People, Places, Projects

PENN MUSEUM HOSTS INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON DIGITIZING ARTIFACTS AND DOCUMENTATION FROM SIR LEONARD WOOLLEY’S EXCAVATIONS AT UR

Representatives from the Penn, British, and Iraq National museums gathered in Philadelphia on January 26 and 27, 2011, at a workshop made possible by the Leon Levy Foundation, to discuss digitizing the more than 21,000 objects excavated at Ur by Sir Leonard Woolley in the 1920s and 30s. The goal of the joint project is to eventually make the entire collection, currently housed among the three museums, available to the public online. A second key project goal is digitization of the documentation of the excavation, including Woolley’s field notes, architectural plans, and reports, which not only tell us what he was excavating at a particular point in time, but also give us insight into his initial interpretation of his discoveries and his evolving understanding of what he was doing.

Iraq’s Ancient Past, the Penn Museum’s long-term exhibition showcasing objects from Ur, will reopen April 30, 2011, on the third floor of the West Wing following renovations and the installation of climate control in the gallery as part of the West Wing Renovation Project.

GRANT FROM 1956 OTTO HAAS TRUST ENABLES EXPANSION OF MUSEUM’S CONSERVATION PROGRAM

A generous grant from the 1956 Otto Haas Charitable Trust has made possible the expansion of the Penn Museum’s Conservation staff. Nina Owczarek recently joined the Museum’s Conservation Lab as Assistant Conservator. Nina graduated from New York University’s program in Art Conservation in 2005. Since then she has undertaken several project-based contracts with museums in the U.S. as well as one contract in Morocco. Nina worked previously at the Penn Museum from January to November 2009, treating objects for the Painted Metaphors and Iraq’s Ancient Past exhibitions. Nina’s arrival marks the beginning of the Conservation Department’s planned expansion. In the fall of 2011, two interns will join the Conservation staff to spend an academic year getting practical experience in a museum setting. These internships are the latest installment of the Department’s distinguished history in conservation education. Conservation’s expansion will enable the Museum to better fulfill our strategic goal of being a world-class museum that stewards and exhibits its collections to contemporary international museological standards.
NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL CERAMICS LAB OPENS

A new ceramics laboratory opened in January 2011, funded by Dr. Charles K. Williams II as part of the Penn Museum’s West Wing Renovation Project. This lab launches the Museum’s commitment to a new suite of conservation and archaeological laboratories. The ceramics lab will support the University of Pennsylvania’s archaeological curricula as well as research programs of in-house and visiting archaeologists. The catalyst for the creation of the ceramics lab was the Ban Chiang Project’s Year of Ceramics, part of a four-year Luce Foundation grant to the Penn Museum to strengthen collaborative archaeological research in Southeast Asia. During the Spring 2011 semester, the lab is being used for a Penn seminar course, Introduction to Archaeological Ceramics, co-taught by Dr. Marie-Claude Boileau (visiting post-doctoral scholar, Penn Museum), Dr. Tom Tartaron (Assistant Professor, Classical Studies), and Dr. Joyce White (Director, Ban Chiang Project, and Associate Curator for Asia). Penn graduate students were the first to use the lab to perform petrographic and other archaeometric analyses on Ban Chiang pottery. Petrography is a core analytical technique whereby the minerals in thin sections of pottery vessels can be optically identified using a polarizing microscope. This kind of sophisticated study assists archaeologists in determining manufacturing processes as well as trade patterns of ancient societies.

Concurrently, the lab is supporting the special study of Ban Chiang ceramics on loan from the Thai government since the Museum’s excavations in the 1970s and the analysis of Middle Bronze Age pottery from the sites of Kirrha and Orchomenos, Greece, by Dr. Tom Tartaron and Dr. Marie-Claude Boileau.

EXHIBITIONS OPEN IN RENOVATED AND CLIMATE-CONTROLLED GALLERIES THANKS TO WEST WING RENOVATION PROJECT

Thanks to leadership support from A. Bruce and Margaret Mainwaring and Dr. Charles K. Williams II, and with generous additional support from Barbara and Michael J. Kowalski, the Frederick J. Manning Family, Diane von Schlegell Levy and Robert M. Levy, and the 1956 Otto Haas Charitable Trust, the three exhibitions currently or soon to be on display in the Museum’s West Wing—Secrets of the Silk Road, Battleground: War Rugs from Afghanistan, and Iraq’s Ancient Past—will open in newly refurbished and climate-controlled galleries. The first phase of the West Wing Renovation Project also included the creation of a teaching laboratory for ceramic petrography. Later phases will add a state-of-the-art suite of conservation labs and workspaces, several additional teaching and research labs, and the restoration of the historic and architecturally unique Widener Lecture Hall, which will return to its original function as an academic or public event space after several decades of use as a behind-the-scenes preparation area for exhibitions. The addition of climate control throughout the wing, together with replacement of the windows with historically accurate but airtight and energy-efficient versions, will significantly enhance the Penn Museum visitor experience and provide greater protection and stability for the artifacts on display.
The West Wing Renovation Project is designed by Samuel Anderson Architects of New York City, noted for their work in museums and libraries, with a specialty in conservation labs, with general contract management by Hunter Roberts Construction Group; mechanical design by McClure Engineering of St. Louis, MO; structural engineering by Severud Associates of New York City; lighting design by Jeffrey Nash Lighting Design of New York City; and project management by the University of Pennsylvania’s Facilities and Real Estate Services.

**Generous Underwriters Support Secrets of the Silk Road and Related Programming**

When *Secrets of the Silk Road* opened at the Penn Museum in February 2011, it was thanks to the hard work of an enormous number of people and generous support from a wide range of individuals, corporations, educational centers, foundations, and media sponsors. Penn Museum gratefully acknowledges exhibition support from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation; A. Bruce and Margaret Mainwaring; Lois and Robert M. Baylis; the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; the Selz Foundation; Cummins Catherwood, Jr. and Susan W. Catherwood; Alexandra and Eric J. Schoenberg, Ph.D.; Tiffany & Co.; Winnie Chin and Michael Feng; Gretchen R. Hall, Ph.D.; Host Hotels and Resorts; and Titan. Media partnership support was provided by NBC 10 and the Philadelphia Inquirer/philly.com. Penn Museum extends thanks also to Annette Merle-Smith for underwriting educational materials associated with *Secrets of the Silk Road*, and to PNC Foundation, Subaru of America, and the Wachovia-Wells Fargo Foundation for supporting the “Sponsor a School Group” program and making it possible for more than 600 inner city public school children to see *Secrets of the Silk Road* and experience related educational programming free of charge. The international symposium “Reconfiguring the Silk Road: New Research on East-West Exchange in Antiquity,” held at the Penn Museum on March 19, 2011, was made possible by generous underwriting from the Henry Luce Foundation and the University of Pennsylvania’s Center for Ancient Studies.

**Voices from Indian Country**

With support from the Annenberg Foundation, the Penn Museum is developing a new exhibition entitled *Native American Voices*. In preparation, exhibition curator Lucy Fowler Williams is working together with a host of native specialists from across the country to identify important issues in Indian country today and to relate these to the Museum’s outstanding collections from this diverse region. She is working particularly closely with Hopi journalist Patty Talahongva and her Phoenix-based film crew to record video interviews with native artists, scholars, and activists. The team has worked in New Mexico, Alaska, and Washington, D.C.

*Native American Voices* exhibition curator Lucy Fowler Williams and film crew with Tlingit wood carver Tommy Joseph (center), at Sitka, Alaska’s National Historical Totem Pole Park. The Park was established in 1904 to remember the 1804 Battle of Sitka, a major armed resistance by the Tlingit people to Russian colonization. Joseph carved the pole in the background, which was raised in 2004 to honor the Tlingit Kiks.ádi clan and celebrate the battle’s 200th anniversary.
ANNUAL WELCOMING RECEPTION AT THE PENN MUSEUM

The 41st Welcoming Reception for International Students and Scholars hosted by the Penn Museum’s International Classroom program was an astounding success, attended by more than 1,200 international guests from 104 countries as far flung as Moldova, Tanzania, Uruguay, and Senegal. Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter, Penn Museum’s Williams Director Richard Hodges, and several officials from consulates in Philadelphia and New York took part in the event. The Reception included the volunteer efforts of 30 students from the Philadelphia High School for Girls, dance performances by Penn and LaSalle students, and the generous donation of refreshments from program volunteers and supporters Josephine Klein and Nada Miller. The goals of the Reception are to welcome international students and scholars to the Philadelphia area and help them network by bringing together 65 colleges, universities, and international programs, as well as hundreds of volunteers, performers, museum staff, and city and state officials. The Reception is considered a national model among international educators and is the only city-wide event of its kind. Students from the University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University, Widener University, Philadelphia University, the University of Sciences, the Art Institute of Philadelphia, and as far as away as Bucknell University came to experience the festivities and make friends from around the world.

CARTIFACTS: INFORMAL LEARNING IN THE PENN MUSEUM’S GALLERIES

Touch, ask, explore: these are the main goals of the Community Engagement Department’s newest educational initiative, Cartifacts.

Cartifacts is an in-gallery, hands-on experience for all Penn Museum visitors. Each day from 12 pm to 3 pm, one or more carts are offered in the Museum’s galleries. Current topics include “Daily Life in Ancient Rome,” “Mummification in Ancient Egypt,” and “Textiles.” Trained facilitators engage visitors in conversation related to a cart’s theme and its accompanying objects. All objects can be handled by visitors who can experience writing with a wax tablet and stylus, opening a canopic jar to find a facsimile of a corresponding organ inside, making thread with a drop spindle, and much more. During the Secrets of the Silk Road exhibition, Cartifacts is tailored to show connections between the Silk Road and the Museum’s long-term galleries. Stop by the Penn Museum to try them out for yourself!