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FURSCA

FURSCA Report

Hello, I am Donna Avina a rising senior at Albion College. This summer I had the opportunity to run my own undergrad research thanks to FURSCA. The Kingman Museum located in Battle Creek, MI owns about 67 ceramic pieces, within their Mexican collection that are from Teotihuacán. Unfortunately, like a typical museum that has a small staff, they don't always have the time to go through their collections and research them. Therefore the Museum had little to no context as to what all the pieces were, who made them, etc. All they knew was who brought them to the Museum and that they were from the Teotihuacán region. (Fun fact: Father and son, Edward Morris Brigham, Sr., and Edward Morris Brigham, Jr. were the ones who brought the items to the Museum. Jr. was actually a 1925 graduate of Albion College.) For my FURSCA project, therefore I was going to research and help fill in that unknown gap for the Kingman Museum. Alongside researching them, I was also going to update the descriptions and images of the artifacts in Past Perfect, the Museum's collections management software. Lastly, the goal was to have a good chunk of my Honors Thesis done, along with an exhibition of the artifacts.

Did I achieve all of my goals? Yes and no. Since FURSCA was made of eight weeks instead of ten weeks, I had already shifted my timeline. I knew I wasn't going to be able to finish all my goals so the plan was to get through most of what I can and finish the rest during the

regular semester as a directed study class. Then when FURSCA started I had to shift my timeline once more but thankfully it didn't affect me by much. The original plan was that I was supposed to have the artifacts in the Anthropology lab during the first week. Unfortunately, both managers of the Museum Josh Holderbaum and Emily Powell were busy running summer camps so the artifacts were not brought onto campus until about the third week of FURSCA. During those first few weeks, I essentially worked backwards, instead of starting with photographing and editing the descriptions, I started with research. I read a few books and articles about Teotihuacán and even watched a few films my advisor Alli Harnish recommended me to watch. This worked out better because it helped me visualize the timeline on Teotihuacán more clearly since I didn't know much about the place prior to this project.

After I finally received the artifacts, I was able to get straight into the research. The number one book that has helped me a lot in my research with the artifacts has been "Teotihuacán Art from the City of the Gods" edited by Kathleen Berrin and Esther Pasztory. (Another fun fact, Elizabeth Brumfiel owned the book before she donated it to the college's library. She was a pioneer for women in the archaeology world !) With the help of the book, I was able to find a lot of similar pieces like the ones the Kingman Museum owned. For example, the book talked about these types of ceramic figurines called puppet figurines. Puppets figurines AKA articulated figurines were not used as we use puppets in the West but rather are called that for the fact that they had holes on the body where the limbs were attached with wire or strings. As you see in Figure A, it is a torso that has no limbs or head. It might be hard to see but on the sides, I circle the holes with a red marker, those holes would have had limbs attached. As you can see in Figure B, that is an example from the book, which shows how the limbs would have looked like.

As mentioned along with the research, I was also writing my thesis. Around week 4 I felt like I had enough information to start typing out some of my chapters. So from week 4 to week 6, I was just researching, writing my thesis, and preparing my FURSCA presentation. In the last two weeks of FURSCA, I dedicated myself to just photographing and editing the descriptions. The goal was to finish photographing, and editing the descriptions, and developing a rough draft of my labels for the exhibit. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to finish any of those things. I got about half of my photos taken along with the descriptions of pictures I had taken so far. This was because taking pictures was time-consuming since you have to find the right angles and lighting. Thankfully, I will have the fall semester during my directed study class to finish those things along with the rest of the project. In the meantime, I will continue to write out my thesis during my summer break along with starting an outline for my labels.

I want to thank everyone involved with running FURSCA along with my donor who funded my project. I would also like to thank my advisor Alli Harnish for believing in me and encouraging me every step of the way even when I would doubt myself. This project has already opened a lot of opportunities for me. For one it confirmed how much I love Anthropology and working with actual artifacts. Working with artifacts has been a dream of mine since I fell in love with history when I was in 6th grade. It also gave me more guidance as to what I wanted to do after graduation and I am now starting the process of looking at graduate schools for museum studies/preservation studies. Thanks to this project I also have a topic to write about for my Honors Thesis. The end goals of my project will be the completion of my Honors Thesis, a public exhibition sometime in February of 2024, and my final presentation at Elkin Isaac in April of 2024.

Links: \text{\small\color{blue}\boxed{\equiv}} Copy of Descriptions for Artifacts

\color{orange}\boxed{\ } Fursca presentation

Figure A The puppet figurine the Kingman Museum owns.

Figure B Source: "Teotihuacan Art from the City of the Gods" Edited by Kathleen Berrin & Esther Pasztory
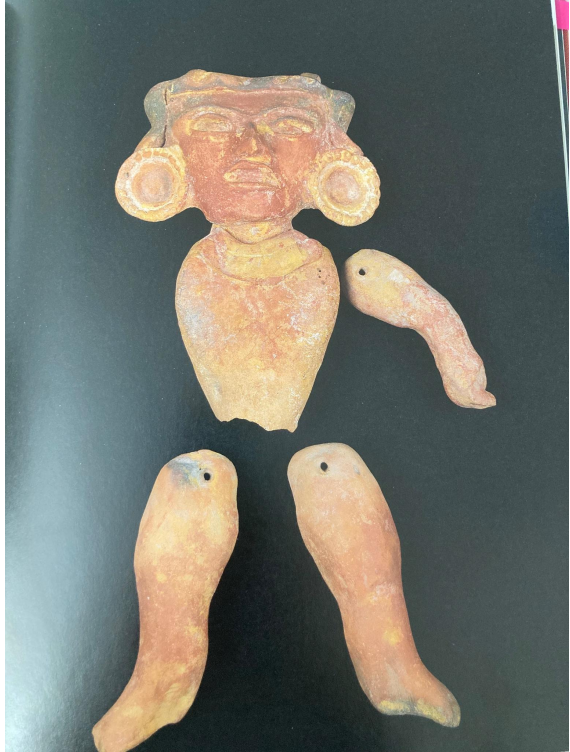
Figure C Josh Holderbaum and Donna Avina posing with the Teotihuacán pieces. Photo taken by Alli Harnish

Figure D Donna Avina taking pictures of the Teotihuacán pieces. Photo taken by Alli Harnish

Figure E Donna Avina taking pictures of the Teotihuacán pieces. Photo taken by Alli Harnish