NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

One of my first, very exciting duties at the Museum has been to participate in the search for a new educational and academic outreach coordinator, and I have posed the same set of questions to all the candidates for the job. What does it mean to be a university museum? How are university museums different from private or community museums? Why, indeed, should universities even have museums? There are a number of different ways of answering these questions, some of which are fairly obvious; teaching and research are central to the missions of university museums in distinctive ways. Hundreds of students carry out museum-based assignments in the Kelsey every semester, and the academic curators often organize entire courses around aspects of the collection, and especially around special exhibitions. The Museum supports research on the collections by students and scholars not only from the University of Michigan but from around the world, and as an archaeological museum, we sponsor active archaeological research projects in six countries and counting. On a less obvious but more general level, I might answer my own question by saying that a museum collection is, in paraphrase the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, “good to think with.” The gravestones and mummy cases in an archaeological museum provide good ways to think about different cultural attitudes toward death, the votive offerings and other sacred objects help to structure discussions of religion and religious differences, the objects in our collections from Egypt and Iraq being historical depth to the study of contemporary events. The Kelsey Museum provides a unique point of departure for intellectual exploration of subjects far beyond the disciplinary boundaries of Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology, and a university context provides an ideal setting for these kinds of wide-ranging intellectual adventures.

Both of the special exhibitions taking place this fall exemplify the overlapping core missions of the Museum in different ways. Discovery: Excavating the Ancient World, which opened in late August and will remain on view through November 10, features no fewer than seventeen university-sponsored excavations and research projects, ranging in location from the suburbs of the Rome to the Sea of Galilee, from the Nile River to the Cascades Mountains. The exhibition, curated by Janet Richards, pays special attention to the many ways in which archaeologists use new technologies such as complex photo modeling in contemporary research. After Discovery, a new exhibition on terracotta figurines and other miniature objects from the site of Slevaca-on-the-Tigris will open on December 20 (see article by guest curator Stephanie Langan-Hooper in the following pages). Slevaca was a Greek city founded on the site of an earlier settlement on the banks of the Tigris only 20 miles from the center of modern Baghdad, and it reminds us how rich and complicated the history of this region has been for thousands of years.

I am thrilled to be joining the staff of the Kelsey Museum at such an exciting time for the institution, and I am immensely grateful to my predecessor as Director, Sharon Herbert, and as the Co-director of the Kelsey-sponsored excavations at Tel Kedesh in Israel for so many years, and for leaving it in such excellent shape. I hasten to add that both Sharon and Laurie will continue to be very much involved in the life of the Museum. Although Laurie retired at the end of June, she remains active as a Research Associate, and Sharon will continue to serve as a Curator through this year and as the Co-director of the Kelsey-sponsored excavations at Tel Kedesh in Israel for the next several years. I look forward to continuing to work with them and the other members of the Museum’s extraordinary academic and professional community in the months and years to come!

Christopher Ratti, Director

This summer the Pedley Research and Travel Fellowship helped me begin my dissertation research in Rome and Naples, where I will be studying catacomb art and the roles of workshops (e.g., painters, stonecutters) in shaping commemorative art and practice at these sites from the second to sixth centuries AD. To help narrow my study to specific sites, I visited catacombs and museums in both cities. I had visited some of the Roman catacombs before, but this year I had a special treat at the catacombs of Domitilla. I ended up on a tour with a group of American priests, and as a favor to those gentlemen, our guide took us to see some spaces that are usually off-limits, including two intact burials (a very rare sight in the catacombs today). After return visits to the catacombs of Callixtus and S. Sebastianiano, I was able to make my first trips to Priscilla and S. Agnese. The catacombs of S. Agnese, which is adjacent to the church of S. Costanza on the northwest side of the city, contains no painted decoration at all (to my surprise). Priscilla, on the other hand, houses some important early Christian paintings, including a scene traditionally called the first image of the Madonna and child. The Palazzo Massimo offered an impressive display of fourth-century monumental painting, which will make good comparative material for the catacombs, as will the rich decorations in the house-churches of ancient Rome. The museum at St. Peter’s, which boasts a special section of Roman catacombs, the complex of San Gaudioso, under Santa Maria della Sanità, early modern monks reused fourth-century spaces for their own burials and those of wealthy patrons. The most striking feature of this complex is the mixed-media decoration: life-size paintings of skeletons on the walls were completed with real bones, especially skulls, embedded in the plaster. Another unusual feature of this complex (also true for San Gennaro) was that works of contemporary art have been incorporated into some of its spaces, highlighting the continued function of these spaces as sites of worship and communal identity. While most of the other St. Gaudioso falls outside my period, the San Gennaro complex, located under San Gennaro extra Moenia in Capodimonte, makes a good chronological match for the major complexes in Rome. Unlike the narrow galleries and small underground chambers in Roman catacombs, the complex of San Gaudioso boasts a three-aisled basilica excavated in the tufo of Capodimonte, with wide halls filled with burials branching off in various directions. This complex once housed the body of Saint Januarius (San Gennaro), the city’s patron, as well as a number of bishops, including one from Carthage. The paintings, mosaics, and inscriptions in this catacomb will hopefully yield evidence for the organization and operation of the workshops that produced them. In comparison with Roman material, this evidence will help me better understand how ordinary workers shaped the funerary culture represented on a large scale in catacombs. In addition to site visits, I also attended an Italian language school in Tuscany (with additional support from IPCAA, Classical Studies, and Radcan). After six hours of lessons every day, I went home to a lovely Italian family who welcomed me in Tuscan cuisine, national politics, and Grandma Gelsomina’s favorite crime series. While in Tuscany I was able to continue my tour of underground antiquities in Chiusi, where Etruscan tunnels manage to keep their water supply, and in Siena, where Santa Maria della Scala surprised me with a beautifully designed archaeological museum three stories below street level. Even my home base of Montepulciano had its subterranean delights: the local cantine (wine cellars) boast the use of Etruscan tombs and tunnels for storing and aging their products. This summer improved my knowledge of the sites, language, and culture that will be invaluable in my dissertation research, and for that I am deeply thankful to Professor Pedley and to Jenny Kreiger, who make IPCAA such a supportive environment for young scholars like me.

Jenny Kreiger, IPCAA Student

PEDLEY WINNER TOURS CATACOMBS AND MUSEUMS IN ROME AND NAPLES

Jenny Kreiger visiting the Vatican Museums.

A fifth-century funerary portrait fresco in the catacombs of San Gennaro.
EXHIBITION DEBUTS TINY OBJECTS FROM SELEUCIA

Life in Miniature: Identity and Display at Ancient Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, which runs from December 20, 2013, to March 16, 2014, presents hundreds of tiny artifacts from the Seleucid royal capital in present-day Iraq. These objects join the Kelsey Museum in 2012, when they were given, in a loan-to-transfer arrangement, by the Toledo Museum of Art (TMA). Many of them were never displayed at the TMA, so the exhibition will be the public’s first opportunity to see these delicate and fascinating objects.

As described by Margaret Root in her Spring 2013 Newsletter article, the "reuniting" of the Seleucia collection is her Spring opportunity to see these delicate and their attention to tiny details. This al- luring presence of miniatures is described by scholars as a kind of enchantment, through which miniature objects have the power to create a close personal connection with people. Visitors to this exhibition will be able to experience that enchantment in person, as they react to objects like the tiny rabbit (fig. 1) by wanting to come closer and press their faces to the glass, wishing that they could pick up this small creature. Dull miniatures are objects essentially en- chanted when they are miniature replicas of larger objects, animals, or people.

These miniatures make the sometimes confusing and stressful realities of life in the “full-size” world much more man- ageable by literally shrinking it to tiny proportions. When you are holding a tiny representation of a person or deity, such as the Herakles figure (fig. 2), your body feels much bigger and more powerful. Although they may not realize it, many people take comfort in owning miniatures because it makes them feel more confi- dent and in control of their real-world lives. Interactive miniatures, like the bone figurine (fig. 3) or the musician “puppet” (fig. 4), further accentuate these feelings of self-assurance by giving their owners the ability to manipulate and pose another human body—albeit a tiny one. Visitors to the Life in Miniature exhibition will be able to experience the delight of interacting with miniatures through a series of nine digital animations, accessible on a platform in the museum gallery. In these animations, digital reconstructions of several of the displayed ancient objects will move in the same way(s) that they did for their original owners approximately 2,000 years ago. These digital animations were created in cooperation with Bowling Green State University, and special thanks go to the BGSU digital arts team: Kevin Kately, Collen Murphy, Haming Ya, and Thomas Huang.

In the second half of the exhibition, focus will shift from personal interactions with miniatures to the broader ques- tions of what these tiny objects can tell us about the world of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris. The royal capital city of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris was founded around 312 BCE by Seleucus I, the first Seleucid king and founder of general of Alex- ander the Great. The people who lived in this new city came from a variety of cultural backgounds. Greeks, Macedonians, and Babylonians were the largest groups in this population, but Persians, West Semitic peoples, and others also lived in the city. Even Seleucia Is wife, Apame, was a Persian woman. Their children, including the next Seleucid king and his royal family, were multiracial—just like the city they lived in. After the conquest of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris in 241 BC, Parthians also joined this cultural mix. All of these people brought with them their own artistic styles, customs, and traditions concerning miniature objects. But these traditions did not stay separate. As people mingled with one another— becoming neighbors, business partners, friends, and even spouses—so too did their styles blend together in a variety of combinations. Miniature objects were especially affected by these cross-cultural relationships, due to the intimate interactions that their small scale encourages, miniatures create an espe- cially close connection with the people who own and use them. As the personal and cultural identities of these people changed, so did the tiny objects that were closest to them. An example of this cross-cultural exchange can be seen in the three female figurines (fig. 5), which display a range of Greek and Babylonian traditional styles and manufacturing techniques. Cross-cultural blending and “hybridity” can be observed throughout the objects in this exhibit—a reflection of the complex social world on display at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris.

Two installations will link the ancient miniature objects of Seleucia-on-the- Tigris with our modern world. The final display case in the exhibition will present a selection of “modern-day miniatures,” such as dolls and collectibles, which are curated and displayed in the same way as the ancient objects. In placing such everyday objects behind glass, the exhibition bridges the gap between past and present, encouraging visitors to reflect on how our own society also has a “life in miniature.” Additionally, a photo- graphic collage installation by Mariah Postlewait, entitled “What does Miniature Say about You?,” will juxtapose images of people holding their own contemporary miniatures (such as Christmas ornaments, refrigerator magnets, and wedding-cake toppers) with photographs of the Kelsey Museum staff holding ancient artificats. This photographic journey invites visitors to consider how the miniatures in their own lives and homes relate to personal and social identities today.

In addition to visiting the Life in Miniature exhibition, the public is also invited to attend the curator’s lecture and grand opening of the exhibition on January 24, 2014. The lecture, entitled “Miniatures in Life: The Role of Tiny Objects in Everyday Worlds,” will intro- duce the exhibition’s featured objects—including gemstone signet rings (fig. 6), abaluster statuettes, and terracotta “puppets”—and offer a behind-the- scenes look at the show’s installation. Additional public lectures organized in conjunction with this exhibition will be given by Douglas Bailey (a specialist in figurine theory from San Francisco State University) and the Kelsey Museum’s Sharon Herbert, an expert on the Hel- lenistic world. An exhibition like this one is by no means a solo venture. I have been honored to have been invited to guest curate, along with Sharon Herbert, this important exhibition of the Toledo gift transfer artifacts at the Kelsey Museum. For facilitating this invitation, I would like to thank Margaret Root, Sharon Herbert, and Dawn Johnson. The exhibitions and collections staff, especially Scott Meier, Sebastián Encina, and Michelle Fontenot, have been tremendously helpful. I am additionally grateful to the Kelsey staff for allowing me to recruit four BGSU students as Kelsey Museum interns.

Cathie Moore, Mariah Postlewait, Jess Pfeundstein, and Julie Knechtges. These four interns have worked tirelessly on Life in Miniature, as well as other recent Kelsey Museum exhibitions, and deserve tremendous praise for their efforts.

Stephanie M. Langen Houston
Research Affiliate, Kelsey Museum
Assistant Professor of Ancient Art History, Bowling Green State University
CONSERVATION INTERN

The Kelsey Museum is pleased to welcome Brittany Dolph, who will be undertaking a nine-month graduate internship with the conservation lab. Brittany is currently a third-year graduate student at the University of California, Los Angeles. In the fall, she will continue her research at the National Museum of American History and will be helping to prepare the Star Spangled Banner for exhibition. At the National Gallery of Art she assisted with conservation treatments in the museum’s sculpture garden. In Greece, at the Theater of Dionysus, she worked on preservation of sandstone amphitheater seats, as well as on objects at the Atlantic-Aegean Archaeological Museum in Volos. At the Methone Archaeological Project, also in Greece, she conserved metal artifacts and carried out technical analysis of glass beads.

Brittany has a special interest in the conservation of archaeological materials, particularly stone. Her thesis research at UCLA/Getty has focused on developing a method for use on weathered volcanic stone. While at the museum, she will continue her research at the Kelsey Museum, including the conservation of archaeological materials, particularly stone.

Life in Miniature: Identity and Domestication at the Theater of Demetrias in Greece.

Brittany works to preserve limestone seats at the Theater of Dionysus in Greece.

SYMPOSIUM ON ABYDOS CONSERVATION

In September the Kelsey Museum hosted the special symposium “Discovery! Conservation and Science in Action at Abydos, Egypt.” The meeting brought together a group of scientists and conservators who have recently been working to develop better conservation protocols for severely degraded wood. The Abydos Middle Cemetery is a fascinating place to work, and experiments carried out there present unique conservation challenges. In fact, if there were a reality show titled “Conservation Nightmares,” we’d put money on Abydos to win. Our most difficult preservation challenge at the site concerns wood artifacts. In most archaeological contexts wood does not survive, but Egypt is different: dry desert conditions often lead to excellent preservation of organic materials like wood.

The Abydos wood, unfortunately, has not been so lucky. At Abydos, wood artifacts like coffins and figurines have suffered from attack by termites and fungi, and the remaining “wood” has the structural coherence of a very dry, very crumbly brownie. In other words, the artifacts fall apart once they’re touched. They cannot even be lifted out of the ground without extra support. However, the surfaces of these artifacts are often well-preserved, resulting in a beautifully painted, eggshell-thin layer of paint and wood in the shape of the original artifact. And often these artifacts have unexpected and important stories to tell.

Because there are currently no guidelines for conservation of wood that is so severely degraded, we assembled a small think-tank of conservators and scientists, each of whom brought specialized expertise to the project. This group included Dr. Ahmed Abdel-Hameem, a mycologist from Suez Canal University; Dr. Robert Blanchette, a plant pathologist and mycologist from the University of Minnesota; Marie-‘Kaye’ Braddock, an expert in the excavation of fragile organic material from the Smithsonian’s Museum Conservation Institute; Pamela Hatchfield, a conservator with extensive experience in conservation of Egyptian painted wood artifacts; and Dr. Gregory Smith, the senior conservation research scientist at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. Our research was funded by a grant from the American Research Center in Egypt and the United States Agency for International Development. The team visited Abydos for a week, conducting scientific analysis and testing excavation and conservation techniques on site. We also traveled to other sites and conservation labs in Egypt where conservation of archaeological wood is being conducted.

After several months to read, think, write, and come up with new ideas, we met again in Ann Arbor to discuss our findings and recommendations. As part of this meeting, the group gave a public lightening-round-style presentation about the project. You can learn more about our work by visiting the Discovery! Exercising the Ancient World exhibition, where several panels explore this research and its contributions to understanding ancient Abydos.

KELSEY ASSOCIATES BOARD CONTINUES TO DEVELOP NEW MEMBER BENEFITS

Over the past year the Kelsey Board of Associates worked diligently to revise the organization’s bylaws. The new bylaws were approved by the Associates at their May meeting and are available on the Kelsey website. In addition, new procedures were implemented for Board recruitment, orientation, and governance. The Board also welcomed three new Board members: Mary Heumann, Bill Kryska, and Emma Fontenot.

Our successful Behind-the-Scenes program, the Kelsey is also offering exhibition preview views for members and will be introducing more opportunities for international travel with Kelsey faculty and research affiliates. We will also continue to offer regional trips to cultural institutions, enhanced by unique experiences with their faculty and curators. A number of Associates enjoyed recent trips to the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Eli and Edythe Broad Museum at Michigan State University. Upcoming travel is being coordinated for museums in Chicago and in the spring for museums in London, Paris, and Berlin. As we acknowledge the significant relationship that members have with an institution, the Kelsey wants to learn more about what programs would interest Associates. This summer the Membership Committee of the Board of Associates worked on developing a member survey, and in the coming months we will be soliciting your ideas and suggestions.

Sharon Herbert

Kelsey participates in TLTC grant

Thanks to a provoer TLTC (Transforming Learning Through Creative Engagements) grant, study of the Kelsey collections will be integrated into the curriculum of a large undergraduate class, ACABS (Ancient Civilizations and Biblical Studies) 277, “The Land of Israel/Palestine through the Ages.” Professor Yaron Eliav of the Near Eastern Studies Department conceived the project after teaching ACABS 157 each winter for the past ten years to over 150 students. In his work with students both at Michigan and in Israel he has observed the power of handling the actual antiques to connect students with the past.

Yaron recruited Sharon Herbert to coordinate the behind the scenes aspect of the project, which will bring students in teams of four into the museum to study and report on selected objects from our collections. Meanwhile, a third member of the team, Julie Everdesh, director of the Learning Resources Center, is overseeing the production of digital images of the objects and the production of a video on the Kelsey, which will appear on the course website and possibly, in a longer version, on the Kelsey website. Justin Winger, a recent PhD in Near Eastern Studies, has a post-doctoral fellowship funded by the TLTC grant to integrate the TLTC innovations into the existing ACABS 157 course.

Sharon and Yaron, with the help of Coordinator of Museum Collections Se- bastiin Encina, went through the Kelsey collections this summer and selected twenty-five objects either from or related to ancient Israel/Palestine. The material available for study has been greatly augmented by the generous loan of thirty objects from the collection of Lawrence and Eleanor Jackier of West Bloomfield Hills. Early this October Justin, Yaron, and Kelsey Collections Manager Michelle Fontenot will travel to the Jackiers’ home to pack the objects and transport them safely to the Kelsey.

This exciting new project will bring a whole new audience to the Kelsey and demonstrate the value of our collections for undergraduate education. The video and other digitized images will add greatly to the documentation and publication of our hidden treasures.

Sharon Herbert
SELECTED EVENTS

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

*Discovery! Excavating the Ancient World*
August 23–November 10, 2013

*Fragments from the Past: Islamic Art from the Collection of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology*
November 30, 2013–April 2014
At University of Michigan Museum of Art

*Life in Miniature: Identity and Display at Ancient Seleucia-on-the-Tigris*
Guest curator: Stephanie Langin-Hooper
December 20, 2013–April 13, 2014
Opening lecture: January 24, 2014

DROP-IN TOURS
Sundays, 2–3 pm
October 6 and 20
November 3 and 17
December 8

LECTURES
For a list of Kelsey-sponsored lectures, please see the “Events” column on the Kelsey homepage:
www.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey

PUBLICATION PARTY

*Life, Death, and Afterlife in Ancient Egypt: The Djehutymose Coffin in the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology*, by T. G. Wilfong
October 24, 2013, 5 pm
Books available for purchase and signing

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