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 do 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 mission of a university museum 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 archaeology museum, we sponsor active archaeological research projects in six countries and counting. On a less obvious and more general level, I might answer my own question by saying that a museum collection is, to paraphrase the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, “good to think with.” The gravestones and mummy cases in an archaeology museum provide good ways to think about different cultural attitudes toward death, the ostentatious 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 these 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 Rome to the Sea of Galilee, from the Nile River to the Caucasus Mountains. The exhibition, curated by Janet Richards, pays special attention to the ways archaeologists use the 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 Seleucia-on-the-Tigris will open on December 20 (see article by guest curator Stephanie Langin-Hooper in the following page). Seleucia 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 three-person staff of the Kelsey Museum in one of the most exciting times for the institution, and I am immensely grateful to my predecessor as Director, Sharon Herbert, and to the Former Associate Director, Lauren Taladay, for giving so much to the Museum over 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 Tell Keled 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 catacombs and the roles of workshops (e.g., painters, stonemasons) 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 burial crypts (a very rare sight in the catacombs today). After return visits to the catacombs of Galliano and S. Sebastiano, 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 restored 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-church complex (a large hall filled with frescoes 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 IPCCA, Classical Studies, and Rachman). After six hours of lessons every day, I went home to a lovely Italian family who ushered me in Tuscan cuisine, national politics, and Grandma Gelsomina’s favorite crime shows. While in Tuscany I was able to continue my tour of underground antiquities in Chiuse, where Etruscan excavations tunnels to manage 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 the outstanding students who make IPCCA such a supportive environment for young scholars like me.

Jenny Kreiger, IPCCA Student

PELDER WINNER TOURS CATACOMBS AND MUSEUMS IN ROME AND NAPLES

Jenny Kreiger visiting the Vatican Museums.
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 artifacts 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 the culmination of a long cooperation between the TMA and the Kelsey Museum. The TMA was a financial sponsor of the Kelsey Museum’s expedition to the site of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris in 1926 and ’30. In accordance with then-current archaeological conventions in the host country of Iraq, the Seleucia expedition brought a selection of artifacts back to the United States. The Kelsey Museum received the vast majority of these objects, which were curated and displayed at the TMA while they were on loan. Many of those artifacts were chosen specifically for the TMA for their own exhibition, by the scholar colleague of the excavator. Many of those artifacts were chosen specifically for the TMA while they were on loan, by their own curators.

The collaboration between the Kelsey Museum and its Ohio neighbors is further reinforced by the Kelsey’s invitation to me to guest curate the show. As a specialist in the miniature arts (especially terracotta figurines) of Hellenistic Babylon, I am joining Kelsey Museum Curator Sharon Herbert as co-curator.

These miniatures make the sometimes confusing and stressful realities of life in the “full-size” world much more manageable by literalizing it to tiny proportions. When you are holding a tiny representation of a person or deity, such as the Herakles figure (fig. 1), 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 confident 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 this exhibition will be able to experience that enchantment, for 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. 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 that enchantment, for 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. 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 this exhibition will be able to experience this form of 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. 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.

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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/Getty Master’s Program in Conservation of Archaeological and Ethnographic Materials. Her Bachelor of Arts degree is from the State University of New York at Buffalo, where she majored in archaeology and psychology.

Brittany brings diverse conservation experience to the Kelsey. At the National Museum of American History she helped 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 Dainmata, she worked on preservation of sandstone amphitheater seats, as well as on objects at the Atlan-

naxartos Archaeological Museum in Volos. At the Methone Archaeological Project, also in Greece, she conserved metallic 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 reliable method for use on weathered volcanic stone. While at the Kelsey, she will continue treatment of the Museum’s collection of limestone stelae from Tereouthis and will gain further experience with organic and composite artifacts. Brittany will also as-

sist with conservation of objects for the exhibition Life in Miniature: Identity and Display at Ancient Sialkou-on-the-Tigris, which opens December 20, 2012.

Please join us in welcoming Brittany! Suzanne Davis

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 artifacts ex-


cavated 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 pres-

ervation 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 characteristics 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, egg-

shell thin layer of paint and wooden in the shape of the original artifact. And often these artifacts have unexpected and im-

portant stories to tell.

Because there are currently no guide-

lines for conservation of wood that is so severely degraded, we assembled a small think-tank of conservators and scien-

tists, each of whom brought specialized knowledge to the project. This group included Dr. Ahmed Abdel-Aziz, a mycologist from Suez Canal University, Dr. Robert Blanchette, a plant pathologist and mycologist from the University of Minnesota, Harriet “Kae” Brashears, 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 Indian 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 conserva-

tion labs in Egypt where conservation of ancient organic material 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. As part of this meeting, the group provided a public lightening-round-style presentation about the project. You can learn more about our work by visiting the Discovery! Eivescat-

ing the Ancient World exhibition, where several panels explore this research and its contributions to understanding ancient Abydos.

Suzanne Davis and Claudia Chemello

KELSEY PARTICIPATES IN TLTC GRANT

Thanks to a provost’s TLTC (Transform-

ing Learning and Teaching for the Century) 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 Eliau of the Near Eastern Studies Department con-

ceived the project after teaching ACABS 277 each winter for the past ten years to over 250 students. In his work with students both at Michigan and in Israel he has observed the power of handling the actual antiquities to connect students with the past.

Yaron recruited Sharon Herbert to coordinate the project, and in the fall semester of the project, which will bring students in teams of four to the museum to study and report on selected objects from our collections. Meanwhile, a third member of the team, Julie Evershed, director of the Learning Resources Center, is overseeing the pro-

duction 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’s 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 277 course.

Sharon and Yaron, with the help of Coordinator of Museum Collections Se-

bastiane Encina, went through the Kelsey collections this summer and selected twenty-five objects either from or related to ancient Israel/Palestine. The mater-

ial available for study has been greatly augmented by the generous loan of thirty objects from the collection of Lawrence and Eleanor Jacker at West Bloomfield Hills. Early this October Justin, Yaron, and Kelsey Collections Manager Michelle Fontenot will travel to the Jackers’ 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 collec-

tions for undergraduate education. The video and other digitized images will add greatly to the documentation and publica-

tion of our hidden treasures.

Sharon Herbert

KELSEY ASSOCIATES BOARD CONTINUES TO DEVELOP NEW MEMBERSHIP

Over the past year the Kelsey Board of Asso-

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ganization’s bylaws. The new bylaws will be introd-

ucing more opportunities for international travel with Kelsey faculty and research

affiliates. We will also continue to offer regional trips to cultural institutions, en-

hanced by unique experiences with their faculty and staff. A number of Associates enjoyed recent trips to the Detroit Insti-

tute 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.

Well wish you all a happy New Year. Thank you for your support of the Museum this year and appreciate your participation and ongoing support. For information on becoming an Associ-

ate of the Kelsey Museum or increasing your involvement by joining the Board of Associates, please contact Dawn Johnson 734.764.9295 or djohnson@umich.edu, or visit the Associates page of our website.

UPCOMING ASSOCIATE EVENTS

 Associates’ Behind-the-Scenes Tour Curator ‘Jerry Williams’ April 15, 2013 “From Dykhuysemo to Jackal Gods” Thursday, November 7, 2013 6:00 pm, reception to follow

Kelsey Associates’ Holiday Party Friday, December 13, 2013

Dawn Johnson

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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

*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

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

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