

# Transformation Update

We hope that you discover something new each time you visit the Museum. Beginning early in 2018, after we break ground for the inaugural phase of our Coxe and Harrison Wing renovations in November, you will certainly discover a different look at the Kamin Main Entrance: we will be putting up construction walls behind the current welcome desk to protect our collections and our visitors as demolition work begins in these wings.

The gift shop will be moved to the former *Human Evolution* exhibition space, adjacent to the Director's Office and Café. The appearance of the construction walls will be one of the first clear signs of the transformation beginning behind them, and they will also be a place for us to share more project details with our visitors. We see the walls, therefore, as cause for excitement—and we are even more excited to share the new Penn Museum behind them with you.

While the construction walls are necessary during some work, other work in preparation for the new galleries is being done in full view of our visitors. A highlight of our Egyptian Collection, the 4,400-year-old Tomb Chapel of Kaipure—with much of its original pigment and carvings—is one of the most intact ancient Egyptian tomb chapels in existence. Discovered in the cemetery at Saqqara in the 19th century, excavated in 1903, and exhibited at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in



New Rockwell Project Conservator Céline Chrétien examines a block from the Tomb Chapel of Kaipure. The Chapel will be reassembled for the first time in several years in the new Egyptian Galleries, allowing visitors to walk in and marvel at its original pigment and carvings.

St. Louis, the Chapel was then donated to the Penn Museum by department store magnate John Wanamaker. Now, thanks to a grant from the **American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE)** and to a generous bequest from our esteemed late Overseer **John “Rick” Rockwell** (W64, WG66, PAR), the Chapel is being conserved in preparation for its reinstallation in the new Egyptian Galleries. Our new Rockwell Project Conservator Céline Chrétien, joined by two assistants, has begun doing research and testing various possible consolidants (for the powdery stone) and surface treatments (for the flaking paint). The team is also starting to assess the best materials to use for mending and filling missing areas of the blocks. Each block—there are more than 60 of them—is being checked against existing documentation of its condition, cleaned, and stabilized as necessary. Visitors can see Céline and her team at work in the Egypt (Sphinx) Gallery.



ABOVE: The C-shaped textile case in the Middle East Galleries will be light-protected and climate-controlled, making possible the rotating display of delicate textiles and other organic materials. Rendering by Haley Sharpe Design.

Preparations continue for our new Middle East Galleries, which will open in April 2018. They will tell the story of the “Journey to the City” with some of our most iconic objects as well as other objects that have rarely or never been displayed. We are honored to have received a grant this spring from the **National Endowment for the Humanities** (NEH, Public Programs Division) in support of the Middle East Galleries—the first of our new galleries to open. You can see several objects that have been or are being conserved for their permanent display in these new galleries in *The Artifact Lab*.

Within the Middle East Galleries, a grant from the **Coby Foundation** will allow us to display textiles from our Near East Collection in a signature gallery for the first time in the Museum’s history. (A previous grant from the Coby Foundation supported the rotation of textiles in the *Native American Voices* exhibition.) In the “World of Cities” gallery, exploring Hasanlu, Nippur,

Rayy and the Rayy plain, the early modern period, and Islamic materials, visitors will be able to view a rotating selection from our textile collection, ranging from exquisite 16th-century Persian silks woven with gold-wrapped thread to 19th-century hand-embroidered bridal coats from Turkmenistan and Iran. These and other textiles including carpets, costumes, embroidered shoes, hats, and bridal gear will be installed in a large case with light protection and a micro-climate generator. The textiles will be rotated every six months to preserve them and to ensure new discoveries for our visitors. Turn to the “Gallery Sneak Peek” to see some of these beautiful textiles.

These grants and others, as well as magnificent support from individual donors, make the Museum a place of continual discovery during—and after—our Building Transformation. ●