NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

People often tell me and my colleagues when they learn that we are archaeologists that they once wanted to be archaeologists themselves. Many of these encounters strike a common chord—because of course we also wanted to be archaeologists when we were young, and we were lucky enough to have that particular dream come true. For me, a decisive experience was a trip to Europe when I was nine years old, which included a visit to Greece and a long stay in Paris. What I remember most about Greece was an afternoon on the Athenian acropolis, where I managed to get deliciously lost from my parents and wandered about on my own for what seemed like hours. One of my most vivid memories of the weeks in Paris that followed was a visit to the Louvre and my first encounter with the Venus de Milo: the majestic seminude statue that has en- trance observers for pages (see page 1).

The memory of that initial acquaintance and many subsequent encounters with Greek statues is one of the reasons why I am fascinated by American artist Wendy Artin. Wendy’s watercolor paintings of ancient sculptures, featured in our summer show this year, has been a great pleasure for me to work as curator with virtually every member of the Kelsey staff on this show—and that experience has given me ever greater respect for the extraordinary range of interests and talents that our staff brings to every exhibition and research project that the Kelsey undertakes (for a full list of the Conservation, and painting staff). It has been a busy year for the Museum. Our fall and winter shows, Pearls of Wisdom and Death Dog, were both extremely successful (and both featured published catalogues), and we have been hard at work on next year’s exhibitions. Pausanias Carystinos, a show orchestrated by Margaret Root on the private collections given to or purchased by the Museum, and on the collectors behind them, and Leather and Luxury at the Age of Nero, a loan exhibition being curated by Elaine Gasda on the Roman villa at Oplontes near Pompeii. We have also been very active in the field. Janet Richardson supervised a remarkably productive study season at Abydos in the fall, reported on in this newsletter. Geoff Emberling returned to Sudan in late January. Richard Redding was working at Giza in Egypt at the same time, and our three summer field projects—at Guban in Italy, Olynthos in Greece, and Notion in Turkey—will all shortly be underway. All year long the Museum has been host to visitors, including hundreds of all ages, from schoolchildren expertly shown around by our loyal docent corps to graduate students working closely with the curators, collections managers, and exhibition staff on exhibition projects as well as pursuing their own research.

In addition to the regular business of the Museum, this has been a year of deep and productive institutional introspection. Readers of this newsletter will remember that at this time last year, we were just starting to review the operations of the Museum in preparation for a visit by a panel of external reviewers in the fall—a group of four academic colleagues who spent two busy days in Ann Arbor in late October, and then produced a formal report on the Museum for the LSA Dean’s Office. Among the recommendations of this very positive report was that the Museum undertake a strategic planning process, and that has occupied much of the spring. As part of that process, we are developing a new mission statement and four major planning priorities. All of these will be made available on our website when they are done. One of our priorities is to examine the relationship between the Museum and its Members, and I want to take this opportunity to thank all the Members of the Museum for their support and unflagging understanding of the Benjamin Frick endowment established in my name. The exhibition will be accompanied by a published catalogue, including illus- trations of all the paintings and objects featured in the show, together with a dialogue between the artist and me. One of the most interesting and rewarding aspects of the development of the show for me as curator is the lively exchange of ideas with Wendy Artin. When we were drafting a letter to send to potential lenders of her work, for instance, I wrote that “Wendy’s art was “practicing a form of emula- tion that has very ancient precedents, such as the Roman habit of copying famous Greek statues”—to which Artin responded with spirit: that is something that “no artist would ever want to have said about themselves. I am not practicing emulation. I am not copying statues. I am creating unique and original works of art that sometimes have Antiquity as a partial inspiration.” “Copy” and “emulate” are simply negative for painters. They assume a better original.” I answered, “My first reaction is that you are not doing justice to the richness and complexity of your work by rejecting those terms outright. Why be afraid of copying the past, or the pasts of the past?” 

The exhibition will run in the Kelsey Museum’s Meader Gallery from June 5 through October 25. The exhibition and related events, including a presenta- tion by the artist, an evening of poetry reading, and academic lectures on both Greek and Roman sculpture, will be accompanied by a published catalogue, including illus- trations of all the paintings and objects featured in the show, together with a dialogue between the artist and me. One of the most interesting and rewarding aspects of the development of the show for me as curator is the lively exchange of ideas with Wendy Artin. When we were drafting a letter to send to potential lenders of her work, for instance, I wrote that “Wendy’s art was “practicing a form of emulation that has very ancient precedents, such as the Roman habit of copying famous Greek statues”—to which Artin responded with spirit: that is something that “no artist would ever want to have said about themselves. I am not practicing emulation. I am not copying statues. I am creating unique and original works of art that sometimes have Antiquity as a partial inspiration.” ‘Copy’ and ‘emulate’ are simply negative for painters. They assume a better original.” I answered, “My first reaction is that you are not doing justice to the richness and complexity of your work by rejecting those terms outright. Why be afraid of copying the past, or the pasts of the past?”

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Harriet Conner, an unreasoning mission in 1880s Cairo, nonetheless found herself networking with famous Egyptologists of the day, as well as guiding the great American abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass through the Cairo slums. His diary acknowledges her. “Little Miss Conner,” as she was called by some of the Egyptologists, donated a child mummy she had picked up in the Fayum to the Bay View Association of Bay View, Michigan, when the Association intended to start a museum. It was later sold along with hundreds of other antiquities to the Kelsey. Conner’s mummy is now a favorite among many children who visit the Upjohn Enthusiast Wing.

Henry Gillman, American consul in Jerusalem in the 1880s, is one of the several figures operating in the Near East rather than Egypt who receive special attention in the exhibition. During his years in Jerusalem he took a stand against the Ottoman Empire, which was attempting to block fresh influxes of Jewish immigrants. He collected coins of the First and Second Jewish Revolts, Crusader coins, seals, figurines, and amulets. When he retired to Detroit, he wrote a historical romance called Hassan: a Folkah, a Romance of Palistine (1898), which chronicled the life of a shepherd whose exposure to Christians and Europeans in Jerusalem has given him a patron in Western cultivation that elevates him above the other “Orientals” in his village.

A final key figure among Kelsey collectors is Albert M. Todd of Kalamazoo: a chemist, global entrepreneur, and Islamic cultural artifacts as well as the ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern material highlighted in the show. (Passionate Curiosities: Tales of Collectors & Collecting from the Kelsey Museum (2015), by Lauren E. Tahay and Margaret Cool Root, will be available at the Museum for the formal opening night celebration on Friday, September 18, 2015, then in the Kelsey gift shop.)

PREVIEWING . . .

Passionate Curiosities: Collecting in Egypt & the Near East 1798–1930
August 28–November 29, 2015

Place: the glamorous Shepheard’s Hotel of Cairo, with its extravagant ambience catering to Western fantasies of anathentic exotic Orient.

Time: an imaginary moment about 1920.

Elegant lobbies and tea-room verandas open to the entry gallery of a great antiquities firm, which has leased space in Shepheard’s in order to present a unique offering of ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian artifacts and personal effects from the estates of various notables—both collectors and dealers. While the other galleries show most of the items on offer, this room provides an appetizer. And it is the space where we can glimpse the notables themselves in imaginary conversation with and about their collections.

What curiosities, what passions, drove them to acquire a taste for such artifacts? What networks of relationships with other people and with history lent texture to their interests? How did these backstories create context for the objects they found compelling? Where did the artifacts on view throughout the many rooms of the imaginary dealer shop come from, and how were they procured? When and how did the boundaries sometimes blurred between excavated objects and objects harvested or purchased in the field?

Passionate Curiosities is an immersive experience inviting visitors to meet a remarkable community of collectors and dealers—from eminent scientists to missionaries, from consuls to swashbuckling adventurers—who forged the Egyptian and Near Eastern collections of the Kelsey. Creative and dogged sleuthing, aided by IPCAA doctoral candidate Dan Diffendale, has unearthed vintage photographs that visually capture the ambience of these people in their environment.

The so-called Lion of Cairo, Maurice Nahman, is the prototype for our imagined dealer, although the exhibition features several intriguing personalizations in this category. “Maurice Nahman Antiquaire” operated out of his splendid mansion, with vast galleries of displayed artifacts at the back. His clients included Francis W. Kelsey and Dr. David Askren (a physician working in Egypt who procured many artifacts for Kelsey via Nahman). His great-granddaughter, Manuèle Wasserman, has been instrumental in facilitating the loan of Nahman’s 1910 guest registration book from her current home in the Brooklyn Museum Archives. It displays sign-ins by a host of players on the Cairo collecting scene—the Kelsey circle among them. An important theme of the exhibition is the complex ways in which dealers and collectors interacted. In some instances, the collectors’ public affability and deference masked private disdain for the often ethically “other” dealers, as documented in archival material.

Some rarely displayed artifacts in the imaginary space created for the exhibition include large decorated Coptic tunics from Egypt said to come from the Monastery of the Bunes near Antinopolis in Upper Egypt. These tunics were purchased by the eminent Egyptologist Suryal Atiya, who taught for a time at Michigan to lead the top-secret Alsos mission during World War II—aimed at Michigan to lead the top-secret Alsos mission during World War II—aimed at

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Making discoveries about the human past isn’t limited to seasons when we’re actively excavating. At Abydos, the University of Michigan team often uncovers new data and turns vital corners of interpretation when confined to the dig house: documenting, conserving, and analyzing finds from past years of excavation. Our study season in November 2014 aptly demonstrated this point, overturning some of our long-held assumptions about the development of the Abydos Middle Cemetery (AMC) landscape and yielding unexpected bits of new evidence.

These activities, building on research undertaken in the Egyptian collections of the British Museum in fall 2013, clarified and contextualized our AMC landscape from the end of the Old Kingdom until the Middle Kingdom and beyond. Space constraints prevent reviewing all the work of the extraordinary AMC team, but here certain categories of artifacts are spotlighted, along with the insights these wooden, stone, and ceramic objects yielded through careful analysis.

Kelsey conservator Suzanne Davis continued to implement the treatment protocols developed during the 2013 season (during which she and former conservator Claudia Chemello convened a team of scientific and wood conservation specialists to study wooden artifacts), monitoring and conserving materials from a severely deteriorated Old Kingdom statue deposit (ca. 200 vessels) found in a chapel excavated in 2013. By the end of this season, the pottery team was able to give a final description and analysis of the assemblage found in association with the shallow “South Shaft” of the vizier Iuiei’s tomb. This material, excavated in 2007 and found with two baskets of linen and natron balls wrapped in linen, probably represents the earliest embalming cache as yet documented from Pharaonic Egypt. The pottery consists solely of red-slipped bowls and plates, of which there were originally between thirty-five and forty individual vessels. The sherds were encrusted with tellurial and soil stains, and some of the vessels were definitely broken while the embalming waste was still moist.

Their intensive work also enabled them to devise a relative chronology of archaeological contexts in the Middle Cemetery: Phase I, dating to the 6th Dynasty coeval with the tombs of Iuiei, Wenid, and Idy; Phase II, associated with a chapel situated between the Iuiei and Wenid mastabas, and debris piled against the wall of the Iydi Chapel enclosure wall. The ceramic material shows a clear development in morphology and type from Phase I, and some time evidently separates the two phases. Christian suggests a date of the very late Old Kingdom to the first half of the First Intermediate Period (FIP). Phase III, associated with a chapel and its large offering deposit near the southwest corner of the Wenid mastaba, burials in pottery basins, and numerous shafts surrounding the Wenid mastaba. Show ing further non-continuous development from Phase II, this material dates ap proximately to the very late FIP through the early Middle Kingdom; this phase lasted for a considerable time.

Phase IV material was associated with offering chapels and burial shafts adjacent to the mastabas of Iuiei and Iupei, and is typical for the mid- to late 12th Dynasty, perhaps even extending into the 11th Dynasty. The identification of these phases has allowed us to substantially reorient our understanding of the history of the Middle Cemetery, refining the chronological parameters of the extremely important late FIP. This phase began when an official of the 11th Dynasty king Intef III established a cult building dedicated to a local saint: 6th Dynasty Idy. Reference to this cult was first documented in a stela excavated by Auguste Mariette in the nineteenth century (now in the British Museum). Our work since 1999 has revealed a range of evidence relating to this cult. In 2013 we excavated a portion of the ruined north end of the huge cult structure; this season’s pottery work confirms that it was constructed in the 11th Dynasty and that, at the same time, a vast development of subsidiary mastabas occurred to the west of the Wenid tomb. This realization contradicts our prior assumption that the mastaba field expanded during Wenid’s lifetime, and it dramatically highlights the importance of the Middle Cemetery during the FIP.

The cult of Idy continued into the Middle Kingdom, with a resurgence of activity around the time of the later 11th Dynasty king Senwosret III, relating certainly to the establishment of Senwosret III’s town and town in South Abydos. The long-lived hold of Idy’s cult on local memory is attested not only in an ostrakon that emerged during ceramic analysis this season—an early Middle Kingdom bowl fragment depicting the FIP cult building—but also in the suggestive pattern for 18th Dynasty activity we’ve pieced together as a result of work between the field, the British Museum, and offices in our home institutions. Here we have been able to reconstruct a sense of human beings moving around in this mortuary and cultic landscape the hill from their town—appealing to the ancestor Idy both to protect the burial of an infant, placed carefully in the empty stela niche of a 5th Dynasty chapel, and to grant a growing yearly wish for another child, embodied in the dedication of a terracotta figurine near Idy’s cult building. These conclusions, which we draw from careful analysis as well as experiences on site, remind us to put the people back into the past we study.¹

¹ The AMC Project operates with the kind permission of H. E. Dr. Manshoud al-Damaty, Minister of State for Antiquities, and the Permanent Committee. I would also like to thank Sobag MSA colleagues Mr. Gamal Abdal Naser, Mr. Tetan Abd Mahlab, Dr. Faridka el-Sayed, and her team. In el-Balyana we are grateful to Mr. Adfar Okabaa and Mr. Ahmed Hammod Ismail for their support during this season. At MSA Shukli Hamad Municats we thank Mr. Raduah Fahu Muhemmed, Mr. Ahmed Abdal Halim, Mr. Hamada Imam, and Mr. Ehsan Abd al-Khali. Many thanks to John Taylor and Alexandra Garrett at the British Museum for facilitating access to collections study in November 2013. Funding for the 2014 season was provided by the Kelsey Museum, Marylee Fisher, and the U-M Department of Near Eastern Studies.

Resources


2. Top: tombs style in original context (fac down in front of standing bosome); bottom: statues after treatment in 2014.

3. Wenid’s north fields, showing remains of pink wash encrusted over granite.

4. Dendroch Idy cult building with corset of orange depicting that building.

5. Map of Middle Cemetery showing 6th Dynasty tomb complexes of Wenid and Idy. “Dundor” cemetery containing state deposit; footprint of 6th Dynasty figurine and infant burial (map G. F. Compton, site: AMC Project).

6. Figures 8: Nekheb figurine near Idy’s cult building.
EXAMINING BONE FIGURINES FROM SELEUCIA

The University of Michigan carried out excavations at the site of Seleucia in the 1920s and 1930s. Located approximately 15 km south of modern-day Baghdad, this ancient city was founded by Alexander the Great's general Seleucus I Nicator and inhabited between the late fourth century BCE and the early third century AD. Among the objects recovered from the site were a number of anthropomorphic figurines. Most figurines appear quite plain today, but while there is significant variation in style—some are quite naturalistic in their appearance, while others are highly stylized—almost all display one characteristic: a small opening in the base for paint, just like the layer observed under a binocular microscope to an ultraviolet (UV) light. The figurines were also painted. When looking at them through a UV light, however, one stands out: madder! Looking at the figurines under ultraviolet light, however, one stands out: madder! Red, violet or “black” light prompted another discovery. I hope that you will be able to join me on this journey at the next time you visit the Kelsey Museum.

A conservation survey is largely an exercise in looking. Each object is examined to glean as much information as possible about its condition as well as its materials and methods of manufacture. I began by simply using my eyes and then brought in other tools—everything from a binocular microscope to an ultraviolet (UV) light. This close study led to a few interesting discoveries you probably would not notice at first glance. For example, most of the figurines had arms. Each figurine was carved to depict a nude female form, but while there is significant variation in style—some are quite naturalistic in their appearance, while others are highly stylized—almost all display one characteristic: a small opening in the base for paint, just like the layer observed under a binocular microscope to an ultraviolet (UV) light. These small openings indicate they were present on most figurines. The figurines were also painted. When looking at each under magnification, I found that many show traces of red, pink, or black paint. A small number also display a white or light-colored preparation layer for paint, just like the layer observed on the clay figurines. Although the bone figurines appear quite plain today, they would have been colorful in antiquity. Looking at the figurines under ultraviolet “black” light prompted another discovery; the pink paint fluoresces. While we can’t see UV light, certain types of materials, including some dyes, minerals, and resins commonly found on archaeological objects, fluoresce or glow when illuminated with UV. In the case of the bone figurines, pink paint glowed a bright orangey-pink when exposed to UV light. In antiquity the most common sources of red and pink were the pigments hematite (iron oxide), cinnabar (mercuric sulfide), red lead, and madder (from the plant Rubia peregrina). When viewed under visible light, all five appear red to pink. When examined under UV light, however, one stands out: madder! The purplish and pseudoporphyrin that give the dye its reddish color also cause it to fluoresce, making it easy to distinguish and identify.

The figurines also vary in shape, and when I examined them with Kelsey Museum conservation assistant and archaeologist Dr. Richard Redding, I learned that this variation is, in part, related to the shape of the bones. Based on the morphological characteristics, Richard was able to determine that many of the objects were fabricated using cattle or sheep/goat metapodials (hand and foot bones) or limb bones from a large animal (likely camel). Understanding the type of bone used has allowed me to see how the raw materials impacted the objects’ finished forms. For example, the “clothes-pin” shape of many of the stylized figurines is largely a by-product of the metapodial bone’s natural structure. The favored head dress and splayed appearance of the legs reflects the widening at the top and bottom of the bone. One of the most interesting things about my conservation training has been learning how to “read” an object—figuring out how to piece together visual evidence to tell an artifactual life story from its creation to its use in a museum. It’s a lot like playing detective. I hope that next time you visit the Kelsey Museum you will take some time to look at the bone figurines. I will point you in the direction of the permanent galleries. Perhaps you will see them in a new way.

SUMMER PROGRAMMING TARGETS VISITORS OF ALL AGES

Meet Sarah Mullerman, the Kelsey’s new coordinator of K-12 and community outreach. Sarah traces her love for archaeology back to her childhood fondness for digging things up in the backyard. She also spent a lot of time in museums, especially the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville, where her mother was a docent. During her college years at the New College of Florida, when she was in Sarasota, she explored American archeology at the Cahokia Mounds Field School in St. Louis and Mediterranean archaeology on the Athienou Archaeological Project in Cyprus. Sarah’s enthusiasm for excavation soon led her to wonder what happened to objects after they were excavated. She volunteered for various museums internships to try to answer that question, helping to catalogue collections, prepare exhibitions, and write condition reports on objects at various Florida museums.

Handling so many objects made Sarah curious about how museum-goers might best engage with them. So she took a job as education coordinator at the East Tennessee State University Natural History Museum. There she found her calling as a museum educator, deploying her considerable energy and imagination to develop popular programs for visitors of every age: outreach programs to local schools, field trips to the National Civil Air Patrol and Boy Scout programs, a monthly lecture series, a summer camp, and Overnight at the museum. Her K-12 programs all emphasized hands-on learning that would be fun as well as educational. She worked with the local city school system science coordinator to offer professional development opportunities for teachers. She trained docents and she began developing a multimedia app to enhance the visitor experience.

In the four months since Sarah’s arrival in Ann Arbor, she has already organized a very successful Family Day and taken a large share of responsibility for the impressive roster of summer programs outlined below. In the near future she will begin updating the Museum’s K-12 tours to meet the state’s Grade Level Content Expectations. She will be reaching out to local teachers and updating the Civilizations in a Crane. She also expects to plan tours and lectures for adults in the community.

We are delighted to welcome Sarah Mullerman as a Kelsey colleague.
STAFF UPDATE

Curator of Conservation Suzanne Davies gave a paper and shared a platter at the American Schools of Oriental Research meeting in November, and she will present two papers on archaeological conservation at an annual meeting of the American Institute for Conservation in May. This year she also served as chair of the AIC’s Objects Specialty Group, the primary professional group for US-based conservators of three-dimensional heritage. She is currently editing the group’s 2014 conference proceedings. In the past year she provided conservation for the El Buru and Abydos Middle Cemetery field projects in North Africa, and she looks forward to visiting the Kelsey’s project at Nisibin, Turkey, this summer.

Research Scientist George Eby organized a visit to the University of Oregon, Chariotta Maxwell-Jones successfully defended her dissertation on the ceramics of Bactria, Afghanistan (500 BC-AD 300). Jana Moshansky has been awarded a 2014-2015 Kogr Fellowship for work in Turkey. And Emma Scaife has a 2014-2016 Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship as well as a Getty Graduate Internship. Among IPCAA alumni, Henry Golfinow won a 2014 ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Award for his dissertation, “The Archaeology of Achaeometral Rules in Egypt.” He has accepted a 2015-2016 Getty Postdoctoral Fellowship. Assistant Professorships have been offered to Kevin Driver at the University of Oregon, Tom Lanovater at Reed College, and Margarita Musetti at the University of Missouri.


- Lewis and William Solomon
- David and Frederick Sohn
- Dr. Danny Sleen
- Len and Mary Mott
- Edward and Namita Surve
- Gregg D. Thomas
- Professor Patricia Monique Viont
- Dr. and Mrs. Steven Woggon
- William J. Widl

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- Ms. and Mrs. Geoffrey Emberlining...
SPECIAL EXHIBITION

Rocks, Paper, Memory: Wendy Artin’s Watercolor Paintings of Ancient Sculpture
June 5–July 26, 2015

RELATED EVENTS
Conversation between Artist Wendy Artin and Curator Christopher Ratté
June 26, 6:00 pm, Stern Auditorium, U-M Museum of Art
Reception follows at the Kelsey Museum

Drop-in Tour
June 28, 2:00 pm
Tour of Rocks, Paper, Memory led by Exhibition Curator Christopher Ratté

Sketching in the Galleries (for all ages)
June 6, 1:30–3:30 pm
Create your own sketches of the ancient objects found in the exhibition. Heather Accurso from the Ann Arbor Art Center will offer guidance as needed. Materials provided.

Painting with Water (for ages 6–12)
June 13 & 27, July 11 & 25, 2:00–3:00 pm
Use zen water painting boards to practice capturing light and shadows on 3-D artwork.
Pre-registration required; $5 fee
To register, contact Sarah Mullersman (mullersm@umich.edu or 734.647.4167).

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

Name
Phone:
Address
Email:
Address
City, State ZIP

I would like to purchase a membership in the Kelsey Associates and support Museum Activities.

CHOOSE YOUR MEMBERSHIP:
☐ $10 Student ☐ $25 Sponsor
☐ $35 Individual ☐ $500 Patron
☐ $50 Dual/Family ☐ $1,000 Benefactor
☐ $100 Contributor ☐ $_____ Other

$_____ Members Gifts (303888)
$_____ Other

If no fund is selected, your gift will be used where it is needed most.

CHOOSE YOUR PAYMENT METHOD
☐ Online at http://www.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey
☐ Credit Card: ☐ AMEX ☐ Discover ☐ MasterCard ☐ VISA
    Acct. # ___________________________
    Exp. Date _____________
☐ Check (Payable to the University of Michigan)
☐ Phone (888-518-7988)

Signature required

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