

Women Paleoartists at the American Museum of Natural History

MAYA NAUNTON, MANDY ABOKHAIR, and SARAH BARLOW-OCHSHORN

The American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) has long used artists to help both the public and the scientific staff to envision long extinct animals and environments. The most famous among those was Charles Knight, whose artwork was used in scientific illustrations as well as in the murals decorating the museum. However, he was far from the only paleoartist who worked with the museum.

Many of the lesser-known artists were, perhaps not coincidentally, women. A recent article published by the museum's library staff, "Beyond Charles Knight: Women paleoartists at the American Museum of Natural History in the early twentieth century,"¹ brought new attention to their work.

The Department of Vertebrate Paleontology (DVP) in the American Museum of Natural History holds an extensive archival collection that contains original artwork in addition to correspondence, field notebooks, taxonomic sketches, and photographs. In April 2021, DVP began work on a three-year project funded by the IMLS Museums for America grant. The grant will enable the department to provide access to 820 linear feet of materials housed in its archives.

The work in the archive helped to uncover the forgotten artwork by the women artists mentioned in the article. We rediscovered 11 preparatory paintings for a never executed mural done by Elisabeth Rungius Fulda. We also found masterly drawings by Margret Joy Flinsch Buba and Lindsey Morris Sterling that were used to illustrate a monumental monograph on evolution of elephants and their relatives that was published in 1936.

In order to further showcase the women artists in the museum, we have created a poster to highlight their work and to bring more attention to their contributions to the mission of the museum.

[1] Reitmeyer, M., Morgan, R., and Baione, T., 2021, Beyond Charles Knight: Women paleoartists at the American Museum of Natural History in the early twentieth century, *in* Clary, R.M., Rosenberg, G.D., and Evans, D.C., eds., *The Evolution of Paleontological Art: Geological Society of America Memoir 218*, p. 171–180, [https://doi.org/10.1130/2021.1218\(19\)](https://doi.org/10.1130/2021.1218(19)).

About the authors:

Maya Naunton (she/her) is the Project Archivist at the American Museum of Natural History's Vertebrate Paleontology Archives. She has previously worked in libraries and archives at

Fordham University, Hunter College, HSBC, the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, and Columbia University Libraries. In addition to her MS in Library and Information Science with an Advanced Certificate in Archives and Records Management from the Palmer School of Library and Information Science at Long Island University, Maya has studied at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts Conservation Center, applying her conservation skills at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Fashion Institute of Technology, and the Brooklyn Museum of Art, among other NYC institutions. From 2019-2020, she served as the Director of the Educational Committee for Archivists Round Table of New York. Her work on textiles has been published in several books and journals.

Mandy Abokhair (they/them) is a recent graduate from New York University and Long Island University, earning a MA in English and American Literature and a MLIS with an Advanced Certificate in Archives and Records Management at each school, respectively. They are currently employed at The New School as Assistant to the Librarian and at the American Museum of Natural History as Archives Intern in the Vertebrate Paleontology department. With experience at both large and small archives, they are interested in archival work that centers voices that were previously unheard and underrepresented.

Sarah Barlow-Ochshorn (she/her) is an Archives Intern in the American Museum of Natural History's Vertebrate Paleontology Department, as well as a student at Queens College Graduate School of Library and Information Studies getting her MLS with a Certificate in Archives and Preservation of Cultural Heritage Materials. She is the current President of Queens College's Student Chapter of the Society of American Archivists. She recently participated in a discussion panel for the American Library Association's Annual Conference about rethinking security policies in special collections and archival settings. She is interested in practices of radical empathy in archives.