

## Coming Up

### May 2: (Wed)

9:15 a.m. Coffee  
10:00 Docent Council  
Lecture, Susan Straight:  
CA Car Culture

### May 9: (Wed)

9:30 a.m. Board Meeting  
Luria

### May 11: (Fri)

3:30 p.m. Provisional  
Recruitment Reception  
SBMA Auditorium

### May 14 (Mon)

1:30 Book Club, Home  
of Dorothy Warnock

### May 16: (Wed)

9:15 a.m. Coffee  
10:00 Docent Council  
PJ Brownlee: American  
Art Exhibition

### June 6: (Wed)

9:15 Coffee  
10:00 Docent Council

### June 8: (Fri)

5:30 PM Docent Gradua-  
tion & Recognition

### June 13: (Wed)

9:30 a.m. Double Board  
Meeting, Home of  
Irene Stone

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*Haniwa Horse*, clay,  
6th century, Japan,  
4' x 4' LACMA

Haniwa – which means "circle of clay" – are hollow, unglazed sculptures that adorned the surfaces of the mounded tombs of the rich and powerful in 4th through 7th century Japan. Most are shaped like cylinders or in the form of houses, people, animals and military, ceremonial and household objects.

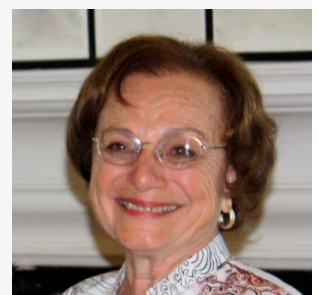
Dating from the 6th century, it may be the largest such terracotta horse known, according to Curator Robert Singer.

- LA Times

Suddenly, May – heralded by rainstorms and sparkling sunlight – and we are preparing for the provisional docent recruiting reception. I hope you are encouraging friends and acquaintances to attend and learn about the program. Many thanks to Kathryn and Rachael, who have planned an enjoyable afternoon for everyone. And thanks to so many of you who have offered to help and attend. It is always fun to talk with prospective docents.

As I write this we are still waiting for the latest printing of the exhibition schedule for next year. We will have updated preference sheets for you by our May 2 meeting, even if the information is changed again later in the year.

As we look forward to our May 2 Docent Council meeting, I hope you are taking the time to read one or both of the novels so generously provided for to us in lieu of receiving an honorarium by our speaker, Susan Straight, who is presenting the Singh Endowed Memorial Lecture endowed by Sneh in memory of her husband. Both novels are available for pickup or exchange in Rachael's office,



Irene Stone

**Highwire Moon** (a National Book Award finalist), and **Take One Candle Light A Room**. Be sure to read Ricki's review of **Highwire Moon** on page 6 of this issue. Susan Straight, Professor of Creative Writing at the University of California at Riverside, has received numerous awards and recognition for her writing, which is enriched by her experiences of a lifetime in Riverside. She will be referencing the *Pacific Standard Time* themes as she discusses Southern California culture, with special emphasis on Car Culture. The New York Times Book Review includes, "An eye-opener of a novel, a road map to the real California, Straight turns headlines into poetry." Please return the novels to the Docent Office if you would like us to pass them on.

At our May 2 meeting we will also have the formal election of the Docent Council Board for 2012-13.

On May 16 our speaker will be P. J. Brownlee, PhD., Associate Curator, Terra Foundation for American Art, who will be discussing our newly installed American exhibition, *Scenery, Story, Spirit: American Painting and Sculpture from the Santa Barbara Museum of Art*, the exhibition that he curated for SBMA.

Now that the provisional docents have finished their research papers, we still have a dozen art objects recommended by the curators for research. Would some of you like to take on a summer research project? Photos of the objects, together with the research guidelines, will be available at the May 2 meeting. For your consideration, a list of the objects is included in this issue of La Muse on page 5.

Yes, it is May already, and I find myself bemused with the quick passage of the year and the great honor and pleasure that I am experiencing as your president. I am touched by your generosity of spirit as, repeatedly, you have volunteered to fill in for docents with personal priorities. You are an exceptional group of docents, friends, and supporters of each other. My gratitude to you all.



## Message from our Vice President



Kathryn Padgett

The provisional class thanks the following people for hosting Spring lunches in their honor: Jean Smith, Jacqueline Simons, Jerry Jensen, Gail Elnicki, Dwight Coffin, Irene Stone, Nancy Estes, Nyna Mahan, Andrea Gallo, Sue Billig, Gwen Baker, Queenie Schewater, Christine Holland, and Sue Skenderian. These lunches have made our class feel both valued and welcome. They express further gratitude to those of you who have assisted, and continue to assist them, in preparing their research papers and various gallery talks. It is wonderful to see the members of the Docent Council investing their time to insure the success of the current provisional class!

The Provisional Information and Recruitment Tea is scheduled **May 11<sup>th</sup> at 3:30** in the Mary Craig Auditorium. Please make plans to attend the reception portion of this event (**4:30**) so that prospective docents can mingle with active docents to learn more about the joy of being a docent at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Thank you to those of you who are actively recruiting potential docents, and please continue doing this – our best provisional docents frequently are referred by you!

The Graduation and Recognition Ceremony is scheduled for **June 8<sup>th</sup> at 5:30** in the Mary Craig Auditorium, followed by a reception in the galleries. Irene and I assure you that it will be a concise and meaningful

celebration of all that is good and wonderful about the Docent Council, celebrating the expansion of our Council with new docents, as well as honoring those who have loyally served for 5, 10, 15 years and more!

Please consider joining the book club next year because it is both fun and informative. We read fascinating books and have lively discussions while munching on the sumptuous treats provided by the host. Susan Billig frequently brings additional research books that provide information about our current topic, which is always appreciated. The upcoming book club is scheduled for **Monday, May 14<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm** at Dorothy Warnock's home. The selected book is *Titan, The Last Days*, by Mark Hudson. See page 4 for the Book Club Notice.



Adult Touring

## Adult Touring



Shirley Waxman

### Touring numbers for March 2012:

Highlights - weekend and daily	92
Focus Tours	170
Pasadena to Santa Barbara	<u>432</u>
	694

*Pasadena to Santa Barbara* is proving to be a very popular exhibition. Many visitors expressed that the docent-led tour enhanced their experience and understanding of these artists who were so important to contemporary art in Southern California. Great work!

A very special thank you to the following docents for going above and beyond for Special Request Tours in March: **Laura DePaoli, Vikki Duncan, Ann Hammond, Amanda McIntyre, and Faith Henkin!**

Questions about Adult Touring? Contact Shirley Waxman or Vikki Duncan.

Forgot to record your tour in the Red Book? Email the information to Shirley Waxman.

[kswaxman@gmail.com](mailto:kswaxman@gmail.com)

### Red Book Reminder:

If you give a special tour, whether it is an 'event' tour or Special Request group, please record your numbers in the Red Book. If you are touring with a group of docents, designate someone to fill in the Red Book with the number of docents (include their names) and the number of visitors.

There is a second 'tab' in the Red Book for Special Request Tours with a sheet to record this information.



Christine Holland  
Nominations Chair

With pleasure I announce, once again, the roster for our new officers for service year 2012-1013, which will be voted on at our next Docent Council Meeting on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. The slate of officers to be voted on is as follows:

- President:** Kathryn Padgett
- Vice President:** Vikki Duncan
- Secretary:** Rosemarie Gebhart
- Treasurer:** Ralph Wilson
- Membership:** Gail Stichler
- Student Teams:** Ann Robinson
- Adult Teams:** Molora Vadnais and Shirley Waxman
- Evaluations:** Sue Skenderian
- Research:** Mary Ellen Hoffman
- Provisional Chair:** Gretchen Simpson
- Past President and Nominations Chair:** Irene Stone.

If anyone cannot attend but wishes to vote (or propose a new nominee) please send me an e mail. We thank all who serve on the Docent Council Board – we couldn't keep going without dedicated Board volunteers !



### Membership Note



Gail Stichler  
Membership Chair

Congratulations to the docents who are earning service pins this year. I hope my records are correct; please contact me if there is a discrepancy. Thank you!

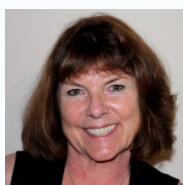
#### Service Pins 2012



Ann Hammond



Tracey Miller



Lori Mohr



Marty Molof



Dwight Coffin



Carolyn Pappas

5 yr



Jacqueline Simmons



Helene Strobel



Jadzia McDonough



Gabriella Schooley

10 yr



Sneh Singh  
Shirley Waxman



15 yr

## Docent Book Club



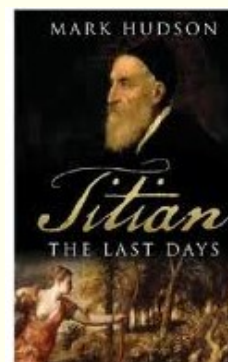
Sue Billig

The Docent Council Book Club Selection for our final meeting of this service year is  
**"Titian: The Last Days," by Mark Hudson.**

Book Club will meet on  
**Monday, May 14 at 1:30 pm**  
 At the home of Dorothy Warnock  
 599 Mountain Dr  
 Santa Barbara 93103

Please RSVP to Dorothy  
 965-4235

[dorothywarnock@cox.net](mailto:dorothywarnock@cox.net)



## Objects Available for Research

Prayer Wheel  
 Western Tibet, 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century  
 Pigments on wood, 56"x31"x30½"

Watanabe SEITEI  
 Japanese, 1851-1918  
*Shirabyoshi Dancers in Asazuma Boat*  
 Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Kobayashi KIYOCHIKA  
 Japanese, 1847-1915  
*Prince Genji Peeping at Utsusemi,*  
*from the Tale of Genji, Chapter 3*  
 Pair of hanging scrolls; ink and color on silk

Shibata ZESHIN  
 Japanese, 1807-1891  
*Momotaro (Peach Boy) Subjugating Demons*  
 Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Unknown Artist  
 Japanese, ca. 1700  
*Fudo Myoo*  
 Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper

Hendrik Kerstens  
 Dutch, b. 1956  
*Paper Roll*, 2008,  
 C-print

Tomoko Sawada  
 Japanese, b. 1977  
*ID 400: #301-400*, 1998  
 (photos)

Tomoko Sawada  
 Japanese, b. 1977  
*Omiai #24, Wedding Album*, n.d.  
 Chromogenic development print, ed. 1/10

Tomoko Sawada  
 Japanese, b. 1977  
*Omiai #11, Wedding Album*, n.d.  
 Chromogenic development print, ed. 2/10

Gregory Maiofis  
 Russian, B. 1970  
*Know Thyself*, n.d.  
 Bromial print

Diane Arbus  
 USA, 1924-1971  
*Jorge Luis Borges in Central Park*, 1969  
 Gelatin silver print

Wilhelm Lehmbruck  
 German, 1881-1919  
*Torso of the Pensive Woman*, 1918  
 Painted plaster

Photos of each object, along with research guidelines, will be available at the May 2 docent meeting.

*Highwire Moon* by Susan Straight

Book Review by Ricki Morse



When we meet Serafina as a fifteen year old illegal immigrant working in a laundry in Rio Seco, California, she has long dark braids, the dark brown skin of an Indian from Oaxaca, speaks no Spanish or English, only Mixtec, and is steeped in the amalgam of Indian lore and Catholicism embodied in the Virgin of Guadalupe.

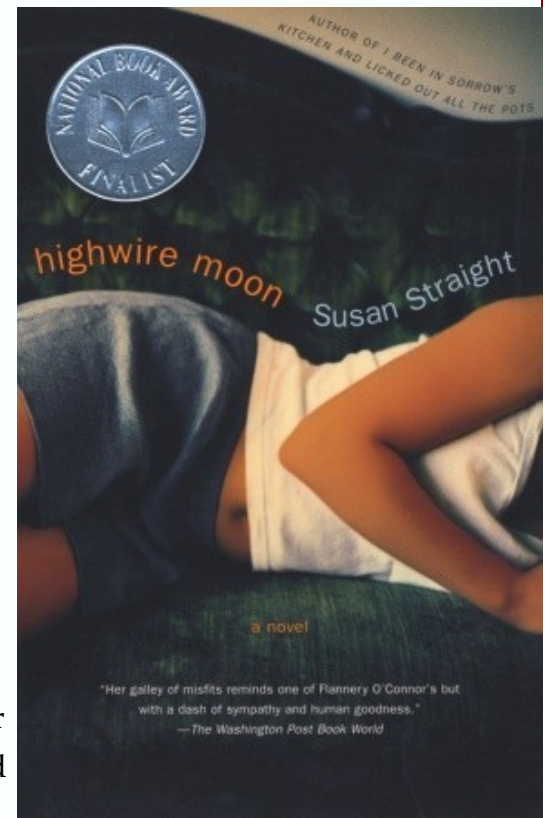
She has left her village against her mother's pleas to find and join her brother working the harvests in California. She is hidden by Larry Foley, a co-worker, during a raid by the Immigration Authority, and nine months later gives birth to their green-eyed daughter, Elvia. Larry Foley almost defies our understanding, the product of an abusive foster home with no memory of his parents; he ferrets out one job after another, doing speed when he has the money, hooking up with women when he can.

Yet Straight finds his humanity and opens his swearing, angry, insulted being to our acceptance. We meet Serafina's daughter at three when her mother is arrested by *La Migra* and returned to Mexico. We next meet Elvia at fifteen when she begins her search for her mother, and we follow her mother's return with a coyote to California to search for Elvia. The stage is set for the losses, violence, poverty, and determination of all of these disenfranchised peoples, from the Mixtec to the Mexican to the methamphetamine-dazed white teenagers and truck drivers who share the hiding places along the arroyos.

But that is not what this book is really about. It is about language and the power of language to reveal the deepest recesses of the lives of others. Susan Straight is not political nor is she judgmental, though her subject matter would be handled that way by most writers. Elvia's father, Larry, who searches her out in a foster home and attempts to protect her as she matures, is treated with a gentleness that he was never afforded in life. We are left to form our own judgments about the ills these people suffer, though she does not leave us any choice about granting them full humanity. Her amazing facility with words plunges us into the visceral experiences of life in the moment.

When I began this review, I was tempted to just copy some of her descriptions and let you enter the lives of her characters. Here are a few:

After her mother was shipped back to Mexico, Elvira was placed with Sandy, a foster mother, and she went back to Sandy at fifteen when she began her search for her Mother.



“When Elvia arrived there the second time, when she wouldn’t talk, Sandy would sit her on the dryer; while she loaded clothes, she would say, ‘Elvia, tell me when that fat, bright moon sits on the telephone wire outside. Tell me. I love those few minutes when it’s balancing. When it’s a highwire moon.’”

Serafina is back in Mexico talking with a neighbor about her brother’s not coming home for her mother’s funeral.

“Serafina nodded, ‘He sends money.’

‘Money doesn’t erase his tequio,’ the old woman said. Tequio— each person in the pueblo has a responsibility, for the water or the roads or the church, for the fiesta, for the old people. Money would pay someone else to do the work, but it wouldn’t dissolve the insult of absence.”

Serafina returns to California after her mother dies and works in the oranges with an old friend from her home village.

“‘You still believe in the old ways, after all this time here?’ she said to Florencio. When she saw him studying the clouds, murmuring prayers, she recognized someone like her mother, who had never changed no matter where she lived, who never let Oaxaca fade like stone carvings worn down by water and wind.”

And later in the orange groves and in her cardboard shack:

“In the morning the fog was thicker, draping itself in the branches and along the grey shedding skin of the eucalyptus, as if the camp were still full of spirits. The mist had risen from the river bottom, as though a water god had breathed all night in the cane.”

“Then she swept the wooden floor, raised the broom to the ceiling, and thought about her prayers to La Virgen, like thousands of straws tied together in a huge broom to collect spiderwebs from the corners of the sky.”

There is a pulse of connection between nature and man, between two people, between the inanimate and the animate which courses through Straight’s writing. She writes about connections, especially between people, as the sustainer of life, and she is dedicated to enhancing that connection, to broadening the links each of us has to others, especially others we may never have known, or had discounted. Her Indian peasants as well as her speed-addled teenagers open up to our imaginations as if we, in the moment, experience their feelings and desires. They are no longer strangers but momentarily intimates.

*Susan Straight will be our guest speaker May 2*

(See next page for related story)

## Susan Straight's Marriage

*Submitted by Ricki Morse*

Lives; We Are (Still) Family

By Susan Straight

Published: December 18, 2005

I was 16 the first holiday my boyfriend took me to his parents' house in Riverside, Calif. It was Memorial Day, 1976, and there was a crowd in the driveway where the barbecuing was going on. I was the only white person there, and I was partly terrified and partly amused, in my halter dress, navigating the relatives. The men were fairly gleeful at the sight of a small blonde with Farrah Fawcett hair holding hands with a 6-foot-4 basketball player with a giant Afro. But I was also introduced to curious faces and a few baleful frowns. Two women refused to shake my hand when I held it out -- my boyfriend's older sister and his older cousin, who said, "I don't believe this."

Inside the house, in the living room, the aunts were mistrustful of my ability to cook properly or be polite, as white people, I found out later, were not known for their home training. I chafed to get to the kitchen, where I would meet my boyfriend's mother. With all the food piled on the table, I knew there were dirty pots. I knew how to clean. Not just wash the pots but wipe down the stove and even the burners, erase spatters from the plastic-encased clock above the stovetop. I was the oldest daughter of a Swiss mother with a cleanliness ethic so strong that Saturdays we swept and weeded at my stepfather's junkyard. In the kitchen I saw my future mother-in-law, Alberta. She had beautiful white teeth like tiny refrigerators, and she smiled at my braces. I cleaned the counter, including the area behind the faucet, which I scrubbed until the hard-water clouds left the metal. Alberta put her arm around me and led me back out to the living room, saying: "She's so sweet, you should look at the kitchen. He found a good one."

I was Dwayne's girlfriend for the next six years. We married when I was 22. For years, I listened to Alberta's stories while sitting in front of the fire in wingback chairs. I listened to my father-in-law, General, telling his stories in the driveway where he held court in metal folding chairs, fixing lawn mowers.

Ten years into our marriage, when Dwayne and I were having problems, he tried to escape to Alberta's house for a while, but she told him: "You have the best woman you'll ever have. You ain't spending even one night on my couch, so take your sorry butt home right now. Go." In 1995, Alberta had a series of strokes. One night, as she lay in a coma, Dwayne sat by her side and whispered to her that I was pregnant again. When he left, she slipped away. Some of the women did Alberta's hair and makeup for her funeral. I took care of her kitchen, with the women who were good with kitchens, like me. After the service, we had just close family in the driveway – well over a hundred people.

After Alberta died, my husband left home for several trial periods – to a motel, to his sister's and finally to a one-bedroom apartment. He needed, he said, to be independent for a time, to try out solitude. When our youngest daughter was 2, we divorced. Dwayne didn't have his mother to reassure him that these hard days of young children and work were the way life was laid out for us. We had been married for 14 years. I stayed away from family gatherings for the first two tough years after we broke up. But I missed the company of my other family, and my three daughters needed the stories and the ribs and the cobbler.

This Thanksgiving, my girls and I came bearing food, and we greeted their father in the driveway, along with 30 or so cousins. I sat with General while he told stories of Oklahoma. We talked about Alberta, who has now been gone 10 years. "One night," I said, "we sat by the fire, and she told me the story of her grandmother, who was run down on a dirt road."



His eyes glistened. "She told you that? She would never tell me anything about her mother's family."

Now, after 27 years, my married family has forgotten that I am white. Last year, while publicly excoriating a white woman my brother-in-law dated, my sister-in-law started in on her hair. I said: "Now, give her a break. I'm blond, too, remember." The women with us looked at me blankly, then sucked their teeth and said, "No you're not," before going on.

We have gathered in that driveway on holidays for as long as I can remember. The men barbecue for hours – on Christmas a couple of years ago they barbecued a goat! – and the women bring their signature side dishes. There are a hundred of us from four generations, in varying shifts all day and into the night.

*THE AUTHOR: Born in Riverside in 1960, Susan Straight grew up in a racially mixed family, a pattern she repeated in her own family. She has never left home and lives, with her three daughters, in an extended circle of cultures as rich as her novels. She is a Professor of creative writing at UC Riverside and has received many major writing awards.*



## LA RAW/raw old love

By Josie Martin

Images courtesy of Cardwell Jimmerson Contemporary Art from Evert's *Desperation Series*



Forty-three years ago while I was a week-end hippie, I had this hot and heavy fling with a married man. I was between marriages, teaching upper middle class children in West Los Angeles. Dressed in tie-dyed harem pants I'd go on Civil Rights demonstrations on the weekend, often followed by a hootenanny or a love-in at Griffith Park.

I also took art classes wherever I could, especially workshops from the charismatic Sister Corrita Kent. The Summer of '66 I took a class in lithography, not because I particularly cared about drawing on stones, but I'd heard of the teacher. He'd been in the news, some kind of pornographic art trial resulting in a

hung jury.

Why not? I needed the credits toward my Masters in School Psychology. Art was infinitely preferable to still another stultifying psychology course. I was "into" the Beats, the guitar, the arts, existentialism, free love.

March 2012, I haven't seen him since 1968. I'm mother of a forty-year-old son, retired, no longer a hippie, but I still love art. Among other activities, I'm a docent at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. The docent council takes a trip to the Norton Simon Museum and to the Pasadena Museum of California Art where a thrilling shock awaits me.



We enter through a garage decorated in brilliant charm-full graffiti. Ah, if all graffiti were so appealing. Brilliant cartoonish comic-strip style. I make a note to get the name of the artist. But the big WOW is the exposition itself: LA Raw displays all the 1950s-1960s Abstract Expressionists that we Beatniks admired during those heady days. The ones who defied the East Coast Art Establishment by doing their own thing, completely independent of its critical judgments. These artists brought an edgy borderline risqué quality to their works – from Ruscha to Raushenberg; Rico Lebrun to Paul McCarthy and views of humanity in its rawest, most elemental state.”

And then, my own big raw thrill.

There he is! My former teacher, tease, lover. Three stunning pieces on the wall from his infamous *Desperation Series*. I am transported back to that exciting moment when I was being pursued, (the term ‘hit-on’ didn’t exist,) stalked almost, by the prominent renegade, the very Beat artist, and an older MARRIED man! My God, he has to be 85 now, I quickly calculate from the accompanying bio.

But I am still 26, terribly flattered to be the object of a fascinating brilliant man’s attention, convinced of my friend and poet Holly Prado’s pronouncement: “Brains, more than looks are the best aphrodisiac.” I was swept away and jazzed to be doing something so bold, after three years of a dull conventional marriage followed by a failed romance with the “Adonis”. This artist was just the kind of dangerous liaison I needed.

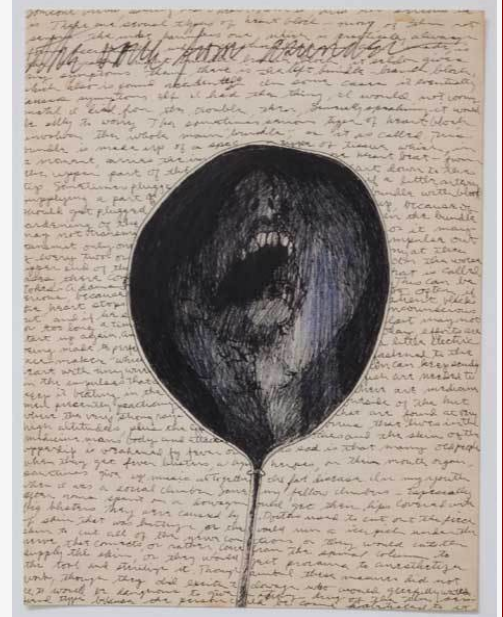
Early morning assignations at my cozy Silver Lake apartment overlooking the Hollywood Hills. My pad was decorated in what we called “Early Akron,” the fore-runner of Pier One and Cost Plus with bright yellow hand-woven curtains I had made. I was deep into arts and crafts and poetry and I had just been selected to be a UCLA training teacher. That summer my confidence may have bordered on hubris.

So when he came along and literally took me for a ride in his rusty pick-up truck, testing my mettle immediately by deliberately driving fast over speed bumps on campus, I was ready! Besides, no man had ever courted me in such raw style.



I went on the adventure with the wild man, though my tailbone needed a cushion for weeks after. There was the seduction dinner at a little hole in the wall on Sunset Blvd. where I insisted we split the bill. There was creativity in everything about him, but it was the beginning of a very complicated relationship. When the class ended, I never knew when I’d see him again, yet he was worth waiting for just to hear the harrowing tales of the trials and tribulations he’d recently endured in the dangerous post-McCarthy era when an artist could be accused of being a Communist if he used too much red.

The LA County Board of Supervisors had decided Connor’s *Desperation Series* that he’d done in reaction to the assassination of JFK, were pornographic. They were Goya-like and stark. One critic called them half-baked Surrealism. Indeed there were violent images, but it was the erotica that freaked out the city fathers. They called it pornography. The first trial resulted in a hung jury; he was acquitted in the second, but badly beaten up by the



Long Beach police, probably in retaliation. One hand was still damaged.

So, there was also a heroic aspect to my devilish lover. It lasted nearly two years, all the while I dated others. I had no designs on this married man who also regaled me with endearing stories of his family. In fact, part of the attraction was that he genuinely cared and worked tirelessly teaching all over the county to support them. I'd have been horrified if he'd left them. At the same time he teased and challenged me mercilessly: my strait-laced outfits that I wore to work, the artsy-craftsy art lessons I'd carefully prepare for my kids. He actually praised some of my own collages, but I wouldn't believe the great "artiste" and mocker. And I knew all too well that I wasn't the first, nor the last object of his philandering.

He gave me two gifts:

A Corita Kent serigraph, "Peace and Justice Shall Kiss," and a poster from one of his San Francisco art shows. The fling lasted until I met husband number two.

Now, finally the raw old love was receiving the serious recognition that had eluded him, both here and at the Norton Simon Museum nearby. I was thrilled and moved to see his dark and daunting work again from the infamous *Studies in Desperation*. Sadly, neither of his gifts seemed to have survived through the moves from Silver Lake to Hollywood, to Santa Barbara to Montecito. The Corita Kent was donated to a worthy cause, the poster - with its basket-full of breasts and penises superbly rendered—has disappeared, but I am determined to find it somewhere in an unpacked box and put it back up. The "mature content" will go on the wall of the foyer, visitor discretion will be left at the door, and its story will be told to my yet unborn grand-children one day.

*Josie Levy Martin is an author: Never Tell Your Name, The American Stories. She was a columnist for 21 years at the Larchmont Chronicle. Her work has also appeared in the LA Times, the New Yorker, Parents, and various literary Journals.*

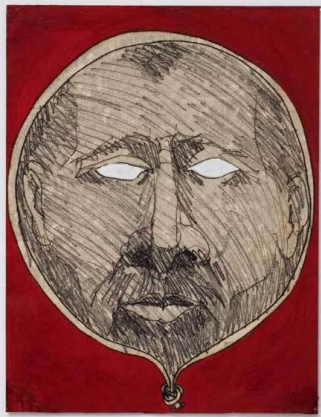
[Josieemartin@cox.net](mailto:Josieemartin@cox.net)

### **CONNOR EVERTS: Art Censorship in L.A.**

On June 20, 1964, the Los Angeles Times reported that the L.A. County District Attorney's office had brought charges of obscenity against artist Connor Everts for artwork displayed at the Zora Gallery on La Cienega Boulevard; works which in the D.A.'s view, "openly outrage public decency." Thus Everts became one of three Los Angeles artists from the period—after Wallace Berman and before Edward Kienholz—to come into conflict with local authorities in a little-known but historic struggle between the forces of censorship and political control on the one hand, free expression and emerging professionalism in the visual arts on the other.

The artworks at the Zora Gallery were collectively titled *Studies in Desperation*. A lithographic suite by that name is the centerpiece of Everts' upcoming show at Cardwell Jimmerson Contemporary Art. Also on view will be contemporaneous charcoal and pencil drawings on shared themes of anguish, terror and alienation. Nearly all of the work from this era was executed in

black and white. In the case of the lithographs and some of the pencil drawings the result is a delicately rendered cluster of darker human forms nestled within the white sheet of paper. The larger charcoal drawings reverse the pattern with a lighter interior image framed by a deep black perimeter. It was some of this latter work—particularly when depicting what was taken to be a womb or a vagina form—that proved most provocative at the time, notwithstanding what now can be recognized as a subtle and rich aestheticism.



Everts denied any prurient interest in this body of work, tracing his intentions back to the Kennedy assassination and the collective sense of horror flowing from that event. In this interpretation, the recurring fetus-like image feels safe and protected within the womb, resisting expulsion out into a new and awful world. Even the artist's defenders conceded at trial that some of the imagery was "shocking and repellent" while insisting that it was without question "worthy of merit," and then invoking works by Goya as historical precedent. After one hung jury the case against the artist was resolved at his second trial in a directed verdict of acquittal.

Richard Sherwood, Everts' attorney, expressed hope "that this is the last time a serious professional artist in Los Angeles will have to undergo trial on an obscenity count" and so it was. When in 1966, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors moved to close the controversial Edward Kienholz exhibition at the County Museum of Art, their attempt at censorship was successfully resisted by a united art community emboldened in part by Everts' legal victory the year before. The era of art-censorship in Los Angeles that began in 1957 with the arrest and conviction of Wallace Berman for "inciting lewd and lascivious passions" had come to an end. But while much was gained in this historic victory of creative expression over state control, something also was lost.



The art-censorship impulse is often characterized as indifferent to or disrespectful of art when the opposite is the case. To the censor, art is always dangerous. In *The Republic* Plato issued an early and powerful warning about the threat posed by music, art and poetry, and particularly the notion of "change" in the arts. "The introduction of a new kind of music must be shunned as imperiling the whole state," Plato wrote, "for styles of music are never disturbed without affecting the most important political institutions". The new style in the arts, the philosopher continued, "gradually gains a lodgment, quietly insinuates itself into manners and customs, and from these it goes on to attack laws and constitutions, displaying the utmost impudence, until it ends by overturning everything."

By this standard, perhaps the District Attorney's office got it right about the work of Connor Everts after all.



Class of 2006-07



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