

# La Muse

## DOCENT DATES

**Social Hour 9:00 AM**  
Park Wing Lobby  
**Meeting/lecture 10:00 AM**

### May 3

Larry Feinberg will speak on James Castle

### May 17

Fabian Leyva-Barraga,  
"Conceptual Photography"

### May 18 3-5 PM

Docent Recruitment  
Event

### June 2 4 PM—6 PM

Docent Service Recognition  
and Provisional Graduation

### June 25

*James Castle opens*



The family farm house porch in Garden Valley, Idaho, drawn with soot on found paper by James Castle (1899-1977), a prolific artist who was deaf and mute. *The Private Universe of James Castle*, SBMA exhibition of 90 works, opens in McCormick Gallery June 25, 2023.

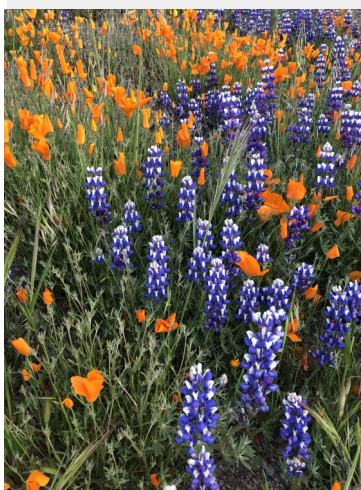
Greetings,

Can you believe another docent year is coming to a close? The May 3rd meeting will feature Larry Feinberg, speaking about the upcoming exhibition, *The Private Universe of James Castle*. (Be sure to see Ricki's excellent article on James Castle in this issue). The touring team for this show consists of Shirley Waxman, Josie Martin, Nicola Ghersen, Marcos Christodoulou, and Loree Gold.

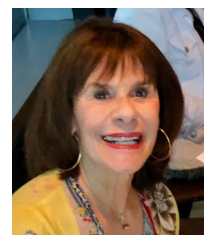
At our May 17th meeting, Fabian Leyva-Barraga will enlighten us on "Conceptual Photography". What a thought-provoking way to end our year!

Planning for next year has already begun—first up is the Docent Recruitment Event for all prospective docents on Thursday, May 18th from 3:00-5:00 p.m. In the past, word of mouth has proved one of the most effective ways to bring people into our incredible program. If you know anyone who might be interested in the training class next fall, invite them, bring them!

We end this service year with our annual Graduation and Service Recognition Ceremony on Friday, June 2nd from 4:00-6:00 p.m. This is an opportunity to congratulate our New Active Docents, and to honor those among us who have reached a personal milestone in service to the Docent Council and the Museum. The program will be followed by a festive reception in the galleries. I look forward to seeing everyone at this evening of



Spring on Figueroa Mountain  
Photo Credit: Doug McElwain



Karen Howsam  
Docent Council  
President

celebration. The Docent Recruitment Event and our Graduation/Service Recognition Ceremony are two of our most significant annual events—one paving the way for our council’s future, the other honoring docent successes of the past year. Congratulations to the new Docent Council Board officers elected at our April 12th Zoom meeting. We can look forward to another richly rewarding year under the leadership of President-elect Teda Pilcher. *Karen*

President: Teda Pilcher	Adult Teams: Denise Klassen/Susan Lowe
Vice President: Pattie Firestone	Evaluations: Christine Holland/ Irene Stone
Secretary: Cindy Anderson	Research: Barbara Ross
Treasurer: Tommy Rae Barnett	Provisional Class: Patty Santiago
Membership: Mary Ellen Alden	Nominations: Karen Howsam
Student Teams: Nicola Ghersen/Andrew Baker	Webmaster: Gretel Rothrock

From our **Vice President**  
*Teda Pilcher*



THIS JUST IN: SBMA DOCENT VP SPOTTED in SAN FRANCISCO. A group of docents lit up the town, viewing art by John Singer Sargent, Kehinde Wiley, Ansel Adams for starters. They've also been spotted in China town eating and having too good of a time. *Teda*



Diego Rivera’s *Pan American Unity* at SFMOMA forms the backdrop. Photo by Gretel Rothrock.

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



Nicola Ghersen

April was a busy month with a total of **485** students from 2nd through 12th grade, plus teachers and chaperones. This is about a 40% increase over March, and we expect May to be the same.

The provisionals have completed their observations of student tours and are now beginning to present works of art on selected tours. We student touring docents are very welcoming and supportive of this activity, knowing this experience will help them hone the touring skills

needed as New Active Docents in the very near future.

The Docent Board last month discussed the issue of whether two 30-minute tours (Artful Making) were equivalent to two 45-minute tours (Artful Thinking). After a thoughtful discussion the Board agreed that the tours are equivalent. That does not alter the docent responsibility of being available for the two touring days per month assigned to each member of the team.

As the Education Department prepares plans for next year's student touring, we ask that you share with us any questions or concerns that you have about our present schedule. And, of course, your comments, etc. are always gratefully appreciated.

*Nicola and Irene*



Irene Stone

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



Denise Klassen

Happily spring is finally here and the skies are clear. Thank you to everyone who has made touring this year so successful. We have had to scramble a bit this spring because of several docents needing to leave their teams due to various issues. Our thoughts are with each of them with wishes for a speedy recovery.

We do still have two tour dates on the calendar that need to be covered—May 17th, a special request tour for UCSB, May 20th and June 17th, both the regular 1:00 docent tour. If you can do any of

these tours please contact me or Susan.

The James Castle Team has been selected and their touring dates sent to each member. We should have those on the calendar soon. Keep your eyes posted for the Preference Sheets that are yet to come. As always we would appreciate a timely return on those so we can begin forming teams for next fall.

We have added back to the calendar the 11:30 AM tours on Friday, Saturday and Sundays for the summer quarter in addition to the regular 1:00 tour.

Thanks again for your dedication to making our tours fun and educational for our visitors.

Happy Touring!

*Susan & Denise*



Susan Lowe

From our Evaluations Co-chairs  
Shirley Waxman and Christine Holland

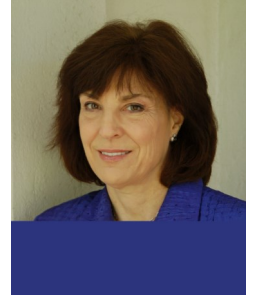


The evaluations are proceeding well, with great cooperation and thoughtfulness from everyone.

As we know, the evaluations process is important for the professionalism of our council and the excellence of our tours.

Evaluators put effort and thought into the job, so we want to urge all docents to consider carefully the comments given. We notice that over time, Docents may have recurring weaknesses, for example, poorly

thought-out transitions, lack of conclusion, or failure to talk from a position next to the object. The evaluations are a great time for each of us to learn how we are doing and how the visitor experiences our tours, to make corrections per the evaluator's observations, and to work on improving our tours. Our Docent group is strong and talented, every one of us! *Shirley and Christine*



From our Membership Chair  
Pattie Firestone



I am pleased to announce the following recipients for Service Awards. If you have questions/concerns, please contact [Pattie.Firestone@gmail.com](mailto:Pattie.Firestone@gmail.com) Thanks, *Pattie*

**Service Awards 2022—2023**

**20 Year Pins**

Josie Martin  
Irene Stone

**10 Year Pins**

Christy Close  
Nicola Gerson  
Denise Klassen  
Sheila Prendiville  
Pma Tregenza

**5 Year Pins**

Pattie Firestone  
Sarajum Quazi  
Gretel Rothrock  
Deby Tygell  
Jeff Vitucci

From our Community Speakers Chair



As our Preference Sheets become available, please note that the Community Speakers Program is a choice under Adult Tours. If you're interested in learning more, email me at [communityspeakerssb@gmail.com](mailto:communityspeakerssb@gmail.com). Joan and I would love to have you join us! *Lori*

Vista del Monte (Joan Dewhirst)	Matisse Part Two	31 Attendees
Ellwood Shores (Joan Dewhirst)	"	11 Attendees

From our **Provisional Chair**  
Patty Santiago



The provisional docents are excited to be entering their final phase of training — observing and presenting during student tours this month, fulfilling this “hands-on” requirement. A special note of gratitude to all student teams docents who have so graciously and generously given their time to help our future New Active Docents in this vital experience.

Provisionals are also working to refine and polish their *Highlights* tours in anticipation of their evaluations, which will take place the last two weeks in May.

Finally, all but one or two of the provisionals’ research papers are now posted on the website. Most of these works are currently on view in the galleries.

We’re almost there!

*Patty*

<b>Provisional</b>	<b>Artist</b>	<b>Artwork</b>
Seraphim A	Arbus	<i>Bishop by the Sea</i>
Mimi B	Besnard	<i>Woman with Red Hair</i>
Mary B	Homer	<i>Woman in Autumn Woods</i>
Josephine C	Zak	<i>Woman with Madolin</i>
Judy D	Jawlensky	<i>Sorrow</i>
Greg F	Paul Cornoyer	<i>Old Chelsea with Children Playing</i>
Kristin F	Henner	<i>Idealized Female Head</i>
Ursula G	Kolbe	<i>Max Lieberman</i>
Laini M	Rousseau	<i>Valley of Saint-Ferjeux</i>
Judy M	Erizku	<i>Untitled (Amanda)</i>
Belle M	Richier	<i>The Leaf</i>
Manuel R	Hill	<i>View of Yosemite Valley</i>
Larry R	Rothstein	<i>Dust Storm</i>
Ruben R	Raffaelli	<i>Vase with Flowers</i>
Elizabeth R	Stettheimer	<i>Journey to the Sun</i>
Mike S	Anshutz	<i>Square Rigger At Sea</i>
Laezer S	Warhol	<i>Flash</i>
Dana S	Hinkle	<i>Luxembourg Gardens</i>
Rachel S	Church	<i>Konigsee</i>
David S	Annie M Snyder	<i>Still Life: Basket of Grapes</i>

From Our **Research Chair**  
Sarajum Quazi



As my term as the research chair draws to a close in a couple of months, I would like to take this opportunity to share some of the exceptional research papers that I have had the privilege of reviewing during my time. In our last issue of *La Muse*, Mark Christodoulou's paper on *Achilles and Troilos* was a remarkable piece of work, and I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. I am thrilled to present three more exceptional papers that I had the honor of reviewing: our former docent Gwen Baker's *Demon Chanting Buddhist Prayers (Oni Nenbutsu)*, Sustaining docent Ralph Wilson's *La Place de la Concorde*, and Senior Active Pattie Firestone's *Draped Bentley*. These papers are truly masterful, and I would like to express my gratitude for the dedication and hard work that these docents invested in researching and writing them for us to enjoy. I hope you are looking forward to the next issue of *La Muse* as much as I am, and stay tuned for more fantastic papers!

Sarajum Quazi



<https://docentssbma.org/lepine-la-place-de-la-concorde/>

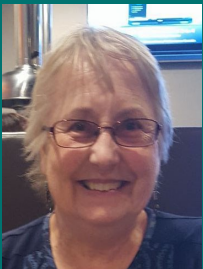
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<https://docentssbma.org/gottlieb-jane-draped->



## Book Club News



Gail Stichler

Our first gathering was well attended, with 25 docents, sustainers, and provisionals signed up. Conversation was lively, on point, and enlightening with such varied points of view. A great success!

Our next get together will be **Monday, July 24**, at 10:30 am in the FRC. If you think you might be interested in joining us, there's always room. Just send me an email (gmstichler@aolcom) so that you can be added to the mailing list. In mid-May, I'll be sending out a survey to determine what we will read for the next meeting.

All suggestions will be appreciated. Happy reading!

Gail

## The Presence of James Castle

By Ricki Morse



James Castle (1899-1977) was an artist from Idaho whom we engage only through his art. He was highly intelligent and profoundly deaf and mute. He did not read, write, speak or sign. From his teens to the end of his life he made art every day, working alone, using found materials. Scraps of paper and flattened boxes became his canvas and the covers of his books of drawings. He carefully preserved all his work, packing it into the walls of his family

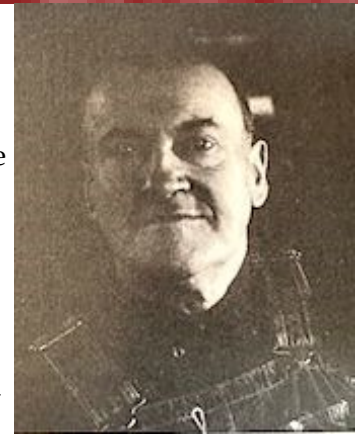


Photo by Robert Beach, Tom Trusky Papers, Special Collections/Archives, Boise



James Castle, Bundles of art, photograph, James Beardsley, Memory Palace, 2021. Photographed before removal from a wall in Castle's home in Boise.

home, barn and storerooms. As the work is all undated, we cannot track his development as an artist. We must meet him where he is, present to his memories and surroundings in a given moment.

When we step into his visual world, devoid of sound, rich with memories, we experience the huge silence, the lack of distraction, the "presence" which is the power of his work. We understand why he chose solitude for making art. His meticulous and minutely accurate memory and his present vision provided his material, uncluttered with art history or theory. He is present without any desire to put a stylistic mark on the image. He is also the master of his own vision, not disabled but a competent originator. That is the immediacy we experience in viewing his work--from the porch of his first home drawing to a construction of two men, contrived of folded paper.



Left: James Castle, Untitled, n.d., soot and saliva drawing on found paper, n.d., The porch on his childhood farm home in Garden Valley, Idaho. In the remembered scene, the tree trunks now become taller, framing a welcoming porch, in many versions including his seated father.



Above right: James Castle, Untitled, n.d., The two figures with squared-off heads constructed of found cardboard display Castle's fascination with the varying textures of paper, and his humor in the jaunty angles of the coat.

## The Family

James was born in Garden Valley, Idaho, a remote mountain farming town, into a convivial, prolific family drawn to the area in the gold rush. His Irish mother, Mary Scanlon, and English father, Frank Castle, naturalized Americans, worked 320 acres of farmland and were the post-masters of the community. According to the family story, James, the fifth of their seven surviving children, was born deaf. At this point our stories diverge into James' private, silent art world and the raucous household of the farming family.

From the family memory of his first drawing at age six, we follow his world through his art, a world of his own invention. He created his own materials, collecting advertisements, flyers and



James Castle, *Untitled*, n.d. soot and spittle, Found paper. The Garden Valley Ice House, his first home drawn from memory.



James Castle, *Open pages of handmade book*, n.d., soot/spittle ink on found paper, memories of the Idaho State School of the Deaf and Blind, fanciful collection of numerals and signs, a drawing of perhaps his parents.

paper from

the family post office, making his own ink from his spittle and soot, sharpening a stick as a marking instrument. He turned his back on farm chores, withdrawing to an outbuilding to draw and build paper constructions.

In 1910, he was sent to the Idaho State School for the Deaf and Blind in Gooding, where he continued his daily dedication to art, refusing to participate in the oral exercises which the school promoted, remaining silent, without reading skills, producing works of art which he carefully preserved, packed into the walls of the house and barns. These early works were lost in 1923 when the family moved out of the mountains to Star, Idaho, where his parent operated a mill. "Uncle Jimmy" was a loved and cared for member of an

extended family which remained close.

Frank died in 1931 and James moved to a farm in Boise with his mother, his sister Peggy, her husband Guy Wade and their infant daughter, again leaving behind James' stored work. In 1931 Peggy downsized again to a small house in Boise on only five acres in which James remained in for the rest of his life, finally with two of Peggy's daughters, and it is the work produced here that we have today. Before his death he took his nieces to the houses and out buildings in Boise where he had stored his art through the years.

## The Discovery

James Castle enjoyed sharing his drawings and books, often gave them as presents to family members, and used his prolific "book" production as a way of "showing" his art. This collecting and sharing are

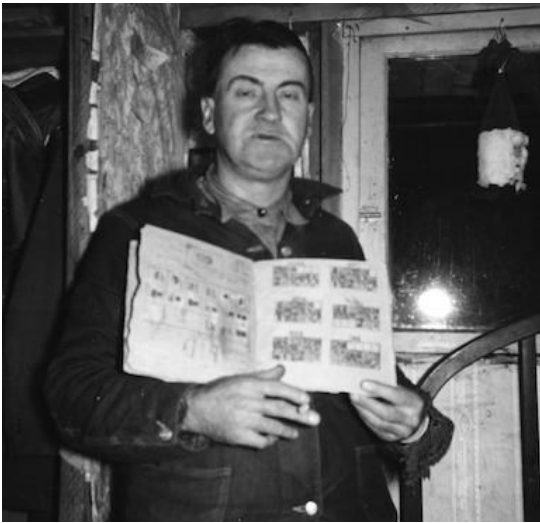
Snapshot of "Uncle Jimmy", 1960s, with his great niece and great nephew.



materials







A 1950's family snapshot of James sharing one of his homemade books with his family.

certainly consistent with Castle's independent development of his life as an artist. He had always found within his private world whatever was needed, from materials to commitment of time, to the sharing of his work. In 1950 his nephew Robert Beach, who was a student at the Museum Art School in Portland, shared James' work with his instructor, who soon accompanied Beach to James' home in Boise, a visit which resulted in a small exhibition in a gallery at the Museum Art School in 1951. Another instructor at the Museum School who owned The Image Gallery in Portland was fascinated with the drawings he had seen. He undertook the first in-depth exhibition of James Castle in 1962 entitled "The Voice of Silence".

This title followed a succession of western exhibitions, which increasingly generated sales of drawings and funded Castle's first true studio. The family purchased a house trailer, parked it near the chicken coup, his former studio now returned to the chickens.

Heated by a

gas furnace it became his year-round home and working studio until his death in 1977.

James Castle attended his opening at the Boise Art Museum in 1963, enjoying the sharing, celebrating the sales. However, the show's title emphasized his deafness, limiting the interest in his work. We again experience the separateness of James Castle, who relied on his acute sight and a phenomenal memory for material and his innate talent for execution. The wide interest in Outsider Art in the 1990s led to the inclusion of his work in many exhibitions, including visionary, ethnic, folk and naïve art, culminating in "Raw and Cooked" at MOMA in 2018 which also included machine-made work.

Clearly Castle's art has little in common with folk or naïve "Outsider Art," as his work was initially labelled. His use of advertising materials is closer to the pop art of the late 1950s. The meticulous accuracy of his architectural drawings is hardly naïve, and his use of perspective is a far cry from the flatness of folk art. He also explored a wide range of subjects from landscapes to interiors to still lifes, and his assemblage constructions are closer to Rauschenberg while his commercial collages echo Warhol.



James Castle, Untitled, n.d., found paper, soot/spittle ink .Boise house interior drawing, the paper shape providing a theatrical setting for his book display.



### Recognition

The prestigious NYC Knoedler & Co. Gallery was the first to mount a solo James Castle show, "The Commonplace in 2000: Structures, Signs and Symbols," followed in 2008 by Castle's first comprehensive retrospective at the Philadelphia of Art. In 2011 a major European museum, The Museo Nacional Center of Arte Reina Sophia, in Madrid opened "James Castle: Show and Store."

Photograph, 1963, Castle attending the Boise Art Museum opening of his first Boise exhibition. The museum today holds the largest James Castle collection and provides tours of his restored home.



*Left: The Family Weekly, "The Idaho Sunday Statesman," January 15, 1956, from James Castle's ephemera collection.*

*Right: James Castle, Untitled, 1956 or later, soot, color on found paper. Castle projects the feeling of the magazine cover more abstractly yet more intensely than the photograph.*



The Smithsonian American Art Museum acquired 54 James Castle works in 2014 mounted an extensive exhibition, "Untitled, The Art of James Castle." They were followed in 2018 by the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., "Outliers and American Vanguard Art". Generated by this wide display of his art, James Castle became the subject of several books, including John Beardsley's Memory Palace, on which I have relied heavily.

And, closer to home, our SBMA director, Larry Feinberg not only is the curator of our James Castle exhibition "The Private Universe of James Castle," (June 25 to September 17), with over 90 works in McCormick and Wasserman Galleries, he is also the author of a book on Castle hot off the press in June!



*James Castle, Untitled, n.d., found paper, string, color. Smithsonian AAM.*

### The Man

Getting to know James Castle is a fascinating and rewarding journey, one I could not have undertaken without the in-depth research which John Beardsley undertook in his Memory Palace. His interviews with surviving family members cleared the popular stories which arose around James Castle, that he was severely disabled, that he was autistic, that he was a recluse. I now feel confident in sharing with you the man I have met. From his earliest days of drawing at age six, the healthy, intelligent, deaf boy chose his path, from which he never deviated. Intuitively he chose art. He actively rejected all attempts to teach him to speak or use sign language. He rejected an identity as disabled. He also rejected chores on the farm or in the classroom at the school for the deaf. Instead he focused on making art all day, seeking privacy to work intently.

He devised an independent life, not depending on the help of others, making his own ink from soot and saliva, collecting discarded paper and boxes for his medium. He carefully preserved his work from damage or loss by packaging and storing it in the house walls. And he was happy as "Uncle Jimmy" to literally dozens of first and second generation nieces and nephews of his six siblings, accepting a nephew's introduction to a gallery owner which generated his first exhibition, continuing to live with his sister Peggy's two daughters until his death, finding satisfaction in seeing, drawing and sharing the world as he saw it, living freshly in the world

by actualizing his core identity. A self-made man. ■



*Left: James Castle, construction, n.d. found paper, string, soot and color. The carriage construction with string for hanging, captures Castle's daily involvement with a growing family.*

*Right: James Castle, Untitled, n.d. construction of found paper, string, soot and color. Thought to be a self-portrait.*

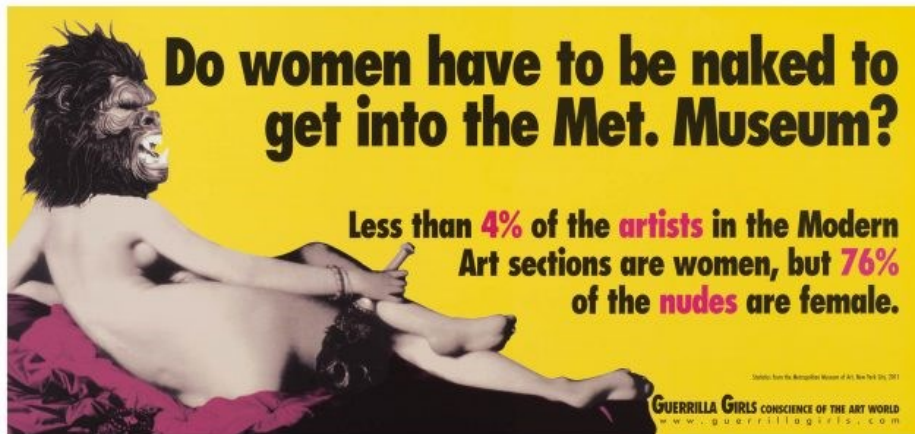


# The Guerilla Girls: Art and Agency

Josie Martin

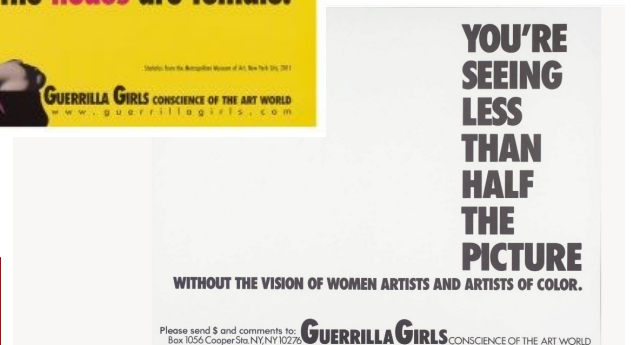


I had no idea! I'd never seen their art, what I knew of them suggested that they were "light weights" or rather heavy-headed with their huge gorilla masks. At the Hirschhorn last month, I discovered I was wrong! They are dead serious with their most famous poster which asks:



or a lesser known poster with half a blank side that announces:

**"You're Seeing Less Than Half the Picture**  
(without the vision of women artists and artists of color.)



The Guerilla Girls' gallery at the Hirschhorn was crowded with more young people than in any of the more traditional exhibitions hanging. Apart from the great, but still not obvious truths depicted on huge wall-sized yellow posters, it seems this is the kind of art that "brings them in...." It speaks to Millennials and Gen Z, also known as Zoomers, i.e. the kids born into the digital age that we docents lead through the galleries. "Less than 4% of the artists in the Modern Art sections are women, but 76% of the nudes are female." ... And there she is, an iteration of the famous Jean August Ingres' *Odalisque*, a fulsome female, but with a gorilla head! No concubine is she! She will not be groomed, pampered, and fanned by dark servants.

Unlike Ingres,' there are no black slaves hovering about, prettying her, fanning her as did Ingres' "La Grande Odalique en Grisaille." I visited her once at the Louvre, 1968, while on sabbatical. She has just a bit of a sneer staring back at the viewer, or is it a calculated come-hither-look? I believed the former back then in Paris—quietly congratulated her for her haughty expression. It was, after all, the '60s, and the fresh Women's Lib movement had taken root in my consciousness.



There are many Ingres *Odalisques*. The one at the Walters Art Museum (next page) was more erotically charged; perhaps a prequel to the famous nude Marilyn Monroe calendar poster? The Walters *Odalisque* is surrounded by harem *accoutrements*—

Jean August Ingres, *La Grande Odalique*, 1814. Musée du Louvre

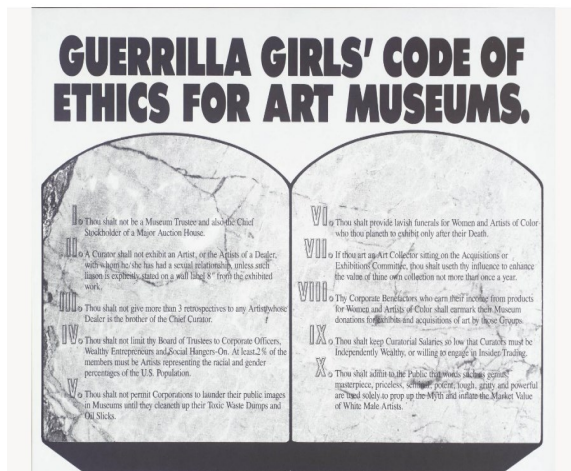
a beautiful fan, a velvet shawl spilling outward, an incense burner, and a light skinned turbaned musician playing a gorgeous stringed instrument, providing entertainment while a very black man stands guard. Although it depicts an imagined scene, for the European viewer, these visual cues set the white woman apart as an object of beauty, deserving of the care and attention of those surrounding her.



Jean August Ingres, *Odalisque*, 1842, oil on canvas. Walters Collection

No wonder the Guerilla Girls chose Ingres women as the epitome of their provocative posters. His works reinforced European stereotypes of the “East,” with sexuality, slavery, and opulent wealth. Their exquisite beauty was equated with the fabled power of region’s rulers in the mid 19th Century. But perhaps their most provocative poster, at the Tate Modern, is a muted stone colored one, resembling the Ten Commandments, renamed:

“CODE OF ETHICS FOR ART MUSEUMS”



*Thou shalt keepeth Curatorial pay so low that curators must be independently wealthy or be willing to engage in Insider Trading.*  
*If thou art an Art Collector sitting on the acquisition Committee, thou shalt use thy influence to enhance the value of thine own collection not more than once a year.*  
*Thy Corporate Benefactors who earned their income on products from women and People of Color shalt earmark their museum donations for exhibits and acquisitions of art by those groups.*

Are the Guerrilla Girls biting the hands that feed them? Apparently not, for they’ve shown their work in nearly ever major museum in the country.

Bravo!”

And I’m proud to be part of a museum that currently is doing a large one-woman show of Joan Tanner’s works as well as the up-coming Beatrice Wood show. In fact, I think SBMA has been a leader in showing as much women’s art as possible given that little art by women was even available before Elisabeth Louise Vigee LeBrun, barely escaping the guillotine, or Berthe Morisot—who might have had no visibility had she not married Edouard Manet’s brother-in-law, and Mary Cassatt, a truly independent woman.

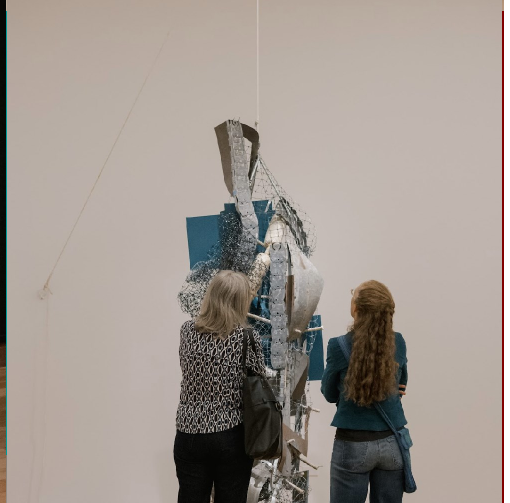
When I first became a docent, there was an entire gallery devoted to the works of the black woman artist, Carrie Mae Weems. Her 1995 *SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL, SPEAK NO EVIL* photographs might very well have been the inspiration for the Guerilla Girls, who are said to be the “conscience of the art world. ■

# The Last Page

New Member Event *Photos by Dune Alford & Susan Lowe*



Photo by Susan Lowe



Lori Mohr, Editor since 2009  
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