Building Transformation

We are building transformation across the Museum, with new galleries, visitor amenities, and programs. The first milestone of this transformation is our Middle East Galleries, which opened to the public on April 21.

Tracing the story of the “journey to the city” in ancient Mesopotamia, these Galleries feature some of the Museum’s most iconic objects alongside many that have never before been exhibited. Situated off the Main Entrance Hall, these Galleries tell the story of humanity—and the story of the Penn Museum, as they showcase our founding collection.

Construction on the Coxe and Harrison Wings continues to move us closer to our next stage of the Building Transformation, opening next fall. The stairs that previously led to the Harrison Auditorium from behind the Visitor Services desk in the Main Entrance Hall have been removed—a dramatic change that will create a bright, welcoming new entrance experience and gallery space that visitors will see upon entering the Museum. Renovations in the former Shop area and Harrison restrooms have revealed details like vaulted ceilings and windows that were previously covered. On the third floor, adjacent to the China & Japan Gallery and Egypt (Mummies) Gallery, construction has begun on the new restrooms and elevators. In other words, as you walk through the Coxe and Harrison Wings, you can see signs of progress everywhere.

Throughout this construction, we are committed to remaining open and welcoming visitors into our galleries. While some galleries will necessarily close, as detailed in Gallery News, the majority remain open. In fact, between now and next fall, when the new Mexico & Central America Gallery and Africa Galleries will open, there will always be more than 32,000 square feet of gallery space to explore. We hope you will take the chance to enjoy these galleries while looking forward to more to come.

Above: Seen from the Harrison Auditorium lobby, the large staircase has been removed. The original 1899 staircases just inside the Kamin Main Entrance will be restored and reopened in September 2019.

Above: Inside the Harrison Auditorium, the seats have been removed and are being refurbished.
Gallery News

The Museum’s first new signature galleries of the Building Transformation project are open, with construction on the next two underway. Meanwhile, special exhibitions continue to highlight facets of our collections.

MIDDLE EAST GALLERIES

The new Middle East Galleries are now open to the public (see page 10 for more on the newest Museum signature galleries). For a few more months, visitors have the unique opportunity to explore these new galleries alongside our special exhibition, Cultures in the Crossfire: Stories from Syria and Iraq, which highlights the ongoing destruction of cultural heritage in the region. Cultures in the Crossfire is open through November 25, so visitors are encouraged to visit both galleries before then.

RIGHT: The new Middle East Galleries showcase some of the Museum’s most iconic artifacts. Among the objects on display is the Ram in the Thicket, Ur, Iraq, ca. 2450 BCE. PM object 30-12-702.

LEFT AND ABOVE: Views of the Bull-headed Lyre and Queen Puabi’s burial accoutrements excavated in Ur, Iraq, are now on display in the new Middle East Galleries.
STUDENT EXHIBITION INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Every academic year, through the Museum’s Student Exhibition Internship Program, three Penn students partner with staff from exhibitions, collections, and academic engagement to develop a small exhibition. *And So the Story Goes... Innovations in Storytelling* marks the fourth student exhibition. Curated by Braden Cordivari (C18), Fiona Jensen-Hitch (C19), and Linda Lin (C18) to reflect on Penn’s Year of Innovation, this colorful exhibition highlights 15 objects to explore storytelling tactics across time and cultures. *And So the Story Goes* is on display in the first-floor Elevator Lobby through March 17, 2019.

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

Both special exhibitions in the first-floor Merle-Smith Galleries—*Bearing Witness: Four Days in West Kingston* and *Moundbuilders: Ancient Architects of North America*—have been extended through December 2, 2019.
ANCIENT EGYPT & NUBIA GALLERIES

The Egypt (Sphinx) Gallery has closed so that we can begin conservation of monumental pieces, including the portals and columns from the palace of the pharaoh Merenptah, for the new Ancient Egypt & Nubia Galleries. As we renovate these galleries, a new special exhibition titled **Ancient Egypt: From Expedition to Exhibition** will take visitors behind the scenes to explore how Egyptian objects are prepared and presented for exhibition. Some rarely seen Egyptian artifacts including jewelry, sarcophagi, mummies, shawabtis, and more will be on display. Opening February 23, 2019, it will be in Pepper Hall, and both Upper Baugh galleries. The **Artifact Lab** will be incorporated into this broader understanding of how objects arrive at the Museum—from expedition to exhibition.

**The Artifact Lab: Conservation in Action**
will close for a short time from November 26 to prepare for inclusion in **Ancient Egypt: From Expedition to Exhibition.**

Egyptian artifacts such as these will be on display in the special *Ancient Egypt* exhibition, opening February 23. LEFT: Wooden funerary stela. PM object E2044. CENTER: Gold necklace. PM object 29-70-19. ABOVE: Limestone stela. PM object E16012. Photo by Tom Jenkins.
UPCOMING SIGNATURE GALLERIES

Our Building Transformation continues: now that the Middle East Galleries are open, our next new signature galleries will be the Africa Galleries and Mexico & Central America Gallery, with a public opening weekend on September 28, 2019. So that they can be renovated and reinstalled with new lighting, new casework, and captivating new displays drawn from the Museum’s collections, both galleries are now closed for the year of renovations. Closing this portion of the second floor necessitates new pathways, especially to the Museum Café and Shop. These pathways will be marked throughout the building, and new Pathfinding Volunteers will assist guests with navigation.

We appreciate your understanding as we make important strides toward a dramatically revitalized second floor, opening next fall. Visit The Artifact Lab to see artifacts being conserved for display in the new Mexico & Central America Gallery, before it is temporarily closed from November 26, 2018 to February 23, 2019.

ABOVE: A polychrome ceramic dish from Greater Nicoya, Nicaragua will be displayed in the new Mexico & Central America Gallery. PM object 12700.

Ceramic figures being conserved in The Artifact Lab will be displayed in the new Mexico & Central America Gallery. Photo by Raffi Berberian.
Programs and Events

As Julian Siggers points out in this issue’s Director’s Letter, public programming activates our collections and enlivens our galleries. This academic year, the Museum will continue popular ongoing programs and debut several new programs that engage a wide range of visitors—and we invite all members to participate.

The 2018–2019 “Great” Lecture Series will feature Great Stuff: Objects and Ideas from the Penn Museum. New programs invite guests to enjoy the spaces, the people, and the resources of our Museum. Look for information soon on Crawl Out Thursdays and CultureFest! For a great start to the day, come and have Coffee with a Keeper (Second Fridays, monthly, 9:30–11:00 am) or walk The Museum Mile (one-mile power walk through the Museum before opening hours, Second Thursdays, monthly, 8:30–9:30 am).

Later in the day, join us for Crafternoons at the Museum (for knitting circles, cross-stitch groups, and many others). Practice your conversational Italian, Spanish, English, Portuguese, or other languages in our Conversational Corners. Those who speak English as a second language are encouraged to attend. Visit the new Middle East Galleries and then expand your knowledge of the region with our fall adult classes and evening workshops: Ancient Spices and Modern Kitchens and Sip and Discover: Ancient Spices.

Other new programs will include evening events, cultural celebrations, community gatherings, and much more.

Visitors to our Celebration of Jamaica on June 2, part of Caribbean Heritage Month and Immigrant Heritage Month, enjoyed performances by reggae and steel pan bands, Caribbean dance workshops, crafts, food, and more. Co-sponsored by the Young Caribbean Professional Network, Team Jamaica Bickle–Philadelphia, and Jamaica Land We Love.