

Docent Dates

June 10
Preference Sheets Due

Summer Break



Laszlo Maholy-Nagy, *Z VI, 1925, Oil on canvas. 37 x 29 in.*

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My Dearest Docents,

This is my last *La Muse* message until next spring when I look forward to announcing the board slate for 2016-2017. Many people have worked hard to make this a successful touring year despite uncertainties caused by the renovation. And you have done some wonderful things.

Thanks to each of you who has offered me encouragement this year, many thanks to a very hard working board, and special thanks to Joan for being such a great partner and friend. Of course, the council would fall apart without the organizing and leadership of Patsy, Rachael, and Kelly, visibly on display at the beautiful reception they hosted following the Service Recognition Ceremony.

I wish each of you a peaceful yet exciting summer and look forward to seeing you next fall where you will find me in the galleries giving tours. 🍷

Love to all. Molora



Molora Vadnais
President



Joan Dewhirst

Kudos and THANKS to Patsy, Rachael and Kelly! The Docent Awards event was a huge success. It was so impressive hearing the individual and collective accomplishments of those docents. Wow....an inspiration for us all. The reception in McCormick was festive and delicious....everyone looking glamorous and handsome. What a party....what a night!

It was a delightful adventure....our weekend road trip to Palo Alto. Driving north from Santa Barbara is always a treat. The beautiful coastline and mountain scenery and the quaint towns with fun food stops make the journey itself a special part of the get-away.

Our group convened officially for the first scheduled function on Saturday afternoon. Dr. & Mrs. McMurtry had invited us to tour their private art collection. Residents of the Vi—a retirement residence on the Stanford Campus—Burt and Deedee were the consummate hosts. Their art was just amazing (See Josie Martin's article on page 11 for delightful details of this unforgettable experience).

After close encounters with several of Wayne Thiebaud's oil paintings of delectable foods displayed in the McMurty dining room and kitchen, we were ready for supper. Soon we were tucked into our own little private room at the nearby Menlo Grill. A little wine and bistro food....a perfect wrap-up for that day. (Irene Wilson snapped some photos)

Sunday morning found us in the Anderson Collection on the Stanford campus. Skilled docents toured us through the extensive and impressive art amassed by Harry and Mary Margaret Anderson. All in all, 121 major works including paintings and sculptures by 86 modern and contemporary artists! It was a daunting task but we survived. (See the Bob Dewhirst group photo on the massive entrance staircase. Ralph Wilson captured the photo in front of the Clyfford Still with Josie Martin taking careful notes)

It was a short 15 minute drive to our afternoon destination—Fi Lo Li (acronym for Fight, Love, & Live) Gardens. The Café there was nestled in a woodsy space and offered delicious luncheon choices that fortified us for the garden stroll that followed. (See garden pictures)

This was a big day filled with really big art and ending with Nature at her very best. Then it was time to pack and head home to Santa Barbara filled with rich visual memories of a weekend well-spent.

We've covered a lot of art ground this year. I certainly hope you've enjoyed it as much as I have. Each excursion,—from LACMA, the Huntington, Lotusland, the Hammer and UCLA Sculpture Garden—to the Palo Alto road trip, has offered its own unique experience. The upcoming bus trip to the Weisman Collection in Holmby Hills on June 1st....will be a terrific final fling.

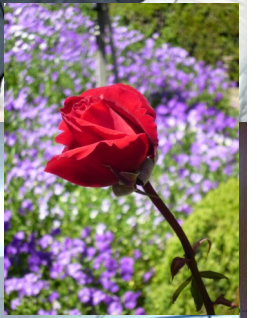
Visiting these places has expanded our appreciation of art, but it has also given us the opportunity to spend time with like-minded people. No wonder we love being docents.

No wonder we keep coming back.

Have a wonderful summer. 🍷

Joan Dewhirst





From our Student Teams



Kathy Eastman
Student Teams

We have enjoyed a strong year led by our Student Team Leaders. Our Power Point team prepared close to 1900 students for their Museum visits and our student teams toured over 2000. During January through May, Docents offered PP presentations at Ridley Tree for 540 students.

Enjoy a few snippets of feedback from teachers to the PP Team. “Awesome presenter”; “Spot on”; “Students were amazed”; “The Docent made everything age appropriate”; “The children were engaged and excited to participate and ask questions”.

Feedback for student touring teams was also positive. A second grade teacher commented, “Students were critically thinking and learning new language”. Many teachers reflected on their students wanting longer tours, “Our Docent is a wonderful storyteller and kept my students engaged the entire time”. One teacher wrote, “Thank you for helping 2 second language students and special education students to access and appreciate the art. Your patience and input were appreciated”.

And most important is feedback from our student guests. A 13 year old wrote, “I have honestly never been to a museum where the staff actually bring the exhibits to life”. A 10 year old said, “Thank you for all you did for me! I think art makes you lighthearted and happy. Art makes you think and wonder. I loved the Samurai suit”. One 6 year old commented, “Thank you again for showing me that beautiful girl. She was my favorite. She really caught my eyes”. Finally, a 7 year old said, “I loved the tour. It was awesome. Me and my mom learned stuff we never knew. The one I loved the most was the huge lamp”.

Thank you to all Docents who participated in Student Touring this year. 🍷

From Our Adult Teams



Christine Holland

We’re getting back to normal after a block-buster 2 ½ months of excitement for all teams. Get ready to bask in the glow of our accomplishments during “*Botticelli, Titian & Beyond*”.

From mid-February through April, docents toured **3289** visitors on all tours (with the exception of *Ten Talks*) for an average of 1163 visitors per month. Compare that with the 7 months of July 2014 to January 2015 where we averaged 383 visitors per month. During the *Botticelli* exhibit, visitors more than tripled for *all* touring teams! The *Botticelli* team alone gave 96 tours (43 Public and 53 Special Request) for a total of 2220 visitors.

More good news—our new Community Services Team is picking up steam. Docents have already given 9 presentations with additional talks scheduled. The team is expanding their repertoire of subjects as well as reaching out to more community groups.

This is the time of year we gather your Preference Sheets in preparation for next year’s assignments. Fabulous special exhibits are coming up as well as interesting Focus and Highlights tours.

Congratulations to the Museum for an excellent blockbuster exhibit and to all Docents for their excellence in touring.

Best wishes to all for an enjoyable summer.

Christine Holland 🍷

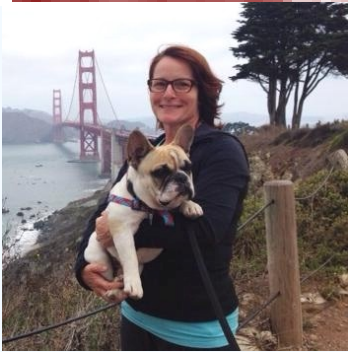


Paul Guido

I would like to thank all of the evaluators and evaluatees this year for making my job run smoothly. All of your hard work on both sides of the process keeps our tours professional, accurate and fresh. The evaluations during the year, and over the summer insure that the docent program remains a highly respected asset to the museum and the community.

Thanks again. 🍷

From Our **Book Group**



We closed our reading year May 11th with a discussion of Calvin Tompkin's *Duchamp: A Biography*. Thank you to Shirley Waxman for hosting and to everyone who has attended book group this year.

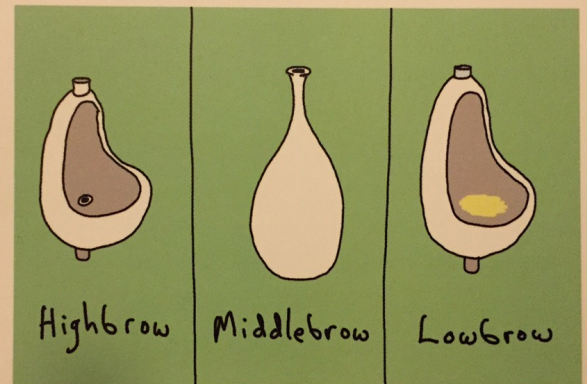
We've planned three meetings for next year:

Monday, October 12 at 10AM

Monday, January 11 at 10AM

Monday, April 11 at 10AM

—Grayson Perry



This summer we're offering a choice of two books we hope will enrich our summertime visits to museums and galleries.

For those looking a read on contemporary art appealing to the "middlebrow or lowbrow," we suggest "Playing to the Gallery: Helping Contemporary Art in Its Struggle to be Understood" by Grayson Perry.

It's a fabulous, fun little book that addresses serious questions: What is good art? Who is the judge of that today? Can art today still tell stories that will resonate in the future? There are wonderful illustrations, including a cartoon explaining his "handbag and hipster test" for judging whether or not something is a work of art. "If there are lots of people with beards and glasses and single-speed bikes, or oligarchs' wives with great big handbags looking a bit perturbed and puzzled by what they're staring at, then it's probably art."

Here's a review if you would like to read a little more about it:

<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/aug/31/playing-to-the-gallery-grayson-perry-review>

For those preferring something a little more "highbrow," Jill Finsten recommends "Rendez-vous With Art"

by Philippe de Montebello and Martin Gayford. Mr. de Montebello is the former long time director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The book is a series of conversations between him and British art journalist Martin Gayford, prompted by their travels. "The mysteries of aesthetic appeal—the factors both subjective and objective that shape our perceptions of quality, craftsmanship and beauty—become rich questions as Mr. de Montebello and Mr. Gayford examine masterpieces including the 15th-century frescoes of Masaccio at the Brancacci chapel in Florence, Vermeer's "View of Delft" (c. 1660-61) at the Mauritshuis museum in The Hague, and a Nâga balustrade from a Cambodian temple now housed in Paris's Musée Guimet."

For a more in-depth discussion, here's a review <http://www.wsj.com/articles/book-review-rendez-vous-with-art-by-philippe-de-montebello-and-martin-gayford-1410558272>

If you have book suggestions please forward them to Laura DePaoli. Have a great summer and happy reading!



Service Recognition Reception

Photos courtesy of Pma Tregenza and Provisional-hopeful Leslie Thompson for Lori Mohr







Up Close and Personal



In a 5,000 square foot home on the Stanford Campus surrounded by lush green lawns reside the McMurrys with an astounding and delightful art collection. Famous contemporary works, inspiring, edifying, and more than a few with semi-serious themes.

Whimsical art of the 20th Century has

long been a favorite genre of mine—the kind that shows human foibles and a droll sense of humor without being superficial. I probably shouldn't confess it, but I can't get into Rothko. Too somber. And no, I'm sorry, I don't feel that spiritual uplift described by some of my dear colleagues. Jackson Pollock? Too chaotic; its gnarly complexity agitates me. So when the doors opened to the McMurrys' home and I spotted a whimsical Red Grooms and a splendid Jasper Johns, I knew it was going to be good.

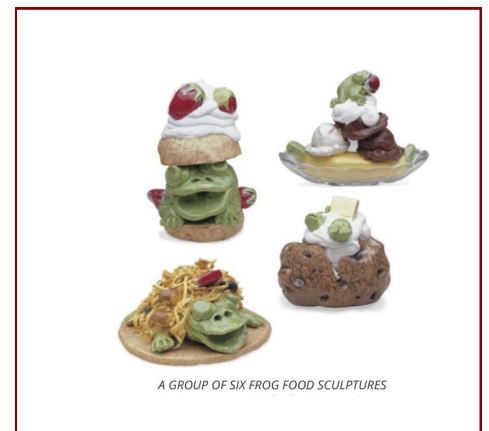
Actually, it was thrilling! We saw at once that we were in an incomparable place. Unless you knew Peggy Guggenheim, it would be rare to have such an intimate experience, i.e looking at very fine art in a private home rather than in a museum. Not only can you get up close and personal, but the owners, Deedee and Burt McMurry, with their enthusiasm and passion, are most approachable. Deborah Butterfield's metal ribbon horse standing on a mantel was placed there as much for the shadows cast on the wall as for the object itself, explains Mrs McMurry. I ponder how Wayne Thibaud's pastry counter came to hang next to a severe geometric abstraction. There is a contemporary jade vase from Korea with a textured surface that I long to touch, but of course I don't. Not far away in a side window stands a simple scarlet bromeliad all by itself...utterly unaware of a brooding Edward Hopper across the room.

The McMurry's collection is post World War II when the art scene in America, primarily New York, displaced Paris leaving European traditions and conventions behind. Abstract non-figurative art became THE art scene. And so there were works by Rothko, Pollack, De Kooning, Lichtenstein and others less known to me, but no less compelling. Is that one of Warhol's portraits? I look at the laminated card that identifies each work. It is not; it's by an artist I don't know, but influenced by Warhol. I imagine sitting on the couch with the superb Henry Moore sculpture calmly posed nearby. I admire a fine Japanese Tansu chest with a cluster of small and perfect black Oaxacan pots arranged upon it. Behind the grouping hangs an exquisite silk scroll with a gauzy sun above a black splash that might have been Chinese calligraphy until it became something else dictated by the artist's brush.

Whatever the McMurrys have acquired appears to be the best of the best. Each and every piece, whether a desk in a study, a stainless steel breakfast room chair, a display case in the living room or a brilliant Sam Francis; all are of the finest quality. Often collectors are



Wayne Thibaud Candy Counter1
1962 Oile on Canvas 55 x 72 in



wooded more by the big names than by the merits of the art itself. Not here. We are beyond impressed.

The dining room's sideboard holds an outsized box of Sees candy containing a comical selection of fake foods. David Gilhooly had created ceramic Oreo-sized hamburgers, sushi, tacos, a frog cream-puff, so life-like you could almost smell them. (pg 10) Such delights and surprises were found in every room. The West Coast and California are well represented with Diebenkorn, Rauschenberg, Baldessari, Robert Arneson, to name a few. There were many fine pieces from the Bay Area whose names I didn't recognize, a mysterious hillscape of snow with silhouettes of skiers... or ghosts by Bill Jacklin? Christian Vincent has a tuxedoed man carrying a single piece of pie, offering it to the viewer—it's a scene from film noir.

After an hour of wandering from room to room, each with its laminated cards indicating titles and artists, we gathered for conversation with the collectors in their salon. Elegant, affable and full of good humor, Burt and Deedee spoke about how they began collecting, and "Yes, after more than 40 years, occasionally something too wonderful to pass up is acquired, though we try not to." They looked at each other without conviction and laughed.

Burt McMurtry candidly spoke of having missed some great opportunities. "We could have bought Lucien Freud and Julian Schnabel when they were still affordable," he says a bit ruefully. It was his wife who made their first major purchase when she saw the small Henry Moore family grouping at a favorite gallery. At the time it was beyond their means, but she, the usually conservative one, threw caution to the winds and made an offer. "We have never regretted it." It is perhaps the most memorable of all the works in this room. It occupies a place of honor on a slender parsons table against a window looking out on an impossibly green landscape. In another room were some of Moore's drawings of Londoners huddled in shelters to escape the blitzkrieg bombing raids. Burt talks briefly about the War Artists. Most of this fabulous collection will go to the Stanford Museums eventually.

There are family pictures too, offering still another dimension to these fascinating and gracious people. Children, grandchildren. Dr. McMurtry is as proud of these as of anything else as he points out a grandson on a soccer field.

There is a framed award, the Alfred Noble prize. Someone exclaims, "Sir, a Nobel?" "No, my dear, NOBLE ... not the same." It was an engineering prize having to do with microwaves when he worked at Sylvania in the '60s.

When it's time to go, it is as if we were treasured guests. Our group walk out in a state of hushed wonder and gratitude. Back in the motor court I tell Joan D., our intrepid leader who made all this possible, "If we went nowhere else this weekend, it would have been enough."

Rodin, the Anderson, the Cantor, and the enchanting Filoli gardens tomorrow.

What treasures! What a trip! 🍷

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THE LAST PAGE



Above: Docents Paying Homage to Matisse at the Hammer Museum.

Photo by Doug McElwain



Left: Barbara Carrington, Niki Bruckner and Helene Strobel at the Getty Center for the Turner Exhibit

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