A Tradition of Discovery through Fieldwork

In 1887, a group of Philadelphians, including University of Pennsylvania Provost William Pepper, established the Penn Museum to house artifacts recovered from excavations at Nippur. One hundred and twenty-eight years later, sending excavation teams around the world remains a priority at the Museum, as evidenced by the wide range of field research programs that we currently support. Although we no longer bring home objects from most of our excavations, our tradition of discovery through fieldwork remains strong.

The longest running Museum expedition began in 1950 and continues to this day. The Gordian Archaeological Project has made major discoveries in central Turkey and has trained scores of archaeologists. In February, Museum members and visitors will have a unique opportunity to see The Golden Age of King Midas when it opens at the Museum. Most of the objects in this remarkable exhibition were excavated by Penn, including grave goods from Tumulus MM, the “Midas Mound.” This is the first time many of these artifacts have traveled to the United States, and when our exhibition closes, they will return to Turkey.

In addition to developing a major exhibition on Gordian, the Museum is also in the early stages of designing our new Middle East Galleries, which will showcase the story of the Penn Museum in the Middle East. These signature galleries—scheduled to open in Fall 2017, pending funding—will contain 1,000 or so objects from ancient Mesopotamia, and Iran, and from other areas of the Middle East, most of which were excavated by Penn archaeologists. The Middle East Galleries will focus on five major themes: early settlements and daily life; globalization and interaction, including trade and warfare; institutions associated with the growth of civilizations, such as religion and education; technology, referencing the production of materials like metals and textiles; and society, covering populations and group and individual identity as expressed by the material remains of ancient peoples.

We are delighted to offer you more reasons to visit the Penn Museum. Please plan on attending the Gordian exhibition. And look for more news on our new galleries in upcoming issues of Expedition.

Jessica Johnson, Senior Conservator (far right) and her assistant, Turkish student Eda Kaygusuz (second from left) show (from left to right) Julian Siggers, Amanda Mitchell-Boyask, Charles Williams, and Dan Rahimi the section of the mosaic floor that will be exhibited at the Museum.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

JULIAN SIGGERS, PH.D.
WILLIAMS DIRECTOR