

ARTwords

SUMMER 2013 Volume 18 | Number 3



DAVID OWSLEY
MUSEUM OF ART

BALL
STATE
UNIVERSITY

David Owsley Museum of Art

Serving East Central Indiana since 1936

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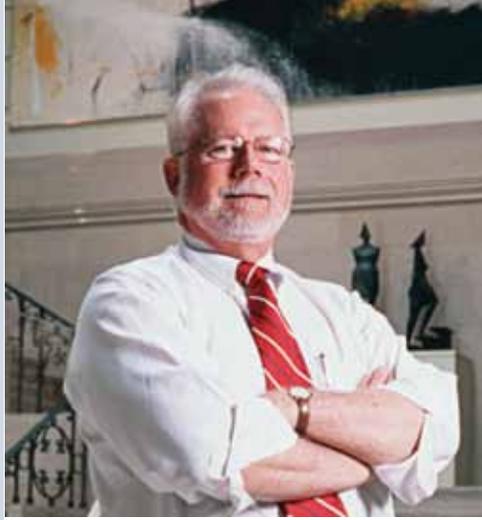
Editor | Carl Schafer
Writer | Carmen Siering
Design | Marin & Marin

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COVER (Detail)

FULL IMAGE (page 6):

A Red Sandstone Door Relief
9th/10th century
Unidentified Indian Craftsman
Madhya Pradesh or Rajasthan
David T. Owsley Collection



From the Director

It was nearly ten years ago that we started thinking idealistically about what the David Owsley Museum of Art might become. This was not too long after a major retrofit of the Fine Arts Building added 10,000 square feet to the museum's exhibition galleries. Former Director Alain Joyaux crafted the chronological and geographical installation of the collection that has since been enhanced, maintained, and photographed. Now about fifteen percent of this visual record has become available online through the Ball State

University Library's Digital Media Repository. This electronic access has given notice of the collection worldwide, and in the past decade we have lent works of art to important temporary exhibitions in Paris and Lyon, France; Florence, Italy; Montreal; Mexico City; New York; Boston; Philadelphia; Chicago; and San Francisco. This museum does indeed have a worldwide audience.

Our current re-visioning began with a planning process in 2003 that identified two strategic issues: "Broadest Possible Awareness of the Museum" and "Accessibility of the Museum's Collection." These two issues have guided our progress for the past decade, leading up to a major reorganization of the collection. World cultures are presented with much greater clarity, with dedicated galleries for South Asian, Chinese, and Japanese art; Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican and South American and Native American art; and the arts of Africa and of the Pacific Islands.

When David Owsley shared his intention to give and/or bequeath the major part of his collection to the museum, it began a reevaluation of the museum's space. The addition of another 10,000 square feet in the east and west wings of the Fine Arts Building has nearly doubled our gallery space, and all of it is dedicated to exhibition of the collection.

Once the university had committed to the expansion of the museum and we had raised the money privately to pay for it, we began to scrutinize the collection. We examined each object on exhibit and in storage. We scrutinized the catalogue, corrected the description when necessary, and usually expanded the description with new information. The process revealed the occasional forgotten masterpiece and the occasional mistaken catalog information. We herded this initial selection of about 600 objects into loose-leaf notebooks, then shared the process with the whole staff to refine the selection downwards to about 500. This convinced us that a chronological installation of the ancient Chinese civilizations made sense, just as several thematic installations of the African works was better suited to that part of the collection.

With Charles Froom, consultant designer, we then set out to prove that we had space to fit each object included in the order intended. It worked, but we needed to add, subtract, or rearrange objects until we reached nirvana. Mount makers Aaron Nicholson and Brose Partington stepped in to understand the intentions of curator and designer, and how to ensure both the advantage and security of each object with uniquely fabricated mounts. Tania Said, Director of Education, made notes about the narratives and the dialogues. She then began testing various fonts, type sizes, and juxtapositions for labels and interpretive text with the objects. Production of over 500 labels in the highly specialized vocabulary and syntax of art historians, coaxed into readable English, is no small feat. Specialist scholars, such as Dr. Patricia Gilson, have assisted this process narrative.

This coming summer, as we begin reassembling the collection as it has never been seen before, we are humbled before the idea of the universal and indomitable creativity of mankind from roughly 5,500 B.C.E. to the present.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Peter Blume".

Peter Blume

Mount Makers...

Brose Partington & Aaron Nicholson

It is commonly understood that art is made to be seen, shared, and put on view. But tucked away in the lower levels of the David Owsley Museum of Art is a workshop where several hundred small, very specialized metal mounts are being constructed. If all goes well, no one will ever take notice of these tiny works of art, even though they play a crucial role in the museum collection.

In October 2012, Brose Partington and Aaron Nicholson set up a studio in what had been the museum's woodshop. Here they began fabricating more than 500 metal mounts to secure and display the works of art that will be installed in the new galleries.

Mounts serve two purposes, says Partington. First, they serve as a kind of "seat belt" for the object, helping secure it to a wall, deck, or other structure. Second, mounts display the object in the exhibit. The challenge for mount makers is to design a mount that can display the object securely, allowing it to be seen from its best angle, while remaining largely invisible.

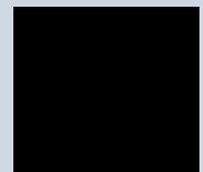
"What we're after is for the mount be deemphasized in order to emphasize the object," says Associate Director Carl Schafer. "Otherwise the mount will change the way you understand the art."

Every mount is a distinctive work, say Partington and Nicholson. There is no easy way to construct multiple mounts, even for a series of related objects like coins or masks.

"The design of each mount is similar, but the mounts themselves are custom," Partington says.

Making a good mount is about making it disappear. Posts are bent and molded to conform to the shape of the object. Tiny, spring-loaded clips gently secure objects with just enough pressure. Each mount is carefully paint-matched so it blends, chameleon-like, into the object it secures. It is painstaking work, especially when one considers that if it is done right, no one will ever see it.

Partington and Nicholson are both graduates of Herron School of Art and Design, and both have worked at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. Partington is a kinetic sculptor whose work has been exhibited internationally. Nicholson works as a sculptor, painter, and photographer. Their skill as mount makers allows them to join a small group of craftspeople who make art that disappears.



Docent Choice TOURS

Saturdays | 2:30 pm
May 18-July 13

No reservations are necessary for these enlightening and informative tours of our collection.

Meet your docent (tour guide) in the Sculpture Court.

Meditation in the Museum Fridays | 3:30 pm

The last hour of the last weekday is reserved for quiet time and self-guided meditation at the David Owsley Museum of Art. However, visitors are welcome to do so any time.

Note: Occasional evening events will limit access. Please call ahead to confirm.



CALENDAR of EVENTS

summer

MAY

8 Wednesday | 8 am - 5 pm

Alliance Trip: Fort Wayne Museum of Art

Enjoy a day away with friends and museum members on the annual Alliance trip! After greetings from Charles Shepard III, Executive Director of the Fort Wayne Museum of Art (FWMoA), view and discuss prints specifically selected for our viewing with Sachi Yanari-Rizzo, Curator of Prints and Drawings. Experience current exhibitions *Afros: A Celebration of Natural Hair* by Michael July and *Jerrod Tobias: Seeds of Symbiosis*. FWMoA staff will also provide a sneak peek of *Brilliant Optics: New Contemporary Painting*

All program costs and lunch, which will be at the popular and elegant Club Soda, are included.

Transportation included for the first 14.

Trip leaves at 8 am from the Alumni Center and returns to Muncie at 5 pm.

Alliance members: \$45

Museum members (Friends): \$55
(includes discounted Alliance membership)

Non-museum members: \$110
(includes Friends and Alliance membership)

LEFT: **Crown**
1970-1999
Unidentified Yoruba Maker
plastic beads
Gift of David T. Owsley

17 Friday | Noon

Talking About Art

Experience a work of art in a whole new way. Staff will lead discussions using an image of a work of art using the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) method. VTS is an open-ended yet highly structured discussion of visual art, significantly increasing students' critical thinking, language, and literacy skills along the way. Professors and teachers may consider its use with students; all participants, including students and the public, will enjoy the unique visitor-centered opportunity.

Bring your lunch...cookies and drinks will be provided.

Brown Study Room

22 Wednesday | 1:30 - 3:30 pm

Alliance Spring Tea

Get to know the members and celebrate the history and impact of the Art Alliance of the David Owsley Museum of Art.

Morrison Woods Health Campus
4100 N. Morrison Rd.

Free for prospective members,
\$20 for current members.

For information and reservations,
contact Sarah Jenkins at srjenkins@bsu.edu
or 765.716.0861.



CALENDAR of EVENTS

summer



Eastern Wei Seated Buddha
543/550 CE
Unidentified Artist, Chinese
Limestone
David T. Owsley Collection

JUNE

8 Saturday | 5:30 - 7 pm

Art and About at Festival on the Green

Join David Owsley Museum of Art volunteers for family-friendly activities on the Ball State University Quad for Festival on the Green. Explore Muncie Arts and Culture Council Arts Fair from 5:30-7 pm and enjoy the Muncie Symphony Orchestra at 7 pm.

For more information, visit

www.munciesymphony.org/event/symphony-on-the-green
or email munciesymphonyorchestra@gmail.com

28 Friday | Noon

Talking About Art

See May 17 listing for description

Brown Study Room

PAGE 4 CENTER:

Covered Tripod Bird Vessel

250-900 CE

Unidentified Pre-Columbian; Mexico; Maya
Formed and fired glazed earthenware

David T. Owsley Collection

PAGE 4 RIGHT:

Palace Support Columns

1900/1950

Unidentified Craftsman, Bamileke, Babanki, or Kom People
Gift of David T. Owsley via the Alconda-Owsley Foundation

JULY

17 Wednesday | 11 am

Intern Showcase

Hear presentations from selected Owsley Museum of Art summer interns Ivana Armstrong (art), Rochelle Martin (art), and Jennifer Tellman (history), and preview forthcoming exhibitions, new galleries, and available resources.

AUGUST

3 Saturday | 1 - 3 pm

Art and About at Maring-Hunt Library

Engage in activities and information provided by Museum of Art volunteers at the Muncie Public Library Family "Dig into Reading" Completion Party at the Maring-Hunt Library, to celebrate the completion of MPL's Summer Reading Program.

Children who have completed 25 hours of summer reading may pick up a free Museum of Art poster.

For more information, contact Emily Hartsfield at 765.741.5150 or ehartsfield@munpl.org.

Maring-Hunt Library • 2005 S. High St. • Muncie

19 Monday

Fall Semester begins

23 Friday | 6 - 8 pm

Art and About at Quad Bash

Join David Owsley Museum of Art volunteers and staff for College Night activities in the galleries while Quad Bash games and food are happening on the Ball State University Quad.

Quad Bash continues with a movie screening beginning at 9 pm on the Quad as a kickoff to the Friday Night Filmworks series.

Quad Bash is sponsored by the University Programming Board.

All programs are free unless otherwise noted. Programs are subject to change without notice.

Drop-in tours, including Art High at Noon and Tour Time, are limited to 15 people. Tour sign-up may be required to accommodate visitors. We thank you for your understanding.

Any visitor attending a tour or public program is eligible to receive a stamp on the Frequent Visitor Card for free merchandise, e.g. posters and catalogs.

The cost to join the David Owsley Museum of Art Alliance is \$15 for Friends members, and starts at \$40 for non-members. Please call 765.285.5242 for additional information.

Please call 765.285.5242 for additional information.

* Prospective Alliance members free; Alliance members \$10 plus \$5 for lunch.

RESEARCH Help

Available in the Galleries

Museum assistants will be available for posted hours in the David Owsley Museum of Art to answer questions from students and other researchers. For updates, see the "For Students" section of the museum website, www.bsu.edu/artmuseum.

Sketching in the Museum

Artists and novices welcome anytime. Supplies provided. Please stop at the front desk for pencils, sketch boards, paper and instructions.

Programs, correct going to press, are subject to change without notice. Visitors may call ahead if desired.

World Cultures Highlighted in the New Galleries

After months of consulting, planning, and construction, the expansion of the David Owsley Museum of Art is nearing completion. Part of the collection was removed from view and put in safe-keeping while new galleries were constructed. With construction complete, these works are being reinstalled. When visitors see them again, they will see them in a whole new light.

“While there will be a number of new things on display, the entire collection will seem new because it will all be reconfigured,” says Director Peter Blume. “That’s because we’ve never had this much space.”

The renovation, costing in excess of more than \$4 million, adds 10,000 square feet of gallery space across four new galleries at the east and west ends of the second floor of the Fine Arts Building. The expansion not only allows the museum to display more works, it allows those works to be displayed to their best advantage.

“Relatively speaking, Western European art has always been laid out very generously, but art from non-western cultures has been crowded, so it couldn’t be fully appreciated,” Blume says. “It’s a matter of perception. Everything you put on view distracts from everything else.”

New galleries

A new Asian Gallery, housing Indian, Chinese, and Japanese art, has been constructed in the east wing of the museum. The Chinese collection will be displayed chronologically, beginning with stone ritual items from the Neolithic period. The Japanese collection will be displayed according to a number of themes, including religion, the warrior culture, the luxury trade, and the tea ceremony. The Asian Gallery will be anchored by the Japanese Buddha that has resided above the sculpture court.

The west wing will house art from Africa and Pacific Island cultures and art from Native American, Meso-American, and South American cultures, nearly tripling in size from 1300 square feet to 3700 square feet.

“We’ll have many more objects on display, with a lot more space between them,” Blume says. “There’s more contextualization, both cultural and thematic.”



A Red Sandstone Door Relief
9th/10th century
Unidentified Indian Craftsman
Madhya Pradesh or Rajasthan
David T. Owsley Collection

LEFT TO RIGHT:
Solomon Islands • Canoe Prow or Figurehead
1900-1999
Unidentified Menanesian
Wood and mother of pearl
Gift of David T. Owsley

Story of Creation
About 1880/90
Unidentified Native American; Haida
David T. Owsley Collection





A new museum experience

The renovation has given the museum staff the opportunity to present the museum collection in new ways, and to create a new museum experience for visitors, says Director of Education Tania Said.

“More and more, museums understand they need to be visitor-centered,” Said says. “We realize we need to walk in the shoes of our visitors and try to understand what they want to know.”

To that end, Said and her two Interpretive Planning Assistants, Ball State University students Nicole Griffetts and Ashley Wehmiller, have been writing, revising, and editing gallery labels and other materials that guide museum visitors as they examine the collection. Their goal is to answer visitors’ questions about the exhibits they are viewing. The challenge is to try and imagine what visitors may want to know.

“If we’re clever enough, we’ll provide the answers to the questions that visitors will ask,” Said says. “If we don’t provide the answers, we can help people find them.”

An evolving collection

The renovation is the culmination of work that began months before construction started, with the development of an interpretive plan which is now available at the Museum’s website, www.bsu.edu/artmuseum. The interpretive plan is a document the museum staff developed with the input of a number of stakeholders from the university and community that outlines the purpose of the museum collection. Both Blume and Said point out that while it is rewarding to see the implementation of the interpretive plan occurring before their eyes, this is just a first step.

“We aren’t doing everything at once,” Said says. “We have short-, medium-, and long-term stages of the plan. And we’re going to be improving it along the way.”

Blume says the careful attention to the design of the galleries will allow for changes in presentation and continued refinement of the interpretive plan.

“Things will evolve. Some things will take a rest, new themes will be reconfigured,” he says. “I’m not conceiving of this being frozen in time. There are certain objects that aren’t easily moved, but there are many others that can be readily exchanged, and in doing so we can keep the museum experience fresh as we go along.”

There are more changes to come in the future. The current renovation is Phase One of a two-phase project. Blume notes that while Phase Two is “still unscheduled and unfunded,” it could include converting space on the first floor of the Fine Arts Building to museum use to address its expanded educational mission, as well as to provide space for workrooms, storage, and art handling areas.



TOP LEFT TO RIGHT:

Frog Pendant

11th-16th Century CE
Unidentified Craftsman, Pre-Columbian,
Costa Rica or Panama, Chirqui
Gold
Gift of the Alconda-Owsley Foundation

Oracle’s Crown

19th Century
Unidentified Craftsman, Tibetan
Gift of David T. Owsley
via the Alconda-Owsley Foundation

ABOVE:

Mask for the Okuyi Society (Mukudj)

Punu
African Craftsman, Central Africa, Southern
Gabon, Punu People
Wood
David T. Owsley Collection



SUMMER 2013
Volume 18 | Number 3

Museum Hours

Monday–Friday
9:00 am–4:30 pm

Saturday & Sunday
1:30 pm–4:30 pm

765.285.5242

Admission Free

www.bsu.edu/artmuseum

Parking in the McKinley Avenue garage between Riverside and University Avenues

A newsletter for the Friends of the



Muncie, IN 47306

In this Issue

In this issue, a preview of the new museum experience awaiting visitors when the David Owsley Museum of Art expansion is complete. Museum mount makers Brose Partington and Aaron Nicholson share the secrets of keeping works of art in their place. A new bronze by Paul Manship graces the museum galleries. PLUS...Notes from the Director, our Calendar of Events, and much more.



Indian Hunter and Pronghorn Antelope
Designed 1914 - Cast about 1914/1916
Paul Manship
Bronze
Gift of Ed and Virginia Ball Estate

New to the Collection Paul Manship...*Indiana Hunter and Pronghorn Antelope*

One of sculptor Paul Manship’s innovations was making a sculpture in two parts, says Director Peter Blume. *Indian Hunter and Pronghorn Antelope* (1914) is one example of this in the David Owsley Museum of Art. The other is the later *Diana and Actaeon* (1925). The bronze sculpture, one of only fifteen cast, was a gift from the estate of Ed and Virginia Ball.

The hunter is a powerfully built athlete, and Blume notes that the torso owes a debt to Hellenistic Greek sculpture rather than a traditional Native American model. The skin draped over the hunter’s knee is often attributed to Hercules. Using the classical world as a source of inspiration served Manship well. He may be best known for the Prometheus Fountain that graces Rockefeller Center in New York.

