

DOCENT

December 1

Tony de los Reyes,
Artist

December 13

Holiday Party
2:30-5 (see no-
tice).

2022

January 5

Marla Berns on
African Masks
(via Zoom)

January 19

Eik Kahng on Van
Gogh exhibit (in
auditorium pend-
ing approval)

January 26

Recruitment Open
House 3 PM

February 2

Eik Kahng on Van
Gogh exhibit (in audi-
torium pending ap-
proval)

February 16

March 2

March 16

April 6

May 4

May 18



Luchita Hurtado (1920-2020), Venezuela, NY, LA, *Untitled*, 1970s, a work on paper, included in *Made in LA 2018* at the Hammer Museum. Her work was discovered and promoted by a curator working with her husband Lee Mullican's work in 1990. She had painted all her adult life through three marriages and five children, after everyone had gone to bed. She was widely shown and appreciated throughout her 90s. Her fourth child by long time husband Lee Mullican, is Matt Mullican, the subject of our article in this issue and a great admirer of his mother and her art.

Submitted by
Ricki Morse

Dear Docents,

As we end 2021, I cannot help but reflect on the many challenges that were presented to the Docent Council this past year. In June, as we began the process of collecting Preference Sheets and organizing tour teams, the museum was still closed after nearly a year. Hopes were dashed as the pandemic lingered, pushing back the reopening time and again. At last we were set to resume touring September 15th, but that was conditional as well—were docents vaccinated? Would they wear masks for touring? Would New Actives, who had been sidelined from student touring by the pandemic be evaluated in time to take on touring? Would schools bring their students back to the Museum as they transitioned to in-person learning? The only certainty was uncertainty. But we docents have adapted to countless changes over these last few years during the renovation, and once again we held on for the bumpy ride, hoping for the best. Now, as we look toward 2022, it's clear that our perseverance these last four months has paid off—we're all vaccinated and masked; touring is going



Patty Santiago,
Docent Council
President

very well; visitors have returned with enthusiasm; students are back in large numbers, especially high schoolers. Our New Actives are finishing their first round of *Highlights* tours, and getting student touring experience under their belts as well. Docent Council meetings are still on Zoom, but that may change at the beginning of the year. Van Gogh buzz is in the air as preparations are in full force. And we have had over 20 inquiries about the provisional class next fall, prompting an early Recruitment Open House for Wednesday, January 26th at 3:00 p.m., with another to follow in May!

Talk about a big payoff for weathering the storm of COVID 19! Be proud, fellow docents.

Have a wonderful holiday season. *Patty* ■

From our **Student Teams Co-chairs**
Teda Pilcher and Irene Stone



Irene Stone

November was a particularly fun, challenging, and successful month for the Student Touring Teams.

The challenges of large numbers of students, older students, and special requests by students were met by the Team leaders and touring docents with creativity, intelligence, and grace resulting in exceptional tours.

Thank you to all the docents who stepped up to fill in as additional docents were needed to tour the 125 students on three tours given in November.



Teda Pilcher

Happy and healthy holidays to all! *Teda and Irene* ■

From our **Membership Chair**
Pattie Firestone



Calling in all service hours! Hey there, fellow docents, we all need to take a minute to record both our public touring hours as well as all art-related research hours for any months July–December. These stats not only track your service award mileage, they also play an important role when grants are being written for funding. Our tours reflect the Museum’s mission to serve the community. That’s what you and I are doing with every tour, and with all our reading in preparation for tours or general background knowledge. So help me keep our docent profile shining in those grant forms with up-to-date stats.

Thanks! ■

Pattie Pattie.Firestone@gmail.com, 301-520-5775 (mobile)

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

From our **Adult Teams Co-chairs**
 Laura DePaoli and Denise Klassen



Laura DePaoli

Wow...our tour numbers continue to climb, a clear reflection not only of your dedication but also the continued excitement we all feel being back at what we love doing. So thank you to everyone.

As we move into the last month of the 2021 service year we are already hard at work scheduling the 2022 calendar, including the *Van Gogh* and *Nature and Spirituality* exhibits. Please don't forget to fill out the Red Book located at the front visitor's services desk, so we have the most accurate count of all our tours as well as the invaluable feedback we get from you.

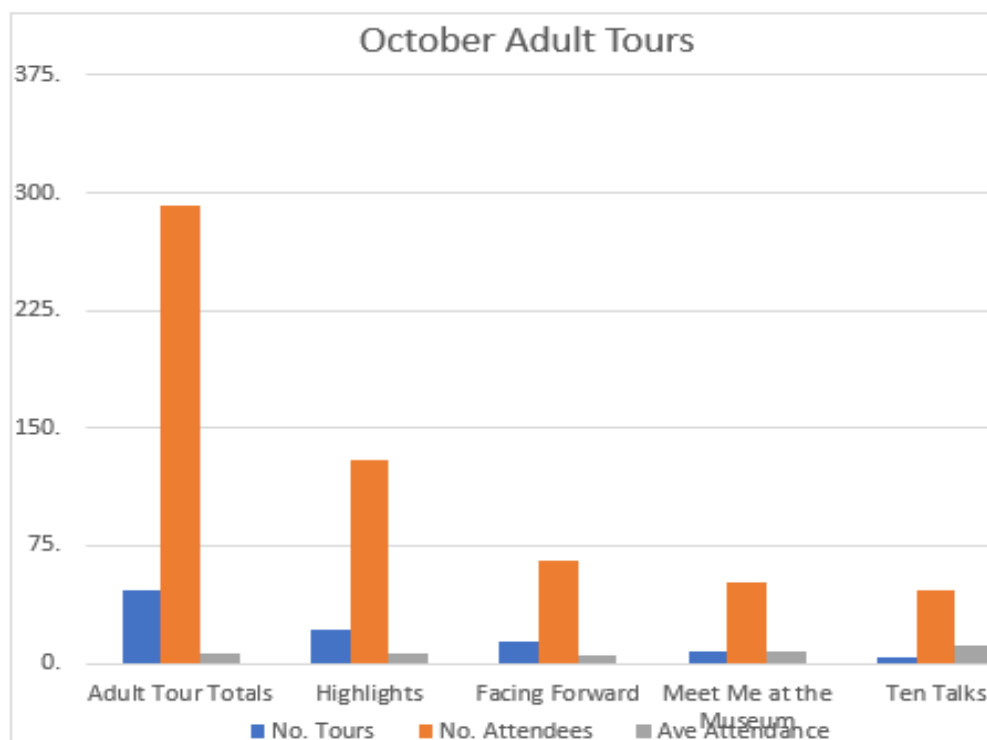


Denise Klassen

Happy Holidays to all! *Laura & Denise* ■

	October				
	Adult Tour Totals	Highlights	Facing Forward	Meet Me at the Museum	Ten Talks
No. Tours	47	22	14	7	4
No. Attendees	292	129	65	52	46
Ave Attendance	6	6	5	7	12

Includes two special request tours for the Newcomers Club: a Highlights tour and a Meet Me at the Museum Tour.



'V for Van Gogh'



SELFIE STATION
Remember your Van Gogh
experience at CMAA
Share your photos with us on
Facebook/Instagram @CMAA



Columbus Art Museum "Van Gogh and His Sources"

On a whim and with excitement and anticipation, six docents traveled to the Columbus Art Museum for the opening of *Van Gogh and His Sources*.

Where is Athena?

By Josie Martin

In response to "Athena" NYTimes. 10/24



The goddess of wisdom, of strategy, warfare and skill; she who wears an aegis, a mantle of goat skins fringed with writhing snakes and the Medusa on her chest. Why isn't she back in Ludington Court? In 2003 Athena, though headless, was my first choice for my three-minute tour. Up to that time I'd never much considered the antiquities. The Surfer

Dude that everyone was so wild about? Nah, though a dear former docent, Virginia Cornell, had Hermes in the same league as Michelangelo's David, I chose Athena, the Virgin Patroness of Athens. After all, the Parthenon on the Acropolis was built in her honor. Born full grown from the head of Zeus, holding a spear, standing on a shield, I was captivated by this woman warrior.

But now she is missing while Hermes stands on high with his detachable member, thanks to the Getty's surgical unit in their

Dept. of Conservation. I missed the gods so much while SBMA was being renovated that I made two trips to LA to the Getty to visit them perched high above the 405, stoically impervious to the noise below.

Since I'm preparing for a session of *Highlights* tours, I thought perhaps I'd use that other statue standing against the back wall, draped similarly to Athena, its clothing billowing in the wind. The marble appears light and transparent, showing the outlines of the body — graceful, I thought. But not only is it not a woman, it is Apollo with his Kithara, I soon realize. That's the Dyonesian Dude associated with wine and music. I want a Goddess, and our lovely Aphrodite is not on display either...nor the Satyr and the Nymph that he holds captive between his legs as



she is trying to escape his eager grasp.

I fell in love with the antiquities because they were both gods and so human. Who else could depict such erotic misbehavior? While there probably wasn't a "me-too" movement in ancient Greece, according to Aristophanes, there was Lysistrata, who sought to persuade the women of the City States to deny their men any sex unless they ended the Peloponnesian Wars. It's a comedy, of course. We need our Athena, this powerful vivid figure of ancient times. With the Medusa on her chest, she could turn her enemies into stone if they stared at it, and she held the small Nike, symbol of victory in her right hand. Like most Greco-Roman statuary, she would be brightly painted and decorated with gilding and precious stones—her eyes perhaps made of jade or turquoise.

At the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, a 3D digital reconstruction of the statue of Athena Parthenos can be experienced through augmented reality. A conservation team examined trace pigments on the mostly white statue of THEIR Athena, using special lights and photographic techniques along with chemical analysis. This digitalized process practically brings her to life. I may have to go to Boston. ■

HOLIDAY PARTY

Monday, December 13, 2:30-5:00

**Josie Martin is opening her beautiful home at 1501
Sinaloa Drive.**

Last names A-H, please bring a savory

Last names I-Z, please bring a sweet

RSVP to karenhowsam@icloud.com

Matt Mullican's *The Spectrum of Knowledge*, Santa Barbara and the Universe

By Ricki Morse



In 1992 the SBMA Women's Board commissioned a work by a prominent contemporary artist, Matt Mullican, honoring the museum's 50th anniversary. One of the four related pieces is on permanent display, an engraved granite slab embedded in the entrance patio, near the front door. School children on tours often make rubbings of it as if it were an ancient work, which in a

way it is. Matt Mullican's source is the 1773 encyclopedia by Denis Diderot, philosopher of the French Enlightenment. Many of the animals depicted in the evolutionary chart had never been viewed

by the engraver, who had only heard descriptions of them.

Thus the image is at once a symbol and a personal point of view. This duality informs the artist's work, which may contain public signs, photographs, maps, cutouts of shapes, reproduced by black oil stick rubbings—following the 2000 year old tradition of rubbings as copies of ancient stone images or texts. As the experience of the viewer is central to Matt Mullican's artistic world, it is fitting that he provides an opportunity for art-making at our entrance, tracing the evolution of our world.



Matt Mullican, photographed in his New York studio in the 1980s.



Matt Mullican (American, b. 1951),
Untitled. 1994, black granite slab, SBMA

An enthralling aspect of Matt Mullican's life is that both his parents were widely recognized artists with whom he was close. As we trace his development, we will see how he echoed each parent's visions through his own imagination, influenced by the rapidly shifting evolution of American and European contemporary art. His mother, Luchita Hurtado, was born in Venezuela and not only bore five sons, but made many friends in the art world, wrote poetry, painted and designed throughout her adult life. You may remember a work of hers



Lucita Hurtado (1920-2020), Venezuela, NY, LA, photographed in her Santa Monica studio, 1990s.

in our works on paper show in 2019. Our *La Muse* cover image of one of her self-portraits reveals the very personal nature of her painting, her transparency as a person, which drew friends and admirers.

Her mother moved to New York City with her children when Luchita was eight. She quickly learned English and exhibited a passion for drawing, entering Washington Irving, a girl's high school off Union Square, which she reached by subway. Having told her mother she was studying to become a seamstress, she attended art classes, exhibiting her inherent, lifelong independence. Married at eighteen to a Chilean journalist, she met many local artists and celebrities, Isamu Noguchi, Mark Rothko, Leonora Carrington, Rufino Tamayo, and later became friends with Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. However, she kept her art private and called the early works the "I Am" series, though she later expanded into abstraction and surrealism. Her surrealistic works interweave the human body with the shape of the land, rendering man integral with nature.

Her husband abandoned the family, which now included two sons, and Luchita built a career designing magazine illustrations for Condé Nast and window displays for Lord & Taylor. A second marriage expanded her connections with the art world but disappointed her desire for more children. She had lost a son to polio and found that her husband didn't want children of his own. Her third marriage, to Lee Mullican, produced three more sons, brought her to Los Angeles, and ultimately her bursting into the public eye in her nineties when her works were discovered by a curator working with Lee's paintings.

Her deep conviction that meaning is found in one's own identity informed the lives of her sons, whom she enjoyed immensely as children, and with whom she shared her curiosity and personal freedom. And it was these characteristics that led to her relationship with Lee Mullican, whom she met in San Francisco as a fellow member of the Dynaton Group. This briefly-joined group of artists and philosophers, supported by SFMoMA, saw art as an expression of the unconscious mind, combining Eastern mysticism and Freudian psychology. Lee Mullican, born in the "Indian Country" of central Oklahoma, adopted the symbols of native American mysticism to explore the workings of the unconscious mind, producing a sci-fi floating world which embeds man in the universe. And though he was regularly shown at the Willard Gallery in NYC during the peak of abstract expressionism, he preferred Santa Monica and saw New York as a "closed society" which did not share his interests. Thus he became the forerunner of much contemporary art which includes the real world and the ephemeral.



Lee Mullican (1919-1998) American, photographed in his Santa Monica Studio, 1970s.



Lee Mullican, *California Poster*, 1969, acrylic on canvas. Gift by the artists to SBMA

One critic described him as “the most important contemporary artist you don’t know.” He expressed “the intuitive contours of an inner world” and influenced a generation of artists during his tenure as a Professor of Art and Architecture at UCLA from 1962-1990.

We are extraordinarily fortunate to have twelve of Lee’s works in our permanent collection, and I hope we’ll mount a show of Lee and Luchita’s work in the future. He gave his *California Poster* to our Ala Story Collection in 1969, his works in our collection ranging from 1949 to 1973. In his *Poster*, the golden orbs seem to float in space, enlivened by spikes of color, expressed in three tones of blue and three of gold. Lee’s skill with the edge of a palette knife placed discreet ridges of color on the canvas, as if piercing the surface, exerting rebounding energy. The image is at once precise

and floating, moving and still, expressing the vibrancy and complexity of the unconscious mind.

Matt Mullican grew up in the midst of a creative happening. It is little wonder his older brother became a well-known film director and his younger brother a performance artist. Luchita considered him a budding artist from childhood, encouraged his Cal Arts enrollment and remained involved in his development of a universal cosmology. When we view his work, carefully ordered, using recognizable images of signs and language, geometrically arranged in grids, it has a pop art/commercial feel. When we study his artistic development as a performance artist, our understanding begins to expand. Our red and yellow panels of black oil stick rubbings could be produced by anyone, just as ancient stone rubbings were. I found that I could see his work more clearly by looking at each piece as an artifact of our culture, much like the way I look at Latin American art, accepting each image as part of a cultural spectrum. The massive structures of drawings, rubbings and photographs are like museums of our culture, each detail capable of sparking a memory, together providing the knowledge of a culture, in one experiential moment, standing in a gallery. The paper stencil shapes he sketches and then cuts out, provide the rubbed images on the panels,



Matt Mullican, *Untitled*, 1992, etched glass panel with lead frame, gift of the Women’s Board to SBMA.

viewed within a geometrically designed space.

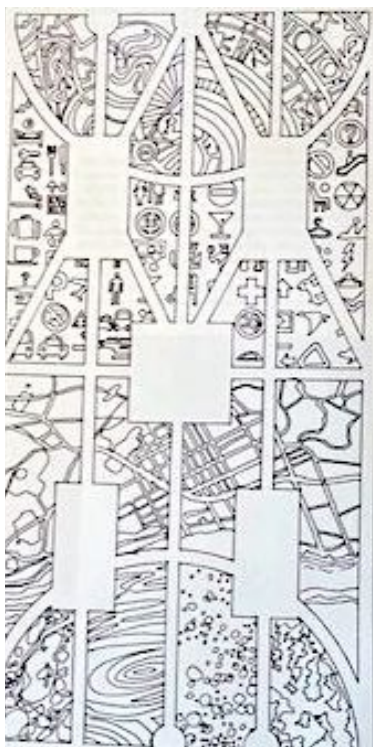
He titles our 4-piece work *Spectrum of Knowledge*, a block of granite engraved with an ancient animal ethnography, two 24 foot vertical panels with black oil rubbings of maps, photographs and stencils, one red, one yellow, and an etched glass panel with lead frame which frames our high window on the stair landing above the back entrance. As it was commissioned to commemorate the Museum's 50th anniversary, the artist chose Santa Barbara for his image source, the granite block representing the previous natural history, the two versions of Santa Barbara: yellow—science and culture, red—subjective experience, and the fourth piece, the window frame—the artist's act of representing our view of our city, perhaps an invitation to come look out my window. And when we look out the window through his frame we see the actual Santa Barbara courthouse.

I have provided a copy (from my iphone) of the artist's sketch of the red panel, as our image is blurred. The bottom area of the red panel is materials, solids, water, air, space. Next above is a map of Santa Barbara (material as an object). Next above is language in the form of signs and at the top is the 13th century rose window of Chartres Cathedral, a famous artifact of our culture. The yellow panel provides the objective view, beginning at the bottom with beach, ocean, clouds and moving up is a photograph of the harbor, above that forms that are signals, traffic lights, directional, roads. The top is black, providing a reflective surface for the light from the window across the atrium, the ethereal. Our observations and responses provide the connection between the two panels.

He shows his work internationally, is collected by major museums. According to the artist, the importance of his work lies in the millions of tiny choices, juxtapositions, which occur during their constructions, each act formed in the individual unconscious mind. To Mullican it is our interaction and response which provides the meaning of the piece, as if when viewed it becomes a performance, with viewers as actors, each responding internally and thus arriving at his own individual knowledge. ■



Matt Mullican, *Untitled*, (yellow) 1992.
Gift Of the Women's Board to SBMA.



Matt Mullican, Preliminary drawing for
Untitled, (red), 1992. Files of the artist.



Matt Mullican, *Untitled*, (red) 1992.
Gift of the Women's Board to SBMA

Vincent Van Gogh Immersive Experience

by Doug McElwain



This is an exhibition we would travel to, if we were doing decent bus trips in this time of Covid. The venue for the Vincent Van Gogh Immersive Experience is the former Amoeba Music

building on Sunset Blvd in Los Angeles. The exhibit encompasses a large part of the structure's interior space. This is not an exhibition of his works in the traditional sense. Instead, it is something quite different—an imaginative, multisensory experience. If you go, plan on staying

an hour or so. I see it as a nice predecessor to our own upcoming Van Gogh exhibit this winter/spring. I



don't have the words to do this experience justice, so I'll use my photos and quotes from the exhibition website:

"You will be immersed in Van Gogh's works—from his sunny landscapes and night scenes to his portraits and still life paintings. The installation includes the *Mangeurs de pommes de terre* (The Potato Eaters, 1885), the *Nuit étoilée* (Starry Night, 1889), *Les Tournesols* (Sunflowers, 1888), and *La Chambre à coucher* (The Bedroom, 1889), and so much more....



Astonishing in scale and breathtakingly imaginative, you will experience Van Gogh's art in a completely new and unforgettable way."

Unlike Van Gogh's paintings, these images are not always static. Irises grow in front of your eyes, and artworks take form before you know it, as music plays subtly in the background. The resolution of the images is incomparable. As you can see from this photo (top right), high-



resolution images of some of his paintings show his brushstrokes in exquisite detail; showing the mixture of pigments and shapes, providing insight into his technique.

In the event building, most of the seating is on the floor, in circles placed six feet apart (note, masks must be worn at all times and proof of vaccination presented at entry into the building). A few of the circles in the center of the largest room have small benches in the middle of them, but they are on a first-come, first-serve basis. You don't have to stay seated the whole time, but can wander through several different rooms. If you do, you will be "painted" with images from Van Gogh's works.



I recommend the immersive experience to anyone who has an interest in Van Gogh and his work. You can get advance tickets online that guarantee you an entry time. ■

