

## NEW DIRECTIONS

### The Director writes

In the last issue I wrote about the great size of our collections, the invisible nine-tenths—if not ninety-nine hundredths—of the iceberg which constitutes the reserve collection in storage: our greatest challenge and our biggest responsibility.

Here I want to explore the strategy which might inform our displays. This issue of *Expedition* is the place to do this, for it introduces the Museum's most important exhibition for many years: 'The Search for Ancient Egypt.' This 'retrospective show' of the University Museum's work in Egypt over nearly ninety years opens on February 20. It will provide the foil for the peak of Tutankhamunology on which the seventies are closing.

The Museum's Egyptian show draws on our standing exhibits and on a great deal never before displayed from our reserve collection. It gives us a splendid view of a place and a long moment in time. And it raises a great issue: what was happening elsewhere in these centuries and millennia, in China, in Meso-america, in Europe north of the Alps? What were man's other courses toward and into civilization 'when Egypt was great'?

This is just the problem facing every excavator of an ancient site. Shall he dig down to establish the history of the site, a relatively small vertical window on the past? Or shall he open out horizontally, learn much about a short period, and lose the long view? If vertical versus horizontal is the digger's crux, it is also a museum's.

Traditionally, we have our Classical, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Chinese galleries, and display a vertical view of the development of culture in limited regions. We do not take the horizontal view. Just where did man stand on this planet the year that Hammurabi died? When Caesar crossed the Rubicon, William conquered England, or Cortés stood in Darien?

Our regional displays must stand; the vertical view is vital too. But a balance must be struck with the horizontal. Otherwise the parallels and the contacts, the variety, and the richness of the springs of our now planetary civilization will escape the little world of museums, and we shall have abdicated some part of our role.

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