

# La Muse

## Docent Dates

Lectures 10 am  
Coffee 9:15

### November 6

Melinda Gandara on  
the *Alfredo Ramos  
Martinez* show.

### December 4

Charlie Wiley or cura-  
torial assistant on  
Miyajima exhibit

### December 9

Holiday Party 5-7  
Andrea Gallo's Home

### January 15, 2020

Rachel Heidenry on  
Latin American rota-  
tion; see spring issue  
of SBM newsletter for  
recent acquisitions.

*Docent Council meet-  
ings will be published as  
dates become available.*



Alfredo Ramos Martínez, *Vendedoras de Flores* (Flower Vendors, detail), 1947. Serigraph / Serigrafía. SBMA. From *Alfredo Ramos Martínez: On Paper* October 27, 2019 — February 9, 2020

Hello Fellow Docents,

November is my favorite month for many reasons—the natural environment in Santa Barbara offers us the crisp clean air, the cool temperatures, and the orangey sky sunsets; families and friends gather together to express gratitude for each other and all the wonderful things in life.

During this time of year, it feels as if we docents have regrouped, become one, and operate as a Council. The social hour before our meetings is alive with energetic conversations. What pleasure there is in watching the provisional class getting to know other docents. As we share great food with each other and see friends greeting friends we grow closer collectively as a group. When we enter the theatre the magic begins. Our guest speakers entice our imagination with tantalizing stories about artists and art. Their descriptions carry us away as they dive deeper into the beauty of the artwork presented. It is wonderful that we have presentations that rekindle this hungry curiosity within us about art. Our own desire for knowledge reawakens the craving within to understand the essence, the soul, of the art.

This quote illustrates this for me. *"At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us."*

*Albert Schweitzer*



Mary Joyce Winder  
Docent Council President

Envision within our little theatre all the minds that are being sparked and enriched by these guest lecture presentations. These lectures often clarify why the artist and artwork are significant. Subsequently, we docents translate the presenter's insights and bridge them with our own research to create inspiring stories to share with our visitors.

In this issue you will find short biographies of our new provisionals, as well as a scholarly article on Alfredo Ramos Martinez by Ricki Morse, very useful reading for our just-opened show. In honor of Thanksgiving, I am sending sincere appreciation to all of the dedicated docents at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Thank you for keeping this oral story-telling tradition alive.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Sincerely,

Mary Joyce Winder ■

## From our Vice President



Patty Santiago

Once again wildfire has disrupted our lives. Fortunately, the Getty fire spared the museum. However, it has closed, and as of this writing, does not know when it will reopen. I will work on rescheduling our bus trip as soon as the museum reopens.

Last week I attended the wonderful National Docent Symposium in Washington, D.C. A main focus of many sessions was how museums are adapting and evolving in our changing world. Kaywin Feldman, Director of the National Gallery of Art, was particularly insightful and inspiring. Here are a few of her main points:

1. From majority to minority: demographics of the population are changing, how do we adapt?
2. From educating to learning: how do we fuel curiosity - create, share, explore?
3. From information to content: rather than dispersing information, how do we engage visitors in content?
4. From fences to open fields: younger people are "cultural omnivores" (the Glenstone museum was an example of that. See below). How do we address that?
5. From consumption to experiences: passive vs. active, for example, sketching in the galleries.

These issues have been and continue to be addressed by our Ed Dept as well, with VTS and other interactive styles of touring. I will be summarizing my symposium experience for the docent board and Ed Dept so we can explore any new ideas as our Docent Council flexes with the times.

During the symposium I spent a morning at the Krieger Museum, which is the former home of the founders and showcased their extensive private collection, from 19<sup>th</sup> century French Impressionism to Abstract Expressionism. The house itself was an architectural highlight, designed by Phillip Johnson in the 1960s. In the afternoon we ventured to Potomac, MD to the Glenstone Museum. Situated on 200 beautiful acres, this museum pushes the boundaries of the traditional approach to a contemporary art museum, incorporating its natural setting with art.

As Vice President of the Docent Council, attending this symposium was a privilege I wish all docents could experience. But, of course, the best part was meeting other docents from all over the country, hearing what they're doing, and learning from each other.

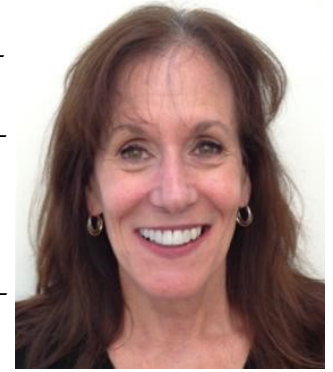
Patty ■

## From our Student Teams Co-chairs



Irene Stone

We are touring our first students now with more scheduled for November. We will be sharing the *Dia de los Muertos* exhibitions on these early tours, both the altars prepared by students from elementary to high school and the creative art projects prepared at several elementary schools under the guidance of our teaching artists. The enthusiasm and high energy at the museum for these activities is a tribute to the entire Education Department. On the day of celebration it was delightful to see the many families enjoying the music, making art projects outside, appreciating the student art on display, and viewing our museum exhibitions. It was a grand day.



Teda Pilcher

We are happy to welcome such a large and accomplished provisional class this year. Their recent study focus has been on student touring, including VTS presentations and other interactive touring techniques, followed by the real-life application of theory by shadowing student touring docents. We hope that you will continue to be welcoming and supportive of our new provisionals' requests to observe your tours..

With our depleted ranks of student touring docents, we ask you if there are volunteers able to join the teams – or to be available on call as angels to support the teams. Please contact Teda ([tedapilcher@yahoo.com](mailto:tedapilcher@yahoo.com)) and Irene ([famstone5@gmail.com](mailto:famstone5@gmail.com)). Thank you for your consideration of this request. And keep in mind – by this time next year, our student touring teams should have plenty of new docents.

Irene and Teda ■

## From our Adult Teams Co-chairs



Christine Holland

Adult Teams had good touring numbers in September, with docents giving 33 tours for 204 visitors—an average of 6.2 visitors per tour. Attendance was especially good for the *Contemporary* team, which finished up in September, and the new *Salt and Silver* team. The Community Speakers Program docents reached out to our neighbors with a long slate of topics for a total of 9 talks given to 185 attendees in September (see CSP Report for October numbers). As always, thank you to all docents for filling out the Red Book information after your tours.



Vikki Duncan

Changes to Adult Teams for the current service year are still pending, but we are excited that objects are being selected for two contemporary shows. We will be sending out checklists to everyone very soon, seeking your involvement in creating new teams to tour these exhibits. The Docent Council Board and Adult Team Chairs will be responding to updated information and keeping you all advised with extreme gratitude for your enthusiasm, flexibility and excellent touring skills.

Vikki and Christine ■

## From our Provisional Co-chairs



Ralph Wilson

Dear Colleagues,

The provisional class is well underway, and they were given their first major assignments this week—the infamous Art Vocabulary Quiz (for November 13) and the Research Paper, for which they selected their art objects. Research Chair Sarajum Quazi was instrumental in providing images and data for 40 works from the permanent collection from which the provisionals made their selections. Thanks, Sarajum!

Thanks also go to Mary Ellen Hoffman for taking the class on an outstanding Docent's Choice tour. Many in the class com-

mented on her thoroughness (“do we need to know so much detail?”) and her transitions (“she tied everything together seamlessly”).

Additional thanks go to Patsy Hicks for two sessions working with VTS and Thinking Routines. She elicited curious and excited participation from all the class.

If you are a mentor, please contact your mentee to offer advice and assistance, particularly for the vocabulary quiz and the research paper. Your encouragement is always welcome.

Now, meet the class of 2020.



Patty Santiago

Ralph and Patty ■



**Mary Ellen Alden.** I relocated to SB with my husband in 2019 following retirement after 40 years in Minneapolis, MN. A graduate of the University of Minnesota Law School, I briefly practiced corporate litigation before leaving to raise my two children and volunteer in the Minneapolis arts community. For 15 years, I served as a docent at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. I returned to legal practice as an immigration attorney, representing asylum seekers from Ethiopia, Togo, Liberia, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Honduras, Myanmar, Philippines, and Mexico through the Immigrant Law Center of MN, Advocates for Human Rights, and Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid. I'm thrilled to be part of the provisional class, and look forward to joining the SBMA community, brushing up on my art history and tour techniques after a 7-year hiatus.

**Mentor:** Mary Ellen Hoffman



**Cindy Anderson** I am a former HS French teacher and now share my love of French culture by writing middle grade mysteries set in French-speaking countries. A native of Chicago, I have lived in California for eight years, SB for two. I hold a B.A. in both Elementary and Secondary Education, as well as an M.A. in French Language and Literature. During my 30-year career, I enjoyed broadening students' knowledge by taking them to art museums, musicals, studying opera, and eating in French restaurants. I look forward to continuing that broadening experience as a docent. I have three children—a daughter, son-in-law, and grandson in Chicago; another daughter in Chicago; and a son at Hamilton College in Clinton, NY. I enjoy the theater, concerts, movies, restaurants, traveling, working in our vineyard with my husband, and relaxing with our Portuguese Water Dog, Remi.

**Mentor:** Christine Holland



**Andrew Baker I** was born in Santa Maria and have always considered the Central Coast home even though I have lived all over the U.S and around the world. After completing a degree in journalism, I attended Peter Kump's New York Cooking School and then combined those two paths as a food writer for Sunset Magazine and freelancer for various publications. I am especially interested in Japanese cuisine. In addition to writing, I have experience in education with a degree in teaching English as a second language, something I have done at the University of Minnesota, Bakersfield College, UCSB, and in Spain, China, and Mexico. Lately, my creative interests have centered on the arts. I have a degree in Theology, Imagination and the Arts from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, and a postgraduate certificate in Socially Engaged Practice in Museum Studies from the University of Leicester. I am a member of the Santa Barbara Printmakers and enjoy spending time with my two Scottish terriers, Hamish and Hardy.

Mentor: Laura DePaoli



**Gisela Balents** I grew up in a small town in the northern Black Forest with a 17th century castle dating back to 800 A.D., which fired up my imagination. My parents had reproductions of Albert Durer's, "Hare", and a country landscape by Peter Bruegel hanging in their living room as well as a Rubens portrait of a young girl. I loved looking at them. My sister and I would visit my grandmother during the summer in Stuttgart, where she always took us to the Stuttgarter Staatsgalerie. These were the beginnings of my interest in art. I studied languages in Germany and came to the U.S. as a translator and executive secretary. New York City museums and art galleries were my favorite weekend haunts. Married for 50 years, my husband I have lived in many different areas of the U.S., the longest in Rochester, NY where I was a docent at the Rochester Museum of Art for five years. We also joined Osher@RIT where I gave some talks on artists and my husband gave talks on climate change before anyone believed in it. After my husband passed away three years ago, I moved to SB to live near my son and his family. Since then I have been taking painting lessons, which I enjoy. I am excited about becoming a docent!

Mentor: Rosemarie Gebhart



**Tommie Rae Barnett** I was born in Knoxville, TN and spent early years and summers on my grandfather's farm. I moved Northern CA in junior high, relocated to So Cal and graduated from UCLA in economics, then immediately entered into sales for Burroughs Computers. Employed for 44 years in tech sales and management for international and US telecommunications providers, I had ample opportunity to visit art museums in the U.S., Asia, and Europe while traveling on business and pleasure. Santa Barbara became home in 2006 when I joined my son and daughter so I could enjoy my growing clan of grandchildren in their early years. I look forward to serving my community as a docent at SBMA.

Mentor: Gail Stichler



**Amelia Carleton** Born in the Bay Area, I studied the classics at Tufts University and promptly headed for Italy where I apprenticed with a master gilder. And so began my love affair with frames. Three years later I returned to California and worked for a cast stone outfit in Oakland before a three-year stint in Sydney Australia, gilding for a framing atelier. I now have a family and it's been my joy to experience art with my three children. For several years I ran the Art-at-Lunch program at Montecito Union Elementary School. There is nothing better than piling a bunch of enticing materials on a table and seeing what children create. While I'm still focused on water gilding, I am equally as interested in the process as the product, and the changes that happen while on that path.

**Mentor:** Kim Smith



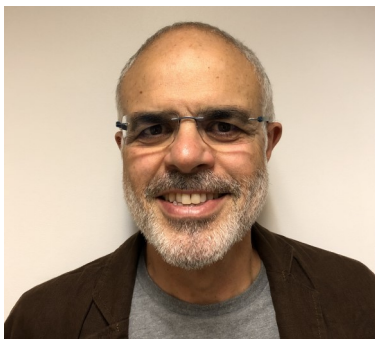
**Kim Carr-Howard** I am a former teacher who just moved to SB after living in Europe five years. There, I discovered a passion for the visual arts. I have two kids in college, and we had the amazing opportunity to visit some of the most famous and profound pieces of art across Europe. I began to dig deeply into the language and history of visual art through a London Art Salon, and found that with some guidance and time, one can see more deeply and understand more about the past, other cultures, or even ourselves. I now hope to learn how to hold people's attention on gallery tours so that they too can be moved by art.

**Mentor:** Wendi Hunter



**Martha Castaneda** I have lived in SB for over 40 years and having traveled the world, I am proud to say there is no other place like our beautiful city. I have three positive activities in my life that keep me busy, happy and satisfied. My family is Number One—an excellent husband and two wonderful daughters. Number Two—my travels. My husband and I have traveled the world for the past 50 years and LOVE exploring new places. Photography is Number Three, a medium that allows me to express my art through images of people, places and events. Life is Good.

**Mentor:** Denise Klassen



**Marcos Christodoulou** I grew up in Cyprus. As a lifelong student, I have been, among other things, an architect, dry cleaner, soldier, lifeguard, corporate executive, U.N. liaison officer, teacher, carpenter, and dishwasher. Formal education includes a Bachelor of Architecture degree from the New Jersey Institute of Technology, an MBA in International Business from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, an MA in International Studies from the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania, and an MFA from UCSB.

As an artist, my paintings have often dealt with the past and its burden, with tyranny, mystery, comedy, life, and mortality. I try to correct things. My sources of inspiration are myths, classic Hollywood cinema, art history, and images snatched from social media.

**Mentor:** Andrea Gallo



**Robert Coronado** Originally from Sacramento, CA, I am a retired attorney, having worked for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, D.C. and as a Foreign Service officer at U.S. embassies in Santo Domingo and Mexico City. I have served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ecuador, where I was able to visit the unforgettable Galapagos Islands. Recently I have taken art history classes at SBCC to fulfill my life-long interest in art and have participated in art history study-abroad programs in Rome, Florence, and Paris. I currently volunteer at Santa Barbara's Sea Center Aquarium and at the Presidio State Historic Park, both of which I greatly enjoy. I am a member of the Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy, the Gaviota Coast Conservancy, as well as the Latino Law Society and the Pacific Pride Foundation. I look forward to completing the Museum's excellent docent training program and serving as a docent.

**Mentor:** Irene Stone



**Anne-Marie Dunaway** After studying Anthropology and Art History at UCSB, I followed other pursuits, including raising my two children. After experiencing the debris flow following the Thomas Fire, I found myself returning to my love of art to help me process and heal. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to learn more about our permanent collection and as a docent share this art with our community.

**Mentor:** Linda Adams



**April Glover** Many in my family, including my two daughters, are artists involved in some capacity with writing, publishing, painting, and music. I am a professional photographer but mostly use the images as inspiration for paintings—favorites are landscapes and florals. As a child I was inspired by both my grandmother, a very fine portrait artist from the Netherlands, and Georgia O'Keeffe. I am a "Life Coach" and work with clients individually but also offer workshops that approach different subjects through art. Art often provides a way in which to connect with my clients that can be both fun and rewarding.

**Mentor:** Pattie Firestone



**Merle L. Guadagnini** I was born and raised in Philadelphia and moved with my family to SB at 16. My husband of 48 years, Eustacchio, and I have raised two wonderful sons, Silvio and Christopher. Sadly, Christopher passed away at 35 on May 22, 2017 after a long illness. While he was ill, I needed to stop working at the Montecito Library, but was able to volunteer with Heather Brodhead at the SBMA library for eight years until it closed. Currently, I volunteer at ASAP (cat shelter) and Hearts Therapeutic. I love reading all genres, especially fiction, historical fiction, biography, art and gardening. Other interests are travel, hand crafts and iconography. I look forward to learning more about art and becoming an SBMA docent.

**Mentor:** Barbara Boyd



**Linda Hedgpeeth** I am a Southern California native and grew up in Whittier. After finishing my education I moved to New Mexico and worked in the personnel department at the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory. It was also the perfect place to get my private pilot's license, play golf and tennis. Moving to SB in 1970, volunteer work became my vocation. Being part of the education programs of the SB Symphony was a wonderful journey that led me to introducing elementary school children to classical music. I was a member and past -President of the Symphony League and later joined the Symphony Board as Chair of Education as well as serving as two terms as Board President. I am also a past-President the State Street Ballet Board and a served as board member and Secretary of the University Club of SB. I have traveled extensively in Europe, became a certified scuba diver in Bali, and did bike trips in Spain, France, Italy and China. Volunteering at Hearts Therapeutic Equestrian Center led me to a life-long passion of owning a horse—my registered quarter horse, "Skip". We have enjoyed horse camping trips, won ribbons in shows and participated in the Fiesta Parade.

**Mentor:** Ralph Wilson



**Kathe Hines** Over the years I have realized some important ingredients for a meaningful life—the joy of learning gives never-ending pleasure; solving problems strengthens mental capabilities; self expression is a fundamental human need. After retiring from 37 years teaching in our public schools I can dedicate my time to these aspects of happiness. I study art with several local artists, and particularly love the surprise and spontaneity of watercolor. Figure drawing opens up a new way of seeing the beauty of the human body. And now I have the opportunity to study art with the docent program. I am eager to share art with others.

**Mentor:** Patty Santiago



**Pat Jones** My love affair with art began during my college years at Duke, though aptitude in math redirected me and I became a CPA. I grew up in South Carolina and Orlando, married and lived in Atlanta, Wisconsin and SB. My travels in the US, Europe and Asia have always included museums. Leadership of local non-profit and national professional accounting organizations as well as teaching fund accounting at UCSB for six years have been other interests. On a personal level, I am retired, married with two sons, one a "rocket scientist" with a design on Mars, and five grandchildren, two girls playing college sports and two athletic youngsters.

**Mentor:** Joan Dewhirst





**Daniel Linz** I have lived in SB for 35 years. Both my son, a city planner in L.A., and my daughter, a student at the School of the Art institute of Chicago were born here. Since 1987 I have been a Professor of Communication at UCSB with a specialization in communication law and psychology. My interest in art began with informal tutelage from my grandmother and continues today with classes at the Life Long Learning Programs at SBCC.

I have been a patron and member of SBMA for three decades, fascinated with the history and the permanent collection. As a practicing artist I believe the Docent Program is a way to communicate my passion with visitors

and I look forward to serving my community in our newly renovated space.

**Mentor:** Kathryn Padgett



**Susan Northridge Lowe** I am a longtime SB resident, attending UCSB with a major in Art and an emphasis on painting. After graduating, I traveled to Asia, visiting Bali, Hong Kong, Bangkok, and Tokyo before going on to Europe, living in Greece for two years. I had the good fortune to be there at a time when many artists, musicians and film makers were also there. I returned to SB and in a complete 360 started working in Real Estate Escrow, eventually specializing in commercial real estate. Married for 35 years to my husband Greg, we have a lovely 24 year old daughter, Claire, who works in San Francisco as a Social Media Strategist (whatever that is).

Now retired, I am circling back to my interests in art—painting, taking classes, and traveling. I am so delighted to begin the journey in the provisional training to become a docent at SBMA.

**Mentor:** Karen Howsam



**Hepzibah Michaels.** Hepzibah in Hebrew means “my delight is in her.” I am interested in narrative and the process through which a story is told. Seeing a correlation between inspiration and drive, expression, I believe, is primarily based on the mind of the artist and the materials at hand. My interest lies in the philosophy of art. I believe the evolution of the arts has been motivated by mankind's instinctual drive to say something about something. Through my own life story of being adopted at birth and reconnection with my biological roots, I came to know peace by accepting the circumstances that catapulted me into being, and attribute my uniqueness as the qualities that give texture and weave meaning into the essence of what is known as the art of life.

**Mentor:** Vikki Duncan



**Kajsa Philippa Niehusen** I grew up in Northern Germany in a city close to Hamburg. At the University of Berlin, I earned my Bachelor's degree in American Studies and Art History as well as a Master's in Cultural Journalism. In addition, I spent a few semesters in Nottingham, UK, and at UC Santa Barbara. After completing my degrees, I returned to SB in 2015 to continue my graduate education with a focus on the exhibition and reception of Third Reich films in the U.S., especially in German-America communities. At this point I am working on my dissertation and certification as a Teaching Assistant. Becoming a docent at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art is an exciting opportunity. As a docent I can both expand my knowledge of art and teaching styles, as well as become more involved with my community.

**Mentor:** Sara Bangser



**Sabine Nocker** I am from Berlin, Germany, lived in Vancouver, BC, Canada and have been in SB for most of my life where I raised five children and am currently enjoying 13 grandchildren. Visiting art museums has been always high on my list of pleasurable activities. It has been my wish for a long time to learn more about the artists and about the workings of a museum, especially now, since the SBMA is undergoing exciting changes. I look forward to sharing these changes with local members of our community and visitors from afar who share a passion for the arts.

**Mentor:** Susan Northrop



**Barbara Ross** I am a new resident of SB, having moved in 2019 from Northern Virginia. I have also lived in Denmark, Israel, Australia, Japan, Panama, and England. Five years ago, I retired as an elementary school teacher after 32 years working in the U.S. and overseas. I started out as a classroom teacher, but later served as a specialist in the Gifted and Talented Education program. My husband Joel and I chose SB as our "forever home" for the small-town feeling, the natural beauty, and opportunities to explore new restaurants, museums, and lovely neighborhoods. We have two children—both artists: Hannah in San Francisco, and Adam in San Diego, so we have conveniently situated ourselves between them. Becoming a docent is my dream chance to learn more about art and at the same time, act as a facilitator to share and discuss art with others.

**Mentor:** Jean Smith

---

## From our Community Speakers Program



Team Leaders Kathryn Padgett and Shirley Waxman

In October our CSP team gave 14 presentations to 355 people. Here are the CSP public talks for November:

### **SB Central Library**

*Alfredo Ramos Martinez: On Paper*

Shirley Waxman

40 East Anapamu, SB

Saturday, November 14 at 5:15 pm

### **Ojai Library**

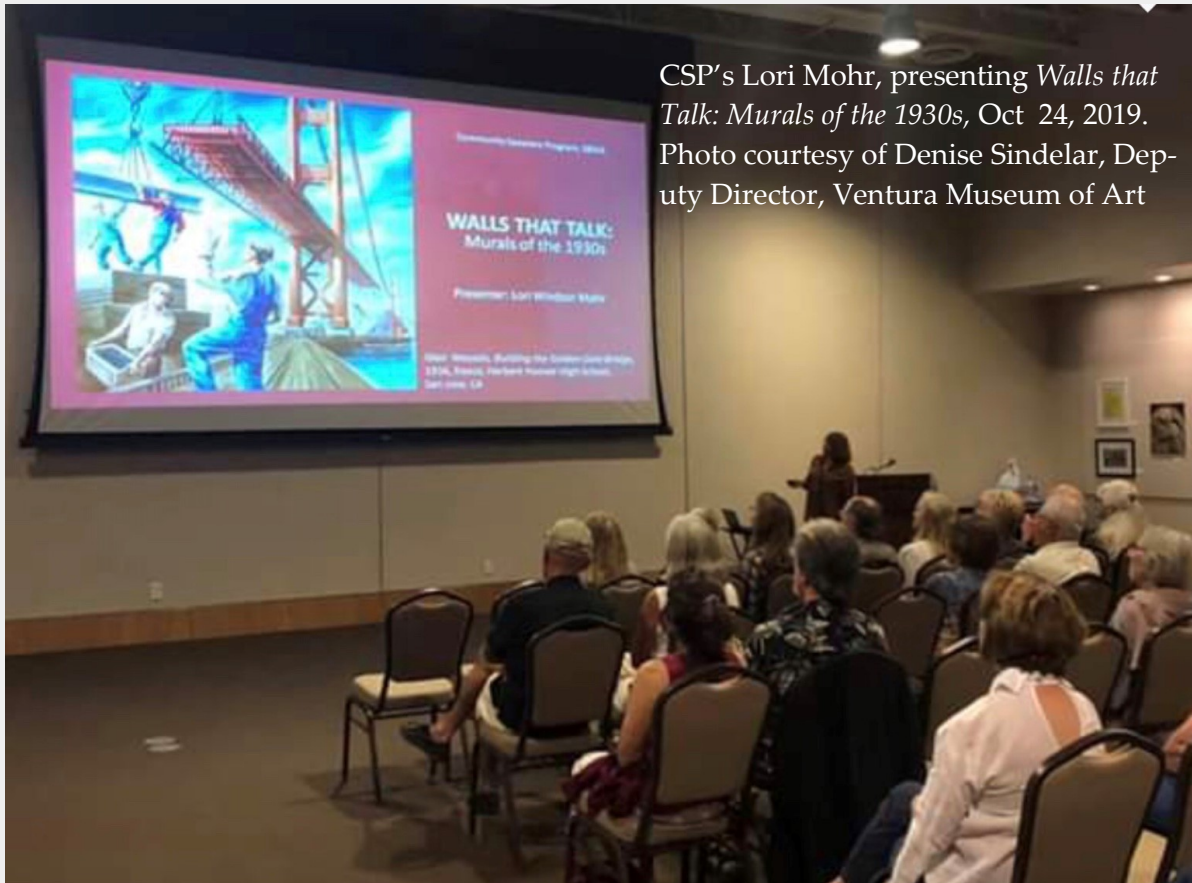
*Uptown, Downtown: American Art for a New Century*

Lori Mohr

111 East Ojai Ave, Ojai

Saturday, November 23 at 1 pm

To request an e-brochure describing our CSP talks, email us at: [communityspeakerssb@gmail.com](mailto:communityspeakerssb@gmail.com)



CSP's Lori Mohr, presenting *Walls that Talk: Murals of the 1930s*, Oct 24, 2019. Photo courtesy of Denise Sindelar, Deputy Director, Ventura Museum of Art

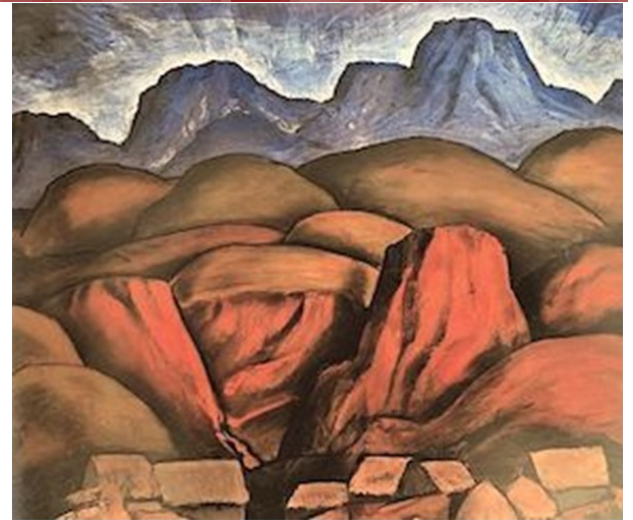
# The Aesthetic Evolution of Alfredo Ramos Martinez

By Ricki Morse



I came across this Alfredo Ramos Martinez landscape which was startling and revealing, releasing me from views of him as a Mexican nationalist and revealing him as a modernist painter schooled in expressionism. *Mexican Landscape*, 1935, reminds me of modern North American artists

who express their world views through interpretations of landscape, particularly Marsden Hartley's muscular mountains and Georgia O'Keeffe's sensuous flowers. Here the mountains emerge from cut stones below the thrusting and rolling hills, ranging from browns through reds into the blue of the high range, back lit by the rising sun. The high range echoes shapes of the hills from which they sprang, adding a further dimension. The emphasis emerges as a visceral sense of the scene, not realistic detail but a shared experience of the artist viewing the mountains.



*Mexican Landscape*, 1935, gouache and Conté crayon

The more I look, the more I recognize. The organic shapes—simple rounded and comforting hills—have the innate strength of the Indian woman painting a bowl (below) or carrying flowers (p 15). What the landscape adds is a history, an evolution. The figures are not specific individuals but shapes with wider meaning. As Martinez sets his figures in nature, he equates their life force as being at one with the earth, the flowers and palm leaves. The single figures are not solitary or isolated, but participants in the continuum of generations and tribes. These are revolutionary paintings, not in the Marxist style of the great Mexican muralists who saw their art as an idealistic economic upheaval, but arising from the indigenous people—descendants of the Maya, the Zapotec, the Mixtec and the Aztec, whose lands, governments and religions had been



*Uruapan Painter*, 1930, oil on board.

usurped by the Spanish. The goal of the Mexican revolution in 1910 was to return the land to the people and establish a democratic government. As we move through the exhibition we will see how Martinez expressed his revolutionary thought and how it evolved during his life into a mythologized view of man.

Our two 1930's paintings of indigenous Mexicans express Martinez's seemingly simplistic view. *The Uruapan Painter* kneels on the ground, intent on painting the bowl in her lap, paint mixed on pieces of paper beside her, completed work stacked in the



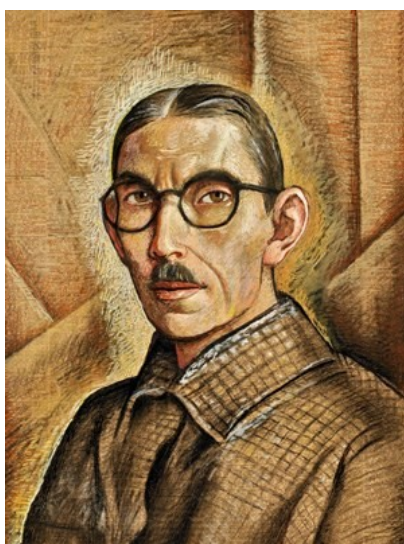
*The Lover*, 1930, watercolor and gouache on paper

banana trees. Yet she captures us with her rapt attention, her votive-like presence reminding us of ancient Mayan sculptures. Her concentration gives importance to her work, carrying on the tradition of ancestors. In her simplicity, she is all artisans and artists, conferring meaning into the present for others. *The Lovers*, again, seems simple, the boy and girl not individualized in a scene as old as art itself. He is the protector, she is devoted, and with that the comparison to other lovers breaks down. They are in despair, clinging to one another, disenfranchised, impoverished children. In both pictures the figures are surrounded by the renewal of lush vegetation as Martinez injects the strength of the tribe, its connection to nature.

On our touring team trip to the Santa Barbara Cemetery, we see his ardent appeal graphically depicted in chapel murals. High in the dome a mass of Indians raises their hands in supplication and suffering. The sup-



*Dome, SB Chapel, 1934, mural*  
I experience it as Martinez offering a very private prayer for his own people in a chapel otherwise devoted to California worshippers, a powerful expression of his dedication to the cause of the Mexican indigenous peoples.



*Self Portrait, 1937, tempera on newsprint*

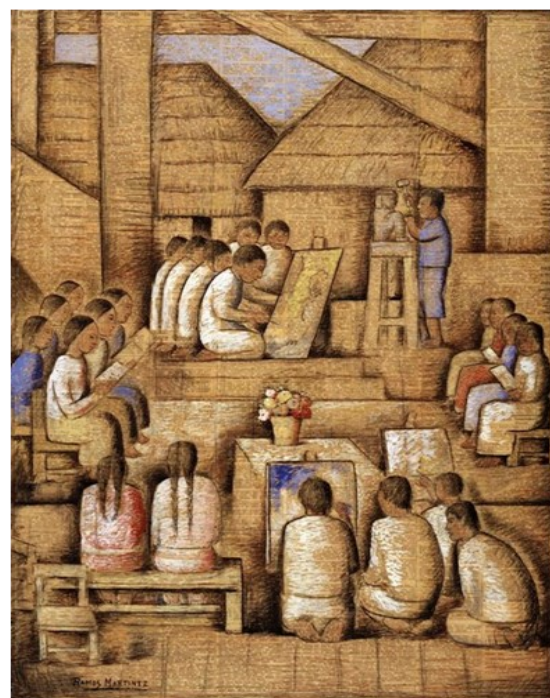
pliants cannot be seen by the congregation, facing only the Christ figure above the altar.

### His Life

Born in Monterey, Mexico in 1871, Martinez's early artistic talent was clear. At 14 he won a national competition and was invited to attend the Academy Nationale de Bellas Artes. The family moved to Mexico

City, where he studied until age 22, becoming prominent in the Academy world and developing new concepts of art education which he called Open Air. Soon a teacher at the Academy, Martinez encouraged students to paint out in nature and explore their own individual imaginations rather than copy works as a means of teaching art.

At 28, he was commissioned to design a menu for an elegant dinner given by President Porfirio Diaz for a visiting dignitary, Phoebe Hearst, the mother of William Randolph Hearst. Taken by his menu design, she asked to meet the artist and offered him a monthly stipend to study in Paris. Already fluent in French, Martinez spent the next nine years in Europe, captivated by French Baroque painting and feeling a kinship with the French Impressionist *plein air* movement. His most influential new friend was Ruben Dario, a Nicaraguan poet, the father of *Modernismo* in Spain who introduced him to his circle in Paris—Monet, Rodin, Matisse and Picasso, initiating Martinez into an artistic sophistication he never would have acquired at home.



*The School, gouache, charcoal, and watercolor*

## The Return to Mexico, then to Los Angeles and Mexico City

By 1906 Martinez was selling paintings, and won the gold medal at Salon d'Automne, an award which led Phoebe Hearst to consider him "launched" and terminate his study stipend. Life as an artist and student became difficult to maintain. Returning to Mexico to take over the recently opened Free Academy, he rejected traditional teaching and established Open Air Schools. He brought French pastels to the classrooms, employed Rufino Tamayo as an instructor, and welcomed a nineteen-year-old aspiring artist, David Alfaro Siqueiros, whose political escape from Mexico to L.A. he later facilitated.

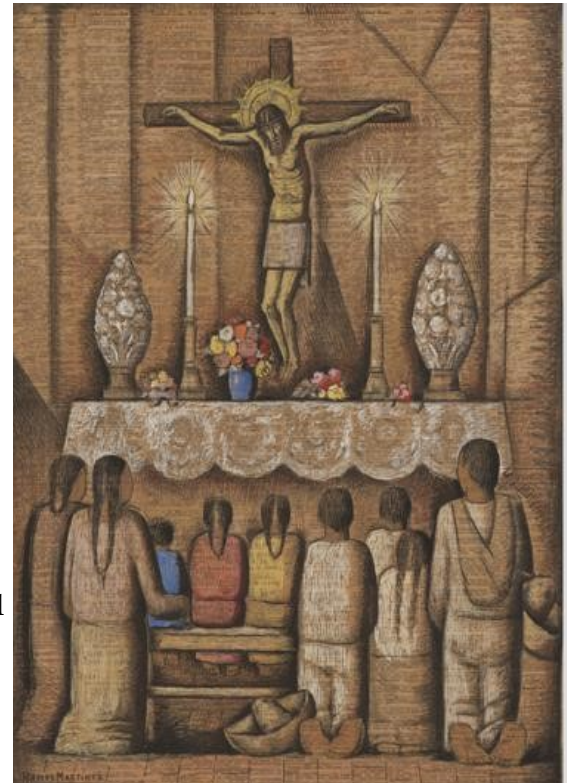


*Flower Vendor, Scripps College Mural*

His painting, *The School*, depicts a traditional art classroom, capturing much about what he wanted to change about making art. The students are seated neatly in rows, those in the back copying a sculpture, while the center front one copies a flower arrangement while another seems to be producing an image from nature and his imagination. Martinez soon became a teacher at the Academy, encouraging students to paint out in nature rather than in the studio and explore their imaginations. Painted on newsprint, the painting captures the present moment in the large world while drawing us into the small world of the school room, providing a more momentous context.

In 1928 Martinez married, with the birth of their daughter, Maria, taking his life in new directions. Diagnosed with a bone disorder and finding no adequate treatment in Mexico, they turned to the Mayo Clinic in the U.S. The recommendation for a warm climate led them to Los Angeles. A shift appears in his work as the suffering of his wife and daughter lead him to prayer and a renewed reverence, which becomes more prominent in his paintings and murals.

His painting, *The School*, depicts a



*Indigenous Prayer, 1937, gouache, watercolor, and charcoal on newsprint*

## Santa Barbara Chapel wall murals





*Maria at Fifteen, 1943, charcoal and pastel on board*

tions in that rhythm even more noticeable in the Santa Barbara chapel . Two graceful figures become dancers in a choreographed ritual.

In 1942, Maria healthier, the Martinez family move back to Mexico City, the artists at the peak of his powers. Commissioned to paint murals in government buildings, he continues to expand on columns of women bearing flowers—regal and serene. Our *Women with Flowers* from the last year of his life, 1946, feels much



*Indigenous Mexicans, 1942, tempera on newsprint*

## The Los Angeles Murals

Not only does Martinez choose more religious subjects, but a more pervasive philosophical shift takes place. His women attain a dignity not seen before. The identification of figures with nature, particularly flowers, continues, but now there is an added sense of ritual, the figures participants in an age old rite. There is a new grace and almost classical beauty emerging in his work. Removed from the toiling, disenfranchised indigenous Mexicans, the figures now seem connected to the mythologies of the western world.

Ruben Dario, Martinez’s mentor in Europe and the father of *Modernismo*, defined the movement as “A freedom of imagination, a recapitulation of mythological worlds of sprites, shepherdesses, and cyclical and magic rituals that lead to a world of female power, the world of the goddess and the siren.”

In the process of painting murals in buildings, Martinez’s figures take on an architectural geometry—strongly-vertical, rhythmic figures, making devia-



*Women with Flowers, 1946, tempera and Conte’ crayon on newsprint*

like the murals, while he continued to paint the indigenous Indian,

but with a shift toward abstraction, which we have seen earlier in paintings such as *Self Portrait* with planes and angles. However, the abstraction now pervades the whole picture and we are caught up in the rhythmic vibe of the iconic abstract patterns.

One of the great joys of this small exhibition is our participation in Ramos Martinez’s growth as an artist, seeing his early depictions of simple people grow into images of a mythologized human, meaningful beyond place and time. We rejoice in the elegant, regal women moving across the walls of the Santa Barbara chapel, at once architectural and flowing, celebrating the surge of life across the ages. ■



*Editor’s Note:* Ricki Morse is a senior docent of 30 years, an expert in Latin American art, and a Docent Council research specialist for special exhibitions.



Editor [Loriwindsormohr@gmail.com](mailto:Loriwindsormohr@gmail.com)