The Power of Programming

As the November groundbreaking for renovations to our Coxe and Harrison Wings approaches, we have been spending an enormous amount of time and energy planning for the construction, renovations, and new galleries. As I’ve said, these will produce a new Penn Museum, a space that can welcome all of our visitors, allow them to circulate through the galleries with ease, and provide fascinating explorations of our incredible collections that engage many different audiences.

However, as we keep our Museum open during this transformation and, just as importantly, after the new galleries are complete, we need programming. Programs enliven our galleries and enlighten our visitors; they engage as many audiences as possible, and they bring our collections to life. We are tremendously grateful to have been awarded several important grants recently. I will mention a few here, then they are described in greater detail in “The New Penn Museum” and “Museum News” in this issue.

The Museum is proud to be part of the Penn Community, and we work to engage as many Penn students as possible in the incredible resources the Museum has to offer. These efforts—from the Penn Museum Fellows and Student Exhibition Internship programs to Object-Based Learning initiatives—are spearheaded by our Academic Engagement Department, established by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in 2008. We are grateful to the Mellon Foundation for their recent grant that will support our Academic Engagement staff and programs for another five years.

More broadly, the Museum strives to develop programming that engages new audiences and various learning styles. We are honored to have received an Advancement Grant from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage that will allow us to do that, by funding branding and identity work and strategic planning in public programs. This catalyst Advancement Grant—the first received by any Penn school or center—will allow us to enhance the operation of our programming—to think creatively about opportunities for creating programming.

As we prepare to open our new Middle East Galleries, followed by new Mexico & Central America and Africa Galleries, we are thrilled to announce the creation of our Global Guides: Immigrant Stories program, made possible by a grant from the Barra Foundation. This program will train immigrants and refugees to give guided tours of galleries that showcase collections from their countries of origin. For more on this exciting program and others, please see “Global Classroom” in this issue.

Finally, I would also like to announce the public opening date of our Middle East Galleries: April 21, 2018. We will be celebrating the opening of these stunning new Galleries at our biannual Penn Museum Gala on April 14; for more information, please go to www.penn.museum/gala. I look forward to sharing information on these new Galleries and other updates with you as our Building Transformation Campaign breaks ground in November.

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