

# La Muse

## Docent Meetings

### Graduation & Service Recognition Sept 25th

*Image:* David Hockney, the British/Angelino artist created a series of works this year on his Ipad, using the app "Brushes." It celebrates our healing and rejuvenating relationship with nature, and he invites other artists to join him in this joyful depiction titled "Hope In Spring."

*Submitted by Ricki*



Dearest Friends,

It has been a wonderful delight to serve as your acting president this last couple of months. I want to thank MJ for having faith in me. Her courage and passion are an inspiration and I look forward to meeting her in Ludington Court next year so that we can discourse at length on the spiffed up and cosmetic surgery-ed Hermes. I would also like to thank the members of the board for maintaining a sense of humor, camaraderie, and commitment as we navigated together through MJ's departure and the great plague of 2020. I am grateful to Patsy, Michelle, and Rachel for diligently working with us to keep the Council cohesive and moving forward. I would also like to thank Lori Mohr for willingly taking on the constant demand of publishing a weekly *La Muse*. From my perspective, and your emails, it seems as if *La Muse* has been the glue that has held us together as friends and colleagues.

Finally, I would like to thank each of you not only for your tangible cards and emails of support which were wonderful, but mostly for your friendship and love.

Sincerely,  
Molora



Molora Vadnais, Docent  
Council President

## From our Vice President



Patty Santiago

As this tumultuous 2019-2020 year for the Docent Council comes to an end, I would like to acknowledge Molora Vadnais, our acting president. With Mary Joyce's temporary leave, and very little notice, Molora stepped in and took on that role earlier this year. In what could have been a disruptive transition, she brought stability to the Docent Council Board and with her knowledge of the process and prior experience as president moved us forward in a positive direction. Her leadership skills were invaluable in guiding us through our many challenges in this unprecedented time. Her hard work and attention to detail served us well. I think that I speak for every docent: active, sustainer, and provisional in saying that we are very grateful for all that you have done for the Council this year. Thank you! *Patty*

## From our Adult Teams Chairs



Vikki Duncan

As this service year draws to a close, we want to thank all Docents for your fabulous flexibility and good nature. During a year of changes and cancellations, you were true ambassadors for the Museum. From last July until mid-March when our Museum closed for quarantine, you connected with 2,188 visitors on 330 Adult tours (an average of 6.6 visitors/tour), and the Community Speakers Program gave 82 presentations reaching 1,744 individuals.



Christine Holland

Adult touring docents offered far more than this to the public. No call for a Special Request Tour went unanswered (among others, for New Members Evenings, Member Mornings, the Newcomers Club, and the Montecito Rotary Club). And other groups requested tours, from Buellton to Bakersfield. In some cases, smaller teams expanded, taking on new members as touring need arose. Nearly a third of team members touring adults expressed willingness to take on the role of team leader. You were generous with your time, in particular when we needed new teams for "American Paintings," and "In the Meanwhile." Adult Teams outreach also benefited art lovers, as The Community Speakers Program gave presentations to our Provisional class, modeling a *Highlights* tour during gallery closures, and surveying areas of our Permanent Collection that will return to view in greatly-expanded exhibit space.

As the Museum draws to a close on its visionary remodeling project, and our interrupted service year ends, we still can reflect on the discoveries and rewards Adult Touring has afforded Docents this year with new artists, new works, and old works not seen or shared the same way before. Our return to the Museum may reflect that same mix, with both familiarity and changes unforeseen before the pandemic. Not only will the old building look different, but perhaps our touring protocols as well. One thing is certain: Adult touring will continue to offer a range of opportunities and discoveries for both Docents and visitors.

## From our Student Teams Co-chairs



Irene Stone

As we look back on this 2019-2020 student touring year, we would like to express our appreciation to all the student touring docents who rose to each challenge and did so with careful planning, good teamwork, and a positive collegial attitude, ably lead by team leaders Jeff Vitucci, Pma Tregenza, Denise Klassen, and Wendi Hunter. With unexpected gallery closures that gave us limited touring options, all worked together to make the experience meaningful for the students.



Teda Pilcher

We also want to express our appreciation to Patsy and the entire Education Department, including teaching artists, for their creative planning for our best outreach activities. We always know that we share a common goal of providing the best experiences to the community. As we look forward to the next touring year with so many unknowns, we can be sure that the Education Department, working with the Docent Board, will be considering how Docents can be most effective in outreach with students. We look forward to the museum's reopening and our sharing with the students the wide selection of art work that will be on display.

For now, our best wishes to all for a safe and mindful summer.

*Teda and Irene*

## From our Evaluations Chair



Joan Dewhirst

Dear Docents,

First, in spite of gallery closures for sprinkler work followed by the Covid-19 pandemic closure of the Museum, our team of evaluators managed to complete a total of 30 evaluations for 2019-2020 (everyone passed).

I continue to be very proud of our Peer Evaluation system. It is an important collegial process designed to strengthen our performance and each others so that we can offer our visitors the best possible Museum experience.

I have been honored to serve as Chair these past two years. My successor, Shirley Waxman, brings a wealth of experience with over two decades, both touring and as a member of the board in various capacities. She will be a very worthy addition to the new board as an officer who knows the organization's history and has experienced the entire scope of our Council.

This next year promises to launch many new beginnings...a fresh start for us all. Whether masked, gloved, socially distant, or some combination of all three, we will be together once again!

*Joan*

## From our Secretary



David Reichert

Dear Docents,

I am happy to say that Diane and I are both still healthy. During lockdown I've learned a little more French. I'm almost to the end of "Undaunted Courage." I've revived old pleasures such as crossword puzzles and my stamp collection after seven years of not touching it. I've done the shelter-in-place thing and look forward to getting out again, happy that Santa Barbara is starting to reopen. Last night we actually went out to dinner for the first time since mid-March. Hopefully the world will continue to emerge at a pace deemed reasonably safe (there's no perfect safety

right now).

On May 13 the board met via Zoom. Like so many others, I've had to learn Zoom on the fly while in quarantine. In a way, taking the minutes was easier than in-person. I entered notes directly on the computer rather than in a notebook to transcribe later. On the other hand, unless one's WiFi is flawless, Zoom can get very frustrating!

I am rotating off the board—it has been an interesting way to serve the Council. I hope for some decent approximation of a service year ahead. I miss the Museum, touring, and seeing all of you!

Warm wishes,

David

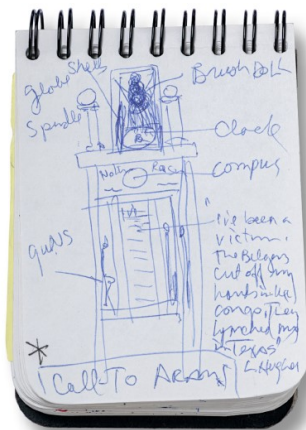
## LACMA

### Call and Response

A Note from Gail Stichler



I had planned on seeing this exhibition. Plan B will have to do. *From the LACMA website. Until we gather again, we're bringing the music to you. Sense the call and response in Betye Saar's work. We welcome your thoughts and feedback at [publicinfo@lacma.org](mailto:publicinfo@lacma.org).*



## Watch: Betye Saar: Call and Response Exhibition Walkthrough

This short film, narrated by curator Carol S. Eliel, explores several of the works in *Betye Saar: Call and Response* and the relationship between found objects, drawings in small sketchbooks—which the artist has kept throughout her career—and finished works.

From our Membership Chair, Pattie Firestone

## Service Pin Recipients 2020

### 10 Year Pin



Above:  
Susan Billig  
Vikki Duncan  
Andrea Gallo  
Rosemarie Gebhart



Left:  
Gail Stichler  
Molora Vadnais

### 15 Year Pin

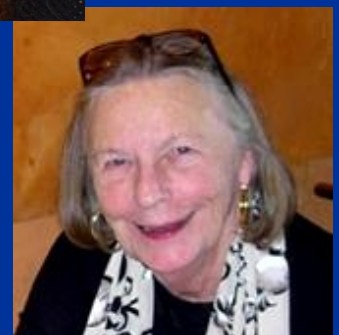


Christine Holland  
Laura DePaoli  
Loree Gold

### 20 Year Pin

### 30 Year Pin

Ricki Morse



## Padmapani, the Lotus-Bearer

By Susan Tai

Written for *SBMA Friends of Asian Art*, reproduced in *La Muse* courtesy of Susan Tai



Susan Tai, Curator, Asian Art

Dear Friends,

This week we send you an object in SBMA's Asian Art collection that is one of Susan's favorites for both its great beauty and its historical importance. It also happens to be the earliest Buddhist sculpture in SBMA's collection, and was included in Osvald Sirén's groundbreaking 1929 publication *Early Chinese Sculpture*. As Padmapani, the Lotus Bearer, later evolved to become Guanyin, the great Bodhisattva of Compassion, this image is particularly appropriate for a moment in which we all could benefit from exercising compassion for ourselves and our fellow human beings. We hope you enjoy it.

With warmest wishes,

Susan Tai, Elizabeth Atkins Curator of Asian Art

Holly Chen, Curatorial Assistant, Asian Art

Allyson Healey, Curatorial Support Group Coordinator

This beautiful stone sculpture, with downcast eyes and a gentle smile, represents Padmapani, the Lotus Bearer, identified by the lotus bud he holds in his left hand. He is one of the earliest types of Buddhist figures introduced from India to China and is the earliest Buddhist sculpture in SBMA's collection.

By the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, Buddhism and Buddhist image-making flourished for the first time in China under the state patronage of the Toba Wei rulers in the north. Padmapani, like other Buddhist figures, emerged from earlier Indian heroic-looking votive models to figures with more Chinese features and gentler demeanors, attesting to the brilliant role artists played in molding once-foreign visions of Buddhist imagery to appeal to Chinese devotees.

Standing Bodhisattva Padmapani, the Lotus-Bearer,  
Northern-Eastern Wei about 500 CE

Limestone, wooden lotus pedestal is a 20th century addition. H 35 1/4".

Published: Osvald Sirén, *Early Chinese Sculpture*, vol. II: pls. 106 a-b,

(London: Ernest Benn, 1929-1930)

Gift of Wright Ludington . 1968.33.1



Padmapani here is fully clothed in a robe and wearing a cape-shawl which loops around his body. His garments and ornaments, including his cylindrical, trifoil crown, were influenced by the prevailing Confucian dress of the Wei court. This sculpture was originally part of a larger assemblage of Buddhist figures in a cave temple. He greets the viewer from above with his right hand stretched out in a “no-fear” gesture (*abhaya mudra*). The lotus bud he holds serves as a metaphor for enlightenment, as it blossoms amid murky waters. SBMA’s Padmapani is somewhat squat with a disproportionately large head. These odd proportions may be a purposeful choice on the part of Wei artisans to visually compensate for the sculpture's placement on high, rocky cliffs. Such adjustments to normalize proportions from different vantage points may be seen on other Wei sculptures now removed from their original cave temples.



Holly Chen, Curatorial Asst., Asian Art

Padmapani was also one of the earliest forms in which Guanyin, or Avalokitesvara in Sanskrit, the great Bodhisattva of Compassion, appeared in China. Of the myriad of bodhisattvas, all of them bound to the enlightenment path with the vow of liberating all sentient beings before entering Buddhahood, Guanyin emerged over the centuries as China's most beloved deity who protects and grants wishes to anyone who calls upon him. ■

## David Hockney's Ipad Images of Springtime in Quarantine

By Isla Phillips, Daily Art Magazine April 7, 2020

David Hockney is in lock-down in Normandy and spends most days in the garden, drawing the spring awakening on his iPad. In a series of letters written to the BBC correspondent he shares how he feels his images can be a respite from quarantine. *“I went on drawing the winter trees that eventually burst into blossom. This is the stage we are in right now. Meanwhile the virus is going mad, and many people said my drawings were a great respite from what was going on.”*



# Thank you, Ricki, for 30 years of service...and counting

By Lori Mohr

## On Becoming a Docent

“Though I felt very much a stranger in a strange land during the early months, this dissipated, one person at a time as my circle of acquaintances expanded and friendships grew. Today I count many members of the council among my dearest friends, and the number keeps growing.

Of course the most amazing friends, the ones who expand our world exponentially, are those silent images in the galleries for whom we speak. These learned, demanding, often daunting friends pull us out of everydayness into worlds we never dreamed of.

And that’s what true friends do—they invite us to re-examine, to stretch our minds and hearts, to enter unimagined possibilities in art and in ourselves. I welcome you, our incoming class, to this circle of friends, the talking ones and those who are silent.

Welcome.”

*Graduation 2010. Ricki’s remarks after receiving her 20 Year pin.*



Those words go a long way in explaining why Ricki is an inspiration to so many of us, both as a person and in her remarkable talent for engaging visitors in art. I could list for you all the special exhibitions teams she has been on, most often as team leader, but your eyes would glaze over. For those docents who are newer, I would rather tell you about this extraordinary woman who has given so much to our Council over three decades, and why we should celebrate this milestone.

In addition to 30 years of continuous touring, Ricki has held almost every board position, some more than once, including webmaster. It was in that capacity that she brought the Docent Council into the 21st century during that first decade when we transitioned from snail mail to electronic communication. (Can you even imagine sending out all those announcements and updates?) It was a mighty struggle that took years. Like others in the world, many docents were computer illiterate. As volunteers, those skills had never been required. But being an SBMA Docent is no ordinary undertaking. Everyone in the Council was willing to get on board. Ricki was there to help.

Meanwhile, she managed our then-cutting edge Dreamweaver software, which allowed only one person to input and manipulate content. For years it was Ricki who updated art movements in the galleries, entered material on new and upcoming exhibitions, transcribed research papers into an electronic format, and contributed her own work for our website—everything from an overview of antiquities to how to write a research paper. Her work on our permanent collection and special exhibitions has always focused on helping Docents tour the art, often difficult contemporary works where visitors turn to Docent-led tours. After a lifetime studying art in one capacity or another, it is no exaggeration to say



that Ricki is an expert on contemporary art, modern art, Latin American, antiquities and 19th century French art.

Last year when I joined the Community Speakers Team, Ricki would arrive at lunch dates armed with hefty art books on my latest subject from her library, yellow Post-Its sticking out on pages I “might want to read.” Her excitement about my talks is just one way she inspires me, and one more manifestation of her enduring desire to educate, as she desires to be educated.

New exhibitions thrill her to the core. You can hear the enthusiasm in her voice as she peruses her considerable library to jump right in, ordering those books online that she needs to delve deeper. Like Julia Child scouring produce stands and meat markets in France for the perfect ingredients to make her meal richly satisfying, research on upcoming shows or re-visiting works in our permanent collection gives Ricki deep satisfaction. She once told me that standing before an original work of art fills her with joy, wonder. Who is this artist? What is she telling us here? Why these colors, this composition? What in my own life experience is responding to it? Why is that? You recognize this as VTS—now—but this was Ricki’s process



long before we learned about formal Visual Learning Strategies.

For Ricki, looking at art is not a passive activity. It’s an interaction. Those artists *do* become friends, she *does* immerse herself in their work, she *does* discover worlds that can open to our visitors. Her tours are the gold standard—a mix of knowledge, exploration, lots of questions, all which combine so that visitors can *experience* the art. Like Julia Child’s dinner guests, our visitors leave satisfied, full. I know because I have seen them, been one myself.

Beyond intrinsic drive and intense love of learning, Ricki attributes a big chunk of her excellence to her provisional instructor in 1990, Deborah Borrowdale-Cox, a former SBMA Director of Education. In both substance and style, Ricki graduated with a solid base from which to flourish, outfitted with the infrastructure to build any tour, take any journey the art might offer.

Peer evaluation is notoriously tricky, quality often overridden by concerns of “hurt feelings.” As Evaluations Chair, Ricki advocated for the mastery system—long before it was formalized into our protocols—offering the Docent specific feedback and then providing support until he/she achieved the desired level of competency. Just as with VTS before we called it VTS, this was her process. She understood that the way to maintain the high



Touring Charles Garabedian in 2011.

touring standard SBMA Docents are known for in the community was to de-personalize evaluations, answer a subpar performance with constructive remarks and a specific path to improvement. A re-do. That's the educator in her, an unyielding desire to have Docents engage in continual learning, to embrace it as she does rather than accept mediocrity.

In addition to touring and serving on the board, Ricki has contributed dozens of scholarly articles to *La Muse* in the 11 years that I have been editor, covering artists such as Helen Frankenthaler, René Magritte, Rafael Perea De La Cabada; Alfredo Ramon Martinez, Soulange; Maholy-Nagy; Diebenkorn; and David Parks, just to name a few. She has written about exhibitions: *The Assault of Modernism on Britain*; *Welcome to 20th Century* (photography); etc. She has done book reviews on authors from Julian Barnes and Reif Larson to Murakami, always including her insight as a psychologist. She has shared art-related



travels in France, Switzerland, New York, always inviting us to see and think and *feel* the sheer joy of discovery from whatever her recent experience.

And I will mention, though she would not, that she has nurtured her commitment to the Museum and the Council through challenges beyond what most of us face, such as caring for her husband with Alzheimer's at home in the final years of his life. With two hours respite each day from a care provider, Ricki scheduled her Museum responsibilities around that window. Is she Wonder Woman? I assure you that she is a very human woman who makes mistakes, stumbles from time to time, disappoints herself occasionally. But as Ricki likes to say, "All the facts are friendly." Whatever the harsh reality facing her, low points become opportunities for self-examination, new insight, however painful. She is still resilient, still growing. It doesn't hurt that she is also an optimist by temperament and philosophy, sustained by hope. That sentiment includes hope for the future, even now.

Even as a visitor as a visitor, others hang close to listen.

In the last year my dear friend has slowed down a step, as you might expect. But that's just her body. Three months ago she received a Legacy Award from the Santa Barbara Psychological Association in recognition of her excellence and contribution to the field of clinical psychology. Clearly, Ricki still has a lot to offer. She is still fully engaged. You and I are the beneficiaries of that engagement, along with her family, her friends, her clients — all of us she has impacted in ways we may not even realize. Patsy summed her up best: "No one is a greater champion of the Docents. No one is a greater role model of perseverance, grace and integrity."

If there were a ceremony this June where Ricki could accept her 30-Year pin, we would give her a standing ovation. For Ricki, that expression of gratitude would be in reverse. It would be *she* thanking us for three wonderful decades as a Docent—always exploring, always learning, always growing, surrounded by friends—both real...and those on the gallery walls. ■

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**Happy Birthday to Dorothea Lange!**

**May 26th would have been the world-renowned photographers 125th birthday.**

**—Oakland Museum of California**



From your **Editor**



So, here we are, still intact thanks to Molora's unflinching leadership during this extraordinary spell with its anxiety, uncertainty. And our provisional class is still on track thanks to Ralph and Patty negotiating the COVID-encumbered restrictions to find a way through. When next we meet, all of us can officially welcome the New Actives to our Docent family. Our Education Department team—Patsy, Michelle and Rachel—has been there, too, with updates to inform us, encouragement to support us. I thank all of you.

As we move into summer, I will no longer publish *La Muse* every week. It has been heartening to have so many of you participate with submissions. From the feedback, you have clearly appreciated the extra issues, and my efforts in bringing them to you. Your expressions of gratitude have sustained me.

Last year, I met with Patsy to discuss stepping away from *La Muse* after a decade as editor. Yet this intensified publication schedule and your response to it have underscored the significance of its role, serving as a conduit for ongoing dialogue in keeping us connected. It has also revived my belief that the best contribution I can make to the Docent Council is in my ongoing role as editor.

I am reluctant to disrupt the tie that binds us while we await updates from Patsy and the Museum about our return. Consider this your June issue, and look for your next *La Muse* on July 1st, and another August 1st for continuous publication into September when we kick off the 2020-2021 service year.

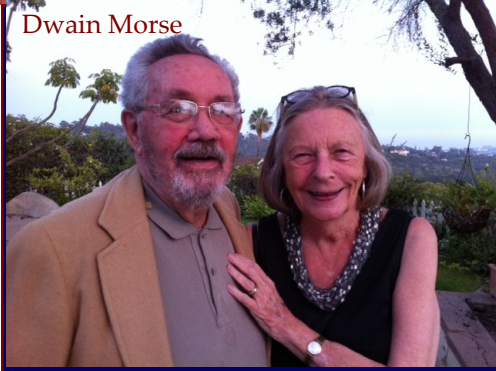
As a Docent Council, all of you have all been exemplars of unity and tenacity these last few months. I am proud to be among you. May we all stay healthy and meet again next fall, in whatever form that takes. *LM*

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And now, The Last Page...

# THE LAST PAGE

Ricki's fully-engaged world



Dwain Morse



Legacy Award 2020, SB Psychological Association



Mike Morse, Cathleen Caruso, Elizabeth Gould Morse



Kiera & Gavin Caruso



In costume w/ niece Diana Alchimisti at Frowhawk's Atelier, a Nights event.



With Deborah Borrowdale-Cox following a recent reception honoring the former SBMA Director of Education



With her sister, Mollie



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