

La Muse

Docent Dates

February 6

George Legrady, UCSB Professor on "Brilliant Spectrum"; Pattie Firestone paper

February 20

Melinda Gandara, SBCC professor on Contemporary rotation; Jeff Vitucci paper.

February 20

Lunchtime forum for touring HS students

March 6

Eik Kahn on Sculpture; Sara Bangser paper

March 20

TBD on Kehinde Wiley
Leslie Hay-Currie paper

April 3 No Meeting;

April 17

Dane Goodman and
Alison Saar on Sculpture

May 1

Julie Joyce /Chris Kallmayer on Contemporary rotation; Gretel Rothrock paper

May 15

Charlie Wylie;
Sarajum Quazi paper

May 17 Service

Recognition Ceremony



Kehinde Wiley, *Equestrian Portrait of Prince Tommaso of Savoy-Carignan* (detail), 2015. Oil on canvas. Image courtesy of the artist and Roberts Projects, Los Angeles.

Greetings Fellow Docents,

February, the month of love, is upon us! I thought this quote from Marcel Proust seemed appropriate for the season: "Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom" —even as our own flower gardens flourish from all the wonderful rain! The rain that caused no harm.

And, speaking of flourishing, our first New Active research paper presentation will be Wednesday, February 6, by Pattie Firestone on her piece, the stunning Chinese Crane Vase. Start looking forward to a New Active presentation most Wednesdays until the end of the 2018-19 service year. Our guest speaker at that February 6th meeting will be George Legrady, artist and UCSB professor whose series, "Authority in the News" is featured in the exhibition, *A Brilliant Spectrum*.

Finally, remember that our spring bus trip is Monday, March 4th (see the Vice President's report), but we WILL also have a meeting on March 6th. Our "spring break" is Wednesday, April 3, so there will be no meeting on that date.

So, for now and throughout the remaining touring year, I found a German proverb that could be directed to those who tour students, some with trepidation: *He who teaches children learns more than they do*. Whether second grade or tenth, keep that in mind and all will go smoothly! See you soon and warm regards until then.

Mary Ellen ■



Mary Ellen Hoffman,
President

From our Vice President



Hello Docents,

The spring bus trip to the Pasadena Museum of History is just around the corner, March 4th. The Exhibition, **Something Revealed; California Women Artists Emerge, 1860-1960**, explores a century of women artists and their artwork. The Museum describes the exhibition thusly:

“Historically marginalized? Relegated to “Sunday painters”?

Mary Joyce Winder

Encouraged to paint or sculpt children, still lifes, puppies, kittens, ducklings and a random landscape? *Something Revealed; California Women Artists Emerge, 1860-1960* stands to dispel the misconception that women were limited in their subject matter and demonstrate that women, especially here in California, have historically made their mark in a male dominated world. Even today, the role of men in the annals of art history frequently overshadows the artistic accomplishments made by women. The exhibition will show a long history of excellence in female-created art and prove that women could and did contribute to the evolution of style, technique, and exploration in the world of art.”



There are over 250 pieces in this exhibition. Both Curators, Marie St. Gaudens and Joseph Morsman, will tour half of our group for one hour, while the other half will have a docent tour of the Fenyes mansion. We will then switch groups. Every docent will experience both the exhibition and the mansion tours.

FENYES MANSION

“With its original furnishings and art collection, the Fenyes Mansion offers a unique glimpse into life on Pasadena’s Millionaire’s Row. Family heirlooms and a unique California plein air art collection enhance the Beaux Arts-style home of Dr. Adalbert and Eva Fenyes. Visitors can experience the Mansion by taking an hour-long docent-led tour, which also includes the Finnish Folk Art Museum. Designed by two premiere architects, the Fenyes Mansion has been designated as a Pasadena Cultural Heritage landmark and a Point of Historic Interest by the state of California.”



This is a special tour in that the museum is not open on Monday’s and the director is opening the museum up just for us. The curators are donating their time to us, as well as the docents that will tour us through the Fenyes mansion.

The Schedule of the day is as follows:

PASADENA MUSEUM OF HISTORY – SPRING BUS TRIP

Monday, March 4, 2019

7:30 AM-Depart Santa Barbara near the Visitor Center on the corner of Cabrillo Blvd. & Garden St. (Self-Pay Public Parking is available in the lot directly behind the Visitor Center)

Stop in Carpinteria and Ventura to pick up Docents

Arrive Pasadena Museum of History 10:00 ish

Tour Facility for approximately 2 hours

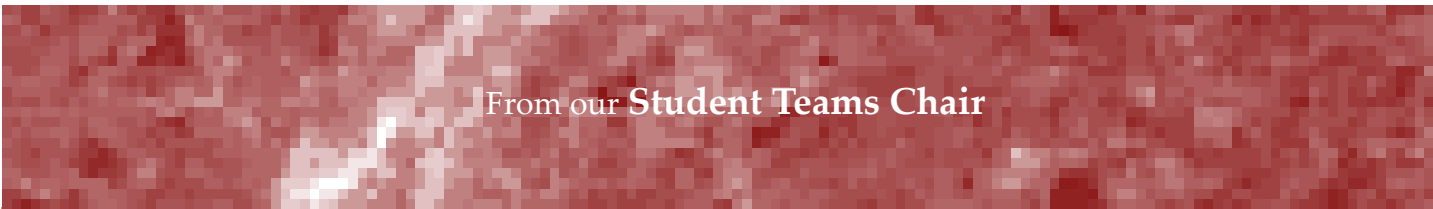
1:00 PM Bus Pick up to go to Old Town Pasadena for lunch.

Depart from Pasadena for Santa Barbara approximately 2:30 PM

Cost: \$67.00 – Check or Credit Card

If you are interested in attending, please sign up at our next council meeting February 6, 2019. We can accept both checks and credit cards for payment. Or, if you prefer, you can contact me via email to re-serve your seat. I can also take payment over the phone (805) 452-9063. Please feel free to invite a guest. See you on the Bus,

MJ Winder ■



From our Student Teams Chair



Karen Brill

In January we had a steady stream of young visitors to the museum. Seven tours were given for a total of 196 students. There were five third grade tours, one fifth grade tour, and one high school tour for tenth graders.

I've been having a wonderful time touring kids and want to share a few comments they've made to me. After looking at the Hans Hoffman *Simplex Munditis*, a fifth grade student commented, "I would have walked right by that painting and look how much there was to see!" An observation that melted my docent heart! Gazing at the Grandma Moses painting in *Let it Snow*, a third grader said, "I could have painted that, but I really like it!" Always a treat to see things from their



Hans Hoffman, *Simplex Munditis*, Oil on canvas

point of view.

Save the date: on **February 20th**, we will host a forum on touring high school students in LAC (Luria). We'll take a 15 minute break after the docent council meeting that day, and then get started. Feel free to bring a brown bag lunch if you like. Definitely bring your thoughts and questions to share. If this proves useful, we may do this periodically as a way to keep our skills tuned- post graduate training if you will!



Anna Mary Robertson (Grandma Moses), *Bringing in the Yule Log*, 1949, oil on panel

Karen ■

From our Adult Teams Chair



Irene Stone

We have seen a steady increase in the number of visitors and special request tours as the *Let It Snow!* exhibition was augmented with the *Paths of Gold* opening on November 16. The average number of visitors per tour was 4.8 in October, 6.5 in November and 5.6 in December., our last numbers available.

Special request tours were three in October, with an average of 5.3 visitors per tour; in November there were four special requests, averaging 19 per tour; and December had eight (divided groups) to average 14.1 per tour, a strong showing of public interest. We hope this momentum continues with the new exhibition—*A Brilliant Spectrum*—now opened.

TEAM NEEDED: It has been confirmed that there will be a Contemporary Art exhibition this spring, scheduled to open in Preston Morton on May 23 and running through summer. The show will be an installation by artist and curator Chris Kallmyer, whose work focuses on sound and space. Our contemporary curator, Julie Joyce, along with artist, will speak at our May 1 lecture. But we need to assemble a touring team as soon as possible. So please respond to me if you are interested as of now. It will be a stimulating exhibition.

Happy touring and viewing!

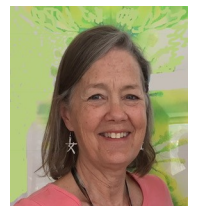
Irene ■



Jean Luc Mylayne, *Untitled*, 1995. Chromogenic print. SBMA, Gift of Timothy A. Eaton. From *A Brilliant Spectrum: Recent Gifts of Color Photography*.



“The aphorism “Docents always exit a museum through the gift shop” has added meaning with the work of artist and New Active Docent Pattie Firestone’s earrings available in our own SBMA gift shop.



From our Community Speakers Program



Team Leaders Kathryn Padgett and Shirley Waxman

CSP continues to grow, reaching more and more community organizations. In January, we gave seven presentations to audiences totaling 225 people. There has been enthusiastic response to our talks, and wonderful feedback. If you would like to attend one of the CSP presentations, please contact me for dates and topics.

Team member Gretchen Simpson has created an interesting and dynamic presentation on American art. It is a three- part presentation.

Here is a sneak peek into her rich and enlightening talk:

Artistic Visions of a Growing America: From Wilderness to Warhol Part I

A living artist views his surroundings with an eye that is both immediate and thoughtful. The result on his canvas can be a historical record which is informative as well as provocative. At times, however, a painting is also disturbing and cautionary. The art of this remarkable era reveals all the growing pains of a society rushing into its future.

We begin 1826 with an introduction to the Hudson River school artists, such as Thomas Cole and Albert Bierstadt, whose vast landscapes inspire a sense of awe and reverence. For the first time, many Americans were becoming aware of the land they have “inherited” and were sensing the moral imperative implied as they step into these magnificent virgin territories painted by the artists of the period.

The dawn of the Gilded Age in 1870 brings great wealth to a small group of entrepreneurs. Many artists flourished as they painted to the tastes of this rising upper class. John Singer Sargent filled this new demand for portraits, with occasional controversial results. By 1900 the strain of such extravagant lifestyles and the demands of the industrial development intensified class divisions and artists, including Mary Cassatt, Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins, responded by breaking conventional boundaries of perception. In many ways, artists were there once again to paint the social struggles, scratch the underbelly of ostentation and raise uncomfortable questions.



*Madame X, 1884
John Singer Sargent*

From Gretchen’s new CSP talk.

If you would like to have an electronic copy of the CSP brochure, feel free to contact me at communityspeakerssbma@gmail.com. It is delightful to see the diverse topics offered by our team members.

Shirley ■

Sustaining Docent Isabel Downs as the Featured Local Artist
at the Wildling Museum of Art and Nature in Solvang,
January through March 2019



***Nature through the
eye of a needle***

Isabel Downs Fiber Artist

January 9 - March 30

Wildling Museum of Art & Nature
1511-B Mission Drive
Solvang, CA 93463

ifdowns@gmail.com isabelsquirts.virb.com

Isabel and her marine biologist husband Bob Warner will present a joint artist's talk on Sunday February 10 at 3 pm at the museum. Make it a day in the country – wildflowers on Figueroa Mountain, lunch in Solvang, and a visit to the museum February 10 or any day that works for you, January through March. The Wildling director strongly suggests reservations for the artist's talk [on Sunday Feb. 10](https://wildlingmuseum.org/news/artist-talk-nature-through-the-eye-of-a-needle-a-shared-adventure). There is a charge of \$5/member \$10/nonmember, <https://wildlingmuseum.org/news/artist-talk-nature-through-the-eye-of-a-needle-a-shared-adventure>

Art Review: Sally Mann's Haunted South

By Vicki Goldberg, *New York Times*, March 29, 2018

Sally Mann, born in a hospital that had once been Stonewall Jackson's home, has lived in Virginia most of her life and always proclaimed her Southern-ness in her photographs. She says that what makes her work Southern is her obsession with place, family, the past, her love of Southern light, and her willingness to experiment with levels of romance beyond what most late-20th-century artists could tolerate. Add to that romanticism the influence of Southern writers and you get a tinge of gothic. A streak of expressionism also comes into the mix, powered by the will to express feelings strongly and the capacity to make those visible.

All of that Southern-ness, all those obsessions, and all her strengths are on view in a deftly chosen and admirably displayed exhibition covering most of her 40-plus-year career: "Sally Mann: A Thousand Crossings," at the National Gallery of Art [**now at the Getty Center**]. There, 108 images and an excellent catalog provide a provocative tour through the photographer's accomplishments. It is also a record of exploration — into the past, into the country's history and photography's, stamped with a powerful vision. The exhibition focuses first on Ms. Mann's preoccupation with family relations when her children were young and she adroitly registered the endemic conflicts and convolutions in the process of growing up. From there she set out to discover the Virginia land she lived on and nearby Southern states.

The work grows visibly more profound in content — in some instances anguished — as it makes a foray into Southern history. At length she returns to her children, ever more liable to time's assaults, to her own close brush with death in a riding accident, and to the sad progress of her husband's late-onset muscular dystrophy. If the delicate progress along life's journey is most evident in children, Ms. Mann took a larger path into racial history, and memories of the past that linger in current consciousness.



"Blackwater 9," from 2008-2012. Ms. Mann conjures nature's menace at a swamp where escaped slaves took temporary refuge in this tintype, a homage to 19th-century photos and techniques. Sally Mann



"Jessie Bites," 1985. Jessie Mann, angry in war paint, still clings to her mother's bitten arm. Credit Sally Mann /Metropolitan Museum of Art

Her work was never solely about surface, but as it went on it went deeper and faced darkness ever more daringly. The exhibition convincingly illustrates her exceptional sensibility, dauntless exploration of techniques, consummate skill as a printer, and willingness to tackle the complexities of life and death. (Her rare tendency to overdo her romantic expressionism also raises its head.) Not everything equals her best, but her best brims with passion.

Ms. Mann burst into the national consciousness with her fourth book, "Immediate Family," in 1992 — for all the wrong reasons. (It was reissued in 2015.) At a time when the country was virtually hysterical about child abuse and about nudity of any sort (remember the Mapplethorpe trial?), her pictures of her three young children who were sometimes nude on their isolated



Emmett Floating at Camp," from 1991. Emmett Mann looking helpless for a moment. Credit Sally Mann, MET

farmland created a child-porn/bad-mother uproar, though the photos were about the children's interplay with one another and their parents during a hot summer by the river. Many photographers understood, and were influenced.

The show has few nude images but emphasizes such complicated matters as the fleeting duration of innocence, the childhood vacillation between dependence and independence, and the recurrent fears of danger that haunt parenthood. "Jessie Bites" foregrounds the child's anger as well as her need of the maternal support provided by an unenthusiastic adult arm with bite marks. "Emmett Floating at Camp," an unpublished image from 1991 of her child floating in a great gray nowhere, turns out to be uncannily prescient and devastatingly sad, for Emmett ultimately became schizophrenic and committed suicide in 2016.

As the children grew, Ms. Mann next went in search of the South itself, propelled by the idea that the landscape's "profligate beauty" set the scene for the odd mix of defeat, defiance and graciousness that marks the region's character. In a section called "The Land," she uses antique lenses, encouraging the kind of mistakes that would have horrified earlier photographers.

The land lies dazzled under the Southern light or slumbers in humidity, the sky is a damaged dome cut off by vignetting (black shading across corners), or it may be a cosmos of its own. She sees light as the great lover lavishing caresses on the land, or the great obliterator that overwhelms the earth's solidity, or the great designer reconfiguring common notions about what should hold our attention.

And she considers the land's sumptuous beauty deceptive, for she is certain that death lingers underfoot, the deaths of slaves who tilled and built the land. "I have had a fascination with death that I think might be considered genetic," she has said, adding, "My father had the same affliction, I guess." Her family's house was full of images of the way various cultures portrayed death, and perhaps by osmosis, she became obsessed by the subject from childhood on. As she wrote: "Death is the sculptor of the ravishing landscape, the terrible mother, the damp creator of life, by whom we are one day devoured."



"Hephaestus," from 2008. Sally Mann's poignant image of her husband, Larry, symbolizes both his illness and his skill as a blacksmith. Sally Mann

This preoccupation coincides with her belated realization that racism infected the entire South, even those who considered themselves virtuously opposed to it, something that suddenly struck her when she went north to boarding school. As a child she was already troubled by the brutal murder of Emmett Till, a black teenager from Chicago who was kidnapped, mutilated and killed in Mississippi in 1955; she later named her first-born after him.

But she had not questioned why Virginia Carter, her beloved black nanny known as Gee-Gee, had to eat in the car when traveling with the family. Once fully aware, she went looking for markers of Till's death. Neither her photograph of the bridge where he was allegedly thrown into the water nor the unprepossessing bit of shore where his body was retrieved looks like a witness to murder, despite a thin white streak like a teardrop near the bridge. Photographs are mute objects, and many only speak when spoken to. Once titled, these two



Sally Mann's "Jessie #25," from 2004. An extreme close-up of the photographer's daughter, now grown up — an intimation of mortality. Sally Mann/Stephen G. Stein Employee Benefit Trust

photographs call up a hideous history, remind us of the land's indifference, and roil the mind.

She ventured farther, into Civil War battlefields. A gallery is filled with very large, immensely dark pictures: an angry, oppressive, demanding display. Using collodion negatives, a 19th-century medium, and antique lenses, she coaxed chance and accidents into her prints, reinforcing the sense of history and mimicking the random effects of war. Several powerful images of Antietam, site of the bloodiest day in American history, are virtually as dark as death itself. In one, half of a pitch-black sun looms on the horizon while a second sun, fuller but less distinct, ominously gathers force in the sky. In another, a curtain of heaving black cloud, laced with what might be lightning, descends. In these images the blind force of slaughter mingles with mourning.



Deep South, Untitled (Fontainebleau),” from 1998. The Louisiana landscape, ancient, luxurious, defined by light. Credit Sally Mann



“Deep South, Untitled (#9),” 1998. The ruins of the Civil War-era Windsor mansion, graced by a heart-shaped leaf in the center. Credit Sally Mann

A group of photographs of the Great Dismal Swamp, where escaped slaves sought refuge on the way north and many died, are also strong and harrowing. They were created as tintypes, a period technique, and relatively small. The foliage, atmosphere and reflections are as clotted and impenetrable as emblems of evil. I'd have liked to see them larger, for they are fierce vistas without redemption, the landscape of hell masquerading as art.

Ms. Mann also made serious, melancholy portraits of black men, taken in an attempt to remedy the unsettled feelings she has about her early blithe ignorance of racism and to find out who the black men were that she never really saw back then.

She has asked more than once if the land has a memory. Well, no. We endow it with one when we memorialize it in cemeteries, monuments, roadside markers, national battlefield parks. But

history moves on; grass grows over it.

Personal intimations of mortality fill the exhibition's last room: greatly enlarged faces of her three grown children, so close up none has hair, all hard to identify one from the other. One has closed eyes, one seems to be in the process of disappearing. We have come full circle and ended in the same place: her children, the inexorability of time, and the parental fear that harm should come to them — as indeed it did later with Emmett's death.

And there are respectful, caring pictures, part of a series on the ravages of disease on her husband's body — a thin arm, a no longer muscular torso. Under the title “Hephaestus,” for the deformed god of metalworking, an intricate cascade of what might be liquid metal slashes across the torso of this man who is both a lawyer and a blacksmith. These pictures are testimony to a marriage that has obviously been one of trust and love, as well as a vivid indication of how Ms. Mann has turned her fears into art.

At the end there is a short color video of Ms. Mann with a brief survey of the rolling green land where she has lived much of her life. My eyes and mind were so drenched in black landscapes that the full



“Deep South, Untitled (Scarred Tree),” 1998. Ms. Mann has said that the land has a memory. This tree's scar recalls a botched attempt to cut it down.

visual spectrum momentarily stunned me and I thought there was something wrong. Photography has many ways to change the way we see.

There is a kind of heroism in staring straight at the vexed meanings of landscape, the complexities of family, memory and life itself, as well as the face of death and the carnage of history. There may be nothing heroic about an obsession with death, but when it produces high-caliber art the issue is effectively closed. After all, death is obsessed with us, and it will have the last word. ■

Editor's Note: The Sally Mann exhibition is at the Getty Center in Brentwood until February 10, 2019. My husband Larry and I saw it last month. It's well worth the drive.

*Error: In the November 2018 issue, I failed to give photo credit to Manuel Alvarez-Bravo for his image *Angel del Temblor (Angel of the Earthquake)*, 1957*



And now it's ours!

Marion Kavanaugh Wachtel, *Eucalyptus Trees*, no date. SBMA, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. E. Avery McCarthy



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