

La Muse

DOCENT DATES

April 3

"Poetry and Art"

April 14-18

Docent D.C Trip

April 22 10:30 AM

Book Club at the FRC

May 1

James Glisson, "A Legacy of Giving: The Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree Bequest"

May 15

TBD

June 7, 4-6P.M.

Docent Service Recognition and Provisional Graduation

Summer Break



Wilfredo Lam, *The Casting of the Spell*, 1947, oil on burlap. SBMA. Wright S. Ludington (1900-1993), founding trustee and donor for over 50 years, gave us this piece in 1956. As a core work of our Latin American Collection, it is a delight to again view it in *Serenity and Revolution* curated by James Glisson. The spell it casts merges the artist's Afro-Cuban roots, the Santería blend of Catholicism and African identification with nature. Wilfredo Lam's deep anti-colonialism and interest in surrealism drew him to Europe. His first view of a Picasso painting revealed for him the meaning in art. *The Casting of the Spell* merges the *orisha* priestess with the foliage

and animal world, a fin extending down her back, a budding horned crown hovering above the red of her internal fire. The cubist flare and grace of her moving hands casts its spell through the primitive burlap surface. *Submitted by Ricki Morse*

Dear Docents, Sustainers and Provisionals,

Spring is in full bloom as we barrel ahead, with only three council meetings to go! Provisionals are finishing up their 45-minute *Highlights* tours with evaluations scheduled for May 21st and 22nd. The evaluations process is the cornerstone in maintaining our high quality tours for visitors. I am grateful to those of you who have stepped up as evaluators for this large class. The team chairs have structured the process to have a senior docent with a newer docent doing evaluations together. This is a great way to have more experienced docents modeling the process to ensure continuity of standards with each new class.

Note the date change for Graduation to June 7th, always a festive celebration.

Here is a new docent opportunity: the Board is looking for volunteers to help with our docent website. Rather than having one person responsible, we are forming a committee, which Loree Gold has generously offered to spearhead. Volunteers will be assigned the task of their choice. If interested, contact me, Patty Santiago and/or Loree. Happy Spring touring,

Teda



Teda Pilcher
Docent Council
President

From our **Vice President**

Pattie Firestone



All the **Meet & Greet events** have taken place and were a great success. Thank you, hosts and co-hosts, for your hospitality: Mimi Baer/Judy Dewey, Christine Holland/ Merle Guadagnini, Wendi Hunter/ Cindy Anderson, Irene Stone/Loree Gold, Mike Sandler/ Teda Pilcher, Shirley Waxman/Elizabeth Russell, and Laura DePaoli/Denise Klassen. This was a great re-boot of a tradition that will continue with each new class of provisional docents.

April 13 – 19 – Washington, DC Docent Trip is finalizing the plans for a fun, art filled four days in DC. We will include highlights and photos in the *May La Muse*.

If you have questions, contact me: Pattie.Firestone@gmail.com

Pattie

From our **Membership Chair**

Mary Ellen Alden



As the end of our touring year approaches, please be sure to **RECORD YOUR TOURING** and **RESEARCH** hours either on the spreadsheet available before Docent Council meetings, or by emailing me at mea.mnlaw@gmail.com. If you have any questions about touring requirements, please take a look at the Docent Council By-Laws. Short and readable, the By-Laws are easily accessible on the SBMA docent website under "Business." Simply click the blue link. The By-Laws are a great source of information for other questions you may have regarding leaves of absence, Sustainer status, and more.

Mary Ellen

DOCENT BOOK CLUB NEWS

Gail Stichler



We're still planning our April 22 gathering in the FRC to discuss *Your Brain on Art*. If you have found that the book is more technical than previous books, you can prepare for the discussion by listening to podcasts with the authors. To find them, go to where you access podcasts, select **SEARCH**, then enter *Your Brain on Art*. The search I did provided 7 podcasts with these authors. The one that I first listened to is on ARTed. You may find that is all the information you need to feel prepared for our conversation on the 22nd.

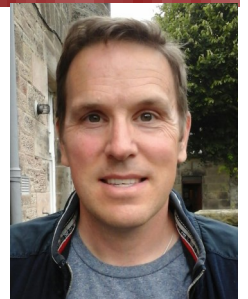
Hopefully, you will be able to join some of us when the authors speak at UCSB May 8.

This book offers insights that reinforce the work that we do as docents. *Gail*

From our **Student Teams Co-chairs**
Nicola Ghersen and Andrew Baker



Happy Spring Break to our student touring team members. A very well earned one, we might add. The number of students who have visited our museum has been consistent since the beginning of the year. Last month we had a total of **402** young people engage with our wonderful student touring docents. While the docents are on break, the Ridley-Tree Education center has come alive with students ages 7 to 13 who are attending our Spring Art Camp, which meets daily from 9 am to 3 pm. This week we are learning about Henri Matisse and creating artworks influenced by him.



Tuesday mornings the whole art camp gets to enjoy a docent-led tour of the galleries, where the conversations have been very engaging, filled with rich art vocabulary and a variety of comments and thoughtful observations. It really feels like the students are attending art school. On Friday afternoon at 2.30 pm families are invited to the All Camp Art show at the Ridley-Tree Center, a highlight of the week. The students' art work is displayed in the hallway of the gallery. Bags of popcorn and popsicles are offered as a treat—families and students delight in this end-of-week celebration, taking pictures of their proud artists next to their works. Docents from the council are more than welcome to attend this art show if they would like. It's amazing and fun to see these new and up coming artists works on view! Looking forward to seeing you all back in the galleries this month as our student touring year is starting to come to end, which is hard to believe.

Nicola and Andrew



Left: Art Camp students enjoying a docent tour; center: Ruby printing her Matisse-inspired stamp; right: creating stained glass windows on plexiglass inspired by Matisse.

From our Evaluations Co-Chairs

Christine Holland and Irene Stone



Your Evaluations Co-Chairs are pleased to report that Evaluations have been completed for all scheduled tours for the Student Teams. It has been quite a task due to the large number of touring docents, and the difficulties with schools sometimes changing their calendars. Evaluations for this year's Adult Team tours have progressed on schedule, with just a few remaining for the special exhibitions.



Christine Holland

Irene Stone

In addition, the Provisional Class is nearing the final stretch of their training year. The 45-minute tours are scheduled for May 21 and 22, and we are setting up teams of Evaluators. Patty Santiago will be performing her magic as usual to set up schedules and prepare for the tours. If you see the Provisionals practicing in the galleries, be sure to say "hello" and provide welcoming encouragement.

As always, and sincerely, we thank the generous Docents who are giving their time to attend tours and provide Evaluations. As we have repeatedly noted, this process is a great way for all Docents to receive thoughtful and helpful feedback. Our Docent Council is proud of its high standards and dedication to providing the best tours for the visiting public.

Christine and Irene

From our Community Speakers Team Leader

Lori Mohr

CSP



VENUE	PRESENTATION	ATTENDANCE
Maravilla Independent	<i>California Impressionism: 1910-1940</i> (Doug)	15
Maravilla Assisted	"	12
Vista Del Monte	"	25
Total Attendance	52	Average Attendance: 17.3

Art Camp

Students enjoying coloring during free time at Art Camp. See the Student Teams report in this issue. Photo from Nicola.



From our Provisional Chair

Patty Santiago



The provisional docents enjoyed several social gatherings this month. On March 6th the class of '23 hosted lunch for the class of '24 at the home of Kristin Frascella, another old tradition revived. Despite the rain, all were treated to a wonderful view of Santa Barbara from Kristin's home. The class has very much enjoyed the small gatherings hosted by senior docents, making them feel welcome indeed. In the classroom they are immersed in the study of Asian art, augmented on March 13th with a "Nature and Spirituality" tour by Shirley Waxman. It was definitely a highlight of the month. They are also continuing to observe student tours and in April will be presenting 2-3 works of art on a student tour. Nicola as Student Teams leader has been very helpful in organizing these observations and hands-on opportunities.

The luncheon photos below are courtesy of co-host Elizabeth Russell from the lunch at Shirley Waxman's.

Patty



From our **Nominations Chair**
Shirley Waxman



Dear Docents,

Serving on the Docent Board is crucial for several reasons. First, it provides strategic direction and governance, ensuring the docent council and the Museum's mission and vision are supported. Second, Board members contribute their diverse expertise, enriching our docent programs, outreach, and overall community impact. Finally, serving on the Board fosters a sense of involvement and stewardship, ensuring the docent council remains strong and relevant.

Here are the nominees for next year. *Shirley*

Nominees for Docent year 2024-2025:

President: Pattie Firestone (2018)

Student Teams: Nicola Ghersen (2013) & Anne-Marie Dunaway (2020)

Vice President: Cindy Anderson (2020)

Research: Barbara Ross ((2020)

Secretary: Ursula Ginder (2022)

Evaluations: Christine Holland (2005) and Laura DePaoli (2000)

Treasurer: Mary Benedict (2023)

Webmaster: Loree Gold (2000)

Membership: Merle Guadagnini (2020)

Nominations Chair: Teda Pilcher (2012)

Adult Teams: Susan Lowe (2020)
and Elizabeth Russell (2023)

Provisional Chair: Patty Santiago

The slate of officers will be presented at the April 3rd Docent Council Meeting. If there are no additional nominations from the floor, the election of officers and chairpersons will be decided by a majority vote of the Active Docents present at this meeting. *Shirley*



From our **Research Chair**
Barbara Ross

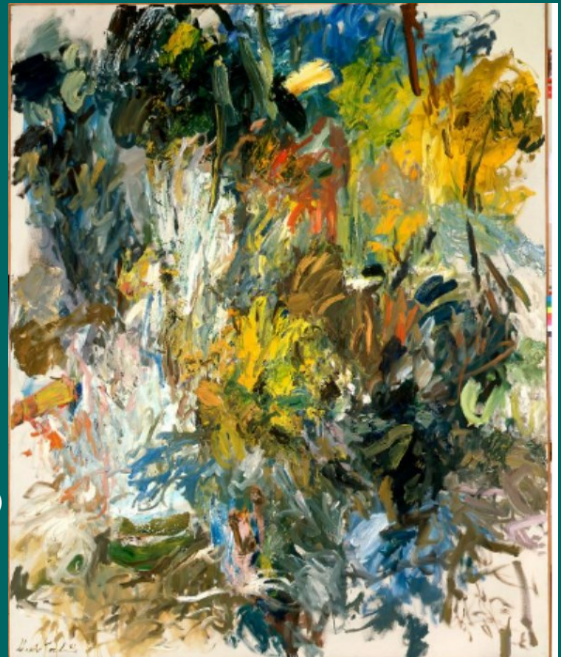


"I must have flowers, always, and always."— Claude Monet

Many of us would agree with Monet, especially as we enter spring, which brings so many beautiful and fragrant flowers to Santa Barbara. This month I am featuring three pieces from our collection that highlight spring's bounty. These artworks do not have research papers, so consider choosing to write about one of them, a perfect spring project that adds to the docent archives.



Left: MA Quan (Chinese, active first half of 18th c), *Spring Flower in Cloisonné and Bronze Vessels, Presenting the New Year, 1731*, ink and color on silk; hanging scroll.



Right: Gerd KOCH (American, 1929-2020) *High Spring #3, 1962*, oil on canvas



Paul NASH (British, 1889-1946) *Spring Woods, 1919*, watercolor and pencil

Serenity and Revolution Viewed Through Latin American Art

By Ricki Morse



The crowning jewel of our *Serenity and Revolution* exhibition is Wilfredo Lam's *Casting of the Spell*, our cover image this month. What better welcome can we offer than Lam's most famous work, *The Jungle*, combining European surrealism, Afro-Cuban revolution and contemporary cubism.



Wilfredo Lam's *The Jungle*, 1943, gouache on paper and canvas, MOMA, NYC.

I'm sure those of you who have stood before this 8' x 7 1/2' work at MOMA, New York, still feel its power to engage viscerally, drawing you into the shifting figures in the sugar cane, an African dance or figures escaping imprisonment? Wilfredo Lam's heritage and vision are all encompassing. Born in Cuba, the child of a Chinese immigrant father and a mother born to an African slave, Wilfredo Lam (1902-1982) was one of eight siblings, immersed in the rituals of Santeria by his godmother, who was an *orisha* priestess. Santeria arose in Cuba, a mixture of African Yoruba beliefs and



Roman Catholicism, a benign god represented by the sun, moon and stars, honoring man's inherent connection with the natural universe.

Encouraged by his family to enter law school, Lam tried it briefly but enrolled in art school in Havana. He found the academic traditions stifling but discovered the work of Pablo Picasso which resonated with his vision. In 1938 he traveled to Paris and met Picasso, beginning a lifelong friendship, declaring themselves cousins. We see Picasso's cubism in the hands of Lam's priestess casting a spell.

Revolution

The melding of Cubo-African art with European surrealism and cubism certainly amounts to an artistic revolution. And the increasing influence of European surrealism in

After meeting Picasso in Paris, Lam visited him in Vallauris on the Mediterranean in 1954.

Latin America was widespread and found a ready place in a culture already steeped in magical thinking in its literature and storytelling. Surrealism sprang initially from the work of Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, and particularly his 1899 book "Interpretation of Dreams."

Fantasy, dreams, and the unconscious mind became valid sources for

Gunther Gerzso, *Mal de ojo*, oil on masonite, 1957, SBMA. The ancient stones of Mayan pyramids, which inspired Gerzso's abstractions, are projected floating in space as the surreal evil eye.



art, particularly surprising when it invades the work of a geometric abstractionist like Gunther Guerszo, whose drawing of Trotsky is in this show.

At the same time political and military revolutions were finding sweeping artistic expression in Latin America. Under the oppressive authoritarian regimes which had replaced colonialism, “Power to the People” and the “Dignity of the Working Man” were drawing followers. Marxism’s message found expression in Mexico through the murals of José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros. In *Man Loading Donkey with Firewood*, Diego Rivera captures the strength of the worker as well as his natural relationship with the donkey. The image projects the dignity of his work and the skill required by the task, achieving the Marxist goal of elevating the simple working man to a cultural hero.



Diego Rivera, *Man Loading Donkey with Firewood*, 1938, pencil and watercolor on paper, SBMA

Serenity

Rufino Tamayo (1899-1991) was a contemporary of the great Mexican muralists. Revolutionary political dogma was the official mission of the artist, while Tamayo’s preferred subject was *Mexicanidad*, the quality of being Mexican. He blended pre-Colombian heritage with European avant-garde elements—Impressionism, Cubism and Fauvism—and is credited as the artist who brought Mexican Modernism to the international art world. His themes were tranquility and pleasure in family settings, paintings of his wife.



Rufino Tamayo, *Dancers over the Sea*, 1947, oil on canvas, Cincinnati Museum of Art. The joyful abandon of the dancers projects Tamayo’s world view.

Born in Oaxaca he began playing guitar as a boy, becoming an accomplished guitarist. When his parents died, he moved to Mexico City under the care of an aunt who operated a fruit stand. At 17 he enrolled in the San Carlos of Fine Arts but found the structured academic work boring and at 21 took a job with the National Archeological Museum making drawings of ancient artifacts. His painted images later reflected these archetypal designs, giving the images a quiet, enduring serenity.

Our drawing of Tamayo by Carlos Oroszco Romero shows a relaxed figure with calm demeanor smoking a cigarette, a newly popular habit. Beside it

is Romero’s drawing of another famous but reclusive Mexican artist, Francisco Goita (1882-1960). Happily, we have a Romero painting in our collection which reflects Tamayo’s influence in its quiet celebration of a mother and child’s belonging.

The *Serenity and Revolution* exhibition explores many of the shifts and experiments in the emergence of contemporary art during the 20th century across a vast emotional spectrum.

One visit is not enough. ■



Carlos Oroszco Romero, *Mujer y niño*, oil on canvas, SBMA

Made by Hand/Born Digital with James Glisson

Photos by Wendi Hunter and Rachel Stengel

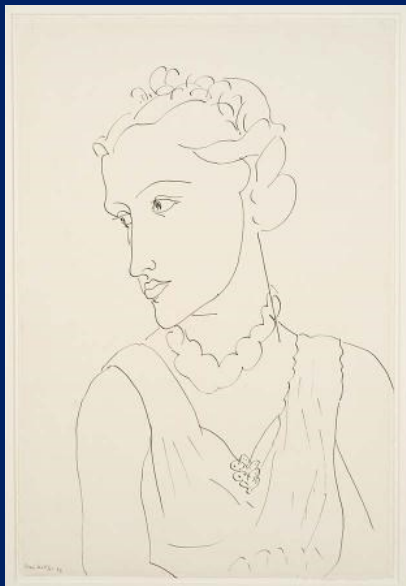


At the March 6 docent meeting, instead of a lecture in the auditorium, curator James Glisson took docents through the show in the Contemporary gallery.

Website description: March 3, 2024-August 25, 2024

The distinction between the digital and hand-made seems clear cut, but this exhibition examines artworks that blur this distinction. The exhibition features artists who use brushes, AI, paint, 3D printers, scissors, magazines printed on paper, digital looms, potter's wheels, Photoshop, and Apple Photo (formerly iPhoto), and who complicate a clean distinction between the hand

made and digital. By continuing to make art by hand but bringing the latest digital tools into the process, these artists subvert the supposedly unstoppable trajectory towards the total digitalization of everything. Their art tells us silicon-based artificial intelligence and our carbon-based brains can and do work together. (See museum website for full description).



Art Camp

Left: Henri Matisse, *Head of a Woman (Lydia Delectorskaya)*, 1937. From the *Serenity and Revolution* exhibition.

Right: Naomi drawing a Matisse face with charcoal at Art Camp. Photo from Nicola.



A Little Mohr Conversation

An Interview with Pattie Firestone

One in an occasional series of docent interviews



Time on Our Side, painted steel, 5' x 8" x 8"
(2015) (Chinese character for Time/Chen)

Lori Mohr: Pattie, you've been a docent for almost 6 years. What drew you to our docent program?

Pattie: After moving from Washington, DC to Santa Barbara in 2016, I joined a Newcomers Club tour of SBMA led by Christine Holland. I did not expect much excitement from the British Painting show on view, but Christine made it come alive! I thought to myself: I want to be able to do that – make something exciting out of something that could be boring. I went to a Docent Recruiting Tea and found all the people there very interesting; people who loved learning and working together. I decided these were my kind of people.

Lori: How nice that you were inspired by seeing one of our own docents in action. Do you have a background in art?

Pattie: I practiced sculpture for 40 years focusing on metal garden sculpture. I majored in studio art in college with an equal number of credits in art history. I chose not get an MFA, so my employment opportunities were limited. In the '80s, Charlie and I lived

and raised our two kids in Venice, CA. In response to Prop 13's cuts in Art Education, three of us started the Westside Arts Center in Santa Monica with afterschool arts classes taught by artists in four elementary schools. In 1990 Charlie and I moved back to DC. There I decided to focus on my own art. But again, I also gravitated towards administration and became President of the Washington Sculptors Group, a guild of some 300 regional sculptors.

Lori: So you've been involved in art on many levels—as an artist, entrepreneur and administrator. In addition to giving back to the community, what do you personally get from your docent role?

Pattie: I love art, I like learning about artists, art history, political and social history. And I like sharing my enthusiasm for what I've learned. As an artist, I like making abstract ideas into tangible or painted steel objects. Docents communicate abstract ideas through other people's art.

Lori: Can you give me an example of how you communicate abstract ideas in student touring?

Pattie: Since I moved here in 2016 I have been practicing Wu Hao Tai Chi. Last year in fact, my teacher, Chao Pang, took a group of us to Taiwan for a conference and competition. In my student tours, I use the balance of yin/yang to find a dynamic balance of opposites in all kinds of art work starting with *Guanyin* pointing to Heaven and Earth and with Eruzku's *Amanda Gorman*. I use a theme of dynamic balance of opposites in my adult Asian tours as well.

Lori: As a docent, it sounds like you've really brought together your martial arts practice, plus the roles of teacher and student. What is the most satisfying part of being a docent for you?

Pattie: Apart from sharing my enthusiasm, I love learning from the students and how they see their world. In a museum, we literally see artists in the past struggling to adjust to changes in their worlds and make con-

nections between seemingly unrelated things. This makes me feel hopeful for the future.

Lori: In your opinion, how has the role of docent changed since you started?

My understanding of the role has evolved from enthusiastically sharing facts to being an advocate for the fundamental value of art in our personal lives and society and promoting the Museum as an integral part of our community. I find that I relax into the job more and more with experience.

Lori: Have we done a good job at keeping docents after investing a year of training?

Pattie: Patty Santiago and her team of Cindy Anderson and Barbara Ross have created a dynamic teaching program which continues to evolve and to better reflect the community. Every docent is different, unique in style, skills and point of view. The most important thing is to listen and support each other as we share our love of art with our visitors.

Lori: Docents as a group nationwide are made largely of baby boomer retirees. As the nature of employment changes, with people working remotely, do you see a way to attract younger docents?

Pattie: In November I will attend the National Docent Symposium biannual conference as the SBMA Docent Council President. This year's theme is "Peer to Peer: Perfecting Your Craft." Change in the volunteer work force has been a theme in the past for the national symposiums. I look forward to hearing new ideas about attracting diverse, younger docents, then sharing those ideas with the SBMA Department of Education and the Council to continue the evolution of our Program. As docents we have an important role as ambassadors from the Museum to its ever-widening public using visual language. I am proud to be part of that mission. ■



Above: *Capitol Leaves of Grass*, painted steel, 8'x10'x10', 2006. Right: Two sculptures at Casa del Herrero installation in 2021: *Ground Waves*, yellow painted steel, 4'x10'x10' (2021), *Leaves of Grass*, red painted steel, 10'x10'x10' (2021)



Goodbye Helene Strobel



Helene Strobel died on March 7 at Sarah House. Many of you will remember Helene's enthusiastic personality, joy for life, and her kind and generous heart. She served on the board, traveled back-and-forth from Chicago, and made deep and abiding friendships— Barbara Carrington, Niki Bruckner, and Helene were in the same class (1996) and remained best friends, often traveling together and celebrating many milestones over the years. She will definitely missed by the Docent Council.



Lori Mohr, Editor , 2009—

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