Musings and Visions from the Director's Desk

Two of the most important missions of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology are research and public education. Some people feel that these two missions are incompatible, and success in one area will be at the expense of the other. I firmly believe that such is not the case. Good science should include the elucidation of research results to the general public. Even if scholars do not think that public communication is a moral imperative, they need to recognize that it is a practical one. Academics are coming to understand that in today's fiscally restrained times, they must explain the nature of their research and its importance in terms that the lay public can comprehend, or they risk losing public support. It is not sufficient in the current climate—if it ever was—to simply assert that one is undertaking significant research, especially in disciplines like anthropology and archaeology whose worth is doubted by some. Scholars must be able to clearly explain how and what they have achieved in their studies.

The University of Pennsylvania Museum is committed to the endeavor of translating its world class scholarship into forms that the general public can understand and appreciate. Whether through outreach programs to schools, tours of the Museum, lectures, publications, permanent or traveling exhibits, or Expedition Magazine, the Museum is striving to make the results of its research accessible to audiences of all ages. The Museum staff realizes that we still have much room for improvement, and we are working on a variety of means to successfully marry our goals of top-notch research and stimulating public education.

* * *

This is the last full issue of Expedition to appear under Dr. Lee Horne's superb editorship. While we can appreciate the fact that Lee's retirement from Expedition will provide her with more free time to pursue her academic interests (she will remain a Research Associate of the Asian Section), we still wish her successful efforts to improve the quality and appearance of the magazine. I know that all of our readers will join me in thanking Lee for her dedicated service and wishing her the best of luck in the future.

Jeremy A. Sabloff
The Charles K. Williams II Director

Glass in the Roman World

In the fall of 1997, more than 180 Roman glass vessels from the University of Pennsylvania Museum will be on display—most for the first time ever. The exhibition, Roman Glass: Reflections on Cultural Change, is being organized and curated by Stuart Fleming, Scientific Director of MASCA here at the Museum and Guest Editor of this special issue of Expedition Magazine. The exhibition will travel after closing in Philadelphia.

As Fleming notes, the Roman glass vessels in the Museum's collections span the entire period of Roman imperial history, and more than 95 percent of them are intact. They have come to the Museum through purchase, gift, and excavation. Much of the collection was in place by the 1940s, but a number of important vessels, collected in the 19th century by William Sansom Vaux, were given to the Museum by George and Henry J. Vaux as recently as 1986.

The occasion of an exhibition on Roman glass gives Expedition an opportunity to bring together four scholars who specialize in history, material culture, and technology. In the first article, David Whitehouse, Director of the Corning Museum of Glass, selects some outstanding examples of gold-glasses from the Corning Museum's collections to lay out the history and technology of this distinctive category of Roman glass. Stuart Fleming then touches on themes from his forthcoming book, also titled Roman Glass: Reflections on Cultural Change, to discuss the cultural significance and technology of a number of vessels that will not appear in the book.

Glass vessels were especially suitable as containers for perfumes, drugs, and medicines. In the third article, John Scarborough takes us into the world of the Roman physician and the pharmae with which he tended his patients. Hilary Codd closes the issue with the glass vessels from Colchester, Britain's first town. She gives us a privileged view of life in Roman Britain, frozen in time by the town's destruction at the hands of Boudica's armies.

We offer this issue as a companion to the exhibition, Roman Glass: Reflections on Cultural Change, and as a view of Roman society through its glass artifacts.

Lee Horne, Editor

The Roman Empire ca. AD 106