

Docent Dates

September 17

9:15 Coffee;
10:00 Lecture

September 29

2:00 Book Group



Georges d'Espagnat, *Banks of the Seine, Near the Bridge Meulan*, ca. 1898-1900

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Dear Docents,

Otto Von Bismark once said, "Laws are like sausages, it is better not to see them being made." Some people might also believe this about setting up docent touring teams. But after three years of participating in that process, I can confidently say that, although complicated, the process is as logical and fair as it could reasonably be.

It begins with the preference sheets. These are ranked based on service years. By tradition, the immediate past president is first, followed by our dear Ellen Lawson, who has 40 years of service, down to our New Actives, who have 0 years of service.

Beginning at the top, docent preferences are listed in order of seniority on a spreadsheet of teams. When all the preferences have been listed, the popularity of any given team quickly becomes apparent. This year 23 docents requested the Botticelli team and 23 requested January-March Highlights, which happens to coincide with the Botticelli exhibition. For all but five docents who wanted to tour Botticelli, that was their first choice.

Once the spreadsheet is complete, a committee: President, Vice President, past President, Adult Team Coordinators, Evaluations Chair, plus Rachael and Patsy from the Education Department, meets for 3-4 hours and hashes out the team assignments. For the first go around, seniority is the most important factor and will



Molora Vadnais
President

generally prevail, but not always. After a docent is assigned a team, however, he or she "loses" their seniority for subsequent teams. This ensures opportunities are spread evenly among all docents.

This year 64 of the 75 active docents wanted to tour adults. Of these 50 received their first choice and 9 their second choice. The other 5 only chose one or two touring teams and in general these teams were the most requested. The five who did not get their first or second choices were given alternatives. Only two docents were assigned three teams, and that was because we were short members for those exhibitions.

Choosing student teams is a little less complicated. The Student Team Leader creates a similar spreadsheet and docents are divided into those for whom student touring is mandatory, and those for whom it is not. Docents for whom it is not mandatory are assigned first. Most docents want to stay on the team they were on the previous year and those wishes are honored as much as possible.

This year 45 docents are touring students. Of these, all but 11 were assigned their first choice, 8 were assigned their second choice, and 3 their third choice team. Of course, all good plans go awry. This year, change is happening more quickly than usual. Before team assignments could be sent out, the *Mars* exhibition was cancelled. The team roster was late because we wanted to make sure those docents assigned the *Mars* team were fairly integrated into other teams.

We are replacing the *Mars* team with two fall teams (see Christine's message). In addition, we are forming a new student touring team for the *Animals* exhibition this fall (see announcement below). We expect additional changes in the schedule—some good and some not so good. Each of these changes will bring challenges as well as opportunities.

As I write this, my best friends and our three daughters are spending a weekend retreat together hanging out by the pool. As I spend time here with our daughters—who I have been blessed to cherish and love while watching them grow from little girls playing with plastic pink ponies into confident, beautiful young women planning their futures—it occurs to me that change is actually a constant, a constant that is often uncomfortable, confusing, and a bit disorienting. It also occurs to me that as a parent, one of my strongest skills is adapting to unpredicted situations. This same ability is required of us as docents. As we watch our Museum change and grow it will sometimes be painful, it will definitely be confusing, and just like parenting, it will never be easy.

But without change, we fall into stagnation. Let's embrace the changes we face this service year and enjoy anticipating what the future may bring.

Molara 

From Our Student Teams

New Student Team Looking for Docents

We are forming a new student team to tour the *Animals* exhibition in the fall. This team will generally tour on the 3rd and 4th Fridays and will focus on Art and Science.

If you are interested, please contact Kathy Eastman.

eastmankathy@yahoo.com

From Our Adult Teams



I am very pleased to announce that we will be featuring a new **Focus Tour Team** for the touring period of October 1, 2014 - March 30, 2015 to highlight examples of sculpture in our collection. The title of the team could be something ordinary such as "Looking at Sculpture," but let me know if you wish to suggest a good title.

Please contact me if you are interested. If there are more interested Docents than places available on the team, we will use the normal selection criteria.

Christine Holland, Adult Team Co-Chair with Teda Pilcher

SBMA Book Group

First Book Group meeting: Monday September 29, 2014 at 2pm.

How to Look at Sculpture by David Finn.

Laura DePaoli ldepaoli@verizon.net

Artist's Statements of the Old Masters

By John Seed, Professor of Art and Art History, Mt. San Jacinto College

Reprinted from the Huffington Post 6/29/2014

Submitted by Christine Holland Article: <http://huff.to/1krLZow>

To be successful as an artist in this day and age it is crucial that you justify your work as being contemporary. To be "contemporary" your work needs to be explained and justified in the language of postmodern theory. As works of art have evolved to require less skill in their making, artists have been become increasingly reliant on intellectual pedigrees substantiated by theory. Five hundred years ago, this wasn't a concern.

In fact, it strikes me that without the right kind of theoretical writing to validate their work many of the great artists of the past would be in real trouble in today's art world: can you get into an MFA program or a decent gallery without an artist's statement? I doubt it.

An Old Master working today would definitely need some strong postmodern language to support his/her "artistic practice." Here are some samples of the kinds of "Artist's Statements" that I think would be required of European Old Masters if they tried to get a show in New York or Los Angeles today.



Juan Sánchez Cotán, *Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber*, 1602, The San Diego Museum of Art

"My work explores the temporal duality of objects/non-objects in a hegemonic space/non-space. Indeed, my fruit and vegetable simulacra juxtaposes pre-Marxist male/female homo/heterosocial redactions of materiality through recurring formal concerns."

-Juan Sánchez Cotán

For More fun examples, go to
<http://huff.to/1krLZow>

Springboard to Contemporary Art

By Ricki Morse



The current installation in Colefax Gallery provides us with a surprising opportunity to guide our visitors from traditional art into the often baffling complexities of contemporary work. Confronted with two major contemporary works, recent acquisitions bequeathed by Mercedes Eichholz, and an 1885 *trompe l'oeil* work by William Michael Harnett, *Still Life*, one of the paintings on long term loan from Michael Hammer, I wondered how I could include the three in a presentation. This is a typical Docent quandary. How do I design an approach relevant to the focus of my tour and at the same time include disparate works presenting widely varying techniques and world views?

I guess the answer lies in the reliable Docent tools of flexibility and curiosity.

I watched viewers moving through Colefax, more often than not merely glancing at the two large contemporary canvases and almost always stopping to study the Harnett still life, pointing out to companions details on the sheets of music, the flute, the books. They spent a few seconds with the Da Silva and breezed right by the Olitski. Obviously, most viewers did not know how to look at the Da Silva, much less the Olitski. The tour I developed, introductory to taking visitors through the *Left Coast* exhibition, went this way.

Some of the power of traditional art is its ability to stop time and provide the opportunity to gaze uninterrupted by movement or distraction on a face, a scene, a still life. We recognize the objects depicted and are often mesmerized and informed by the power of the artist's vision to show us more than surface or, as in the Harnett, to depict surface in amazingly realistic detail, rendering the surface non-existent and pulling us into a created space within the two dimensional surface.

We are aware that photography, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, began to change the role of the artist. He no longer was the only portraitist or landscape renderer. Photography with the click of a button provided the desired image and put it in our hands.

Another revolution was taking place in our understanding of the human mind and creativity. Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, 1901, demonstrated that man's unconscious mind, his dreaming mind, expressed meaningful feelings and experiences, providing a whole heretofore unexplored arena for the artist and a conceptual basis for symbolism and later surrealism, extending later into Miró's automatic drawing. As expressionism expanded, Cezanne broke up the landscape into geometric planes while the Cubists Picasso and Braque painted several aspects of the subject from different points of view super-imposed on a single image. And this was just modernism, the beginning.

Maria Vieira (VEE air Ah) da Silva was immersed in Abstract Expressionism from her earliest art student



William Michael Harnett, Irish, active in the United States (1848-1892), *Still Life*, 1885, Oil on panel, Michael Hammer Foundation loan to SBMA.

days in Paris, where she arrived from Lisbon at 20. However her mature work was deeply influenced by her experience of Europe upon her return from Brazil, where she and her husband had taken refuge during World War II. The stark devastation met her patterning eye as geometric lines imposed on a natural landscape, often interspersed with small scarlet marks, highlighting places of importance to those now gone? We don't know. The natural landscape is only hinted at; the geometric marks of civilization are interrupted and broken. Yet she calls our painting *Lakeside City*, 1957, suggesting a peaceful resort, and revealing the sharp contrasts between what was and what is and at the same time complementing a somehow romantic bird's eye view of this deserted place.



Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, Portuguese, active in France (1908-1992), *Cité lacustre (Lakeside City)*, 1957, Oil on canvas, Gift of Robert B. and Mercedes H. Eichholz.

Jules Olitski's *OGV*, 1966, is all surface, which is also its intent and subject matter. This is one of a series of works produced with multiple, sometimes simultaneous, spray guns and acrylic paint, bringing the artist great acclaim and critical prominence.

In the '60s contemporary art had become obsessed with surface, the desire to exclude any fragmentary illusion of depth. After Pollack's drip paintings into which we could peer and sense another deeper layer and Rothko's shimmering soft rectangles of color, harboring between them a deeper reality, contemporary art was poised for the next step—the surface itself. What a beautiful contrast with the Harnett.

This work invites prolonged viewing, allowing the atomized distinct colors to float right on the surface, denying any depth, celebrating the separate colors (I'm guessing *OGV* stands for olive green, violet), which Olitski was delighted to find didn't mix together when sprayed. Interestingly, in the early '70s, to the horror of his galleries and the critics, Olitski abandoned his spray guns and returned to a heavy impasto style, using thick acrylic in powerful, gestural paintings.

The individual search of the artist for his own particular voice and mode makes a strong transition to *Left Coast* and the wide variety of materials and subject matters which are stimulating Los Angeles artists today. —

Jules Olitski, American (1922-2007), *OGV*, 1966, Acrylic on canvas, Gift of Robert B. and Mercedes H. Eichholz.

See the Docent website for Ricki's new research papers on the works by da Silva and Olitski.

A Little Mohr Conversation

An Interview with Mercedes Eichholz, 2008

By Lori Mohr



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The following interview was first published in *La Muse* in January 2008. In light of the recent bequest of 70 works from Mercedes and Robert Eichholz, I thought you might enjoy this interview.

Mercedes Eichholz is a diminutive woman with an outsized sensibility when it comes to contemporary art. The range of works in her collection reflects the diversity of her interests—American and European artists in a panoply of media, including painting, sculpture, works on paper, ceramics, and photography amassed by Mercedes and her husband, Robert, throughout the 1960s and '70s. Though most works have been dispersed to museums, Mercedes retains a stunning selection that continues to bring her particular pleasure. In response to my request for an interview, Mercedes invited me to visit her home, where we sat in her art-filled living room as she regaled me with stories of how these pieces were grafted from their singular identities into a righteous collection.

Lori: Merci, I understand you've been collecting for more than four decades. Tell me how you started.

Merci: I had no involvement with art until I married Robert Eichholz in 1963. Until then it was mostly politics. My first husband was Asst. Secretary of the Dept of the Interior in what we called the Roosevelt New Deal, so we were very involved in Washington. I was still very much in that picture when I married my second husband, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. Robert Eichholz was my third husband, an attorney who wrote tax legislation under Roosevelt. He later became General Council of The Marshall Plan. Bob was retired when I married him and he had been a collector.

Lori: What was his art background?

Merci: His mother had great aesthetics, although she did not collect art. She collected beautiful rugs, furnishings.

Lori: So your husband developed a collector's eye early on. What was his first purchase and when did he buy it?

Merci: Robert had been in the navy during WWII and when he returned he had some back pay, and that's what he used to buy his first painting, a Cubist Braque.

Lori: Your art education came from him, then, as an experienced collector.

Merci: Yes. Bob and I used to go to openings and galleries in New York and Washington, and it got to the point where I would realize the one he would pick out. From then on I had the confidence.

Lori: What was your first solo purchase?

Merci: The Hoffman [*St. Etienne's Glorious Light Eminated by it's Windows, as Remembered, 1960*].

Lori: Tell me how you made the decision to buy one piece of art over another?

Merci: It hits you!

Lori: What hit you about this Soulages behind you [*May 10, 1961*].

Merci: Well, look at these huge, black lines, so strong, powerful. That's the first thing that hits you from across the room—these big, sweeping lines, and like this one, he uses mostly black, dark blue and reds.

Lori: Did you buy from a gallery or directly from the artist?

Merci: Pierre Soulages was a friend. He's not so well known in this country, but in Europe he's very big. We got more than one piece from him—one will be in the show.

Lori: Tell me about the story of this piece.

Merci: Bob and I would go to his studio. He paints with a palette instead of a brush, and he'd have a whole line of different sized palette knives, all beautifully clean and ready to go. So interesting. Then this Mathias Goeritz [*Message, 1960s*] we got in Aspen. He was having a show and was there visiting [artist] Herbert Bayer. They were great friends. Then he [Goeritz] used to come see me when he'd come here to Santa Barbara. He was a tall, rugged man...very attractive. He's dead too...everybody's dead [chuckles, winces].

Lori: Were there other artists you met or knew?

Merci: Yes. We met Hans Hoffman. We were up at the [Sam] Kootzs' in New York. Sam had a gallery on Madison Avenue, and he had a show for Soulages, and of course, we went to the opening. I remember I was standing in the gallery with Tony Rosenthal and Hans comes in with this young woman and Tony says, 'He's been going around with Renata introducing her as his niece.' Later that night the Kootzs' had this big dinner party in their penthouse, and the waiters brought around champagne. We knew something was up. [Laughs] Sure enough, Sam went into the middle of the room and announced that we were there to toast Hans and Renata. Interestingly, none of Hans' paintings before Renata had any purple in them. After they married, whenever you saw any purple you knew it was the Renata series.

Lori: That's a funny story. How exciting to get work directly from the artist!

Merci: Yes. Now this Herbert Bayer [*Aspens*]...he was from Austria and was the last of the Bauhaus teachers in Germany. He came to the U.S. to escape the Nazis. Bob and I got to know him when we lived in Aspen from 1967-80 when Walter Peapke was building up that town. He's the one who changed the old silver mining town into a center for learning, music and skiing. He got Herbert [Bayer] to come out and do the architecture. Herbert was not a good architect—the architecture stinks—but his art was excellent. And he had a studio; we bought both pieces out of his studio. Before we left Aspen to come back to Santa Ynez, Herbert got news that he had heart trouble; the doctor told him he had to move to sea level. So he came to Santa Barbara, bought the house up Middle Road. Atlantic Richfield built him a studio, but Herbert hated coming here. I told him he should've stayed in Aspen and died skiing! Then he'd have quit kvetching. The same thing happened when he quit painting. Joella told me Herbert wasn't painting anymore. They came out to lunch and I asked him about it. Well, he complained, 'There's no one to paint for.' I said, 'Herbert, I thought artists painted for their souls.' The next day Joella called and told me he had started painting again.

Lori: He needed reminding...

Merci: No, he needed knocking down! And I was the only one who would talk back to him. [Laughs]

Lori: As only a good friend can, Mercedes. Tell me about this Bayer piece in the show.

Merci: It's a collage, a photograph that Herbert gave to my husband as a gift. So was this Luis Jimenez [*Alligator, 1997*]. You remember eight, ten years ago when they had that art on State Street...giant sculptures, painted alligators. I met Luis and I told him that I came from alligator country—there were alligators on my college campus—and how much I'd like to have one of his alligators for my yard. But I was told the paint wouldn't withstand the moisture dripping from the trees. So, no sculpture. Well, later on he sent me this water-color as a gift—it's in my bathroom—painted bright like the sculpture.

Lori: Now there's a memory. Merci, people collect art for any number of reasons. What drove Team Eichholz?

Merci: Art was never an investment. It was something you wanted to live with. Bob loved looking at art. And he would get tired of things, want new things. He had a Modigliani, and he sold it for two pieces—this Picasso that will be in the show [*Two Women on a Sofa*] and another piece.

Lori: Sounds like he was comfortable maneuvering in the art market.

Merci: Well, that was in the '60s and the art market wasn't what it is today. Today you have to be a billionaire to

buy a really fine piece of art.

Lori: [Smiling] So I hear. You have a strong collection of Latin American art. Is that from your travels?

Merci: No. My mother was from Guatamala, so I have an interest in that area. There was a very fine gallery in New York on 57th Street which no longer exists that sold Latin American art, and that's how we got so much. Most of these [in the show] came from galleries, but not all. The Wolcott [*Jitterbugging*]...now I knew her, not well, but she lived near me. And she had a photograph of this Depression era 'Juke Joint.' And of course, I'm a child of the Depression. Now the Bayer [*Old Star, 1959*] is one of his earlier ones. It was a birthday gift from Bob.

Lori: Merci, has a work of art ever effected you emotionally, had personal meaning?

Merci: Well, there's a photograph, a Nell Campbell [*Lower 9th Ward, New Orleans, LA, June 23, 2006*]. I got that because I come from Louisiana and it told the story of the flood: on this old beat up house, someone had written 'Baghdad,' and it really told two stories. That's what attracted me to it. Our home was along the Mississippi River, the northeast corner north of Vicksburg, which is the only landmark anybody that wasn't from there could identify.

Lori: That certainly explains the lilting southern drawl part of your identity.

Merci: [Smiling] It's Jambalaya, that's how I explain my identity. I had a Spanish mother, so that explains 'Mercedes' and of course, Eichholz, of German derivation, was Bob's name. So, Jambalaya [puts hands out with palms up, smiling].

Lori: Any other works with a personal or emotional connection?

Merci: This other Campbell [*J.W. Campbell Store, Morganza, LA, During the 1927 Mississippi Flood*]. I grew up on a cotton plantation and every plantation has a commissary. This photograph looked so much like my father's commissary.

Lori: Did you discover any of your art in offbeat or surprising places?

Merci: Well, the Chinese terracotta horse [*Standing Horse*] my husband bought at Gumps.

Lori: Gumps? In San Francisco?

Merci: [Closes her eyes and nods] Gumps was quite a fine dealer back in the '50s; they had a lot of beautiful Chinese furniture. But Gumps changed, of course, when it changed owners. Now it's just a gift shop. But the horse is documented from the Tang Dynasty.

Lori: What about the Kim piece [*Waterdrops No. L6, 1978*]?

Merci: We bought that together on a trip to New York. This is an artist that only paints water drops—he's Korean—some of the canvases are solid water drops. Then this Olitski [*OGV, 1966*]...he had a show at the Corcoran; his airbrush drawings are fantastic. Bob had always wanted one, but could never find a canvas small enough. Then we found this one. Same with this Shimomura [*Oriental Masterpiece 28, 1975*]. We bought that together too, from a Washington gallery. He's a third generation Japanese who went to Japan and after he came back all of his paintings were of Japanese people.

Lori: Mercedes, choosing good contemporary art must be so much harder than collecting from established artists. How do you go about finding those works you think will stand the test of time, not merely a trend or fad?

Merci: [Exasperated sigh] If it hits you, it doesn't matter if it stands the test of time. And that's the point. You want to live with it. But people buy art today for the investment—that's why the market's gone up so high.

Lori: Are you still collecting?

Merci: [Throwing her head back on the sofa] I have no more room! I did still collect when I first moved to California after Bob died. I would go to L.A. Louvre, a very fine gallery in Venice. I first went there with Robert Henning when he was looking for a Richard Schaffer for the [SBMA] museum. Well, I ended up buying a Richard Schaffer. Now the only thing I do is support a local artist now and then.

Lori: What local artists do you have here in your home?

Merci: There's Mary Heebner, Seyburn Zorthin, Raphael Perea de la Cabada, Joan Tanner...

Lori: How did you go about planning for the future of your art?

Merci: It was before Bob died. He wasn't going to be bothered leaving anything to a museum. I talked him out of it. I asked him if he really wanted these going on the open market. I felt they should be in the public domain, and I told him he really should put them in his will. And he decided to do so. This was after Marie Harriman worked with the National Gallery to establish "The Lending Collection," which was her request when she gave her paintings. Our request is that, to the extent possible, ours be so used. It is not mandatory. I don't think they'll ever lend the Braque out.

Lori: I see that the show has 'promised gifts.' How does that work?

Merci: Well, it's a tax thing. For instance, the Gauguin there, the National Gallery already owns 30% of that. On the 50th anniversary I gave...I think, 10%. Each time you have to have it appraised and, of course, each time the appraisal's gone up. My accountant gradually raised it to 30%. As for the Cubist Braque, I was constantly being asked by galleries to sell it—they always had a client. I kept telling them it wasn't for sale. I have a friend who will not give her art to a museum; she's leaving it to her kids, and they'll just sell it to pay estate taxes. That's how prices on the market just escalate. I have one or two things doled out to each of my children, but the rest goes out of the estate to museums, so no taxes.

Lori: Your gifts virtually guarantee that countless visitors will have access to this art. Mercedes, you've been involved with the Museum on many levels, as trustee and major donor since 1984. You must feel such a strong emotional connection to SBMA.

Merci: Well, after my husband died in 1983, the Museum saved my life. I've been stuck here ever since.

Lori: Your spirit and generosity have helped shape this Museum for 24 years. That's quite a contribution to your community.

Merci: I'm proud to leave that legacy. —

SBMA Press Release, June 2014

Excerpt from the SBMA website Press Room:

"The Eichholz collection includes significant European paintings, such as a sizable 1960 abstraction by contemporary School of Paris artist, Pierre Soulages. Another is by Maria Helena Vieira da Silva. Her work, like that of Soulages, is affiliated with French Tachisme, a European branch of abstraction that emphasized spontaneity. These paintings comprise a substantial enhancement of the Museum's collection of 20th-century abstraction, which features paintings by Hans Hofmann, Ernst Wilhelm Nay, Kenzo Okada, Serge Poliakoff, Jack Tworkov, and others.

Another strength of the Eichholz collection is work by Latin American artists from the 1960s and 1970s. The bequest includes exemplary works by Marcelo Bonevardi, Mathias Goeritz, Eduardo MacEntyre, Roberto Matta, and Jesús Rafael Soto. These enhance the Museum's important holdings in this area, which include works by artists Carlos Cruz-Diez, Gyula Kosice, Wilfredo Lam, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and others.

Other works included in the Eichholz bequest are by the artists Agam (Yaacov Agam), Eileen Agar, Enrico Donati, Tschang-Yeul Kim, Jules Olitski, Ann Purcell, and Frank Stella. Reflecting Merci's love and support of local artists, the gift also includes works by Santa Barbara artists Dane Goodman, Mary Heebner, Rafael Perea de la Cabada, Harry Reese, Marie Schoeff, Joan Tanner, and Howard Warshaw."

The Last Page



Jean-Honore Fragonard, *The Bathers*, c. 1765, The Louvre

"By disrupting the implied heteronormative discourse of antediluvian mythology, my paintings imply a personal mythopoeic narrative that both transcends and embodies the male gaze. By investigating the callipygian forms of a complex homosocial nexus in an anti-Lacanian context I depict a multitude of redundant, overlapping and coded tasks and roles."

Jean-Honore Fragonard

From Artists' Statements by Professor John Seed

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