

Museum Exhibitions, 1890–1990

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KNOWN WORLDWIDE for its pioneering fieldwork, the Penn Museum surprises the visitor with its beautiful building, extensive collections, and impressive exhibitions. Since its founding in 1887, the Museum's building has continued to grow and evolve, and so have its displays. Our new archival exhibition, currently on display through

July, 2017 at the Museum, invites you to travel through time with these ever-changing spaces. By means of photographs, posters, and ephemera, *Timely Exhibits of Interest to Everyone* (from a Museum flyer, 1942) surveys a century of public exhibitions at the Penn Museum, 1890–1990. See how taste and design have changed and learn about our fascinating exhibitions. •



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Mediterranean Gallery, ca. 1905. PM image 22425.

1. The Penn Museum's collections first went on display in 1889 in a room on the 3rd floor of College Hall. Between 1891 and 1899, the Museum shared the University Library building (now the Fisher Fine Arts Library), designed by noted Philadelphia architect Frank Furness. The first portion of the Museum's own building opened in 1899. Early exhibitions aimed to be encyclopedic, with as many types of artifacts from as many cultures as possible on display. This was an aesthetic but also practical decision, since the Museum had little storage space at the time. As new collections were acquired, space was made in the galleries to display them.



- 2.** Mohammedan Art, 1918. As Museum Director from 1910 to 1927, George Byron Gordon oversaw the construction of two building additions and greatly enlarged the Museum’s collections. The galleries he helped shaped were less full and more formal.
- 3.** WPA Federal Art Project, Maya mural in Mesoamerican Gallery, *ca.* 1935. The 1930s were lean years for the Museum. One novel development was the collaboration with artists employed through the New Deal’s Works Progress Administration (WPA) to design maps and murals in the Museum.

- 4.** Lilly Daché, milliner and fashion designer, at *5,000 Years of Vanity exhibition*, 1944. Marian Angell Godfrey was the Museum’s Secretary from 1941 to 1945. During the absence of Director George C. Vaillant for World War II, she managed the institution and oversaw exhibitions. She created a number of very popular cross-cultural exhibitions.
- 5.** Jacques Lipchitz, sculptor, with Maya bas-relief he selected for *14 Eyes in a Museum Storeroom*, 1952. In 1952, Director Froelich G. Rainey asked seven experts in visual fields to select their

- favorite artifacts from Museum storage for a display, including René d’Harnoncourt, Director of MoMA; Lincoln Kirstein, Director of the New York City Ballet; and Charles Addams, cartoonist and creator of “The Addams Family.” The exhibition was a hit.
- 6.** *African Tribal Sculpture*, 1956. David Crowover was Manager of Exhibitions from 1956 to 1977 and focused especially on exhibitions of Classical and African objects. His displays were artistic, aiming to showcase the aesthetic, rather than the cultural, aspects of the artifacts.

TOP ROW, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: PM image 174402, Photograph by Charles Sheeler; PM image 146623, Photograph by Reuben Goldberg; PM image 29664. BOTTOM ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: PM image 45388; PM image 174615.