
The Art of Seals

A Gallery Guide



The Art of Seals

Aesthetic and Social Dynamics of the
Impressed Image from Antiquity
to the Present

by

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Foreword

The idea for this exhibition grew out of my keen scholarly interest in pre-Hellenistic Near Eastern seals--their aesthetic qualities, their social importance, and their significance as vehicles of cultural transmission in antiquity. I am currently involved in a long-term research project on seals of the Persian Empire (ca. 550-330 B.C.). This particular material is not part of the collections of the Kelsey Museum and will not in any case be available for exhibition purposes in the near future. Nevertheless, I have wanted for some time to explore problems of seals and sealing practices through the medium of public exhibition. And so I decided to investigate the collections of seals and seal impressions in the Kelsey Museum in order to devise an exhibition which would relate at least in general terms to my ongoing research project.

It soon became apparent that the collections of the Kelsey are almost overwhelmingly rich and diverse. Rather little of this material may be said to dovetail with the very specific substantive areas in which I have developed any professional expertise--but all of it is certainly of great relevance to one or another conceptual issue which my work on pre-Hellenistic Near Eastern seals involves.

In fact, I became so fascinated by what the Kelsey collections were revealing about aspects of continuity in seal use and social significance from pre-Hellenistic times into much later periods and across varied cultural horizons, that I decided to allow this point to be the focus of the exhibition. This decision led almost inevitably to the idea of broadening the scope of "The Art of Seals" to include representative material from other collections of The University of Michigan--material medieval to modern derived from the Orient, Western Europe, and the New World as well as from the ancient and early Islamic traditions represented in the Kelsey Museum. From there, it was only a small step to realize the impact of including a subsidiary display of thoroughly contemporary reflections of these seal-using traditions.

Special museum exhibitions may serve a variety of functions. The concept of displaying material in an aesthetically pleasing and an instructive way is a unifying principle implicit in any exhibition. But beyond that, the range is great. At university museums such as the Kelsey, a multi-faceted educational purpose is usually mandated. An exhibition is meant to reflect and to further scholarly endeavor; it must instruct university students (often as participants in the planning of the exhibition, and always as an important audience for it); it is also geared to the rest of the academic community--meant to address material in a manner meaningful to a scholarly audience; and finally it is intended to serve the interests of the larger community--to inform the lay public.

"The Art of Seals" has been planned with the disparate goals of a university museum very much in mind. Generated initially out of specialized scholarly interests, the entire process of the creation of this exhibition has energetically informed my own long-term research project and has provided insights which have already found (and will continue to find) active reflection in my teaching. By the same token, the integration of material from a variety of University collections has increased my awareness of the richness of Michigan's holdings and of their potential for further research. Hopefully, the juxtaposition of objects and documents drawn from these normally dispersed collections will be a source of institutional and civic pride for others as well. Beyond that, the exhibition is meant to attract attention to the study of seals and their uses--both among the community of students and scholars at The University of Michigan and elsewhere and also among the lay public. The items brought together here from other collections are for the most part valued in their "home" settings by virtue of their importance as objects and/or documents--but not specifically as seals or as sealed artifacts or manuscripts. Displaying them in the context of seal traditions per se thus presents them in a fresh perspective.

The small adjunct exhibition--the addendum to all of this, in the two galleries designated "Impressions of Today"--obviously addresses young people particularly. In this sense it is for the Kelsey Museum an experiment in community out-reach according to current jargon. Youth-oriented and even whimsical as it ostensibly is, the initial inspiration for "Impressions of Today" came nonetheless from rather ponderous musings on problems of the study of ancient seals and sealing practices. Adults as well as children are cordially invited to explore modern analogies of age-old traditions and to experiment making impressions from a variety of types of seals modern and ancient.

Generally an exhibition marks the culmination of an intellectual effort--the final distillation of thought and research on a specific topic. Here, however, the viewer is invited to participate in an active learning process. Just as the aesthetic and social dynamics of the impressed image remain a continuing part of our cultural tradition, so our understanding of them is by no means in a final state. "The Art of Seals" is intended to stimulate increased interest in a broad range of issues rather than to offer a definitive statement on all the material assembled for display. For this reason, full scholarly documentation of the exhibition will take place after the fact in the form of a volume of essays by specialists who will bring their expertise on specific traditions to bear upon the larger issues presented by the temporary juxtaposition of diverse material in the galleries of the Kelsey Museum. This Guide is, by contrast, intended to provide an overview and a permanent record of the exhibition. It also serves to supplement the deliberately limited information presented in case labels (where it has seemed important not to allow written statements visually to compete with the small and detailed objects they are meant only to complement).

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Six units of The University of Michigan have most generously loaned objects and documents for "The Art of Seals." To do so has taken time and effort on their parts, and the Kelsey Museum is most grateful for their eager cooperation. I take this opportunity to thank them collectively and individually:

Bentley Historical Library: Francis X. Blouin Jr., Director; William Wallach, Assistant Director; Thomas E. Powers, Archivist; James Craven, Conservator; Nancy Bartlett, Reference Archivist

William L. Clements Library: John C. Dann, Director; Galen Wilson, Manuscripts Curator

Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library--Department of Rare Books and Special Collections: Helen Butz, Acting Director; Louise C. Youtie, Researcher in Papyrology; Mary Ann Sellers, Rare Book Librarian; Martha A. Little, Conservator; David Whitesel, Supervisor

Museum of Anthropology: Jeffrey R. Parsons, Director; Henry T. Wright, Curator; Laela Minc and Laura Junker, Research Assistants

Museum of Art: Evan Maurer, Director; Anne Lockhart and Marshall Wu, Curators; Carole Cunningham, Registrar

Alfred Taubman Medical Library: Yvonne Wulff, Director; Dottie Eakin, Acting Director.

A number of significant objects in "The Art of Seals" belong to collections which are on permanent loan to the Kelsey Museum from the American Schools of Oriental Research and from Mrs. Irene B. Goudsmit. This material thus continues to be of great value to the Museum--here enriching the exposition of ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian seal use.

In order to mount the contemporary segment of the exhibition we have received kind assistance and generous loans from many local residents whose contributions we acknowledge here:

Jamie Fine
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Many have assisted in the production of "The Art of Seals." I thank Sue Webb for extensive photography for publicity and documentation purposes; Carol Taylor and Carol Hellman (respectively), of University Publications, for designing and managing the production of the posters, invitations, and Guide.

At the Museum itself, a number of graduate students have assisted in the project: Meg Morden, Mark Garrison, Jim Higginbotham, and Gail Hoffman. I am grateful to all of them for their hard work and for their enthusiasm. Meg Morden has been the primary participant, her endeavors funded by the Kelsey Museum through a Research Assistantship.

So cooperative an effort has "The Art of Seals" been that it is difficult to isolate all the tasks performed by key individuals. In the office, I wish to thank Rachel Vargas especially for her expert troubleshooting. Kathi Davis, Administrative Assistant, has been a powerful force in many capacities ranging from the arduous typing of labels and this Guide to the handling of all publicity and many other exhibition-related matters too numerous to mention.

Laurie Talalay energetically switched gears from professional archaeological drafting work in order to make the drawings of cylinder seal impressions which appear in the exhibition. I am also grateful to her for a number of ideas which very tangibly enriched the show. Elizabeth Higashi, Kelsey Librarian as well as History of Art doctoral candidate, was an indispensable source of information on the Islamic material.

Amy Rosenberg, Conservator, is to be thanked not only for her cleaning and mending of pieces in the exhibition and for her vigilant oversight of installation conditions, but also for her research on the optimal medium for impressions of the Kelsey seals used in display.

Pamela Reister, Registrar, has been and continues to be a mainstay of the project. Her traditional functions have of course been performed impeccably. But to these I should add that her reorganization of the Seleucia excavation archives and objects greatly increased the potentials for research on this material. Furthermore, she has been a wonderful source of inspiration and practical assistance particularly with respect to the "Impressions of Today" segment in all its aspects. I also wish to thank Pamela's assistant, Teresa Lederle, as well as Mary Weichmann, Janet Donovan, and Joan Foley—who volunteered on the Seleucia archives project.

David Slee is an artist; he is also the technician and designer for all Kelsey installations. More than for any other exhibition on which David and I have collaborated, I am at a loss adequately to describe the range and impact of his work on "The Art of Seals." The very excellence of David's work dictates that its nature and complexity will not be apparent to the viewer. That is to say, the artistry in the exhibition design lies in its ability to invite meaningful appreciation of the displayed objects--not in its revelation of the difficulties overcome in the process. David's careful and creative thought has gone into every case, in order to make the objects tell their own stories.

I should like to thank John Griffiths Pedley, Director, and Elaine K. Gazda, Associate Director, for their support and encouragement. I am also grateful to the Board of Associates of the Kelsey Museum for their participation in aspects of the exhibition program and to the College of Literature, Science and the Arts under whose auspices the Museum received the word processor used to produce this Guide.

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Introduction

Preliminary Definitions

Technically, a seal may be any object which is used to render an impressed image on a secondary surface. Thus, a seal need not be an object originally made for the purpose of producing impressed images. In antiquity, for instance, a person might even use his thumbnail or the hem of his garment in place of a seal per se. Ancient texts record such practices; and in Case 1, item nos. 2-3 offer actual examples of the thumbnail usage (here employed to countermark impressions produced by artistic seal devices).

The foregoing definition is, on one hand, so general as to obscure all issues of formal and cultural nuance in seals as works of art or as implements of social importance. On the other hand, there is decided value in the gross generalization simply because it underscores the essence of a seal as an active agent. A seal is capable of generating a theoretically infinite number of impressed images of itself. It is in this aspect of latent regenerative capacity that the overarching bond linking all types of seals lies.

The secondary surface involved in the act of sealing may be a plastically receptive one--such as leather or paper; or it may be a malleable one--such as clay or shellac in its pre-dried state or wax, glass, or metal in its warmed/molten state. All of these media are capable of receiving and maintaining a plastic (i.e., three dimensional) impression directly from the pressure of the seal into the surface. The secondary surface may also be a medium characterized by and exploited for its absorbent qualities--a medium such as cloth, paper, leather, or "living" skin. In this case, the seal may be coated with ink or paint in order to render a flat image of contrasting color onto the host surface.

This exhibition focuses upon seals as objects specifically designed to serve as transmitters of impressed images. We draw an admittedly fine definitional line here between seals and the dies used to produce coins. The crafts of die cutter and seal engraver are closely allied. Indeed, they must often have been practiced by one and the same person especially in ancient and medieval times; and the problems of technique, composition, and iconography encountered in both are closely related. Nevertheless, the mode of production of the coin (the impressed image yielded by a coin die struck into a disc of molten metal) differs significantly from that of the sealing (the impressed image yielded by a seal per se). Coins by their very nature are mass-produced by carefully regulated governmental agencies. An individual or a business does not (or at least is not supposed to)

strike his/its own coins as need arises. By contrast, an essential aspect of the production of a sealing is its intimate and even unique link with the individual or institution which uses it. This link is based partly on symbolic aspects of the seal design (which often relates directly to the identity of the user). But it is also based on the importance of the individual act of applying the seal to produce an impression.

Just as coin dies are related to seals, so woodblock carvings and printers' plates also share significant characteristics with seals. But here again, distinctions must be drawn in order to make the subject of our inquiry meaningful on levels of active social function as well as purely mechanical similarity.

The Study of Seals and Sealing Practices

Clearly, the study of seals must involve an understanding of the objects themselves and also the impressions they are used to create. Seals have been valued for their intrinsic properties and have been collected as antiques for about 5,000 years. Thus, for instance, a horde of four Mesopotamian cylinder seals were found to have been carefully and deliberately imbedded in the pavement joints around the podium of a Parthian temple at Uruk in ca. 100 A.D. These seals ranged in date from about 2800 to 1300 B.C.

In Chinese culture literary testimony documents a similarly intense interest in prizing and collecting old seals. A seventeenth century A.D. poem by Shih I Shan, entitled "I Bought an Antique Seal," characterizes this:

...

As for me, I often empty my purse
 To purchase old bronze seals
 Which, big and small, crowd my writing desk--
 Seals of chin and Han, down the Six Dynasties,
 Corroded, earth-eaten and stained
 Or bright with silvery patina:
 Some embellished with carved tortoise
 Some snake, lion and inverted ladle;
 Some engraved on six sides
 Some two, but all beautiful;

...

Though small, their worth to me is no less
 Than ancient goblets, basins and jars.
 I wonder if they are by providence preserved
 To last a thousand and many more years.
 If so then the spirits of the gods
 Must, I presume, be always with them!

(T.C. Lai, Chinese Seals, 1-3)

The European Renaissance gave rise to a high level of enthusiasm for ancient sealstones of the classical tradition. Large collections were established, and this connoisseurship in turn stimulated production of contemporary seals based on classical models.

Antiquarian sentiments of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries prompted a new era of seal collecting in the West. These great collections of classical engraved gemstones were published in beautifully illustrated volumes which unfortunately tended to be uncritical in scholarly terms—their sumptuous etched illustrations not as reliable as they were aesthetically captivating renditions of the ancient objects. The ardent, if sometimes uninformed, connoisseurship of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries encouraged the art of forgery such that many museums and private collections to this day include large numbers of these imitations among their genuine classical seals.

The methodical study of seals both ancient and medieval is a relatively recent phenomenon—really beginning only in the second half of the nineteenth century, despite the age-old and widespread traditions of antiquarian interest in them. For classical seals this scholarship, pioneered by the great Furtwangler, focused on stylistic issues such as attributing unsigned seals to the hands of specific craftsmen who had signed other works. This endeavor remains a primary area of investigation in the classical field. By contrast, among authorities on ancient Near Eastern seals little attention has been paid to the question of hand or even workshop attribution because the names of Near Eastern seal carvers are not known to us either from labels carved into the works themselves or from literary accounts. Rather, in this field work has focused mainly upon determining chronological and regional typologies of style and iconography. This trend in research has been encouraged by the sheer abundance of excavated Near Eastern material unearthed from the nineteenth century on at a variety of sites—many occupied continuously for several millennia.

In Europe, the main priorities of scholarship on seals have related to the documentation of heraldic iconography—in a milieu where medieval traditions of heraldry and coats-of-arms remain significant to those whose filial genealogies and institutional histories can be traced back to these early times.

Universally, it is the systematic study of sealing practices which has been neglected until rather recently. This is the case even for the ancient Near East and medieval/Renaissance Europe—two areas for which material remains are rich in sealed documents. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to investigation of the nuances of the functional interplay between seal motifs and their uses in the administrative, legal, ritual, and personal contexts of complex document-oriented societies.

Questions which need to be addressed include the following:

What was the relationship between seal quality and user's social status; or between seal motif and user's status?

How did directives of royal iconographic programs for state seals effect changes in seal iconography in various social strata of the same culture?

In what contexts were antique seals actually used--and what evidence is there for discerning patterns of filial transmission of heirloom seals?

In what situations did specific protocols for seal use pertain? When, for instance, did a government agent affix the seal of his office to a document, and when did he use his own personal seal?

These and many other questions can only be answered through the study of sealed documents. The seal itself, if known as an object but not as an impression in its original context, is of limited value for such investigations despite its greater appeal as a collectible.

An exciting aspect of the study both of seals and of sealing practices is the extent to which research methods and goals prevalent in the scholarship on one cultural setting may help to stimulate creative initiatives in another. With the European material, for instance, much is already known about the compositional and iconographical principles underlying the formulation of heraldic emblemata used for coats-of-arms and seals. These principles became canonized. It would be potentially rewarding to examine the modes of thought and convention governing these canons of design specifically in order to broaden the theoretical scope of current art historical inquiry into realms such as the ancient Near Eastern--which are less richly document in this particular regard.

It is with such issues in mind that "The Art of Seals" departs in a new direction--attempting to generate cross-cultural and cross-temporal inquiry.

Seals and Seal Impressions in the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology

Material displayed in "The Art of Seals" offers a representative selection from the holdings of the Kelsey Museum which pertain to the subject. In no category has an attempt been made to exhibit an entire corpus of artifacts. The seals range in date from about 3500 B.C. to about the eighth century A.D., with a single example dating to the twelfth-fourteenth centuries. In cultural terms, these seals offer an extensive although not encyclopedic view of pre-Hellenistic Mesopotamian types and styles. A collection donated by the eminent Assyriologist, Professor Leroy Waterman forms the nucleus of this group. Mesopotamian seals excavated by The University of Michigan at the Hellenistic and Parthian site of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris are valuable additions to this corpus--not least because they were apparently heirlooms in this late context. Seals on permanent loan from the American Schools of Oriental Research provide a small but significant group of objects excavated at the holy city of Nippur in Mesopotamia.

A number of our more interesting Dynastic Egyptian seals are displayed. These derive from the permanent loan of Mrs. Irene B. Goudsmit and include several important examples of the Middle Kingdom. The Minoan culture of Crete is also represented by numerous examples--all purchased from Charles Seltman. Classical Greece is, however, represented by only one seal--also part of the Seltman purchase (Case 12, no. 14). A solitary example from the Persian empire but roughly contemporaneous with the Greek gem is displayed in the same case (no. 3)--this a gift of Mr. Henry Gillman from Jerusalem.

It is in material from the Hellenistic through Roman occupations of Egypt and Mesopotamia that the seal collections of the Kelsey Museum are especially strong. Michigan's excavations at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris and at Karanis and Dime in the Egyptian Fayoum have provided extensive groups of seals ranging from the second century B.C. to the fifth century A.D. and documenting a rich tradition of iconographical motifs both pagan and early Christian. To this corpus of excavated seals is added an interesting group of seals from Egypt and Syria purchased in the 1920's, 30's, and early 40's. Excavated and unexcavated Graeco-Roman sealstones still mounted in ancient ringsets add a special dimension to the exhibition (note particularly the fine example in Case 3, no. 11). Several examples of Sasanian seal art (from Mesopotamia and Iran of the third through early seventh centuries A.D.) derive from Seleucia (e.g., Case 12, nos. 12 and 15).

Egypt of the Islamic period is represented by an inscribed carnelian seal still in its ringset (Case 3, no. 9) as well as by a large decorative clay textile stamp (Case 13, no. 6) and by a small clay inscription stamp (Case 13, no. 24). The first two items derive from the extensive collections of Roman and Islamic material gathered in Egypt by Alexander G. Ruthven and his son Peter and later donated to the Museum.

The single Western European seal of medieval date (Case 11, no. 14) is a fine bronze piece which came to the Museum as part of a collection of coins. Although something of a cultural anomaly in the context of the Kelsey, it is significant for purposes of comparative iconography--not least as it demonstrates a link between traditions of late Sasanian Iran and the imagery canonized in Christian traditions of the West later on. As far as we have been able to ascertain, this is the only Western medieval seal (as distinct from seal impression) in the collections of The University of Michigan.

Diverse as these examples of seals are, the richness of the material in the Kelsey Museum is especially great in terms of seal impressions. These are found on a variety of early Mesopotamian clay objects and documents: clay jar coverings, envelopes, and inscribed tablets (Case 1, no. 8, Case 4, nos. 2-4, Case 16, no. 19). The Kelsey collections provide a significant view of the perpetuation of these early traditions of seal use in the large numbers of clay and bitumen sealings for papyrus rolls excavated at Karanis and Seleucia (e.g., several in Case 16) and in the important corpus of stamped shipping and storage amphoras from the same two sites (Case 9). Administrative uses of seals are also documented for the Islamic period--here by items such as stamped glass weights and glass medallions, the latter originally fused onto glass vessels (Case 16) to itemize, measure, or authenticate the contents.

Examples of seal impressions used for decorative purposes are varied in cultural origin and chronological range. Particularly interesting are the examples of stamped pottery assembled in Case 17. These range from archaic Etruscan wares to late antique red ware plates with impressed Coptic Christian emblems. Once again, this display represents only a sampling of the material in the Museum's collections.

Scholarly publications in monograph form of specific groups or subgroups of seals and impressed objects in the Kelsey Museum include the following classic studies:

John Bodel, Roman Brick Stamps in the Kelsey Museum (Ann Arbor 1983)

Campbell Bonner, Studies in Magical Amulets (Ann Arbor 1950)

Barbara Johnson, Pottery from Karanis (Ann Arbor 1982)

Robert H. McDowell, Stamped and Inscribed Objects from Seleucia on the Tigris (Michigan 1935)

George C. Miles, Contributions to Arabic Metrology Vol. II (New York 1963)

and

Wilhelmina Van Ingen, Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum--University of Michigan (Cambridge, MA 1933).

Although selected pre-Hellenistic Mesopotamian stamp seals will be included in a forthcoming catalogue by Edith Porada (Corpus of Near Eastern Seals in North American Collections Vol. II), much of the early Mesopotamian material remains unpublished, as does the bulk of the later material which has not derived from excavated contexts. Furthermore, the seals from Michigan's excavations at Seleucia have never been published as a corpus--despite the full treatment given the seal impressions from the same site by McDowell. For Karanis, neither the seals nor the clay and mud sealings have been published. Clearly, there are numerous research projects on aspects of seals and seal usage for which the Kelsey's collections are admirably suited and deserving subjects.

Seals and Seal Impressions in Other Collections of The University of Michigan

The Alfred Taubman Medical Library may seem an unlikely repository for antiquities. Nevertheless, a number of "amuletic" seals with carved images relating to healing magic are housed there. These seals form part of the Bonner Collection--of which another significant portion resides in the Kelsey Museum. The Taubman group, as well as many of those in the Kelsey, were published by Bonner in his Magical Amulets. Since the Taubman portion of the collection has never before been placed on display, it is especially significant to be able to include this fascinating material in "The Art of Seals" so that it can be appreciated by the public. (These amulets are always available for study by serious scholars who request access through the Medical Library.)

The Museum of Anthropology has an eclectic and significant selection of material relating to seals and sealing practices. Some of it derives from staff excavations and field surveys in the Near East and Mexico.

Other material has come to the Museum in the form of gifts of artifacts donated by friends of The University who have collected them on travels and ethnographic expeditions in Central Asia and the Far East.

In the first category, two particularly notable pieces are the ivory stamp seal (Case 1, no. 4) which is the earliest seal of all those in Michigan collections, and the fragment of a stamp-decorated brick from Farukhabad, Iran (Case 17, no. 22). The latter is the earliest artifact of any type in Michigan collections pertaining to traditions of impressing techniques. In the second category, the seals from China and Tibet (Cases 2, 3, and 13) are an important addition to this exhibition--representing a wide variety of materials and elaborate forms. Once again, because this material is not displayed in the galleries of the Museum of Anthropology, it is especially rewarding to be able to include them here in juxtaposition to a range of related artifacts.

The Museum of Art houses a major collection of Oriental art which includes several examples of seals--the most impressive being the twelfth century gold signet ring from Java (Case 3, no. 19) and the eighteenth century brass university seal from China (Case 13, no. 4c). From the Museum of Art's fine and extensive collection of Chinese scrolls with seal impressions, space dictated that we select only two examples for display here (Cases 7 and 19). But others are routinely on exhibit across the street within the context of Oriental painting and calligraphy traditions rather than cross-cultural sealing traditions. So too, of the many prints and drawings in the Museum of Art's collections we have borrowed only three--specifically to demonstrate the uses of and devices on the collectors' ink-stamps impressed upon them (Cases 5 and 19) rather than to address the art historical significance of the works themselves.

The three other lending units of The University all specialize in the acquisition and safe-keeping of written documents, many of which happen to bear seal impressions. While the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections is rich in early sealed documents dating from about the sixth century A.D. up into the eighteenth century, the Clements Library includes in its vast holdings sealed historical documents of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for the most part. The Bentley Historical Library is a repository for documents relating to the history of the University and the State of Michigan--and thus its holdings bring us from the nineteenth century into thoroughly modern times.

From all three of these collections there were many documents to choose from. Our selections were made naturally enough on the basis of the significance of specific items to the study of seals and sealing practices as well as on the basis of the state of preservation and visibility of the sealings. Adequate space for display is always an issue in the charming but small Victorian-Romanesque "villa" which is the home of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology. Nevertheless, we have been able to accommodate a large number of sealed documents of the Western tradition through David Slee's ingenious design of an open manuscript console with sixteen drawers housing additional items. The viewer is encouraged to sit down to examine the sealed manuscripts in these drawers as if he were in a private study.

Material borrowed from the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections will be found primarily in this manuscript console (Case 14) and in Cases 4 and 5. The large taxation decree of Charles VII and the sumptuously illuminated patent of nobility issued by Maria Theresa are particularly imposing. But the sixth century Coptic codex with its beautiful wax sealings and the early English legal documents are equally significant, if less eye-catching, examples of their respective genres. In addition to these manuscripts and related material, we are pleased to be able to include from the Department of Rare books and Special Collections four sixteenth century books with exquisite impressed leather bindings (Case 18).

The importance of the material from the Clements Library is symbolized by the seventeenth century deed of sale sealed by two ancestors of George Washington—who ultimately used one of the seals impressed on this document as his own (Case 6). The viewer will also note a document sealed by Thomas Jefferson (Case 4) and numerous other interesting sealings (especially in Case 14) which ratify official transactions of the eighteenth century from a number of the newly formed United States. The one document which could not be borrowed from the Clements Library is the magnificent Treaty of Ghent, of which we include a photograph of the affixed seal impressions (Case 4). This manuscript is on permanent display at the Clements and should not be missed in a tour of that Library.

From the Bentley Historical Library come particularly noteworthy documents pertaining to the seals of The University of Michigan (Cases 6 and 14 B). The sixteenth century papal decree sealed with the beautiful stamp of Gregory XIII (Case 14 A) may seem anomalous in the context of the Bentley's holdings; but it derives from a personal autograph collection which came to the Bentley as a set not meant to be broken up. This sort of thing is a common enough occurrence in every museum (witness for that matter the European seal mentioned earlier in connection with the Kelsey). It makes the periodic pooling of University resources for display along thematic lines an especially important activity, however—as a means of focusing attention on material which in its home setting is not likely to be exhibited because it does not relate to the primary historically defined *raison d'etre* of that unit.

Seals: History and Social Significance

The earliest seals retrieved from archaeological contexts to date derive from Near Eastern sites of the late seventh through the sixth millennia B.C. Clay stamp seals from Catal Huyuk in Turkey are typical examples of these neolithic artifacts, carved with strong geometric motifs. No seal impressions have so far been found in such early contexts, however. It is thus postulated that the clay stamps were used to decorate cloth and perhaps also the human body with colorful dyes. Wall paintings from Catal Huyuk depicting decorated fabric hangings lend support to the plausibility of this suggestion.

Although the Near East can claim precedence in the early use of seals, neolithic Greece was not far behind. Interestingly, the devices of many of the stamp seals retrieved from neolithic sites in Greece (dating to the fifth millennium) closely resemble those from the East. Bold abstract motifs such as meanders, spirals, and stacked linear elements nested in quadrants seem, in fact, to be recurring patterns in the repertoires of seal carvers operating in widely scattered cultural settings. Comparison of the drawings of neolithic stamp seal devices in Case 1 with some of the seals and impressed images displayed in Cases 13 and 17—ranging from the Far East, to the Near East, and to Mexico, across temporal zones equally diverse—will demonstrate this phenomenon.

The development of writing in Mesopotamia and Iran during the course of the second half of the fourth millennium seems to have been a profound stimulus to the development of long distance trade as well as to religious-political administrative structures. One can also argue the converse—that it was the development of expanded commercial enterprise and complex social organizations which necessitated the development of writing. In any case, it is at precisely this point that seals emerge as critical tools of the social apparatus in the Near East. The development of literacy hand in hand with the development of seal usage on documents and commercial goods is a pattern which we see repeated only slightly later in Egypt. Then in the West, beginning with Greece and Crete of the Bronze Age, we find the pattern asserting itself again. Similarly in the Far East it was the growing importance of written records during the first millennium B.C. that stimulated the real flowering of a seal tradition. Finally by the same token, in Western Europe traditions of seal use which had been so important in antiquity declined during the "Dark Age." But they emerged again forcefully in medieval times in step with the return of more widespread literacy and commercial/political enterprise. In England, for instance, seal impressions survive which establish the use of royal seals before the arrival of William the Conqueror; and in the course of the twelfth century seal use had become an established and widespread social

phenomenon once again. The particular characteristics which mark the better documented European conventions of seal design and seal use from later medieval times into the present had already become firmly placed at this point.

This whole aspect of a developmental link between seals and the administrative needs of complex societies is perhaps best demonstrated by the situation in Mesopotamia in the second half of the fourth millennium B.C. At just the point when bureaucratic activities were expanding with the rise of city-states, a new development occurred in the art of seals: the invention of the cylinder seal. An image carved around a cylinder could be rolled over the surface of a clay jar sealing or a clay writing tablet to produce a repeating impression of theoretically infinite length. Thus, the user could rapidly impress a surface with a continuous mark of ownership, closure, or ratification without even lifting the seal. Furthermore, the area available for images on the cylinder was less restrictive than that on a stamp seal. On a relatively compact cylindrical piece of stone, perforated longitudinally for suspension fittings, a greater potential variety and complexity of images could be included, and with greater economy of material. Both of these features have suggested that the stimulus for developing the cylinder emerged from the specific demands of a society which increasingly recognized the seal as an indispensable, effective, and efficient means of identification of personal or institutional authority when applied to commodities and to written transactions.

The cylinder seal is a form which enjoyed extraordinary and persistent popularity in the Near East until the Hellenistic age--sometimes almost completely ousting the stamp seal and in other periods coexisting with that more straightforward form. Undoubtedly the special appeal of the cylinder in this particular social milieu was due in part to aesthetic predilections as well as to purely practical considerations such as those outlined above. This issue will be touched upon later.

From the time in Mesopotamian history when we first have texts which refer to seals, it is clear that they held great significance in that culture as active extensions of the identity of the person or institution owning and using them. Such texts reveal that the loss of a seal could be a serious problem--and one reflecting not only the legal importance of the seal but also the psychological bond between owner and seal. Certain Assyrian dream texts actually allude to dire personal consequences attendant upon the loss of one's seal: the death of progeny. From our perspective this may seem a bit of an overreaction to an essentially practical problem. But an attempt to understand the force of such concepts in this particular milieu may take us a long way toward defining the essential characteristics of seals which have charged them with special power universally and which continue now to render them fascinating as an expressive vehicle to children and to adult artists.

In trying to understand this phenomenon we must appreciate the dualistic aspect of the art of the seal. Like any reusable mold, the seal is, by its very nature, endowed with virtually unlimited creative potential. But unlike a sculpture mold shelved in a coroplast's studio, a

seal functions on another level as a work of art in its own right--as a work of art in which the representational aspect of the emblem is not the important thing at all. Part of its aesthetic and social value lies in its material, its shape, its workmanship, and its fittings for suspension (where applicable). Another part of this value lies in its creative essence: its power of becoming as well as simply being. This regenerative potential is the essence of living things--not inanimate objects. And herein may lie the root of ancient man's intense psycho-social identification with his seal as well as a modern child's fascination with them.

Seal devices designed to be impressed into plastically receptive surfaces are almost always carved in the negative, in "intaglio," and in reverse image. Thus when impressed the seal will yield a positive, projecting three-dimensional image and any inscription included in the seal device will become legible. An artist must carve such a seal as if standing deep within each representational form and working his way outward to the exterior surface. This implies a reversal of the creative process as we are accustomed to articulating it. With the seal the artist is, conceptually speaking, hidden within a pre-existing subject. We, on the other hand, tend to conceive of artistic creation in terms of the subject or idea being hidden within the artist. It is perhaps paradoxical that the creation facilitated by the seal carver (the functional manifestation of a conceptually pre-existing form) actually serves to engage that form inward, away from view.

In this inner-directed aspect the seal-proper functioned in the ancient Near East as a votive object, as a politically charged antiquity, or as a personal accoutrement of status. In its outward-directed form--functioning as a message conveyor of identity, status, prestige, and power covenant--the seal operated through the medium of its progeny: as impressed image rather than primary object.

This concept of the seal as a progenitor relates also to the fact that seals have tended in many societies to be favored family heirlooms. A number of Mesopotamian cylinders in our exhibition were found in late contexts which suggest that they had served in this way. And the document sealed by George Washington's great-great-great-great grandfather with a seal used 150 years later by the American president himself admirably demonstrates the continuity of this practice (Case 6).

Because seals have been passed on from one generation to another and have also been kept in museums or placed in deposits as treasured antiquities, they have played a major role in the transmission of artistic motifs across time. They have also been important vehicles for the transmission of motifs and ideas across geographical zones (see Case 1). Even in early antiquity seals traveled widely--as they went everywhere with their owners, who sometimes did indeed lose them abroad; and they were also undoubtedly favorite trophies of the battlefield. In the middle ages, ancient sealstones were often embedded into reliquaries as decorative ornaments. Thus we note one way in which, for instance, a Sasanian seal from the East might find its way to Europe many centuries after its manufacture as a result of the Crusades.

The imposing necklace in Case 3 illustrates a similar phenomenon. Here, an Islamic seal has been used as a decorative pendant surrounded by a veritable wreath of silver coins of the Czarina Catherine. This piece was collected in Siberia before the turn of the century, and it eventually found its way to Ann Arbor as a kind of trophy of travel in much the same manner as such things crossed vast distances in ancient and medieval times. Seal impressions have traveled even more than seals themselves--affixed to commodities of long-distance trade or sealing letters and treaties of state.

Seals have often figured in legends relating to prophecy and power. Such tales demonstrate the importance of seals as intrinsically valued items and as objects bearing representational devices of symbolical significance to the owner and to his society generally. An ancient Mesopotamian tradition has the great god Marduk, in his conquests over adversaries, seizing the Tablets of Fate and sealing them with his own seal in order to establish the destiny of men and gods alike. In his life of Alexander the Great, Plutarch recounts a dream of King Philip of Macedon in which he stamped his wife's belly with a lion seal--thereby presaging the birth of Alexander who would be like a lion. And a famous story told by the Greek historian Herodotos emphasizes the role of the seal as a kind of messenger of destiny. The Egyptian king Amasis advised the tyrant Polycrates of Samos to divest himself of his most treasured possession in order to ward off the evil bound eventually to be attracted to one so fortunate in worldly affairs. Polycrates therefore cast his seal into the ocean. It was promptly swallowed up by a fish. As Polycrates' luck would have it, a fisherman caught the fish and offered it to the tyrant. The prized seal was miraculously found, of course. Its reappearance forecast the fate of Polycrates always to be so fortunate as to be inescapably prey to ultimate evil. Rather similar prophetic tales of seals lost and found are preserved from early China as well.

Such stories relate to the aspect of seals as amulets--as objects imbued with special powers to protect their owners from various calamities. The Graeco-Roman seals in the Bonner Collection fall into this category in a very explicit way. Many of these bear devices of particular cult significance and supposed healing power (Case 15). But other seals could and did also function for their owners as talismans. There is ample evidence of this in textual sources. And significant evidence attests to the ritual "killing" of some seals apparently as a highly personal protective act at the death of the owner. The "killed" seal was deliberately defaced and then interred with the deceased--as if to render the seal somehow neutralized as an active agent for the owner, mirroring his own state of departure from the active world.

Impressed Images: Decorative and Administrative Uses

In our brief overview of the art of seals, we turn now to questions of usage. Since the earliest known seals apparently were used exclusively for decorative purposes, it seems appropriate to begin with that aspect here as well.

The impressed image has always had appeal for the decoration of pottery and textiles. Perhaps this is partly because by using various seals in different combinations a craftsman might produce distinctive and creative results with a high degree of efficiency. This practice is amply illustrated by the selection of black glaze ware on display in case 17. Palmettes of rather standardized type are interchanged with other elements such as gorgon heads in a seemingly endless variety of patterns.

It is noteworthy that bookbinders--beginning at least as early as 800 A.D., and probably earlier--adopted a similar approach to the efficient exploitation of the potentials of the impressed image. Compare, for instance, the stamped bowl in Case 17, no. 2, with the bookbinding in Case 19, no. 5. Both maximize the sober decorative effect of the isolated floral motif on a dark ground. The stamps used by bookbinders to impress designs into leather became increasingly elaborate. This is evident in the other examples assembled in Case 18--where allegorical figural images intermingle with complex geometric and floral patterns. By the fifteenth century, a labor-saving device called the roll-stamp had been devised to assist the artisan in expeditiously creating running border friezes such as we see on these volumes. Thus, a concept appreciated in ancient Mesopotamia--the concept of the cylindrical seal capable of producing extended patterns--reasserted itself in Europe within the framework of a specific "modern" craft.

The use of cylindrical seals for decorative purposes is well attested in antiquity. It has been postulated that the original development of the cylinder seal form in early Mesopotamia emerged from a specifically Sumerian ethnic predilection for rhythmic repetition both in the visual arts and in literature. In other words, some scholars have stressed the decorative potentials of the form as a quality more important than the practical considerations discussed earlier for the development and persistent popularity of the cylinder in ancient Mesopotamia. There is validity in both of these approaches to the issue; and they are by no means mutually exclusive.

Certainly this decorative aspect deserves some comment here. A comparison of the stamp seals in Case 11 with the cylinder seals in Case 10 reveals clear differences in artistic approach to the decoration of the two types of surface. For the stamp, the tendency was to produce isolated

emblematic images. The cylinder, on the other hand, gave the artist greater freedom to develop a more expansive compositional and even conceptual repertoire. Scenes involving several figures in lively interaction could be rendered; and aspects of narrative exposition could be explored. Furthermore, the ability of the cylinder seal to reproduce its device in extended strips enhanced the quality of a cyclical line both visual and narrative.

It is probable that the development of continuous architectural friezes first in the Near East and then in the West ultimately derived from the fact that the cylinder seal used as a decorative tool produced running borders of pleasingly repetitive composition, well-suited to moving the eye smoothly along the decorated surface. We can appreciate this quality in the interesting examples of Etruscan pottery assembled in Case 17 (nos. 27-29). Near Eastern decorative principles had a tremendous impact upon the art of Greece and Etruria in the early and mid-first millennium B.C. Another example of the specific stimulus provided by Mesopotamian cylinder seals is found in ninth century Athens in the form of gold bands decorated with friezes created by continuous rolling of intaglio-carved cylinders. These gold bands were used to bind the eyes and mouths of corpses in Geometric period graves.

The assertive, emblematic power of the stamp seal image has its own very different decorative validity. This is evident in a variety of media. Note, for instance, the use of stamped imagery on glass vessels as documented in Case 17, nos. 7-9 and 33-36. Here, two techniques for stamped impressions are illustrated. Nos. 7-9 and 33 are glass medallions which were formed by applying a molten blob of glass onto the still red-hot wall of a glass vessel or into a cavity in a piece of metal jewelry and then pressing an intaglio-carved stamp into the molten glass blob. Nos. 34-36 are fragments of glass vessels in which the plastic decoration was achieved by a tonged intaglio stamp.

The appeal of the stamped (rather than rolled) image was strong in late antique/early Christian art--where isolated, frontally directed icons were prominent features of decorative systems. This is beautifully illustrated by two red ware plates of the fifth century A.D. in Case 17 (nos. 23 and 25). Their Christian emblems dominate the expansive vessel interiors, riveting the eye with their uncompromisingly hieratic eloquence.

It is not always possible neatly to define distinctions between decorative and "administrative" uses of seal impressions. If we understand by the term administrative a variety of functions relating to message-conveyance above and beyond the decorative strictly for its own sake, then certain types of items straddle both realms in virtually equal measure. Two examples are the Coptic liturgical cakes in Case 17 and the stamped Chinese scrolls (Cases 17 and 19). The Coptic cakes are impressed with images of a highly decorative character. On the other hand, they are inscribed images designating the cakes as meant specifically for the Feast of the Eucharist. In a real sense, then, the cakes bear an emblem which verifies their function on a quasi administrative level, while also ornamenting them.

Turning to the Chinese scrolls, we have a situation in which a figural or calligraphic painting is considered incomplete until inscribed and impressed by the artist with one or more seals. The painter usually makes his own seals for application on his works. Proper form and placement of the vermillion sealing on the painting is every bit as critical a step in the creative process as is the painted image itself. Thus these seal impressions are assertively decorative in intent. Yet they are also administrative in function by virtue of the fact that they simultaneously act as signatures for the work of art. By the same token, the stamps of the connoisseurs who collect Chinese paintings are also meant to be decorative additions to the art; but they serve a definite practical purpose as well, in establishing ownership.

The administrative uses of seals are perhaps intuitively obvious on a general level. Seals may serve as distinctive marks which individuals apply in lieu of or in addition to a signature in order to authenticate or bear witness to transactions. Their impressions may also serve to close a document or commodity in order to render its contents inviolate. And finally, they may act as labels—particularly, of course, in commercial administrative contexts. When one investigates the nuances of seal usage in any specific cultural milieu, however, one soon realizes how complex the phenomenon is and how subject to intriguing variation from one historical setting to another.

All three administrative functions were operative in ancient Mesopotamian society. And yet even here, variations in sealing practice from one period to another make it uncomfortable to indulge in gross generalizations. Nevertheless, we can note that private individuals owned seals, kings owned them, gods owned them, and institutions of all levels owned them. Unfortunately, however, we have virtually no understanding of how (if at all) any register of seal motifs may have been kept which could be consulted in case of a question as to the authenticity of a given seal.

In ancient Athens, a decree was passed by Solon which made it illegal for a seal carver to keep an impression of any seal which he had sold. Presumably this was to prevent the artisan from producing replicas of any seal either for sale to another individual or for explicitly fraudulent purposes. But here again, one is left to wonder whether any public register existed in which seal devices were deliberately kept on record precisely for legal purposes of verification. Although we understand a good deal about the functions of seals in this social context (due primarily to allusions in literary sources), we remain ignorant about the mechanics of implementation of these functions. As indicated earlier here, the field is wide open for further research.

One of the many fascinating aspects of administrative usage of seals relates to the processes by which specific administrative seal devices were created. In "The Art of Seals" we have used the Great Seal of the United States as the vehicle for commenting upon this issue (Case 6). Since medieval times, when principles of heraldry were codified, seal devices in the Western tradition have been formulated according to set iconographic formulae which prescribe the symbolical content of specific images and dictate ranges of permissible compositional interactions between specific

motifs. Despite these guidelines, important choices must be made in the designing of an official emblem such as a state seal—choices of message. So too with personal seal devices, the rules of heraldry do not preclude the necessity of a decision-making process.

The purpose of this exhibition has not been to comment extensively on the historical evolution of specific emblems and iconographical images used on seals. Such a task would have been inconceivable given the cross-cultural and cross-temporal thrust of the presentation. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of so many seals and seal impressions forces us to suggest the ultimate importance of a few deceptively simple-sounding questions: Why and how was any given seal device composed? What specific meaning did it have for its owner? How much and in what ways did the owner relate to the style, quality, and imagery of his seal? In what ways was the appearance of a given seal dictated by its practical function as an office seal, a personal seal, or an institutional seal? Certainly for the seals of antiquity, these questions are as yet unanswered.

Living Legacies

The legacy of age-old seal traditions survives into our contemporary space-age culture. In "Impressions of Today," a variety of displays exhibit different aspects of the persistence of the aesthetic and social dynamics of the impressed image.

In Case 23, we see essentially vestigial legacies displayed. The plastic and clay imitations of early seal impressions which occur on the liqueur bottles, for instance, no longer serve a bona fide practical function. They are primarily decorations meant to elicit in the prospective purchaser a sense of the product as a "classy" item. Similarly, the printed imitations of sealings on the tobacco products are mere decorative reminiscences of commercial sealing traditions that go way back to the fourth millennium in Mesopotamia and are documented in the "Art of Seals" by examples in Case 1, no. 8a-c, and Case 9.

In Case 22, however, the commercial emblems impressed on soap, candy, and cookies still serve a primary advertising function. And of course they are also decorative. Even though these impressed images are now mass-produced in molds, they are meant to recall the stamping process which would have been used for such items in earlier ages.

We have already suggested one dynamic quality of the seal which has guaranteed its persistent appeal for thousands of years: its latent regenerative potential, its active aspect of becoming as well as being. In designing "Impressions of Today," the continuing impact of this essential quality of the seal became readily apparent with respect to several realms.

The domestic art of cookie decorating is one important milieu in which the active essence of the seal lives on. The stamps assembled in Case 21 are a significant group of types. Note especially the springerle stamp plates, with their lovely figural devices of country scenes, Christmas tableaux, and the like. The six-imaged springerle stamp overlaid with metal is particularly fine. It comes to us from the Haab/Parr family and has been passed down from mother to daughter for several generations since its original purchase 100 years ago. The domestic realm thus offers us a thoroughly woman-dominated social counterpart to the traditions of generational seal transference documented so clearly in earlier times primarily by seals belonging to of men.

In observing children at work on artistic projects and in talking with contemporary adult artists, we become attuned also to the living legacy of the seal as a dynamic essence.

In Wall Display 3, the stamp pad ink drawing by Barry Kahn, lent by Yvonne Wulff Kahn, documents an artist exploring the possible systematic variations of the triangular elements which compose the drawing. In one of his notebooks, Kahn describes the arbitrary but carefully chosen rules he established to govern the execution of the drawing. He was engaged in a conscious exploration of the limits and potentials of materials, tools, and space in the exploitation of the energy of repetitive pattern produced by the stamped image.

The stamp art work of E.F. Higgins III, on the other hand, explores a different kind of phenomenon. Higgins is bridging the gap between the impressed image as function and the impressed image as form. Both of these artists are, however, using stamp seals to make conscious statements about art imbedded in the nature of the work itself.

When you pass to the Hands-On gallery of "Impressions of Today," we hope that a bit of whimsical play will stimulate a personal sense of rapport with the elemental essence of the art of seals - that sense of rapport which most children seem to share but many adults have forgotten.

Checklist of Objects in the Exhibition

Case 1

Seals and Sealing: Early History

1.

ILLUSTRATED MAP: SELECTED SITES
YIELDING EARLIEST KNOWN SEALS

The seals from Hassuna, Arpachiya, Tepe Gawra, Tell Judeideh, and Çatal Hüyük date from the close of the seventh-sixth millennia B.C. Those from Sesklo and Nea Nikomedeia in Greece are of the late sixth-fifth millennia.

2-3.

BITUMEN AND CLAY SEAL IMPRESSIONS
WITH SUPERIMPOSED THUMB NAIL MARKS
First-third centuries A.D.

U-M excavations at Seleucia 1935
Kelsey Museum 35671 and 35905

4.

ANTHROPOMORPHIC IVORY STAMP SEAL:
CROSS-HATCH MOTIF

Ca. 3600 B.C.

U-M excavations at Farukhabad, Iran
Museum of Anthropology 60798

5.

IVORY APE SEAL: CONTINUOUS SPIRALS

Ca. 2000 B.C., from Crete

Giamalakis Collection

After Spyridon Marinatos, Crete and Mycenae (London 1960) pl. 12.

6.

PINK MARBLE CYLINDER SEAL: KNEELING
"PIG-TAILED" FIGURES

Ca. 3100-2900 B.C., from Mesopotamia

Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman
1959

Kelsey Museum 26804

7.

LAPIS LAZULI CYLINDER SEAL: MYTHICAL
CONTEST OF BULL-MEN AND ANIMALS

Ca. 2300-2100 B.C.

U-M excavations at Seleucia 1935
Kelsey Museum 94533

8a-c.

CLAY JAR COVERING MULTIPLY
IMPRESSED BY A CYLINDER SEAL

Ca. 2300-2100 B.C.

American excavations at Nippur
Permanent loan from American

Schools of Oriental Research
Kelsey Museum 63.6.108 a-b and
63.9.91

9.

DIAGRAMMATIC SECTION OF A JAR
OPENING COVERED WITH CLAY
IMPRESSED BY SEALS

This drawing illustrates the type
of function documented by the clay
seal impressions of no. 8a-c.

After Henri Frankfort, Cylinder
Seals (London 1939), fig. 1.

10a-c.

CLAY SEALINGS ON WOODEN TABLETS:

a) Athena; b) Zeus and a bearded
portrait; c) Name seal of a
Chinese commander

Second-third centuries A.D., from a
cache of inscribed tablets found at
the Niya site in Central Asia by
Sir Aurel Stein.

After Sir Aurel Stein, On Central
Asian Tracks (London 1933), fig.
44, 1/4/6.

11-12.

CLAY SEALINGS: ATHENA; PORTRAIT OF SELEUCOS I

Fourth-third centuries B.C.

U-M excavations at Seleucia 1935

Kelsey Museum 35802 and 35701

Case 2
Materials and Techniques of
Manufacture

1.

MARBLE STAMP SEAL: DRILLED BLOB

Ca. 3200-2900 B.C.

American excavation at Nippur

Permanent loan from American

Schools of Oriental Research

Kelsey Museum 63.6.7

2.

WOOD STAMP SEAL: FLORAL MOTIF

First century B.C.-fourth century A.D.

U-M excavations at Karanis 1935

Kelsey Museum 24662

3.

CLAY STAMP SEAL: LINEAR DESIGN

First-fourth centuries A.D.

U-M excavations at Karanis 1927

Kelsey Museum 3693

4.

BITUMEN CYLINDER SEAL: FILE OF PRIESTS(?)

Ca. 1400 B.C.

U-M excavations at Shafarabad, Iran

Museum of Anthropology

Registration No. 55

5.

LAPIS LAZULI CYLINDER SEAL:

HEROIC CONTEST

Ca. 2300-2100 B.C.

American excavations at Nippur

Permanent loan from American

Schools of Oriental Research

Kelsey Museum 63.6.4

6.

CONCH SHELL

The spiral cores of large conch shells from the Persian Gulf supplied Mesopotamian cylinder seal carvers with an inexpensive and easily worked material.

7.

SHELL CYLINDER SEAL: SUPPLIANT APPROACHING DEITY

Ca. 2100 B.C., from Mesopotamia

Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman

Kelsey Museum 26826

8.

LAPIS LAZULI AMULETIC SEAL: CULT SCENE

Second-fifth centuries A.D., from Egypt

Kelsey Museum 26137

9.

BLOCK OF LAPIS LAZULI

10.

FAIENCE RING BEZEL

Ca. 1550-1200 B.C., from Egypt

Gift of Mrs. Carroll Paul 1940

Kelsey Museum 23481

11.

AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY GEM ENGRAVER AT WORK

After P.J. Mariette, Traité des pierres gravées (Paris, 1750)

"Certainly it (the art of gem engraving) is the most painful and discouraging of all others: For besides the Knowledge of Drawing, which is as necessary to an Engraver in Stone as to a Statuary or Painter; he is obliged, when he does whole Figures or Histories, to regulate his design, or Composition, according to the Method of engraving; he must avoid, for example, Perspective, which is of so much Advantage to a Painter, and the shortening of the parts of a Body; but must always strive to give his Figures a light and easy Position ... Another

Difficulty attending this Art is, that the Engravings are commonly done on such small stones... that it is scarce possible to draw the just Proportions with the Diamond-point, which greatly fatigues the Sight; nor can they be cut afterwards without excellent Eyes, and a very good Light. Farther, you cannot have the Assistance of Another to forward your Work; and the least Mistake in executing the Design is very difficult, if not impossible, to be amended. You must also form your Idea of the Design for the Reverse of the Engraving, and engrave deep what is to appear in high Relief. Add to this that the Stone is liable to be spoilt by many Accidents. All these Reasons discourage People from cultivating an Art that requires so much Precaution and Labour; and which is at the same Time without Protection of the Rich and Great."

L. Natter, Traité de la méthode antique de graver en pierres fines...(London 1754) xi.

12-16.

SEALS OF CARNELIAN, BLACK JASPER, YELLOW JASPER, CHACEDONY, AND MOTTLED JASPER

First-fifth centuries A.D., from Egypt

12. Kelsey Museum 26078

13-16. Taubman Medical Library

17.

FOUR-SIDED SEAL WITH UNFINISHED ENGRAVINGS IN VARIOUS STAGES

After A. Furtwängler, Die Antike Gemmen (Berlin 1900)

18.

GLASS MAGNIFYING LENS

Third-fifth centuries A.D.

U-M excavations at Karanis 1928

Kelsey Museum 25697

"(The emerald) alone of gems pleases the eye without tiring it. More than that, when the eye is wearied by intense application, it is refreshed by the sight of an emerald. There

is for instance no better relief for gem engravers, whose weary eyes are soothed by its soft green."

Pliny, Natural History XXXVII, xvi

"I just now remarked that mirrors are made which multiply any body which they reflect; I may add that all objects appear much larger if seen through water; letters, however minute and indistinct, appear larger and may be clearly seen through a glass ball full of water."

Seneca, Naturales Quaestiones, I, vi, 5

19.

AMETHYST SCARAB: ORIGINALLY INSCRIBED IN INTAGLIO WITH GOLD FOIL APPLIQUE

Ca. 1990-1785 B.C., from Egypt

Permanent loan of Mrs. Irene Goudsmit
Kelsey Museum 81.4.73

20.

AMETHYST STAMP SEAL: SPHINX

First-third centuries A.D.

U-M excavations at Seleucia 1935

Kelsey Museum 36739

21.

IVORY STAMP SEAL: SIGNET

Stevens Collection, from China
Museum of Anthropology 10929

22.

ROCK CRYSTAL AMULETIC SEAL: LION AND STAR

Second-fifth centuries A.D., from Egypt

Nahman purchase 1932

Kelsey Museum 26050

23.

GLASS AND GOLDFLEAF AMULETIC SEAL: MALE FIGURE

Seventh-tenth centuries A.D., from Syria

Ayvaz purchase 1941

Kelsey Museum 26166

24.
BRASS STAMP SEAL: SIGNET
Erlanson collection, from
Travancore, India
Museum of Anthropology 8509
25.
SOAPSTONE SEAL BLANK
Collection of Marshall Wu, from
China
26.
METAL TOOLS FOR CARVING NAME DEVICES
Collection of Marshall Wu, from
China

Case 3
Seals as Jewelry and as
Emblems of Status

1.
GLAZED STEATITE COWROID
Ca. 1550-1300 B.C., from Egypt
Permanent loan of Mrs. Irene
Goudsmit
Kelsey Museum 81.4.48
2.
GLAZED STEATITE SCARABOID
Ca. 1550-1300 B.C., from Egypt
Permanent loan of Mrs. Irene
Goudsmit
Kelsey Museum 81.4.47
3.
SILVER SEAL-RING BEZEL
Ca. 1550-1200 B.C., from Egypt
Bay View purchase 1971
Kelsey Museum 71.2.135
4.
FAIENCE RING: "BELOVED OF
AKHENATEN"
Ca. 1363-1347 B.C., from Egypt
Permanent loan of Mrs. Irene
Goudsmit
Kelsey Museum 81.4.76
5.
ISLAMIC SEAL USED AS DECORATIVE GEM
ON NECKLACE PENDANT WITH RUSSIAN
COINS OF CZARINA CATHERINE
Kennan gift, from Siberia
Museum of Anthropology 17552
6.
GREEN ABRASAX SEAL IN BRONZE RING
First-fourth centuries A.D., from
Egypt
Gift of Dr. Alexander G. Ruthven
1963
Kelsey Museum 63.4.48
7.
JASPER SEAL IN MODERN SILVER RING
Second-fifth centuries A.D., from
Syria
Ayvaz purchase 1941
Kelsey Museum 26120
8.
BRONZE SEAL RING
First-fourth centuries A.D., from
Egypt
Purchased from Dr. D.L. Askren 1925
Kelsey Museum 21657
9.
CARNELIAN SEAL IN BRONZE RING
Islamic period
Gift of Dr. Alexander G. Ruthven
1963
Kelsey Museum 63.4.49
10.
PORTRAIT BY HANS HOLBEIN 1532
A merchant with his seals and
sealing wax
Berlin-Dahlem Gemäldegalerie
After E. Kittel, Siegel
(Braunschweig 1970) pl. 2.
11.
CARNELIAN SEAL IN BRONZE RING
First century B.C., from Egypt
Purchased from Dr. D.L. Askren 1925
Kelsey Museum 21664
- 12-13.
BRONZE RINGS WITH SEALSTONES NOW
LOST
First-fourth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1935
Kelsey Museum 23326 and 23325
14.
QUARTZ BEZEL IN BRONZE RING
Fourth-fifth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1930
Kelsey Museum 22800

15.
BRASS AND GLASS STAMP SEAL PENDANT
WITH CRYSTAL SEAL
Nineteenth century A.D.(?)
Kelsey Museum
16.
CRYSTAL SIGNET AS PENDANT STAMP
Brodie gift, from China
Museum of Anthropology 14438
17.
HEMATITE SEAL IN MODERN GOLD PENDANT
SETTING
Second-fifth centuries A.D., from
Egypt
Tano purchase 1934
Kelsey Museum 26109
18.
BRONZE AMULETIC SEAL RING
Fifth-sixth centuries A.D., from
Syria
Ayvaz purchase 1941
Kelsey Museum 26165
19.
GOLD SIGNET RING
Twelfth century A.D., from Java
Museum of Art, Bequest of
Frank W. Funk, Jr.
20.
BRONZE SEAL RING
First-fourth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1929
Kelsey Museum 23085
21.
BRONZE SEAL RING
First-fourth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1929
Kelsey Museum 23085
22.
BRONZE SEAL RING
First-fourth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1929
Kelsey Museum 23073
23.
DRAWING AFTER A PAINTING IN THE TOMB
OF HUY: INVESTITURE WITH OFFICIAL
SEAL OF GOVERNORSHIP
Ca. 1350 B.C., Thebes Egypt
After E. Kittel, Siegel
(Braunschweig 1970) fig. 27.

- 24-25.
TWO SIGNET SCARABS
Ca. 2000 B.C., from Egypt
Permanent loan of Mrs. Irene
Goudsmit
Kelsey Museum 83.1.59 and 81.4.67

24. Inscribed: "keeper of the
Royal Seal, the Chief Steward
Sen'a-ib, esteemed by all"

25. Inscribed: "Royal Sealer,
keeper of the Seal, Häär"

Case 4
Seals Used to Ratify and to
Render Inviolable

1.
IMPRESSIONS OF THE ROYAL NECROPOLIS
SEAL OF THEBES SECURING DOOR TO THE
SECOND SHRINE IN THE TOMB OF
TUTANKHAMUN
Ca. 1338 B.C.
Photograph by Howard Carter 1922
After Howard Carter, The Tomb of
Tutankhamen (London 1954) 12.
2.
CLAY SEALING, INSCRIBED AND
IMPRESSED WITH A CYLINDER
2032 B.C., from Mesopotamia
Kelsey Museum 89096
3.
CLAY ENVELOPE IMPRESSED WITH A
CYLINDER
2029 B.C., from Mesopotamia
Source of acquisition unknown
Kelsey Museum 89015
4.
CLAY TABLET IMPRESSED WITH A
CYLINDER
Ca. 2100-1900 B.C., from Mesopotamia
Permanent loan of Mrs. Irene
Goudsmit
Kelsey Museum 81.4.115

5.
PAPER ENVELOPE SECURED WITH RED WAX
IMPRESSION OF THE SEAL OF
SHAKESPEARE'S DAUGHTER
Nineteenth century envelope
Fifteenth century seal
Haliwell-Phillipps Scrapbook
46694/85
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library
6.
SEALED LETTER FROM GEORGE III TO
FRIEDRICH WILHELM
Windsor Castle 1806
Miscellaneous Collection
William L. Clements Library
7.
SEALED LETTER FROM THOMAS CROKER TO
S.W. CROKER
1818
Miscellaneous Collection
William L. Clements Library
8.
PETITION TO ORACLE OF ISIS WITH
ORIGINAL CLAY SEALING
Ca. Fourth-fifth centuries A.D.
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library
1258-1259
9.
CLAY IMPRESSIONS OF A SEAL SIMILAR
TO NO. 8: EROS ON HIPPOCAMPOS
First-fourth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis
Kelsey Museum 26208
10.
SEALED DOCUMENT FROM THOMAS
JEFFERSON TO JOHN LAMB
Paris 1785
Miscellaneous Collection
William L. Clements Library
11.
SEALED ARABIC TAX DOCUMENT
Year 286 (?) of the Hegira
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library 4191
12.
PHOTOGRAPH OF SEAL IMPRESSIONS
RATIFYING THE TREATY OF GHENT
1814
The original of this document is on
display at the William L. Clements
Library.

Case 5
Personal Seal Devices

1.
PHOTOGRAPH OF PORTRAIT SEAL
IMPRESSIONS
Ca. 1650 B.C., from Crete
After E. Kittel, Siegel
(Braunschweig 1970) fig. 29.
2.
CLAY SEALINGS: BUST OF SERAPIS
First century B.C.-fourth century
A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1930
Kelsey Museum 24322
3.
CLAY SEALINGS: BUST OF HERMES
First century B.C.-fourth century
A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1929
Kelsey Museum 6275
4.
BITUMEN SEALING: JUGATE BUSTS OF A
KING AND QUEEN
Second-first centuries B.C.
U-M excavations at Seleucia 1935
Kelsey Museum 35790
5.
CLAY SEALING: HEAD OF HERMES
Second century B.C.-second
century A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 35584
6.
CLAY SEALING: FRONTAL PORTRAIT HEAD
Second century B.C.-second
century A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 35921
7.
LETTER SEALED BY ANN AUSTIN:
MALE PORTRAIT BUST
1817
Miscellaneous Collection
William L. Clements Library

8.
LETTER SEALED BY RICHARD SHERER:
MALE PORTRAIT BUST
1784
Miscellaneous Collection
William L. Clements Library
9.
BITUMEN SEALING: NUDE MALE
(HERACLES?)
Second century B.C.-third century
A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum
10.
LETTER SEALED BY EDWARD CROKER:
MONOGRAM AND FLORAL EMBLEM
1820
Miscellaneous Collection
William L. Clements Library
11.
BITUMEN SEALING: WINGED THUNDER-
BOLT AND STALK OF GRAIN
Second century B.C.-first century
A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 35721
12.
CLAY SEALING: MONOGRAM
Second century A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 35668
13.
GLAZED STEATITE SCARAB:
CARTOUCHE OF THUTMOSE III
Ca. 1490-1436 B.C. or later, from
Egypt
Permanent loan of Mrs. Irene
Goudsmit
Kelsey Museum 81.4.46
14.
LETTER SEALED BY CATHERINE CROKER:
NAME DEVICE "KATE"
1817
Miscellaneous Collection
William L. Clements Library

15.
RED WAX IMPRESSION OF WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE'S SEAL: INITIAL DEVICE
Seal: Fifteenth century
Impression: 1847
Halliwell-Phillipps Scrapbook
46694/75
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library
16.
COLLECTOR'S STAMP OF FRIEDRICH
AUGUST II OF SAXONY (lower right):
MONOGRAM
Stamp: ca. 1834
Etching by Jacques Callot: 1619
Gift of Mrs. Jean Paul Slusser
Museum of Art 1968/2.77

Case 6
Allegorical Emblems on Seals

1.
DEED SEALED BY ROBERT AND LAWRENCE
WASHINGTON
Sulgrave, Northamptonshire 1602
Miscellaneous Collection
William L. Clements Library

The left seal (of Robert
Washington) was used by his Great,
Great, Great, Great Grandson,
George Washington, 150 years later.
2.
EMBLEM OF THE GREAT SEAL OF THE
UNITED STATES - OBVERSE
Adopted in 1782

The original committee, formed on
July 4, 1776, to prepare a device
for the Great Seal of the United
States of America was composed of
Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and
Thomas Jefferson. Unable to reach
a consensus on iconographical
issues, the committee disbanded.
A new committee was formed in 1780
and chaired by James Lovell. With
the failure of yet another group
effort, a private citizen, William
Barton, was engaged to design the
seal. After much discussion

Barton's second attempt was accepted by Congress in 1782--Ben Franklin's adamant preference for the turkey over the eagle notwithstanding.

3.
DESIGNS FOR THE SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES MADE BY THE FIRST COMMITTEE
The reverse shows the Egyptians submerged by the Red Sea after the parting of the waters for the Israelites.

4.
DESIGNS FOR THE SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES MADE BY THE SECOND COMMITTEE
The reverse of this seal was to stress virtue, rather than victory over tyranny, in allegorical terms.

5.
CLAY SEALING: EAGLE
First-second centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 32149
Eagles and other large birds of prey have been favored power emblems from the third millennium B.C. to the present day.

6.
LAWS AND ORDINANCES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
1817
Bentley Historical Library

An act concerning the Seal of the University of Michigania.

Be it enacted by the University of Michigania that on the Seal of the University there shall be a device representing six pillars supporting a dome, with the motto "Epistemia" at their base, and the legend, "Seal of the University of Michigania" around the margin, and light shining on the dome from above; and until such seal shall be provided the President may use any temporary seal which may be convenient.

Passed at the city of Detroit on Friday the twelfth day of September, one thousand eight hundred and seventeen.

John Monteith
President

Attest
J.L. Whiting
Register

7.
SEALS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

To the left is a rendering of what the first seal, described in 1817, must have looked like. When the name of the University was changed in 1824, a new seal was devised. Described as "having upon it certain emblematick devices...", no impression of it is known to be preserved. A third seal was adopted in 1843. An actual impression of this so-called Minerva seal is on display in Case XIV B, Drawer 7. Here, the Goddess of Wisdom points a youth toward the Temple of Wisdom on a hill. Used until 1895, this device was finally replaced by the present seal emblem (at right) which features the Lamp of Knowledge.

Case 7
Oriental Signet Sealings

CHINESE LANDSCAPE WITH INK IMPRESSIONS OF ARTIST'S AND COLLECTORS' SEALS
Huang Chun-Pi, twentieth century
Museum of Art, the Marvin Felheim Collection

Case 8
Seals as Gems

1.
CARNELIAN: MYTHICAL FIGURE (APOLLO?)
First-third centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Dimé 1931
Kelsey Museum 22849

2.
GARNET: FRAGMENTARY DRAPED FEMALE
FIGURE
First century B.C.-third century
A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia 1931-32
Kelsey Museum 19163
3.
GARNET: WREATHED MALE FIGURE
First-third centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia 1935
Kelsey Museum 94526
4.
CARNELIAN: DRAPED FEMALE FIGURE
First-third centuries A.D., from
Tuscany
Gift of Dr. E.S. McCartney 1937
Kelsey Museum 92040
5.
CARNELIAN: FEMALE FIGURE WITH BIRD
AND SISTRUM
First-third centuries A.D., from
Egypt
Gift of Dr. Alexander G. Ruthven
1963
Kelsey Museum 63.4.30
6.
CARNELIAN: SPHINX
First century B.C.-third century
A.D., from Egypt
Gift of Dr. D.L. Askren 1935
Kelsey Museum 3249
7.
CARNELIAN: PECKING BIRD
Second-fifth centuries A.D., from
Egypt
Gift of Dr. Alexander G. Ruthven
1963
Kelsey Museum 63.4.31
8.
CHALCEDONY: PEACOCK PECKING AT FRUIT
First-fourth centuries A.D., from
Egypt
Khayat purchase 1930
Kelsey Museum 26016
9.
CARNELIAN: IBEX PROTOME
Third-sixth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
1928-32
Kelsey Museum 36738
10.
SANDWICHED GLASS: VICTOR AND FALLEN
FOE
Fourth-fifth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1929
Kelsey Museum 22851
11.
CARNELIAN: NUDE FEMALE WITH
CORNUCOPIA
First-third centuries A.D., from
Egypt
Gift of Dr. Alexander G. Ruthven
1963
Kelsey Museum 63.4.28
12.
CARNELIAN: DIONYSIAC SCENE
First-fifth centuries A.D., from
Jerusalem
Gift of Mr. Henry Gillman 1889
Kelsey Museum 87087
13.
CARNELIAN: MALE PORTRAIT BUST
Third-sixth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia 1928-32
Kelsey Museum 36737
14.
GARNET: FEMALE PORTRAIT BUST
First century B.C.-first century
A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia 1931
Kelsey Museum 19158
15.
GARNET: MALE PORTRAIT
Second-third centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia 1935
Kelsey Museum 94530
16.
CARNELIAN: MALE PORTRAIT
Third-fifth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia 1928-
32
Kelsey Museum 19164

Case 9
Stamped Amphoras

1.
AMPHORA WITH STAMPED HANDLES
First century B.C.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1929
Kelsey Museum 8126
Very few whole examples of this type of amphora are preserved. This one is unique in bearing one Latin stamp (left) and one Greek (right).
2.
MUD AMPHORA SEALING WITH IMPRESSIONS
Fourth-early fifth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1925
Kelsey Museum 24596
3.
STAMPED AMPHORA HANDLE
Third-first centuries B.C., from Egypt
Purchased from Dr. D.L. Askren 1935
Kelsey Museum 93830
4.
STAMPED AMPHORA HANDLE
Second century B.C.-early third century A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia 1935
Kelsey Museum 30202
5.
STAMPED AMPHORA HANDLE
Second century B.C.-early third century A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia 1935
Kelsey Museum 30194
6.
STAMPED AMPHORA HANDLE
Fifth-third centuries B.C. (?)
Purchased by F.W. Kelsey 1920, from Jerusalem
Kelsey Museum 1838
7.
STAMPED AMPHORA HANDLE
Second century B.C.-early third century A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia 1935
Kelsey Museum 30187

Case 10
Cylinder Seals of Mesopotamia

1.
WHITE MARBLE: ROWS OF FISH
Ca. 3000 B.C.
Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman 1959
Kelsey Museum 26831
2.
WHITE MARBLE: CULT SCENE WITH WORSHIPPERS, ANIMALS, VESSELS
Ca. 3100 B.C.
Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman 1959
Kelsey Museum 26827
3.
WHITE MARBLE: "BANQUET" SCENE WITH CHARIOT AND BOATING PROCESSION
Ca. 2500-2300 B.C.
Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman 1959
Kelsey Museum 26824
4.
SHELL: SEATED PRIESTS WITH TEMPLE SERVANTS
Ca. 2500-2300 B.C.
Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman 1959
Kelsey Museum 26818
5.
AGATE: HERO WITH RAMPANT RAM: WORSHIPPER BEFORE ALTAR
Ca. 700 B.C.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 94527
6.
WHITE MARBLE: HEROES WITH LION AND SNAKE(?)
Ca. 2600 B.C.
Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman 1959
Kelsey Museum 26825

7.
GREEN SERPENTINE: EAGLE GRASPING TWO
DEER

Ca. 2500-2100 B.C.

American excavations at Nippur
Permanent loan from American

Schools of Oriental Research
Kelsey Museum 63.6.58

8.
PINK MARBLE: HERO WITH RAMPANT LIONS

Ca. 2300-2100 B.C.

U-M excavations at Seleucia

Kelsey Museum 33619

9.
SHELL: ANIMAL CONTEST WITH DEER AND
EAGLE IN FIELD

Ca. 2300 B.C.

Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman
1959

Kelsey Museum 26822

10.
SHELL: PETITIONER APPROACHING DEITY
Ca. 2100-2000 B.C.

American excavations at Nippur
Permanent loan from American

Schools of Oriental Research
Kelsey Museum 63.6.95

11.
BLACK SERPENTINE: ENCOUNTER BETWEEN
MACE BEARING CONQUEROR-GOD AND
GODDESS

Ca. 2000-1600 B.C.

Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman
1959

Kelsey Museum 91600

12.
BROWN SERPENTINE: SNAKE GOD
NINGISZIDA WITH GODDESS, GRAIN,
LOAVES

Ca. 2300-2100 B.C.

Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman
1959

Kelsey Museum 26828

13.
SHELL: MEN AND TREE BEFORE SHRINE;
OSTRICHES, SNAKES, SCORPIONS
Ca. 2300-2100 B.C.

Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman
1959

Kelsey Museum 26819

14.
GREEN SERPENTINE: PETITIONER BEFORE
GOD WITH LION FOOTSTOOL

Ca. 2300-2100 B.C.

Permanent loan of Mrs. Irene
Goudsmit

Kelsey Museum 81.4.117

Case 11
Stamp Seals: Emblematic Images
Across Time and Space

1.
CAVE ONYX HEMISPHEROID: PARALLEL
DRILL "WORMS"

Ca. 3500-3200 B.C., from

Mesopotamia

Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman
1959

Kelsey Museum 26811

2.
VEINED MARBLE OVAL HEMISPHEROID:
SIX TAILED BLOBS

Ca. 3500-3200 B.C.

U-M excavations at Seleucia 1935
Kelsey Museum 36397

3.
PINK MARBLE HEMISPHEROID: TWO
CROUCHING ANIMALS

Ca. 3300-2900 B.C., from

Mesopotamia

Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman
1959

Kelsey Museum 91601

4.
VEINED MARBLE HEMISPHEROID: THREE
GAZELLES IN A CIRCLE

Ca. 3300-2900 B.C., from

Mesopotamia

Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman
1959

Kelsey Museum 91603

5.
STEATITE LENTOID: STAG WITH BUSH
AND SPEAR IN FIELD

Ca. 1500-1200 B.C., from Crete

Seltman purchase

Kelsey Museum 26186

6.
BANDED MARBLE OVOID: ANIMALS AND
FISH

Ca. 3200-2900 B.C., from
Mesopotamia
Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman
1959
Kelsey Museum 26815

7.
CARNELIAN SPHENDONOID: RAMPANT STAG
AND TREE

Ca. 1450-1375 B.C., from Crete
Seltman purchase
Kelsey Museum 26189

8.
STEATITE SPHENDONOID: THREE FISH

Ca. 1550-1150 B.C., from Crete
Seltman purchase
Kelsey Museum 26185

9.
STEATITE LENTOID: TREE WITH DROOPING
BRANCHES

Ca. 1550-1150 B.C., from Crete
Kelsey Museum 26188

10.
GLAZED STEATITE SCARAB: CONTINUOUS
SPIRALS

Ca. 1990-1785 B.C., from Egypt
Permanent loan of Mrs. Irene
Goudsmit
Kelsey Museum 81.4.49

11.
STONE SCARAB: "SON OF RA"

Ca. 1550-1300 B.C., from Egypt
Permanent loan of Mrs. Irene
Goudsmit
Kelsey Museum 81.4.74

12.
CARNELIAN SPHEROID: FLORAL DEVICE OR
ALTAR

Third-sixth centuries A.D., from
Egypt
Blanchard purchase 1932
Kelsey Museum 26030

13.
BANDED CHALCEDONY OVOID: COCK

Third-sixth centuries A.D., from
Jerusalem
Gift of Mr. Henry Gillman 1890
Kelsey Museum 87115

14.
BRONZE: EVANGELICAL EMBLEM
Twelfth-Fourteenth centuries A.D.
Lockwood Collection
Kelsey Museum 80395

15.
SMOKY CHALCEDONY OVOID: SPHINX
APPROACHING PLANT
Seventh-sixth centuries B.C., from
Mesopotamia
Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman
1959
Kelsey Museum 26806

Case 12
Ancient Stamp Seals: Images of
Cult, Myth, and Human Essence

1.
RED JASPER HEMISPHEROID: HERAKLES
AND LION
Second-fifth centuries A.D., from
Syria
Ayvaz purchase 1941
Kelsey Museum 26143

2.
RED JASPER OVAL: HERAKLES AND LION
Second-fifth centuries A.D.
Khayat purchase 1930, from Egypt
Kelsey Museum 26014

3.
CARNELIAN OVOID: PERSIAN KING WITH
LION
Fifth-fourth centuries B.C., from
Jerusalem
Gift of Mr. Henry Gillman 1890
Kelsey Museum 87016

4.
BANDED CARNELIAN OVOID: EROTIC
SCENE
First century B.C.-third century
A.D., from Egypt
Purchased from Dr. D.L. Askren
1925
Kelsey Museum 89690

5.
LAPIS LAZULI RECTANGLOID: SERAPIS
BUST WITH GRIFFIN AND WHEEL OF
NEMESIS
Second-fifth centuries A.D., from
Egypt
Blanchard purchase 1932
Kelsey Museum 26047
6.
CHALCEDONY OVOID: CULT SCENE
Seventh-sixth centuries B.C., from
Babylon
Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman
1959
Kelsey Museum 26807
7.
BLUE GLASS PASTE OVAL: CULT SCENE
Ca. seventh century B.C., from
Babylon
Gift of Professor Leroy Waterman
1959
Kelsey Museum 26830
8.
HELIOTROPE OVAL: ATHENA
First-third centuries A.D., from
Egypt
Purchased from Dr. D.L. Askren
Kelsey Museum 89691
9.
STEATITE OVAL: DANCING MAENAD
First century B.C.-first century
A.D., from Italy
Gift of Dr. E.S. McCartney 1937
Kelsey Museum 92041
10.
CARNELIAN OVOID: TWO LAMBS WITH
CRESCENT ABOVE
Third-sixth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Dimé 1931
Kelsey Museum 22850
11.
HELIOTROPE OVAL: VICTORIOUS
HORSEMAN
First-third centuries A.D.,
from Jerusalem
Gift of Mr. Henry Gillman 1890
Kelsey Museum 87083
12.
BUFF MARBLE OVAL: MALE BUST
Second-fourth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia 1928-32
Kelsey Museum 26096
13.
TRANSVERSELY TRUNCATED CARNELIAN
SPHEROID: MALE BUST
Third-sixth centuries A.D.
Date and source of purchase unknown
Kelsey Museum 36740
14.
BLUE MARBLE OVOID: MALE BUST
(SILENOS?)
Fifth-fourth centuries B.C.
Seltman purchase, from Greece
Kelsey Museum 26190
15.
SERPENTINE ELLIPTOID: MALE BUST
Third-sixth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia 1935
Kelsey Museum 36741

Case 13
Stamp Seals Around the World:
Some Distinctive Types

1.
LONG WOODEN BREAD STAMP WITH STRAP
HANDLE: INSCRIPTION AND HAND EMBLEM
Second-third centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Dimé 1931
Kelsey Museum 23993
2.
WOODEN BREAD STAMP WITH EUCHARISTIC
DEVICES
Third century A.D. or later, from
Egypt
Gift of Dr. Atiya 1953
Kelsey Museum 88002
3.
RECTANGULAR WOODEN STAMP WITH ROPE
THROUGH HANDLE
First century B.C.-fourth century
A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1928
Kelsey Museum 7636

4a-e.

FIVE SEALS FROM CHINA

- a. BRONZE ANIMAL SEAL
Brodie Gift, Museum of
Anthropology 47870
- b. STONE SEAL WITH ANIMAL CARVING
Brodie Gift, Museum of
Anthropology 11439
- c. BRASS UNIVERSITY SEAL
Museum of Art
- d. COLUMNAR SOAPSTONE SEAL
Collection of Marshall Wu
- e. CARVED STONE SEAL
Stevens Collection
Museum of Anthropology 10931

5.

ROUND CLAY PASTRY STAMP

Third-fifth centuries A.D., from
Egypt

Purchased from Dr. D.L. Askren 1935
Kelsey Museum 88669

6.

ROUND CLAY TEXTILE STAMP

Islamic period, from Egypt
Gift of Dr. Alexander G. Ruthven
1963

Kelsey Museum 71.1.73

7.

WOODEN KNOB SEAL

First century B.C.-fourth century
A.D.

U-M excavations at Karanis 1925
Kelsey Museum 3846

8-11.

CARVED WOODEN PLAQUE SEALS FOR
TEXTILE DECORATION (?)

Koelz Collection, from Spiti and
Ladakh, Tibet
Museum of Anthropology

17026, 17029, 17044, 17023

12-14.

CLAY STAMPS FOR POTTERY (?)

From Calhuacan and Huexotla, Mexico
Museum of Anthropology 30886,
56311, 30758

15-18.

CARVED WOODEN PLAQUE SEALS FOR
TEXTILE DECORATION (?)

Koelz Collection, from Spiti and
Ladakh, Tibet
Museum of Anthropology 17036,
17033, 17031, 17037

19-20.

ROUND CLAY PASTRY STAMPS

Third-fifth centuries A.D., from
Egypt

Purchased from Dr. D.L. Askren 1935
Kelsey Museum 88679 and 88640

21.

STONE KNOB STAMP

First-third centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Dimé, 1931
Kelsey Museum 21767

22.

ROUND CLAY CULINARY STAMP WITH
COPTIC DEVICE

Third-fifth centuries A.D.
Worrell Purchase, from Egypt
Kelsey Museum 29997

23.

ROUND PLASTER TEXTILE STAMP WITH
REMAINS OF RED DYE

Third-fifth centuries A.D.
Purchased from Dr. D.L. Askren 1935
Kelsey Museum 88681

24.

ROUND CLAY ARABIC STAMP INSCRIBED:
"GOD IS GENEROUS"

Islamic period
Purchased in Palestine 1888
Kelsey Museum 87116

25.

ROUND CLAY STAMP

Second century B.C.-second century
A.D.

U-M excavations at Seleucia 1935
Kelsey Museum 33763

26-27.

ROUND CLAY PASTRY STAMPS

Third-fifth centuries A.D., from
Egypt

Purchased from Dr. D.L. Askren
1935
Kelsey Museum 88642 and 88665

Case 14
Sealed Manuscripts of the Western
Tradition

LARGE VELLUM MANUSCRIPT: JUDGMENT BY
KING CHARLES VII OF FRANCE
PERTAINING TO THE TAXATION OF
CERTAIN MONASTIC PROPERTIES
1447

This document bears an impression of
the large royal seal of Paris and
two impressions of a smaller
official seal.

Case 14 A

ILLUMINATED PATENT OF NOBILITY:
SEALED WITH THE IMPERIAL SEAL OF
AUSTRIA

Signed by Maria Theresa 1749
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library

Case 14 A Drawers

1.
CONVEYANCE OF LAND AT THYRNING,
ENGLAND: SEALED BY THOMAS BULWERE AS
WITNESS
1351
Bulwer-Norfolk papers 19
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library

2.
CONVEYANCE OF LAND AT THYRNING,
ENGLAND: SEALED BY SELLER, RECEIVER
AND WITNESS
1302
Bulwer-Norfolk papers 12
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library

3.
QUITCLAIM RELINQUISHING RIGHTS TO
LAND NEAR INTWOOD, ENGLAND: SEALED
BY JOHANNES PIRBEVELL
1581
Bulwer-Norfolk papers 27
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library

4.
CONVEYANCE OF RIGHTS OF HOMAGE AND
SERVICE: SEALED BY EDMUND NEWBORNE
1371
Bulwer-Norfolk papers 17
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library

5.
AFFIDAVIT CONCERNING A WILL: SEALED
BY WALTER HAMILTON AT ST.
CHRISTOPHER'S
1717
William L. Clements Library

6.
GRANT OF LAND FROM CHARLES CRAVEN
TO JOSEPH BOONE AT CHARLESTON,
SOUTH CAROLINA: SEALED BY CHARLES
CRAVEN
1713/14
William L. Clements Library

7.
FOUR LEAVES FROM A COPTIC CODEX:
SEALED BINDING STRAPS SHOW 3/4
VIEW PORTRAIT
Sixth century A.D., from Egypt
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library

8.
PAPAL DOCUMENT: SEALED BY POPE
GREGORY XIII AT ROME
1578
John R. Crouse Autograph Collection
Bentley Historical Library

Case 14 B

ILLUMINATED DIPLOMA OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA: SEAL OF THE
UNIVERSITY
Diploma dated 1597
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library

DIPLOMA OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
ABERDEEN: MEDIEVAL SEAL OF THE
UNIVERSITY
Diploma dated 1786
Minto Collection
William L. Clements Library

Case 14 B Drawers

1.
LANDGRANT DOCUMENT: SEAL OF THE
UNITED STATES GENERAL LAND OFFICE
1838
Bentley Historical Library
2.
"PASSPORT" LETTER ISSUED BY THE
GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA: SEAL OF
THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
1796
William L. Clements Library
3.
PERMIT FOR MERCANTILE TRANSPORT
ISSUED BY THE GOVERNOR OF RHODE
ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS:
EMBOSSSED WITH THE SEAL OF PROVIDENCE
PLANTATIONS
1776
William L. Clements Library
4.
DEED OF SALE FROM THE COMMONWEALTH
OF PENNSYLVANIA: EMBOSSSED WITH THE
COMMONWEALTH SEAL (OBVERSE) AND THE
SECONDARY SEAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH
LAND OFFICE
1786
William L. Clements Library
5.
LAND GRANT FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF
PENNSYLVANIA: EMBOSSSED WITH THE
COMMONWEALTH SEAL (REVERSE)
1786
William L. Clements Library
6.
JUDICIAL APPOINTMENT BY GEORGE III
TO FOSTER HUTCHINSON OF NOVA SCOTIA
PROVINCE: SEALED WITH GREAT SEAL OF
THE PROVINCE - HERE SHOWING THE
REVERSE WHICH BEARS THE COAT OF ARMS
OF GEORGE III
1810
William L. Clements Library

7.
DIPLOMA OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
MICHIGAN TO GEORGE DANE: SEALED WITH
THE "MINERVA" SEAL OF THE UNIVERSITY
1853
Bentley Historical Library

8.
SESQUICENTENNIAL CONGRATULATORY
DOCUMENT FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CAEN
TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN:
MEDIEVAL SEAL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
CAEN
1967
Bentley Historical Library

Case 15
Seals as Amulets

1.
HARPOCRATES AND A CHILD
Kelsey Museum 26102
- 2-4.
CULT SCENES WITH OSIRIS
2. Kelsey Museum 26061
3-4. Taubman Medical Library
Bonner Collection 1 and 374
- 5-7.
CULT SCENES WITH HARPOCRATES
Taubman Medical Library
Bonner Collection 201, 355, 141
- 8-11.
COMPOSITE DEITIES AND DEMONS
8, 9, 11: Taubman Medical Library
Bonner Collection 52, 387, 45;
10. Kelsey Museum 26054
12.
VIRGIN WITH CHILD, CROSS ABOVE
Taubman Medical Library
Bonner Collection 330
- 13-16.
SNAKE-DEMONS AND A MEDUSA
Taubman Medical Library
Bonner Collection 163, 64, 165, 24
- 17-18.
CANOPUS AND OSIRIS
Taubman Medical Library
Bonner Collection 21 and 134

19-20.
RIDER SPEARING SPIRIT OF EVIL
Kelsey Museum 26092 and 26140

21-22.
ALTARS AND SYMBOLIC DEVICES
Taubman Medical Library
Bonner Collection 80 and 103

23-24.
THE REAPER OF GRAIN
Taubman Medical Library
Bonner Collection 124 and 115

Case 16
Administrative and Commercial Uses
of Seals

1-2.
FRAGMENTS OF TWO STAMPED STORAGE
VESSELS: "FULL MEASURE"
Islamic period, from Egypt
Gift of Dr. Alexander G. Ruthven
1971 and 1965
Kelsey Museum 71.1.78 and 65.3.56

3.
GLASS RING-WEIGHT: STAMPED WITH
DATED ADMINISTRATIVE SEALS
Islamic period (eighth century
A.D.), from Egypt
Gift of Peter Ruthven 1964
Kelsey Museum 64.2.44

4a-b.
TWO GLASS SEAL IMPRESSIONS
ORIGINALLY FUSED ONTO GLASS VESSELS:
SEALS OF FINANCE DIRECTORS
Islamic period (eighth century
A.D.), from Egypt
Gift of Peter Ruthven 1964
Kelsey Museum 64.2.26 and 64.2.23

5.
COARSE TEXTILE MULTIPLY INK-STAMPED
WITH LARGE SEAL
Islamic period, from Egypt
Gift of Peter Ruthven 1964
Kelsey Museum 64.2.11
The inscription is largely
illegible, though it appears to
include a blessing to the owner.
This cloth was probably used to
cover a commodity.

6.
STAMPED CLAY BRICK: NAME AND TITLES
OF KING UR-NAMMU
Ca. 2100 B.C.
American excavations at Nippur
Permanent loan from American Schools
of Oriental Research
Kelsey Museum 63.6.111

7.
STAMPED BRICK: BRICKYARD OWNER'S
NAME DEVICE
Late first century A.D., from Rome
Purchased by F.W. Kelsey 1901
Kelsey Museum 23469

8.
STAMPED LEAD WATER PIPE:
MANUFACTURER'S STAMP
First-third centuries A.D., from
Baiae
Purchased from the heirs of De
Criscio 1923
Kelsey Museum 1071

9.
LAND CONTRACT: SIGNED AND SEALED BY
PARTIES TO THE TRANSACTION
1761
Miscellaneous Collection
William L. Clements Library

10a-c.
THREE CLAY CONES: IMPRESSED WITH
PERSONAL NAMES AND TITLES
Dates range from ca. 1300-680 B.C.,
from Egypt
Permanent loan of Mrs. Irene
Goudsmit
Kelsey Museum 81.4.20, 81.4.10,
81.4.19
These cones were set in rows above
the facade doors of the tombs of
well-to-do personages at Thebes.

11.
CLAY SEALING FOR PAPYRUS DOCUMENT:
STAR AND CIRCLE
First century B.C.-fourth century
A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1933
Kelsey Museum 26207

12.
CLAY SEALING FOR A COMMODITY:
MULTIPLE CYLINDER IMPRESSIONS
ca. 2100-2000 B.C., from Mesopotamia
Source of acquisition unknown
Kelsey Museum 89485
13.
CLAY SEALING FOR PAPYRUS DOCUMENT:
JUGATE BUSTS OF ISIS AND SERAPIS
First century B.C.-fourth century
A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1930
Kelsey Museum 24303
14.
BITUMEN SEALING FROM PAPYRUS
DOCUMENT STAMPED WITH NINE SEALS:
SHOWN IS LARGE PORTRAIT HEAD
Third-second centuries B.C.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 35736
15.
CLAY SEALING FROM PAPYRUS DOCUMENT:
MALE PORTRAIT WITH DIADEM
Third-second centuries B.C.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 35786
16.
CLAY SEALING FROM PAPYRUS DOCUMENT:
FEMALE PORTRAIT (ARTEMIS?)
Third-second centuries B.C.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 35706
17.
BITUMEN SEALING FROM PAPYRUS
DOCUMENT STAMPED WITH FOUR SEALS:
SHOWN IS OFFICIAL SALT TAX INSIGNIA
Third-second centuries B.C.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 35734
- 18a-d.
FOUR RED GLASS IMPRESSED TOKENS
Fourth-fifth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1930
Kelsey Museum 22835, 22843, 22845,
22847
19.
CUNEIFORM TABLET WITH MULTIPLE
CAPTIONED SEALINGS: SEALS OF
PARTIES TO A SALE OF TEMPLE
PERQUISITE
Seventh-sixth centuries B.C., from
Mesopotamia
Source of acquisition unknown
Kelsey Museum 89454
- 20a-e.
FIVE GREEN GLASS TOKENS
First century B.C.-third century
A.D., from Egypt
Gift of Peter Ruthven 1964
Kelsey Museum 91216, 91212, 91194,
91196, 91217
21.
CLAY SEALING FOR PAPYRUS DOCUMENT:
HORUS-HARPOCRATES RECLINING
First century B.C.-fourth century
A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1929
Kelsey Museum 93575
22.
CLAY SEALING FOR PAPYRUS DOCUMENT:
OFFICIAL SEAL OF THE BYBLIOPHYLAX
Third-second centuries B.C.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 35713
23.
CLAY SEALING FROM PAPYRUS DOCUMENT:
MUSE WITH LYRE
Second century B.C.-second century
A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 35679
24.
CLAY SEALING FROM PAPYRUS DOCUMENT:
DEVICE OF THE ROYAL TREASURY
Third-second centuries B.C.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 35705
25.
BITUMEN SEALING FROM PAPYRUS
DOCUMENT: APOLLO (?)
Third century B.C.-second century
A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 35670

26.
BITUMEN SEALING FROM PAPYRUS
DOCUMENT: LEGEND OF THE SLAVE TAX
BUREAU
Third-second centuries B.C.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 35783

27.
CLAY SEALING FROM PAPYRUS DOCUMENT:
HARPOCRATES WITH A COBRA
First century B.C.-fourth century
A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1930
Kelsey Museum 24447

Case 17
Decorative Uses of Impressed Images

1.
IMPRESSED BLACK GLAZE WARE: GORGON
FACES AND PALMETTES
Fourth-third centuries B.C., from
South Italy
De Criscio purchase 1923
Kelsey Museum 2874

2.
IMPRESSED BLACK GLAZE WARE:
PALMETTES AND FLORAL DEVICES
Fourth-third centuries B.C., from
South Italy
H.C. Hoskier purchase 1928
Kelsey Museum 23511

3.
RED FIGURE PLATE: FEMALE PORTRAIT
WITH IMPRESSED EARRING
Fourth century B.C., from So. Italy
Marburg Collection 1923
Kelsey Museum 2613

4.
CLAY PITCHER: FEMALE HEAD STAMPED
AT BASE OF HANDLE AND AT FRONT
Fourth-second centuries B.C., from
Italy
De Criscio purchase 1923
Kelsey Museum 2831

5.
FRAGMENT OF PSEUDO-ARRETINE WARE:
IMPRESSED FLORAL DEVICES
Fourth-fifth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis 1930
Kelsey Museum 20986

6.
STAMPED POTTERY FRAGMENT
Teotihuacan IV period, from Mexico
Museum of Anthropology 31045

7-9.
IMPRESSED GLASS DISCS ORIGINALLY
FUSED ONTO GLASS VESSELS: FIGURAL
IMAGES
Late Roman-Islamic periods, from
Egypt
Gift of Peter Ruthven 1964
Kelsey Museum 91206, 91567, 91568

10-11.
STAMPED COPTIC CAKES FOR THE
EUCHARIST: ABSTRACT MOTIF AND
INSCRIPTION
Late nineteenth-early twentieth
century A.D., from Egypt
Kelsey Museum

12.
STAMPED POTTERY FRAGMENT:
WHIRLIGIG DEVICE
Third-sixth centuries A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 30623

13-16.
STAMPED CLAY SPINDLE WHORLS:
ABSTRACT DEVICES
From Mexico
Museum of Anthropology 56310 a-b,
32433, 32440

17.
STAMPED POTTERY FRAGMENT:
CIRCLE WITHIN STAR
Islamic period
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 33354

18-20.
STAMPED GLASS COIN WEIGHTS:
CIRCLES WITHIN STARS
Islamic period
Gift of Peter Ruthven, from Egypt
Kelsey Museum 91229, 91574, 91341

21.
STAMPED POTTERY FRAGMENT:
GEOMETRIC MOTIF
Fourth century A.D. or later
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 30625

22.
FRAGMENTARY STAMPED BRICK: GEOMETRIC
MOTIF
Ca. 4400 B.C.
U-M excavations at Farukhabad
Museum of Anthropology

23.
AFRICAN RED SLIPPED WARE: LARGE
PLATE WITH THREE LATIN CROSSES
Fifth century A.D.
U-M excavations at Karanis
Kelsey Museum 3431

24.
TEXTILE STAMPED IN RESIST DYE:
FLORAL AND GEOMETRIC DEVICES
Ca. sixteenth-seventeenth centuries
A.D., from India
Tano purchase 1934
Kelsey Museum 22704

Case 18
Impressed Bookbindings

1.
CALF BINDING: GEOMETRIC RULINGS AND
ROLLED IMPRESSIONS
German translation of Johannes
Sleidanus' Commentariorum de statu
religionis et republicae (1559)
Binding stamp dated 1541
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library
DD/178.9/.S645

2.
PIGSKIN BINDING: ROLLED AND STAMPED
IMPRESSIONS
Johannes Sleidanus' Commentariorum
de statu religionis et republicae
(ca. 1577)
Binding dated 1589
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library
DD/178.9/.S632

3.
MODERN LEATHER STAMPS
Collection of James Craven

4.
PIGSKIN BINDING WITH ROLLED AND
STAMPED IMPRESSIONS
Paolo Giovio's Descriptiones...
Basileae (1561)
Binding dated 1569
One stamp dated 1564
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library
DD/913/.G52

5.
CALFSKIN BINDING WITH STAMPED
INITIALS AND FLEURS-DE-LIS
Richard Smith's The Assertion and
Defence of the Sacraments of the
Aulter (1546)
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library
BX/2220/.S66

Case 19
Collectors' and Artists' Stamps

1.
CHINESE HANDSCROLL WITH SEALS OF
CALLIGRAPHER AND COLLECTORS
Gift of the Estate of Agnes E.
Meyer
Museum of Art
2.
UNSIGNED DRAWING - ALLEGORY OF
VICTORY
French, last quarter of the
seventeenth century
Collectors' stamps of Jean-Charles-
Marie Jourdeuil (1811-1868) and
Victor Winthrop Newman (1860),
lower right
Museum of Art 1960.130.1
3.
UNSIGNED CHALK STILL LIFE BY JEAN-
BAPTISTE MARIE HUET
French, late eighteenth century
Collector's mark, lower left
Museum of Art 1959.36.2
4.
TERRA SIGILLATA BOWL WITH POTTER'S
STAMP AT CENTER INTERIOR
First century B.C., from Gaul or
Germany
Marburg Collection 1823
Kelsey Museum 2676

5.
BLUE MOLD-MADE VASE: FACTORY MARK
OF ROOKWOOD STUDIO ON BASE
Cincinnati, Ohio 1929
Marvin Felheim Collection
Museum of Art 1983.1.4.38

6.
ARRETINE POTTERY FRAGMENT OF A BOWL:
POTTER'S STAMP AT CENTER INTERIOR
First century B.C.-first century
A.D., from Etruria
Purchased by F.W. Kelsey 1901
Kelsey Museum 1617

7.
ARRETINE POTTERY FRAGMENT OF A
BOWL: POTTER'S STAMP AT CENTER INTERIOR
First century B.C.-second century
A.D.
U-M excavations at Seleucia
Kelsey Museum 33751

8.
ARRETINE POTTERY FRAGMENT OF A
PLATE: POTTER'S MARK AT CENTER
INTERIOR
Second-third centuries A.D., from
Etruria
Purchased by F.W. Kelsey 1901
Kelsey Museum 1618

Case 20
Ink-stamps Today

ASSORTED RUBBER STAMPS
Pictures and messages
Twentieth century A.D.

Case 21
Stamps for Making Fancy
Cookies at Home

SIX SPRINGERLE COOKIE-STAMP PLATES
Pictures of a knight on horseback,
Christmas scenes, farmers, hunters,
maidens, and country scenes
Nineteenth and twentieth centuries

ASSORTED WOOD, CLAY, AND METAL
STAMPS
Flowers, lady bugs, and designs

Case 22
Commercial Soaps, Candies and
Cookies with Stamped Decorations

NEFER SOAP
Cleopatra
CAMAY SOAP
A lady in profile
HOTEL MAYFLOWER SOAP
The Mayflower
HERSHEY BAR
BAKER'S CHOCOLATE
HEART CANDIES
OREO COOKIES
CHESSMAN COOKIES
MILK BONE DOG BISCUITS

Case 23
Modern Imitations of Seals Used
to Label Things and to Keep Things
Closed

LIQUEUR BOTTLES
BIRKENSTOCK SANDLE TAG
BISON TOBACCO PACKAGE
TURKISH SPECIAL CIGARETTES
BEE AND FLOWER SOAP

Case 24
Stamped Clay: Decorated Pottery
and Bricks with Company Names

BOWL AND STAMPS USED TO DECORATE IT
By Jamie Fine

CLIPPERT BRICK
TWO DANIEL BRICKS

Wall Display 1
Impressions of Government Seals

DECLARATION OF LEADER DOG WEEK
Sealed with the Seal of the State
of Michigan in gold foil
Bentley Historical Library

A PICTURE OF THE COAT-OF-ARMS OF
THE STATE OF MICHIGAN

ONE DOLLAR BILLS - FRONT AND BACK

Printed with imitations of both
sides of The Great Seal of the
United States, The Federal Reserve
Bank of Issue, and the U.S.
Department of the Treasury

Wall Display 2
First Impressions

A BIRTH CERTIFICATE

Impressed with the seal of The
University of Michigan Hospital in
gold foil
and

Baby's foot in black ink

HAND PRINT IN PLASTER

Made by a child of one year

FOOT PRINTS IN RED PAINT ON PAPER

Made by a child of three and one-
half years

Wall Display 3
Stamped Images as Art

STAMP-ART ENVELOPE

By E.F. Higgins III
1981

RED AND BLACK STAMP PAD INK DRAWING

By Barry Kahn (1938-1982)
"Subset G" 1976

Suggestions for Further Reading

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Erich Kittel, Siegel (Braunschweig 1970)

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Frits Lugt, Les marques de collections: de dessins et d'estampes (Amsterdam 1921).

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United States Department of State, History of the Seal of the United States (Washington 1909)