

**Docent Dates**

**June 4**

9:15 Coffee  
10:00 Meeting  
Director Larry  
Feinberg on Museum  
renovations; the film  
*Lutah*, introduced by  
Melinda Gandara.

**June 6**

5:30 Graduation and  
Service Recognition

Docent Council  
Meetings resume  
in September. Date  
will be posted in the  
August *La Muse*.



Robert  
Wechsler,  
*Economies of  
Scale*, 2005.  
Cast iron.  
From: *Left  
Coast: Recent  
Acquisitions of  
Contemporary  
Art*

FOR INTERNAL  
USE ONLY

We are in the home stretch. We will meet as a Council for two more events this year. At the final Council Meeting on Wednesday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, we will hear SBMA Director Larry Feinberg talk about the Museum’s renovation plans, and we’ll see the film *Lutah*, introduced by archivist and contributor to the film Melinda Gandara. Then, on Friday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30 p.m., I look forward to being with you to congratulate our new docents as they receive their diplomas, to recognize docents on special service anniversaries, and give special recognitions.

As our year and my term in office come to an end, I thank you for the privilege of having served as your President, and I thank you for your support. My outstanding predecessors shared their experience, and I’ve worked with a wonderful Board: insightful, good-humored, and not shy of advocate positions yet reaching consensus on issues for the Council.

Your contributions, too, have supported the Council. In addition to touring, many of you have invested more: organizing field trips, gallery visits, theater events, and our own art show. You’ve contributed fresh ideas and research, and shared recommendations for books, films, outstanding exhibits, and your on-line resource finds. You’ve served as mentors, evaluators, and workshop speakers. Through these efforts and hands extended to docents with extra cares and concerns, you have enriched our experience.

Our Provisional Chairs have kept their eyes on the Council’s

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Vikki Duncan  
President

future for the past twelve months: three in interviewing and preparing for nine month's work with the Provisional class. The results are terrific: we have six strong new docents to congratulate as they move into summer touring.

The Education Department staff has kept us ready for the quickly changing exhibitions as Patsy Hicks has secured notable speakers for our Council Meetings. Rachael Kriebs has managed the Museum's side of our touring, coordinating with curators and staff, and also tutoring docents as they prepared research presentations. Mid-year, Rachael introduced the newest Education Department staff member to SBMA's and our Council's culture at the same time, and Kelly Almeida has acclimated and begun scheduling our student tours like a veteran.

When I pass the gavel to new President Molora Vadnais on June 6<sup>th</sup>, I'll do so looking back with a deep appreciation for all of you, and looking ahead with anticipation to a new presidency of focus, buoyancy, and action to meet the challenges and rewards of a new year.

Thank you all for this good year. Have a wonderful summer.

Vikki Duncan —

### From our Vice President



Molora Vadnais

About 20 docents, partners, and friends enjoyed a beautifully acted and thought-provoking Ensemble Theatre Company production of Red at the New Vic Theatre on May 24. The play was a biopic about painter Mark Rothko set in 1958, at the peak of his career. The play juxtaposes Rothko's hubris against his artistic and personal vulnerabilities as seen through his relationship with Ken, a fictionalized assistant.

After the play, a dozen attendees met next door at the Arlington Tavern for a leisurely dinner and interesting conversation. Thanks to Christine Holland who helped arrange the discounted tickets and the reservations with the restaurant.

It is the last call for the Monday, June 16 bus trip to LACMA to see *Expressionism: From Van Gogh to Kandinsky*. The cost per person is \$70.00 Make out your check to SBMA DOCENT COUNCIL and mail to Joan Dewhirst, 193 Coronada Circle, S.B., CA. 93108 OR leave your check in the Vice-President's box in Docent Office OR Bring YOUR check to the final Council Meeting on Wednesday, June 4th.

CHECKS MUST BE IN BY JUNE 4TH TO CONFIRM YOUR RESERVATION. —

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*Submitted by Suzanne Von Drehle*

## From our **Student Teams**



Ann Robinson  
Student Teams, Co-chair  
with Sylvia Mabee

Our Student Team is comprised of tireless and dedicated docents who have had a delightful year sharing their enthusiasm for fine art with the students of Santa Barbara County. Our classroom presentation and student touring docents have touched the lives of well over **3,000 students** this year and have, without a doubt, inspired many of these students to treasure the invaluable role that art plays in our society. In her evaluation, a teacher aptly stated that, "Exposure to the arts creates aware, intelligent children."

I would like to thank the co-chair of Student Teams, Sylvia Mabee for her leadership and guidance taking on both student team co-chair and the Classroom Presentation Team. Student Team leaders kept the teams running smoothly, contributing to the ease of the position of student team chair. This year's team leaders include: Francis Hallinan, Andrea Gallo, Laura DePaoli, Barbara Ruediger, Ralph Wilson and Molora Vadnais.

The Junior and Senior High team leaders—Gail Stichler, Teda Pilcher and Karen Howsam —were committed to furthering the efforts of the Education Department in securing docents and making this a stellar year for arts education with the older students of Santa Barbara.

The evaluations which we receive from educators are a testament to the commitment and professionalism of this docent council.

As the Student Teams Chair these past three years, I am honored to be part of this exceptional outreach program, offering children an opportunity to discover the museum as a place where they have a voice and are welcome as active participants, interpreting and discovering the meaning of art, an experience hopefully leading to a lifetime of museum visits wherever they go. —

## From our **Adult Teams**



Christine Holland, Adult Teams Co-chair with Mary Eckhart

In April 2014, docents toured 472 visitors on 63 tours. Of those, 3 were Special Request tours with a total of 32 visitors. Ten Talks had 7 tours with 64 visitors. Unfortunately, in April there were 6 regular tours with no visitors, all due to low museum attendance. However, all other tours had good attendance, with an average of almost 7 visitors per tour during the month.

We Docents continue to help the Museum integrate art into the lives of our visitors – keep up the good work! —

### **Take Note: Change of Address**

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## From our Research Chair



Barbara Boyd  
Research Chair

**Year End Wrap-up!** It has been a busy and satisfying year in docent research! I'm sure the entire Council joins me in thanking the authors who generously donated their time and talent to produce really fine papers, enriching our understanding of the art and providing information that makes our tours so much more engaging! Here are the authors and the topics:

Stephanie Amon, Joe Andoe, "Untitled" (Oak Leaf)

Stephanie Amon, John Chervinsky "All Watched Over"

Stephanie Amon, Danielle Ezzo's photograph, "*Constellation No. 2*".

Monica Babich, Dionysus

Sue Billig, Wilson "Snowflake" Bentley, "Snowflake"

Joan Dewhirst, Francesco Clemente, 1983 "Untitled"

Joan Dewhirst, John Seery, "Manhattan Jump"

Gail Elnicky, techniques paper, "Glossary of photography techniques"

Nancy Estes (2003), Matt Mullican, 4 pieces

Francis Hallinan, Nancy Graves' sculpture

Mary Ellen Hoffman – "Tall Vase with Garden Rock, Birds and Flowers," 17th century Ming Blue and White Porcelain

Mary Ellen Hoffman, Background/techniques paper on "Chinese ceramic production in the Neolithic through the Ming Eras", and on "Porcelain production"

Ricki Morse, "Soulages", (in addition Ricki published informative articles in *La Muse* on Francesco Clemente, Salman Rushdie, and Sam Francis.)

Pma Tregenza, Lehmbruck sculpture "Torso of the Pensive Woman"

**Our incoming Provisional Class** has shown real skill in research and a passion for art! It has been a pleasure to read their research papers. Here are the authors and their topics which will soon be posted:

Ann Marshall, Martin Kersels, "Charms"

Jay Frederick, Greek "Black Figured Hydria"

Kim Smith, Unknown English "Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough"

Marc Brody, Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux "Portrait of Gerome"

Marci Friedlander, Armand Guilaumin "Haystacks"

Mary Winder, Davis Birks "Blackboard #10"

Monica Babich, Giovanni Paolo Pannini "Saint Paul Preaching Among the Ruins"

Wendi Hunter, Brian Bress "The Architect"

Robert Gibson, Joan Brown "Gypsy Nativity"

### **Research papers on Asian subjects:**

Molara Vadnais, The "Gandhara Buddha"

Jean McKibben Smith, "Yamantaka" (Our Jean has been very busy indeed!)

Jean McKibben Smith, Background Paper on "Jainism"

Jean McKibben Smith, Jain Altar Façade

Jean McKibben Smith, Background Paper on Hinduism

Jean McKibben Smith, "Pichhava's" of the Emerson Collection

Jean McKibben Smith and Sneh Singh, "Krishna and the Cowherd Girls in the Autumn Full Moon"

Jean McKibben Smith and Sneh Singh, "Water Festival"

Mike Ramey, Kalachakra Mandala

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After a great deal of investigation as to how best to interface with the limitations of our particular website in producing research papers, particularly images, title cards, and bibliography, the Research Papers Guidebook was completed and posted in time to present to the Provisional Class on Dec 5 as they commenced work on their papers. The goal was to prepare a clear, complete, and easy to understand and follow handbook for any researcher, as well as to present them with resources to help them locate information and images, and know how to write out correct citations that will work with our website.

Two additional types of research papers were produced: Techniques papers and Background Papers.

This year we investigated ways to interface with special exhibition tour leaders, who prepare a huge amount of research material as they launch their tours, with an eye to expanding the use of some of their reliable and juicy bits and pieces of information online so that all of the other touring docents can make use of it in preparing one or two pieces to add to their regular tours. We will continue to look for ways to let you know about this information, which generally does not comply with traditional research paper format. Ideas as to how best to quickly produce reliable information for temporary exhibitions is still under discussion, and how to coordinate information for these exhibitions will be explored further in the near future.

We are continuing to work on ironing out any kinks in the flow of papers to Education and to Curatorial for vetting, investigating any ways to speed up the process so that our research can be vetted and returned in time to be used while the exhibitions are still up in the galleries. The question has been raised also for Silk Robes and for Japanese Woodblock prints, and works on paper which rotate more frequently. As always, we are sensitive to how busy everyone in these offices is already!

Gail Elnicky, Jean, Jacqueline and Michi hosted a well-attended Asian Salon. A vibrant 4 Square, "tour based" approach to researching art works was demonstrated, as well as a discussion of how this facilitates the preparation of the outline of a two page research paper relatively easily. This approach to research addresses each of the four main ways people learn and experience art, and the questions they ask: What is the meaning, symbol, story or myth? What is the material, method, artist or school? What is the cultural context in the style of that time period? What relationships does this piece have to other art objects in our collection or other collections? Each question is answered with a visual clue in the work of art.

A complete list of everything up in the Asian galleries currently, plus a list of research papers in progress, plus a list of objects and works of Asian art needing research papers are forthcoming from this hardworking group. Geri Servi volunteered to coordinate the large amounts of information that need to be organized for the Japanese section.

The list of all works of art with Research Papers, without Research Papers, and with Research papers in progress but not yet completed for our permanent collection has begun. Your requests and ideas are certainly appreciated for this project!

Our work continues this summer, getting all the remaining research papers that have been produced finalized and posted on the website for our 2014 – 2015 touring year.

I hope that you all have a wonderful summer! Congratulations and all our best wishes to our New Actives on their summer tours. I look forward to dropping in on them with my famous clipboard in hand, ready for some new ideas!

Barbara —

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## From our Provisional Instructors



Provisional Instructors: Mary Ellen Hoffman, Ralph Wilson

Mary Ellen and I are pleased to announce that—unlike the Michelle Stuart seed calendars which recently lay dormant in our galleries—the seeds planted in the Provisional Class have blossomed into six impressive New Active Docents. Our congratulations to Monica Babich, Marc Brody, Jay Frederick, Wendi Hunter, Kim Smith, and Mary Winder.

We hope all members of the Docent Council will attend the Graduation and Service Awards ceremony on June 6<sup>th</sup> to offer your congratulations and welcome our new colleagues. —



Monica Babich



Wendy Hunter



Marc Brody



Kim Smith



Jay Frederick



Mary Winder



Laura De Paoli

We closed our reading year on May 19th with a discussion of our favorite art and art related books, set the calendar for next year and chose most of what we plan to read in the months ahead.

We decided to get together five times next year (see dates below). All meetings are on **Monday afternoons at 2pm.**

**September 29**

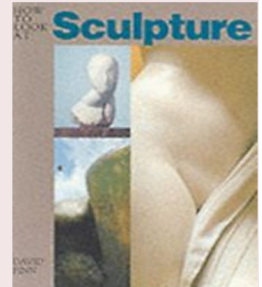
**November 10**

**January 26**

**March 23**

**May 11**

This summer, in advance of our September meeting, we've chosen a book perfect for the patio or beach. We'll be reading *How to Look at Sculpture* by David Finn. Kathryn Zupsic recommended this book and said: "Small but absolutely wonderful—completely changed the way I see and talk about sculpture." It's a slim volume, wonderfully illustrated with photographs. David Finn is a photographer known for his work with sculpture and the book is his meditation on what he's learned over the years looking deeply at the works he has photographed. Even if you're not sure about attending book club in the fall, it's well worth a read and it's available for \$.01 (yes, a penny), used, from Amazon.



For our November, we'll be reading two short books offering differing views of what photography is, both suggested by Stephanie Amon: **Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*** and ***What Photography Is* by James Elkins**. Our reading choice for January is related to our upcoming Latin American photography show: *Essays on Mexican Art* by the great Mexican poet **Octavio Paz**.

We've left the book for March open for now.

Our May selection is *The Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning* by **Maggie Nelson**, also recommended by Stephanie, who says this book is "an examination of what constitutes cruelty in visual art and literature, what ethical uses can be made of it, and ultimately what it means to be an intentional viewer."

More books suggestions you may enjoy:

***The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance* by Edmund de Waal**. Strongly recommended by both Irene Stone and Jill Finsten.

***A Perfect Red: Empire, Espionage, and the Quest for the Color of Desire* by Amy Butler Greenfield**. Our Latin American book club read this several years ago and everyone loved it.

***The Lady in Gold: The Extraordinary Tale of Gustav Klimt's Masterpiece, Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer* by Anne-Marie O'Connor**.

***The Art of Wealth: the Huntingtons in the Gilded Age* by Shelley Bennet**. Jill called it "fascinating" and says that, "She's uncovered all sorts of new information about them, and it's a bit like an American Downton Abbey. Gossipy and fascinating as cultural history."

Laura DePaoli

[ldepaoli@verizon.net](mailto:ldepaoli@verizon.net)

## Lunch with Beatrice Wood, 1993

By Josie Martin

*Josie's article was submitted before our lecture on Beatrice Wood but held for June.*

I had an appointment in Ojai to buy one of her "Naughty Figures," the large clay sculptures that were so full of whimsy, humor, and mischief. The one I was considering was a loopy bridal couple nearly twenty inches high. The groom, a youthful Charlie Chaplin in a black suit and a bowler hat. The bride, regally determined in a thick clay wedding gown and veil. The couple resemble each other, as if they had already been married a long time.

At the base of the sculpture are the words MAN AND HIS PAST. The past is composed of three much smaller naked females. One rides the back of the groom peering over his shoulder, cat-like. The second stands by his side, barely up to his hip. The third little one is leaning against the large back of the bride, her arms and hands covering her face, perhaps in mourning?

The whole piece is primitive, almost crude in its execution, yet it has the subtle irony of a New Yorker cartoon.

Lunch was offered if one was seriously interested in making a purchase. I had invited my artist friend Carol Bishop to come with me for the long drive from Los Angeles.

I had long admired Beatrice Wood, now in her mid-nineties, still working daily in her studio throwing glazing, and building clay with the energy of a person half her age. She was best known for her vibrant lusterware vessels found in museums around the world as well as in many private collections. I had first learned of her in the seventies when we would visit my husbands' parents living in Ojai where she lived and had her studio. I did not fall in love with the pots. Despite their extraordinary glazes, most of them seemed thick, lumpy, too graceless for my taste.

It was Beatrice, her Dada spirit and that capricious sense of humor that was so captivating. Over the years I watched her ply her charms at the Garth Clark Gallery in L.A. An old woman drawing young men to her like flies, a master at the art of flirting. A coquette dressed in layers of colorful saris with long grey hair wrapped elegantly around her head, her fingers and arms heavy with Indian jewelry. Fans lined up to greet her whenever she came to town.

There was one show on Wilshire that was only of the Naughty Figures. The wit, the absurdity, and playfulness of these sculptures were irresistible. On the wall of the gallery





was a quote,

“I make naughty figures to laugh and comment on this funny world in which we are caught.”



Each sculpture had titles crafted at the base: “Point of no Return” a Victorian couple appearing wistfully resigned to their lot. “Settling the Middle East Question,” a couple fully clothed in a stiff embrace prone on the floor. “Is my Hat on Straight?” shows a woman wearing nothing, primly sitting on a decorated bench all alone, perhaps waiting for a customer. The sculpture that got the most attention was of three droll nuns in black habits and prominent crosses on each flat chest, called “Father Hagerty and his Candy Bars”, possibly a ribald in-joke about their parish priest.

In a used book store I found Wood’s autobiography aptly titled, “I Shock Myself.” I visited her gallery whenever we were in Ojai. In 1992 “Man and His Past” was for sale. After careful consultation with my husband we thought we should buy it. Hence the lunch invitation a few weeks later.

Carol and I arrived on a Saturday. Beatrice’s long-standing loyal assistant manager, Mr. Ram Pravesh Singh, greeted us. We followed him past the public gallery into some small rooms crammed with Indian crafts

and folk art. Beatrice was seated serenely on a wide couch in her living room. She inquired about the drive up from Los Angeles. “I left the city in 1948 to come here. I never go anymore.”

Mr. Singh reminded her, “Beatrice, remember, we have to go down next week to meet with....”

“I don’t know what he’s talking about,” she interrupted and then turned back to us.

For the next hour the combination of her whimsy, wit, and quirky comments had us fully under her spell. She seemed to take particular pleasure in being outrageous, mildly mocking poor Mr. Singh at every opportunity.

When my friend Carol mentioned the challenge of working as an artist while also being a wife and mother, Beatrice interrupted, “My dear, I would have given it all up, all this....” she pointed to the gallery, the workshop, the luminescent chalices and pots along the walls “I’d have given it up for a good man.”

Mr. Singh rolled his eyes and directed us to the dining room. It too was filled with Indian artifacts that looked as if they hadn’t been dusted in years. The mirror cloth that covered the table had stains from countless meals. The napkins were paper, but the dinner plates were magnificent.

Beatrice moved slowly under the large Indian shawl draped over her multi-layered saris. Mr. Singh carefully pulled out an old wicker armchair covered with Indian pillows. I noticed she was bare-foot. She admired a hand-knit sweater Carol was wearing, “You slender ladies can wear anything. I can only wear saris, you see, I have a difficult figure.” A young woman, introduced simply as Stephanie, had come in from the outside studio to join us for lunch. She added, “Even when she works, she wears saris.” Just then, Beatrice accidentally clanked a heavy silver bracelet against one of the dinner plates. “Oh careless me; these have become so expensive, even I can’t afford them anymore.” She took on a look of playful indignation, “Ridiculous, isn’t it?”

Mr. Singh brought in a tray of food. There was a bowl of yogurt, a plastic basket of dried dates, some rice crackers, a handful of almonds, and a cluster of dark grapes. By the time they were equally arranged on the large heavy lusterware plates they looked like small distantly scattered islands.

We ate quietly while Beatrice told of India, how she longed to return but “my guardian sitting to your left says I’m too old for arduous travel.” There was mischief as she added, “After so many years, I might have to find another companion.”

“Come now, the long plane ride, the humid heat...”

They parried back and forth. She hadn’t touched her food.

“Please Beatrice, eat something. This is the special yogurt that you requested from...”

“I am waiting for dessert,” she quipped.

Mr. Singh looked at us unhappily, “She doesn’t eat...One day she will be sick.” The poor man, like a frustrated mother enticing his stubborn child. Beatrice took a tiny bit of yogurt and then pushed her plate away.

To break the tension, I inquired whether the constant stream of visitors interfered with her creative output. She became serious. “Not at all, it is an exchange of energies, each nourishes the other.” She continued describing her philosophy on work and productivity and the life altering effect of her time spent in India.

Mr. Singh and Stephanie cleared the precious dishes.

A few minutes later, two bars of Hershey’s chocolate were brought out on a plain white plate and placed in the middle of the table. Beatrice immediately reached for the bar that was unwrapped and deftly broke off half of it.

“Finally, something tasty has arrived,” she declared as she bit into the chocolate with sensual pleasure. “At my age, I’m allowed whatever I like.” She closed her eyes.

Mr. Singh shrugged his shoulders. “She lives on chocolate!”

Beatrice smiled impishly at him, rose from the table taking the other half of the Hershey bar, and left the room.

Lunch was over.

## Los Angeles Gallery *Surface to Air*

*Submitted by Ricki Morse*



Kayne-Griffin-Corcoran’s new space at 1201 South La Brea in L.A. just opened a new show, *Surface to Air: Los Angeles Artists of the 60’s and the Materials that they used*, curated by Robert Dean and open until July 5, 2014. This pristine space, architecturally minimal and light maximal, is a delight in and of itself. Even Robert Irwin would love the garden (maybe he designed it?). It’s three galleries, each with one western wall of glass overlooking the simple, orderly garden space. There is nothing to distract from the art. And this show, since it’s about light and surface and space, uses the setting to its great advantage. Many artists in our permanent collection are included here. Best of all we really get to relish the surfaces, the deep glosses—a visceral quality in a geometric world.

The image here is of Ron Davis’s polyester resin and fiberglass panels paired with an unearthly lavender cube by John McCracken, whom we see in our permanent collection. Incidentally we also encountered him (old home week) in the permanent collection at the Jumex Museum in Mexico City. —

## Experiencing Central Mexico Part II

By Ricki Morse

*Photographed by Loree Gold inless otherwise attributed*



Edi Haenseler, part of the Swiss contingent of our crew, and Ricki, at Las Casas B & B in Cuernavaca.

Reluctant to leave Pahuatlan, our enchanting mountain-encircled inn and the Otomi people in their embroidered native dress, we boarded for the bus drive to Puebla. By late morning we were happy to tumble out for lunch at an open-air restaurant where we watched our food being prepared on open grilles. Hal Coffin, in admiration for the great homemade sausage, expressed his desire to take a few kilos home. As the staff scrambled to begin packaging enormous piles of linked sausage, he explained that his desire was not an request but simply praise for their culinary skill. Luckily Hal's Spanish is excellent so Florencio didn't have to bail him out.

We were traveling south through immaculate

fields of corn and sugar cane, irrigated small privately owned farms, providing a verdant patchwork beneath the view of Popocatépetl, an active volcano, which commands the horizon (Photo 1). This is a very different agricultural scape from the earlier agave fields we saw on our way east from Mexico City. Here we experienced the pride of ownership in individual parcels—the dream of those early revolutionaries who fought for peasants to own land. This is certainly not the early muralists' ideal but expresses that entrepreneurial, populist spirit which we repeatedly experienced from the women's embroidery cooperative to the multitude of individual skilled practitioners of folk crafts.



1. Popocatepetl rises to almost 18,000 feet in the state of Puebla and can be seen most days from both Mexico City and Puebla



Our afternoon arrival in San Pablo del Monte, a village outside Puebla largely devoted to the manufacture of Talavera pottery, was greeted by the owner of one of the oldest Talavera factories in the area. His family has kneaded the local clay, shaped it, painted it and fired the glazes for eleven generations (Photo 2). The tempo and ease of the workers is remarkable. Their steady pace and engagement with us as we toured the kilns, the painting stations and the display galleries were light years from an automated factory floor. In this setting it felt light years ahead.

Our experience of contrasts was underscored as we arrived from the Talavera factory floor to our hotel, Quinta Real Puebla, the renovated Convent of the Immaculate Conception originally dedicated in 1593 (Photo 3). Its extravagant colonial baroque style encircles a grand

2. A painter finishing the traditional Talavera decoration in a dish in the San Pueblo Del Monte Factory. *Photo by Ricki Morse*

arch-rimmed patio, large enough to be a parade ground, and evolves into tiny interior gardens looking up through the archways and stairwells. The silent presence of those early nuns seems to hover in the corridors among the altar niches and saintly statuary.

Perhaps the greatest departure from folk craft and colonial opulence came with our arrival in Cuernavaca at the studio and home of David Alfaro Siqueiros. The studio itself is now a museum but retains his elaborate system for painting huge murals. Running the length of the two long galleries are floor plates which cover story-deep slots, allowing the ceiling pulley system to raise and lower murals and providing the artist access to work at eye level standing on the studio floor.



3. The central grand hall of Hotel Quinta Puebla, a beautifully repurposed sixteenth century convent. This patio is now covered by a retracting roof, open at night to fill the patio with stars. *Photo from hotel web page.*

But most rewarding was the experience of walking up the ascending grade of the studio/museum



4. Entrance to David Alfaro Siqueiros' studio/museum flanked by two massive murals he painted for this site.

entrance, framed by two massive Siqueiros murals (Photo 4). The development from figurative, politically inspired murals to these abstract geometric forms reveals the ultimate focus of his muralistic art: to expand space and distort perspective, drawing the viewer directly into the created universe. Certainly this was my experience as I entered. The surface expanded, and I was drawn into the deepening reality of the murals' created spaces. David Alfaro Siqueiros is at these moments profoundly alive and welcoming the visitor into his powerfully evolved space.

At eighty miles distant from a huge city, its proliferation of fine restaurants and its vistas of flowering trees and gardens, Cuernavaca is much like Santa Barbara and has been a second home for the wealthy of Mexico City from Hernán Cortez onward. Las Casas B&B, where we lunched, exceeded even Santa Barbara standards (Photo 5). Our table overlooked a garden, white umbrellas, white couches and lounges, around a blue pool accented by an occasional sea green vase or a carefully placed green apple. Rather than feeling contrived, it exuded a gentle tranquility, inviting us to linger before leaving for the ride to Taxco.



5. This charmingly tranquil patio of Las Casas B & B in Cuernavaca where we lunched after visiting Siqueiros' home and studio.

After our reception at a silver gallery in Taxco, we

rode by gondola to the mountaintop Hotel Monte Taxco. The enveloping vistas of the city unfolding over the flanks of the mountains and the surrounding mountain ranges were highlighted during our dinner on the porches of the hotel by the pre-Lenten Friday fireworks exploding in colorful showers of sparks over the city. It is no wonder that Florencio had to pry us off the mountain the next morning to visit the town itself, but within seconds we were drawn into the palpable magic of its winding colonial streets, tiny enticing shops and little flowering zocalo. But of course what drew us in awe was the baroque façade of the unique cathedral, Santa Presca, built in the 1750s by José De La Borda, a French immigrant, who made his fortune in the gold and silver mines of Taxco and raised the cathedral. De La Borda not only managed to negotiate with the bishops gaining complete



6. Santa Presca church in Taxco, encrusted with gold-plated figures surging up the face of the main altar, José De La Borda's great monument to this mining town which provided his wealth.

*Photo by Ricki Morse*



7. Temple of the Feathered Serpent in the archeological restoration at Xochicalco. We see the head to the right turned back to view the undulating body carved into the individual stones of the temple base. *Wikipedia photo*

The museum displays artifacts from archeological excavations and allows us to track the mythic backgrounds of the ancient inhabitants. We find among the sculptural images not only the triangular royal faces of Teotihuacan but also the domed heads of the southern Mayan royalty, establishing the mixing of diverse tribes and customs through the centuries. Also the images on the Temple of the Feathered Serpent look forward to the 15<sup>th</sup> century Aztec mythology of their god Quetzalcoatl emerging from the mouth of the plumed serpent. Standing in the Xochicalco ball court, the mythical location where men and gods enter each others' worlds, we feel a flow, over 2000 years of astonishing achievement and demise, the rise and fall of nations, and we are present to the connections culminating for us in our standing in this place in time aware of their histories and our own.

architectural control over the planning and execution of the construction, he also imported materials and artisans from Europe and, most amazingly, completed the total project in just ten years (Photo 6). Standing below the soaring altar, encrusted with hundreds of gold figures, one is mesmerized. The carved cedar figures, covered in gold from De La Borda's mines, tumble and cavort as if viewed through a kaleidoscope. The feeling is one of jubilation, celebration and opulence, revealing the power of one worshipper's vision. This is not built by committee; rather it revels in the imagination of a single man.

Our descent from this baroque pinnacle was balanced by our arrival at Xochicalco, another ceremonial site, but dating from the ninth century CE and allowing us to weave together all the strands of our historical journey during these ten days. (Photo 7).



Lunch in the Castillo patio in Puebla surrounded by the family members painting ceramic figurines. Senora Castillo, chef of our fabulous meal, talks with Amanda McIntyre. *Photo by Ricki*



Our gang emerging from the Palace of Governors in Mexico City on the first day of our adventure. *Photo by Ricki.*



## Artists Among Us

*Submitted by Mooneen Murad*

Loree Gold and Mooneen Mourad have had pieces accepted into the prestigious Ridley Tree Art Gallery at Westmont College in a show titled "Made You Look". Loree has two photographs and Mooneen Mourad has a ceramic vessel. Amanda McIntyre presented the award.



(L) Rose Marie Gephart, Mooneen, Amanda, Loree



Mooneen with husband



Amanda

*Be sure to submit your travels, museum/gallery reviews, and art-related stories for the July, August and September issues of La Muse. Thank you to all who have contributed this year. ~LM*

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