

# QUEST FOR CULTURAL SALVATION IN IRAQ APPROACHES HISTORIC 5TH ANNIVERSARY

**Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage (IICAH)  
Crosses Threshold October 10 Preserving "Cradle of Civilization"**

**WINTERTHUR, DELAWARE**—As scientists dig through dust, mortar, rocks, and glass, straining to recover evidence of Western civilization's earliest known existence, a team of world-renowned antiquities experts presses forward to teach Iraqi professionals how to preserve their priceless ancient artifacts for future generations. On October 10, 2013, an international coalition of governments, museums, universities, and others will celebrate a milestone that once seemed impossible: the 5th anniversary of the *Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage (IICAH)* and the graduation of 14 Iraqi students from its landmark antiquities conservation program.

IICAH is a global collaboration that brings experts from around the world to Erbil, Iraq, to train Iraqi museum and heritage professionals in the preservation and conservation of Iraq's national treasures. Launched in 2008 through a \$14 million grant by the U.S. Department of State, IICAH includes the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, Kurdistan Regional Government, U.S. Embassy Baghdad, U.S. Department of State, Winterthur Museum, University of Delaware, Walters Art Museum, Getty Conservation Institute, University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, and University of Arizona.

"Iraq holds the esteemed position as the birthplace of Western civilization. With that distinction comes a responsibility for all of us to save evidence of our past for future generations," said Lois Olcott Price, director of Conservation at Winterthur Museum and chair of IICAH's Iraqi-American Advisory Council.

"Artifacts tell us our 'family story', the record of who we as nations of peoples are, where we came from, how we got here," Price said. "If Iraq's ancient artifacts are permanently lost or destroyed, we all forfeit the right to pass this cultural heritage to future generations, as mankind has done since the beginning of time. I think our children and the world's future generations deserve better than that."

IICAH completed a state-of-the-art educational and training facility in 2009 at the foot of the Citadel, the oldest continually inhabited settlement in the world, to train Iraqi preservation professionals in state-of-the-art techniques to preserve artifacts, buildings, and sites in the wake of the Iraq war.

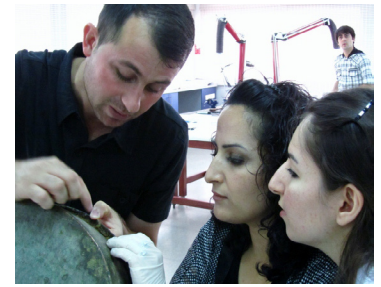
"All of us involved in IICAH share a deep passion for preserving evidence of one of the world's oldest civilizations before the artifacts are lost possibly forever," said Debra Hess Norris, chair of the University of Delaware Department of Art Conservation and one of IICAH's academic advisors. "As a global team, IICAH is working diligently to educate Iraqis in the best known techniques for protecting their treasures into perpetuity."

The University of Delaware is the lead institution in administering grants to IICAH.

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IICAH instructor and students work to save ancient Iraqi artifacts in IICAH's recently completed, state-of-the-art facility in Erbil, Iraq. Photo courtesy of the University of Delaware.

## MEDIA CONTACT

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Winterthur—known worldwide for its preeminent collection of American decorative arts, naturalistic gardens, and research library for the study of American art and material culture—offers a variety of tours, exhibitions, programs, and activities throughout the year. General admission includes a tour of some of the most notable spaces in the 175-room house as well as access to the Winterthur Garden and Galleries, special exhibitions, a narrated tram tour (weather permitting), the Campbell Collection of Soup Tureens, and the Enchanted Woods children's garden. \$20 adults; \$18 for students and seniors; \$5 for ages 2–11.

## Museum hours

10:00 am- 5:00 pm, Tuesday- Sunday.

Winterthur, located on Route 52, six miles northwest of Wilmington, Delaware, and five miles south of U.S. Route 1, is closed on Mondays (except during Yuletide), Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day.

Winterthur is committed to accessible programming for all. For information, including special services, call 800.448.3883, 302.888.4600, or TTY 302.888.4907, or visit [winterthur.org](http://winterthur.org).



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Since its inception, IICAH has trained a cultural cross-section of 135 Iraqi professional men and women -- Arabs, Kurds, Muslims, Christians, Sunni, and Shia -- in the conservation of both museum collections and architectural sites. Its programs are designed for long-term sustainability through partnerships with Iraqi institutions of higher education and the successful identification and development of Iraqi master trainers to take over academic programming in the future. A highlight of the graduation ceremony October 10 will be the promotion of the first Iraqi student to the level of full instructor. Two additional students will be elevated to senior teaching instructors.

American partners continue to work together with the Iraqi Board of Directors and advisors to build and strengthen two-year academic programs in two critical areas: Conservation and Collection Management and Architecture and Site Conservation. A Museum Studies program and a distance learning initiative are also under development.

"It is an honor for all of us involved with IICAH to work with the Iraqi people to not only restore to them rightful ownership of their national treasures but to transcend boundaries of time, distance, and culture to celebrate our shared humanity," Price said. "Preserving global cultural heritage has relevance and implications for every human on the planet. IICAH has exceeded our expectations largely because the Iraqi people embraced it and dedicated themselves to its success."

Norris agreed, noting that the keys to IICAH's success are mutual trust and honest, uncensored exchange. The program has been recognized as a model of international collaboration for cultural heritage preservation.

"Every critical party needed to ensure IICAH would flourish came to the table and worked tirelessly to help it succeed," Norris said. "It is extremely gratifying for us to have grown to where we are today, crossing a threshold of sustainability not only in years but in passing the reins of program management to the hands, and hearts, of the Iraqi people."

For more information, please visit: <http://www.artcons.udel.edu/public-outreach/iraq-institute>.

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