NEWSLETTER of the Peabody Museum
and the Department of Anthropology

The Fourth Estate

Newspaper and magazine articles published in 1978.

"Masterpieces" reviewed
Boston Sunday Globe, Nov. 5, 1978
by Robert Taylor (reviewed with a Boston Museum of Fine Arts exhibit)

The impulse behind this pair of conspicuously eclectic yet beautiful exhibitions is similar — to present what in the opinion of authorities is "the best" in the collection. Thus these are survey shows, lacking a theme and pointing to the institution's holdings, but they are none the worse for that, and there is an excellent reason for their approach.

The Peabody Museum situation is more complex. Of the 65 "Masterpieces" on display, 33 have never been seen in public before. That statistic underlines the irony. The Peabody Museum, the oldest and still one of the pre-eminent museums in the world devoted solely to the disciplines of archaeology and ethnology, is only now beginning to develop a contemporary exhibitions program.

The strengths of the collection lie in magnificent North American Indian and Pre-Columbian art, including materials from the Lewis and Clark expedition and what is, arguably, the finest collection of Peruvian textiles anywhere, certainly outside Peru. There are good representations of African and Oceanic art. The Captain Cook material, which one would ordinarily expect to be either in England or in the Bishop Museum of Honolulu, is impressive.

And yet only a fraction of the collection is known to the public or has gone on display. Even among scholars much remains to be done in terms of classification and research. The Peabody, unlike its sister institution, the Fogg Art Museum, has suffered from the schizophrenia of being a teaching museum which also serves the public. From the start there was an active exhibitions program at the Fogg and agreement that the academic and the art aims reinforced each other. But the Peabody was "scientific," and overtly so. The entire world and the races of man were its laboratory.

"Masterpieces" embodies the "new" Peabody, for it inaugurates a handsome first-floor gallery designed by Addis M. Osborne where changing exhibitions can be mounted. Of course the very word "Masterpiece" is European, out of the essence of western civilization, but the show in its diversity requires one to think of the meaning of the concept, or whether it has any meaning at all measured by societies in which art is collective and utilitarian.

The sophistication of "primitive" art is sometimes as startling as a Rembrandt print, and both the MFA's non-theme show and the Peabody's are indeed a feast for the eye.

Boston Herald American, Oct. 29, 1978
by Robert Garrett
"Masterpieces of the Peabody Museum" is, unabashedly, a "best of" survey chosen by the anthropology faculty. Social scientists first, these are scholars who see an artifact foremost as an expression of the society in which it was once embedded.

We think of anthropologists at home in the rain forest or remote desert rather than in the gallery, attuned to rituals and magic rather than art. As demonstrated by this exhibit, they are quick to enjoy a beautiful object for its own sake. They understand the magic of aesthetics.

(continued on page 2, see "Masterpieces")
The title of the show is a prickly return to any lingering notions that "primitive" art is unhealthy to a form of Western high culture. Early in this century, certain museums, notably the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology and the National Museum of Man, mounted exhibits on "primitive" art. Since then, such an exhibit has been held in the museum's new building. But now, the Peabody Museum is holding an exhibit that demonstrates the vast range of culture and art from all over the world. The museum's new building is located on the campus of Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. The museum's collection includes more than 1,000,000 objects, ranging from artifacts of the earliest humans to modern-day works of art. The exhibit features a wide variety of objects, from textiles and pottery to sculpture and paintings. The museum's visitors can learn about the history and culture of different peoples and regions through the objects on display. The exhibit is part of the museum's ongoing commitment to education and outreach. The museum's goal is to help people understand and appreciate the diversity of human experience and culture.
Peabody

(Continued from page 3)


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have been crammed, some­

ican Indian materials, including the artifacts

Indians by John Webber, who accompanied

Captain Cook on his third voyage to the New

(Continued from page


Thousands of irreplaceable examples of the

art and technology of vanishing human cul­

The Harvard Crimson, 22, 1978

\[\text{I.C.A. excavation - Aug. 16, 1978; backhoe-dug trench uncovered the foundation of one of Harvard's earliest buildings, perhaps Indian College (1635-1698), the first brick school house in North America.}\]

Bulldozers halted by I.C.A. trowels

Harvard Gazette, Sept. 15, 1978

members of the Peabody Museum's Insti­

tute for Conservation Archaeology (ICA), by
design of their own, recently encountered

backhoe-dug trenches in the Yard where they

retrieved clay pipes, oyster shells, ceramics,

and other clues of Harvard life from centuries

past.

Last month construction workers from the

Museums, Bay Transportation Authority

(MBTA) had dug trenches near Massachusetts

Institutions. The Peabody Museum and other

prominent institutions around the

country.

Anthropology museums, traditionally poor,

have found it especially difficult to raise

money for their collections.

In some ways the situation is worse at

Harvard's Peabody Museum, the repository

of one of the North American's first great

American Indian materials, including the artifacts

gathered by Dr. Lewis Clark and paintings of Indians by John Webber, who accompanied

Captain Cook on his third voyage to the New

World 200 years ago.

MUSEUM HOLDINGS POLICY APPROVED

The University Museums Council, a 19-member

group of museum directors and administrative officials

officials, in effect, the decision to

the making of the decession must be a joint one of the
director and the full members most immediately

concerned. When the material proposed for decession has come to
to the decision of the director or by the terms of a gift

or bequest the terms of the gift or bequest must be carefully considered and obeyed by

is that objects from the teaching and research collections

may properly be decessioned by sale, gift or loan

when they are duplicates, or on the grounds of irrele­

vance, unimportance to the collection or interior quality. If an institution is financially unable

adequately to maintain and preserve such objects, it

is probable that they be decessioned than that they be

permuted. The deciding factor in the decession of such objects should be determined if the objects are of interest to

another institution within the University, which would

accept them without any financial burden in a permanent transfer. It may be that an institution may come into a financial

situation wherein the preservation of the property is not only of the kinds of "properly decessioned" mate­

rials, and it is held to be in the best public interest of the
collection. In such cases decession must be consi­

dered as a matter of principle, not as a matter of policy preservation not only of the kind of "properly decessioned" mate­

rels are of interest to the University as a whole. In some cases the decession of certain objects of its primary

collections. In such cases decession might be con­

sidered as a matter of principle, not as a matter of policy

the University must here also be sought first, and every effort should be

made to preserve the collection, either within or

outside the University, that will make resort to sale be considered the last resort.

Material which is evidently not now useful to the

purposes of teaching and research of the holding

institutions, and is not likely so to be in the foreseeable

future, but which in the opinion of the institution in the gen­

cultural interest, for a public outside the Univer­

sity, may be decessioned only after consultation with other institutions in the University to determine

whether they are interested in acquiring the material.

Whenever it is reasonable from the point of view of the benefit of the remaining collection, that may be relevant in a particular case, the balance between financial (and con­

sequent possible educational) benefit to the original

holding institution and the educational benefit the

University might obtain by requiring transfer. Where

the material at issue may be of value to teaching or re­

search within the University, disposal outside the

University should be authorized by the Corporation

only after the more careful deliberation.

Reliable valuations (by staff members competent
to give them, but also by outside agents when that

may be needed) should be secured for objects selected

for decession. Such valuation may influence whether objects should be transferred by gift or loan, with or without compensation, or to an institution within or outside the University.

In the case of decession by sale, if material to be

decessioned is less than $5,000 in value it may be

decessioned through the ordinary channels of the

institution (after the approval of the curator concerned without further con­

sideration (but not to the same purchaser more than once in a single year). In the case of material to be decessioned

by sale or by exchange that is over $5,000 in value, they should be reviewed by a "watchdog" committee of the

Museum Council which may include outside experts

called in where it may be necessary. The committee

may approve the proposed decession or, if it

disapproves, send a negative report to that effect to the

Corporation or an agent, the President and the Dean of

the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. The committee shall

normally consist of three members of the Council, named by the Chairman from the recommendations

made by the membership. The committee should serve to

review the decision of the decession department.

First option in decession by sale should be offered to an agent of the holding institution, if it was acquired by gift, or to the heirs of such a donor or to a tentative.

decession might be used for general operating ex­
penses. Consideration should also be given to enabling poten­
tial purchasers outside the University who would use the objects to a benefit of the remaining collection, as in particular for decession of objects of less educational value, which it is presumed that in the majority of instances material

selected for decession should be.

The sole required approved for decession of the

office, the decession department, with the approval of the Corporation or its agent. Certain institution members may find it appro­

appropriate to add in addition the chairman of their visiting

committee. The asset that the "watchdog" committee of the

Museum Council is also executed, but it is un­
desired that in the event of its dissent it may be over­

rulled by the decision of the Corporation or its agent.

Final power of decision in all circumstances resides in the

corporate officers. It is therefore essential that the decession department be a very active and pain­
ful committee.

[1] There need be no restriction in the way in which proceeds from the decession by sale of the kind of ma­

terial described in paragraph 6] above may be used. However, proceeds from the sale of all decession

material should be used either for the acquisition of

new material, by purchase or by such other means (e.g., expeditions or excavations) as are pro­

tential funders. Proceeds from the sale of decession funds should not normally be permitted, nor

should payment of other operating charges of the

museum.

[16] It is only in situations that may be critical to the

very existence of an institution that funds derived from decession might be used for general operating ex­

penses.

Published in Harvard Gazette, week of 2/1679

Rutland Daily Herald (Vermont), Nov. 6, 1978

An ancient Indian rock shelter — with a number of artifacts dating back an estimated 3000 years — has been discovered in Marl­

boro, Mass. by Harvard archaeologists exam­

ining a strip of land destined to become a

park.

A 4-inch square tip, arrowheads, deer teeth and bones, scrapes of crude tools, rocks sharpened as cutting tools and several other artifacts were turned up by the Harvard team.

"It's a rock shelter that has not been dis­
turbed. This in itself is virtually unique in New England," Russell Barber said.

The shelter, according to the ar­

chaeologists, appears to be stratified, used

around 1450 B.C. (Late Archaic), then, its

collections closer to the surface, by a later Indian

group around A.D. 500 to A.D. 800 (Middle

Woodland).