Dear Friends,

The start of this new year seems a good time to reflect on the exciting changes that the last brought, and those the next will witness. The opening of the Middle East Galleries last April brought our world-class collections and expertise into the light, showcasing them in vivid detail. Seeing our visitors’ response to these galleries—their engagement with the digital interactives, children’s excitement at sliding the magnifying glasses over ancient coins, the look of wonder at feeling the detail on touchable replicas, the gaze of people coming face to face with Queen Puabi for the first time—has made it clear just how much objects create connections across millennia, and how important our Building Transformation project is as we strive to share our collections in newly accessible, engaging ways.

Later this year, we will open our next new signature galleries, the Africa Galleries and Mexico & Central America Gallery, along with the new Main Entrance Hall, Gateway to Egypt, and renovated Harrison Auditorium. From the first steps visitors take inside our Kamin Main Entrance doors, the experience will be a new one.

Before then, we will open a special exhibition next month that is shaped by this particular, special moment in the Museum. Ancient Egypt: From Discovery to Display traces the process of taking objects from excavation to exhibition, giving a glimpse into the planning for our new Ancient Egypt and Nubia Galleries. (Please see page 7 in this issue for more on the upcoming Ancient Egypt exhibition, and come see it for yourselves starting February 23.)

The privilege of telling the human story in all its facets is a collaborative one. It involves our staff across every department, our students, our visitors, and our supporters. Several recent gifts, detailed in “At the Museum,” have helped us on our way to a transformed Penn Museum. I am grateful for this exceptional support, and also for the support of all of our members, who partner with us in Building Transformation. As you look through behind-the-scenes construction photos in this issue, I hope you will join me in looking forward to the new galleries, gathering places, and important pathways to come later this year.

Warm regards,

JULIAN SIGGERS, PH.D.
WILLIAMS DIRECTOR