

NEWS RELEASE

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Penn Cultural Heritage Center Advances Partnership with U.S. Department of State to Protect and Preserve Heritage

PHILADELPHIA – Formalizing an ongoing initiative that protects at-risk international cultural property from destruction, theft, and trafficking, the Penn Cultural Heritage Center (PennCHC) has signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Department of State. It solidifies a long-term relationship between the two entities, who routinely work together to protect cultural heritage amid political instability, armed conflict, or disasters.

Dr. Julian F. Siggers, the Williams Director of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, signed the agreement with Marie T. Royce, Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs during a virtual meeting on August 12, 2020. This new public-private partnership establishes the Cultural Property Experts On-Call Program in an effort to combat international cultural property trafficking.

"As the first museum that established the ethical protection of antiquities through the 1970 Pennsylvania Declaration, we are thrilled to continue this important, critical practice in collaboration with U.S. Department of State," Siggers says. "This MOU not only formalizes the partnership, but also marks another milestone in the preservation of cultural heritage for generations to come."



"This vital partnership adds to the Cultural Heritage Coordinating Committee's growing body of programs and initiatives that build law enforcement cooperation and international capacity to stop trafficking," says Assistant Secretary of State Marie Royce. "Thousands of paintings, manuscripts, antiquities, and other works of art have been repatriated by the United States to countries around the world, thanks to the work of U.S. law enforcement and the private sector experts that assist them. I envision repatriating thousands more, thanks to this new partnership."

Connecting law enforcement officials to leading researchers in archaeology, anthropology, conservation, art history, and other fields, this program expedites information-sharing when subject-matter experts, such as those from the PennCHC, are needed most.

"Preserving and protecting antiquities requires a strong partnership between a community of experts and law enforcement," adds Dr. Richard M. Leventhal, Executive Director of the Penn Cultural Heritage Center and professor in Anthropology at Penn. "This MOU builds a foundation for this relationship, which will now be implemented and developed at Penn over the next several years."

Housed at the Penn Museum, PennCHC is a research hub that promotes community-based cultural heritage while studying threats related to historical site plundering, as well as the illicit antiquities trade. It will lend its expertise in cultural property and assist with the identification, authentication, and proper care of undocumented objects, ensuring sound cultural heritage preservation practices.

"This Agreement reflects the position of the Penn Cultural Heritage Center as a leader among U.S. universities in supporting cultural preservation and policy around the world," says anthropologist Dr. Brian I. Daniels, the Director of Research and Programs for the PennCHC. "We look forward to our efforts with the U.S. Department of State to set in motion heritage protection initiatives that address legal concerns and community needs."

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About the Penn Museum

The Penn Museum has been transforming our understanding of the human experience since 1887. Dedicated to building connections between cultures, the Museum welcomes everyone to uncover the ancient past, gain an understanding of our shared humanity, and find one's own place in the arc of human history. For more information, follow @PennMuseum, visit [penn.museum](https://www.penn.museum), or call 215.898.4000.

About the Penn Cultural Heritage Center

The Penn Cultural Heritage Center is a research, policy, educational, and outreach center at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Philadelphia, Pa. By positioning communities in a leading role, the PennCHC reframes the preservation of cultural heritage within a context of social, political, and economic development. PennCHC participates in field projects, research, engagement in public policy, and public programs that emphasize the centrality of community priorities for successful

outcomes. Since its inception in 2008, PennCHC has been committed to the protection of cultural heritage from intentional destruction, looting, and trafficking.

About the Cultural Heritage Coordinating Committee

The Cultural Heritage Coordinating Committee (CHCC) builds cooperation across U.S. government agencies to protect and preserve culture around the world. The Department of State established the CHCC in 2016 under the Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act. Since 2004, CHCC member agencies have repatriated more than 20,000 cultural objects to more than 45 different countries and supported nearly 100 training programs in the United States and overseas.