

Layers Upon Layers: My time in the collections of the Penn Museum

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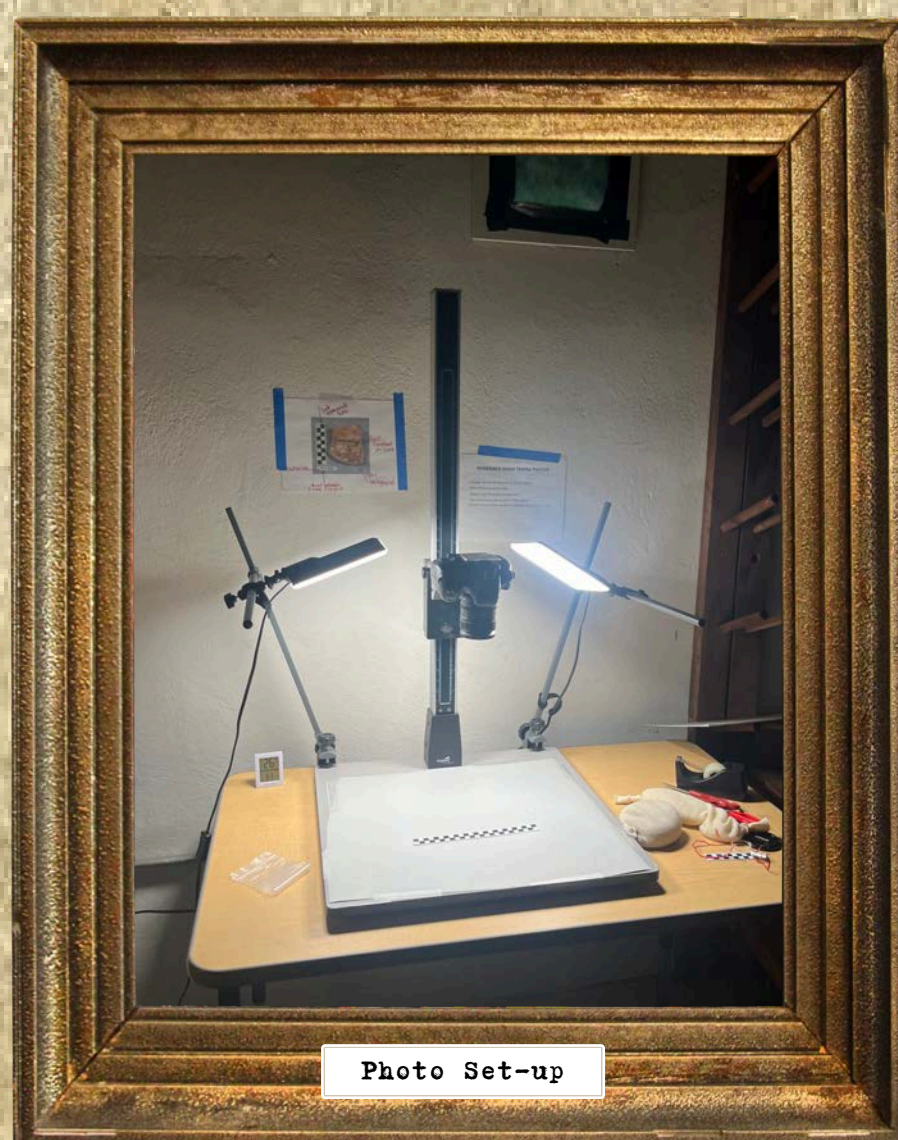
Beth Shean and Beth Shemesh

Beth Shean and Beth Shemesh are both located in modern-day Israel and have rich archaeological histories. A majority of my project focused on Beth Shean. Beth Shean is a tell with layers upon layers of history as it was continuously occupied from pre-history to the Byzantine era. Both sites were excavated in the first half of the 20th century.



The Goal and Takeaways

The goal of our project was to inventory boxes, shelves, and drawers from Beth Shean, and when we finished, Beth Shemesh. We would first figure out if all the objects were accounted for and if there were any extras. Then we would photograph them and rehouse them. Lastly, we would place them back on the shelf. Through this experience, I have grasped the region's material culture in a way I would never be able to in class. It is one thing to see a photo in a textbook and another to be able to hold and examine the object from all angles. I am also considering the museum field and this has given me a better sense of what the behind the scenes of a museum looks like.



The people behind the objects

The Penn Museum keeps a great record of all of their excavations in their archive, and one day we took a trip there and looked at the records from Beth Shean. This included everything from their field journals, to receipts, to photos, and even grocery lists. The photos to the left show one object which we photographed and its drawing in one of the field journals when it was excavated in the early 19th century.

