

“Vessels of the Past”

Ophelia Parrish houses ancient pottery

BY JENNIFER LEWIS
Staff Reporter

Beginning Tuesday, Ophelia Parrish’s art gallery will become the temporary home of an art exhibit composed of 28 pieces of Egyptian pottery, including some dating as far back as 5000 to 4000 B.C.E. Accurately called “Vessels of the Past,” this exhibit is on loan from the Royal Ontario Museum and will be displayed in the gallery until Feb. 19.

Aaron Fine, director of the Truman art gallery, said pieces of pottery like those in the exhibit are one of the most common things found at excavation sites and are very useful in the field of archeology.

“It’s durable enough to survive the years and it can help us understand who was doing what and when,” Fine said.

Fine also said the exhibit is very exciting because of its difference from the art gallery’s usual contemporary art shows.

“We don’t usually have that many art historical shows,” Fine said. “This exhibit is definitely one of the most dramatically ancient that we’ve done, as far as I know. It’s also the first thing we’ve done that is affiliated with a major museum, so it’s kind of prestigious. As far as sheer antiquity and prestige, this show takes the cake.”

The pottery vessels in the exhibit represent the range of Egyptian civilization from the earliest culture to the Late Period of 664 to 332 B.C.E. and were used for everything from drinking beer to holding temple offerings.

Truman art professor Sara Orel will be curating the “Vessels of the Past” exhibit during its time at Truman. As Truman’s resident Egyptologist, Orel is the reason behind the pottery’s presence in the gallery. Inspired by the upcoming Faculty Research Conference, Orel said she wished to obtain examples of Egyptian artifacts to complement her lecture on her work at the ancient Egyptian burial site of Beni Hasan.

“The first place I went to ask for a donation was the Royal Ontario Museum because I did my dissertation in Toronto, and they agreed,” Orel said. “It’s very nice of the Royal Ontario Museum to loan us this stuff. It’s the first time we’ve ever had an exhibition like this, and they’ve helped walk us through a lot of the procedures as we went. Hopefully, it will be the first of many exhibits like this.”

Orel’s lecture will focus on how to look at an archaeological site that has been excavated and recorded many years previously and how to get new information from such sites. Excavations are extremely limited now in Egypt, Orel said, so scholars frequently have nothing but old records and information to work with to discover new things.

Orel also said Truman students and Kirksville residents are fortunate to get the opportunity to view such a great display of ancient culture so close to home.

“It’s a really good chance for Truman students to see this,” Orel said. “The closest students could go to see an exhibition of this quality would be Chicago. In fact, I think some of these pieces are even nicer. It’s really a special opportunity.”

Samantha Lyons, a senior art history major, is one of several students assisting Orel with this project. Lyons said her role has been to compile research and write excerpts on several of the pieces included in the exhibit.

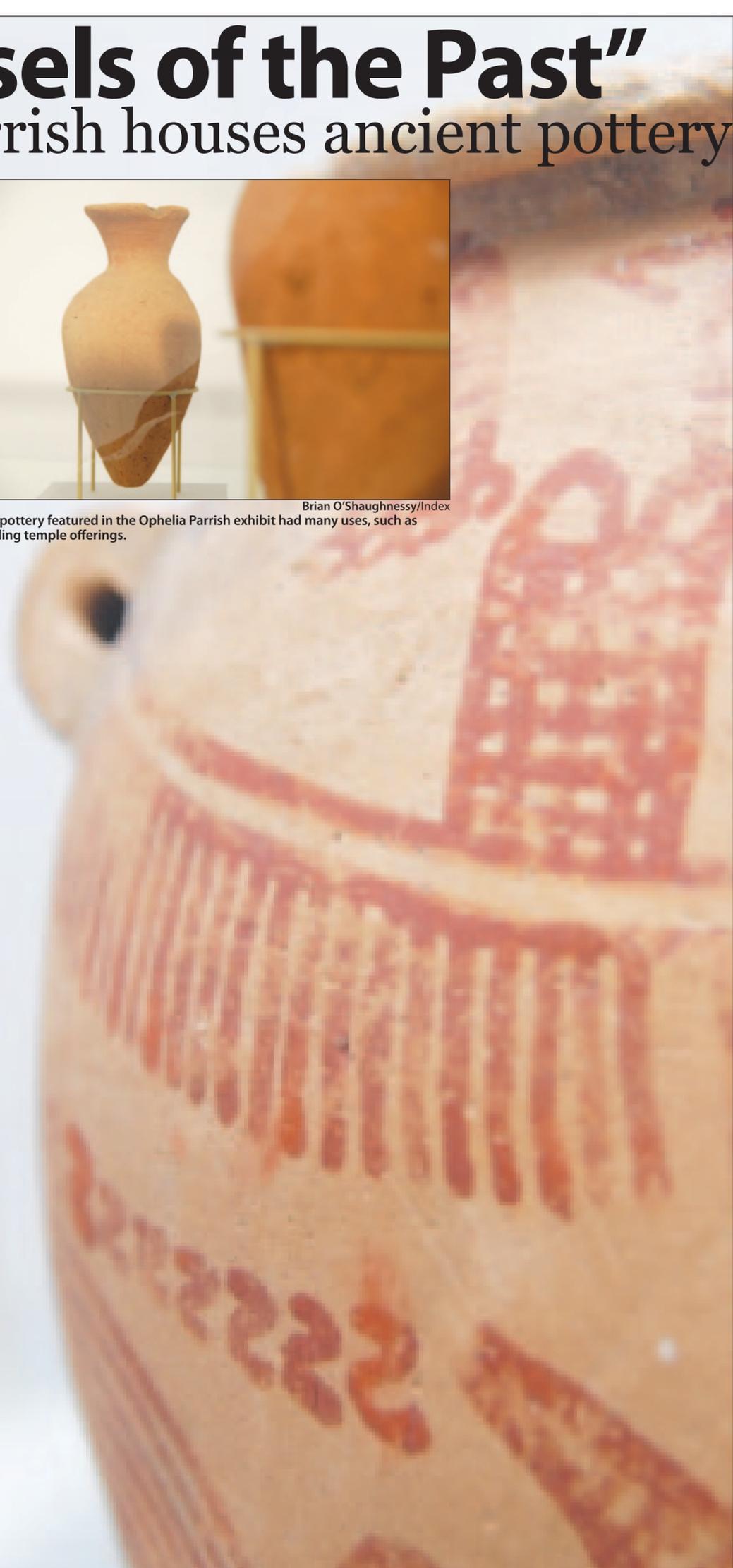
“I focused on predynastic pottery, which is pottery that was created from 4000 to 3000 B.C.E. and I got to focus on quite a few different aspects in my research,” Lyons said. “For one, I concentrated on the material the vessel was made from, for another I did the subject matter of the vessel, and for a third I focused on the archaeological message, so it was fun to have a wide range of angles to talk about Egyptian art.”

Lyons also said Truman students are not the only ones who will benefit from the presence of the “Vessels of the Past” exhibit.

“I think even the Kirksville community will benefit from this because there aren’t very many museums in Kirksville, so it’s a good way to connect with art from the past,” Lyons said. “I would definitely encourage students to come and take a look, because it’s not every day that you get to be this close to relics of the past that are this old, and it’s really incredible to be a part of.”



Brian O’Shaughnessy/Index
The pottery featured in the Ophelia Parrish exhibit had many uses, such as holding temple offerings.



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Ophelia Parrish will feature an ancient Egyptian pottery exhibit from Tuesday through Feb. 19. Art professor Sara Orel was the inspiration behind bringing the pottery to the gallery.

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