

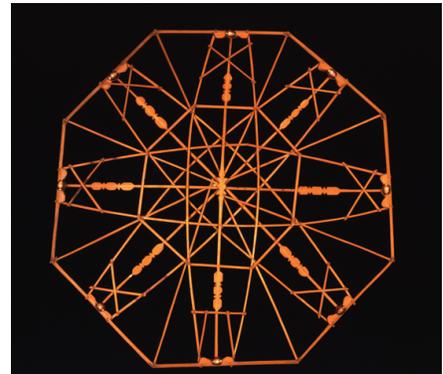
NEWS RELEASE

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## Living with the Sea: Charting the Pacific opens August 28

PHILADELPHIA – An undergraduate student-curated exhibition highlighting the Penn Museum’s rarely seen Oceanian collection will open Friday, August 28, 2020. *Living with the Sea: Charting the Pacific* will explore the ways the sea inspires people from the Pacific Islands to create materials and meanings that connect their past, present, and future.

This intimate exhibition will showcase 14 compelling objects from the Oceanian collection—most of which have never been on display due to light- and temperature-sensitivity.



All of the artifacts were influenced by the sea: some were used in everyday life, while others represent important cultural symbols that transmit meaning across generations. From nose ornaments and body modification instruments from the Solomon Islands to a scarification tool from Kiribati, to a navigational chart used by sailors to determine their course on the water in the Marshall Islands, *Living with the Sea: Charting the Pacific* will outline the unique relationship people in Oceania share with the natural resource that shapes their way of life.

Each year, the Penn Museum’s student exhibition program selects three undergraduates to collaborate with staff, expand their research with faculty, and create an accessible experience for Museum visitors, all while strengthening their skill sets for future careers. Together, they produce an exhibition, including selecting and researching the artifacts that will be on display, writing the descriptive labels for each object, and contributing to the look and layout. As a part of the University of Pennsylvania’s **Year of Data**, the exhibition ties together archaeological, ethnographic, and archival data.

The 2020–2021 undergraduate student curators are:

- **Kia DaSilva**, a rising senior from West Philadelphia, who is double-majoring in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, and Music
- **Ashleigh David**, a 2020 graduate from Pacific, Missouri, who majored in Anthropology and
- **Erin Spicola** of Richmond, Rhode Island, a 2020 graduate who majored in Anthropology.

“The Student Exhibition Program exemplifies our goals as a research museum,” says Anne Tiballi, Director of Academic Engagement at the Penn Museum. “None of the student curators were experts in our Oceanian collection, but by combining their own skills in archival, anthropological, and object-based research with expert advice, they developed a very thoughtful approach to the topic and how best to share it with the general public.”

## About the Penn Museum

Since 1887, the Museum has been transforming our understanding of the human experience. Dedicated to building connections between cultures, the Museum welcomes everyone to uncover the ancient past, gain an understanding of our shared humanity, and find one's own place in the arc of human history. For more information, follow @PennMuseum, visit [penn.museum](https://penn.museum), or call 215.898.4000.

## Meet the Student Curators:



**Maria Kiamesso (Kia) DaSilva** is a rising senior double-majoring in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and Music. She has interacted with the Museum as a visitor since childhood, as a student since 2017, and as a volunteer and employee in various roles. A performer with the Penn Singers Light Opera Company, she also supervises the archives at the Philomathean Society. The object in *Living with the Sea* that she feels most connected with is the navigation chart because of her interest in ways to store and transmit data.



**Ashleigh David** is 2020 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. She studied Cultural Anthropology and minored in Theatre Arts and Philosophy. A stage manager for the Penn Players theatre group, she was an active member in her sorority Zeta Tau Alpha. The artifacts that she connected with the most are the archival drawings used in researching this exhibition. She spent hours in the Museum Archives, pouring over the drawings and the accompanying notes. Too delicate to be on display, the drawings will be represented through graphics or replicas.



**Erin Spicola** is a 2020 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania who majored in Anthropology and Archaeological Science. She worked on the Smith Creek Project in Mississippi and in the North American Archaeology Lab at the Penn Museum. She was also a dancer with West Philly Swingers, Penn's swing dance troupe. The object in *Living with the Sea* that she connects with the most is the statue of a man who has scarification patterns on his face, as the patterns match the archival images and it helped narrow the focus of the exhibition.