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Summer days are winding down, kids are unwillingly (at least in my house) getting ready for school to begin, and a few more exhibitions have been visited. A few weeks ago, I took my mother-in-law to the new Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia. The sleek and modern building sitting on Benjamin Franklin Parkway looks completely different from the beautiful old shaded house that was home to the Barnes collection on the Main Line. After finally finding the museum entrance (wayfinding needs some work), we walked into a looming concrete

space with incredibly high ceilings. As we made our way to the galleries, I enjoyed the stark architecture but was not sure how they were going to “recreate” the old experience as I had heard they had done.

Once we entered the galleries, I was relocated in my mind to that old house and all its rooms. Each room looked as it did before, cluttered yet crafted by Barnes himself. Overwhelming with masterpieces, various paintings of all shapes and sizes, old door hinges, and furniture, it was amazing. The Barnes Foundation did a wonderful job of creating a new modern building to house an “old building” of sorts and an amazing collection. My only frustration with the Barnes Foundation is that there is SO much to see. It is completely overwhelming to see in one visit. It is a place that will be enjoyed over



Taxidermied species, pelts, bones, and antlers in the case are the backdrop for the touchable items below in Secrets of the Diorama at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University. Courtesy of Beth Redmond-Jones.



The Academy displayed the original detailed miniature diorama which was the model for their full-size Dall Sheep diorama located in their North American Hall. Simply beautiful. Courtesy of Beth Redmond-Jones.

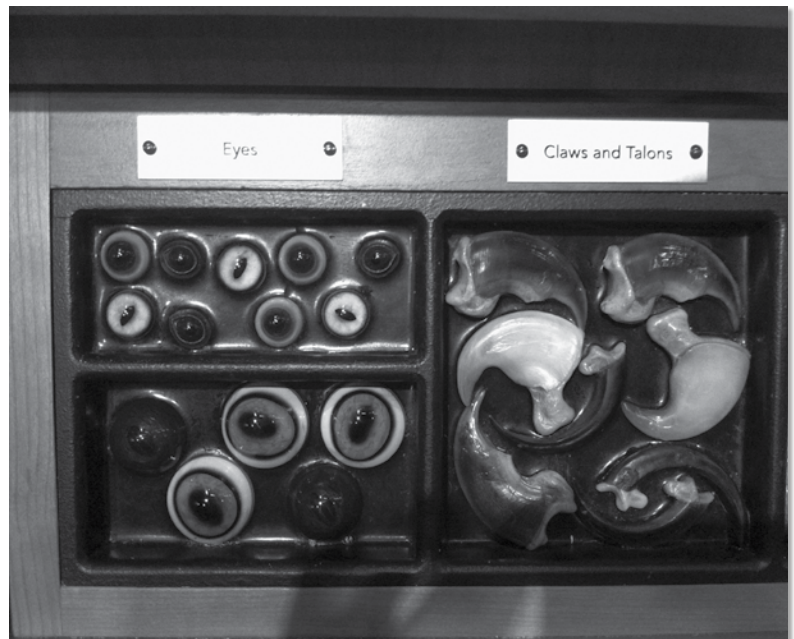


Touchable artificial sand, mud, and dung in Secrets of the Diorama. Adjacent label explains that the sand is real, mixed with plastic to hold the grains in place, and that artists mixed dirt with plastic and color pigments to make the mud and dung. Courtesy of Beth Redmond-Jones.

time and multiple visits. I think we're going to have to buy a membership.

I recently took my youngest daughter, Lena, to *Secrets of the Diorama* at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University. This small but content filled exhibition explores what is inside the animals in the Academy's dioramas, the detailed fieldwork that took place, and the artistry to make it all look "real." My eight-year-old enjoyed the interactive and touchable elements, but failed to connect with understanding the artistry and attention to detail that was/is required to create a diorama. I loved it. A gem of an exhibition.

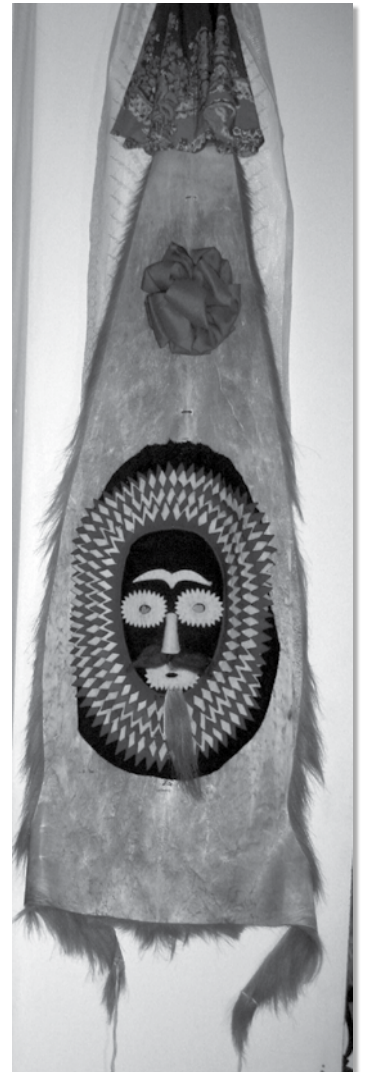
Paul Orselli sent me this after a summer trip abroad. *I recently visited the National Museum of Ethnography in Sofia, Bulgaria. The museum itself is housed in the former royal residence right downtown. Displays of costumes and artifacts as well as everyday objects fill the exhibition galleries. (I was shocked that many of the objects on display are completely "out in the open" on top of*



Touchable eyes, claws and talons used in taxidermied animals. Courtesy of Beth Redmond-Jones.



Docent showing a “trick wedding bottle” with four spouts (It spills wine on the groom!). National Museum of Ethnography, Sofia, Bulgaria. Courtesy of Paul Orselli Workshop.



Tall Kukeri mask, nearly 1 meter high. Courtesy of Paul Orselli Workshop.

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pedestals and other display furniture—but this also allowed roaming guides to pick up objects to show and talk about with visitors.)

One exhibition at the Ethnographic Museum that I found especially interesting was a display of Kukeri masks and traditions. Kukeri (which roughly translates to “mummers” in English) are scary-looking creatures (represented by men in costumes made of primarily natural materials like fur and wood) that walk around towns in Bulgaria after New Year to scare away “evil spirits” to ensure happiness and a good harvest in the spring.

People in Kukeri costumes parade around town ringing bells of all sizes and trying

to look scary. If they knock on your door you are supposed to reward them with wine or rakia (which is a sort of Bulgarian grapa).

The exhibition displayed Kukeri masks, costumes, and bells (even hung in doorways so that they could be rung by visitors). Another interesting facet of the Kukeri tradition brought out by the exhibition is that many other countries in Europe share similar traditions of masked and costumed paraders meant to scare away bad spirits. So “mummers” from such countries as Italy, France, Germany, and Poland were shown on video displays and on large graphic panels describing each country’s particular twists on the annual celebrations.

As a sidebar to Paul's submission, there are current-day mummers in Philadelphia, and there is a Mummer's Museum (www.mummersmuseum.com). The museum houses an amazing collection of mummers paraphernalia and memorabilia dating back to the turn of the 20th Century; the costumes are amazing in their own right. And, if you are ever in Philadelphia for the New Year, be sure to stick around

for the mummers' parade, the oldest folk parade in America (http://www.phila.gov/recreation/mummers/mummers_parade.html).

If you see any exhibition gems or any exhibition that you think our readers should know about, drop me a line and we'll put in the next issue of Exhibit NewsLine. Cheers! ✨



*Display of multiple Kukeri masks hanging in a framework enclosure.
Courtesy of Paul Orselli Workshop.*