

La Muse

DOCENT DATES

9:15 AM Social Hour
10 AM Meeting/lecture

(non-meetings are in blue)

October 16

Dane Goodman, local artist, will present on POOCH: The Art Full Life of Kieth Julius Puccinelli.

(Evaluations workshop after)

October 21, 10:30 AM

Book Club, FRC

October 28

Huntington Road Trip

November 6

Isabel Barbuzza (artist in the Latina "Accretion" exhibition)

November 20

James Glisson will present his vision of the new re-installation of Ridley-Tree.

December 4

James Glisson: upcoming exhibition" Dario Robleto: The Signal"

December 9 (place TBD) Holiday Party

Docent meetings are Sept—May (June Graduation) 1st and 3rd Wednesdays every month, except December and April (Holiday Party, Spring Trip). Topics will be published in La Muse as they become available.



Pierre Soulages (1919-2022) was honored with the first one-man, contemporary show at the Louvre on his 100th birthday, celebrating his genius as an expressionist. Stand before our Soulages, *10 Mai, 1961*, on view in *In The Making* exhibition, and allow yourself to experience the internal equilibrium of the work, not as an idea but as a felt sense of deep, illusive natural order. Each brush stroke is exactly right, the strokes interacting to form felt complicity, as if drawn together by agreement. The work pictured here, *27 Aout, 1961*, was auctioned in 2021 by Sotheby's in NYC for over \$20 million, a record for the French artist.

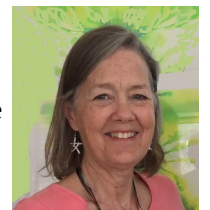
Submitted by Ricki

Dear Active Docents, Sustainers and Provisionals,

September has been an exciting month with new exhibitions opening, galleries closing, the Docent Website crashing for a couple days, and the *Legacy of Giving* exhibition attracting a continuous stream of visitors. I appreciate your flexibility in adjusting to all the ups, downs, changes and obstacles.

With all the changes, we have an opportunity to focus on Contemporary art the next couple months. Art of our own times can be more challenging than other genres, which is why docent tours are especially valuable for the public. Generally, there is different information available because the art is created recently by living artists. And this is where we make full use of our resources—starting with the curator walkthroughs with James Glisson to get the big picture, our own research online, and research papers on the Docent Website. We also have marvelous opportunities to read and use the artists' own words to hear from them directly. And we can do a walkthrough of new exhibitions with a fellow docent to explore the work. Enjoy what we can learn from each other.

While every visitor experiences the art in their own way, we can offer context from our research and our own experience previewing the exhibition. Then we can lead the conversation in our tours about what the artwork says to us personally and about our times. All of this gives us a firm grounding for touring the public. (continued)



Pattie Firestone
Docent Council
President

Student tours of contemporary art are more of a conversation about their reaction to the works. What do they see? What do they think about that? Does it connect to their own lives in some way? These tours are more about inspiring students to see and share their thoughts and ideas—what we say is simply the opening for them to explore and share. What they think, feel and share will impact them more than what we say. We are there to guide their exploration.

As we move into exhibitions that are more diverse and inclusive, we will have more challenges than we have with traditional art. This offers all of us opportunities to grow, to learn and push through our own confusion or discomfort to embrace learning. That's why we became docents. Artists will always be pushing the envelope. Think of Parisians viewing impressionism for the first time. Our job as docents is to de-mystify a kind of art that may be new and unfamiliar so viewers can be open to the art rather than dismissive as too confusing or abstract or offensive.

This is what we signed up for—a dynamic exciting role connecting people and art. We're not sitting in a hall stuffing envelopes—we're part of a living, breathing organization that offers us access to new experiences and challenges traditional understandings. Once we have a handle on our own reactions, we can guide our visitors into new worlds.

Happy Touring! *Pattie*

Pattie.Firestone@gmail.com

From our **Vice President**
Cindy Anderson



Hello fellow Docents,

What a great turnout at our first meeting! I have two announcements regarding our trip sign-ups.

1. **Registration** for The Huntington on Monday, Oct 28th is still open! We have 32 signed up, 25 slots still available. Friends and family are welcome. I'd like to have all the checks by October 4th. Shy a full bus, we have a smaller one waiting in the wings, though the cost goes up a little.

If you have friends or family who want to join us, make checks (\$70 pp) payable to SBMA Docent Council.

Mail to: Mary Benedict 49 Six Flags Circle Buellton, CA 93427

2. **Chicago Trip** April 27 - May 2. It would be great if we were all there for an opening dinner Sunday, April 27th. With a large convention that week, planning ahead is the smart move. More details will follow about hotels and events. But first I need to know our count, so do let me know if you're interested in either trip so I can nail down plans.

Cindy

cjndrsn2@aol.com

Quips and Tips With the idea of helping us all BLOOM this year, I'd like to share some of the comments or revelations your visitors (students or adults) have expressed to you. Are there pieces that have particularly engaged them that surprised you? Any other comments from visitors you'd like to share? Do you have any touring tricks that you'd like some ideas about, or that you'd like to share with your fellow docents? (i.e., What do you say in your Sweep?) Let me know, and we'll try to share a few Quips and Tricks at our October 16th meeting.

Thank you! *Cindy*

From our **Student Teams Co-chairs**
Nicola Ghersen and Ann Marie Dunaway



We're excited to kick off the new school year! Approximately 500 students will be visiting our galleries in October, and we're ready to share all the new installations.

The SB Unified School District has changed their curriculum to include second grade visits to the Museum. Everyone is buzzing with anticipation. It's a wonderful opportunity to engage young, curious, open minds visiting for the first time—what a gift!



Our New Active docents are being scheduled for evaluations, creating a lot of activity for our team.

We need your help. Our 3rd & 4th Tuesday Team could use another docent or two! If you have this time slot available, or could be an Angel, it would be very much appreciated. Please reach out to Anne-Marie or Nicola if you can help us out joining Kim's fun Artful Making group!

Wishing everyone a fantastic month of student tours!

Anne-Marie and Nicola

From our **Adult Teams Co-chairs**
Susan Lowe and Elizabeth Russell



Hello fellow Docents!

What a terrific summer quarter of touring we have had! The final numbers for September are not yet available, but July and August had an excellent showing – 332 visitors for *Highlights* and 622 for the *Legacy of Giving* exhibition (which includes a whopping 277 visitors on opening day alone). Congratulations to the touring teams.



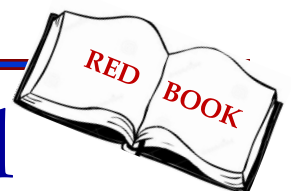
Looking forward, we are most excited about the new Modern Contemporary team which will begin touring in October. Some team members will be taking full advantage of their new title, exploring both modern and contemporary works throughout the Museum. During this dynamic time, the new (and coming) exhibitions will offer a wonderful variety of artworks to choose from. Bottom line, we are very much looking forward to seeing their tours!

Speaking of new exhibitions, touring in October will require our renown docent flexibility in adjusting to the temporary closure of some key galleries, the shuffling of installations a reflection of the Museum's growth into new areas. So, we thank you in advance. And remember, the final step in touring is completing the Redbook at the front desk!

Happy touring!

Susan and Elizabeth

Sweep → **Tour** → **Record**



Our Community Speakers Team Leader

Lori Mohr



We had a busy summer, giving talks on the *Legacy of Giving* exhibition. Most of these groups have had Special Request tours, with more to come in October. Here are the numbers for September.



VENUE	PRESENTATION	ATTENDANCE
Alexander Gardens	<i>Legacy of Giving</i> (Lori)	11
Samarkand	<i>Legacy of Giving</i> (Lori)	34
Yacht Club	<i>Legacy of Giving</i> (Lori)	19
Casa Dorinda	<i>Legacy of Giving</i> (Lori)	62
Total Attendance	126	Average attendance 31.5

From our Evaluations Co-Chairs

Christine Holland and Laura DePao;li



Are you going to be doing docent tour evaluations this year? Would you like to better understand what evaluators are looking for?

If you answered yes to either or both of these questions, **please attend to our evaluators workshop on Wednesday, October 16th following the Docent Meeting.** We will review policies and procedures around evaluations and then provide a refresher on what makes a good evaluation and how to improve the experience of being evaluated.



We'll address how to provide supportive and constructive criticism and how to tell a docent that there are issues with the presentation of a piece in a way that she/he can hear them. We'll also answer any questions you may have about the process.

In addition to planning the evaluator training, we've been meeting with Adult and Student team leaders to hear their concerns for the coming year as we gather our group of experienced and dedicated docents to serve as evaluators. We are also beginning the process of scheduling docent evaluations.

We appreciate your continuing positive attitude about this process. The high standards we've set together are what enables us to be of such great service to the Museum and the community.

Christine and Laura

From our **Membership Chair**
Merle Guadagnini



Hello Docents!

We have a new method for recording our hours for the previous month—meeting attendance, public hours (touring) and research hours (all activities related to study). We'll be emailing you the new Google form on the first of each month to be filled out and sent back. It really is a quite simple form—once you've completed it, hit Send. As soon as it comes to me I will begin collecting the data. Expect your email on October 1st. This should make life a lot easier for all of us.

Any questions, please contact me or Anne-Marie Dunaway.

Happy recording! *Merle*

From our **Webmaster**
Loree Gold



Thank you for your patience with the website's "ups and downs". After crashing last month, it is currently up and working. We have new labels for two new shows—*Friends and Lovers* as well as *Accretion: Works By Latin American Women*.

We have only one research paper for these new shows of contemporary artists. I have created four posts with comments for *Friends and Lovers* that can be found on the **Exhibitions** page. I will be collecting more information for both shows in the next few weeks. Please keep me posted if you have trouble logging in or find information that can be shared.

I'm looking forward to adding new information and images for us all!

Cheers!

Loree



Monet in London. Views of the Thames, Courtauld Gallery

27 Sept 2024 – 19 Jan 2025. *Submitted by Shirley Waxman*

website: <https://courtauld.ac.uk/whats-on/exh-monet-and-london-views-of-the-thames/>

"...some of Monet's most remarkable Impressionist paintings were made not in France but in London. They depict extraordinary views of the Thames as it had never been seen before, full of evocative atmosphere, mysterious light and radiant colour."

Monet, *Charing Cross Railway Bridge Early Morning*, 1903

From our **Research Chair**
Barbara Ross



"You tell me, and I forget. You teach me, and I remember. You involve me, and I learn."
-Benjamin Franklin

I was very pleased with the response to my request for research papers at the last council meeting, and very grateful to those who have made the commitment. The second table lists those works in need of papers, so there's plenty of opportunity for you when the time works.

ARTWORK	ARTIST	RESEARCHER
Autobiography 1968	Robert Rauschenberg	Kim Carr-Howard
Verduta: La Combe Red Pines	Whitney Bedford	Carol Forhan
Fermented Origins	Rina Banerjee	Johanna Chase
Skewed Square	Gisela Colon	Johanna Chase
Sense Four	Mimi Lauter	Dana Staub
The White Door	Wilhelm Hammershoi	Linda Gorin

ARTWORK	ARTIST	EXHIBITION
Still Life w/ Triumeq and Wrapped Candies	Joey Tirell	Friends and Lovers
Cowboy Study (Prussian Blue)	Alex Foxtan	Friends and Lovers
Ceilings and Lightbulb	Robert Rauschenberg	Works from the Collection
Untitled (Statue of Liberty)	Robert Rauschenberg	Works from the Collection
Untitled (collage in tan, white, and red)	Robert Rauschenberg	Works from the Collection
Elysian, from Romances Series	Robert Rauschenberg	Works from the Collection
Quiet House-Black Mountain	Robert Rauschenberg	Works from the Collection
Untitled, from Portfolio of 13 Points	Robert Rauschenberg	Works from the Collection
Untitled (central red color)	Robert Rauschenberg	Works from the Collection
Hues from Brown to Pink	Carlee Fernandez	Accretion
Re-Designing My Library	Isabel Barbuzza	Accretion
Lagrimas y mocos	Ilana Savdie	Accretion
Figura Emisaria	Daniel Lind-Ramos	In the Making
Untitled	Albert Contreras	In the Making
Tramas sobre negro	Eduardo MacEntyre	In the Making
10 Mai 1961	Pierre Soulages	In the Making
November 1967 #1 Three Dimensions	Sidney Gordin	In the Making
Trends and Predictions for the Year	Garth Weiser	In the Making
El Nino—Motorcycle II	Jana Dickson	In the Making
Dilmun	Vian Sora	In the Making
Sedition	York Chang	In the Making
Au Bois d'Amour (printemps)	Claire Tabouret	In the Making
Memories of Kermi	Betye Saar	In the Making
Untitled	Jesus Rafael Soto	In the Making
tearing flesh from bone	Elliott Hundley	In the Making

Meet the Provisional Class 2024-2025

Patty Santiago, Instructor



Nina Sandvik Bashforth

Born and raised in Norway, I moved to California where I earned my B.A. in Business and Marketing at California Lutheran University. Returning to Norway, it was 2008 before I made my way back to California. The business side of me has always been matched by my love of the arts across media, which gave me a fulfilling career in children's book publishing. Now, as a proud parent of three adult children and happily retired, I am excited to be in the docent training program. That same drive to nurture and inspire young minds that fueled my business and marketing career can now be channeled into working directly with children, exploring the world around them through art.

I am also a lifelong enthusiast of health, fitness, and longevity, engaging in pursuits that enrich both body and mind. Whether hiking, skiing, or cooking with fresh local ingredients from the farmer's market, I find balance and energy in nature and its bounty. Fluent in several languages, I have a deep appreciation for travel and discovery, so art education as a training docent is a perfect fit to balance my life.



Gretchen Hewlett

Raised in Fresno, California, I moved to Santa Barbara in 1970 to attend UCSB. Like many others, I fell in love with the community and have been fortunate to spend my entire adult life here, working in a variety of professions—publishing, law, trust services, and most recently, fundraising at the Museum of Natural History and Santa Barbara City College (from which I retired in 2021). Coming from a home of public school educators, I've had a lifelong appreciation for education's power and attraction for continual learning and growth.



Ann Kaplan

My husband and I fell in love with Santa Barbara on our many trips across the continent. Bi-coastal living gave way to full time in 2019 when I cut back to half-time as a Distinguished Professor at Stony Brook University and he retired from NYU. We decided to retire here while maintaining contact with NYC. After my husband died, it made sense to make my home here. In my career, though I mainly taught literature, film and contemporary media arts, I always loved classical art. I applied for this docent position as an avenue to enjoy a more formal and rigorous exposure to additional art genres and learn more about their contexts through art history, a way of continuing my career as an educator but in the role of volunteer. While I did a lot of research over the years in feminism and film, trauma and climate change (areas I continue to study), it was teaching that I loved most. As a docent I hope to revive the teaching self that I have most missed these last few years.



Michelle Madril

I made two decisions that changed my life. The first was after graduating from Cal State Fresno when my employer asked if I would move temporarily to a place called Montecito. I knew nothing of Santa Barbara County, except that it was on the ocean. I immediately fell in love with the place, quit my job, and stayed. That was in 1999. I had found where I would spend the rest of my life. The second key decision was trading a career in finance with Morgan Stanley for one in real estate. Being able to help clients buy and sell homes in the city that I love is my passion.

When I'm not working, you can find me walking my dogs (mini poodles, Kizzy and Bun Bun) at Elings Park, my favorite place in SB. I also love playing tennis, attending ceramic class at the Schott center, going to the farmer's market, and partaking of all the amazing eateries here with friends and family. Volunteering is my way of giving back. I have been involved with Pacific Pride Foundation, the Santa Barbara Food Bank, and the Democratic Women of Santa Barbara County. As a docent, I will give my best sharing the Museum's art with our community.



Natalie NG

I went to school in NYC, got my first real job there, and believed I would be there forever. It wasn't an easy place to live, but after a few years it felt like home. Then unexpectedly, I was recruited to SB for a job. It was an absolutely unreal transition. When my plane landed in front of what looked like someone's Spanish-style estate, I was stunned. How can this place be where I live and work? After the initial shock, I settled comfortably into this dream-like landscape, the easy, relaxed lifestyle, and all these happy, friendly people around me. It felt and still feels like a vacation. I became a Santa Bar-

baran—got married in the Courthouse and gave birth to my child at Cottage Hospital. Twenty years later, it's hard to imagine living anywhere else, a city that inspired me to pull up my Big City roots and replant them in an irresistibly charming town that feels like home.

Giving back to the community as a docent feels like the best way to honor that journey.

Tish O'Connor (No image)

I grew up in Boston, earning my degree at Dartmouth in 1976. That was bookended by three years of study at the Sorbonne in Paris and the École du Louvre. After working in publishing in NYC for five years, I moved to L.A. to manage LACMA's publications, specifically the exhibition catalogue that featured impressionist works from the French national collection, their contribution to the Olympics Arts Festival in 1984. I also documented the cultural life of sprawling Southern California in two guidebooks commissioned and published by the L.A. Times (1990) and the Getty (1997).

For three decades I worked with my husband, photographer and book designer Dana Levy, as Perpetual Press, our studio producing illustrated books for museums and university presses all over the U.S. In 2001 we relocated to SB where I became a docent at Lotusland for fourteen years until my husband's illness intensified, as well as the SB Courthouse until my ongoing work as a scholarly editor demanded more time. Since 2017, I have been a Compeer at the Music Academy. I am excited to be in the docent training program to continue my lifelong learning and resume volunteering in a culture-rich environment.



Kathleen Phillips

I was raised in Philadelphia, home to the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Barnes Collection, where I first fell in love with everything related to art, especially its historical context. My father and siblings were active members of the Philadelphia arts community as wood and metal sculptors and muralist painters. I've lived in SB with my husband and two sons for over twenty years, and now that my sons have officially 'launched', I have time to revisit my love of art. In addition to that passion, I have great curiosity about human biochemistry and physiology, which I satisfied with a B.A. in Nutrition & Dietetics and an M.A. in Food Chemistry. While raising our sons, I taught nutrition classes at Peabody Charter School and was the Director of Research and Education at Bragg Live Food Products, learning and teaching everything imaginable about vinegar and olive oil! My family and I have thrived in Santa Barbara and are grateful to live in such a beautiful city.



Sylvia Sarisky

I grew up in Monterrey, Mexico, where I earned a B.S. in Marketing and Statistics at the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores De Monterrey in 1985. After 15 years working in Mexico, the U.S., Denmark, Sweden, Paris, and Spain, I married. Before moving to California, I had been a docent at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Monterrey, Mexico, and in 1999 became a docent at the Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA) in Long Beach for two years.

I was a stay-at-home mom for years, then in 2016 earned a minor in Art with an emphasis in Art History at Moorpark College and taught art to elementary school students as a volunteer for six years. Later, I obtained a certificate in Curatorial Studies, and in 2023, completed my M.A. in Art History, focusing on Modern Art at Centro de Cultura Casa Lamm, as well as certification in Western Art of the 19th Century. Currently, I am the Director of the Conejo Valley Museum of Art in Thousand Oaks while intermittently returning to Mexico to lecture. And now, I look forward to being a docent at SBMA, learning about the art history I love, and serving the public.



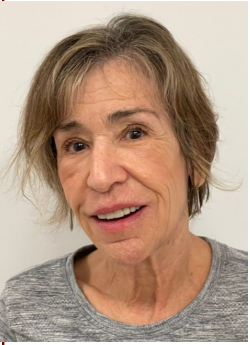
Pat Sheppard

I first moved to Santa Barbara after a brief stint in the Peace Corps and proceeded to raise my family here. After five years I took a position in the administration at UCSB. While pursuing my career and raising my family, I also studied for a master's degree in history. I retired from my job after twenty-seven years and trained for multiple volunteer opportunities. Currently, I am an active docent at Lotusland, the Casa del Herrero, and the County Courthouse. In addition, I have been a former president and remain an active board member for the nonprofit organization *Vistas Lifelong Learning*, promoting ongoing education for adults committed to a life of enriched study. For twenty-five years, VISTAS has offered a wide variety of topics through short-term classes that change throughout the year. As a proud lifelong student, I look forward to the docent training program and engaging with visitors through art.



Susie Thum Way back when, as a newly married graduate student with a budget to fit, my introduction to art was a Rauschenberg collage in a Leo Castelli Gallery. As missed opportunities in life go, I sometimes think about the \$250.00 price tag and wince. But I came away with a budding appetite to learn more. Since then, I have had four children, earned a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology at UC Berkeley, and run a non-profit education and psychology clinic. Along the way, I was an educational psychologist in the public school system and worked in educational research at a San Francisco non-profit.

My volunteer experience is varied, most recently as a docent at LACMA from 2004-2019, holding many positions over the years. As a lifelong student, I relish the opportunity to learn something new every day, be it a child's reaction to an artwork, or delving into the research needed for a new exhibition. My being a provisional docent will help satisfy my need for personal growth while serving the Museum.



Paula Ullman I am a native New Yorker, having lived there for most of my professional life, which was buying and merchandising women's clothing for department stores like Saks Fifth Ave, specialty apparel stores and to manufacturers. I moved to California in 1998 after my daughter was grown. Within a few years I produced a research report, The Merchandising Edge, providing qualitative information to hedge funds and institutional investors on the retail apparel sector and the relative strength of clothing assortments at specialty stores. It was always interesting to observe how trends in art, interior design, and music are so closely aligned with fashion. And now through art.



Sohelya Valleie

I left Texas and my engineering career behind in 2022 to move here, my new home. Santa Barbara, with its nurturing of artistic expression, is the perfect place to grow, share and contribute. Retirement has given me the opportunity to build on my knowledge of art history as well as the environment in which to advance my artistic abilities. Primarily self-taught, I have supplemented that knowledge with various classes and art programs here in SB. I see the docent program as a natural progression for my interests, a more focused, in-depth education program to prepare me to share the Museum's riches with

visitors. For me this level of learning is a privilege. I am excited to one day share my new knowledge and skills with students and the public.

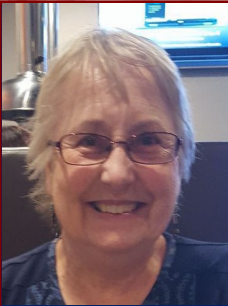


Cyndi Withrow-Aliabadi

My husband and I finally returned to SB after meeting at and graduating from UCSB thirty years ago. We lived in several cities in California, plus a decade in Europe, and another decade in Chicago and Seattle before moving back. We absolutely love to travel and experience new and different cultures, during which I have nurtured my love for art, antiques and design, collecting unique treasures and selling them online. I am particularly drawn to antique textiles, which visually and tactilely connect me to the culture which produced it. In addition to my M.A. in Philosophy, I continually take courses to enhance my education, especially in art history and interior design. Education feeds me, and I continually pursue other likeminded people to share and learn from. My home away from home is always a museum, no matter where I am in the world. So I am thrilled to be in the docent training program, making SBMA my new 'home' of choice.

Docent Book Club News

From Gail Stichler

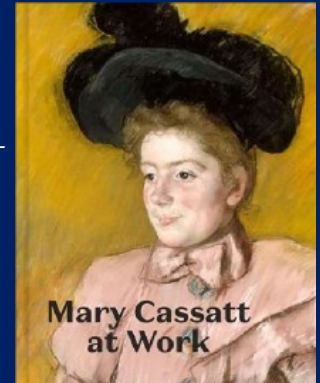
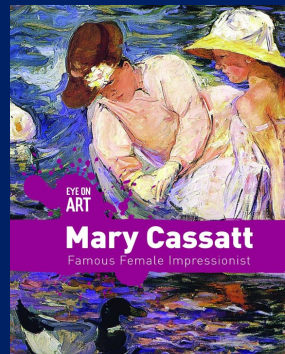
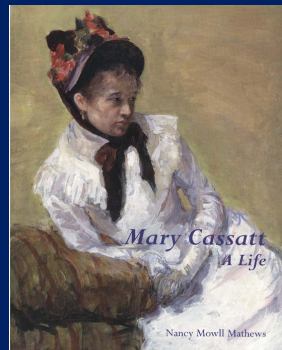


Our next meeting will be Monday, October 21, at 10:30am in the FRC, discussing the life and works of Mary Cassatt. The exhibition of her work at the Legion of Honor in San Francisco opens October 5, and it's the catalog from this exhibition that will be the main source for our discussion. If you want to choose something else, there are many books available on Cassatt (sample images below) as well as three docent research papers on our website. This will be an interesting conversation for docents planning to see the exhibition. For those who won't be able to travel to the Legion of Honor, from our reading we will be a lot more informed when we add the new Cassatt to our tours, thanks to Leslie Ridley-Tree!

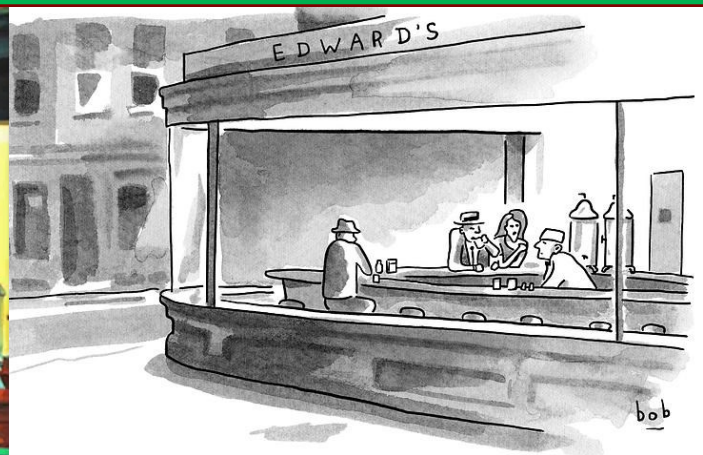
Contact me if you have any questions (gmstichler@aol.com).

Happy reading!

~ Gail



Jennifer A. Thompson (Author), Laurel Garber (Author), Dave Beech (contributor)



"Not you, too, Larry. Pumpkin-flavored?"

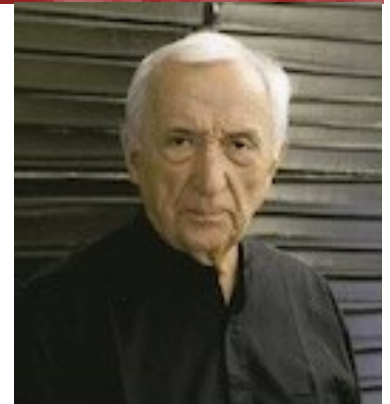
Edward Hopper, *Nighthawks*, 1942, oil on canvas. Art Institute of Chicago. Cartoon submitted by Christine Holland

Pierre Soulages: Capturing Light

By Ricki Morse



Pierre Soulages' instinctual nature was to understand the world through his personal experience of it, not through ideas about it. As a 14-year-old in southern France, he first stood on the floor of the 11th century Romanesque Sainte Foy Abbey in Conques, north of his home in Rodez. He wrote, "I was overwhelmed by the proportions of the interior. Art seemed to me to be the only thing that was worth spending one's life doing." He was already convinced of this by the age of twelve or thirteen, and "the activities of normal adults



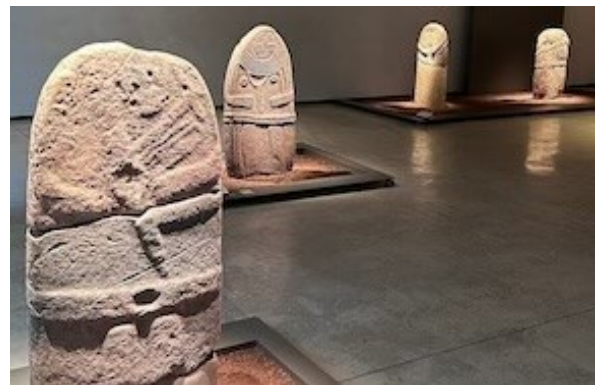
Pierre Soulages, 1994, standing in front of the windows he designed for Sainte de Foy Abbey



The interior of the Abbey Church of Sainte-Foy

seemed to me to be somewhat pointless, to say the least of it." In his local Fenaille Museum in Rodez he sat among the ancient Celtic stone carvings, drawn to the hand carved markings.

His father, a carriage maker, died when he was five and he was reared by his mother and his older sister. He remembers at nine being asked by his sister's friend what he was drawing, and he replied: "a snow landscape." She looked surprised. "What I was drawing was a landscape under snow, black lines against white paper. I was trying



The Celtic stones carved in France 4500-3000 BC, Fenaille Museum, an archeological museum in Rodez, France.

to capture the brightness of light."

This deep clarity characterized his search for an art education, his choice of a life partner and his painting,



all overcast by the German occupation of France in June of 1940. He decided that a career as an art teacher could fund his life as a painter, but the traditional rigidity of the first school he tried repelled him. At the next school, the Fine Art School of Montpellier, he not only met fellow student, Colette Llaurens, but viewed and admired works by Paul Cézanne and Pablo Picasso, and found a new home along the Mediterranean. Colette shared his questioning view of tradi-

Pierre and Colette, Paris, 1940, their first car purchase, a Panard. grasped his uniquely

individualistic approach. They were married in October of 1942 having developed a strategy for avoiding recruitment into the Nazi Compulsory Work Force (STO).

Pierre filed an exemption document as a farmer, and he and Colette began their lifelong union, working their land in Montpellier while Pierre explored his vision of painting. The search for light produced paintings viewing the sky through the leafless branches of trees on a hill.

This early 1946 untitled landscape provided his first step into abstraction. Observing the tree branches against sky, he recognized his long search to display light. "I was looking at it in terms of an abstract sculpture, an interactive series of forms, tensions and colors," and painted this abstract of branches against sky. As he viewed the contrasts in these paintings the black branches and bright sky dissolved into his first abstract painting. Once asked to explain his concept of painting, he said, "Ideas have nothing to do with it. I make a single paint stroke on canvas, stand back, and let it tell me



Pierre Soulages, *untitled*, 1941, oil on canvas.



Pierre Soulages, *Brou-de-noix sur papier*, 1946.

what comes next."

The 1940 German and Italian occupations of France, Belgium and the Netherlands initiated a mass exodus to the United States of artists, Jews and other asylum seekers, fleeing death threats from the Nazis. Suddenly, the center of the art world shifted from Paris to New York City. Pierre Soulages, consistent with his self-determining nature, found a way to stay in Southern France with his new wife isolated on their Mediterranean farm, where his talent asserted itself without the influence of current art trends or association with other artists.

Much to the benefit of art lovers, Pierre's unique sensibility flowered out of a single source, the artist himself. And it is that concentrated presence of internal balance, a kind of reciprocity among the strokes on the canvas, that Pierre called

"complicité," as if the paint strokes themselves contrived their inherent composition.

Pierre's unique sensibility continued to thrive and expand without outside influence. In the 1940s he first became aware of abstract painting through a neighbor in Montpellier and came across a Mondrian painting in a Nazi pamphlet on degenerate art, his first introduction to abstract expressionism. Black was his favorite color, to him the most dramatic and expressive color in the spectrum. In his search for capturing light, black became his medium, polished, scrapped and buffed into a vast array of reflective. He called these explorations "otrenoir," beyond black.



Pierre Soulages, *21, Novembre*, 1959, oil on canvas. Private collection.



Pierre Soulages, *30, Septembre*, 1963, oil and walnut stain on canvas. Private collection.

The Louvre, in celebration of his 100th birthday, displayed his "otrenoir" works in their first ever exhibition of a contemporary artist.



Pierre Soulages, 27, *Aout*, 1958, oil on canvas. Private collection.

In 1986 the French government commissioned Soulages to replace the 104 ancient windows in the 8th c. Abbey de Sainte Foy, the church which had inspired him as a boy to become an artist. Completed in 1994, after prolonged experiments with glass textures and reflectivity, the windows provided Pierre with an intense experience in the transmission of light.



Pierre Soulages, *Soulages at the Louvre*, 100th Birthday, 12, 11, 2019 to 3, 9, 2020.



Pierre Soulages, *104 windows, Abbey Church of Sainte-Foy in Conques, France*

The windows were greeted with wonder at their quiet humility and subtle beauty, honoring the history and sanctity of the Abbey. For Pierre Soulages the experience, from conception through execution, was a celebration of his lifelong artistic search for light.

As his art appeared in galleries across Europe and he was honored by the French president as the greatest artist in France, plans to build a Soulages museum in Rodez materialized. Pierre and Colette contributed 900 works and participated in the design of the building. Completed in 2014, the galleries extend below the entrance hall into underground spaces where the light is controlled to allow viewing the reflective surface of the “otrenoir” works.

In that same year Mercedes Eicholz, a Museum trustee and long-time patron, gave us the Pierre Soulages, *10 Mai 1961*. And it is standing before this work in our galleries that we come



Pierre Soulages, *10 Mai 1961*, oil on canvas, SBMA.

to know the power of his work. Not only are the red and black strokes of paint varied in shading, but each stroke is edged with ridges of piled paint. Thus the painting becomes a bas-relief sculpture, projecting the inherent “rightness” we experience in his work. The subtle balance or “complicité of the composition captures an inherent order, as if each stroke requires the next—like an overheard private conversation. With each visit we “get it” more clearly, as if it were a fresh happening, occurring in this moment.



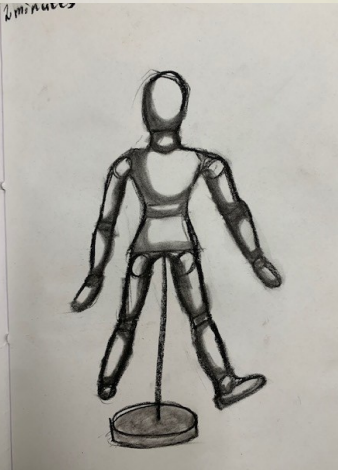
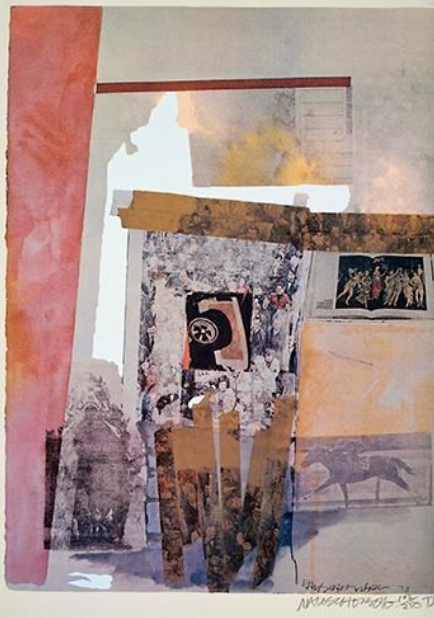
Soulages Museum, Rodez, France

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The Last Page

Museums Art camp at the Ridley-Tree Education Center ran for seven weeks this summer for students aged 5- 12 years, enjoying full day art classes for a weekly fee (some scholarships are available). Nicola had the pleasure of teaching five of the seven weeks. Here are a few of the artwork students created inspired by Rauschenberg and Signac works currently on view.



Lori Mohr, Editor , 2009—