Visitors to an Exhibition

“You could never imagine such highly advanced civilizations ancient people had until you see with your own eyes their relics.”

During the twenty-two months since it opened on September 23, 1962, approximately 660,000 people have visited the Junior Museum’s special exhibition Archaeology—Exploring the Past. Although planned primarily for children from ten to fifteen years of age, this exhibition has in fact an almost universal appeal. The very young are captivated by individual objects, such as the terracotta effigy jar from Mexico, and the china doll and ceramic marbles shown buried “Under New York City.” They find it fun, too, to push buttons and to look in peepholes while listening to explanations on telephones. Older students, often coming by assignment, are delighted to find illustrated in three dimensions objects or methods previously known only from reading or discussion—an actual foundation deposit, a pottery sequence from Nippur, an example of dating by comparison. Parents and teachers find the subject novel, and they particularly appreciate the organization of the exhibition into brief sequences, easily grasped with the aid of explicit titles and labels in simple language and bold type. Visiting archaeologists—and there have been many—are intrigued with the presentation and with the sometimes unsuspected resources of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in their field.

Welcome as these evidences of widespread interest may be, it is the everyday reactions of the youngsters for whom the exhibition was planned that count for most. Some of these reactions, culled from the bread-and-butter notes they often write, serve as captions for the pictures that follow.

Louise Condit, Assistant Dean in Charge of the Junior Museum
"We saw a mummy case with a woman supposedly in it, there were two eyes painted on it, the woman was supposed to look out of them into the world."

"I liked one part of the exhibit best—'Objects That May Be Found Under New York City.' We saw what the United States Customs House would be on top of, and learned that Archaeology does not only take place in foreign lands but can take place right here in New York."

"We learned about scuba diving and I thought that was really very exciting. It is surprising that they can discover so much from the bed of the sea."
“We also saw a tomb which ancient Egyptians had built, and on it were pictures of slaves, people, and rulers. The Egyptians believed in a life after death that would be much like the life on earth. The tomb was a home of the soul. If a person could afford it he would decorate his tomb with pictures of everyday events hoping that the soul could experience the same events in the next world.”

“The excavators must have been very excited when they found these things.”

“I am partly of Greek ancestry, and up until I visited the Metropolitan I was fully unaware of the beauty and grace of Greek art. I thought of the Greeks, more or less, as warring people. I now know that they were people who loved beauty and perfection—quite human. I am grateful to the Metropolitan for helping me awake to the beauty of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian art!”