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## Objects d'art: Furman's antiques, artifacts and memorabilia

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## Objets d'art: Furman's antiques, artifacts and memorabilia

The Smithsonian Institution is frequently referred to as the nation's attic.

But Furman has its own attic — and like the Smithsonian, it isn't confined to one building.

Furman's attic stretches across the campus. It includes temperature-controlled rooms and vaults, and features paintings, rare books and ancient lamps from Biblical times. It has satirical etchings from the hand of noted Spanish artist Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes (Goya for short), earthenware objects that date from 3100 BC (above), and precious coins embossed with the images of ancient rulers.

DebbieLee Landi, special collections librarian and university archivist, chairs Furman's Decorative and Fine Arts Committee, which protects the artwork, antiques and artifacts owned by the university. The material includes the Cherrydale Collection, with its variety of antique furniture, china, silver and other items that beautify the Alumni House, and the furnishings and art at White Oaks, the president's home.

"It's a diverse collection. We have more than 2,500 items in our inventory, but we estimate we have more than 3,000 items on campus," Landi says. "We manage collections spread across 27 buildings, on and off campus."

No one has put a price tag on the collection. Many of the items have not been appraised, and Furman won't make public the value of those items that have been.

"It's a collection that only appreciates in value, and it serves an educational purpose as well as an illustrative purpose by highlighting the history of Furman," says Landi. "This campus is only 50 years old, but a lot of our collection began with the founding of the university in 1826. The entire Furman community continues to add to this collection, so it's one of the few things showing our full history."

Her office contracts with preservation specialists, conservators and furniture experts to restore, clean and protect the collection. And on occasion, the library pulls together items for a special exhibit.

During the fall semester, for example, an exhibit titled "The Archives of Babel" featured a diverse sampling of works written both in and about a variety of languages. In the spring of 2009, a photographic retrospective highlighted the 50th anniversary of the move to the current campus.

For many years the university had no record of what exactly it owned. In 1999, Furman established the Decorative and Fine Arts Committee. Comprised of alumni, volunteers and friends, the group was initially tasked with helping to decorate and find interior furnishings for the newly arrived Cherrydale Alumni House.

In 2005, Landi reorganized the committee. It now includes staff members from the departments of art, facilities services, business affairs and development, and its responsibilities extend to the cataloguing and protection of the university's artifacts and collectibles.

"We have dozens of contributions each year, which is a good thing," says Landi. "But now that we have more than 2,500 items in our database, the next step that the Decorative and Fine Arts Committee wants to take is to make sure these objects are being used for educational purposes."

She hopes teachers will eventually use Furman artifacts in their lessons, and that she can persuade more Furman faculty to explore and take advantage of the collection.

"We have evocative artwork that reflects different movements for art classes," Landi says. "But artwork can also be related to other disciplines. There are objects related to religion, artifacts from different cultures, and historical objects. These resources could be used for history, language, sociology, religion and education classes, to name just a few."

— ANN GREEN

*This article first appeared in the fall 2009 edition of Inside Furman, the university's internal newsletter. Photos courtesy Special Collections and Archives.*

