

## DOCENT DATES

### May 1

Melinda Gandahara:  
Sarah Rosalena's piece  
'Exit Grid' and indige-  
nous weaving

**May 15 meeting** "Job  
Fair" at Ridley-Tree  
Education Center

**June 7, 4-6P.M. RTEC**  
Service Recognition and  
Provisional Graduation

**June 26 10 am**  
James Glisson gallery talk  
on 'Legacy Gifts: exhibit.  
McCormick Gallery



**Vian Sora**, *Last Sound*, 2022, mixed media on canvas, Baltimore MA. Vian Sora, born in Bagdad in 1976, immigrated to the U.S., receiving her MBA from Bellarmine Univ. in Kentucky. Her style synthesizes modern and ancient Iraqi culture to capture natural beauty and the devastation of war and the loss of homeland. "The painting's foundation is charged with dark stains and clashing surface textures, which have been disrupted by a path of vibrant colors that weaves throughout the composition, signifying a journey to harmony within the chaos of misplaced experiences." Last year we acquired two of her paintings which will form the foundation of our solo exhibition of her work in March 2025. *Last Sound*, 2022 echoes the last familiar sound that keeps resonating in life of the refugee. *Submitted by Ricki*

Dear Docents, Sustainers and Provisionals,

The year is winding down as our intrepid Provisionals move one step closer to joining our ranks (see the Evaluations Co-Chair report). We have only two more council meetings. On **May 1st**, the always-inspiring Melinda Gandara will talk about Sarah Rosalena's piece 'Exit Grid' and indigenous weaving. I've seen this piece in the *Born Digital, Made by Hand* exhibit and find it thought provoking, offering insight into the myriad ways in which the digital realm intersects with the tactile world.

Our **May 15<sup>th</sup>** meeting at the **Ridley-Tree Education Center**, will be set up as a 'job fair' where you can hear from team leaders about touring opportunities for the '23-'24 year, including less familiar options of Ten Talks and the Community Speakers Program. Our annual dues will be collected as well—\$35 made payable to SBMA Docent Council. Coffee and donuts will be provided by the Ed Dept. Please make an effort to return your Preference Sheets in a timely manner. The Adult and Student Teams chairs have the arduous task of assigning teams, all done during the summer.

Not to be missed, mark your calendars for the Service Awards Recognition and Graduation Ceremony on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 4-6<sup>th</sup>. Celebrating our New Actives as well as honoring seasoned docents is a great way to end the year!

Happy and sunny touring to all,  
Teda



Teda Pilcher  
Docent Council

From our **Vice President**

*Pattie Firestone*



### **Our DC Trip April 14-19, 2024**

**Eleven of us:** Linda Adams, Barbara Boyd, Bobbi Corbin, Isabel Downs (with Bob Warner), Merle Guadagnini, Christine Holland, Laini Melnick, Thea Van Tonder, Shirley Waxman and I. We visited museums from opening at 10 am until closing at 5 pm, Monday through Thursday. We ate our way through Washington, DC and walked it off as we laughed, learned and bonded over four full days.

**Sunday** night we all walked from the [Cosmos Club](#) to Rasika for amazing Indian food!

**Monday** we spent all day at the [National Gallery](#) including a group tour with a docent who may not have passed our Evaluation – no transitions, did not face us when speaking, and a weak microphone that did not help. Over dinner and drinks at [Cosmos Club](#) bar, we reminded ourselves of why our docents are continuously solid. Even following a less-than-SBMA-quality tour was a learning experience.

**Tuesday** we toured the [Hirshhorn & Sculpture Garden](#), then on to see the Whistler's art in the [Freer Gallery](#), snacked at the National Gallery Sculpture Garden, then waked to the [National Museum of Women in the Arts](#) and ended our museum day with a half-hour at the [Phillips Collection](#) next door to our [Cosmos Club](#). Finally, we walked to the Farm-to-Table restaurant Founding Farmers near George Washington University.

**Wednesday** we toured all three floors of the [National Museum of African American History & Culture](#), then circled back to the [Phillips Collection](#) to spend more time at the Bonnard Exhibition (our SBMA Bonnard did not make the cut, but we know we can see it at home). That night, five of us took a trolley to see the National Monuments lit up in spectacular fashion! The trolley was a welcome break for tired feet.

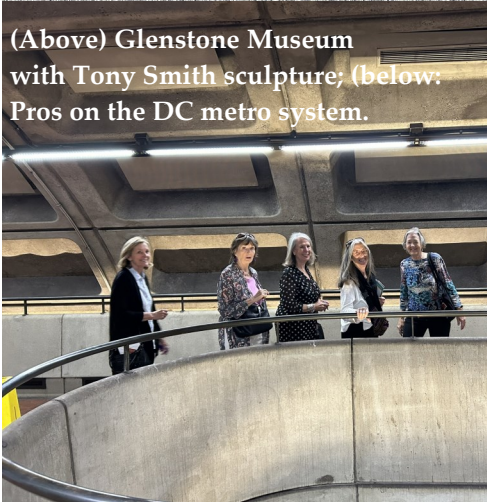
**Thursday** morning, some rushed over for a last look at the Phillips Collection while we waited for our van to the [Glenstone Museum](#) of contemporary art in Potomac, MD where former SBMA docent Sara Bangser (class of 2018) met us for a walk through the sculpture park and gallery, after which we had a nice lunch there. For dinner we went to Sequoia's on the Potomac River in Georgetown, saying good-bye to those who would be leaving the next morning instead of Friday. Isabel and Bob had come to DC early and stayed a couple days longer. All in all, it was a stimulating, fun and delicious time with friends. Ask any of us for more details and stories. And enjoy the photos.

*Pattie*





Hirshorn Gallery with Yayoi Kusama Pumpkin sculpture



(Above) Glenstone Museum with Tony Smith sculpture; (below): Pros on the DC metro system.



Barbara Boyd



Monuments lit up at night



National Gallery side entrance

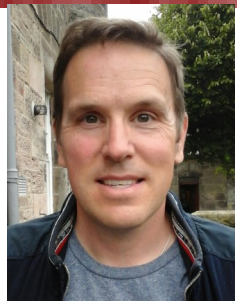


Sustainer Isabel Downs with Bob Warner

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



We had a busy month of student tours in April, a total of **607** students from kindergarten to high school enjoyed their time in the galleries with our wonderful student touring docents. After leading an art-and poetry-making session at the first Docent meeting and lecture in April, Cie Gumucio kept the creative juices flowing during the Friday Focus tour. Docents helped students explore works in “Serenity and Revolution”



and “Janna Ireland: True Story Index.” Then, seated in the McCormick gallery, eighth graders used the prompt “shadows and light” to compose their own poems.

Finally, Carlos Bardales , our SBMA teaching artist, worked with the students to create “identity diptychs” incorporating words that represented truths from their own lives. This looking-thinking-writing-making combination worked well and highlighted the ability of the Museum and the student team docents to engage young visitors using multiple streams of visual input and creativity.

The Provisionals have completed their observations of student tours and are now beginning to present works of art on selected tours. Thank you to all those student touring docents who have been so welcoming and supportive of this activity. If you have been confused in the past about the various student touring opportunities available on the preference sheet. Your questions, and concerns can be answered in person by our Student Team Leaders at our “Docent Job Fair” on Wednesday, May 15th at 10am at the Ridley-Tree Education center. See you all there!

*Nicola and Andrew*

## Ridley-Tree Education Center 1600 Santa Barbara Street, SB, 93101

**PREFERENCE SHEETS for 2024-2025 will be handed out**

**ADULT TOURING opportunities will be described**

**\$35 DOCENT annual dues will be collected  
(payable to SBMA Docent Council)**

**From Christine Holland:** an interesting article with links to films of artists working.

<https://www.openculture.com/2024/04/watch-iconic-artists-at-work-rare-videos-of-picasso-matisse-kandinsky-renoir-monet-pollock-more.html>

From our **Adult Teams Co-chairs**

Denise Klassen & Susan Lowe



Denise Klassen

April started off with a bang with many Special Request tours. Thanks to everyone for the extra effort in covering these. Team members continue to support each other, jumping in to take scheduled tours for fellow members who are unable to fulfill their assignments either through illness or for personal reasons. This really is the essence of teamwork, and we thank you all for pitching in so that we avoid leaving visitors without a scheduled Adult tour.



Susan Lowe

The touring numbers for March continue to be strong, with a total of **539** people attending either a Community Speakers Program (CSP) presentation or attending tours in the Museum.

Lori Mohr gave a wonderful talk to the provisional class on *Impressionism and Post Impressionism* from her CSP presentations. As team leader, she would love to recruit some new members. So if you have an interest in this outreach program—giving art-focused talks at organizations in town and are good at putting together a Power Point, you can contact Lori or sign up on the Preference Sheet. CSP members are furthering art education outside the Museum, encouraging in-person visits, and promoting new exhibitions. Thanks to Lori, Belle, Sarajum and Doug for all your efforts. Learn more about Ten Talks as well, another lesser-known Adult touring option for those interested in an evening assignment.

Speaking of tours, an exciting new show has been announced—"A Legacy of Giving: The Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree Bequests". We are grateful to have had a wonderful response to the call for team members, and have formed a team with touring dates from the opening in July already sent out. This promises to be a very exciting exhibition and I'm sure we're all anxious to see these primarily 19th century French and British landscape paintings, exceptional additions to our permanent collection alongside those previously gifted over twenty-five years of patronage. Be sure to follow a tour with one of our designated team members and learn more about these exceptional paintings from Lady Leslie and Paul Ridley-Tree.

*Susan & Denise*

From our **Community Speakers Team Leader**

Lori Mohr

CSP



April was quiet but in May we have two presentations from Doug and a two-hour talk from Belle at VISTAS lifelong learning, a public venue.

VENUE	PRESENTATION	ATTENDANCE
Alexander Gardens	<i>California Impressionism: 1910-1940</i> (Doug)	12

## From our Evaluations Co-Chairs

Christine Holland and Irene Stone



Christine Holland

The good news is that we have almost completed all the scheduled tour evaluations for this year. The major evaluations still remaining are those for *Highlight Tours* from the provisionals, which will be completed on May 21-22, from 11:00-2:00 each day. Be sure to encourage our future docents when you see them practicing in the galleries.



Irene Stone

Our thanks to all those docents who have volunteered to be evaluators. With such a large number of evaluations scheduled this year, we deeply appreciate their willingness to take on more dates. We know that our evaluation process makes our tours for the public both more professional and more engaging as we support each other in our camaraderie.

*Christine and Irene*

## From our Provisional Chair

*Patty Santiago*

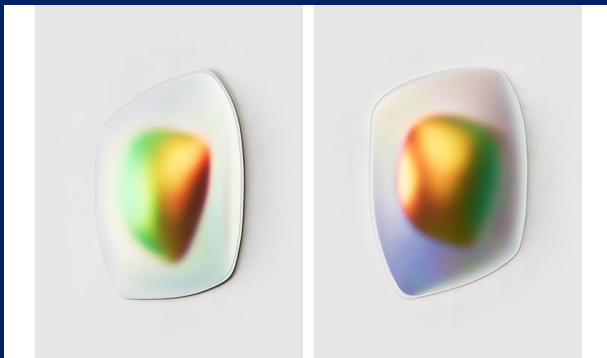


Dear Docents,

We can feel the excitement build as we prepare to finish out the service year by welcoming twenty New Active Docents in June. Seven of the twenty are men, several provisionals are fluent in a second and even third language. But, maybe most importantly, they are enthusiastic and eager to learn. Barbara Ross and Cindy Anderson and I are looking forward to a very successful year as we support them through the final evaluations process.

The three of us would like to thank Lori Mohr for presenting her exceptionally well done talk on "Impressionism and Post Impressionism" to the provisional class on April 10<sup>th</sup>. And thanks also, again, to Ralph Wilson for speaking to the class on "American Art" on April 17.

*Patty*



**In the Making: Contemporary Art at  
SBMA July 21, 2024 – March 9, 2025**

*Gisela Colon, Skewed Square, Phosphorous, 2022,  
blow-molded acrylic, SBMA*

From our **Nominations Chair**  
Shirley Waxman



Dear Docents,

*Warmest congratulations* to our 2024-2025 SBMA Docent Council Board members who were elected by unanimous vote at the April 3 meeting of those docents in attendance. The expertise and leadership of these dedicated colleagues will undoubtedly bring invaluable contributions to our council and help us achieve our shared goals and objectives in support of the Museum's mission.

Please give them your *congratulations* and support.

Shirley

### Docent Council Board 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

From our **Membership Chair**  
Mary Ellen Alden



**Last Call for Hours Reporting!** We have only two more council meetings to report and for me to collect your hours for the year ending June 30th. I need to tally and calculate numbers for those docents earning service pins before June 7th for the Service Recognition portion of our Graduation Ceremony. Pins are a way to honor those docents who have reached milestones of service for all the research prep and touring time you've dedicated! Please either record hours at the table outside the auditorium, at the May 1 meeting or at our meeting May 15 at the Ridley-Tree Education Center. You can also email me at [mea.mnlaw@gmail.com](mailto:mea.mnlaw@gmail.com).

From our **Research Chair**  
Barbara Ross



*"May is the month of expectation, the month of wishes, the month of hope." – Emily Bronte*

In this May *La Muse*, I'd like to focus on the Park Wing entrance and the latest display or artworks. The closest entrance to the parking lot, many visitors come through these doors. For student tours, we think of the spacious reception area as a



Santa Barbara Public Library Foundation rendering, Noozhawk

gathering spot for school groups. As we all know, the area just outside this entrance has been transformed to showcase a beautiful park. The Michael Towbes Library Plaza is expected to open this spring, a new public space for community cultural events—concerts, lectures, post-performance receptions, and art opening receptions. We will no doubt be getting even more visitors using this entrance. The artworks currently hanging there have no research papers, so consider doing one so docents can include them in their student tours, or even for docents ending a *Highlights* tour.

Barbara



**Ann Craven**  
American, 1967-  
*12 Moons*, 2022  
oil on canvas.  
SBMA



**Keith Mayerson**  
American, 1966-  
*Someday we'll find it, the Rainbow Connection, the lovers, the dreamers and me*, 2023, oil on linen, 55 1/8 x 88 in., SBMA



**Tatsuo Miyajima**, Japanese, 1957-  
*Time Waterfall-panel #12*, 2018, computer graphics, LED display, 132 1/4 x 25 1/8 x 12 1/2 in. SBMA



# Vian Sora: Her Presence Through Mythology, History, Conflict and Beauty

Ricki Morse



Vian Sora's life as a refugee and survivor is reflected in the colors and vibrancy of her abstract paintings, allowing us to experience

not only the anguish of loss but also the presence of history and mythology, from darkest black to flaming reds and yellows.

Born in Bagdad in 1976 to a Kurdish family, Vian was reared on stories of her ancestors' migrations through the Middle East since they were driven from their

homeland of Kurdistan in eastern Turkey. When she was three, Saddam Hussein came into power, initiating years of dictatorship and human rights violations. In 2003 the United States invaded Iraq and on the night before the bombing began she fled Bagdad with her family to a distant village, thirty of them huddled in one room as B-52s flew overhead on their way to bomb the capital.



Vian Sora, "Biosphere II," 2022, mixed media on canvas. The writhing foliage reaching for life, captures Vian's concern for our natural environment and her belief in the power and joy of growth.



Top image: Vian Sora at her 2022 exhibition in L.A. at the Luis de Jesus Gallery. Of her artwork she says, 'It was my way to resist'.

Sora's family were prominent gallery owners and art auctioneers, representing major modernists, many of whom she met as her interest in art grew. Describing herself a self-trained artist, she never took an art class, developing her skills as natural expressions of life as it happened and the evolution of her mythic history.

Vian's uncle, a health minister in Bagdad, had been kidnapped and later killed, the family home ravaged. Determined to bring her parents with her but unable to obtain visas, they moved to Dubai and Vian applied through the United Arab Emirates for humanitarian help, finally getting visas for her and her American husband. Exhausted by the ordeal, they settled in his hometown of Louisville, ultimately gaining visas for her parents, and settled in Kentucky in 2009 where she earned her MA in computer science at Bellarmine University while settling her parents in their new world.

Vian's paintings are re-experiencings of her personal history, enriched by a deep understanding of history and the mythologies it creates, begin-



Dilman harbor buildings, World Heritage Site. Now a part of Bahrain, from 1250 B.C. Dilman was a major link in Persian Gulf trading.

ning in the cradle of civilization, Mesopotamia. The ancient city of Dilman on an island in the Persian Gulf was a trading crossroads in the Middle East, using the first script, the Sumerians' *cuneiform* language. Dilman, 2600 BC, flourished as a source of fresh spring water in a salty sea and was thought of as having once been the



Vian Sora, *Dilman*, 2022, oil and mixed media on canvas, SBMA.

Garden of Eden. Her 2022 painting of the city's ruins captures the rising green face of the island or a temple, the shore, sun, moon, sea rising out of a dark past, described in cuneiform script on the blue plaque below, giving Dilman life today. A quiet serenity pervades the surface, reflecting its ancient history and endurance through the ages.

The artist's process begins with the canvas spread on the studio floor. She first applies spray paint, acrylic, or pigments to her canvas or paper and then uses materials including Velcro and glass to strip away. She considers this process to be a metaphor for the residues of destroyed cities or woodlands. "I employ these atmospheric type surfaces and layer them with lattices whose optical ambiguities create illusions of light and movement, time and space. My intention is to suggest the turmoil that can disturb the thin surface of social order, and its effect of the human soul."



Vian Sora, *Forest Remains I*, 2022, oil and mixed media on canvas, SBMA

Vian finds a deep resonance between the destruction of war and the decay of our natural habitat through ecological destruction. Our painting, *Forest Remains I*, 2022, employs Vian's blending of abstract and figurative shapes, overlaying shapes as if seen through a forest, the gold of survival pushing upward into a bird's crown of feathers. The movement is grounded in the tunneling movement of a primitive lizard into the depths and observed by a skirted mythic goddess figure emblazoned with a scarlet scarf. The opposing forces competing, dark decay burrowing down and golden plumage rising. The overall movement is upward, rising, expressing Vian's joy in beauty and commitment to survival, her own and that of the universe.



Cuneiform receipt for traded goods, carved in stone, earliest written language originating around 3400 BC in Sumeria.

We look forward to our Vian Sora solo exhibition in March 2025,

developed by James Glisson, our contemporary art curator, with the collaboration of the Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Kentucky, and the Asia Society in Houston, Texas, where the exhibition will travel after opening here. ■

## Vian Sora Bibliography

Annabel Keenan, "Vian Sora's Vibrant Paintings Shine In the Darkest of Times," **Cultbytes**, November 2022.

Rawaa Talass, "Iraqi-American painter Vian Sora's work finds the beauty in decay," **Arab News**, January 27, 2023.

Veronica Esposito, "it Was My Way to Resist, The Iraqi Born Artist Who Grew Up Under a Dictator," **The Guardian**, October 23, 2023.

Katie White, "Iraqi-American Artist Vian Sora Evokes the Splendor of Eden and Ancient Assyria in her Paintings," **artnet**, November 2023.

Amanda Randone, "Debut in New York," **Vogue Arabia**, December 13, 2023.

## Gallery Browsing with Ricki



Freya Douglas-Morris (b.1980)  
London, *Evening Sun*, 2021.  
*Imaginary landscapes.*

(La Muse continues on the next page)

## THE LAST PAGE

### *Steps* (after the Jana Ireland photograph)

*Josie Martin*

(inspired by Cie Gumucia's Poetry workshop April 3)

That staircase shadow plays on  
Paul William's architectural grace.  
When we lived in Hancock Park  
we had a staircase with a tall window  
halfway up, 'They used to have natural  
ventilation,' said my long dead friend, Sharon.

Dear Sharon said that in 1981, forty-three years ago!  
Maybe not long after Jana Ireland was born. And I  
loved that house. Its gentle flow of un-conditioned air,  
our small son's smudgy dirty hand prints on the wall  
of the staircase. He's fifty-one-and-a-half now.  
He flies, flows down steep snowy mountains,  
grace out of a helicopter that drops him  
somewhere on an Eaglecrest, Valdez...

Mat-Su Valley frozen, far far away.

His mother worries, like the drones  
of those helicopters swirling over  
dangerous Hancock Park nights.

We got burgled three times!

But we stayed 21 years.

Sometimes I wonder,  
does the staircase  
miss our shadows?  
Our grace?



*Jana Ireland , Hancock Park, Number 1*



Lori Mohr, Editor , 2009—

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