

## TREASURES TAKES SHAPE IN THE ROYAL BC MUSEUM EXHIBIT ARTS DEPARTMENT

On a Tuesday afternoon, Colin Longpre stands in the middle of the museum basement. He's surrounded by boxes, shelves, weird-looking tools, acres of moulding, a couple of free-standing doorways – and columns. Lots of Greek columns. It's all part of the upcoming *Treasures: The World's Cultures from the British Museum* exhibition, the design of which will echo the Greek revival theme of the British Museum itself.

"These are all built in-house," says Longpre, acting manager of the Exhibit Arts Department, gesturing to the huge wooden portals that will be placed throughout the *Treasures* exhibition. Same goes for hundreds of wooden boxes used to mount small artifacts, dozens of plexiglass-topped display cases – with all new locks, as per British Museum instructions – and thousands of teeny tiny block-shaped dentils that will adorn the amphitheatre-like curved walls inside the exhibition. In fact, just about everything for *Treasures* is being built from scratch.

When wood trim to complement the Greek motif proved too expensive, Royal BC Museum exhibit arts technicians instead ran strips of Styrofoam through a hot knife they cobbled together, splatter-painting them to give them the right texture. Limestone pillars? As if. Instead, technician Kate Kerr paints the pillars to look like the real deal, using everything from rollers to feather dusters to her own hair. "I just ran around the studio gathering textured things. I was trying everything," she says. "We put our all into this job!"

Longpre agrees. "There isn't always a set way of doing something," he says. "We're having to invent methods and use materials in different ways." It's all part of putting on a great show. "The museum has been doing this kind of stuff for a long time, so we've got the expertise. We get a lot of calls from some of the smaller museums, and we offer advice."

Longpre and his staff of artists, apprentices and carpenters will be hard at work until the May 1 opening of *Treasures* to create the magic that has come to be associated with Royal BC Museum exhibitions. "It's a busy, busy place."

**Massacre? Or mass overdose?** Find out more with a visit to *Treasures: The World's Cultures from the British Museum*. When British archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley dug up a few graves in the Royal Cemetery at Ur (in Southern Iraq), he discovered rich artifacts dating from 2600 BC to 2000 BC, including the gold headdress pictured at right. In one grave – dubbed the Great Death Pit – Woolley's crew found the bodies of 68 elaborately adorned women. Beside the bodies were cups which may have contained a poison – or possibly a drug.

> **Treasures tickets now on sale at [www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Treasures](http://www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Treasures).**



Colin Longpre crafts pieces of Styrofoam into crown moulding (top), while Kate Kerr uses a feather duster dipped in paint to recreate a limestone look (above).



## SAVING HISTORY, ONE JOURNAL AT A TIME

If someone handed you a smattering of journal entries – say, ones that were written a hundred years ago by the Governor General’s 15-year-old daughter – you’d be pretty interested. Not because they’re written by a fact-bound historian, but because they come straight from a kid’s soul. You’d want to know what kind of trouble tomboy Marjorie got up to on her Okanagan ranch, especially with that little brother of hers, Archie. Riding ponies, shooting small furred things, reporting on events from the latest church supper (and of course, dishing on the town gossip) – it would make for a pretty fine read, wouldn’t it?

The traditional keepers-of-historical-records didn’t think so. When the journals of Ishbel Majoribanks Gordon, First Marquess of Aberdeen and wife of Governor General John Campbell Hamilton Gordon, were copied out and bound into great descriptive tomes of the political goings-on of the day, young Marjorie’s musings were left out. (And unless they dealt directly with events in the political arena, her mum’s writings were axed, too.)

But deep down we know better. The *really* interesting bits are the *faux-pas* committed at state dinners, the family dramas and the social rabblousing recorded by the mother-daughter team. (Doesn’t the international appetite for “America’s Next Top Model” tell us this?)

On Wednesday, Feb. 4, the Royal BC Museum invites visitors to attend archivist Kathryn Bridge’s free noon-hour talk: *The Story of Marjorie Gordon’s Journal*. As Manager of Special Projects at the BC Archives (and with a special interest in children’s record-keeping), Kathryn will indeed dish – about how 15-year-old Marjorie Gordon’s priceless recordings were almost lost in the shuffle.



Image A-01071 (part), BC Archives

Marjorie (second from left) stands with her family in front of the Government House in Victoria, BC, in 1895.

## Updates



- The BC Museums Association recently honoured the Royal BC Museum with an award for *Free Spirit: Stories of You, Me and BC*. The Honourable Steven L. Point, Lieutenant-Governor of BC, presented the Special Council Award of Merit for the project. At the same event, exhibit arts technician Cuyler Page (above) took home an individual award for his years of service to the BC museum community.
- Top marks go to two Royal BC Museum security supervisors for their on-the-job dedication. Dave Jacks and Gary Drinkwalter were recently honoured by the Corps of Commissioners for their years of excellent service at the museum and archives. “The amount of value they bring to our organization is incalculable,” says Bill Chimko, Royal BC Museum Risk, Security and Business Continuity Manager. “They take on numerous management duties when regular staff aren’t here.”
- Drop by the Museum Café and have a look at what’s hanging on our walls. We’ve got art from up-and-comers Melanie Schambach ([www.melanieschambach.com](http://www.melanieschambach.com)) and the Marlo sisters ([www.marlostudios.com](http://www.marlostudios.com)). Colourful and full of hope, this artwork (and maybe a cuppa) will brighten your day.

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 **ROYAL BC MUSEUM**

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