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MUSINGS AND VISIONS FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

The University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology's collection of materials from the excavations in the Royal Cemetery at Ur is among the most celebrated of the Museum's illustrious holdings. "The Ram in the Thicket," for example, is illustrated in Janson and Janson's well-known *History of Art*, now in its fifth revised edition (1997). The Jansons note that "The animal, marvelously alive and energetic, has almost a demonic power of expression as it gazes at us from between the branches of the symbolic tree." They also illustrate the inlaid panel from the bull-headed lyre (see cover). These are just two of the pieces that are among the most renowned objects from antiquity.

Much of our archaeological and anthropological collections has come from the more than 350 significant field projects that the Museum has sponsored over the 111 years of its existence. People who are unaware of the breadth and depth of our collections are often taken aback when they visit us. For instance, I have been told that some years ago an eminent visitor, after viewing the Ur exhibit, commented admiringly on how well done the replicas were. When informed that the pieces were real, he was speechless!

The archaeological value of the Ur objects, however, lies not only in their remarkable aesthetic qualities. Of equal importance is the information about their contexts contained in the superb field notes, plans, maps, and photographs from Sir Leonard Woolley's excavations that are housed in the Museum's archives. Such data are as priceless as the objects themselves. As the reader will see in the informative articles in this special issue of *Expedition*, the objects and their associated contextual data allow scholars to make insightful inferences about the objects and the ancient Mesopotamian civilization that produced them.

The Museum is proud of the traveling exhibition of our Ur materials put together by Professor Richard Zettler, Associate Curator-in-Charge of the Near East Section, and his curatorial colleagues and Pam Jardine, the Assistant Director in charge of Museum Services, and her colleagues in Exhibits, Registrar's Office, Photographic Studio, and Conservation. This show will allow people all across the country to see and appreciate the cultural accomplishments of the ancient Sumerian civilization. For those people who see the show in its various venues and even for those who are unable to visit the traveling exhibition, we hope this issue of *Expedition* and the extensive catalog that accompanies the exhibition will serve to heighten their enjoyment or act as helpful surrogates.

Jeremy A. Sabloff
The Williams Director

TRAVELING EXHIBITION VENUES FOR "TREASURES FROM THE ROYAL TOMBS OF UR"

10/9/98-1/3/99	The Bowers Museum of Cultural Art, Santa Ana, CA
2/5/99-5/9/99	Frank H. McClung Museum, Knoxville, TN
5/30/99-9/5/99	Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX
10/17/99-1/17/00	Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC
2/20/00-4/23/00	Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH
5/00-9/00	Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, NY
10/00-1/01	The Oriental Institute, Chicago, IL
2/01-5/01	Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit, MI