

PRESS RELEASE

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Jennifer Kirker Appointed Associate Director of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology



Jennifer Kirker

Ann Arbor, MI—The University of Michigan’s Kelsey Museum of Archaeology is pleased to announce the appointment of Jennifer Kirker as its new associate director. Working closely with Museum Director Nicola Terrenato, Kirker will coordinate the efforts of the institution’s multidisciplinary staff by facilitating special exhibition programming, developing and implementing outreach endeavors, and overseeing operations in support of the Kelsey Museum’s mission to advance the understanding and appreciation of the ancient Mediterranean world. She will begin her position on September 18, 2023.

Kirker brings to the Kelsey Museum more than 20 years of leadership experience and a passion for public education—particularly in connection with university museums. She comes to the University of Michigan from the Michael C. Carlos Museum at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, where she spent the past five years as senior director of development. In that role, Kirker cultivated professional relationships with internal and external stakeholders to drive annual multimillion-dollar fundraising efforts. In addition to leading the charge on the institution’s revenue growth, Kirker oversaw the expansion and retention of museum members, launched and managed DEI and social justice initiatives, and supported Emory students through the establishment of an experiential learning fund, among other transformative projects.

As associate director at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, Kirker will encourage long-term growth and planning, with a goal of maximizing the institution’s impact. Her involvement will touch every facet of the Kelsey Museum, from overseeing daily operations to participating in creating and executing a strategic plan that unites staff, faculty curators, and university and community partners under a shared vision.

“The Kelsey Museum community is excited to welcome Jennifer Kirker this fall,” said Terrenato, who serves as the Esther B. Van Deman Collegiate Professor of Roman Studies and curator for the archaeology of the Italian Peninsula in addition to director of the museum. “Her start marks another important step for the future of our institution. We look forward to seeing the ways in which the Kelsey Museum’s reach, research profile, and reputation expand under her leadership.”

An anthropological archaeologist by training, Kirker received her degrees in anthropology from the University of California at Santa Barbara and Pennsylvania State University, completing further coursework at Penn State and the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Prior to her work at the Carlos Museum, Kirker served as the director of the James B. and Rosalyn L. Pick Museum of Anthropology at Northern Illinois University (2012–2018)—leading the development of award-winning, mission-driven exhibitions that transformed the Pick Museum into a pillar of campus-community collaboration. Kirker also served in leadership positions at the Freeport Art Museum (2006–2012), Trammell and Margaret Crow Collection of Asian Art (2005–2006), and Farmers Branch Historical Park (2001–2006), again playing key roles in the fiscal and educational efforts of those institutions.



Kirker at the Step Pyramid of Djoser in Saqqara, Egypt.

“My career is dedicated to the vision that museums can connect the world, building understanding and empathy for people across the globe and through time,” Kirker said. “There is so much opportunity for the Kelsey Museum to increase its research, impact, and support to build on the museum’s reputation as an important center for the study of the ancient world. I am excited about this opportunity to work closely with the director, staff, faculty, and community stakeholders to achieve the vision of the Kelsey Museum of Archeology to create knowledge, explore the past, and educate for the future.”

The Kelsey Museum of Archaeology—a unit of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts at the University of Michigan—advances understanding and appreciation of the ancient Mediterranean world through its collections, research, exhibitions, and fieldwork. As a museum at a public university, the Kelsey Museum embraces a vigorous public outreach mission, engaging with local residents and visitors of all ages. The Kelsey houses more than 100,000 artifacts from the civilizations of the ancient Mediterranean, including the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome, dynastic and Roman Egypt, and the Middle East.

Hours and Admission

The Kelsey Museum of Archaeology is open Tuesday–Friday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m., and Saturday–Sunday, 1–4 p.m.; it is closed Mondays and University holidays. Admission is free to all visitors. The Kelsey offers public tours and events throughout the year, both in person and virtual. For further information, see lsa.umich.edu/kelsey/news-events.html.

For more information, please contact

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