

Docent Dates

Council meetings start at 10 am, coffee at 9:15.

February 1

Jenni Sorkin
"Women Artists Now"

February 10

Valentine's Open House (see p 2)

February 15

Susan Tai: Carved Paper: The Art of the Japanese Stencil (title of the katagami stencil show)

March 1

Nigel McGilchrist
Color (no title yet)

March 13

Docent trip to LACMA

March 15

Gulru Cakmak: 19th Century European Art

April 5

Meeting or bus trip

April 19

Meeting or bus trip

May 3

Meeting

May 17

Meeting

Speaker info will be included as it becomes available.



Mr. Wuffles! (detail), David Wiesner. Watercolor and India ink on paper. 9x11 in. Courtesy of the artist.

INTERNAL USE ONLY

Dear Docents,

We have exciting lectures planned for February and March. Take a look in this issue of *La Muse* at who will be speaking this month (left side bar).

Once a year, the museum has The Annual Preview Meeting, which is held for SBMA staff, trustees, and support group chairs. It was a privilege for me to attend on behalf of the Docent Council last week. A particularly important part of the meeting was staff recognition. Rachael was awarded a 10 year pin and Patsy one for her 20 years! Once again, I was impressed with the creativity, commitment and support these two women give to the Council. Congratulations go to both along with sincere thanks for all that they do.

In October, a change was made to the start time of the Focus tours in



Gail Stichler,
President and
Docent of the Year

response to the renovation and decreased gallery space available for tours. We understand that some docents found it very difficult to take adults on Focus tours at noon when so many children were still in the galleries. At our December meeting, the Board decided that the 2:00 Focus tours will continue throughout this service year. At that same meeting, Christine Holland presented data showing the number of visitors who toured non-*Highlights* tours for September, October and November of 2014 and compared those statistics with the same months in 2016. In 2014, that number was 420; in 2016, it was 423. It was a bit of a surprise to see that the number of visitors has not dropped with the change from noon to 2 PM. We have not made a decision about the 2017-18 year. The change in time is still considered to be on a trial basis. Feedback from docents is very much appreciated concerning this issue.

There have been quite a few personnel changes recently to the Visitor Services Department. It is recommended that when you come to the Museum to do an adult tour that you alert the person working the front desk, let them know you are there for the scheduled tour and ask them to alert those visitors arriving about the time and place to meet. Sweeping the galleries remains very important for inviting guests to join our tours. Even if no one takes you up on the offer, the expectation is that you will stay in the galleries until a quarter after the hour with the hope someone does. If not, it is valuable for visitors if you make yourself available informally for questions or comments. In my experience and from feedback from other docents, visitors who don't want to commit to a tour seem grateful having a docent to answer questions, share a look at the work, or offer additional information.

We have a contract with the Wellington Hotel for another docent trip to New York City. The reserved dates are April 22–27, 2018. It's still a long way off, but that gives you time to think about how you can join us in Manhattan in 2018.

Gail

From our Vice President



Ralph Wilson

Party Time

The question "How come we can't bring our partner to docent parties?" was the impetus for our Valentine's Party on February 10th. It promises to be a special event where we can enjoy not only each other's company but also that of many of our special Valentines. So please come for the friendship, food, and wine. It's an open house format between 4:00 and 7:00 at the beautiful home of Diane and David Reichert, 679 Alto Drive, Santa Barbara 93110. A sign-up sheet is available at the February 1st meeting or you can email me. mrbeagle@verizon.net

On the Road Again

Get your travel shoes and set your alarm. We're heading to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) on Monday, March 13th. The bus will leave promptly at 7:00 a.m. from the usual Cabrillo and Garden location in order to arrive by 10:00 for a special guided tour of the *Picasso and Rivera: Conversations Across Time* exhibition. The cost, including entrance and special tour, is \$85.00, which you can charge to your credit card (contact Denise Klassen) or pay by check or cash. A sign-up sheet will be available at all Docent Council meetings prior to the trip or you can email me. *Ralph*

Feb 10th 4:00-7:00 pm, 679 Alto Dr

March 13th, LACMA Road Trip

From our Student Teams Chair



Karen Brill

January started with many empty galleries. And then it rained! While grateful for rain, our not having access to the outside art presented an even greater challenge. Creative docents pulled it off with their unflappable attitude and great teamwork. So we had a bumpy month. But we are ending it with the highly anticipated *David Wiesner & The Art of Wordless Storytelling*. These beautiful images will be a joy to explore with students of all ages, fun for them and for us. We are excited.

A big thank you to our Classroom Presentation Team: Teda Pilcher, Susan Billig, Loree Gold, Guy Strickland, and Patty Santiago. These dedicated docents have been going out into the world, working with the kids in schools, preparing them for the Museum trip and our student teams who await them. We are grateful! *Karen*

From our Adult Teams Chair



Christine Holland

December was a somewhat odd month. There were few visitors during the first weeks of December (perhaps many people were shopping) and then, during the two weeks before and after Christmas, we frequently had a lot of visitors in the galleries. The odd stats: There were 12 Docent tours in December with no visitors. Other tours were well-attended, some with 20 or even 30 visitors for a total of 300 visitors on 43 tours. We had five Special Request Tours which added another 50 visitors toured.

The Community Speakers Program continues to blaze a trail of great presentations in our community. Although December was slow (3 presentations to 50 attendees), we congratulate the team on their growth in 2016. What a great addition this outreach is to our Docent Program, offering us one more way to act as ambassadors for SBMA. *Christine*

From our Research Chair



Barbara Boyd

Dear Docents,
Check out the gorgeous catalogue for the Wiesner show. Note the interview between our own Eik Kahng and David Wiesner.

DW: *"I first came to wordless storytelling simply to explore that art form and express something in myself."*



Click the link below:

<http://docentssbma.org/wp-content/uploads/Exhibition-2017-01-29-Wiesner-Catalogue.pdf>

From our **Community Speakers Program**



Team Leaders Kathryn and Shirley Waxman

We welcome docents to our presentations. Public CSP talks for February:

David Wiesner & the Art of Wordless Story Telling.

Speaker: Wendi Hunter

Central Library- [Saturday, February 4, 3 pm.](#)

East Meets West: Japanese Inspired from Monet to Van Gogh.

Speaker: Shirley Waxman

Montecito Library- [Wednesday, February 22, 6 pm.](#)

The State of Our Antiquities

By Josie Martin



It all started with Achilles. We had to pick him up in Santa Monica at my cousin's house. "Well then, let's also pay a visit to our classiest friends visiting at the Getty."

"Who are you talking about?"

"You know, Hermes, Athena, Herakles, the Doryphorus...I miss them terribly and besides, Hermes has been all spiffed up and has a few new members, I'm told."



Head of Aphrodite,
2nd century AD,
Roman, marble

It's a rainless Sunday, it takes just an hour-and-a-half. There is a certain excitement about getting on the tramway with its spectacular views of the city in the distance. Was the original plan for the Getty Center to be up high like the Parthenon, or Mount Olympus, I wonder?

A volunteer welcomes us and knows exactly where the Santa Barbara antiquities are located. She points with pride at the latest addition, which just arrived from the Louvre. It's a larger than life Bouchardon—*Sleeping Faun*, sprawled shamelessly behind us in the foyer. He's on view for all the visitors to see, lying back on the marble pile with his musical pipes. A little girl shouts to her Dad, "Why doesn't he have pants on?" The dad scoops her up and takes her out to the plaza.

We head to the South Pavilion, passing several rooms of ornate furnishings and precious objects that Mr. Getty collected; what a range of taste this man had. Finally, through a distant arch I spot a familiar object, the head of Aphrodite perched sedately on a white stand. She looks neither happy nor un-



Special Installation of Bouchardon's masterwork *The Sleeping Faun* now on view at the Getty Center Entrance Hall. Getty Image

happy with her coiled tresses. A slight turn to the left and there he is, Hermes, free-standing, facing snow-capped Mt. Baldy through enormous windows. This surely is a first for him. Not even in Lord Lansdowne's stately home would he have had such a view. He stands with 3 new fingers and a new phallus, which I am told is detachable in case future owners might want him un-restored. He is glistening, dazzling in his white marble. The conservation department thoroughly cleaned and stabilized him, with an iron bar through his back side. For the first time we can walk all around him to admire his magnificent torso from all angles. It's hard not to fall in love all over again.



Hermes. Roman, first half of 2nd century A.D.

About ten steps ahead is dear old Athena staring at the fat blimp hanging over the busy 405 freeway below. "Well, you old dear, what do you think of all that traffic?" She's silent, regal. I wonder if she's looking for some ancient horse-drawn chariots amidst the snaking line of cars. A bright bubbly teen-ager is telling her friend all about Athena. "She was really cool, she ruled Athens." "You mean like a mayor?" Her friend asks, "No, no, even better, as a goddess!" I nod in approval.



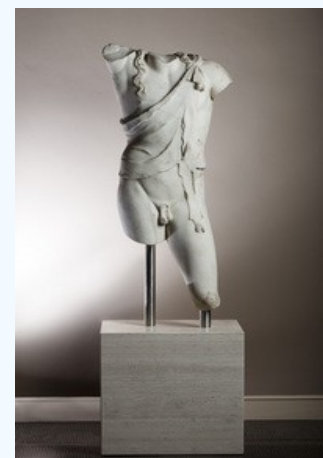
Against the wall is the small statue of the Dioskouros, either Kastor or Pollux, the twins with very complicated parentage. I always thought he looked lonely by himself without his brother. At the far end of the hall is the Doryphorus, the spear bearer. I walk around him, admire his perfect posterior. Same teen-ager comes by and winks at me, "nice buns." My thought exactly, we both laugh.

This wide space, so different from our own Ludington Court, allows the visitor to walk all around the statues instead of having them placed along walls. But I wonder if these treasures are as safe?

"Where is Herakles?" I suddenly realize he's missing. Where is our strong-man holding his club, carrying a lion skin, our God of athletes? A young guard politely apologizes, says that Herakles is at the Getty

Villa (the other sculptures demanded the larger gallery spaces at the Center). "Are you from Santa Barbara?" he asks, "Yes, but Herakles should be here, up high, for he was the keeper of the Gates on Mount Olympus." We both shrug. Some 7 or 8 years ago, Ed and I visited the ruins of a Temple to Herakles at Agrigento, in Sicily. It was awesome. Well, we'll have to make another visit to the Villa.

The patient husband has taken photos, but it's time to catch a few galleries of the permanent collection. Two voluptuously dressed Tissots, four unusual Cezannes, a Bougureau, that appeared on an old cookie tin in my Aunt Lina's kitchen, it's the *Young Girl Defending Against Eros*. The surprise is *Starry Night*, not Van Gogh's, but Edvard Munch's, bleak and melancholy. I hadn't seen it before. And finally, the painting I'm always embarrassed to admit I enjoy so much, It's too sweet, the *Alta Dema Roman procession* with all those lovely maidens parading down garlanded stairs in their gorgeous gowns. I nearly always buy the postcard.



Lansdowne Dionysos, Roman, first half of 2nd century AD

It's past 5, the Getty will close shortly. I am astounded how many young people and kids are gathered on the platform awaiting the tram. "We are some of the oldest people here, I bet." I tell Ed.

"No, the oldest are those classy friends of yours, we just saw."

Can't wait to have them back home where they belong.

How To See: Looking, Talking and Thinking About Art

by David Salle

Book Review by Ricki Morse



Entering David Salle's world is a big step. His energy, intelligence and mental agility are startling and require alert flexibility. But he is so stimulating and right on that we beg for more. He is asking us not only to look, but to see, to actually *get* works of modern and contemporary art. He insists that we not rest with the "what," the subject matter and critical history of a work, but to explore the "how," to talk about art the way artists talk, not like critics but as participants.

He explores over 30 modern and contemporary artists, asking why and how they made their work, leaving most of the "what" for critics, though we are clear that he is knowledgeable about the underlying academics. I chose four of the artists he discusses because their works are in our permanent collection. Hopefully we will be seeing them in the flesh soon and be able to experience them first hand.

Let's begin with Andre Derain, a Frenchman whose career followed an unusual trajectory, from early Fauvist to later neo-classical still lifes. Salle insists that progress is a meaningless term in the world of art. He asks us to think of the artist's mind as ranging over the whole spectrum of art and public image, incorporating and reimagining, re-understanding earlier missed works, a lifelong process. In this sense progress is not linear, but dynamic. As a docent I am drawn to a chronological development of presentation because it gives structure, but it can imply progress, a linear unfolding, which actually makes no sense. It masks the dynamism of the art-making process.

Salle asks us to look at Derain's early work from a different perspective, ". . . Derain divorced color from the conventional idea of naturalism, relying instead on a combination of emotional intuition and the almost scientific recording of chroma as sensation, as wave phenomenon—*color as light*." Try looking at Derain's *Three Nudes In Front of a Fireplace* with just this thought in mind, *color as light*, almost as if you are feeling the color/light. You find this experience enhanced by the fireplace toward which the nude figures lean casually, naturally. Salle adds, "His paintings of that time have a lot of air in them—he opened up the space between colors, between brushstrokes, giving the eye room to reseat; the paintings *breathe*."

This clearly visceral approach to *Three Nudes* lets me into the picture in a more intimate way, which certainly reflects the intimacy of the scene. The playful and personal feel of the lavender walls somehow makes this a scene shared between friends, and the lively alternate dots and dashes of the suggested carpet design provide energy and movement in contrast to the solidity of the three bodies. The figures seem almost to float in the warm air, inviting me to enter their world in the moment, sharing an earthy, primal, inviting yet very private moment. I now understand what it means for my eyes to reseat.

We have two Preston Morton gifts in our collection by Marsden Hartley, a painter Salle admired and included in this book as a "Grappler," along with two later Americans, Philip



Andre Derain (1880-1954) French, *Three Nudes In Front of a Fireplace*, 1904-05, watercolor and pencil on paper



Above: Phillip Guston (1913-1980) *City Limits*, 1969, oil on canvas, MoMA New York. Below: Clyfford Still (1904-1980), *PH-401*, 1957, Clyfford Still Museum, Denver.



Guston and Clyfford Still. “They took painting head-on, a little brutally. There’s some truculence in their attitude—why try to hide it? Wrestlers of paint. A painting is something grappled with, brought to ground. It’s a Promethean effort. The artist prevails, but at a cost.” If we take this grouping of “Grapplers” at face value, the “what” of their work, it doesn’t make any sense. Phillip Guston moved from abstract expressionism to cartoon realism in brilliant reds throughout a rich career.

Clyfford Still was the imperious dean of the San Francisco abstract expressionist school and became a leading exponent of Color Field Painting. How these three large, powerful men of decidedly different approaches could be grouped together is baffling, until we step into Salle’s shoes and get the physical feel of their work, the internal place in each of us that resonates with physicality of line or brush stroke. Then we get the ah-ha!

Marsden Hartley, born of British parents who had emigrated to the U.S., was a painter, poet and essayist supported by Alfred Stieglitz and befriended by Gertrude Stein. As we allow the sense of mass and density that emanates from Hartley’s *Alspitz-Mittenwald Road* to penetrate our experience of the work, these Bavarian Alps seem pulled out of the earth and bullied into shape, as if resistant to being defined. Salle says, “Hartley’s clouds, mountains, wharfs, roses, sailors—painted as if hacked from dirty marble or granite...it is sturdy, durable. As in nature, disaster is always close to grandeur.”

Salle asks us to feel the mountains pressing at the sky, to experience the effect of all that mass pressed to the top of the picture frame as if it can barely be contained. Always fascinated with how the artist handles the edges of the painting, Salle here notes the force the artist brings against the edge, challenging it to actually manage to contain the image.

Salle opens his book with an essay on the art of Alex Katz, his close friend of 35 years, and an artist who always makes it look easy—bright colors, simplified shapes, appealingly glamorous subjects—the slick commercial magazine image. Katz is approaching 90—erudite, a lover of theater, dance, literature and history. Because the *what* always awakens my curiosity, I dug deeper and found that Ada, his wife since 1957, is a dedicated medical researcher and often his model. Her serene distance seems to match her profession, and Katz often speaks of her as if she were a force of nature.

As Salle begins to break down his response to Katz’s art, we attain a deeper “seeing” through his observations. “Katz is very, very good at the *what*—that is to say, he is always on the look out for a dynamite image, an image that makes of its subject something *iconic*; the enduring part of his art, however, lies in the *how*.” Salle likens Katz’s unerringly effective stroke of paint to the perfect batter’s swing, delivering different results every time because of its specific energy and tempo. Salle asks us to particularly look not only at the colors, how they are set near one another, but also the intervals between them. As we soak in the rich colors of *Ada with Flowers*, we become aware of values of colors as they are set adjacent to one another, of openings between the flowers—an overall effect of airy opulence—a perfect moment—a perfect swing. Katz achieves that moment when the wet-on-wet loaded brush stroke becomes permanent, as if every space and interval obeyed



Marsden Hartley (1877-1943) American, *Alspitz-Mittenwald Road* (1933-34), oil on paper board.



Alex Katz, (b. 1927) *Ada with Flowers* (1980), color serigraph.

an internal rhythm. The contrast between the moment, held precisely as if eternal, and the fleetingness of the moment, draws the viewer to Katz like a moth to flame, perhaps not understanding what draws him but delighted to be there. Salle sums up the experience produced by Katz's rapid, deft and assured brush strokes as, "Solidity out of movement, permanence of controlled spontaneity."

Our work is a color serigraph, and Salle notes the great benefit to an artist when his work is amenable to production as a print. In our world of glossy images and exquisitely arranged advertising layouts, we are encouraged to slow down and experience how the Katz is different, how it is more a captured moment, more meticulously spaced, more intangibly unique and grabbing. That very spacing which characterizes Katz's eye is enhanced by the silk screen process, in which a stencil blocks areas of the mesh (silk) from receiving ink, while various inks are applied to the areas of color.

Then the mesh containing the inked spaces creates the print on paper. This process further enhances Katz's spacing, making the colored areas unique around the white petals, exaggerating the edges and the contrasts.

Salle's chapter, "Baby's Giant Bean," examines the *how* of Anish Kapoor, the sculptor who crafted our *Turning the World Inside Out*. Certainly those of us who have toured the Kapoor with visitors have experienced first hand the tactile appeal of this sculpture. The curatorial staff have devoted hours daily to removing the hand-prints and hugs of admirers. It invites interaction of the kind even a baby can share.

At the same time it seems to carry universal meaning, our world turned inside out, openly enticing us to explore, yet playfully, gently, humanly. Though faced with a huge stainless steel sculpture, we are in no way daunted or put-off. How does Kapoor achieve this feat?

As we have come to expect, Salle leaps right into the experience of being present with the huge shiny object. "Even though it is metallic and hard, you want to cuddle it, or more exactly, to be cuddled by it, scooped up in its enormous arms—or ears, or tail, or whatever features it has—and be held, finally safe."

He notes the prominence of baby toys in current art—Jeff Koons' inflated animals inhabit the gallery as a constantly reinstalled playpen, which Salle finds confusing in a brutal world. In my experience, Kapoor's emotional content is of a different color from Koons'. His surface reflects our faces, surprisingly curving them. Where Koons feels assaultive, Kapoor feels benign. Where Koons is blatant—*Here it is, and it's all you get!*—Kapoor is inquisitive and inviting—*Can you shimmy up the curve and look inside?* Where Koons is in your face, Kapoor is at your back saying, "Look!"

And then there is the sheer audacity of taking all that bulky material through the elaborate process of casting it into a huge gleaming form. It sort of takes our breath away. How dare he do that? And I think this is the core experience Salle's approach provides—a primal recognition that something new has been created that didn't exist before. In allowing ourselves to be vulnerable to a work of art, letting it get inside our minds and bodies, we complete the creative act, and its newness happens afresh within us.

As I walk out of a museum, it's this feeling of having received a rare gift that always brings me back.



Anish Kapoor (b. 1954) Indian/British, *Turning the World Inside Out* (1995), cast stainless steel.

Seeing David Salle

David Salle was born in 1952 in Norman, Oklahoma, grew up in Wichita, Kansas, and attended Cal Arts in Valencia, California from 1973 to 1975 where he studied with L.A. conceptual artist John Baldessari. In 1976 he moved to New York City and began painting post-modernist canvases which kicked aside the minimalist/abstract style of earlier decades.

But enough of the *what*. Let's take a page from his book and look at a Salle's painting for the *how*. This work, from a series in the 80s and 90s called *Angels in the Rain* is jarring. We are instantly captured by the disparity between the images, the plaster angels leaning almost as if in a bar, casual, relaxed, seeming to enjoy one another's company and the red and yellow coated bears racing on motorcycles. The disjuncture is increased by the implied speed of the racing bears and the plaster serenity of the attending angels. Then there's the rain, big drops fall behind the angels, yet not on the racetrack. What's going on here?

It's almost like flipping the pages of a magazine, one page having nothing to do with the next. And there's the additional sense that this is a stage, or a staged performance. The rectangular space to the right seems to depict a curtain. I recognize the snarl of wire or sea grass in front of the curtain. This is a recurring Salle image, painted from his own photographs of debris washed up on the beach on Long Island. I am getting a little more comfortable as I recognize a feeling I often have of life moving too fast, images piling on images, flicking through channels on the TV.

My attention is drawn to the small objects on the track—a banana, a tomato, an apple, a conch shell, a fish, a candlestick. What is a de Chirico-style still life doing on a racetrack? Rendered with deep shadows they rest solidly on the ground as immovable as de Chirico spheres. Which brings me back to the plaster angels, which look remarkably like de Chirico angels. The images themselves are appealing. Can I let them just float, collage-like, and find their own relationships for me to discover? Isn't this the way I operate in my living moments? Am I witnessing a dramatic rendering of my media-soaked experiential world? Somehow that feels right, the sense that not only have I gotten David Salle, but that he had already gotten me.



David Salle, *Angels in the Rain* (1998), oil and acrylic on canvas.

THE LAST PAGE

Collectors and SBMA donors Zora and Les Charles made possible the catalogue for the Wiesner show. I interviewed Zora Charles in 2009. Click on the link below for the full read. *LM*

<http://docentssbma.org/wp-content/uploads/Exhibition-2017-01-29-Wiesner-InterviewWithZoraCharles.pdf>

“David Wiesner...oh, I would love to have a David Wiesner from his book *Tuesday*. Once anybody has won an award...it’s just like the movies. A Caldecott or Newbury award makes your book. Everybody’s going to buy it – schools, libraries. So the price goes up. And that’s why artists today are able to decide whether they’re going to keep their art, sell it, give it to an institution.”



David Wiesner, *Bugs*, 2009, watercolor on paper, 16 in. x 18 in.
Collection of Zora and Les Charles

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