



NEWS

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NHM CELEBRATES 94TH ANNIVERSARY WITH EXHIBITION OF RARELY VIEWED OBJECTS

Treasures from the Vault

November 18 to January 21, 2008

*Diverse Selection from World-Class Natural & Cultural History Collection
Includes Amelia Earhart's Flight Log, Gynandromorph Butterflies, 85 Million
Year-Old Marine Mosasaur, and an installation by artist Kim Abeles*

LOS ANGELES, October 19, 2007— Since opening its doors in November 1913, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHM) has amassed one of the world's most extensive and valuable collections of natural and cultural history— more than 35 million objects, some as old as 4.5 billion years. In celebration of its 94th year, the Museum has selected some of its most remarkable and rarely seen artifacts and specimens for *Treasures from the Vault*, on view in the Director's Gallery from **November 18 to January 21, 2008**.

“What defines a treasure? Some of the objects represented here have great monetary value, while others require only a little knowledge and context to reveal inestimable worth. All are indisputable examples of either nature's ingenuity or humankind's imagination. We hope that this exhibition, much like the Museum itself, will be a source of inspiration and wonder for people of all ages, backgrounds and interests,” said Jane G. Pisano, president and director of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

Working with Museum Research and Collections curators, NHM Anthropology Curator Margaret Hardin organized the *Treasures* exhibition featuring objects from NHM's diverse collections of natural and cultural history— Vertebrate and Invertebrate Paleontology; History; Mineral Sciences; the Dinosaur Institute; Marine Biodiversity; Anthropology; Entomology; Ichthyology; Mammalogy and Ornithology. Many of these objects are so fragile and light sensitive that the Museum is not able to present them for permanent display. For example, Amelia Earhart's bold, passionate scrawl is faded but still legible in her 1928 flight log. The

butterflies on display have a rare quirk — look closely and see one of nature’s strangest phenomena, gynandromorphism, at work. These delicate creatures are simultaneously male and female.

“As the Museum recasts its most iconic spaces, we were inspired to create an exhibition highlighting Museum treasures that could now no longer be bought or replaced,” remarked Margaret Hardin. “Visitors may encounter a rare silver pheasant collected on a World War II battlefield, an intact glass sponge found 2,700 feet underwater, or a marine mosasaur *Platecarpus* which lived some 85 million years ago.”

While delicacy and novelty are major themes at play in the exhibition, *Treasures from the Vault* also pays homage to the way objects are collected and displayed. “The Importance of Objects” a tabletop installation by artist Kim Abeles serves as a microcosm of the exhibition.

Commissioned by the Museum in 1995, Abeles’ piece was chosen because it contains objects from several departments that wouldn’t ordinarily mix in the same space— worms and nudibranchs in alcohol, human-made artifacts and taxidermied specimens. After working closely with several museum curators, Abeles was moved by the sensitivity with which they care for objects, and her piece is intended as a tribute to their devotion.

But as Hardin explains, “Unlike an art museum, where objects emanate from studios and workshops, the fruits of a natural history museum come to us by way of distant pasts and distant places.”

With a range of specimens and artifacts represented, and the remarkable stories behind each object, *Treasures from the Vault* is a window into the NHM’s far-reaching grasp on our natural and cultural worlds.

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Museum Admission and Hours

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County is located at 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles. It is open weekdays, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and weekends and holidays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tickets are \$9 for adults, \$6.50 for children. For more information, visit the museum’s website at www.nhm.org or call (213) 763-DINO.

About the Museum

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County serves more than one million families and visitors annually, and is a national leader in research, exhibitions and education. The Museum is L.A.’s second oldest cultural institution, the first to open

its doors to the public in 1913, and has amassed one of the world's most extensive and valuable collections of natural and cultural history – more than 35 million objects, some as old as 4.5 billion years.