

THE ORIENT EXPRESS

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Oriental Museum

No: 51

September 2023

Editor: Sue Childs
The Friends of the Oriental Museum
Oriental Museum
Elvet Hill, Durham, DH1 3TH
Tel: 0191 334 5691
Email: fomdurham@fastmail.co.uk

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

Sue Childs

Welcome to the 51st edition of the Orient Express. The Friends of the Oriental Museum has been in existence since 1985. We had our 25th anniversary in 2010 jointly with the Oriental Museum's 50th anniversary (the Museum was officially founded in 1960). The first full year covered by the Orient Express was the academic year 1986-87, the first edition coming out in September of 1987.

The purpose of the Friends of the Oriental Museum is to promote and support the Oriental Museum, and to further its development. To do this the Friends can engage in, support and co-ordinate research, publishing, education, advertising and other activities. The Council of the Friends aims to allocate funds every year to finance an activity that the Museum will benefit from. This could be purchasing or conserving an object, funding an exhibition or event, or enabling a publication.

Rachel Barclay, Senior Curator of the Museum, describes below some of the ways that the Friends have achieved this support. In future editions of the 'Orient

Express' we will describe more examples. This support is always acknowledged by the Museum.

In my opinion, this support is the key satisfaction that members of the Friends receive from their membership. I love to look at an object or see a catalogue and know that we helped to fund that; to attend an event and to hear the Friends' help being acknowledged.

Your membership also receives other benefits. The Council organises a series of events during the year. We are trying to explore ways to make these events more accessible to you, for example by holding some events during the day, moving the start of evening lectures to 6pm, running winter events on Zoom to avoid the bad weather, offering Friends-only events such as Museum tours and object handling sessions. We are making the events programme a bit more flexible to be able to respond quickly when a visitor to the Museum offers a public talk.

For events run by the Museum, there will be a number of places reserved for the Friends (available on a first come first served basis). We are looking to see if there are volunteer opportunities for the

Friends to offer individual support to the Museum, for example by assisting at the big festivals organised by the Museum.

Please tell us if there are any other ways that we can support you and provide an events programme tailored to your needs.

Warm wishes *Sue*

Last Season's Lectures

In November 2022 our joint North East Ancient Egypt Society (NEAESOC) and Friends of the Oriental Museum event was a study day exploring 'Tutankhamun: His Life and Legacy for Egyptology'. 2022 was the 100th anniversary of the discovery of Tutankhamun's Tomb. In December 2022 Ross Wilkinson, Learning and Engagement Manager at the University, told us about the educational team and the work they do. We had two Friends-only events: in January 2023 a tour of the Central Asian photography exhibition followed by a handling session with the new Uzbek ceramics acquired with the support of the Friends; in March 2023 a tour of the Museum's stores. In February 2023 Dr Qian Gao, Assistant Professor, Department of Archaeology, gave a talk on 'International cultural heritage issues related to museums, with reference to China'. We concluded our programme with a talk by Prof Kathryn Stevens, Fellow, Corpus Christi College, University of Oxford on 'The Greeks in Asia' in April 2023.

HOW THE FRIENDS HAVE SUPPORTED THE ORIENTAL MUSEUM

In the past year the Friends have supported the purchase of a new collection of contemporary ceramics from Uzbekistan and the conservation of the Akhenaten stela.

Other purchases for the Museum collections which have been funded by the Friends include:

- A highly decorated steel and gold armguard from Rajasthan now on display in the Roberts Gallery
- A late 17th century Persian tile with enamel decoration in seven different colours used by the learning team for teaching school children about the principles of Islamic art
- A contemporary Korean moon jar by the well-known potter Mun Pyung and a set of porcelain bowls by a young, emerging female ceramist Lee In Hwa. All currently on display in the Rutt Korea Gallery

Previous conservation funded by the Friends includes an important Ancient Egyptian cartonnage funerary mask, now on display in the Wolfson Gallery.

Friends have helped to fund major exhibition projects, such as the 'Daily Life in Ancient Lebanon' exhibition, enabling the Museum to fund a loan into the exhibition from the National Museum of Beirut including objects which had never been publicly displayed before.

The Friends have also supported the purchase of materials to decorate the museum for events such as the Lantern Festival and funded the printing of updates sent to Friends and other donors and supporters to keep them updated during major gallery development work.

See images at the end of this newsletter of the Moon Jar and the Funerary Mask.

ORIENTAL MUSEUM OPENING HOURS

As at September 2023

The Oriental Museum is currently open on:

- Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday between 10am to 5pm
- Saturday and Sunday between 12noon to 5pm

From April to October the Museum is open until 7pm on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month.

The MacDonald Gallery of China is currently closed to visitors until early 2024 to allow for updating the display.

Currently, entry is free.

www.dur.ac.uk/things-to-do/venues/oriental-museum/visit/

NOTICES

Subscriptions

Subscriptions are due by 1st October 2023.

- Family – £25
- Individual – £15
- Concession (individual) – £10

Subscription requests will be conducted via email and online documents, and via the post for people without an email address. Membership cards will be sent out in the post.

If you have an email address but haven't told us, please would you let us know as it helps us keep you up to date with events and changes. Saving on postage adds to the funds available for the Friends main purpose.

Notice of the Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held on Sunday 26th November 2023, 3pm, in the Education

Room at the Museum. It will be followed by refreshments and the opportunity to visit the Museum.

Matters for discussion should be submitted to the Chair on

fomdurham@fastmail.co.uk

or by post (to the address at the top of this newsletter), to be received 14 days before the meeting.

Agenda will comprise:

- Minutes of the previous meeting, and matters arising
- Chair's Report
- Treasurer's Report, independently examined accounts, and appointment of independent examiner
- Secretary's Report
- Museum Curator's report
- Election of Officers and Members of the Council
- Proposed increase in subscription rates for 2024 to 2025
- Submitted discussion topic(s)
- Any other business

Current Members of the Council

Chair – Sue Childs

Vice Chair – Anne Bothwell

Hon. Treasurer – Brian Straughan

Hon. Secretary – Jane Manley

Members – Lyn Gatland, Keith Pratt, Charlotte Spink, Ian Stewart, Malcolm Walker, Penny Wilson

Annual Meal

For this event we have chosen to try something new: an afternoon tea in the Museum on Saturday 11th May 2024, 2.30 to 5.00pm.

Mahjong Group

The Mahjong Group meets in the Museum (the Education Room) on the second Sunday of the month 2.00pm to approx. 4.00pm. New members are welcome. Mahjong sets are available and training

will be provided. The group is informal and welcoming.

Book Club - Durham University

The Library and Collections Book Club meets one Thursday a month from 5pm to 6pm in the Oriental Museum café and is free to join.

The book is decided month by month as we fit around what our members are enjoying. We read books inspired by the museum, art, archive and special collections. As well as literature surrounding our temporary exhibitions.

Occasionally, we also offer sessions for members to explore the collections, with handling sessions, tours and talks.

The Book Club appeals to people who want new experiences, enjoy conversations about the literature, want the chance to learn about the collections at Durham University, and the opportunity to meet new people in and around Durham.

To join the mailing list, Friends of the Oriental Museum can email Ross Wilkinson (Learning and Engagement Manager) directly to be added to the mailing list or for more information at ross.wilkinson@durham.ac.uk

FRIENDS EVENTS PROGRAMME 2023 to 2024

Usually evening lectures are held in Room 009, Elvet Hill House (next door to the Oriental Museum) unless otherwise stated.

Wednesday 25th October 2023, 6pm, Elvet Hill House

Gods & Things: Religious Objects in Museums

Crispin Paine MA FMA FSA; Co-Chair of the Religion, Collections & Heritage Group

North East Ancient Egypt Society (NEAESOC) / Friends of the Oriental Museum joint event

Date and details to be announced

Wednesday 8th November 2023, 6pm,

Elvet Hill House

Diwali – as I know it

Tanju Sen, Assistant Principal (Colleges), Student Support and Wellbeing Directorate, Durham University

Sunday 26th November 2023, 3pm, in the Museum

AGM

Monday 11th December 2023, 2pm to 4pm in the Museum

Collection handling followed by mince pies

Further details to be announced

January 2024

Talk via Zoom

Details to be announced

February 2024

Talk via Zoom

Details to be announced

Wednesday 6th March 2024, 6pm, Elvet Hill House

The Material Cultures and Rituals of Tea in Asia

Xinyi Chi, Department of History, and Dr Ran Zhang, Department of Archaeology, Durham University

Saturday 11th May 2024, 2.30pm to 5.00pm, in the Museum

Afternoon Tea

If you have any queries please contact Sue Childs at:

fomdurham@fastmail.co.uk

ORIENTAL MUSEUM CURATOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2022 to 2023

Rachel Barclay, Senior Curator

2022/23 has been a wonderful year for the Oriental Museum. Having spent 2021/22 emerging from Covid, we have not 'gone back to normal'; there is no going back. If I had to sum up this year, it has been about merging the changes and learning brought about by Covid with the things we have all missed to create something new and exciting.

Visitor numbers for 2022/23 were 24,192, 10,000 more than the previous year's Covid restricted numbers. This included more than 3,000 school children coming on organised visits. Not quite back up to our pre-Covid numbers, but heading in the right direction.

The events programme is back in full swing. Regular clubs like Little Dragons, Creative Age and DAX (Durham Archaeology Explorers) are fully booked. In fact, the second Little Dragons session each Wednesday morning is now a permanent fixture to keep up with demand from local families.

In November we celebrated the 10th anniversary of our annual Diwali celebrations working with our local and student Hindu and Sikh communities. This, together with Lantern Festival in February, were sell out events. Holi Festival in March was hit by snow and had to be scaled back to an indoor event. Nevertheless, more than 300 people braved the cold weather to join us in welcoming (or wishing for?) the arrival of Spring.

New this year was an event organised with Durham University Islamic Society to celebrate Eid-al-Fitr. More than 150 people attended for a programme that included readings from the Qur'an, art

activities and a lot of food. Following a smaller scale event for Eid al-Adha later in the year, we hope to build on the links we have made with the Society to develop this area of work in the coming years and deepen our links with our local Muslim community.

The exhibition programme for this year opened with two exhibitions created in collaboration with Durham University academics. "There was light": Amunhotep III and his Dazzling Age', used the Oriental Museum collections to tell the story of Tutankhamun and his family, particularly his father and grandfather, and the courtiers who surrounded them. I was delighted to work with Dr Penny Wilson, Associate Professor in the Archaeology Department here at Durham, to create this exhibition. Penny makes extensive use of the Oriental Museum collections in all her teaching. She is also a great supporter of the Friends. It was a privilege to work with her on an exhibition that combined some of our most well-known Egyptian objects and pieces never displayed before.

Central to the exhibition was the display of the stela of Akhenaten. The Friends supported the conservation and mounting of this important piece so that it could be shared for the first time since it was excavated in the 1960s. It has now been placed on permanent display in the Thacker Gallery of Ancient Egypt. A wonderful legacy from the project, this work was funded by the Friends as a tribute to Dr Ralph Austin.

Alongside "There was light" we displayed 'Guardians of the Silk Road's Heritage: Women of the mountains of Central Asia'. Gill Ramsay worked on this exhibition with Dr Mike Crang, from Durham's Geography Department, together with his collaborators at the University of Central Asia and the NGO Laajverd.

This exhibition showcased the work of professional Central Asian artists and craftswomen who are working to preserve and transfer traditional knowledge and skills, adapting them for new audiences and popularising Central Asian folk art. Examples of textile work were exhibited alongside photographs of the women practicing a variety of traditional craft skills, captured during a research project, part of the Resilient Silk Route Heritage Network.

Outside the Oriental Museum gallery space, we collaborated with Prof Christina Riggs, of Durham's History Department, on a new version of her exhibition 'Photographing Tutankhamun' which explores how photography turned Tutankhamun into a global sensation. This was the first exhibition to make use of our new 'outdoor art gallery' located in the square in front of the Bill Bryson Library. This new display space is open and accessible to everyone 24 hours a day.

Within our Japan Gallery, we created space for 'Contemporary Wood-carved Netsuke', a touring exhibition from the Japan Foundation. The Oriental Museum was the only UK venue for this popular exhibition which showcased the work of modern netsuke carvers working in wood. The beauty of the carving and the incredible skill of the carvers was greatly admired by our visitors.

This summer we have taken a rather different focus on Japan, hosting 'Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki', an exhibition created in collaboration with the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, highlighting the devastation wreaked by the atomic bombings of 1945. We were honoured to welcome His Excellency Hayashi Hajime, Japanese Ambassador to the UK, and Mr Takigawa, Director of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, to the opening. Their moving speeches on the

opening night have been echoed by the feedback from visitors to the exhibition over the summer. The coincidence of the release of the Oppenheimer film and the visit of the G7 world leaders to Hiroshima this summer has helped to boost visitor interest in the exhibition. The moving nature of the exhibition has been matched by the accompanying events programme which included the incredibly moving testimony of survivor Kono Kiyomo, via a live stream from Japan. I have worked on many exhibitions over the course of my career, and I can honestly say that this one has been one of the most difficult and most worthwhile.

In the permanent galleries, we have taken the opportunities created by our temporary exhibition programme to make several changes in the permanent displays. Some key objects from the Egyptian collection were included in "There was Light". This offered the opportunity to make some changes in the both the Wolfson and Thacker Galleries, bringing out new objects and reviewing both the displays and our school sessions taught in these galleries. Thanks must also go to Dr Penny Wilson for the most spectacular new addition to the Wolfson Gallery, a 19th century plaster cast of a section of relief from the temple of Kom Ombo. Previously part of the collections at the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow University, Penny was responsible for bringing the plaster cast to Durham. It will be enormously useful to the Learning team for teaching and is also fast becoming a favourite with visitors.

Similarly, we had taken out the existing ceramic displays in the Japan Gallery to make space for the Netsuke exhibition. Rather than simply put back the old displays, we used the opportunity to create a new temporary display highlighting contemporary Japanese culture. This bright, colourful exhibition has proved

very popular with visitors who are interested in Japanese film, gaming and kawaii culture.

The next major project in the permanent galleries is the redisplay of the MacDonald Gallery of China. The current gallery was opened in 2011. Research in Chinese art and archaeology over the last decade has transformed our understanding of some parts of the collection. The arrival of Dr Qin Cao as Curator of Chinese Collections in September 2022 provided the perfect opportunity to reconsider this gallery. Qin has been working over the last year to get to know the collections and undertake research with the support of a range of colleagues in the UK and China. As I write, work has begun to deinstall the old ceramic displays along the back wall of the gallery so that the first phase of the redisplay can take place. We are aiming to redisplay the ceramics during this academic year and then the other half of the gallery during 2024/25. So that the Learning Team can continue to offer our popular Shang dynasty session, we have also made changes in the Silk Roads gallery to incorporate more Chinese objects while the MacDonald gallery is closed.

Away from the galleries, work has continued to audit and repack all the stored collections. Intern Hannah Tidyman moved to a new role with the Art Collection team early in this year after doing amazing work on the audit over the previous year. Work was able to continue as we were very fortunate to welcome Carolyn Waterworth as a new permanent Collections Assistant. Carolyn brings extensive experience working in other collections. She has proved to be an invaluable member of the team, taking responsibility for the daily movement of objects in and out of storage to support teaching and research and supporting our volunteers, interns and researchers.

Carolyn's support has been essential as demand to use the collections for teaching continues to grow. The University is working hard to internationalise the curriculum. New staff are being appointed across a range of departments whose teaching and research focus falls within our collecting area. Many of these academics are making use of the Oriental Museum collections. More than 20 different modules now use the Oriental Museum collections to support their teaching and more than 30 more use the Oriental Museum galleries, classrooms and collections alongside the other University venues and collections.

Research use of the collections has returned to pre-Covid levels, with staff supporting 133 different enquiries from countries worldwide, this year including Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Nepal, New Zealand, People's Republic of China, Spain, Taiwan and the USA.

The main focus for our volunteer programme has continued to be supporting students who need to gain experience as part of their course work. However, we have also been able to restart some of our wider volunteering activities, welcoming back our amazing textile conservation group and some of our other long-term volunteers from within the wider community. I know that this an area that several Friends have expressed an interest in. I will be working with colleagues and members of the Friends Council this year to try to open up opportunities for Friends to get more involved if they wish to.

One major personal victory for me this year was the launch of the new website for all the University's venues and collections: www.durham.ac.uk/things-to-do As one of the project leads, I have been working on this for more than three years and so it was somewhat ironic that it went live when I

was away working on a university project in Nepal.

The new website is part of a wider overhaul of the whole Durham University website. The aim of 'Things to do' is to create a part of the University website that is aimed at visitors, families, schools and Friends, rather than at our students and staff. Content focused on university teaching and research support has been moved onto the Library website. The new site has been designed based on feedback from a range of users and is designed to work on mobile phones and tablets. As with any new IT project, there have been some teething problems, but we are getting to grips with the site now and I hope that we can continue to develop it over the coming years.

During Covid we began to explore the world of online exhibitions, allowing us to share our collections with a much wider audience worldwide. You can find all of these exhibitions via the What's on section of the new website www.durham.ac.uk/things-to-do/whats-on/. This year we have added 'Enchanted Treasures: Russian Folk Art in the Kirill Sokolov Collection', an exhibition created by our MA Museum and Artefact Studies Students. You can see this alongside the previous MA student exhibition focused on Jericho, and exhibitions on the Malcolm MacDonald Collections and the work of Sir John Marshall at Taxila.

I was not in Durham for the launch of the new website as Craig and I were able to return to Tilaurakot in Nepal for the first time since 2019. We were delighted to be able to continue work in the Kapilavastu Museum, creating new displays focused on the archaeological excavations at the site of the childhood home of the Buddha being undertaken by the Durham University team led by Prof Robin Conningham.

Assistant Curator, Gillian Ramsay, travelled to Malaysia and Singapore in October 2022 to meet with curators and restart our joint research into the Malcolm MacDonald Collections that had paused during the pandemic. Building on the success of Gill's visit, Durham University signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Malaya. Gill's outstanding contribution was recognised when she won the Professional Services Award for international work in the University's first Global Week in March 2023. We have since welcomed one of the curators from the National University of Singapore to Durham and Gill will be returning to Southeast Asia this autumn to begin work on digitising the shared collection.

Shortly after joining us Qin published her book, 'Weapons in Late Shang (C.1250-1050BCE) China: beyond typology and ritual'. The quality of her research was recognised when she was invited to speak at a conference at the Smithsonian Museum in June. This October she will travel to Hong Kong to speak at an international conference of Chinese collection curators. Shortly afterwards, I will travel to Japan take up a visiting fellowship at the National Museum of Japanese History.

New acquisitions for the collections this year reflect the work we have been doing at home and overseas and our commitment to collect contemporary material as well as historic objects. Gill used her trip to Singapore and Malaysia to undertake some contemporary collecting. Qin has been making contact with emerging Chinese artists to acquire new pieces for the MacDonald gallery. Durham University has supported these projects with funding. The University has also supported us to acquire a work by the Singh Twins, 'Indigo: the Colour of India', part of the Twins amazing 'Slaves of Fashion' series,

and the purchase of material that reflects the Women.Life.Freedom protests that have taken place across Iran over the year.

The coming year is already shaping up to be as exciting as the last. I look forward to welcoming the Friends to our exhibitions and events.

As always, I must finish by thanking Sue and the rest of the Council and all of you for your continuing support. My thanks on behalf of the whole Oriental Museum team.

ORIENTAL MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS 2023 to 2024

Rachel Barclay, Senior Curator

Voices: Contemporary Art and Design from the Middle East and North Africa

29th September 2023 to 12 May 2024

Preview 28th September 2023

This exhibition highlights recent acquisitions to the Oriental Museum by emerging contemporary artists from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The exhibition focuses on the core themes of conflict and protest, inspired by the past, and identity. Artists from across the MENA region will be represented, many of whom have never exhibited in the UK before. To accompany the exhibition there will be a series of artist talks and workshops.

Everest 24 (title to be confirmed)

24 May 2024 to 15th September 2024

Preview 23rd May 2024

A collaboration with artist Stephen Livingstone, the trustees of the Bentley Beetham Trust and the local Nepali and Tibetan communities. This exhibition will use the photographic archive captured by local teacher Bentley Beetham during the 1924 expedition to Mount Everest as a starting point for new art works and community input.

Several other exhibitions and events related to the 1924 expedition will be held throughout the country, but this exhibition will be the only one able to show the story from the beginning of the journey to the team's return to India following the disappearance of Andrew Irving and George Mallory together with an emphasis on previous largely ignored contributions of Nepali members of the expedition.

MA Museum and Artefact Studies student exhibition

June 2024 to September 2024

Preview date to be confirmed

This year's MA students will be focusing on the theme of toys and games. The students will be given access to the whole collection including ancient Egyptian gaming pieces, traditional Russian folk toys, Japanese dolls and intricately carved Indian and Chinese ivory chess pieces.

Major events

This year we will be trialling a new system of special, reserved tickets for Friends so that you can ensure you don't miss out on our most popular events. Dates that have been confirmed are:

- 14th November 2023 – Diwali special late night opening
- 24th February 2024 – Lantern Festival special late night opening
- 23rd March 2024 – Holi Festival
- 18th May 2024 – Buddha's birthday

To check the start and end date of exhibitions before you visit please consult the Museum's website

www.durham.ac.uk/things-to-do/venues/oriental-museum/whats-on/

or ring the Museum on 0191 334 5691

Korean Moon Jar

purchase funded by the Friends



Ancient Egyptian Cartonnage Funerary Mask

conservation funded by the Friends

