

# Archaeology at the Dawn of History

## The Khirbet Iskander Collection

### —Information about the traveling exhibition—

The Erie Art Museum announces a traveling exhibition of archaeological discoveries from the Early Bronze Age in the Middle East. The exhibit, *Archaeology at the Dawn of History: The Khirbet Iskander Collection*, features domestic tools and equipment found in the city of Khirbet Iskander in Jordan, dating from 2350 to 2000 B.C.E. Organized by Erie Art Museum Director John Vanco with the cooperation of archaeologist Dr. Suzanne Richard of Gannon University, the artifacts are gathered from excavations since 1981. This continuing expedition led by Dr. Richard, has revealed the only known city in Canaan during the Early Bronze IV Period, approximately four thousand years ago. The site sits on the north bank of the *Wadi Wala*, at an important crossing point on the famous caravan route called the “King’s Highway,” east of the Dead Sea. The *Wala*, now dry, was once a year-round river and a major reason why people first settled at the site. Khirbet Iskander is a medium-sized site by Near Eastern standards, a mound about 65 feet high and covering about eight acres. It is often called the most important site in the EB IV period because it appears to have survived the dramatic upheaval throughout Canaan around 2300 B.C.E.

Through the artifacts and corresponding interactive (hands-on) displays, the exhibit highlights the way in which we learn about the past through the study of the cultural remains of ancient people—in this case, Canaanites living at Khirbet Iskander. A variety of ceramic vessels, stone tools, and cultic objects are featured. Maps and photographs of the site augment the exhibition. Objects from other time periods and other lands illustrate the differences in the development of pottery and tools from various times and places.

This exhibit has been organized by the Erie Art Museum in cooperation with Gannon University with the support of a grant from the Laurel Foundation of Pittsburgh. The Khirbet Iskander archaeological materials are on permanent loan from the Department of Antiquities of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Additional materials are on loan from private collections, the Erie County Historical Society & Museums, and The James L. Kelso Bible Lands Museum of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

*Archaeology at the Dawn of History* is comprised of 116 artifacts—most from the Khirbet Iskander excavations—and 19 framed photographs, maps, and digital images, illustrating the process of the archaeological dig and placing the artifacts in the context of their original environs. The exhibit requires 885 square feet of exhibition space, with at least 145 feet of linear wall space. The exhibition includes two hands-on activities—visitors can reassemble a broken pot and create a coil-built pot from scratch—, as well as eight jug-shaped cut-outs with relevant Qs & As to be hinged to the walls. Wall and case labels and detailed text panels are also included with the exhibit. The Khirbet Iskander Expedition also has a web site dedicated to the ongoing project, which can be accessed via the link at [www.erieartmuseum.org](http://www.erieartmuseum.org).

Exhibition Rental Fee: \$5,000 + shipping & insurance, for bookings up to 12 weeks duration.  
Call 814-459-5477 for availability or other questions.