

Michael J. Kowalski

CHAIRMAN OF
THE MUSEUM'S
BOARD OF
OVERSEERS

BY DEBORAH I.
OLSZEWSKI

PENN MUSEUM WELCOMED Michael J. Kowalski as Chairman of the Museum Board of Overseers on July 1, 2006. Kowalski graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1974 and has a long-standing interest in modern and ancient cultures. As an undergraduate studying economics at Wharton, his diverse interests included Russian his-

tory and literature. His fascination with the ancient world was driven in part by his interest in underwater exploration and marine archaeology, a then-fledgling discipline that had been launched at the Museum in the 1960s by George F. Bass.

After graduating from Penn, Kowalski worked for a year before going to Harvard Business School, where he earned his MBA (Class of 1977). In 1978 he joined the Financial Planning department at Avon Products, which acquired Tiffany & Co. in 1979. In 1983 he was offered the position of Director of Financial Planning in the Tiffany & Co. division. By October 1984, Avon Products divested Tiffany & Co. in a leveraged buy-out. Kowalski remained at Tiffany & Co. and helped craft its strategic plan for its post-Avon Products future, including going public on the New York Stock Exchange in 1987.

In 1985 Kowalski moved from Financial Planning to Merchandising as a Vice President. His work brought him into daily contact with the craft and craftsmanship of the objects manufactured in the Tiffany & Co. workshops. This experience brought him back in time to a lecture series he attended as a Wharton undergraduate in 1972. Sponsored by Walter Hoving, then Chairman of Tiffany & Co., the series focused on design as a competitive advantage in the corporate world, highlighting the importance of design in cultures. An appreciation of design and craftsmanship in objects, as well as their cultural context, thus has long been part of Kowalski's background.

Kowalski became President of Tiffany & Co. in 1996. He was elected Chief Executive Officer in 1999 and Chairman of

the Board in 2003. During a Tiffany & Co. reception at Penn Museum in 2004—when the Royal Tombs of Ur exhibition was on display—he became reacquainted with the Museum and its fabulous collections.

Recognizing the importance of art and culture as seen through objects and their context, he began to consider a closer connection to the Museum. This was realized when he accepted the role of Chairman of the Museum's Board of Overseers.

As Chairman of the Board, Kowalski joins the Museum during a critical phase in its planning for the future. The Museum is developing a long-term master plan that will include renovations to existing structures, the redesign of entrances and public space, and new construction. His business experience and Board leadership will be significant assets as the Museum crafts a strategic plan to accomplish the goals of the master plan. Additionally, he is actively engaged in expanding national and international recognition of the Museum as a key player in the preservation of cultural heritage and as a leader in research relevant to the modern world. To that end, he and his wife, Barbara D. Kowalski, have provided a pivotal gift to sponsor the Penn Museum International Research Conference Program.

Penn Museum looks forward to working with Michael J. Kowalski as Chairman of the Board during this exciting period. 🏠

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Michael J. Kowalski is the Museum's new Chairman of the Board of Overseers and Chief Executive Officer of Tiffany & Co.