

Docent Dates

September 23

9:15 Coffee

10:00 Council Meets

October 12

10:00 Book Group



Raul Corrales, Cuban, 1925-2006 *The Fishing Net, [La Atarraya]* 1950 ca. Gelatin silver print
Image: 14 3/4 x 19 1/4" (i) 20 x 23 7/8" (s) Museum purchase.

INTERNAL USE ONLY

Dear Docents,

What sad news about Karen Sinsheimer. The press release chronicled her career, the trail she blazed as curator for the Museum. What some of you may not know is that Karen was a true supporter of the docent council, an advocate and friend. She attended every provisional graduation I know of for the last seven years, and joined us for our holiday parties, her presence a show of respect for what we do. Karen was always excited about our touring her shows, confident we would engage the public with the enthusiasm inherent in her work. We will so miss her.

In this issue you'll find a piece from The Royal Academy of Art on Richard Diebenkorn submitted by Ann Hammond. I've also included a note on the September 20th opening of the new Broad Museum in LA amid considerable art world buzz, as well comments from The Wall Street Journal blog on the piece, *Docents Gone Wild* in the July issue of *La Muse*. Apparently the article made quite a stir in nonprofit circles.

Kudos to our docents making tracks outside the Museum—Rosemary Gebhart has been accepted into the California Society of Printmakers, and Doug McElwain has had an article published in *Electrum Magazine*.

Isn't this one of the things you love about being a docent? We're such a diverse group...just look at how we spend our Museum down time. 🍷



Lori Mohr, Editor

In This Issue

Unwild Docents	2
Book Group	4
Broad Museum	5
Docent Kudos	6
Diebenkorn	7
The Last Page	10

WSJ: Museum Docents Are Well Trained and Add Good Value

July 7, 2015



“Museums: Docents Gone Wild” (Arena, June 26) isn’t reflective of the docents at the Phoenix Art Museum, which has an intensive two-year training program. Experienced docents oversee the training program and are assisted by the museum’s curators and professors of art. We also have weekly continuing-education lectures from September to May. All docents are peer reviewed periodically, and those who don’t measure up to the standards are asked to leave the program. Trainees must demonstrate their skills in presenting school and adult tours in the museum and in school and adult outreach programs.

In the past few years we have transformed our presentations from a lecture format to an interactive approach, which provides a more engaging experience for students and adults alike. While we have some leeway in making presentations (there are no scripts for on-site and most off-site presentations), our docents strive for accuracy at all times. In more than 10 years as a docent, I haven’t seen any docents running wild.

Mark Sendrow

Phoenix

As a docent and “of a certain age,” I find the article mean-spirited. The training to become a docent is extensive. I suggest that those museums that complain about their docents review their budgets and replace these free volunteers with docents who are paid. This way, there wouldn’t be a need for forums put on by the American Alliance of Museums titled “Waking Up From Volunteer Nightmares.”

Barbara Terranova

Paradise Valley, AZ

The article highlights issues and challenges with senior-citizen docents who haven’t been properly trained, supported or supervised. The Minneapolis Institute of Arts invests almost 250 hours of classroom education plus gallery talks, continuing education, supervisor observation, tour evaluation and special-exhibition education for each docent volunteer. Docents are prepared to present a one-hour tour without notes on every genre, period, culture and medium represented in our collection. Many museums make parallel investments in their docent training. As in most transactions, you get what you pay for.

Sheila-Marie Untiedt

Stillwater, Minn.

With today’s limited budgets, a number of museums couldn’t even stay open without the contributions of volunteers. As many museum directors will attest, it is difficult enough to get competent volunteers without negative articles painting older volunteer docents as incompetent troublemakers deserving of ridicule. We should be encouraging their volunteerism and celebrating those who give up their free time to contribute, not denigrating them.

Nirmal Chatterjee

Funny--no one has mentioned Lettice and Lovage. This play showed on Broadway some years ago with Maggie Smith as the docent gone wild. In guiding tourists through a manor house/castle, her commentary began with a calm, "factual" version of the history of the place, but with each tour became more and more off track and highly dramatic until it was finally unrecognizable. Should be required reading for docent trainers.



Wild About Our Docents

Susan Severson, Director of Adult Programs, Joslyn Art Museum

In museum circles there's much buzz over Ellen Gamerman's recent Wall Street Journal article, **"Docents Gone Wild."** In her cautionary piece, Gamerman describes the occasional rogue docent whose performance in the galleries does not measure up to museum expectations—the greying, privileged volunteer who strays off script, misstates facts, or touches the artwork, among other dreadful infractions.

In light of such attention to docent behavior, the time feels right to reflect on the performance of Joslyn docents (who I have never observed "going wild.") The glowing reports from teachers and visitors by far exceed the occasional misstep, and considering our docents conducted 1,288 tours for over 14,000 visitors last year, that says a lot.

Joslyn Art Museum holds the utmost admiration for its docent corps. Our gallery teachers are recognized as professional, vital members of the education department who deserve and receive praise for working tirelessly, without a dime, on behalf of the Museum. In the spirit of generosity and community service, our volunteer docents understand that no amount of money can equal the reward that comes with meeting new people and engaging them in meaningful conversations about art. The hard work and commitment they bring to the Museum is without measure, which is why we do best to train and manage this extraordinary group.

Gamerman opens her article with the words, "More arts-loving baby boomers—educated, experienced and recently retired—are hustling to become museum tour guides." Why? With so many volunteer opportunities available to people eager to share their time and talent with the community, why would anyone want to be a docent? Docenting is hard work.

Training to be a tour guide begins with a rigorous two-year course in art history and pedagogy, followed by continuing education courses with curators and art professionals throughout a docent's tenure. With over 11,000 works of art in Joslyn's extraordinary permanent collection, and several special exhibitions rotated through the Museum every year, there is a lot to learn!

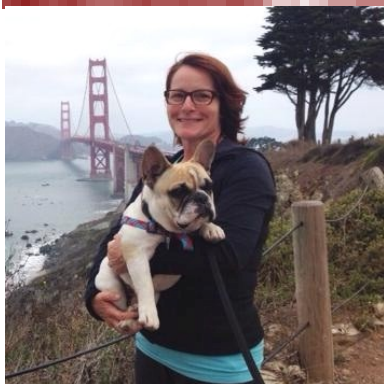
Being a docent requires excellent public speaking and group management skills. Docents must engage visitors of all ages and dispositions—from the youngest student to the most seasoned art expert—in easy, thought-provoking conversation. They are expected to afford equal attention to the visitor and the object

while keeping everyone a safe distance from of the artworks.

Docents must decipher volumes of information about artists, materials and techniques, stylistic techniques, stylistic movements, economics, politics, social issues and so on, all related to a single object. Preparing for just one tour can take hours of research and preparation, yet the docent knows that the information gathered may never be shared with the visitor. It is not enough for a gallery teacher to memorize and communicate art historical facts. Today, an effective interpreter must facilitate meaningful connections between people and objects in order to create an interactive experience that pushes far beyond the lecture. Yes, being a docent is an art in itself.

As summer winds down—as we puzzle together our schedule of classes and speakers, as we anticipate another busy school year, and as the **docent application deadline of August 28** approaches—candidate interviews begin in earnest. It is a pleasure meeting new applicants eager to serve the Museum and embark on a journey that most of them have been looking forward to for years. I welcome this time to reflect on the role of our gallery teachers, selfless volunteers who enable the Museum to fulfill its mission to interpret, inspire, and bring people and works of art together. Joslyn has good reason to be wild about our docents. 🐾

From Our Book Group



Laura DePaoli

We've planned three meetings for next year:

Monday, October 12 at 10AM

Monday, January 11 at 10AM

Monday, April 11 at 10AM



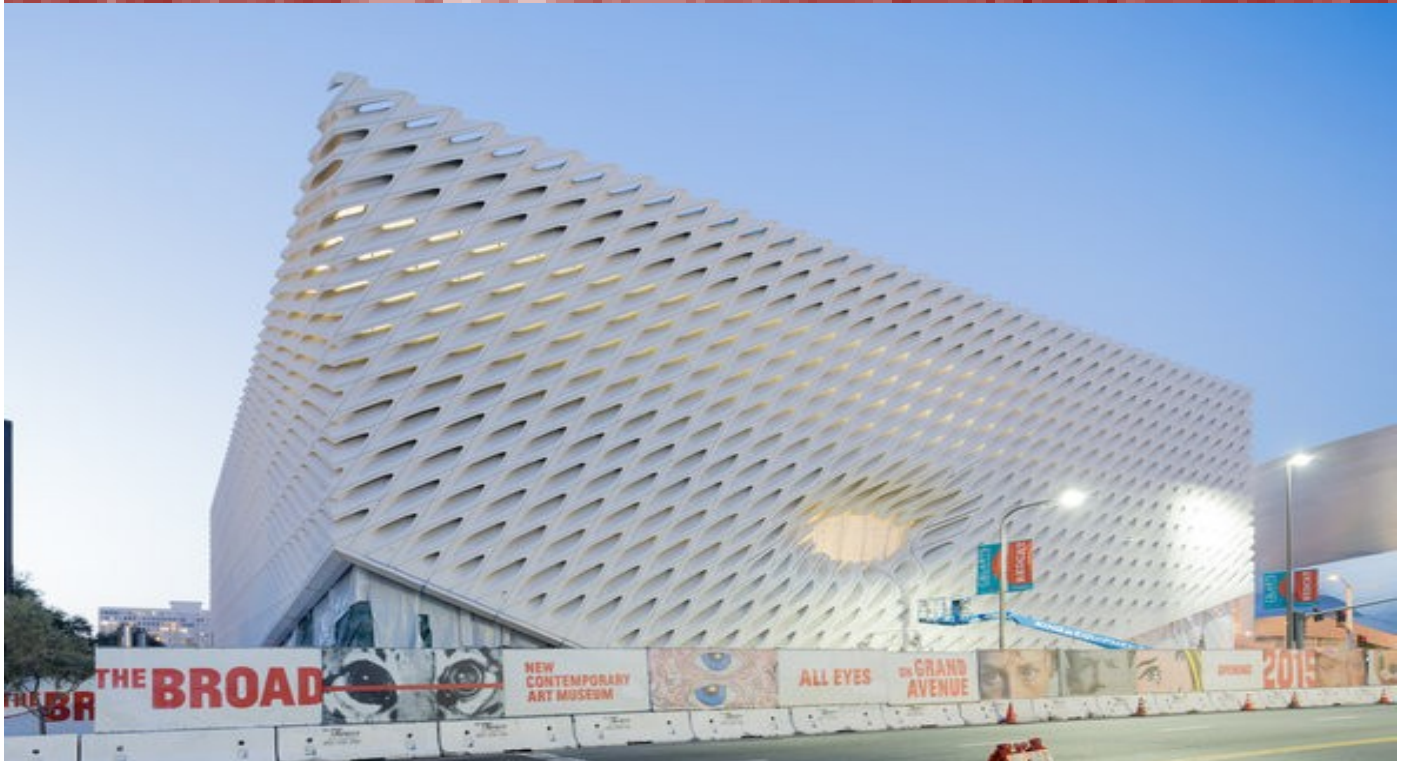
The Art of Restoring a 400-Year-Old Painting: A Five-Minute Primer

<http://www.openculture.com/2015/07/the-art-of-restoring-a-400-year-old-painting-a-five-minute-primer.html>

Source: Open Culture Submitted by Christine Holland

The Broad Museum in LA to Open in September

By Jori Finkel February 5, 2015, *The New York Times*



The Broad. Credit Iwan Baan

After a series of construction setbacks, the billionaire art collectors Eli and Edythe Broad have announced that their new art museum downtown will open this year on Sept. 20. The Broads originally expected the building, designed by Diller Scofidio & Renfro, to be completed about two years ago, but they never issued a specific date. (A \$19.8 million lawsuit by the museum against the German manufacturer Seele, which fabricated the building's intricate honeycomb-like facade, is pending.)

Regular admission when the museum opens in September will be free. At that time the Broad will show art spanning the last six decades, from early works by Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg to a recent video installation by Ragnar Kjartansson, drawn from the museum's holdings and its founders' personal collection.

As for Otium, the restaurant that Mr. Broad is developing with Bill Chait of République and Bestia for the museum plaza, a spokeswoman, Karen Denne, says she expects it to be "open and in full operation" by Sept. 20.

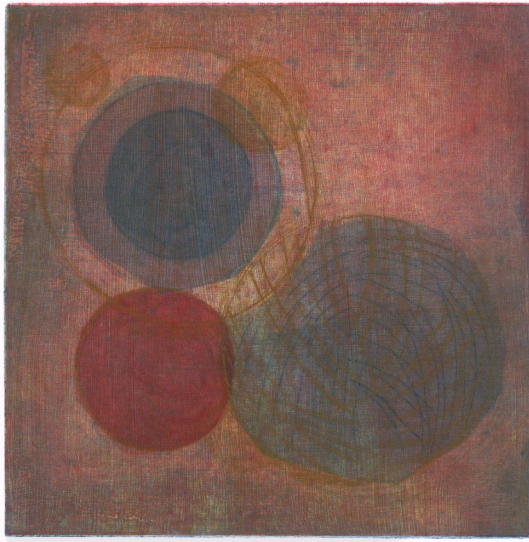


Shirley's new email

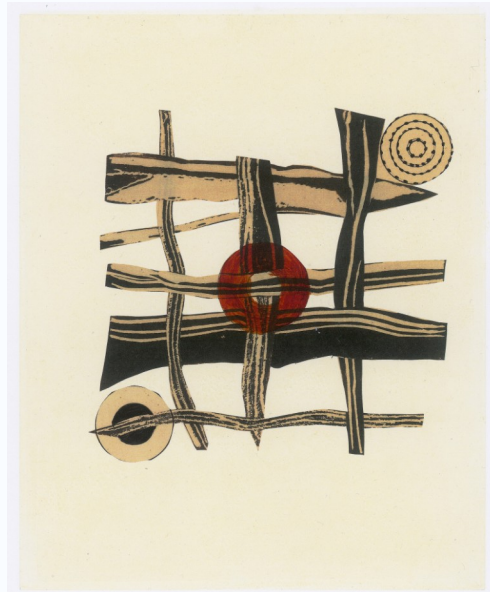
Shirleywaxman@gmail.com



Congratulations, Rosemarie Gebhart! You have been accepted as a new member of the California Society of Printmakers. The California Society of Printmakers (CSP), a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, is the oldest printmaking organization in the nation. Originally founded in 1912 as the *California Society of Etchers*, it reflected a surge of printmaking activity in the West during the early part of the century. In 1968 the *California Society of Etchers* merged with the *Bay Area Printmakers* to form the present California Society of Printmakers.



Los Mundos



Illusion 2



HOME PAGE— We at ELECTRUM Magazine are keen on studying the past or – perhaps more humbly – what we think it was. Some of us are archaeologically trained or we are professional historians and art historians and investigative journalists never tiring of asking questions of the past, even if we sometimes receive other answers to unasked questions rather than the ones we ask.

We at ELECTRUM respect that amateurs or professionals in other fields may love history as much or more than we do. We constantly seek to understand ourselves better by examining whatever we can about our human ancestry. Thus we at ELECTRUM are constantly looking for links – and assistance from a reading public – to increase our own and others’ wider understanding of ‘Why the Past Matters.’ See Doug’s article.

The screenshot shows the website header with the title 'ELECTRUM MAGAZINE WHY THE PAST MATTERS'. The main article is 'The Antikythera Mechanism – Identifying its Place of Origin?' by Douglass McEwan, dated July 20, 2015. The article features a large image of the Antikythera Mechanism, a complex ancient Greek device. The website also includes a sidebar with 'RECENT ELECTRUM' articles and a 'SHORT BY TAGS' section listing various topics like 'allegory', 'Alaska', 'archaeology', etc.

<http://www.electrummagazine.com/2015/07/the-antikythera-mechanism-identifying-its-place-of-origin/>

Richard Diebenkorn: A Unique Talent

By Tom Jeffreys, *The Royal Academy*, February 2015

Submitted by Ann Hammond



Richard Diebenkorn, 1956, Photo by Rose Mandel

This is just one example of the esteem with which Diebenkorn is held in his native country, where he is considered one of the most important American artists of the twentieth century. His work can be found in many of the country's leading public and private collections, such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Brooklyn Museum and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, all of which have loaned work for our exhibition.

Not so big in the UK

Here in the UK, Diebenkorn does not have such levels of public recognition. In part this might be a question of geography. While we are familiar with the big names of the east coast scene – Pollock, de Kooning et al – the artists from the west coast,

where Diebenkorn lived and worked, remain less familiar in the UK. This is also due to a lack of exposure: it's been 24 years since his last major exhibition in this country. Nonetheless, he is held in high regard by his fellow artists and those in the know: Royal Academicians David Hockney, Ian McKeever and Barbara Rae have all expressed their admiration for different aspects of his work, and he was made an honorary Royal Academician in 1992, shortly before his death. McKeever's article in the forthcoming issue of RA Magazine (published 1 March) is a fascinating response by one artist to the work of another.

In March the Royal Academy celebrates the fascinating career of Richard Diebenkorn, one of the great twentieth-century masters of American painting. Diebenkorn is rightly regarded as one of the most significant artists in post-war America, but this is the first major exhibition of his work in the UK for over 20 years. For those new to Diebenkorn, here are seven key facts to kick-start your appreciation of a unique talent.

Big in America

When Barack Obama moved into the White House in 2009, he selected for his living quarters a large, brightly coloured abstract painting by Richard Diebenkorn.



US President Barack Obama adjusts his tie in the Yellow Oval Room of the White House, May 19, 2010. Richard Diebenkorn's painting 'Berkeley No. 52' is reflected in the mirror.

Official White House Photo by Pete Souza



Abstract Expressionism

One of the most distinctive aspects of Diebenkorn's career is the way it can be divided into three clear phases. He first emerged as an artist of significance in the 1950s, as the Abstract Expressionism pioneered by the likes of Pollock and de Kooning was making waves in the east coast art scene. Diebenkorn flew the flag for the movement out west in Berkeley, Urbana and Albuquerque, alongside the likes of Clyfford Still. During this period he produced a range of energetic, colourful works that Thomas Williams, writing in *Artists & Illustrators*, has described as "among the most dynamic and brilliant of his career".

Berkeley #5, 1953. Oil on canvas. 134.6 x 134.6 cm.

The figurative revolt

In the mid-1950s, however, Diebenkorn took a very different path. His return to the San Francisco Bay area followed three years in New Mexico and Illinois, and he continued pursuing abstract painting for the next few years. But by 1956, he completely abandoned Abstract Expressionism in favour of figurative painting – distinctly out of fashion at the time. It was a move that provoked outrage. Fellow Californian artist Ernest



Girl on a Terrace, 1956, oil on canvas, 179.1 x 166.1 cm.

Briggs accused him of being a "moral sell-out." But it also marked Diebenkorn apart as an artist unafraid to follow his own artistic impulses, whatever the prevailing winds of the period. Very soon, he became equally well known and successful as a Bay Area Figurative artist. As our exhibition demonstrates, however, for Diebenkorn, figuration was not some quixotic decision but a logical extension beyond the self-imposed limits of abstraction.

Ocean Park

The late 1960s marked the beginning of the final phase of Diebenkorn's career. Following his move to Santa Monica in order to take up a professorship at UCLA in 1967, Diebenkorn returned to abstraction in a sequence of works now known as the Ocean Park series. These geometric abstractions became the focus of Diebenkorn's work for two decades. The paintings are

among the most important in recent art history and have been described by the *Boston Globe* as “some of the most beautiful works of art created in America or anywhere else since the Second World War”.

European Modernism

Although these three phases may at first sound disconnected, two clear threads run through Diebenkorn’s career. The first is the strong relationship that all his work has with the great figures of European Modernism – especially Cézanne, Matisse, and Mondrian, for whom he had a deep admiration. Diebenkorn travelled across Europe between 1964 and ‘65 and the influence of works such as Matisse’s *View of Notre-Dame* (1914) is clearly visible in the subsequent Ocean Park series.



Ocean Park #116, 1979.

Oil and charcoal on canvas. 208.3 x 182.9 cm.

The poetics of place

The second continuous thread is Diebenkorn’s sensitivity to place: changes in his life frequently led to changes in his work. “Very often,” Diebenkorn has said, “if you go to the locale where an artist works, you’ll suddenly really know that you’re in this person’s area.” He cites the Arles of Van Gogh and the Florence of Piero della Francesca, but he may just as well have been talking about himself. Few artists can have captured the unique space and light of California quite like Richard Diebenkorn. 🍷

Richard Diebenkorn is in The Sackler Wing at the RA from 14 March — 7 June 2015.

Tom Jeffreys (@tomjeffreys) is a writer, editor and curator.

Our Own Backyard: The Weisman at Pepperdine Malibu

Back to Basics, Aug 31– December 6, 2015



Right: Ann Hammond at the Weisman for On Location in Malibu: Paintings by the California Art Club, Frederick R. Weisman Museum, Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA May 23 – August 2, 2015

THE LAST PAGE



Karen Sinsheimer

Courtesy of Katrina Carl



Lori Mohr, Editor
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