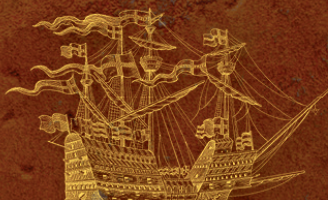


DK SMITHSONIAN 

BEHIND THE SCENES

AT THE

MUSEUM





ROLES BEHIND THE SCENES

ARCHAEOLOGIST

Archaeologists study historical sites around the world by removing layers of earth and sand to reveal what's underneath. They uncover buried objects and the ruins of structures such as houses and monuments. These objects and structures provide exciting evidence about our ancestors. As they dig, archaeologists make drawings, write notes, and take photographs to record information about the exact location and condition of the objects and ruins they find.

Metal tools are used to scrape earth from artifacts.



Archaeologist's toolkit

Excavation can be hard physical work, but it mostly requires precision. An archaeologist's toolkit includes small trowels and narrow brushes to carefully remove earth from precious artifacts.

▲ Burial site

In Peru, an archaeologist works to uncover human remains, ceramics, and textiles in a burial site from 1000–1450 BCE.

Underground ruins cause vegetation to dry out at different rates, creating outlines of old buildings.



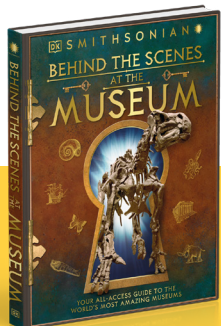
Aerial archaeology

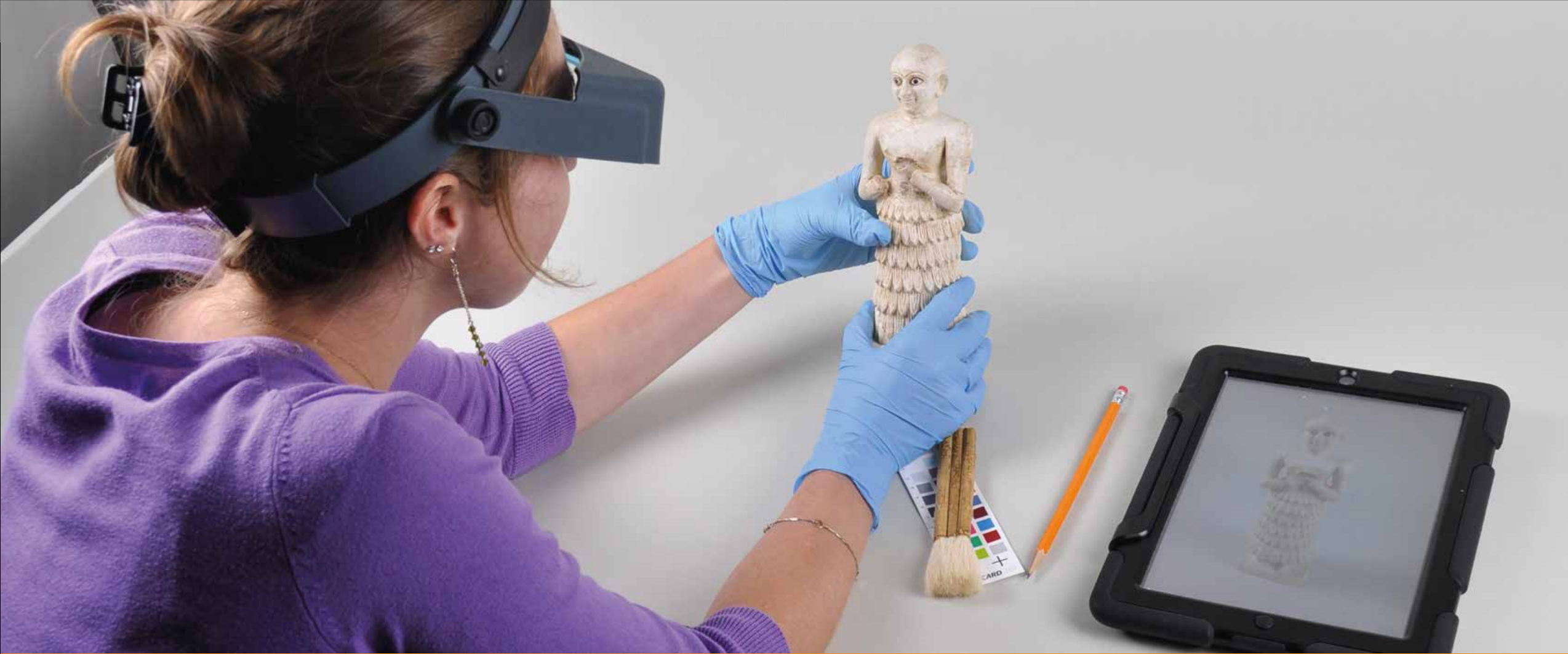
Before digging, archaeologists research potential historical sites. They study historical documents and old maps, but one of the best ways to assess an area is from above. They look at images taken by satellites or drones to search for ruins. During the summer of 2018, a long heat wave in the England exposed ancient imprints. As the soil dried out, lines, known as crop marks, appeared in the soil. In this field in Devon, England, these crop marks are thought to show where a Roman settlement once stood.



For the curious

Content taken from *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*





ROLES BEHIND THE SCENES

REGISTRAR

A registrar is responsible for keeping track of the whereabouts of all the objects in a museum. Whenever an object is moved—either within a museum or loaned to another museum—it is documented by the registrar. Even small museums can hold tens of thousands of objects, so registrars must be very organized. When objects are moved, registrars often take photographs of them and check their condition, to see whether they have been damaged. They are then placed in storage, or passed onto conservators for treatment.



Magnification goggles

When inspecting the condition of an object, registrars often wear a pair of magnification goggles, so that they can see it clearly in minute detail.

▲ Condition report

This registrar at the Penn Museum is inspecting a small figurine from Khafaje, Iraq, in order to write a report on its current condition.

Engineers used special carts that blew jets of air under the statue. This made it hover a couple inches off the ground, making it easier to move.



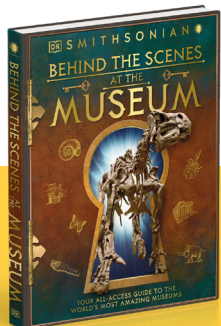
Transporting artifacts

When artifacts are moved, registrars often accompany them in person to make sure that they stay safe. This enormous sphinx was moved 250 ft (76 m) along a carefully planned route from one gallery to another within the Musée des Confluences in Lyon.



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ROLES BEHIND THE SCENES

CONSERVATOR

A conservator is responsible for making sure that historical artifacts stay in good condition, so that they can be seen and studied by future generations of people. Conservators control the conditions an artifact is kept in, regulating the light, temperature, and humidity to which it's exposed. In some cases, they might also have to fix broken artifacts, making sure that the repairs they make are as invisible as possible. Most conservators have a speciality—from books and pottery to ancient statues and dinosaur fossils.



Repair and restore

If an artifact has been accidentally broken, a conservator repairs it, ensuring that the object looks exactly as it did originally. At the Palace Museum in China, these conservators are fixing a delicate porcelain bowl.



Careful cleaning

Conservators spend a lot of time cleaning delicate artifacts that have become dirty over time. They try not to cause any damage to the artifacts, so often they simply use tiny brushes to gently remove dirt. Some artifacts may need to be treated with cleaning chemicals, however. In these situations, a conservator will carry out tests before starting to clean the artifact to find out what materials it is made from, and how these materials will react with different types of chemicals.

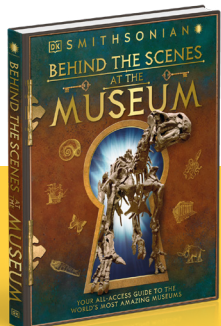
Steady hand ▲

This conservator at the Penn Museum in Pennsylvania is working on the ancient Egyptian mummy of Nespekashuti, who lived sometime between 1070 and 664 BCE. The conservator is protecting the linen wrapped around the mummy with sheer fabric.



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ROLES BEHIND THE SCENES

CURATOR

Curators are the guardians of museum collections. They are responsible for finding out as much as possible about the artifacts and specimens in their collections and for improving the way they are stored, cared for, and displayed. Curators help plan and organize the objects that museums have on display to the public. In some museums, they are also in charge of teaching visitors about their collections.



Planning an exhibition

One of the most important jobs of a curator is deciding which objects will be featured in an exhibition and how everything will be displayed. Here, curators at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C., are working together to plan the museum's 2019 "Deep Time" exhibition.



Telling a story

Curators are responsible for creating a story about the objects they present to the public. To put on an exhibition, they work with conservators to carefully plan the display of the objects, making sure they explain the importance of each one. They guide visitors through an exhibition from start to finish using information boards with detailed descriptions about the objects on show. This curator at The Postal Museum in London, UK, is adding a postcard to an exhibition display.

Animal display ▲

A curator at the Musée des Confluences in Lyon, France, is removing the protective wrapping from around a taxidermied giraffe. After a period in storage, the giraffe is being prepared to go on display.



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