



Archaeological Institute of America

Elizabeth Bartman Museum Internship Fund

Final Report

Curating Heads Exhibition at UCL Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology



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I. Internship Program

Date	Tasks
July 15	Arrival in London
Week 1 (July 17 – July 21)	Orientation, health and safety introduction, introduction to Petrie Museum practices
Week 2 (July 24- July 28)	Literature review on the human remains collection of Petrie Museum, identifying archaeological context of human remains in Petrie Museum
Week 3 (July 31- Aug 4)	Work with the pathology lab at UCL on human remains
Week 4 (Aug 7- Aug 11)	Research of the successful human remains exhibitions from different countries as case studies
Week 5 (Aug 14 – Aug 18)	Build research portfolio, contribute to development of ethical guidelines document
Week 6 (Aug 21- Aug 25)	Assist in the development of Curating Heads exhibition,
Week 7 (Aug 28- Sept 1)	Text panel writing and proofing
Week 8 (Sept 4- Sept 8)	Assist in the installation and events programming of the Curating Heads exhibition
Week 9 (Sept 11- Sept 15)	Evaluation of placement and the exhibition
Sept 18	The last day of the internship

II. Introduction

This is a report of my two-months long internship at UCL Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, which has become possible owing to the great assistance of AIA Elizabeth Bartman Museum Internship Fund. This internship, which took place between 17 July 2017 and 18 September 2017 in London, was supervised by Dr. Alice Stevenson from Institute of Archaeology at University College London. During this internship, my work focused on identifying archaeological context of human remains in the Petrie Museum, building research portfolio, contributing to development of ethical guidelines document and assisting Dr. Stevenson in the development of *Curating Heads* exhibition. This internship owing to its emphasis on exhibiting human remains has been a great contribution for my own M.A thesis research on the problems of managing archaeological human remains in Turkey. The results of this internship experience will be included within my thesis to provide a comparative example to the Turkish context in the issue of managing archaeological human remains.

III. The Project

My internship project is directly linked to my thesis in which I am assessing the ways in which human remains can be managed and displayed in scientifically convenient and respectful ways. In relation with my goal, the Petrie Museum's exhibition project, *Curating Heads* tries to initiate a discussion regarding the power of human remains to generate debate and critical reflection among public and scientific environments. The exhibition project integrates different elements into this discussion such as the use of "current scientific advances highlighting the process of obtaining and sequencing DNA, as well as the ethical procedures followed when making decisions on what and how to display".¹ For this project,

¹ Press Release for *What Does It Mean To Be Human? Curating Heads at UCL Exhibition*, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/culture/projects/what-does-it-mean-be-human>

different types of human remains and other material from Petrie Museum, UCL's different collections (UCL Art Collections, Special Collections, Science Collections, Pathology Collections, Anatomy Collection, Bioanthropology Collection), Grant Museum and Bentham Project are chosen to be displayed in the Octagon Gallery of the UCL Culture. This gallery space is located at the intersect of different buildings where different groups of students and researchers pass by on a daily basis and encounter different exhibitions in different periods of the year (Fig 1). Therefore, it is an ideal location for this exhibition project to attract the attention of not only eager visitors, but also people who may just pass by without hearing about the Curating Heads Exhibition. They may also be interested in the discussion on displaying human remains.



Figure 1. Octagon Gallery, UCL Museums & Collections Blog

a. Objectives

The objectives of this internship are based on the questions of my thesis research on the management archaeological human remains. In my thesis, I investigate the ways in which archaeological human remains are excavated, stored, conserved and displayed in Turkey. The second research aim of my thesis is to offer legislative and procedural solutions to the problems of human remains management in Turkey. Within my research, I studied different legislative frameworks and studies on human remains from different countries to develop a comparative perspective. The legislative frameworks and academic practices from the United Kingdom have become the focal comparative example for the Turkish context in my thesis. Therefore, the Petrie museum as a British Institution and Curating Head Exhibition Project have become valuable learning platforms for me to gain knowledge in how the British legislations and procedures are applied in practice. Secondly, learning about the standards and procedures used to store², conserve and display human remains at the Petrie Museum was an important objective of the internship. The third objective was to work on actual human remains with the assistance of the teams of the Petrie Museum and UCL Pathology Collection.

For the part of my internship regarding *Curating Heads* Exhibition, I was assigned to various tasks to gain curatorial experience. My tasks included building research portfolio for the exhibition, learning about text/panel writing, proofing, and assisting in the installation and events programming of the Curating Heads exhibition. The last objective of this internship was to observe and evaluate the visitor experience to be discussed in my thesis later and in this way to advance my methodologies and recommendations in the human remains policy that I will be proposing for the Turkish context.

² Although the remains were kept spread across the cupboards along with the other objects from the same contexts, Petrie Museum has recently decided to move all human remains to the same storage area to keep them together, except the ones on display.



Figure 2. The Press Launch of the exhibition



Figure 3. The opening day, the showcases with archaeological human remains

b. Outcomes

The most significant outcome of this internship was to take a role in the preparations of a meaningful human remains exhibition, which intended to explore many themes surrounding human remains exhibitions such as death, belief, myths, posthumous records, memory, emotions, ethics, genetics and medical science. The exhibition intended to raise discussions surrounding these themes by organizing public discussion events where the visitors could express their opinions and feelings about the purposes of and the ways in which these remains are curated.

The second most important acquisition for me was being able to work at the museum where I could observe and perform duties regarding collection management, specifically management of human remains. I had chance to observe the implications of the British regulations and as well as UCL's human remains policy (Policy, Principles and Procedures for The Care and Treatment of Human Remains At UCL) in the museum and in the other UCL collections. I learnt the use of different conservation materials, storage depots and followed certain rules to handle the remains in the best way possible. The museum uses acid

free cardboard boxes to contain the human remains, and acid free paddings (plastazote foam), textiles (Tyvek) and papers to support the human remains in their boxes (Fig 4) (Fig 5).

Although the museum cupboards are relatively old, the containers where the remains kept as well as the ways in which staff handles them are very careful and sensitive (Fig 6). These precautions that Petrie Museum take seriously are critical to preserve the organic materials like human remains in the best possible way. I am glad that observing and learning about the practical steps of human remains management complemented the theoretical knowledge that I have gained throughout my thesis research.



Figure 4. Cupboards where the human remains

are kept at the museum



Figure 5. Moving drawers inside the cupboards



Figure 6. The cardboard acid free boxes contain multiple warning signs to ensure safe handling³

Another acquisition of this internship was the opportunity to be able to work with different groups of professionals such as archaeologists, art historians, medical doctors, conservators and curators. Especially my work at UCL Pathology Collections have been a fascinating experience since I have had chance to work with modern human body parts (specimens), organs and various chemical material that are used to conserve these remains. I have advanced my knowledge in object documentation and databases, which I learnt in different forms at the excavations that I previously attended.

Moreover, during my internship period, I have had chance to visit various museums with human remains collection and meet some of their curators. I could learn more about their collections and the ways in which they manage these human remains collections. It was interesting to see that almost all the institutions that I visited are following the internationally accepted standards of conservation and storage of human remains that ICOM first mentioned

³ Figure 4 and 6 by Elifgül Doğan and Figure 5 by Alice Williams.

in its Code of Ethics in 1986.⁴ In addition to these standards, every institution has their own human remains policy and follow the British legislative works such as Human Tissue Act⁵ and Department of Culture Media and Sport's Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums.⁶ These are the works that I have studied thoroughly for my thesis to use as examples for the Turkish context. Therefore, seeing the direct applications of them in the museum collections have helped me broaden my perspective on how the regulations could or could not work in actual life. Calculating the possible outcomes of introducing a policy to the Turkish archaeology has become more manageable owing to my observations in London.

The last acquisition of this internship was to be able to come to London and visit many museums and collections that have human remains collections. During my internship, I have had chance to visit the UCL Institute of Archaeology Laboratories, the British Museum, the Museum of London, the Natural History Museum, the Ashmolean Museum, the Greenwich National Maritime Museum's Death in the Ice Exhibition, which fascinated me in many ways due to their different methods and practices. Seeing many examples enabled me to look at my own research from a critical perspective, re-evaluate my finds and advance my methods. Readings the work of others from articles is always useful, but actively observing the results of their works and having talks with these professionals from some of these museums above helped me tremendously to understand their challenges and priorities. I believe that assessing these issues will be instrumental in developing the policy for the Turkish context in a more aware and careful way.

⁴ Code of Professional Ethics 1986, <http://ethics.iit.edu/ecodes/node/3805>

⁵ Human Tissue Act 2004, <https://www.hta.gov.uk/policies/human-tissue-act-2004>

⁶ Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums 2005, http://old.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/cultural_property/3289.aspx

IV. Expenses

My expenses were almost fully covered by the amount that the AIA provided to me. The extra amount was covered by another fund that I received from Koç University. I was fortunate to find Ms. Pauline Walsh, who hosted me in her house for a considerably reduced rent. The table below includes three currencies (Turkish Lyra –TRY, GBP and USD) in which I have paid my expenses before leaving Turkey and during my stay in London. The receipts are kept securely in case of any request from the AIA. The currency conversions were made in accordance with prices of the day before I left London.

Costs for 2.5 Month-Stay in London	Costs, paid in local currency	Costs converted into US dollars
Flight from Istanbul to London	228,00 TRY	\$ 64,08
Flight from London to Istanbul	352,00 TRY	\$ 98,92
Accomadation (Reduced rent, utilities)	£ 625,00	\$ 835,35
Transportation (tube,bus tickets etc.)	£ 320,90	\$ 429,64
Groceries and Food	£ 712,83	\$ 956,50
Other costs (office supplies, adapters, communication)	£ 36,50	\$ 49,05
Liability and Accident Insurance for Internship	€ 34,00	\$ 40,06
UK Visa	\$ 119,00	\$ 119,00
Transaction fee for the Grant	\$ 61,00	\$ 61,00
Total amount Spent		\$ 2.653,60
Total amount Granted		\$ 2.500,00
Currency conversion rates from 29 Sept 2017		

Figure 7. All the expenses made during this internship

V. Acknowledgements

I thank my advisor Dr. Lucienne Thys-Şenocak and Dr. Christina Luke from Koç University very much for putting good words for my scholarship application. More importantly, I am grateful to them for always encouraging me to follow my dreams and find the best ways to diversify my skills in heritage management. During this internship, my wonderful supervisor Dr. Alice Stevenson guided me to learn about the different steps of managing human remains collections and gave me the freedom to work on my own project along with my internship tasks. I also thank Ms. Maria Ragan for welcoming me to the Petrie Museum where I have gained such a valuable experience and have genuinely felt like a team member.

I also want to express my gratitude for Ms. Pauline Walsh, who generously hosted me in London and taught me invaluable things during my stay in this wonderful city. Finally, I thank the AIA for making my internship possible and Ms. Samantha Craig for sincerely assisting me at every step of my application.