McKissick Newsletter - Spring 1988

McKissick Museum--University of South Carolina

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Ever since Napoleon and his grand army descended upon the Nile, the Western World has been entranced with the power and splendor of the great kingdoms of the Pharaohs. Although many are familiar with the drama of spectacular excavations, the cracking of the linguistic mysteries of the Rosetta Stone, and Carter's discovery of the golden treasures from the the tomb of Tutankhamon, the complete story of ancient Egypt has yet to be learned.

No major exhibition has brought to light the story of an earlier time—the Egypt before and during the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt in about 3100 B.C.

"The First Egyptians," a joint exhibition project undertaken by the University of South Carolina's McKissick Museum and the Earth Sciences and Resources Institute, is directed toward providing a fuller understanding of pre-Pharaonic Egypt and modern archaeology methods.

The exhibition focuses primarily on the cultural facets of a primitive society composed of small chiefdoms as it developed into the world's first nation state. While past exhibitions have emphasized the Pharaohs' tremendous wealth, "The First Egyptians" examines the early social, economic, and environmental factors that interacted to produce both that wealth and a societal structure dependent on relative wealth. A secondary theme of the exhibition illustrates the procedures of the archaeologists, who through persistence, expertise and modern excavation techniques, have recovered the significant information that is featured in this exhibition.

This recently discovered information will reveal some of the most important cultural and artistic endeavors in the course of human history—the origins of towns, cities, and centralized states; kingships; monumental architecture; the advent of pottery for decorative purposes; the beginning of a written language; arts and crafts designed specifically as grave goods for the elite; and a system of values and beliefs that nourished the roots of ancient Egyptian culture a thousand years before the first Pharaoh.

Most of the 130 artifacts featured in the exhibition have never before been displayed in the United States. Careful consideration was taken in choosing the most appropriate examples of Egyptian artifacts to demonstrate the aesthetic skills of the early artists and craftsmen as well as to illustrate the exhibition's many cultural themes. The objects have been chosen from the impressive art and historical collections of The Boston Museum of Fine Arts, The Brooklyn Museum, The Charleston Museum, The Detroit Institute of Art, The Florence Museum (South Carolina), The Oriental Institute (Chicago), The Petrie Museum (University College London), and The University Museum of Pennsylvania.
The majority of artifacts to be presented in "The First Egyptians" were excavated from ancient tombs along the Nile River. These artifacts illustrate the importance the Egyptians placed on burial rituals and the beginning of a "mortuary cult," which was to play such a critical role in Egyptian politics. It was during the Predynastic period (5500-3100 B.C.) that Egyptians developed social hierarchies symbolized by the quantity and value of burial goods along with the increasingly complex structures of the tombs.

Among the spectacular array of objects chosen for the exhibition, several deserve special notice. Artifacts representing kings from the first and second dynasties include a gold-handled knife impressed with the banner of Pharaoh Djoser and limestone bowls inscribed with names of kings. A green faience amulet carved to resemble an ape, and beautifully crafted jewelry made from ivory, shell, copper, faience and bone, contribute to the aesthetic component of the exhibition. Several exquisitely carved stone and hand-thrown vases prove that the ancient craftsmen were extremely well skilled in stone and earthenware. From the "Main Deposit" at Hierakonpolis, discovered at the turn of the century, comes an assortment of marble alabaster bowls, and sculpted animal figures. Other intriguing works include an earthenware bowl sitting on two "human" feet, an unusual black-topped brown pot in the form of a fish, and a stylized ivory woman statuette. All of the objects in the exhibition will be presented together for the first time.

"The First Egyptians" is a multi-faceted exhibition that will include lecture series, a catalogue, educational programs and other special events that will help to make the exhibition entertaining and comprehensible for all ages. After its showing at McKissick Museum, the exhibition will travel to five nationally recognized museums: The Milwaukee Public Museum, The Denver Museum of Natural History, The Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, and the Smithsonian Institution. Sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, "The First Egyptians" will open at McKissick Museum on April 8, 1988.

Sidney Guberman
January 29 - March 13

The status of abstract painting in America today is much as it was in the 1930s. In the current rush to embrace a socially "relevant" art with a specific "humanistic" content, a majority of abstract is overlooked, just as the art of Stuart Davis, David Smith and Arshile Gorky was deemed "escapist" by the rhetoric of Thomas Hart Benton, Grant Wood and John Stuart Curry 50 years ago. Then, as now, the power of abstract art to speak through the language of paint itself—deeply humanistic language, by definition—is manifestly clear, but not widely acknowledged.

The painting of Sidney Guberman asserts the power of abstract. Since he gave up architecture in 1968 to become a full-time painter, his art has been characterized by exuberant color, distinctive composition, and the sure stamp of its underlying form and composition. He is not embarrassed to use these terms—form and composition—and in this sense he is what some would call an "old-fashioned" painter. He is surely aware and proud of his lineage in Matisse, Hofmann and Stella. He seeks an art that is demanding and engaging, but he does not mind "if a piece were to be called beautiful," a description that to many these days is anathema.

Guberman explores the possibilities inherent in the depth and richness, and even the mystery (his titles come from stories by D.H. Lawrence), that emanate from the dynamics of his color and shapes. He juggles the contradictions of painting—the play and tension between dark and light, linear and painterly (neat and messy), movement and stasis, change and continuity, scale and size, which are all ever-changing to our perception. Guberman still prefers the gestural, freehand curves created by the stroke of the fully extended arm, which comes out of the tradition of Matisse and Pollock. Also important to him has been the example of the curvilinear intricacy of the architectural ornament by Louis Sullivan, one of America's great masters, who has always intrigued Guberman.

Guberman's recent work has been consistently his best. In earlier work he tended to overcrowd the surface, fearing that "less is a bore." He has learned to resist this, to see in the black shapes, for example, a richness of hue and depth of experience that Matisse, Mondrian and Patric Henry Bruce had assimilated by a similar process of trial and error in the early years of this century. Guberman has, it seems to me, whole worlds yet to explore, worlds where the complexity and the joy of painting—and of life itself—are made abundantly clear. It is on these private explorations of paint that the future and the continued health of art today ultimately depends.

— William Agee
February

Above the Fall Line: Folk Art of the Southern Piedmont
Through June 30, 1989

The objects in this exhibition are taken from all facets of the Southern inland experience. Life in the Southern Piedmont is characterized by the influence of a number of ethnic traditions on the local craftsmanship that produces these pieces of folk art. This exhibition was funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Sidney Guberman, "Vert Fonce," 1987

Photograph by Reis Birdwhistell

Dramatic works by a leading painter in the contemporary art scene.

Nina Freifeld
February 14 through March 27

Expressive woodcuts of women artists, in recognition of Women's History Month.

"Those Amazing Men and Their Flying Machines"
Through March 15, 1988

Through Movietone News footage, photographs and supplementary objects, this exhibition traces the evolution of man's fascination with flight during the past century. Highlights include film of Charles Lindbergh, Jimmy Doolittle and the dirigible "Los Angeles."

Registration Opens for Summer Consortium
March 15

Zoo/Museum Summer Consortium opens registration on this date. See program details in this calendar.

McKissick Midday Concert Series
March 17, 24, 31

Traditional music presented Thursdays at 12:30 p.m. on the Russell House Courtyard stage.

McKissick Mornings
March 22 & 29, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Above the Fall Line - the natural resources and the early people of the Piedmont area will be discussed.

USC Annual Student Art Competition 1988
March 25 through April 24

A competitive exhibition open to students enrolled within the nine campus University system. Sponsored by the Department of Art, USC, Columbia.
March

Family Workshops in Conjunction with Above the Fall Line
March 26, 10 a.m. - noon
Herbs (Adults) - Participants will look at old recipes from the Piedmont area and at how the growing and use of certain herbs has continued. Recipes, starter plants and food/drink samples will be offered.

Pottery (Children) - Pottery dating back to the colonial period will be studied and original pieces made and decorated by the participants. Ages 8 to 11.

Register during the week of March 14-18 by phoning 777-7251. Each workshop has a fee of $7.50 and is limited to 20 participants.

Conference on Access to Sweetgrass
March 26 at 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Conference at the Charleston Museum with dialogue between botanists, basket makers, policy makers and developers.

USC Master of Fine Arts Candidates 1988
April 1 through May 3
Works by four graduating MFA students with each hosting a seven-day solo show followed by a five-day group exhibition.
April 1-7: Kit Loney
April 8-14: William Renkle
April 15-21: Rebecca Des Marais
April 22-28: Gloria Clemmenson
April 29-May 3: Group Exhibition

McKissick Mornings
April 5, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.
Movietone News & the History of Aviation a discussion of Columbia's role in World War II aviation training.

McKissick Midday Concert Series
April 7, 14, 21
Traditional music presented Thursdays at 12:30 p.m. on the Russell House Courtyard stage.

The First Egyptians
April 8 - June 19
The most recent archeological discoveries about ancient Egypt are presented with 130 artifacts recovered over the past century to recreate the roots of Egyptian civilization. Three dimensional models of ancient buildings and photographs of the University of South Carolina's archeological dig at Hierakonpolis help tell the story of Egyptian culture at the time of the first Pharaoh.

"The First Egyptians" Lecture Series
April 10, at 3 p.m., Gambrell 153
A double feature will celebrate the opening of "The First Egyptians" exhibition. Dr. Michael A. Hoffman, co-curator of the exhibition, and Dr. Zahi Hawass of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization will speak on "Egypt Before the Pharaohs" and "Pyramids, Sphinxes, and Egyptian Archaeology." On three Sundays, April

April

17, 24 and May 1, other dynamic speakers will continue the series with individual presentations: Dr. Fekri A. Hassan will speak on "Dessert and Nile: The Environment of Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt;" Dr. David O'Connor will speak on "The Rise of the Pharaohs;" and Dr. Walter A. Fairservis will speak on "The Place of Egypt Among the World's Early Civilizations." Call the Museum for further information.

McKissick Mornings
April 12 & 19, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Lectures focusing on Hierakonpolis discoveries.

Family Day at McKissick
April 16, at 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Bring the family and spend the day at McKissick. There will be guided tours, a lecture and children's programs. Tours of "The First Egyptians" and "Above the Fall Line" will be offered at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. A lecture on archaeology at Hierakonpolis will be presented. Children's programs on Egyptian culture will run concurrently. They will explore hieroglyphs, Egyptian animals in art and Egyptian folk tales.

Decorated jar, Gerzean, The Petrie Museum, University College London (UC 10702)

April

USC Student Art Exhibition

Dan Smith, "Aries"

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Decorated jar, Gerzean, The Petrie Museum, University College London (UC 10702)
The Department of Art at the University of South Carolina, with the support of McKissick Museum, sponsors a competitive art exhibition each year, open to all undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at any USC campus. The exhibition owes its existence to Professor Harry Hansen of the Department of Art who acknowledged the need for such an exhibition in 1976 and helped nurture it in the early years. The exhibition is run and organized by a committee of faculty and students who raise money for awards, publicize the show and sponsor a reception and awards ceremony. For the past four years, the committee has been chaired by Associate Professor Gunars Strazdins.

The exhibition showcases the excellent work done by students seeking a degree in the visual arts as well as the efforts of talented students from other disciplines. Although most of the entries over the years have come from the Columbia campus, the exhibition is beginning to attract participants from other USC campuses as well. While the exhibition encourages alternative art formats, most of the entries fall within the traditional categories of drawing, printmaking, photography, painting, sculpture, ceramics, glassblowing, fibers and metalsmithing. The competition attracts about 200 entries, with average exhibitions consisting of approximately 50 works. In the past, students have been limited to two entries. This year the limit has been extended to three and, for the first time, a small entry fee is being assessed ($2.00 per entry) to help pay for an illustrated catalogue.

The exhibition has received strong financial support from the community. Each year the committee seeks funds for awards from private individuals and businesses as well as encouraging corporations to buy works for their collections. Recently, works have been purchased by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of South Carolina, South Carolina National Bank, Chernoff/Silver & Associates and GMK, Incorporated. The awards and purchases for the student exhibition surpass those of many national competitive exhibitions. Last year, with a generous contribution by South Carolina Electric & Gas, as well as support from the Dean's Office of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the exhibition was documented for the first time by a partially illustrated catalogue. Each student who entered the exhibition received a copy and additional copies were distributed widely within the state and selected colleges and universities regionally.

The jurors for the exhibition are selected from outside the University and have included artists, museum curators, gallery directors and educators. This year the exhibition committee has invited three outstanding alumni of the M.F.A. program at the Department of Art to jury the exhibition. All three have been very active in the arts since receiving their degrees in 1980. Bill Dooley is the Gallery Manager in the Visual Arts Department of the Spirit Square Center for the Arts in Charlotte, North Carolina. Jean Galagher was formerly the Head of

Jonathan Scolo, "Jumping with Life Like Fish Gamboling in the Water"
Photograph by Gunars Strazdins

support from the Department of Art at Converse College and Tom Stanley is the Director of the Waterworks Center for the Visual Arts in Salisbury, North Carolina. Juried exhibitions are an important testing ground for many artists beginning their professional careers. For undergraduates in particular, the USC Student Art Exhibition offers an initial opportunity to exhibit work professionally within a museum setting. The competition also introduces students to the rewards and caprices of the jurying system. In the past, exhibitions have ranged from small, tightly edited curatorial statements to large, broadly representative selections.

This year's reception is scheduled to start at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, March 25, with awards to be announced at 5 p.m. Everyone is cordially invited.
Museum Acquires Significant Collection of Catawba Indian Pottery

McKissick Museum is gaining national recognition for its outstanding permanent collection of Catawba Indian pottery, the largest and finest such collection in the country. Recently, the collection was further enhanced when the Museum acquired a collection from the family of the late Mrs. James Hamilton of Chester, South Carolina.

Mrs. Hamilton served as a house mother at Winthrop College in Rock Hill, South Carolina from 1917 until the 1940s. During the early 20th century, Catawba women potters made and sold their pottery at the gates to the main gallery at the college. It appears that Mrs. Hamilton purchased these pieces during the early years she spent at Winthrop.

The Hamilton collection is representative of the type of wares made by Catawba potters in the early 20th century. Of particular interest is a pair of candlestick holders and a large vase with handles. Both pieces illustrate mastery of pottery-making techniques that are still being used by today's Catawba potters. The pottery is built by hand using the coiling technique and then rubbed smooth with a stone. Firing is done outdoors with an open fire where the pieces are covered with hot coals and smother fired, creating the mottled effect of color on the pieces.

A small number of Catawba Indian pottery pieces are currently on view in "Above the Fall Line: Folk Art of the Southern Piedmont." The rest of the permanent collection is made available to interested researchers by appointment.

McKissick Membership

The Museum Membership Program, designed to encourage more involvement in the activities and events available through McKissick Museum, is now underway. Members receive numerous benefits, including the quarterly museum calendar of exhibitions and events; invitations to "members only" receptions; a 25% discount on museum catalogues, posters and other items; reduced rates on fee-charged workshops, trips and children's programs; and a discount on admission to Riverbanks Zoo.

By accepting this invitation to become a McKissick Museum Member, you will demonstrate your support of our commitment to preserve the rich heritage of the University of South Carolina and our state. By becoming a member now, you will be able to take advantage of all the special benefits during "The First Egyptians" exhibition in April. If you wish to join us, return the membership form provided in this calendar issue for your convenience.

McKissick looks forward to welcoming you as a member.

McKissick Museum Membership Application

Please accept me as a member of McKissick Museum in the category checked below:

- $5 Student Membership
- $10 Alumni, Faculty or Staff Single Membership
- $15 Single Membership
- $25 Family Membership
- $100 & up Patron Membership
- $250 & up Corporate Membership

Name ____________________________
Address ______________________________________
City __________ State ______
Zip ______ Phone ______

Enclosed is my check made payable to McKissick Museum.
Amount enclosed: ________________________

Mail to: McKissick Museum
Membership Program
University of South Carolina
Columbia, S.C. 29208

As a non-revenue producing effort, all support received through the Membership Program will be channeled back into the program. Membership fees are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.
Good Times in the Summertime

Last summer, McKissick Museum, Historic Columbia, Columbia Museum, the Governor's Mansion and Riverbanks Zoo initiated a joint summer program for children. Due to the positive community response to this innovative and diverse program, McKissick will again participate in such a consortium to present week-long programs for children ages 8, 9 and 10. The programs will run during the weeks of June 6 and June 13. Children will spend a day (8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.) at each of five sites around the city. Enrollment will open on March 15 on a first come, first served basis. The fee will be $100 per week; $25 is payable with registration and $75 on the first day. All checks are to be made out to the Riverbanks Zoo. More details and registration forms will be available in March.

There will also be morning programs at McKissick the weeks of June 20, June 27, July 11 and July 18. Details about these programs will be published in the next issue of the McKissick calendar.