

# Temple University Anthropology Laboratory and Museum

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Next time you are in the lobby of Gladfelter Hall, look around to the southeast corner. You will notice a couple of glass display cases—they might contain a model of a Chinese junk in full sail, a big feather headdress from an Amazonian tribe, or artifacts from local archaeological sites. You might wonder what they are doing there, since few people on campus are aware that they sit next to the Temple University Anthropology Laboratory and Museum (ALAM).

The ALAM is home to anthropological collections from all over the world. House posts and funerary canoes from the Solomon Islands sit alongside pottery from Metepec, Mexico. Temple students create exhibits on the indigenous past of Pennsylvania, textile production in Argentina, and music in Papua New Guinea.

The ALAM has existed on campus since 1964, when it was located in College Hall and known simply as the Anthropology Laboratory. It moved to its current location in 1972, when a large space in the lobby level and basement of Gladfelter Hall was designed specifically to hold anthropological collections and a laboratory. The custom storage system has gradually filled over the years with archaeological, ethnographic, and historic material collected by Temple Anthropology faculty or donated by friends of the museum.



Leslie Reeder-Myers



Temple archaeologist James Gifford (1927-1973) sits in the original Anthropology Laboratory in College Hall, reconstructing a pot from his excavations in Central America.

Sixty years later, Temple Anthropology students are examining these objects in a new light. The Cashinahua artifacts are being carefully preserved in new, custom made acid free boxes. Students in the *Museums and Society* class will develop an exhibit that explores their own perceptions of authenticity and exoticism through the material culture of the Cashinahua.

At the other end of the spectrum, one of the most recent collections to come into the museum was excavated by Temple Anthropology graduate student Mara Katkins in 2006, right here in Philadelphia. She excavated a privy that belonged to the Philadelphia Almshouse, which was located on the 300 block of Cypress Street from 1732-1767. The Almshouse was home to some of Philadelphia's most desperate residents, and also featured in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, *Evangeline*.

Temple students have been working on cataloging all of the material excavated from the Almshouse privy, including Katkins' excavation in 2006 and an earlier excavation during the

The first collection to be accessioned—or formally accepted into the museum—came from a group of Cashinahua people living in villages along the Curanaja River in southeastern Peru, just across the border from Brazil. When linguistic anthropologist Kenneth Kensinger arrived in their village in 1955, members of this small group were negotiating their interactions with other Cashinahua and non-indigenous people coming into the area looking for rubber and timber. Kensinger purchased or was given many items from the villagers, such as spectacular feather headdresses and masks used for important rituals, children's dolls and toys, and wicked looking axes (that were actually used to crack open nuts).



This Cashinahua mask, made of gourd, monkey fur, bird feathers, armadillo scutes, and beeswax, confers the role of a specific spirit on its wearer during ceremonies.

1970s by University of Pennsylvania archaeologist John Cotter. The material forms the basis for an exhibit, *Evangeline: The Story of Colonial Refugees in Philadelphia*, created by undergraduate anthropology student Cara Tercsak and graduate Theater, Film & Media Arts student Amy Blumberg. The exhibit explores the idea that refugees from political, religious, and economic violence have fled to the United States since before the United States existed, and many of them found relief at the Philadelphia Almshouse.

These days, you are likely to find students hard at work in the ALAM any day of the week. Graduate students use the laboratory space to analyze archaeological materials for their dissertation projects—and often come back to write their dissertations away from distractions (thanks to spotty Wi-Fi in the basement). Anthropology graduate student Nydia Pontón Nigaglioni recently defended her dissertation on consumer identity among enslaved people in Puerto Rico, after many months of hard work in the ALAM basement.



Anthropology students Elysia Petras and Cheyenne Washington work on creating a custom acid-free box for a palm leaf hat from indigenous groups in Columbia.

Undergraduate students work with faculty on a variety of projects. The ALAM has particularly strong collections representing the indigenous and historic past of the Mid-Atlantic region, which Temple students and faculty have been studying for decades. Hannah Wolfram, a double major in anthropology and art history, is working with Dr. Leslie Reeder-Myers in the ALAM on the analysis of oyster shell from archaeological sites in Maryland. This research will help explain how the oyster fishery in Chesapeake Bay has changed over the past 1000 years.

The ALAM is also working on creating digital records of their collections that can be accessed from anywhere in the world. During the Fall 2018 semester, Anthropology major Caroline Kirchner has been working with Dr. Patricia Hansell to create 3D images of archaeological materials using photogrammetry and 3D scanning technologies to produce high resolution 3D images. The goal of this project is to digitize an entire archaeological collection from Panama and to place it in a publicly accessible web-based repository. The incorporation of high-resolution 3D scanned artifacts in digital databases will allow users to manipulate, make observations and take measurements similar to handling the actual artifact without having to travel to the source.

If you would like to see the Temple Anthropology exhibits or collections, you can make an appointment by emailing the director, Leslie A. Reeder-Myers, at [anthlab@temple.edu](mailto:anthlab@temple.edu). After some renovations during the fall of 2018, the museum will be open two days each week during the spring semester. Check the website, <http://gamma.library.temple.edu/anthropologylab/>, for more information.