Museum Objects Travel the World

The Penn Museum has an active loans program, sending objects from the collection to museums and institutions around the world. Currently, the Museum is contributing objects to 32 different exhibitions. Two such exhibitions are *Court and Cosmos: The Great Age of the Seljuq*, which will be on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City from April 26 to July 24, 2016, and *Art from Africa: Looking Closely*, on display just across the river at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA) from May 13 to December 4, 2016. The *Looking Closely* exhibition is part of a larger series of exhibitions presented at the PMA this year entitled *Creative Africa*, which will explore and celebrate African art and design both ancient and modern. The Museum is lending 12 objects from the Near East Section to the Metropolitan, and more than 200 objects from the African Section to the PMA.

Celebrating the Harrison Centennial

One of the grandest domes in the country, the Penn Museum’s Harrison Wing Rotunda, completed in 1915 and long home to an internationally renowned collection of Chinese art, soars an impressive 90 feet high. Descendants of Charles Custis Harrison gathered at the Museum on Sunday, November 8, 2015, to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the opening of the Harrison Wing. Following a reception with Williams Director Dr. Julian Siggers, they attended lectures on the history of the design and construction of the Harrison Wing by Dr. David Brownlee, Frances Shapiro-Weitzenhoffer Professor of 19th Century European Art, and Alessandro Pezzati, Senior Archivist at the Penn Museum. The family helped raise $100,000 to replace the audio/visual system in the Museum’s Auditorium that bears the Harrison name.

Molly at the Mütter

Molly Gleeson, Schwartz Project Conservator for the In the Artifact Lab exhibition, presented a talk Monday, October 5, 2015, at “Death Salon: Mütter Museum”—a two-day conference on “mortality and mourning and their resonating effects on our culture and history,” held at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Molly’s lecture, entitled “Breathing New Life into Old Mummies: Conservation of Egyptian Mummies at the Penn Museum,” focused on her conservation treatment and research on ancient Egyptian mummies in our collection—and how these practices have changed throughout the Museum’s history.
New Acquisitions Highlight Living Tradition of Native American Arts

Vincent Williams, a member of the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape and Lakota Tribes and a supporting specialist for the Museum’s Native American Voices exhibition, made two fans by hand for the Museum. He wrote:

As Native Americans, we are taught to carry ourselves in a humble way. I made these fans as gifts for the Museum, as a way of saying thank you to Penn. Penn has done a lot to honor Native peoples, and has worked tirelessly to educate the community about us. We are grateful to be a part of the Native American Voices exhibition, and for Penn’s continued support. I admire the staff of the Museum for consulting Native scholars and Tribal leaders throughout Indian country for their expertise on the collection, and I thank them for handling and displaying the collection with such respect.

These beautiful fans, representative of the living tradition of Native American arts, will enrich the Museum’s growing collection of contemporary Native American material culture.

TOP: Medicine Fan made of goatskin and wild turkey feathers with red and blue dove feathers dyed in Penn’s colors. Used to honor and welcome a special guest into the community or to welcome home a veteran of war. Made by Vince Williams, 2014. UPM object #2015-14-2. BOTTOM: Peyote Fan made with Hyacinth Macaw feathers decorated in fire colors. Peyote fans are used by members of the Native American Church for healing and spiritual concerns. Made by Vince Williams in 2014 to honor his mentor and Penn alumna, Dr. Ann Dapice. UPM object #2015-14-1.

Historical Marker Unveiled

On August 1, 2015, a Pennsylvania Historical Marker honoring Russian-American Mayanist Tatiana Proskouriakoff was unveiled in Lansdowne, PA, where her family settled soon after immigrating to the United States. Around 35 people, including members of Tatiana’s family, Mayanists, and members of the Museum’s Precolombian Society, attended the dedication ceremony. Penn Museum Archivist Alessandro Pezzati spoke on behalf of the Museum, and invited the guests, including family and friends of Tatiana, to come by the Museum to see her papers and related materials. Tatiana got her start as a Mayanist at the Penn Museum during the Depression and the Museum houses some of her papers and drawings. In the Mexico and Central America Gallery, visitors can see the stela that was instrumental in helping her “crack the code” to be the first to read Maya glyphs.

Tatiana Proskouriakoff at Piedras Negras. UPM image #37401.
Memorial for Mayanist Chris Jones

Christopher Jones, Ph.D., a Maya archaeologist and epigrapher most noted for his investigation of the inscriptions at the famous site of Tikal, Guatemala, died Thursday, September 3, 2015, at his Kimberton, Pennsylvania farm home, after a long illness. He was 77 years old. A memorial service for Dr. Jones was held at the Museum on Sunday, October 18.

Chris Jones had a long history with the Penn Museum, obtaining his Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania in 1969 and returning as a Research Associate in the American Section in 1973, a position that he held until his retirement in 2001. After his retirement, he continued his research and publication efforts as a Consulting Scholar, demonstrating his devotion to his field.

Throughout his career, Chris was actively engaged in the ongoing research and massive publication efforts of the site of Tikal—one of the largest ancient cities in the Americas and the capital of one of the most powerful polities of the ancient Maya in the Classical period (200–900 CE)—where the Penn Museum conducted excavations from 1956 to 1970. In addition to this scholarly work, Chris delighted in sharing his love and knowledge of the ancient Maya with a broader public whenever the opportunity arose. He was instrumental in the creation of the Penn Museum’s long-running annual Maya Weekend, a popular program that brought Maya archaeology and epigraphy to the public. “We are greatly saddened by the loss of Chris Jones,” noted Julian Siggers, Williams Director of the Museum. “We are fortunate that he left behind such a large and important body of work building upon our understanding of the ancient Maya.” Chris Jones is survived by his wife, Leslie, four sons, two brothers, and seven grandchildren.
Public Lecture Series Features Touch Experiences for Vision-Impaired Guests

The Museum’s annual “Great” lecture series makes world-class scholarship available to the public and now provides access for visitors with visual impairment. The “In Touch” pre-lecture program offers guided opportunities for visitors to touch objects, both from the collections and teaching collections, to better understand the lecture content. Participants also receive verbal descriptions during the lectures through special earpieces for even more enhanced understanding. The “In Touch” program took place on October 7, November 4, and January 6. The last program of the academic year will be held on March 2, 2016. For more information, contact Kevin Schott at kschott@upenn.edu.

46th Annual International Student and Scholars Reception

Celebrating Penn’s commitment to global impact, more than 600 guests from all over the world mingled under the magnificent dome of the Penn Museum’s Rotunda during the International Student and Scholars Reception on October 16, 2015. This annual event is hosted by the Museum’s International Classroom program, which offers educational workshops that connect international residents of the region with students, teachers, and businesses. Penn Language Center and Penn Global were key event sponsors, along with the Graduate School of Education, Global Philadelphia, Jo Klein, and more than 20 other organizations.

International students enjoyed festive dance performances from student groups such as Penn Lions, Yalla, and Chinese Dance club, as well as performing groups from Temple and University of the Sciences. The event also featured remarks by special guests that included Consuls from five countries and the Executive Director of the Philadelphia Mayor’s Office of Immigrant and Multi-Cultural Affairs.

Interactive information tables highlighted resources for new residents and offered activities such as language lessons, basic salsa dance steps, and more. With the Penn Museum’s impressive collection setting the stage, guests enjoyed international foods to complement the celebration.
Museum Introduces New Mummy Mobiles

Our two Mummy Mobiles hit the streets of Philadelphia in October 2015, as part of our free Unpacking the Past education program. The Penn Museum’s five GRoW Annenberg educators use these vehicles to travel to Philadelphia public and Title I charter schools, where they teach outreach lessons to middle school students that prompt critical thinking skills. After the Mummy Mobile classroom visits, students come to the Museum where they view the Sphinx, ancient Egyptian mummies, and much more during workshops and guided tours.

Unpacking the Past is supported by a lead grant from the GRoW Annenberg Foundation, with additional support from Diane vS. and Robert M. Levy, the Institute for Museum and Library Services, the Penn Museum Women’s Committee, the National Endowment for the Arts, and PECO.

Penn CHC at the U.S. Senate

In collaboration with the Penn Cultural Heritage Center, the Smithsonian, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Pennsylvania Senator Bob Casey hosted “Death of History: Witnessing Heritage Destruction in Syria and Iraq” in the Kennedy Caucus Room on Wednesday, October 28, 2015. The event included brief speeches, a panel discussion, and a small exhibition.

ABOVE: Katharyn Hanson, Richard M. Leventhal, Salam Al Kuntar (all from Penn CHC), U.S. Representative Ed Royce (California 39th district, Chairman of House Foreign Affairs Committee), Senator Robert Casey, Jr., and Brian I. Daniels (Penn CHC).

Public Tours for Midas Exhibition, Starting in February

Discover the story of the real King Midas in guided tours of the upcoming exhibition, The Golden Age of King Midas. Most people know Midas’ name from myths, but this new tour explores the archaeological findings that teach us about this famous king’s life. Docents lead you back in time to ancient Anatolia (modern Turkey), where Midas ruled the city of Gordian. Participants can compare myths to reality as they walk in the footsteps of this famous king.