

Docent Dates

September 18

9:15 Coffee
10:00 Meeting
Larry Feinberg
and Eik Kahng
on *Delacroix*

September 23

1:30 Book Group

September 30

Westmont Art

October 2

Karen Sinsheimer
and Lisa Volpe
on *Divola*

October 16

Julie Joyce on
Totally 80s

November 6

Council Meeting

November 20

Bus Trip TBA

December 4

Council Meeting

December 9

Holiday Party

This Issue

Pres Message	1
Save the Date	2
Book Group	3
Provisionals	3
Geri Servi	
Review	4
Ricki's review	6
The Last Page	8



John Divola, *Dogs Chasing after My Car*, 1996-2001, inkjet print
from SBMA Exhibition *As far As I Could Get* Opening October 2013

Goodbye summer, and welcome fall. Our first meeting is Wednesday, September 18th. As we reconnect with each other and our Education Department—Patsy Hicks, Rachael Kriepps, and Amanda Garcia—we'll also hear from Director Larry Feinberg and Associate Director and Chief Curator, Eik Kahng, who will share new scholarship before the opening of the *Delacroix* exhibition. Fall lectures also will introduce us to the *Divola* retrospective, focus on *Totally 80s*, and delve into *Byzantine Icons*.

Docent Council events will include the second Docent Art Show in November as well as adventures outside the Museum—local visits, bus trips, and new travel destinations organized by Vice President Molora Vadnais and Travel Coordinator Christine Holland.

The Docent Board has been active all summer planning the service year. Provisional Co-Chairs Kathryn Padgett and Mary Ellen Hoffman have admitted a remarkable Provisional Class. Kathryn and Mary Ellen will begin the year, and Ralph Wilson will join them to lead our Provisionals to graduation. Web Master Mike Ramey, along with web team member Loree Gold and editors Ralph Wilson and Gabriella Schooley have posted fall exhibition



Vikki Duncan, President

information online for us. They have refined postings on the European Collection as well. Provisional materials are also moving online.


In collaboration with Sylvia Mabee, a new Power Point section has been created with grade level information and images. We also are seeing development of the Asian Collection on the website, based on the Asian Focus Group's recommendations prepared by Gail Elnicky and teammates. Research Chair Barbara Boyd is encouraging on-going research to augment our touring resources. She will be posting a list of objects from our permanent collection for your consideration.

I'm very pleased in announcing the return from leave of Dwight Coffin, Carolyn Pappas, and Shirley Waxman. We heartily welcome them back to touring. We can also express our gratitude to Mooneen Mourad, Sue Skenderian, and Jane Tucker, who have opted for Sustainer status.

Great thanks go to our summer touring docents! The *Labour & Wait* team has engaged visitors with our surprising contemporary works. The Focus Teams have brought their enthusiasm for the permanent collection, and the Family Tours Team has steered the pilot summer program and visitor appreciation of Antiquities. Our New Actives have been shining in their Highlights tours, capturing visitors' interest and the wondrous attention of Art Venture Camp students. And a special thank you goes to the many docents who answered the call for special request tours.

Finally, I want to thank Lori Mohr for keeping us connected during the summer by publishing *La Muse* year round.

With our first meeting two weeks away, I can almost feel the synergy of that gathering as we catch up with each other and turn our focus to the exciting year ahead!

Vikki 


SAVE the DATE



Molora Vadnais
Vice president

Monday, September 30

Westmont Ridley-Tree Museum of Art
Invisible Realms: Encountering the Sacred

Museum director Judy Larson will guide us through this new exhibition which features the work of 13 living artists from around the world whose diverse art is an exploration of spirituality. We will offer a morning and an afternoon tour and will begin, or end, with an optional lunch in Montecito. 

Provisional Class



Ralph Wilson
Provisional Co-Chair

I am pleased to report that there currently are eight candidates who have accepted membership the 2014 Docent Provisional Class. We are impressed by the diversity of education, careers, and interests within the group and know that each has much to offer the Council. We feel sure these provisionals will be very welcome to our ranks. Their brief biographies will appear in the next issue of *La Muse*.

Kathryn has spent much time this summer placing the contents of the familiar 3-ring, provisional training binder on the docent website. The binders will no longer be printed and distributed, for all of the class material—including syllabus, assignments, quizzes, forms...everything!—has been transferred to the website to be printed according to the reader's needs. All docents are invited to log onto the site and select the Provisional tab at the top of the home page to see the fruits of Kathryn's hours of labor.

It is my pleasure to be joining Kathryn and Mary Ellen as instructor for the new class. We look forward to an exciting year not only in the classroom but as members of the dynamic Docent Council. 🍷

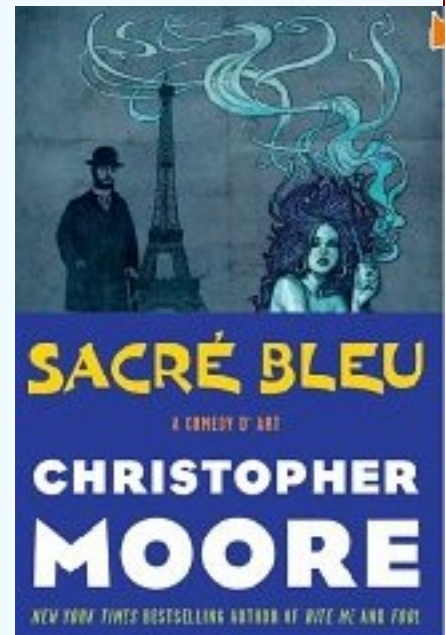
Book Group



The Book Group will reconvene on
Monday, September 23, 2013, at 1:30 p.m.
at the home of Susan Billig. The book to be discussed is

Sacre Bleu: A Comedy d'Art
by Christopher Moore.

Sue Billig
1693 Franceschi Road.
R.V.S.P. to suebillig@gmail.com
or [805-956-9505](tel:805-956-9505).



Take Note

Stephanie Basher's new email: sbashir@outlook.com

Japanese Art from the Larry Ellison Collection

Museum Review By Geri Servi



If you find yourself in San Francisco this month, be sure and stop by the Asian Art Museum for this exhibition, on view through September 22.

Ellison is a long-time connoisseur of Japanese art and culture with impeccable taste, and being the billionaire founder of computer giant Oracle hasn't hurt his ability to amass a world-class art collection either! Critics describe his as one of the finest in the US.

A dramatic pair of folding screens from the 17th century, attributed to Hasegawa Togaku, first sweep the museum visitor into a dynamic panorama of roiling waves crashing against jagged rocks. Also displayed in three special-exhibition galleries on the ground floor of the museum are Ito Jakuchu (1716–1800) scrolls -- an elephant squeezed into its silk border, a white-robed Kannon (Bodhisattva of compassion) and multitudes of crane, deer and turtle – that are eccentric, as might be expected from this quirky artist, but also impossibly modern, in contradiction to their venerable age.

A personal favorite of mine is Usumi Kiho's Taisho Era (1912-1926) pair of large folding screens featuring a peacock and one raven. These exhibit the



Tigers (detail),
by Maruyama Okyo (1733-1795).



Waves and rocks, attrib. to Hasegawa Tōgaku (1573 –1615) or early Edo period (1615 –1868).



Shotoku Taishi as an Infant, Unknown, Kamakura period (1249-1335).

specifically its selection and brief display according to season and occasion.

Additionally, the curators give the public an experiential glimpse into the effect of changing natural light on art-viewing, allowing us to imagine (accompanied by the hypnotic sounds of rainfall and chirp of crickets and birds), what it would be like to consider the art throughout the passage of one day, from dawn to dusk. As docents, we can also keenly appreciate the finely displayed and easy to absorb info on various schools of Japanese art, its history, attributes, storage and manner of display.

For info and a much better overview than mine, visit the museum's website at http://www.asianart.org/exhibitions_index/in-the-moment.

White-Robed Kannon, by Ito Jakuchu (1716-1800).



Japanese devotion to the use of negative space.

One expansive screen shows nothing more than a small raven with a peacock feather, but if you ever see a bird with more sass and 'tude than this one, please let me know!

Also featured are a 14th-century wooden sculpture of Shotoku Taishi, similar to SBMA's own *Prince Shōtoku Taishi as a Child*; tigers painted on hanging scrolls and screens by Maruyama Okyo, wonderfully imagined considering the artist had never actually seen the animal; and dazzling samurai armor and helmets.

These are only a few of the over 60 pieces on view, spanning more than 1100 years. Masterfully curated by Dr. Laura Allen, the museum's curator of Japanese art, and Melissa Rinne, associate curator, the show offers practical insights into the historical and cultural presentation of Japanese art as a transient experience,



By Ricki Morse



As a raw provisional, I first saw San Francis' *Untitled*, 1958, a watercolor on paper, from our permanent collection. It totally eluded me, but did not let me go. The white space seemed valuable, not just background. The shapes were organic but, perhaps in motion? I learned he had studied Zen Buddhism, which I was studying. A conversation began.

In the ensuing years I viewed his works at any opportunity, in New York or Los Angeles, always finding there was more to see, his elusiveness was not unavailability. I just needed to keep looking.

The next time I visited him in our Museum was in our spring 2012 *Pasadena to Santa Barbara* exhibition. Here was the huge horizontal canvas, all white in the center with brilliant color bleeding off the periphery of the canvas, as if the power of the white had pushed the color to the edges. Again I saw white as a primary color—or experienced its power as space, demanding dominance.

Sam Francis believed that art saved his life. As a World War II pilot in training, he was injured in a landing accident, contracted tuberculosis of the spine, and lay in a hospital bed on his stomach for over two years in a body cast. He began to draw and paint in watercolors—the light in the room, the reflections from the ceiling, and ultimately images of the outside world. Some of these early paintings are in the current exhibition at the Pasadena Museum of California Art, which runs to January 5, 2014. The exhibition takes



Exhibition of *The Last Works* at Johnathan Novak Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, 2012.



Sam Francis at 66 in his Santa Monica studio, 1989.

us through five decades of his work from California collections through the final canvases in 1994.

A man of exuberance and new possibility, Francis married five times and fell in love often. That very sense of open possibility inhabits his canvases, enlivening the open white spaces with potential. I like to think of his paintings as a strange amalgam of Petri dish and atmosphere. The organic forms writhe and move, but could become orbs in galaxies. Always we sense the freedom of soaring through air, the view of the land from a plane in his geometric landing strip paintings (my term). At the same time, are these strips

actually arteries flowing through the body? I feel it is this constant conversation between the interior and the exterior that enlivens his work. We can be in both places at the same time.

Toward the end of his life he was fighting prostate cancer and was restricted not only to a wheelchair but to using his left hand for painting, a skill he perfected in his final years after his right hand became paralyzed. He termed these paintings *The Last Works* and produced over 150 in 1994, of which two magnificent acrylics on canvas are included in this Pasadena show. These canvases celebrate Francis' skill as a colorist. Black, which had always inserted itself into his paintings, now provides an almost heavy-handed background geometry. His signature blue is now less obvious, and in the work pictured here, the jazzy, jumping squiggles of red and yellow dominate the foreground, accompanied by patches of green. Typically, though, the dominant experience is of the white background in which all this activity floats, describing a sense of freedom and joy.

Sam Francis' exuberant love of life, the irrepressible joy in the present moment, dance through all his canvases, offering a world of limitless possibilities. One of my favorites is *Mantis* from 1960-61, a large (51"x76") oil on canvas. At this time Francis was living in Paris and Tokyo, enjoying his star status in Europe, which had preceded his recognition in the United States. This canvas expresses a freedom of movement akin to flying, which we experience in many of his paintings. The organic forms play with shapes of mantis appendages, and the drips and sprays of blue draw our attention to the expanding white which dominates the center of the painting. Again, it's about space and our presence in the moment to that openness.

In the early 1960s, following another bout with tuberculosis, he returned to California, first coming to Santa Barbara and later settling in Santa Monica, while developing studios in New York and Tokyo and being shown in major exhibitions throughout Europe. While he was virtually revered in Europe and Japan, he was often dismissed by the art establishment in New York as perhaps too decorative, shallow and light, rather than angst-ridden. Critics have come to see around these arguments into the Zen-like experience of the moment, "the unbearable lightness of being," in his paintings.

The trip to Pasadena (an easy one at an hour and a half drive) also provides the opportunity for a marvelous meal in the Old Town. I like to go down on Sunday when Cheval Bistro, a traditional French restaurant, offers brunch. The gougères are light as a feather and the Grand Marnier soufflé is to die for! But the real feast is the five decades of Sam Francis paintings at PMCA. 🍷



Sam Francis, *Mantis*, oil on canvas, 1960-61, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Gift of the artist

The Last page



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