

Passionate Curiosities

Tales of Collectors & Collections from the Kelsey Museum

by Lauren E. Talalay and Margaret Cool Root

DESCRIPTION:

Passionate Curiosities explores the collections held in the University of Michigan's Kelsey Museum of Archaeology through the lens of the people whose intellectual interests, financial backing, and social networks brought artifacts to Ann Arbor from the 1880s to the 1990s. Through purchases and expeditions, these individuals shaped the Museum's internationally recognized antiquities from the ancient civilizations of Greece, Rome, North Africa, Egypt, and the Near East, extensive photographic documentation of these regions from the early 1900s, and significant assemblages of early Christian and Islamic visual culture.

An intriguing array of personalities—from archaeologists, missionaries, and diplomats to industrialists, bankrollers, and inventors—weave through these pages. They include Ernst Herzfeld, the eminent Orientalist who helped forge antiquities legislation in Iran; Luigi Cesnola, the rapacious harvester of Cypriot sites; Esther Van Deman, the pioneering feminist and scholar of Roman construction techniques; and Samuel Goudsmit, the renowned nuclear physicist and avid Egyptologist.

World-famous dealers who established standards in antiquities connoisseurship likewise populate these sagas. Readers will encounter Edgar J. Banks, a swashbuckling purveyor of Mesopotamian antiquities and entrepreneur of biblical documentary films; Maurice Nahman, the "lion of Cairo"; and the colorful members of the Tano dealer dynasty in Egypt.

This copiously illustrated book will interest general readers as well as scholars curious about the holdings of the Kelsey, early collectors and dealers, and the history of museums.

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CONTRIBUTORS BIOGRAPHIES:

Lauren E. Talalay is former Associate Director of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan, and is currently Curator Emerita and Research Associate at the Museum. She has written or collaborated on five books and numerous articles and has conducted fieldwork and research

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throughout the Mediterranean and the Balkans, most recently on the early prehistory on the island of Euboea, Greece. Her research focuses on the Neolithic period of the Mediterranean, particularly Greece, with an emphasis on figurines, gender, and the human body as a symbol. She also publishes on contemporary issues, such as the use of archaeological images in modern advertising and political cartoons. Her coedited book on the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy was voted one of the best books of 2002 by the Times Literary Supplement, and she is the recipient of grants from the American Council of Learned Societies, the Michigan Humanities Council, and the Chrysler Foundation Fund. Her current project is a book on unpublished photographs, letters, and essays by the American photographer George R. Swain, who undertook several trips to Europe and the Mediterranean during the pivotal years after World War I.

Margaret Cool Root is a Curator of Collections at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology as well as Professor of Near Eastern and Classical Art and Archaeology in the Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan. Her first book, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art: Essays on the Creation of an Iconography of Empire* (1979) was transformative in her field. It explored the official representational strategies of the Achaemenid Persian Empire as productions of an ideologically coherent program that recast antique and foreign imagery and styles to serve a new paradigm of world order. A major funded research project documents and interprets art as social history via seals used on the thousands of administrative records of the Persian Empire excavated at the site of Persepolis in the 1930s. More broadly her scholarship consistently probes the production of visual and material culture and the multiple reinventions objects may undergo in their subsequent lives. She has received fellowships and grants from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, and the Iran Heritage Foundation.