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BOOKS FOR REVIEW should be sent to *AJA* Book Review Editors Professors Pedar Foss and Rebecca Schindler, Department of Classical Studies, DePauw University, Greencastle, IN 46135-0037, tel. 765-658-4760, fax 765-658-1044, email bookreviews@aia.bu.edu. The following are excluded from review and should not be sent: offprints; reeditions, except those with significant changes; journal volumes, except the first in a new series; monographs of very small size and scope; and books dealing with New World archaeology.

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Museum Reviews Editorial Statement

BETH COHEN

Old World archaeology has always been one of the key subjects of blockbuster exhibitions. The critical, transitional museum decade of the 1970s, for example, was ushered in by *Treasures of Tutankhamen* and ushered out by *Pompeii AD 79*, and current blockbusters have revisited these overwhelmingly popular archaeological themes. In the contemporary museum world, antiquities have figured prominently not only in traveling loan exhibitions but also in attention-getting reinstallations, architectural expansions, and even new museums. Such developments have fueled, and been fueled by, museums' growing needs for funds and thus for attracting ever-expanding audiences.

Significantly, a central role of the modern museum is the education of its diverse public. Curators of antiquities and their colleagues in other fields have thus been encouraged to organize compelling exhibitions with fairly esoteric themes that may not become blockbusters. And these exhibitions are often accompanied by detailed catalogues with color illustrations. Museum conservators' astonishing expertise in analyzing, stabilizing, packing, and transporting all manner of fragile objects safely, and in providing proper climatic conditions for their display, has facilitated an extraordinary variety of traveling exhibitions and fine installations. Museum galleries, including those in museums for archaeological sites, recontextualize ancient works that have been removed from their original context and/or archaeological findspot. Thus, accessible presentations of antiquities by museums both nourish popular culture and are essential resources that warrant the attention of archaeologists, art historians, and other scholars. However, by the late 20th century, the relationship between archaeologically concerned audiences and museums that continued to collect and display antiquities purchased on the art market without rigorously following the articles of the UNESCO Convention of 1970 in regard to cultural property had become strained.

In early modern times, collecting antiquities began innocently enough, however. Classical antiquities were already considered prestige collectibles by members of wealthy and noble families in 15th- and early 16th-century Italy, including the Medici in Florence and the Gonzaga in Mantua. Ancient coins and other artifacts were displayed alongside *naturalia* in

the Kunst- und Wunderkammern of northern Europe. Museums themselves emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries in England and on the Continent as the public gained access to and control of learned, noble, and courtly collections. Over time, however, the early delight in chance archaeological finds was supplanted by purposeful excavation, which meant the mining of archaeological sites and monuments in order to carry off and/or sell their contents. During the 19th century, universal museums established in both Europe and North America were commonly enhanced with displaced antiquities. As archaeologically rich lands became modern political states and sought to control their cultural patrimony through legislation, clandestine looting of archaeological sites and monuments to feed the art market became rampant. Meanwhile, with the rise of modern archaeology, a broad audience came to comprehend the damage wreaked by archaeological looting and the concomitant suppression of an antiquity's findspot.

Over the last few decades, significant legal action has been taken in a variety of cases involving illicit antiquities. In particular, recent landmark agreements resulting in the return of looted antiquities to Italy by North American museums and private collectors suggest we may be approaching a future in which cultural patrimony will be respected and in which museum-going can once again be a positive, life-transforming experience for archaeologists and casual visitors alike. In the museum world of the future, with limitations on collecting antiquities, loan exhibitions will surely play an ever more significant role. The *AJA* museum reviews, which follow the Archaeological Institute of America's (AIA) guidelines in regard to the publication of cultural property, ought to be considered a step toward putting the muse back in museum for an uncompromising archaeological audience.

A museum review first appeared in the *AJA* in January 2004, when Elizabeth Bartman contributed an appraisal of the reinstallation of the ancient art galleries at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. In October 2004, Editor-in-Chief Naomi J. Norman established a formal feature with Bartman as the first museum review editor. Hoping to bridge the museum, archaeological, and academic worlds, Bartman sought to make the *Journal's* readers more sensitive to the contribu-

tions of museums and curators through their exhibitions, reinstallations, and scholarly catalogues. She has relinquished the museum review editorship in order to assume the duties of first vice president of the AIA. The continuation of museum reviews as an integral *AJA* component is a testament to Bartman's vision and to her vigorous handling of this feature.

I am both honored and delighted to have been appointed as her successor. An art historian in training and orientation, I have curated or co-curated several special exhibitions of ancient art and have also edited, written, and contributed to exhibition and museum catalogues. My abiding interest in the manifold ways that individual objects in museums, entire installations, and special exhibitions may communicate with attentive audiences has been fostered as well by nearly two decades of lecturing in the galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

During my editorship, the *Journal* continues to feature reviews of selected exhibitions in Old World, including Mediterranean, archaeology. Coverage of other archaeological areas, including the New World and Asia, as well as urban archaeology, is being expanded in the free, downloadable museum reviews published on the *AJA* Web site (<http://www.ajaonline.org>). International museum developments continue to be covered, but a special emphasis is being placed on the museum scene in North America, including relevant exhibitions in university museums. The current goal is to carry one museum review in each of the *Journal's* quarterly fascicles and to post four additional reviews solely online, with both types of reviews considered full publications of the *AJA*. Review authors

include museum curators and academic scholars who have organized exhibitions, and some online reviews showcase the work of prominent specialists from a variety of archaeological fields not normally featured in the *AJA*.

The museum reviews face several serious logistical challenges. Eight reviews annually can cover but a tiny fraction of relevant exhibitions and museum displays. While our museum reviews aim to provide valuable assessments of new museums, reinstallations, and special exhibitions, they generally can only be feasibly scheduled for publication months after the openings and well after temporary exhibitions have closed. It is currently necessary to rely heavily on authors who happen to be living, working, or traveling near a relevant museum or exhibition. And real costs are involved in the publication of the many color photographs that give readers a vivid view of the exhibitions themselves.

In order to revamp the museum review feature so that it may be less constrained by the above-mentioned practical concerns, special funding is necessary. Many readers consider the museum reviews, with their full-color illustrations, to be an eye-catching highlight—in fact, the part of the *Journal* that they turn to first. I would thus like to invite fans of this feature to make contributions to the Society for the *AJA* earmarked for the museum reviews to ensure that they have a colorful and bright future.

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