

# Collecting Antiquities

In the early 1970s, after more than a decade of strong contemporary art programming, the Jewish Museum began to explore the richness of Jewish historical life and culture. Archaeology became a new area of interest. By 1973 the Museum's budding collection of ancient objects had more than doubled with a major purchase from New York University of nearly five hundred antiquities excavated from three sites in Israel. Included in this important acquisition was a group of late eighth-century BCE handles, once part of large storage jars, on view in this gallery. These fragments are inscribed "[Belonging] to the king" in ancient Hebrew and were probably part of a royal provisioning system. The kings of ancient Israel rarely produced objects bearing their names. Instead they are mostly mentioned and depicted in the inscriptions of foreign kings, such as on the extraordinary Tel Dan Stele shown here, which has been loaned by The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, from the collection of the Israel Antiquities Authority.