

# La Muse

## Docent Meetings

**ALL MEETINGS  
CANCELLED UN-  
TIL APRIL 30TH**

**April 1**

**No meeting**

**April 15**

**No meeting**

**May 6**

Bruce Robertson,  
*Small Format American  
Painting show*

**May 20**

Eik Kahng, *Van Gogh*

**May 29**

Graduation and  
Service Recognition  
Ceremony

**SAVE THE DATE**

NYC April 27-May 1



“As I look at the 2008 exhibition catalogue on my coffee table from *Portrayal/Betrayal*, I realize I’m probably looking at the current *Nouveau Riche*.”

~Tracey Miller

*FB post used with permission*

Dearest Friends,

Welcome to Weekly La Muse. Lori Mohr has graciously agreed to publish a weekly mini-La Muse while we are at home on lock down. The goal is to keep us connected as a council and as friends during this frightful time. But we will need your submissions to make this a success! Please send photographs of you on lock down. We also want short write ups of books you are reading, shows you are watching, games you are playing, and art you are making. And we are interested to hear what you are grateful for and if you have any personal news to share. For example, new grandchildren announcements would be most appreciated!

I am grateful to have Hannah home from Scotland and Tom home from Australia. I am also grateful for the three Queens--Boudica, Isabella, and Hatchepsut (posing with me) now that eggs are rationed, and for my garden which is not only keeping us in greens but will also temporarily be used to help feed injured and



Molara Vadnais, Docent Council President

baby animals at the Wildlife Care Network.

Although this is the most precarious era I have faced in my lifetime, I am heartened by the resilience of those whom I have been blessed to know, including some of you, who have lived through depression, war, and inhuman atrocity. I think many books and movies are written about horrible times because it is in the horror when we can most clearly see the good in humanity.

Please send your submissions to me at [moloravadnais@gmail.com](mailto:moloravadnais@gmail.com) and I will compile and send to Lori for publication. Please stay healthy, happy, and inside.

This too shall pass.

Molora

## What Pepys's plague diaries can teach us about coronavirus

By Gavin Mortimer, from *The Spectator*, 6 March 2020

*Submitted by Ann Hammond*



I've been writing a diary for 26 years and 2020 is shaping up to be a vintage one. I thought 2019 would be hard to beat, what with Brexit, Greta and Labour's implosion, but this year I've been feeling like Samuel Pepys as the 21st century answer to the bubonic plague sweeps the world.

The virus first came to my attention on January 24, when I mentioned in passing 'the spread in China of something called "coronavirus".' But it wasn't until February 9 that I informed my diary that the arrival in Britain of Storm Clara has 'given the media something else to panic about other than coronavirus. Seven people now infected in the UK and 800 deaths in China.'

At 32, Pepys was younger than me when the plague ravaged London in 1665, which may have been a factor in saving him from becoming one of the estimated 100,000 fatalities (around 20 per cent of London's population) of the disease, which was transmitted by fleas that lived on rats. Once infected, the chances of surviving the plague were terrifyingly slim; most people, as Daniel Defoe recorded 'were immediately overwhelmed with it, and it came to violent fevers, vomitings, insufferable headaches, pains in the back, and so up to ravings and ragings with those pains.'

Of more significance, however, was that Pepys was not poor and didn't live in the squalor that passed for housing where the plague flourished. In terms of lethality coronavirus bears no comparison with the more deadly bubonic plague, but re-reading Pepys' diary it is fascinating to see the parallels between 1665 and 2020. The first handful of recorded Plague deaths in London were in March but of more interest to Pepys that spring was England's fight with her European neighbours (specifically, in this instance, the Dutch) for control of the seas and trade routes. Pepys mentioned the plague in a line at the end of April and then on May 24 wrote: 'To the coffee-house, where all

the news is of the Dutch being gone out, and the plague growing upon us in this town; and some of the remedies against it: some saying one thing and some another.'

Despite the continued presence of the plague, Pepys remained unconcerned, dining out most evenings and, as he noted on 1 June, trying on his new camelott (camel or goat hair) suit, 'the best that ever I wore in my life'.

Six days later Pepys saw for himself for the first time the effects of the plague while strolling through Drury Lane, writing in his diary that evening 'two or three houses marked with a red cross upon the doors, and "Lord have mercy upon us!" writ there; which was a sad sight to me'. The melancholy was gone within a day as news reached London of victory over the Dutch in an engagement off Lowestoft. Pepys' heart 'was full of joy' at the news.

Pepys continued his 'business as normal' approach, even in August, when the Bills of Mortality were recording more than 6,000 burials each week (a figure that rose to 8,000 the following month). In fact Pepys worked so hard, he complained to his diary on 9 August, that he went to bed early because he was 'disturbed with over-much business today'.

While Pepys chronicled the contagion, many of his peers sought the safety of the countryside. 'Those who could, including most doctors, lawyers and merchants, fled the city,' records the National Archives. 'Charles II and his courtiers left in July for Hampton Court and then Oxford. Parliament was postponed and had to sit in October.'

Theatres and courts were closed, all sport shut down and trade with other cities at home and abroad was suspended. The Council of Scotland closed its border with England and, according to the Museum of London, 'people's lives and businesses suffered terribly because so many were shut in their homes [and] many were forced to beg or steal food and money because the plague had such a bad effect on trade.' 'Lord!' wrote Pepys on August 16. 'How sad a sight it is to see the streets so empty of people.'

But again the dejection was brief. The next day Pepys went boating on the Thames with four friends, dropping anchor near Gravesend, 'to supper mighty merry'. The ability to carry on regardless was a defining characteristic of Pepys, according to his biographer, Claire Tomalin. Physical pain of some sort or another had been his constant companion since childhood, imbuing in him a stoicism and a determination to make the most of life. 'You see it again, later, in his elated response to the plague year, when,' wrote Tomalin, 'with death all around, he grabbed at whatever there was to enjoy'.

Samuel Pepys was an administrator for the navy of England and member of Parliament who is most famous for the diary he kept for a decade. Pepys had no military experience, but he rose to be the Chief Secretary to the Admiralty under both King Charles II and King James II through patronage, hard work, and his talent for administration. His reforms at the Admiralty were important in the early professionalism of the Royal Navy.



# San Antonio Museum

By Amanda McIntyre, Sustaining Docent



My travel to visit new great-grandchildren in San Antonio, Texas, was a joyous and exhausting adventure. A nice surprise was the chance to visit the San Antonio Museum of Art, which has, as it turns out, (from their website), the most comprehensive ancient Greek, Roman, and Egyptian art collection in the southern U.S.!



The building, located on the San Antonio River, was originally the Lone Star Brewery from 1884 when purchased by Adolphus Busch— of Anhauser Busch— and made into the first large mechanized brewery in the state. After Prohibition, the thriving brewery declined and the building eventually was converted into a museum, opening to the public in 1981. The old brewery footprint is large and allows for many galleries, and huge doors with plenty of room for transporting art. And the crenallated parapets made it look like a castle!

My time was somewhat limited so we scooted through most of the galleries. (The Nelson Rockefeller Center for Latin American Folk Art was closed for renovation). The lead exhibit was *Texas Women: A New History of Abstract Art*, the first major survey to focus on women from the 20th and 21st centuries working in abstraction— painting, sculpture, collage, installation. It was satisfying to see a show not only of women artists, but women with huge abstract canvases!

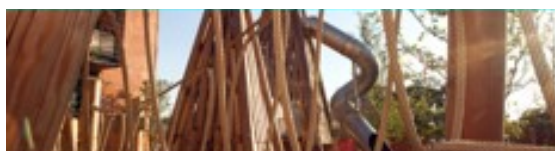


Liz Ward ( b. 1959), *Ghosts of the Old Mississippi: Dismal Swamp/Northern Lights*, 2015, Watercolor, gesso, silverpoint, pastel, and collage on paper, 72 x 32 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Moody Gallery,

tion— painting, sculpture, collage, installation. It was satisfying to see a show not only of women artists, but women with huge abstract canvases!

Along the way I also spied a fine Richard Diebenkorn from his “Ocean Park” series. Another unique display was a wall of sculptural pieces crafted from a variety of weapons and other armaments —clever idea but fearsome to one’s eye.

The other unique museum we visited was the DoSeum (pronounced Do-see-em). Fairly new, it has myriad hands-on and interactive displays (which explains the “Do”), many centering around nature and the surrounding landscape. Outside a few water areas led upward to a nest to crawl up and into, and at the bottom an area only small children could enter— only fairies lived in the small dwellings made out of sticks and twigs with crinkly gold highlights— my favorite!

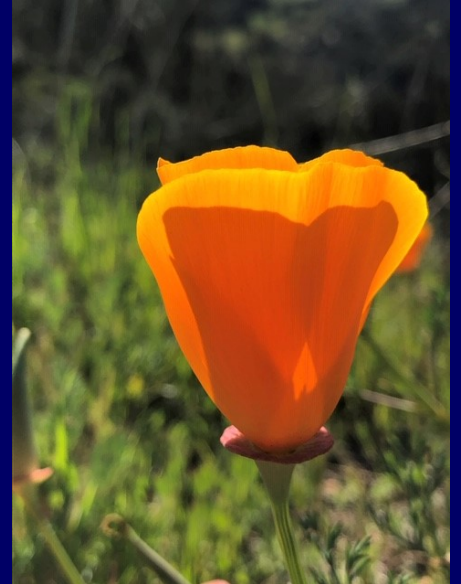


Sara Cardona (American, born Mexico, 1971), *Circular Thinking*, 2019, Digital print on, aluminum dibond, 72 x 51 1/2 in. Courtesy the artist



Dorothy Hood, American 1919-2000  
*Flying in Outer Space*, 1974, Oil in Canvas

## THE LAST PAGE



Spring in the time of Coronavirus., brought to us by Doug McElwain

Alone, at last. At the Louvre  
Museum, Paris.



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