush whose burials include kings who conquered and ruled Egypt as its 25th Dynasty (715-653 BC). The burials were excavated in 1908-1910 by the American archaeologist George Reisner, and he also noted elements of a settlement around this cemetery. A Kelsey Museum project returned to El Kurru in 2013 to investigate elements of this settlement, and we significantly expanded our work in 2014.

This season, we focused our excavation efforts on two of Reisner's structures: a mortuary temple and a city wall. We anticipated having structural problems excavating underground rooms in the mortuary temple, so we brought an architect who has designed support structures in rock-cut tombs in Egypt. This allowed us to begin excavating a royal pyramid at the site in which structural problems had prevented previous excavation. For more information and photos about the season, visit our blog: elkurrublog.blogspot.com.

We also hosted a National Geographic film crew during the season. Watch for their film, which should air on PBS in the late summer or early fall of 2014.

EXCAVATIONS AT EL KURRU, 2014

CITY WALL

This year we were able to clear a single stretch of 12 meters of the eight wall that included a gateway found by Reisner (fig. 1). The wall is 2.15 meters wide, faced with shaped sandstone blocks encasing a core of sandstone blocks and rubble. It is preserved about 1.0 meters high. The gateway included a piece of petrified wood used as a threshold, sockets perhaps for locking a gate, and two door socket stones at different levels, suggesting a history of rebuilding. It had two walls extending about 3 meters toward the river on either side of the gate, forming an unusual kind of portico, and two smaller extensions on the west (village) side.

We also excavated a sounding against the city wall (fig. 2) and found a domestic occupation with cooking pots left in place. The pottery is entirely classic Christian, dating to the eighth to eleventh century AD. After the house was built and fell out of use, it was used as a trash dump, and then as a cemetery. It is noteworthy that although the diagnostic ceramics in the area are entirely Christian in date, the construction of the wall itself is more similar to Napatan and Meroitic construction than it is to Christian, at least in its use of shaped sandstone blocks. Some of the facing blocks are not finished, but chisel marks remain visible. It is of course possible that these were stones shaped in Napatan times for use in the cemetery and that the wall (or at least its facing) is largely built of blocks taken from the cemetery. Our preliminary geo-morphological observations of this area suggest that it was prone to flooding and was washed from a nearby wadi that may have removed traces of earlier settlement. The area along the wall farther to the north is not affected in this way and may preserve traces of earlier settlement.

MORTUARY TEMPLE

In 2013 we began excavation of a structure identified by Reisner as a mortuary temple dedicated to worship of a deceased king. Our excavation of the temple this year entirely cleared two outer rooms, each 1.5 meters long, buried in over 2 meters of sediment. Room 1 (fig. 3, foreground) was entered by a staircase from the south and seems to have had few features or installations. Its northern wall of massive stone blocks (7.4 × 2.8 × 0.32 cm average size) was destroyed by an ancient wadi flood. Room 2 contained 26 columns and was originally roofed around the edges with a system of stone beams and perhaps palm branches. Some of the stone beams were preserved in the fill of the room.

The first underground chambers, Rooms 3 and 4, were decorated with columnar stone beams—the system seems to have been decorative rather than functional as there are gaps between the beams and the ceiling, and the beams are placed in a location that is not structurally weak. In Room 3 the columns had two different types of capitals—five volutes completely empty. Reisner excavated a meter or two into the second room (Room B) and encountered a large structural flaw in the ceiling—a hole in the stone through which (he said) he could see the base of the pyramid. We began excavation with the expectation that our architect, Nacho Forcadel, would be able to build protective structures that would allow us to excavate to the back of Room B.

Our excavation revealed particularly interesting results in Room A (fig. 7), where careful excavation uncovered twelve postholes cut into the floor in three rows, perhaps to support a canopy over the king during a stage in the mortuary ritual. The season was made possible by generous support from the National Geographic Society, the Qarot-Sudan Archaeological Project, and Ms. Kathleen Pickens. As always, our thanks are due to our archaeological colleagues in the Sudanese antiquities department, the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, and Geof Emberling.

KU. PYRAMID 1

The only well-preserved pyramid at El Kurru is Ku. 1 (fig. 6). It appears from its form to be considerably later in date than the other burials at the site, and this raises interesting questions about ancestral memory, powerful lineages among the Kushite elite, and the importance of El Kurru as a place within the political landscape of Kush.

Reisner cleared the corners of the pyramid. He removed corner blocks and excavated the foundation deposits there, and he cleared out the chapel, which contained some incised blocks. He also excavated the massive, monumental descending (about 2.3 meters long, 2.5 meters wide, 8 meters deep at the doorway) and the first underground chamber (about 5 meters long and 4.5 meters wide), which he labeled included excavated a meter or two into the second room (Room B) and encountered a large structural flaw in the ceiling—a hole in the stone through which (he said) he could see the base of the pyramid. We began excavation with the expectation that our architect, Nacho Forcadel, would be able to build protective structures that would allow us to excavate to the back of Room B.

Our excavation has very largely therefore been a dirt-moving exercise. We estimate that we removed roughly 250 tons of sand and soil from the terraces.

Fig. 1. Gateway in city wall.

Fig. 2. Christian period domestic architecture against city wall.

Fig. 3. Rooms 1 and 2 of a mortuary temple.

Fig. 4. Rooms 3 and 4 of the mortuary temple.

Fig. 5. Outer view of Rooms 1 and 2.

Fig. 6. Ku. Pyramid 1.

Fig. 7. Room A in Ku. Pyramid 1.

Fig. 8. Gateway in city wall.
Curator for Conservation Suzanne Davis gave an invited presentation at the annual meeting of the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) and chaired a session at the American Schools of Oriental Research meeting. She also published articles on the conservation of glass and on conservation outreach at the Kelsey Museum. She is a program chair for the 2014 meeting of AIC and is in this year’s winner of AIC’s Advocacy Award.

The focus of Research Scientist Geoff Emberling’s year has been the excavation season at El Kurru in northern Sudan, where his team excavated significant portions of a Napatian royal pyramid and mortuary temple (ca. 350 BC), as well as a city wall and settlement apparently of the ancient Christian date (ca. AD 400). He also obtained major funding for the next four years of the project from the Qatar- Sudan Archaeological Project. For details, see his blog, elkurrukush.blogspot.com.

Hellenistic and Roman Curator Elaine Gazda will take up a Residency at the American Academy in Rome this May and June. While in Italy she plans to work on a new publication on Olympia, that opens at which the Kelsey in 2016, as well as her book on Roman villas. In January she also curated a symposium on Roman domestic space at the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) meeting in Chicago. Research Scientist Richard Reidinger gave a talk on feeding pyramid builders at the January meeting of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities in Toronto. He delivered a paper at the April meetings of the American Research Center in Egypt in Portland, Oregon, and will make two presentations at the International Council of Archaeological meetings in San Rafael, Argentina, in September. He published a paper on Old Kingdom subsistence economy and the infrastructure of pyramid construction in the Proceedings of the 19th Meeting of the ICAZ Group “Archaeology of southwest Asia and adjacent Areas.” He is currently doing fieldwork at the Siltos Building Complex at Giza.

Curator for Dynamic Egypt Janet Richards curated the Kelsey exhibition “Discovery! Excavating the Ancient World” during Fall Term 2013. She is currently planning a conference at the American Academy in Berlin as Ellen Maria Gorissen Fellow in the Humanities, where she is completing her book on political crisis in ancient Egypt. While there she delivered public lectures in Stuttgart, Berlin, and Basel.

Curator Emerita for Academic Outreach Lauren Talalay published “Drawing Conclusions: Ancient Egypt, the Economic Crisis, and Political Cartoons” in the Journal of Modern Greek Studies.

Curator for Graeco-Roman Egypt Tricia Williams was promoted to full Professor and Curator. He published “The Oracular Amuletic Decrees: A Question of Length,” in Journal of Egyptian Archaeology, and his book Life, Death, and Afterlife in Ancient Egypt. The Coffin of Djehyhotep in the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology appeared in summer 2013. His next book, Karium Revealed, edited with Andrew W.S. Ferrara, will feature an overview of his 2011-2012 Kelsey Museum exhibition along with new essays about the material, and will appear in the summer of 2014. He gave an invited lecture, “A Misunderstood Egyptomania? The Cult of Ptah at the 7th Century B.C. Western Egyptian Tombs” at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore in October. He is currently preparing an exhibition of the jackal gods of ancient Egypt, which will open at the Kelsey Museum in February 2014.

A special panel, “The Art of Empire in Achaemenid Persia,” honored Greek and Near Eastern Curator Margaret Root as she is currently preparing an exhibition of the jackal gods of ancient Egypt, which will open at the Kelsey Museum in February 2014.

Grant Meadors and Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Walters are overseeing the publication of the Kelsey Museum’s “The Collections of the American Research Center in Egypt (IPCAA 2010 and French Archaeological Mission in Iran),” and Christopher Taylor (University of Liverpool) and Alex Nagy (IPCAA 2012) and Hinn Hall (IPCAA 2014).
SPECIAL EXHIBITION

Ancient/Modern: The Design of Everyday Things
June 27–September 7, 2014

RELATED EVENTS

Ancient, Modern, or Somewhere in Between?
lecture by Donna Braden, Curator of Public Life, The Henry Ford Museum
Friday, June 27, 6:00 pm
Exhibition opening reception follows

Drop-in Tours
with exhibition curator Sebastián Encina
Sunday, June 22, 2:00 pm
Sunday, August 24, 2:00 pm

A Taste of the Mediterranean
with Vinology and Morgan & York
Thursday, June 19, 5:30–6:30 pm
Please preregister at 734.763.8639.

Sunday Gallery Conversations
July 20, 2:00 pm, with Professor Franc Nunoo-Quarcoo, Stamps School of Art & Design
August 3, 2:00 pm, with Professor Carla Sinopoli, Museum Studies Program and Department of Anthropology

OTHER ACTIVITIES

For a complete list of Kelsey events, see the “Events” column on the Kelsey homepage: www.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey