

La Muse

DOCENT DATES

Social Hour 9:00 AM
Meeting/lecture 10:00 AM

March 1

Dorota Dutsch (UCSB) on
"Women in Antiquities"

March 15

Charles Donelan (UCSB)
on Wright Ludington and
Catherine McCormick

April 5

Roberto Tejada on Latin
American photography

April 12

Kathryn Zupsic, "Sargent
and Spain" Zoom, 10 AM

May 3

Larry Feinberg will speak
about the upcoming James
Castle exhibition.

May 17

Fabian Leyva-Barragan,
assistant curator, will talk
about an exhibition on
Conceptual Photography
to be installed in Davidson
this summer.

May 18

Docent Recruitment
Event, 3-5 PM

June 2

Service Award Ceremony
and Graduation, 5:30 PM



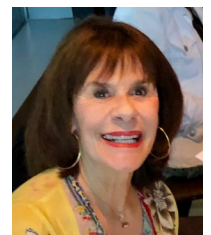
"Shaped plywood, wire, mesh, metal and other common materials become exuberant sculptures in the hands of Joan Tanner." Right: Joan Tanner at home. The Santa Barbara Independent, Feb 23, 2023. By Joseph Woodard, Photo: Ingrid Bostrom. From Out of Joint: Joan Tanner, on view through May 14, 2023. (See article by Ricki on page 7 of this issue.)

Dear Docents,

March brings the beginning of spring after a wet, cold winter. But nature is celebrating. The days are staying lighter longer, and across Santa Barbara, our amazing pear trees are joyously blooming.

The Museum is a buzz with two extraordinary new exhibitions: *Out of Joint: Joan Tanner*, and *Nancy and Ed Kienholz: Scenes from a Marriage*. We were fortunate to have a docent walkthrough with Contemporary Curator, James Glissen, for both exhibitions. These walkthroughs are important to help us better comprehend the intent of the artists, which enhances our tours for the public. Docent time face-to-face with the exhibition curator, the person who knows the art best, is our chance to ask questions while we're standing in front of the piece itself. Make sure you avail yourself of these rare opportunities.

Kudos to the touring team for *Joan Tanner*: Team Leader, Loree Gold, Susan Northrup, Irene Stone and Nicola Gherson. *Cont.*



Karen Howsam
Docent Council
President

The Council is blessed by the quality and variety of speakers at our meetings. March will be no exception. Dorota Dutsch, Professor of Classics at UCSB, will speak about “Women in Antiquities” at the March 1 meeting. Our March 15 meeting will feature local journalist and art critic, Charles Donelan, speaking about our Museum’s founder, Wright Ludington, donor and patron, as well as generous donor, Katherine Dexter McCormick. Both are important figures in our Museum’s history. Docents should know some of this background, as visitors do ask on occasion.

Please note changes on the calendar: Larry Feinberg will speak about the upcoming James Castle exhibition on May 3rd, and on May 17, Fabian Leyva-Barragan, assistant curator, will talk about an exhibition on Conceptual Photography to be installed in Davidson this summer. And don’t forget to mark your calendar for Friday, June 2—our Service Recognition Ceremony and Provisional Graduation, a high point of our year!

And finally, former CSP Team Leader Shirley Waxman and I both offer congratulations to Lori Mohr for her Zoom presentation to docents at the Fine Arts Museum San Francisco. They were so impressed with the content and presentation, with rave reviews for Lori and our Community Speakers Program!

Best to all, *Karen*

From our **Vice President**

Teda Pilcher



Dear Docents,

I find it fascinating how time can be perceived as passing both quickly and slowly. February was that kind of month. At home gray, rainy cold days kept us quiet, slowed us down. Yet, the Museum was all action with many fascinating exhibits, curator’s talks, sold out student tours, and strongly attended adult tours, as well as a membership appreciation event!

The members’ appreciation event was a huge success! It was more than well attended.

I had acquaintances call me personally to say how fantastic the Museum event was and how gracious docents were at welcoming them and responding to their questions. I hope you share my pride in belonging to a great museum and a fabulous docent corp. Thank you to the Joan Tanner adult touring docents for the excellent job at this member’s appreciation and exhibit opening event.

I am delighted to announce that the Book Club is off and running. Immediately after our first docent council meeting in March, March 1st, those interested in attending will meet, choose a book, and vote on other logistics regarding specifics. If you have not received an email from me with suggested titles yet, and are interested in joining the book club, please email or call me.

Teda

Return of the Docent Book Club!



From **Student Teams Co-chairs**
Nicola Ghersen and Irene Stone



Nicola Ghersen

February continued with a full month of tours for 446 students, along with their teachers and chaperones. We expect this attendance pattern to continue throughout the spring.

The provisional class will start shadowing student touring docents in March. After observing the first tour, they will present two art works during the second tour. Past history tells us this participation in an actual tour is very helpful preparation for future years of student touring.

Many thanks to our student touring docents for your mentoring of our provisionals.



Irene Stone

Nicola and Irene

From our **Adult Teams Co-chairs**
Denise Klassen and Susan Lowe



Denise Klassen

The *Joan Tanner* opening was a huge success! A big thank you to Loree, Irene, Nicola and Susan for their help at the Members opening event. Their mini tours and the information they shared made the morning a smashing success.

The spring dates for April, May and June have been sent out to all the team leaders. Hopefully the tour dates will be scheduled with the team members and sent back to us soon. Because of the reduction in January to only one tour a day, the spring team rosters were

downsized. This was done in order to allow enough touring hours per docent and to make the work involved in creating a tour worthwhile.

Additionally, we are looking at resuming two tours a day on Saturdays and Sundays only. We are hoping to get some feedback from the Museum on attendance times before confirming this change.

Finally, and it simply can't be said enough, thanks so much to all of you for your cooperation, hard work and dedication in putting these wonderful tours together and for truly making our museum a more interesting place to visit.



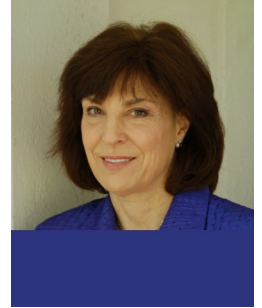
Susan Lowe

Happy Touring,
Susan & Denise

From our **Evaluations Co-chairs**
Christine Holland and Shirley Waxman



The evaluations of both Adult and Student Team touring docents are on track as scheduled and going well. We are happy to report that last week, a team of volunteer evaluators (thank you !!) completed evaluations for all 20 of the provisional docents on their 8-minute talks. Peer review is a cornerstone of our Evaluations program. Touring is a complex and interesting endeavor, a culmination of our knowledge, our touring skills and our interpersonal style interacting with visitors to



present the very best gallery experience we can. As docents we are committed to ensuring that our Docent teams are wonderful! As a council, we take pride in helping each other, the non-competitive atmosphere not as common as you might think at all museums. In that spirit, we offer a review of tips compiled in 2013 by Gretchen Simpson.

Christine and Shirley

HIGH FIVE Touring Tips

I. Delivery

Position:

- Next to piece
- Facing the audience
- No distracting mannerisms
- Appropriate gesturing

Speech:

- Pitch—loud enough to be heard
- Vocabulary
- Variation
- Pace

2. Entry into Object

- Capture the viewer with a:
 - Provocative statement
 - Question
 - Unique observation
- Create a common understanding

3. Analysis

- Note the apparent artistic elements
- Uncover the artist's intention
- Connect the elements to the voice of the artist
- Bring the viewer into the image

4. Spice

Mention only relevant details:

- About the artist
- Time period
- Significance of the work
- Social impact, past and present

5. Transition

Impel the viewer to follow you to the next object:

- Place the object into your theme
- Suggest that the next piece will take things further
- Keep it simple and state it clearly before moving on
- Make it intriguing

Prepared by Gretchen Simpson, Senior Docent 2013

From our Provisional Instructor and Docent Program Coordinator

Patty Santiago



The provisional docents reached another major milestone on February 15th by successfully completing their 8-minute talks with evaluations. A very big thank you to the excellent Evaluations Team led by Shirley Waxman and Christine Holland. The knowledge and experience of the evaluators has been a valuable resource beyond the classroom for these new docents in learning the skills of touring. An additional note of appreciation to Shirley for presenting her "Nature and Spirituality" tour to the class last week. The provisional docents were dutifully awed by Shirley's excellent presentation. Her breadth of knowledge on the subject is exceptional. The class will now be turning their attention to student touring with a combination of observing a tour before presenting two works on a subsequent tour.

This is a vital link between theory and practice, so we all appreciate our Student Teams docents for their role modeling. Preparing new docents really is a council-wide effort. *Patty*

Museum Updates from our Docent Program Coordinator

It seems with Lori Mohr's CSP presentation, *Van Gogh's Masterpieces and The Woman Who Made Him Famous* for docents at the Fine Arts Museum San Francisco via Zoom, our two councils have begun a dialogue. During the pandemic, the SFMFA created an exchange program for docent tours with other museums. So now, former SBMA docent and provisional instructor Kathryn Zupsic will give us a Zoom presentation on their current exhibition, "Sargent and Spain" on **Wednesday April 12 at 10:00 A.M.** A Zoom link will be sent ahead of time. You won't want to miss this talk. *Patty*

Who is Kathryn Zupsic?

Kathryn was a docent at SBMA for 12 years before moving to San Francisco and becoming a docent at the MFASF. She and Shirley Waxman taught the provisional class of 2006-2007, my class (which included my dear friend and classmate, Ann Hammond, the two of us the only remaining active docents from that year).

In 2014 Kathryn came down from San Francisco to help Shirley and Kathryn Padgett develop our own CSP program, modeled on theirs.

LM



A Little Mohr Conversation:
Interview with Kathryn Zupsic

By Lori Mohr

My 2014 interview with Kathryn is available in the January issue of *La Muse*

From our **Membership Chair**
Pattie Firestone



Remember to email me your Public (Touring) Hours and your Research Hours which includes preparing for your tour, reading about art, going to museums or galleries, reading news about art, informal art discussions, and making your own art.

Do the other arts count? Going to symphonies, plays, poetry readings? You decide. Music and the visual arts as well as writing are known sources of inspiration in both directions. If those activities augment your tours, then please add them as Research hours.

Thanks, *Patty* Pattie.Firestone@gmail.com

From our **Community Speakers Chair**
Lori Mohr



VENUE	PRESENTATION	ATTENDANCE
Santa Barbara Club	Van Gogh's Masterpieces (Lori)	42
Fine Arts Museum San Francisco	(ZOOM) "	30

February had a déjà vu kind of feel. The Yacht Club cancelled my presentation due to structural damage from recent storms. That cancellation and the chaos of the city recovering from an unexpectedly brutal weather assault took me back five years to February 2018, to the Student Teams report from Karen Brill (excerpt below). It has stayed with me as a perfect example of our extraordinary Docent Council, of what a compassionate group we are. It wasn't a big deal, the event in Karen's message, but its association with the trauma of the time beautifully captures one of those precious moments that make the ordinary shine. To me it also stands as a reminder to embrace this docent experience we are sharing with each other right now, through whatever our personal challenges. Sometimes looking back is good. *Lori*

"Life can only be understood backwards, but must be lived forward."~ Soren Kierkegaard



"...Hopefully we are on our way to normal as the community recovers and heals. Amazingly, with many docents impacted by the mudslides, we were still able to meet all requests for January student tours. In addition, a last minute special request came in for the students of Mount Carmel school in Montecito, located right in one of the main pathways of the mudslides. All of their kids were displaced. Mount Carmel staff attempted to maintain some degree of normalcy by having their students share a very small space with those down the street at Notre Dame. So when Mount Carmel requested a museum visit, four docents jumped in to meet this need the very next day. Students and docents alike shared their stories, impromptu conversations in our galleries that seemed to fill a need for everyone. The healing power of art at work!

Thanks to Pma, Denise, Patty, Susan, and Rachael for making this happen. Karen

Getting Joan Tanner: Start From Where You Are

By Ricki Morse



Joan Tanner's lifetime exploration into visual juxtaposition, disruption and invention has been celebrated throughout the United States and by her hometown art museums throughout her career—from her solo SBMA show in 1967, *Window Theme*, to her 1986 *California Viewpoints*, to Santa Barbara's Contemporary Art Forum's 1995 *Close Scrutiny*, culminating in her current exhibition, *Out of Joint: Joan Tanner's Eighties*, which opened last month in three of our galleries. At 87, Joan

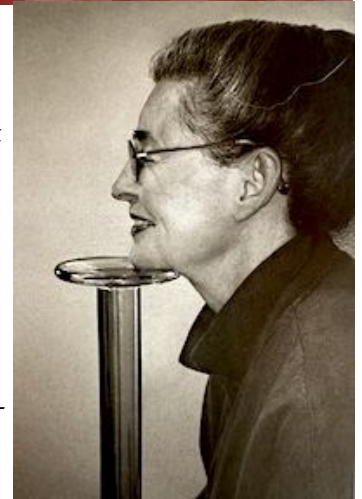
Tanner continues daily explorations in her workshop in the hilly Montecito woodlands. Daughter of an Indianapolis eye surgeon, her studio has the feel of a labor-

atory, and her approach reflects that focus on the inherent qualities of her materials and their response to disruption and distortion.

Her roots in the Midwest are deep. Educated in Madison at the University of Wisconsin where she received her Bachelor of Arts degree, she and her husband, a physician, moved to Santa Barbara in 1964 with every intent of returning to the Chicago area. Their daughter Laura was born in 1968. After years of practicing radiology in Santa Barbara, James joined Joan in her studio and became her right hand in constructing, assembling and moving/packing her works. Laura married and soon moved to Chicago, and Joan is delighted to welcome her now-adult grandchildren's visits to Santa Barbara and calls herself an "invasive grandmother."

Out of this traditional background has come drawings, paintings, sculptures, and assemblage which question regimentation and planned outcomes while embracing spontaneity, discovery and happenstance. Balance

and predictability are sacrificed for present action. The sculptures in her home garden, *Fat Step Out* and *Dead Step* are softened by their surroundings but still convey the ominous sense of disruption which characterizes her work. Is the step dead because it doesn't go anywhere or is it about feeling stuck? Is the "fat step" a launching pad out into the universe? We will follow her discoveries from her first exhibition at SBMA in 1965 through subsequent Southern California shows, culminating in our galleries today.



Tanner clowning around in her SB Studio in 2012.



Tanner, *Fat Step Out*, 2013, ply wood and metal strapping.



Tanner, *Dead Step*, 2016, 1965, steel.

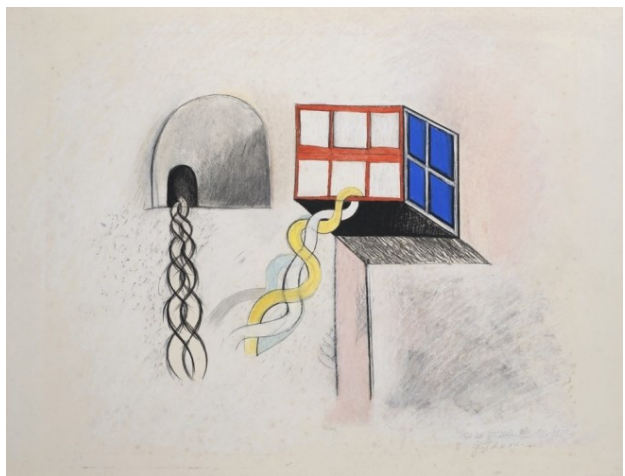
Window Theme/First Showing, 1965,

Santa Barbara Museum of Art.

These drawings were shown in Joan's first year in her new home in Sant Barbara and reflect her curiosity about the contrasts between geometric and organic forms. By juxtaposing the windows and spirals, their generic dissimilarities are emphasized and explored. The manmade windows provide no views while the spirals move out into space, but also feel borrowed, out of place. We experience a disconnectedness—a search for our relationship to these disparate



Tanner,, *Red & White Cord*, chalk and pencil on Strathmore paper



Tanner, *There are Two Cords*, 1965, chalk and charcoal.

ways of being in our world and

our introduction to her lifelong curiosity about the interplay of the geometric and the organic.

California Viewpoints, 1985, Santa Barbara Museum of Art

SBMA's second Tanner show of 30 paintings and drawings centered around organic figures, emerging shapes interacting in surreal but somehow enticing relationships. In *Three Journeys A Night* the embryonic, oval and cylindrical figures suggest disparate dreams. The artist invites us into her interior,

very personal world with a fearless transparency. The *Discs Facing Off* are part of a shared swirl which draws two forms together as the centrifugal force holds each separate. Very appropriately, the exhibition catalogue quotes Mark Rothko, "It is our function as artists to make the spectator see the world our way—not his way."

Close Scrutiny, 1995, Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum

The decade between the '80s and '90s exhibitions brings the strands of the artist's and my stories together. I had recently moved to Santa Barbara and opened an office downtown. Eager to get a feel for the city, I wandered into the Museum and was stunned by the Greek, Etruscan, and Roman art in the atrium.



Based on my undergraduate studies in the classics I recognized the rarity of this collection, especially in a little Pacific coastal town, and wanting to be a part of it, I applied for the Provisional Class of 1990.

Tanner, *Discs Facing Off*, 1986, oil on canvas



Tanner, *Three Journeys a Night*, 1985, oil pastel, charcoal and chalk on paper.



Tanner, foreground: *Der Apffelwerk Tablewerk*, 1994, metal shelves with steel brads; metal strainers; copper funnels; and wood and copper balls on table draped with painted canvas drop cloth. Left wall: *Yellow Shelf*, 1995, painted wood shelf with latex molds; altered apples; cat hair; rolled cellophane; painted wood panel; "C" clamps; sandpaper coil; acetate bag with studio debris. On wall: mesh bag with dried apple; 18 metal springs and push pins; mesh bag with pleated paper toy.

During this same period Joan began her transition from painter to sculptor to assemblage artist. By 1988 she had begun attaching other surfaces to three-dimensional objects, and in 1993 made the mind-altering choice to work with found objects, choosing broadly "whatever came to hand." From that point on, the found object determined the course of the work rather than marks she had made, enhanced by her expanding object vocabulary—steps, embryos, layered lines.

In 1995 I visited Joan Tanner's exhibit when it opened at the Contemporary Arts Forum in La Cumbre Plaza, and I knew I was in trouble. In *Close Scrutiny* we are presented with found objects on shelves, netted, decaying, demanding our scrutiny, our questioning. Why this object? What is its relationship to its surroundings? For four years I had been touring the Asian and classical works in our permanent collection, but here was something I had no idea how to approach.

My consternation provided the catalyzing charge for the work I have been doing in the Council for the last two decades—introducing contemporary exhibitions and artists to docents, beginning slowly to find ways to look and share what I am seeing. And, amazingly, my first contemporary art teacher was Nancy Doll, the director of CAF and curator of *Close Scrutiny* who had joined SBMA as its first contemporary art curator.

Joan Tanner invites you to come as you are and meet her in viewing a decaying apple, join her in the slow unfolding of time. Experiential sharing requires only presence, which we achieve by slowing down. A slow reading of the list of ingredients in each piece allows us to collect each item, turn it over in our mind's eye and place it for viewing. She has moved outward from the organic, visceral shapes of her paintings into a world of found objects with their own meanings and histories. The discoveries from her journey are now being celebrated on our museum walls, offering—again—a new way of seeing.

Out of Joint: Joan Tanner's Eighties, SBMA, Feb 12 to May 14, 2023

The site specific assemblages which have burst into being in our galleries hurtle us into Joan's current explorations. *Mire* emerges through a gallery wall like a breaking wave, inviting our wonder while the *donottellmewhereIbelong* drawings from 2013-2015, the *Staunch* oil stick, the charcoal drawings from 2018, and the 2020 *End of Water* oil stick, crayon and pastel trace her path in arriving where she is today.

Julian Robson, as co-curator of our exhibition with James Glisson, wrote of Joan's *donottellmewhereIbelong* series: "By her own admission, Tanner's ideas evolve through chance as she becomes absorbed in their invention, so

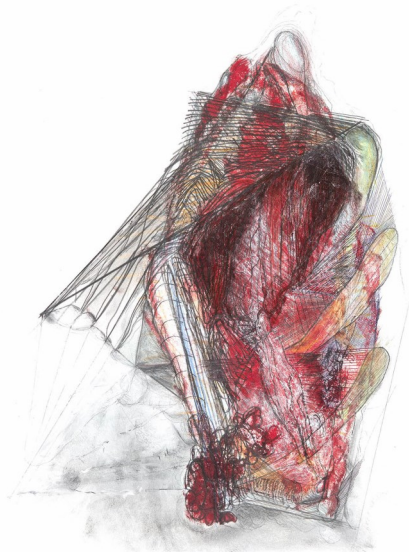
that the outcome is not the ending she had in mind. This is not, however, a vague or unintentional activity but one that shifts restlessly between seemingly contradictory forms and methods. Being about both visual connectivities and their disjunctions, flux can be seen as a principle that underscores and unifies Tanner's work even as her drawings, sculptures and installations make visible the fissures and breaks that exist in any unifying theory. Through an aesthetic of "unfinishedness," Tanner underlines the fact that our world is governed by impermanence and change."

Thus as viewers, Joan invites us to share her exploratory mode.

Judgments are irrelevant and uninvited, Do Not Tell me Who I Am! We are freed from art historical chronologies and analysis and challenged to join in her curiosity to explore our own awareness of disjuncture. ◆



Tanner, *Mire*, 2022, painted plastic net, painted vinyl tubes, steel re-bar, cast concrete, plastic sheeting, wood, plastic tubing, zip ties in Tanner's studio, a site specific work for SBMA's *Out Of Joint*.



Tanner, *donottellmewhereIam*, 2014, Oil stick, pencil, pen, chalk. Joan's visual vocabulary echoes steps, layered lines, an organic core, transparency, a slight breeze or tide rippling through it all.

Articles:

John Brooks, *Pursing Oddness: Interview with Joan Tanner*, BOMB MAGAZINE, November 2022.

Christa DiMarco, *The Geographic Imponderables of Joan Tanner at Locks Gallery*, ARTBLOG, Jan. 8, 2016.

Lurie Porter, *Joan of Art*, SANTA BARBARA MAGAZINE, Winter 2022.

Natalie Weis, *The Persistence of Inconsistency: A Conversation with Joan Tanner*, SCULPTURE MAGAZINE, July 2021.

Catalogues:

Joan Tanner, *California Viewpoints*, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1986.

Close Scrutiny, *The Art of Joan Tanner*, Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, June 1995.

Joan Tanner on *Tenderhooks*, Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, July 2006.

The Last Page
Thank you, Lady Ridley-Tree

Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree

From our Museum website: "The visionary leadership of Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree is responsible for the transformation in 1991 of the large residence left to the Museum by the remarkable Katharine Dexter McCormick into an important educational resource and center for SBMA's art-making programs." Today, this place plays a vital role in the Museum's mission to integrate art into our lives. And while the Museum's Ridley-Tree Education Center (RTEC) at McCormick House has evolved over the years, the curriculum has remained at the heart of that mission.

When Lady Ridley-Tree first envisioned the studio art-making potential of RTEC, she may not have even realized the importance of this timeless transformative teaching space. It is a rich and rare resource given by an even rarer woman of foresight, wisdom, grace, and generosity. The promise embodied in that initial gift is renewed in every drawing, painting, performance, and partnership made within its walls.



RIDLEY-TREE EDUCATION CENTER AT MCCORMICK HOUSE



Lori Mohr, Editor , 2009 –

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