

AEON

Ann Hamilton's project AEON has been temporarily installed in the Joe and Rika Mansueto Library Grand Reading Room in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago.

The OI is one of the world's leading interdisciplinary centers for the study of ancient Middle Eastern civilizations. Its world-renowned museum houses the largest collection of artifacts from the ancient Middle East in the United States, including more than 350,000 artifacts with roughly 5,000 on display. The majority of the collections come from the OI's expeditions in the Middle East during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.

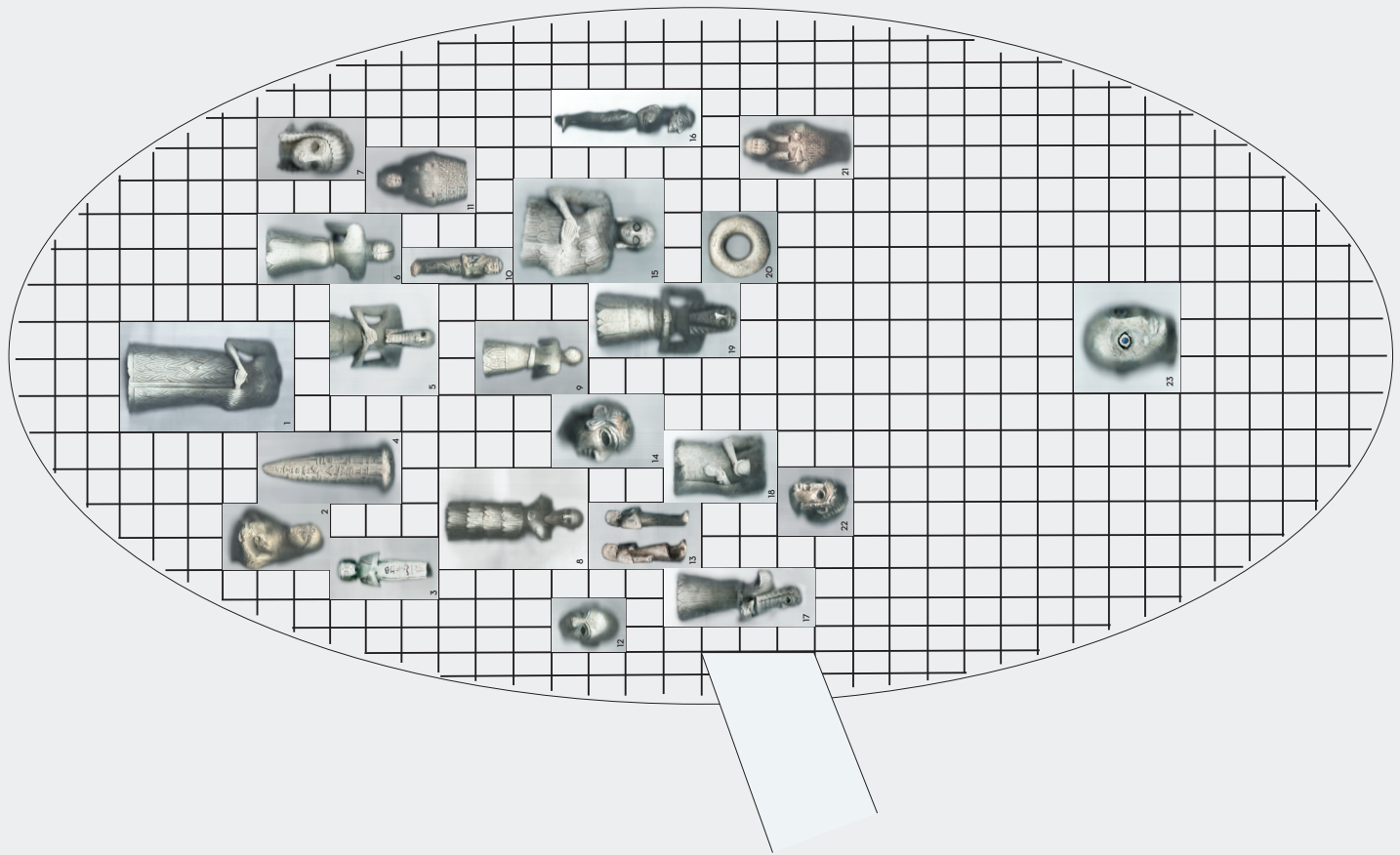
In the fall of 2018, Hamilton spent a week in residency at the OI imaging hundreds of objects, mostly from Iraq and Egypt. Her photographic process was unusual; rather than a camera, she used two kinds of scanners: a small early-generation flatbed desktop scanner and a handheld wand scanner, both designed with a shallow depth of field for documents, not three-dimensional objects. To use the flatbed scanner, Hamilton placed small figures on its glass platen and scanned. In contrast, Hamilton guided the wand scanner over the surface of the objects to produce unique images, in a hybrid of gestural drawing and lensless photography.

This process makes the figures seem strangely lively, quickened by the light. The images record the movement of the scanner's light across the figure over time, but the sense of movement accrues not to the photographic process, but to the figures themselves. This unsettling liveliness echoes a fundamental quality imparted to the figures by their makers millennia ago. The Egyptian Ushabti were placed in tombs in large numbers, journeying with the entombed person to the world beyond, ready to spring to life as servants. The Mesopotamian figures were deemed so much alive that they were given food and drink, since the care given to these effigies had direct consequences for people in the underworld.

The glass ceiling of the magnificent Joe and Rika Mansueto Library, with its state-of-the-art technology and award-winning, contemporary design, gives AEON its form. High in the dome and backlit by the sun, these ancient figures seem to stare down at the viewers, deriving agency from their lofty position.

The importance of the Middle Eastern collection at the University of Chicago Library is recognized by scholars throughout the world. The Library shares the Oriental Institute's commitment to rigorous explorations of the world's history and is pleased to celebrate this important centennial by hosting Ann Hamilton's AEON in Mansueto Library and the exhibition *Discovery, Collection, Memory: The Oriental Institute at 100* in the Special Collections Research Center in Regenstein Library.

Ann Hamilton (b. Lima Ohio, 1956) is a visual artist internationally acclaimed for her large-scale multi-media installations, public projects, and performance collaborations. Hamilton uses common materials as a means of addressing the knowledge that comes from language and touch, creating site-responsive installations for individual and collective experience. She has received the National Medal of Arts, MacArthur Fellowship, Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, NEA Visual Arts Fellowship, United States Artists Fellowship, the Heinz Award, and was selected to represent the United States at the 1991 Sao Paulo Biennial and the 1999 Venice Biennale. She received a BFA in textile design from the University of Kansas in 1979 and an MFA in Sculpture from the Yale University School of Art in 1985. Hamilton currently lives in Columbus, Ohio where she is Distinguished University Professor of Art at The Ohio State University.



1. STANDING FEMALE FIGURE
MISSING THE HEAD
Gypsum
Iraq, Tutub, Sin Temple IX, Q 42:7,
Early Dynastic period (2600–2300 BC),
Excavated in 1933–34, A12338

2. FRAGMENTARY FEMALE FIGURE
NURSING A BABY
Baked clay
Iraq, Nippur
Neo-Babylonian period (625–539 BC)
Excavated in 1957–58, A31003

3. USHABTI
Faience
Egypt, Abydos, Grave D1
New Kingdom–Third Intermediate
Period, Dynasties 20–22 (1200–
725 BC)
Excavated by the Egypt Exploration
Fund in 1899–1901, E6857

4. INSCRIBED CONE OF THE
RULER GUDEA OF LAGASH
BAKED CLAY
Iraq, attributed to Tello
Lagash Dynasty, reign of Gudea
(2141–2122 BC), Gifted in 1912,
A1447

5. STANDING MALE FIGURE
Gypsum, shell (with modern restoration)
Iraq, Eshnunna, Abu Temple, D 17:9
hoard, Early Dynastic period (2900–
2600 BC)
Excavated in 1933–34, A12328

6. STANDING MALE FIGURE
Gypsum shell, bitumen (with modern
restoration)
Iraq, Tell Agrab, Shara Temple Main
Level, M 14:4
Early Dynastic period (2700–2500 BC)
Excavated in 1935–36, A18130

7. FEMALE HEAD
Gypsum (with modern restoration)
Iraq, Tutub, Sin Temple IX, R 42:2
Early Dynastic period (2600–2300
BC)
Excavated in 1933–34, A12412A

8. STANDING MALE FIGURE
Gypsum, bitumen (with modern
restoration)
Iraq, Tutub, Sin Temple IX, Q 42:3
Early Dynastic period (2600–
2300 BC)
Excavated in 1933–34, A12335

9. INSCRIBED MALE FIGURE WITH
TENON TO ATTACH THE FEET
Gypsum, shell, bitumen, stone
Iraq, Nippur, Inanna Temple VIII,
hoard below Sanctuary 179 floor
Early Dynastic period (2600–
2300 BC)
Excavated in 1960–61, A31491

10. USHABTI
Faience
Egypt, Luxor, Medinet Habu, Middle
cell in 4th chapel
from south, Pit 18
Late Period (724–333 BC)
Excavated in 1931, E15762

11. USHABTI
Faience
Egypt, Abydos, Grave D1, New
Kingdom–Third Intermediate
Period, Dynasties 20–22 (1200
725, BC), Excavated by the
Egypt Exploration, Fund in 1899–
1901, E6857

12. MALE HEAD
Stone, lapis lazuli
Iraq, Tutub, Temple Oval II, N
44:1, Early
Dynastic period (2600–2300 BC),
Excavated in 1930–31, A9057

13. USHABTI
Faience
Egypt, Luxor, Medinet Habu
Late Period, Dynasty 26, reign of
Psamtik I (664–610 BC)
Excavated in 1927, E15600

14. USHABTI
Faience
Egypt, Luxor, Medinet Habu
Late Period, Dynasty 26, reign of
Psamtik I (664–610 BC)
Excavated in 1927, E15597

15. FEMALE HEAD
Stone
Iraq, Tutub, Sin Temple IX, Q 42:7
Early Dynastic period (2600–
2300 BC)
Excavated in 1933–34, A12411

16. FRAGMENTARY FEMALE FIGURE
Gypsum, shell, bitumen (with modern
restoration), Iraq, Tutub, Sin Temple
IX, Q 42:7 and R 42:3,
Early Dynastic period (2600–
2300 BC),
Excavated in 1933–34, A12337

17. FEMALE FIGURE
Copper alloy
Turkey, Tell Judaidah, trench TT-20
Early Bronze Age I (3200–2800
BC), or later
Excavated in 1935, A24008

18. STANDING MALE FIGURE
Gypsum shell, bitumen (with modern
restoration)
Iraq, Tell Agrab, Shara Temple Main
Level, M 14:4
Early Dynastic period (2700–
2500 BC)
Excavated in 1935–36, A18130

19. SEATED FEMALE BANQUETER
Gypsum
Iraq, Tell Agrab, Shara Temple Main
Level, L 13:6
Early Dynastic period (2700–
2500 BC)
Excavated in 1935–36, A21481

20. NET SINGER
Baked Clay
Iraq, Tutub, Temple Oval I, L 43:9
Early Dynastic period (2600–
2300 BC)
Excavated in 1930–31, A9089

21. USHABTI
Faience
Egypt, Luxor, Medinet Habu, "Tank"
between chapels and small temple,
Late Period, Dynasty 26, (664–525
BC), Excavated in 1927, E14111

22. FEMALE HEAD
Stone
Iraq, Tutub, Sin Temple IX, Q 42:7,
Early Dynastic period (2600–
2300 BC),
Excavated in 1933–34, A12376

23. MALE HEAD
Stone, lapis lazuli
Iraq, Tell Agrab, Shara Temple Main
Level, L 14:1
Early Dynastic period (2700–
2500 BC)
Excavated in 1935–36, A18092