

Docent Dates

April 1

9:15 Coffee, 10 Meeting;
April 1 -- Nominees for
2016 Board; Lecture: Chief
Curator Eik Kahng on the
upcoming show, *The Paint-
ings of Moholy-Nagy*; New
Active Jay Frederick
presents research paper

April 15

No Meeting (road trip)

May 6

9:15 Coffee, 10 Meeting;
Vote to elect 2016 Board;
Lecture: Contemporary
Art Curator Julie Joyce on
upcoming contemporary
shows and performances;
New Active Mary Winder
presents research paper

May 20

9:15 Coffee, 10 Meeting;
Lecture: Sameer Pandya,
Topic TBD; New Active
Wendi Hunter presents
research paper

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April 1

Ito Shinsui, *Rouge from the series "Twelve Forms of Modern Beauty" 1922, Color woodblock print with mica. From "Visions of Modernity", on view now, SBMA INTERNAL USE ONLY*

Dearest Docents,

I have nothing new to report this month on Museum news, but I would like to share with you a bit more about Maria Krzyczkowska.

Joan Dewhirst, Paula Mauro, and I were honored to represent the Docent Council at Maria's memorial service on March 20. Maria's daughter, Barbara Prati, son-in-law, grandchildren, and the parishioners at St. Anthony's congregation planned a beautiful, intimate reflection on Maria's life. Maria's son-in-law described Maria as "a fighter" with a joyous outlook on life and a playful sense of humor.

The photographs of Maria during her war days that Loree Gold was so good to provide (example, pg 2) affected me in the same way as much of the art on our walls--the more closely I looked, the more questions I had. Were these photos taken in Warsaw or in Germany after the war? How did Maria get the photographs? Who took them? Are all of the soldiers Polish? Why are they in uniforms if they were part of the Polish underground? What would have been Maria's fate at the hands of the Germans? Why are they smiling? These questions and more would not go away. So I did a little research...

As you know, Maria was part of the medical corps during the Warsaw Uprising in the fall of 1944. She was 19 years old.



Molora Vadnais
President

In July, the Soviet Army was on the edge of Warsaw confronting the Germans. The Polish Home Army, loyal to the Polish Government in Exile, and backed by the British, made the decision to push the Germans out of Warsaw before the Soviet Army arrived. The Poles were fiercely patriotic and not inclined to accept Soviet Communism. They believed that if they could liberate Warsaw from the Germans, they would also create the possibility of an independent Poland after the war.



Young people such as Maria were pre-staged at strategic locations throughout the city ready for coordinated assaults on

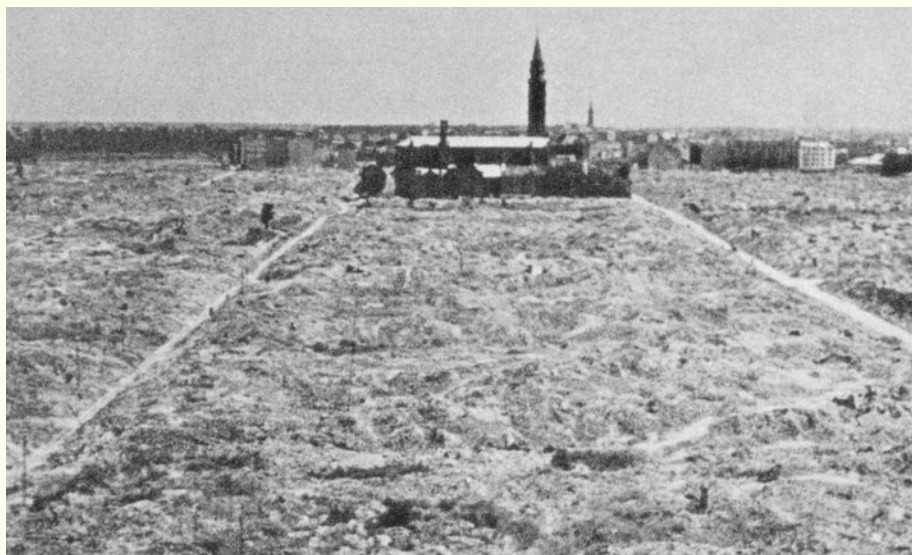
Nazi strongholds. It was impossible to keep this preparation from the Germans and they anticipated an uprising—just not one as large as they would confront. On July 31, the Polish command ordered the uprising to begin. Within 4 days, most of the entire city was in Polish hands and the city rejoiced. I believe that this is the most likely time that Maria's photographs were taken. Sadly, this was also to be the high point of the uprising.

The uprising had been planned so that as soon as the Poles had taken the city, the Soviets would send support—food, weapons, and troops. But the Soviets refused to communicate with the Home Army and refused to send any support. The British lost 36 planes airlifting supplies to the besieged city but the meager supplies that could be airlifted in by the British were just not enough. German reinforcements arrived on August 4 and they began a counteroffensive. As troops advanced, Himmler ordered the SS, police and Wehrmacht to systematically go house to house shooting all inhabitants and burning their bodies. In the first district they took, 20,000-100,000 inhabitants died at the hands of the Germans. The Germans planned their tactics to dishearten the Polish army, believing that Poles were so racially inferior that they would stop fighting. But the atrocities only emboldened the young Poles and they made the Germans fight block by block. The Germans retaliated by shooting all captured resistance fighters such as Maria. This would be German policy until mid September.

On September 21, Himmler wrote "This is the fiercest of our battles since the start of the war. It compares to the street battles of Stalingrad." The Poles lacked artillery or heavy weapons and were continuing losing ground. The Germans deliberately targeted hospitals and used human shields in front of their tanks. Food was scarce and inhabitants survived off of barley stored in the local brewery. The water supply was under German control and the waterways were filled with corpses. The Poles dug 90 water wells.

By October, Polish forces had been pushed back to just a few blocks. The Western Allies appealed to the Soviets but Stalin refused to intervene even though Russian forces were just outside the city. On October 2, the Poles capitulated after the Germans agreed to treat surrendering Polish troops, such as Maria, as POWs under the rules of the Geneva Convention and to treat the civilian population humanely. Maria and 15,000 Polish troops were sent to concentration camps in Germany. The entire civilian

population that was left was exiled, many of them ending up in the infamous Ravensbruck, Auschwitz, and Mauthausen camps. The Germans then systematically destroyed 85% of Warsaw. Their hatred of the Poles were so great that they took the time to blow up the now empty city despite the Western Allies closing in on the Rhine and the Soviets closing in on the Eastern Front.



The remains of the site of the Warsaw ghetto destroyed by German forces, 1945. Image: Public domain. www.theholocaustexplained.org

We know that Maria eventually spent time in Italy before emigrating to the United States. We do not know if she went back to Poland when she was liberated but it is likely that she did not. By this time, Poland was under the control of the Communists and participants in the Warsaw Uprising were treated as traitors because their patriotism represented a threat to Soviet hegemony. Many were sent to Siberia by Stalin.

I marvel at the courage of a woman who lost her father at age 11, watched the Nazis invade her city at age 14, witnessed the concentration of her Jewish neighbors into the Ghetto, their deportations to death camps, and their eventual uprising and then destruction. At 19, she tried to help liberate her city, watched her people and city be destroyed, went hungry, experienced countless atrocities, and was then taken captive. By 21, she would be stateless and penniless. And yet, despite the tragedy—or perhaps because of it—she would go on to live a long life of beauty, wonder, and love.

Barbara Prati, Maria's daughter, told Joan that "the Docent Council was my mother's life for many years, and you could not have a conversation with her, without her talking about the Docent Council. I am very grateful for all the support that the Council and its members gave my mother over the years!"

Should you like to send her a message, Barbara's address is 537 Bush Street, Mountain View, CA 94041.



L.A. Sculpture Walking Tour, Feb 28, 2015

Photos submitted by Pma Tregenza





Joan Dewhirst

It was an exhibit OF birds, BY birds, and FOR birds.....the show titled "FLOCK: Birds on the Brink" that 22 of us visited at Lotusland on March 16th. Curator Nancy Gifford was our guide through this amazing display of art focused entirely on the plight of birds in the environment, many of them disappearing rapidly as victims of climate change and vanishing habitats. The message was poignant and provocative. The art---masterful, innovative and whimsical.

Enjoy the photos below my message, taken by Team Dewhirst.

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR APRIL: (checks due April 1st)

APRIL 15th Bus Trip to Westwood (\$75): Tour of UCLA Sculpture Garden; tours of 2 new exhibits in the Hammer Museum; lunch at AMMO, the Hammer Café.

APRIL 25, 26, 27 Weekend Road Trip to Palo Alto: Saturday afternoon visit to a private art collection; Sunday tours of the Anderson Collection (no fee) and Fi-Lo-LiGardens (group price \$15 per person).

Joan Dewhirst



A courtyard "ceiling" installation of black cages titled "Silent Spring", empty and with their doors open, awaiting the return of songbirds long extinct.



A blackbird "Murmuration" installation hovers above viewers.



Nancy explaining how Lotusland staff members created the large images of black crows.



The "Murder of Crows" in the newly restored blue garden. Nancy feels Ganna Walska, creator of Lotusland and a bird-lover, would have been pleased with the exhibition. We were captivated.



*Nancy and her "FLOCK".....
Docents on the Brink...of the Lotusland swimming pool)*



*Docent Geri Servi
in the galleries*

From Our **Adult Teams**

Christine Holland, Adult
Teams Co-Chair

February was a wonderful month for touring Docents, as we experienced such enthusiasm from museum visitors. We thank Larry Feinberg for bringing the *Botticelli* exhibit, which has greatly increased visitor numbers. And thanks to the supporters who made the exhibit possible, including the SBMA Women's Board.

Docent tours in all categories have had excellent attendance – the galleries are full most of the time! The *Botticelli* exhibit is, understandably, a huge draw, and visitors seem to be visiting other galleries as well. There have been many “special requests” for tours, set up by the Museum and by Docents themselves. One special evening was for the New Member Reception: Five Docents gave tours for some 80 new members, with two *Botticelli* tours, one *Asian* tour, one *European* tour and one *Highlights* tour. Also, due to visitor interest, the *Botticelli* team added a second tour Sunday afternoons at 2:00, which had a good response.

In February the Docent group toured 894 visitors on 67 tours (all categories) for an average of 13.5 per tour. The total tours were comprised of 54 regular tours and 13 “special request” tours, of which 10 were for *Botticelli*.

The Month of March is looking great also. A full report for all tours will be in the next issue of *La Muse*, but here are some numbers focused on the *Botticelli* tours: In March, there were a total of 12 regular tours for the exhibit, touring 322 visitors.

Also in March, there were 14 “special request” tours with 252 visitors. Thus, in March for the *Botticelli* exhibit the Docents toured 574 visitors, and of course many more visitors enjoyed other focus tours, such as *Highlights*, *Portraits* and *Techniques*.

We Docents are certainly the front line in helping to fulfill the Museum's Mission of integrating art into the lives of people. Congratulations to all Docents.

Christine 

The Artist Project *Submitted by Christine Holland*

Ever since it was founded in 1870, The Metropolitan Museum of Art has been a place where artists come to gain inspiration from works of art from their own time and place, and also from across time and cultures.

[The Artist Project](#) is an online series in which we give artists an opportunity to respond to our encyclopedic collection. Beginning March 2015, for one year, we will invite 100 artists—local, national, and global—to choose individual works or galleries that spark their imaginations. In this online series, artists reflect on what art is, what inspires them from across 5,000 years of art, and in so doing, they reveal the power of a museum and The Met. Their unique and passionate ways of seeing and experiencing art encourage all museum visitors to look in a personal way.

**Proposed Docent Council 2015-2016 Board**

The Nominations Committee has proposed the following slate of officers:

President:	Joan Dewhirst
Vice-President:	Gail Stichler
Secretary:	Vikki Duncan
Treasurer:	Denise Klassen
Membership:	Mei Chih Ho
Adult Teams:	Christine Holland and Teda Pilcher
Student Teams:	Sylvia Mabee
Provisional Chairs:	Ralph Wilson and Mary Ellen Hoffman
Research Chairs:	Barbara Boyd and Monica Babich
Evaluations:	Paul Guido
Webmaster:	Loree Gold
Nominations/ Past President	Molora Vадnais

Nominations will be accepted on the floor and then closed at the April 1st meeting. A formal election of the officers by majority vote will be held at the May 6th Docent Council meeting.

We are grateful for all individuals who are willing to dedicate their time to the Docent Council Board and understand that these dedicated volunteers are vital to the continued effectiveness of our organization.

Vikki 

Stolen Art

By Josie Martin



Jack Miles, a former editor at the LA Times gave a brilliant exegesis, actually, told a dirty secret at our last docent meeting. He explained why, to this day, many curators talk more about THE ART than the content of religious paintings. He told how after the French Revolution, the French Academy viewed religious art with a formalist perspective mostly omitting the narrative content, a practice still in place today in Academia.

Why?

During the upheavals of the Revolution valuable art was plundered from churches, monasteries, and private chapels. Too much description of the paintings' content would make the works identifiable, subject to demands for restitution. So art historians, instead of describing content, developed a certain academic formalism when cataloguing their precious Poussins, De la Tours, Raphaels, Tintoretts, Titians, and countless Renaissance splendors. They referred to the brilliance of the colors, the 3-point perspective, the sophisticated compositional elements, the effect of chiaroscuro. There was great admiration for the absence of any visible paint strokes, a fascination for the source of light and of the arrangement of the figures, but they did not identify the characters... Jesus, Peter, Paul, Mary, St. John the Baptist, Mary Magdalene...the whole mischpocha were barely mentioned! To do so could give away the identity of the plundered paintings, raising questions and demands for restitution of the stolen goods.

And so, a good part of the Louvre's contents with its encyclopedic collection of Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, and Mannerist art may well have been "lifted" literally: from damaged basilicas; altar pieces ripped off from undefended churches, portraits of holy saints stolen from monasteries built in their honor. The fine smaller works would likely have been stripped from private chapels. I wonder in what chateau the exquisite St Catherine with her crown of white jasmines lived. It wasn't just Lord Elgin stripping the Parthenon, there have been shady art dealings long before and tragically after. The spoils of War!

Currently restitution is sought by descendants of the victims of World War II. As Jews fled their homes they left priceless art behind which Hitler and his designated art historians stole, including art experts like Gunther Gerszo's Uncle. Entire train loads of art disappearing as was heroically depicted in the film, "Monuments Men". Perhaps the best known is the famous portrait of Adele Bloch, Klimt's "Woman in Gold" which hung in Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum for decades. It was Arnold Schoenberg's grandson who fought through years of complicated litigation to bring Adele back to Maria Altman, her 93 year old niece in Los Angeles.

My own German-French family owned no great art, but my mother mourned a tall filigreed sterling Menorah (next page) that would be brought out only for the 8 days



Gustav Klimt, *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer, ("Woman in Gold")*

of Chanukah when she was a little girl. In its large base was a music box that played the ancient melody, "Rock of Ages". In Hebrew it is known as MaoTzur, the hymn sung each night as another candle is lit until the Menorah is fully kindled. The eight candles, representing the miracle of a small ancient cruse of oil that lasted for eight days after the destruction of the great Temple of Jerusalem.

My mother spoke of it with the same aching melancholy and longing as when she remembered her precious Rosenthal porcelain, the Oriental rugs that had long been in her family, and most of all, the sparkling Daum crystal wine goblets that had been a wedding gift from her best friend, Elise, who was deported by the French never to be seen again.

All had to be left behind when we fled from Sarreguemines in 1939, a town too close to the German border. For the next 6 years we lived in an obscure French village near Limoges in the Unoccupied zone of France, the region free of German rule, until they broke with Vichy and invaded us anyway.

My father sometimes recalled his beloved violin during those times. It couldn't fit into the overloaded Citroen when he had to hurriedly pack up his family as the Germans marched in and took back Alsace Lorraine. The violin was neither a Stradivarius, nor a Guarini, but he loved it as if it was, the shape, the glow of its wood and the tone when he played a bit of Mozart.

I grew up with such stories of bright notes, candle-lit nights, and loss. Tonight I can imagine vividly how helpless priests and nuns must have felt when cherished paintings, pietas, altar pieces—luminous scenes of Annunciations, Crucifixions, and Last Suppers vanished during the French Revolution.

There is a happy ending to the silver Menorah story, however. Eric, my mother's youngest, brother fleeing Germany in 1936 had packed it in his buckram trunk going to America. He was only 16 and probably cared little about such a religious object, but his mother, my grandmother, insisted that he take it along. She would never see him again, becoming one of the millions of Hitler's victims, but that's another story. In 1947, I was nine, my first Chanukah in America at my Uncle's house in Huntington Park, California, the beautiful Menorah reappeared! It stood on a snowy white monogrammed cloth with an ornate J for Josephine after whom I am named....the silver tinkling notes of the MaoTzur gently playing in the soft candlelight made me cry. It really was a miracle!

One work of art saved!



Klimt's portrait of the newly married Adele Bauer, ca. 1907, brought them together on a regular basis for more than three years.



Editor's note: You can find Josie's book, *Never Tell Your Name*, on Amazon

THE LAST PAGE



Santa Barbara Arts exhibits freelance illustrator and graphic artist Sever Thomas, showcasing his travel posters from the 1950s.

Lori Mohr, Editor
Mohrni@aol.com

