



Van Gogh, Right: *The Langlois Bridge* (detail), 1888. Brown ink over traces of black chalk Sheet. LA County Museum of Art. On View at SBMA through May 22, 2022. Left: *The Langlois Bridge*, 1888, oil on canvas.

DOCENT DATES

April 6 Artist Narsiso Martinez, whose artwork recently entered the Museum's collection

May 4 Rachel Skokowski, Curatorial Exhibitions Research Assistant: "Women's Work: Cassatt to Frankenthaler"

May 18 James Glisson, Curator of Contemporary Art, on "Going Global: Midcentury Abstraction"

May 19 Information reception for prospective docents (at the Museum).

June 3 Service Recognition Ceremony, 4-6 pm, Ridley-Tree Education Center at McCormick House.

Dear Docents,

The return to in-person attendance for our Docent Council meetings has been wonderful. I hope more can join us for these final few meetings in April and May as we close out the service year by slowly but surely reclaiming some version of the lives we knew two long years ago.

The Van Gogh exhibition has opened to large crowds! The show's touring team is managing groups of up to 50 visitors eager for tours, such is the excitement out there. Docents touring students have also had large groups. Maneuvering masses of either students or adults through crowded galleries has required close collaboration among Docents as they structure their routes through the Museum. For many Docents, crowds this size are a first. But what a great problem to have! As usual, Docents haven't missed a beat, working together to make sure all visitors get the best experience we can offer.

On the following page, I am pleased to present the slate of officers for the 2022-2023 Docent Council Board. A vote for approval will be held at the April 6th Docent Council Meeting. Come at 9 am for our first pre-meeting social gathering in two years. See you in the Luria Activities Center. BYOC (bring your own coffee).



Patty Santiago,
Docent Council
President

Patty ■

Slate of Nominated Officers

President	Karen Howsam	Evaluations	Shirley Waxman
Vice President	Teda Pilcher	Research	Sarajum Quazi
Secretary	Cindy Anderson	Provisional Class	Patty Santiago
Treasurer	Jeff Vitucci	Nominations	
Membership	Pattie Firestone	(Past President)	Patty Santiago
Student Teams	Irene Stone/Nicola Gherson	Webmaster	TBD
Adult Teams	Denise Klassen/Susan Lowe		

Vote is April 6 at our meeting

From our **Membership Chair**
Pattie Firestone



Fellow Docents, help impress the Trustees with our total volunteer hours! I know you have spent a lot of time researching Van Gogh and touring. Please email me your public and research hours!

Question: Does watching the Oscars count as art research? That is up to you

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

Pattie ■

From our **Student Teams Co-chairs**

Teda Pilcher and Irene Stone



The recent Docent activities in the Museum have been extraordinary. The *Van Gogh* Student team has navigated large numbers of students from both public and private schools as they make their way through the exhibit. In March, **313** students toured *Van Gogh*. For April we have scheduled exhibition tours for 576 students.



In addition, we continue to receive an increased number of requests for regular student tours, from a start of

35 students in March to an anticipated additional 331 students in April! Thank you to *all* docents for your magnanimous show of support and camaraderie. This is part of what makes us a strong council.

Teda and Irene ■

From our **Adult Teams Co-chairs**

Laura DePaoli and Denise Klassen



March brought the return of the Community Speakers Program, news of a new summer exhibition, and several changes to the Adult touring schedule. Specifically, *Highlights* tours have been put on pause until the May 22nd close of *Through Vincent's Eyes*. The logistics of running *Highlights* tours are difficult with so much of the main level given over to *Van Gogh*.



Thank you to members of the Spring *Highlights* team for your understanding in making this change.

For the month of March, the *Nature and Spirituality* team stepped up to take the Friday 1pm tours. Thank you for your adaptability in doing that. Museum attendance for the *Van Gogh* exhibition has been tremendous and the galleries are bursting with visitors. To better manage the timed ticket entry and flow of the crowds, tours for *Van Gogh* now start at 1:15 p.m. Docent tours are in demand, and we have been averaging 40-50 visitors per tour, a first for many of us. The week of spring break brought even larger crowds—we had one tour with 60 visitors! A big shout out to the wonderful docents who are managing these oversized groups as you maneuver your way through the exhibition's five galleries. But what a challenge to have!

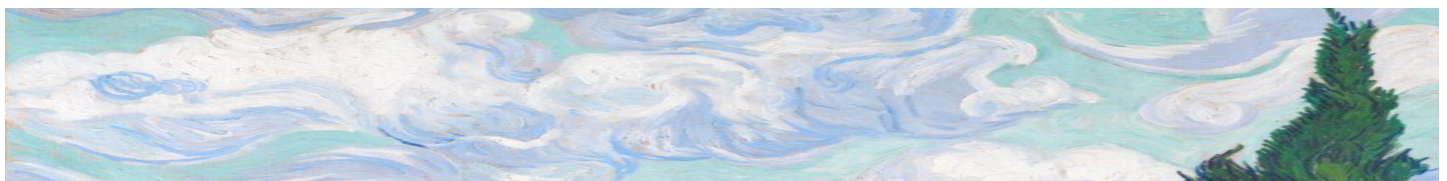
We hope that everyone is enjoying the show with family and friends, and of course we welcome you walking through the galleries as docents-at-large for your personal party. Do keep in mind, however, that only those docents on the *Van Gogh* touring team are approved for public tours with general visitors. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

This summer, we're "Going Global" with a new contemporary installation curated by James Gleeson, our Curator of Contemporary Art. We will be putting together a summer touring team for that show as well as focusing on our contemporary art collection. Anyone interested in joining this team please contact Denise Klassen at nyceklassen@icloud.com.

As always, a huge thank you to all of our touring docents and especially to our hard-working team leaders. Please everyone, remember to turn in your hours to Pattie Firestone so all of this hard work is accounted for. Hours are used in grant applications and to quantify for the Board of Trustees and Museum management our true pride, dedication and contribution to SBMA.

See the next page for the touring stats for all Adult teams tours.

Laura and Denise ■



FEBRUARY STATISTICS

	Total	H.L.	N & S Ten Talks	
NUMBER TOURS	21	14	6	1
NUMBER ATTENDEES	151	75	67	9
AVERAGE ATTENDANCE	7	5	12	9
TOURS W ZERO ATTENDEES	1	1	0	0

Community Speakers Program (CSP) February and March Statistics



Shirley Waxman
CSP Team Leader

The Community Speakers Program resumed giving talks in February after a two-year interruption due to the pandemic. We offered one topic—Van Gogh—four times in conjunction with our exhibition at the Museum. The talks were all given by Lori Mohr.

The CSP venues were thrilled to welcome back the docent program. Lori is scheduled to give talks in April and May.

Shirley ■

February:

VISTAS total attendees- 60 (sold out)

March:

VISTAS total attendees- 60 (sold out)

Little Town Club - 42

Maravilla Assisted- 20

Total attendees for February and March – **182**

Two Venezuelan Artists Who Actualized the Optic and Kinetic Art Movements

By Ricki Morse



This article is offered in exploring works in conjunction with James Glisson's June 2022 exhibition in McCormick Gallery, "Going Global: Abstract Art at Mid-Century".

Victor Vasarely, a Hungarian/French artist, painted *Zebras* in 1937, now considered the first op art work. He continued to explore the optical effects of *Zebras* throughout his career, even rendering the evolved image on a ceramic plate in 1967. We experience the optical evolution of his experiment over those 30 years, the very years during which two Venezuelan artists were taking art into what Soto called "the fourth dimension." It was Carlos

Cruz-Diez and Jesús Alvarez Soto,

each born in 1923 in Venezuela and classmates at the School of Fine Arts, a classical art school in Caracas, who opened one of the most revolutionary explorations of contemporary art. They both moved to Paris and established studios there, first Soto and later Cruz-Diez, where they became part of the Parisian School of modern artists and where they met Victor Vasarely.

In 1965 MOMA mounted an international exhibition of 96 contemporary kinetic and optic art works entitled *The Responsive Eye*. It included works by Vasarely, Cruz-Diez and Soto. The MOMA director, William C. Seitz, provided the signage for the show:

The "Responsive Eye" brings together paintings and constructions that initiate a new, highly perceptual phase in the grammar of art. Using only lines, bands and patterns, flat areas of color, white, gray or black, or cleanly cut wood, glass, metal and plastic, certain of these artists establish a totally new relationship between the observer and a work of art. Unlike most previous abstract painting, these works exist less as objects to be examined than as generators of perceptual responses, of colors and relationships existing solely in vision; of forms, presences and variations often entirely different from the static stimuli by the artist. Such subjective experiences, brought about by simultaneous contrast, afterimages, illusions and other optical devices are entirely real to the eye, although each observer will respond to them somewhat differently.



Victor Vasarely, *Zebras*, 1937, oil on canvas. .



Victor Vasarely, *Zebras*, 1967, ceramic plate.



Cruz-Diez outside his Paris studio

Carlos Cruz-Diez is known as one of the greatest artistic innovators of the 20th century. Fascinated with art from childhood, Cruz-Diez was encouraged by his father, a chemist and amateur poet, who supported his enrollment in the Caracas School of Fine Arts at 18. He was the first to arrive and the last to leave each day. His exploration of color grew as he painted local landscapes with his classmate Jesus Soto,



Carlos Cruz-Diez at the Louvre during his first visit to Paris, 1955.



Carlos Cruz-Diez, *Paisaje De Bernardino*, 1943, oil on canvas, Cruz-Diez Foundation, Houston, Texas.

attempting to capture. He became aware that color was not a fixed perception,

but shifted when placed next to other colors, when seen by different people, from different angles and in different lights. To explore these phenomena, he painted sticks varying colors on each side, placing them adjacent and at angles to one another, providing the passing viewer with an array of color auras seen by the human eye in passing, colors not painted on but created in the viewer's gaze. Designed for an outdoor wall, this work heralds Cruz-Diez's urge to take art out of the museum and into the world as well as leading to intense research into how the eye sees.

In 1960 Cruz-Diaz moved with his family to

Paris, encouraged by years of correspondence with Jesús Soto and hastened by his last exhibition in Caracas which was not understood by the local audience. During a 1959 trip to Paris he had constructed his first work of the *Physichromie Series* with thin strips of colored cardboard, inviting the viewer to experience the optical effects generated by the eye's perception of spaced colors placed adjacent to one another. He continued to evolve this series into his 90s, producing over 2000 physichromies .

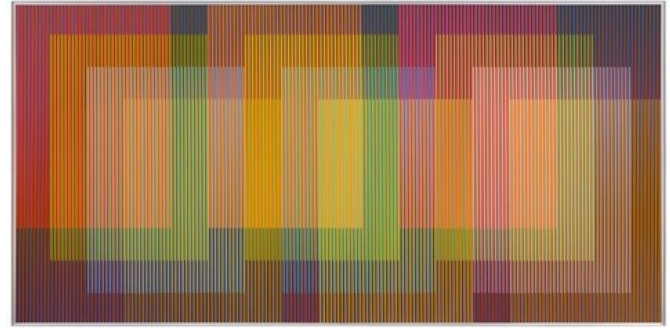
Our *Physichromie 352* was completed in his Paris studio in 1967. His invented word, translated as "physical color," points to color as a phenomenal aspect of our universe, at the same time experienced individually in widely varying ways.

Carlos Cruz-Diez, *First Project for an Exterior Wall*, 1954, painted wood on plywood, Pompidou Centre, Paris.





Carlos Cruz-Diez, *Physichromie No. 352*, 1967, acrylic on board with plexiglass, SBMA, Gift of the ARCO Collection



Carlos Cruz-Diez, *Physichromie No.1879*, aluminum bands on wood, 2013.

The Physichromies are a light trap, a space where a series of color strips interact and transform one another. They generate new ranges of color and invade the space that surrounds the vertical bands that cover the entire work. Moreover, the movement of the viewer and the light source create a series of chromatic variations, similar to those produced in a real landscape with each revolution of the sun. They will never be exactly the same because the intensity and nature of the light that is shed upon them will never be the same. Hence the name Physichromies, because they put into play the color of light, a physical color.] (Quoted in Museu d'Art Espanyol Contemporani 2009, p.20.)

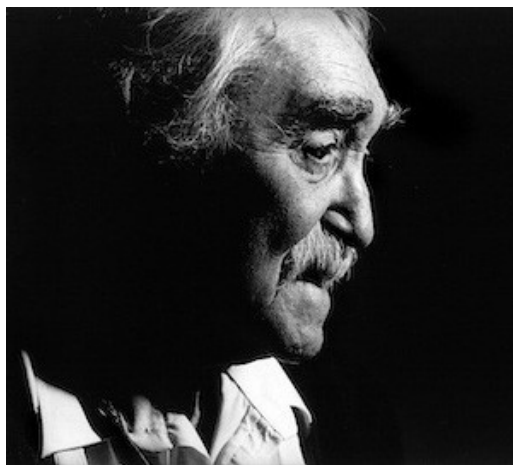
It is important to understand that Cruz-Diez was not interested in abstract art. He had always seen art as a social endeavor, the artist offering the viewer an experience of the world. One of his dilemmas was teaching his viewer to be sensitive to the optical effects of his work and not be drawn into the composition of the overall work. As a result he increasingly simplified the structural configuration of his works to avoid “distracting” his viewer from the optics.

Our *Physichromie 352* is constructed not of cardboard but of acrylic strips mounted on board with plexiglass. In the late 1960s acrylic became hard to acquire, and he began to use aluminum strips folded into v-shapes which he invented a machine to form. As the earlier cardboard works were not holding up well, he began to refit with aluminum strips, including *Physichromie 113*, 1963, which was in the Tate Modern collection and is now dated 1976. Cruz-Diez continued his optical experiments with the *Physichromie Series* works throughout his life, following each new discovery with new works.



Left: Carlos Cruz-Diez, *Environnement Chromointerférent*, 1974-2017, video. Right: Carlos Cruz-Diez, Commissioned for the pedestrian crossing on Grand Ave, LA, celebrating the opening of the Broad Museum, 2017.

The configuration for an exterior wall, (page 7) points us along another path Cruz-Diez was taking, escaping galleries and moving art into the everyday world. Integral to his political commitment to individual freedom, it would also resolve his concern about his art being seen as designs. It is a path his friend Jesus Soto had already taken. In 1974 Cruz-Diez installed his first *Environnement Chromointerférent*, a video using parallel, vertical colored light strips projected onto an interior space, making everything already in the space transparent. The viewers became the viewed and concurrently, the actors, thus achieving Cruz-Diez's goal of involving his viewers in the experience. Museums from Houston to Denmark to Dubai have mounted *Environnement Chromointerférent* exhibitions. Cruz-Diaz installed commissioned sculptures throughout Europe and the United States, marking a boundary in Spain and installing transparent color-bathed booths in New York City. In Los Angeles, he entered the streets of the museum district in the heart of the city with a colorful pedestrian crossway on Grand Avenue between the new Broad Museum and MOCA. Known in Paris as the "maestro," he continued to produce exploratory optical works in his family-run studios in Paris and in Caracas until his death at 96.

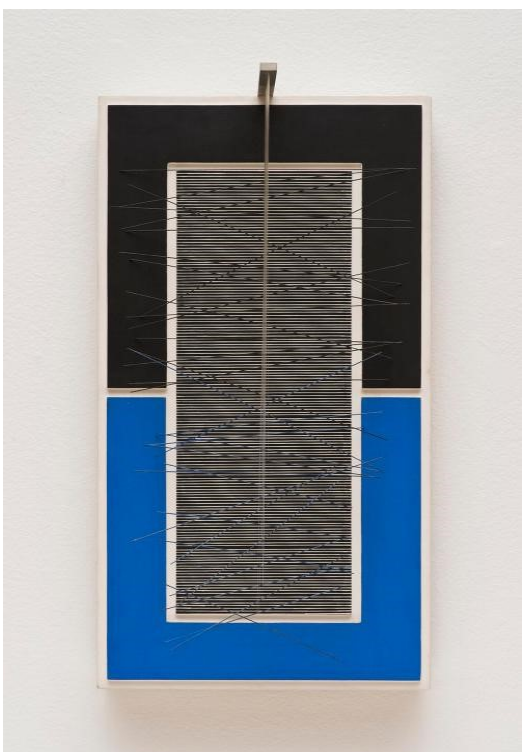


Jesús Rafael Soto, 2003, in his Paris studio.

Jesús Rafael Soto was born in Ciudad Bolívar, an inland provincial capitol in eastern Venezuela. Son of a violinist, he was drawn to the arts, taking up guitar briefly before he discovered lettering and poster-making, which he employed to help support his family. In 1943 he entered the School of Fine Arts in Caracas, beginning a lifelong friendship with a fellow student, Carlos Cruz-Diez. They shared a deep respect for the independence of the human spirit, and each searched for avenues to allow the viewer to experience his work, Cruz Diez through providing his viewer with unique optical experiences of color and Soto through offering an environment in which space could be viscerally entered and known. Carlos Cruz-Diez devoted his life to the study of the essential nature of color and of the human eye's perception of color, sharing his learning experientially through his works of art. Jesus Rafael Soto undertook on an even more ephemeral search, how to embody the nature of space in an individual moment. He said, "Before the viewer was like an outside witness to reality. Today we know that man in not on one side



Jesús Rafael Soto, 1973, as he cut the opening ribbon at the new modern art museum in his hometown of Ciudad Bolívar, where he had taught.



Jesús Rafael Soto, *Untitled*, 1970, metal, painted wood, nylon cord, SBMA, Gift of Robert B. and Mercedes H. Eicholz.



Jesús Rafael Soto, *Permeable*, 1969, white plastic string, metal lattice frame, MAM, Paris.

and the world on the other. We are not observers but integral parts of a reality which we know to be teeming with life forces, many of them invisible. We are in this world like fish in water. We cannot pull away from matter-energy; we are inside it, not facing it. There are no more spectators, only participants.” (*The Fourth Dimension*, Bilbao Guggenheim, 2017, p.54).

In 1947 Soto took a position as head of the Escuela de Artes Plásticas in Maracaibo, Venezuela, providing him support for his kinetic work. Much like his friend’s search, Soto’s began with physical experimentation, initially with wires, strands, strings and the visual vibrations they produce. These vibrations happen in space, which has no identifying color or outline, but can be felt and can be arranged to change how they are seen by the human eye. He was fascinated by the new art appearing in Europe, so applied for and received a grant to study in Paris, arriving in 1950, meeting French artists, including Victor Vaseraly and becoming associated with The Movement. It was the landmark exhibition in Paris in 1955, *Le Mouvement*, including such new comers as Ives Tinguely, Victor Vasarely and Jesus Soto, that acted as a trigger for kinetic art, build-

ing an international following, and launching Jesus Soto’s career.

Our *Untitled* 1970 constructed work veers toward sculpture, though the work presents as a painting, in fact Soto was still referring to himself as a painter. The nylon cords stretched down the surface seem to shift as we move past blurring the strings and the painted wood behind. A single cord hangs in front of the lines of string suggesting some sort of purpose or mechanical function. We are aware of the optical illusion of movement within the plane of the work, and it is the slight movement of the strings which initiates our awareness of space itself, something moving with the space of the work.

Soto’s breakthrough work had come the previous year with his first *Permeable*, 1969, installed in a courtyard outside the Paris Museum of Modern Art, a massive shift toward his goal of pulling the viewer into the work, which it literally does, inviting the visitor to move through the work pushing aside the cords, entering, leaving or turning—interacting with the space—actually experiencing space. The *Permeables* that poured from Soto’s drawboard over the coming years literally took the museum world by storm. They need only be viewed to be grasped and to send us scurrying to the nearest *Permeable*, which, in our case, happens to be at LACMA.

To share the range and scope of Soto’s installations, I offer a *La Muse* gallery tour. Please join me . . .

References:

William Seitz, *The Responsive Eye*, MOMA, 1965.

Carlos Cruz-Diez, *A Conversation with Ariel Jiménez*, Fundación Cisneros, 2010.

Jesús Rafael Soto, *The Fourth Dimension*, Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, 2020.

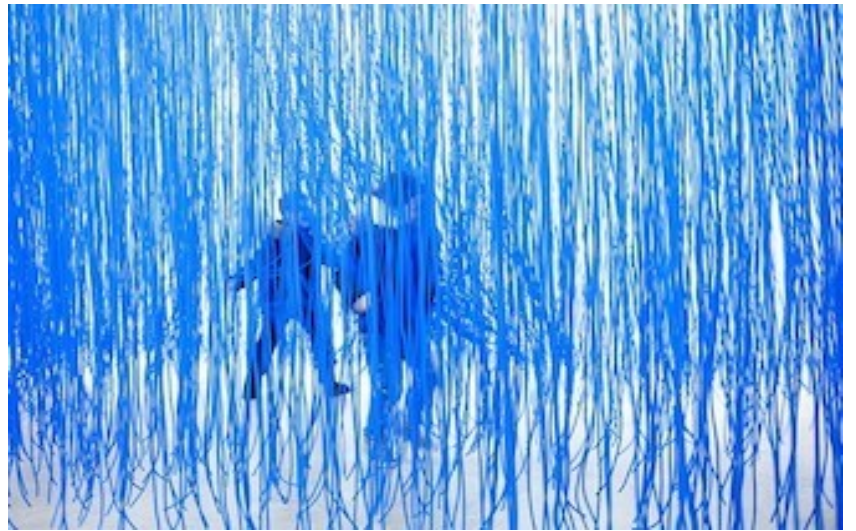


Left: Jesús Rafael Soto, *Permeable*, 1974. The Guggenheim Museum, NYC, mounted an extensive Soto exhibition, highlighted by the *Permeable* hanging in the museum's central atrium, which they commissioned and later donated to the presidential palace in Caracas, Venezuela.

Below: Jesús Rafael Soto, *Sphere Lutétia*, 1996, painted iron and aluminum, first installed in 1996 on the Champs-Élysées and in 2019 at the Guggenheim Bilbao as part of a Soto retrospective.



Second row, left: Jesús Rafael Soto, *Penetrable BBL Bleu*, 1999/2007, painted steel and suspended polyvinyl tubes, three size configurations, LACMA. Below R: Jesús Rafael Soto, *Penetrable BBL Bleu* (detail with visitors), 1999/2007, currently under installation at LACMA; bottom row: Soto conceived *The Houston Penetrable*, 2004, pvc tubing hanging from steel frame. Though Soto died in 2005, his studio in Paris completed the work over several years, opening the exhibit in 2014 at The Houston Museum of Fine Arts.





Doug McElwain's spring wildflowers in full Van Gogh-esque color. Photos taken March 2022 at the California Poppy Reserve State Natural Reserve, Antelope Valley.



Jean Smith flanked by tamed flowers at the Members Only debut of Van Gogh. Photo by Pma Tregenza.





Jean Francoise Millet, *Starry Night*, 1849-1865, oil on canvas. Yale University Art Gallery.



Vincent van Gogh, *Starry Night*, 1889, St. Remy, oil on canvas. MoMA, New York

Van Gogh's Signature Swirls



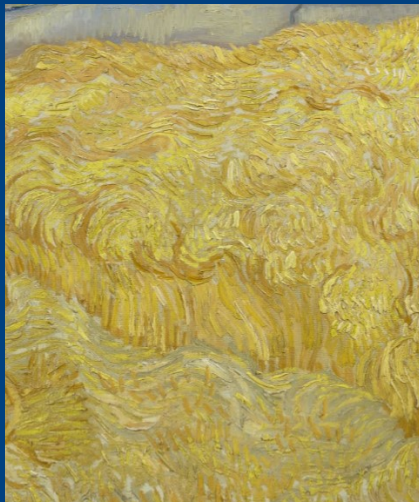
Wheat Field with a reaper,



Portrait of Joseph Roulin, 1888



Hospital at St. Remy, 1889



Wheat Field with Cypress, 1889



The Olive Trees Saint Rémy, 1889



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