

THE NEAR EASTERN COLLECTIONS AT THE PENN MUSEUM



This semester, I had the opportunity to explore over 500 of the 90,000 objects cared for by the Near Eastern section of the Penn Museum. With the help of my co-intern, Julie, and under the supervision of the collection's Keeper, Katy, we continued the on-going project of inventorying, photographing, and re-housing the collections from Beth Shean, Israel. This site was excavated by University of Pennsylvania between 1921 and 1933 and artifacts were brought back to Philadelphia through *partage*.

The Process

- The objects were originally housed in large wooden boxes which did not have clear labelling
- We started by taking inventory of each box and solving any problems that arose (i.e. missing or extra objects)
- Then, we photographed the objects so that these photographs could be edited and added to the database
- We gave each object a plastic covering and a label
- Then, we placed them in an archival plastic bin and back on their respective shelves

Below, are just some of the objects we photographed over the past few months. Our goal was to improve the safety and accessibility of the objects.

A huge drainpipe held together by decades-old twine!



As the Germans say, "Scherben bringen Glück!"

I was able to make comparisons between my internship at Penn and my work as a student worker in the Bryn Mawr Special Collections Art and Artifacts department. The two institutions differ greatly in size, staffing, collection types and provenance, mission, etc.

As someone who wants to one day work as a collections manager, this glimpse into the variety of collecting institutions was invaluable. I was able to gain perspective on the type of institution and type of collection I would like to work with in the future.