

NEW DIRECTIONS

The Director writes

The Museum holds some of man's great works of art—from the world of the Maya, from Sumer, from China—but it is not an art museum. Rather is it a museum of man in all his variety in all times and places. Cultural experience and achievement, therefore, are touchstones: 'quality', that elusive, evanescent guide is not our prime mentor. On any realistic assessment of the past, as of man's present and future, excellence has flowered in a context by definition less than excellent and can be comprehended only against its time and place.

Such a concept has informed the life and work of the University Museum since its earliest days and is reflected in its collections. These are the results not of eclectic acquisition but of systematic archaeological and anthropological research. In this the University Museum is exceptional, if not unique, and the future management and utilization of its collections must reflect the character of their growth.

The development of nationhood and of awareness of the national past that has taken place throughout the world in the last half century means that no museum will ever again be able to gather collections of the kind possible until quite recently. The University Museum, first and foremost a research institution, has never ignored these developments but has chosen to lead in combating illegal excavation and export of antiquities. The Pennsylvania Declaration of 1970 was a landmark in this movement. An even tougher and more comprehensive policy regarding collections has recently been approved by the Curators and the Board of Managers and will soon be published.

People sometimes ask if we will continue to dig in country X now that the 'finds' cannot be brought home to Philadelphia. The answer always is 'Of course: we strongly support X's attempt to control the export of antiquities and we are proud to be able to go on working, alongside their own scholars in the investigation of their past.'

But this brings practical problems as well as challenges. The very fact that the collections are not likely to be massively increased, at any rate with major objects, means that we have a great obligation to make the best use of what we do have in our storerooms and galleries. In future numbers of *Expedition* I shall face some of the problems this poses.

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