

La Muse

DOCENT DATES

9:15 AM Social Hour
10 AM Meeting/lecture
(non-meetings are in blue)

March 5

Susan Tai "Tibetan Art" 10 AM
Chicago Trip Meeting 9 AM
(auditorium)

March 19

James Glisson "Elliott Hundley;
Proscenium"

April 2

Vote for Docent Board;
"Putting the Pieces Together",
Docent Touring Dialogue

April 27-May 2.

Docent Spring Trip: Chicago

May 5th

Book Club 10:30 AM

May 7

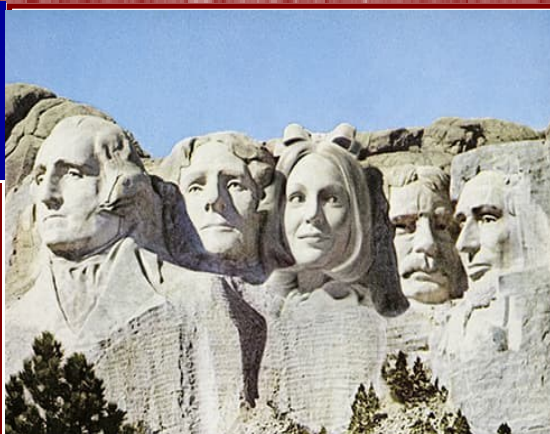
James Glisson "Vian Sora:
Outer Worlds"

May 21

Allyson Healey "Letter Forms"

May 30

Graduation and Service
Recognition Ceremony,
4-6 PM



Conceptual artist Hank Willis Thomas (b. 1976), appropriates published images to expose social stereotyping, particularly of gender and race. In *Behind Every Great Man* (2015) he replaces Roosevelt's face in the Mount Rushmore sculpture with the face of a pleasant housewife, jarringly out of place among the stern visages of presidents, reminding us of the natural order of society. *Submitted by Ricki*

Dear fellow Docents,

Spring is that time of year when we as a Council elect new officers for the Docent Council Board. As the immediate past President, Teda Pilcher is the Chair of the Nominations Committee, made up of the current President and the Vice President elect. This three-year commitment brings continuity and experience to those existing and new leadership positions on the board. Teda will describe those roles in her message so that you have an idea of what you would be committing to.

Serving on the board is a way to participate in the Council at a whole new level, organizing things behind the scenes in coordination with fellow docents. This body is really the engine that drives our activities—carrying out our by-laws, and negotiating change as needed. As an all-volunteer organization, we depend on YOU to make it run smoothly. We have great support from the Museum. The Docent Council operates under the umbrella of the Department of Education with Director Patsy Hicks supporting and inspiring us with stimulating speakers and creative events. Patsy has a very resourceful, efficient team behind her, including Molly Kemper who organizes the Student Touring schedule. Patty Santiago as our Docent Coordinator not only organizes the Adult Touring calendar, but also teaches, leads, and nurtures the Provisional Class each year, turning out educated, enthusiastic, flexible docents. We could not exist without such amazing support from the Museum in the form of these key staff members. The rest is up to us. If you can make this commitment of time, I hope you will take the opportunity to serve on the board and be an integral part of what makes this Council the amazing, high-quality organization that it is.

Pattie Pattie.Firestone@gmail.com



Pattie Firestone
Docent Council
President

From our **Vice President**
Cindy Anderson



Greetings Fellow Docents,
We have some exciting events coming up this Spring!

March 5th Chicago Trip Participant Meeting

I will be holding a meeting for those of us going to Chicago at 9:00 in the auditorium before the Docent Council meeting next week. This is an important meeting, so please let me know if you're unable to attend or if you have any questions. cjndrsn2@aol.com

March Provisional Luncheons/Wine & Bites Gatherings

We are looking forward to spending more time together and getting to know our Provisional docents a little better. If you haven't sent in your RSVP, please do so today. Search your emails for ail@mail.punchbowl.com.

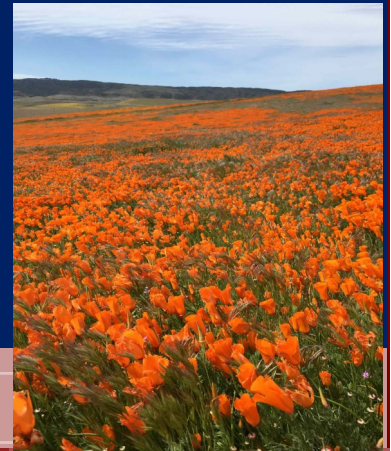
April 2nd Docent Council Meeting

Be sure to highlight your calendar for our April 2nd meeting, inspiringly titled, "Putting the Pieces Together". We will be hearing from our own docents about touring ideas, techniques, and dialoguing with each other in a creative way.

Looking forward to seeing us bloom this Spring in many ways.

Happy touring!

Cindy



Antelope Valley California Poppies, (detail) 2019. Photo courtesy of Doug

From our **Membership Chair**
Merle Guadagnini



Hello Fellow Docents,

I am happy to report that so far this month I have received 55 Docent Hours submissions for January using the Google form. This is a considerable increase in use of the new form from the previous months. And overall there are only 12 docents who have not yet submitted January hours. There has been some confusion on the form asking about number of meetings attended since last reporting, so I have changed the wording in the hopes of clarifying the question for everyone, asking how many meetings you attended in the previous month.

Thank you, Docents, for your successful participation in our new system of reporting. Remember, these hours provide a record of your volunteer hours that go toward earning a Service Award pin for 5, 10, 15, 20 + years of docent activity. So it's valuable data!

Gratefully, *Merle*

From our **Student Teams Co-chairs**
Nicola Ghersen and Ann Marie Dunaway



In March we will have a total of 356 students tour our museum, which will make Spring Break—the 24th-27th—very welcome for our student touring docents, a much-deserved hiatus from the busy month. Thank you to everyone who has been playing musical chairs with the FRC being closed and Ludington Court being reinstalled. It is a LOT right now. But the final results will be so worth it.



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 team docents for your mentoring of our docents-in-training.

Our Artful Making project planned by teaching artist Itoko Maneo for the Spring is inspired by the Ancient world and a vessel from China—**Funerary Storage Jar (Neo Jar), 27th c. BCE - 24th** on view in our Asian gallery. Students from 2nd grade and up will decorate their own Chinese vessel using watercolors and colored pencils. They will be decorating their vessel with various types of wavy lines and then will have fun learning Chinese calligraphy and painting characters on their vessel and finishing by enjoying painting in blank areas with color. These art projects are so popular with our school groups. If you have ever observed the students working you will noticed how happy and engaged they are making these art projects. Even though they are all working on the same art project the varsity of ideas and colors is so inspiring.



Happy Spring everyone,
Nicola and Anne Marie

ART EDUCATION, from the Museum's 75th Anniversary Catalogue:

“Already in that first year [1941] the Museum established itself as a cultural leader in the community. The range of educational and cultural activities that many museums in the country have adopted only in the past few decades were in fact part of the Museum's identity and agenda from its very inception. Although the next year, 1942, is best remembered for the completion of the grand McCormick Wing and Gallery donated by Katherine McCormick in honor of her husband Stanley, the year was also marked by the creation of the Emma Wood Gallery **dedicated to children's art education, quite possibly the first in the country. A highly active space used regularly for art-making demonstrations and classes, this room replaced the Junior Art Center and was the precedent for the Family Resource Center.** Classes were held four days a week. Students' works were frequently exhibited on the walls and the room boasted an 'unusually fine collection of color reproductions of works of art.'”

From our **Adult Teams Co-chairs**

Susan Lowe and Elizabeth Russell



Hello Fellow Docents,

Tour attendance in January was a bit lower, which is typical for this month. The average number of visitors hovered around five per tour, and we had five tours with no visitor attendance. A question has come up regarding what to do if you wish to do a tour for friends or an organization that you are a part of or support. Any opportunity to introduce more people to the Museum is always



welcome! The rule of thumb is as follows:

1. If it is a short informal tour with fewer than five guests, there's no need to get permission to tour. Just be mindful of when and where you do the tour to prevent conflict with scheduled tours and/or events.

2. If it is a regular tour (45 minutes) and five or more will attend, you'll need to get permission through Patty Santiago who will make arrangements, as this will be considered a "Special Request" tour and its details (date, number attending etc.) will need to be recorded in the Red Book under "Special Requests."

3. For either tour above, invite any museum visitors that may be observing to join in on your tour.

Looking for Docents! The Elliot Hundley Touring Team that starts in April has space available for docents wishing to join. Please contact team leader Laura Depaoli, lauradepaoli@icloud.com if interested.

Sharing Best Practices: Red Book Docent Notes: Josie has posted that it's a great idea to mention the Siquieros Mural (located in its own gallery in front of the Museum) to your visitors, even if you are not touring it. She had some repeat visitors to the Museum who had never been told about it and they really appreciated hearing about it.

Happy Touring!

Susan and Elizabeth

David Alfaro Siqueiros, *Portrait of Mexico Today*, SBMA



From our **Community Speakers Team Leader**

Lori Mohr



VENUE

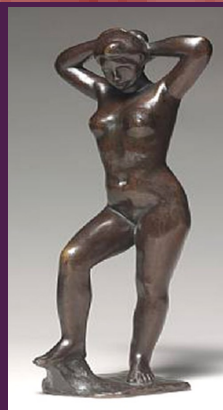
Maravilla Assisted (Darcie)

PRESENTATION

"Antiquity to Modernity:
The Evolution of Bronze Sculpture"

CSP

ATTENDANCE 21



From Darcie's Presentation
using the SBMA collection:

Aristide Maillot (French, 1861-1944), *Bather Putting Up Her Hair*, 1930, bronze. SBMA

From our Evaluations Co-Chairs

Christine Holland and Laura DePaoli



Evaluations of Adult and Student tours are proceeding well, and we thank evaluators for sending us their written evaluations in a timely manner. In February, we completed evaluations of the 8-Minute talks presented by the Provisional Docent Class. We thank the volunteer evaluators who gave their time and experience to this process. All went beautifully and we congratulate each of the class members on their good work.



Christine Holland and Laura DePaoli

From our Provisional Chair

Patty Santiago



The provisional docents successfully completed their 8-Minute Talks on Wednesday, February 19th. As always, a huge thank you to the evaluation team: Christine Holland, Ann Hammond, Teda Pilcher, Laini Melnick, Laura DePaoli, Pattie Firestone, Elizabeth Russell, Susan Lowe and Denise Klassen.

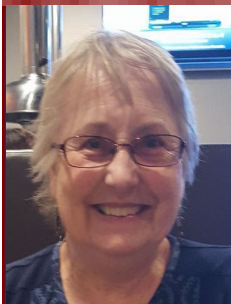
On February 12th, Ralph Wilson gave a PowerPoint presentation on “The Legacy of the Renaissance”, which, as usual, was excellent. Also, research papers have been completed and are ready to be uploaded to the Docent Council website. And finally, during our short, busy February, the provisional docents have been learning from and enjoying the student tours they have been observing.

On March 12th Lori Mohr will be returning to the classroom to give provisional docents a presentation on European Art of the 19th century tailored to the re-installation of the Ridley-Tree Gallery.

Patty

Docent Book Club News

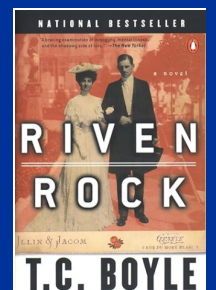
From Gail Stichler



Our next SBMA Book Club meeting will be Monday, May 5, at 10:30am. The book for this meeting is *Riven Rock* by T. C. Boyle. The novel is about Stanley and Katherine McCormick. The hope is that the book will give us a deeper understanding of this couple who lived in Santa Barbara and how our collection benefited from the many gifts of art

from them. This is not a biography. The Boston Globe described it: “As romantic as it is informative, as colorful as it is convincing. Boyle combines his gift for historical re-creation with his dazzling powers as a storyteller.”

Any questions? Email me at gmstichler@aol.com Happy Reading! *Gail*



From our Nominations Chair

Teda Pilcher



Dear Docents,

It's an exciting and challenging mission to fill the many Docent Council Board positions opening up for the 2025-2026 service year with upcoming President Cindy Anderson. Fortunately, between New Actives and our formidable Senior Docents, we have a large pool of committed volunteers to choose from.

In her message, Pattie described the structure of the Council, where the board fits into the Museum departments, and key support staff for the Docent Council. What you may not know is exactly what your fellow docents do on the board. You can read descriptions of the roles and responsibilities in the By-Laws on our website but here I will go over them in a less formal way, starting with Barbara Ross, who assists Patty Santiago leading the Provisional class as well as acting as Research Chair, managing all new papers posted on our Docent Website. This year we have Student Teams Co-Chairs Nicola Ghersen and Anne-Marie Dunaway who organize six teams for each school day and additional ad hoc special requests, reaching some 700 students each month of the school year, which includes Summer Camp docent tours. All these tours are coordinated and scheduled by Molly Kemper, no small task in logistics.

Adult Teams Co-Chairs Susan Lowe and Elizabeth Russell organize tour dates for 13 Teams—from *Ten Talks*, to *Highlights*, to *Special Request* tours that come in. They also collect data on how many visitors attend said tours during the year. Lori Mohr is team leader for the Community Speakers Program, our Docent Council Outreach Program that comes under the umbrella of Adult Teams. Last year the CSP team gave presentations to 687 people in organizations both public and private, many of whom visited the Museum on Special Request tours.

Membership Chair Merle Guadagnini manages the reporting of all docent volunteer hours needed by the Museum for grant applications at the end of each fiscal year. Merle also tallies those hours for service awards and coordinates the ceremony that takes place in May. As Treasurer Mary Benedict keeps track of your dues and how we spend it. Ursula Ginder as Secretary takes the Minutes at our board meetings and initiates social communications when cards and flowers are given.

Maybe the most unappreciated team is Evaluations with Co-Chairs Christine Holland and Laura DePaoli who coordinate and manage the peer review process for Active Docents every two years as well as for the Provisionals, hearing all their talks, including the final *Highlights* they must complete for graduation. That's a lot of evaluations to schedule. The Website Team led by Loree Gold deals with all research, referencing and cataloging mountains of information so our website continues to be a useful communications tool and a go-to resource for learning about new and existing works in our collection.

Nominations for new officers remain open until March 15th. Any Active Docent can submit a name to the Committee, including on the day of the vote. Nominees will be published in the April edition of *La Muse*. Two days later, at the April 2nd meeting, unless there is an additional nomination from the floor, we will vote on the slate presented in *La Muse*. The election will be determined by vote of those Active Docents attending the meeting. If you have questions, you may contact me.

Teda Pilcher

From our **Research Chair**
Barbara Ross



"It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold, when it is summer in the light and winter in the shade." – Charles Dickens

As I read this quotation recently, I realized that it accurately describes the current weather in Santa Barbara. I wake up in the morning and turn on the heat for a few hours. Outside the sun is up and before I know it, I'm wearing shorts and a tee-shirt while standing in the bright sunlight. It's perfect weather for walking or gardening in the afternoon hours, but soon the winds produce a chill air that forces me to grab my puffer jacket in order to be comfortable. As I walked through the Ridley Tree Gallery one afternoon, I found myself drawn to this painting, reminding me of the colors of spring.

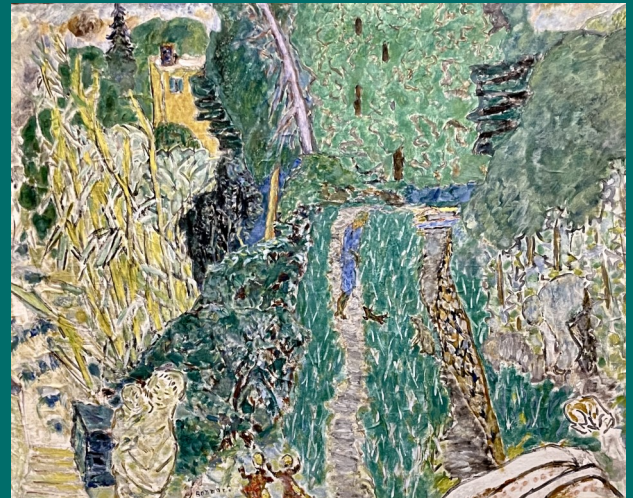
This piece would be a perfect addition to a student or adult tour because of the timeliness of its content. A research paper on our website done by Pricilla Brown Sims in 2001 offers us useful information.

"Jardin au Petit Pont has none of the structure associated with traditional landscapes. The elements of the composition are piled up, not distributed in depth of space. Everything, even the small patches of blue sky are brought forward and represented on a single plane. The entire canvas is covered with color, spots, and tangled shapes through which no apparent air circulates. It's as though all classical forms of imagery and composition have exploded.

There is a garden path, generally a perspective device, but it runs up the canvas rather than moving deep into the garden. Forms are difficult to identify at first glance. It is not until one contemplates the scene for a time that figures emerge in the garden and a house appears in the distance. Bonnard places some objects (i.e., the small bridge, a woman carrying a child and two small children playing) on the lower edge of the composition where they are abruptly cut off by the edges of the painting. This device cleverly allows the viewer to feel closer to the scene rather than be just a spectator from a distance."

What a perfect piece for announcing the arrival of Spring.

Barbara



Pierre Bonnard, (French, 1867-1947), *Garden with Small Bridge (Le Jardin au Petit pont)*, 1937 oil on canvas. 39 x 48 7/8 in. SBMA, Bequest of Wright S. Ludington



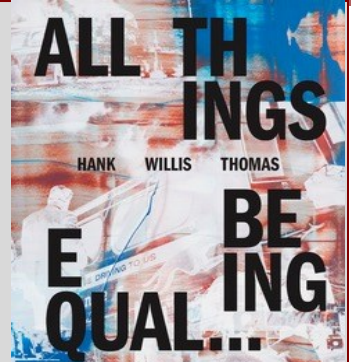
Photo by Barbara Ross

The Curatorial Revelations of Hank Willis

By Ricki Morse



After soaking in Hank Willis Thomas's *All Things Being Equal*, Aperture Press, 2017, I found a fresh way of looking and an informed way of seeing. We are drawn into the company of a philosophically rich and artistically gifted family's ability to reveal the corporate influences operating in our published world.



Hank Willis Thomas, *All Things Being Equal*, Cover Image, Aperture and the Portland Art Museum, Oregon, 2018.



Hank Willis Thomas, "Slack Power," *Unbranded: Reflections in Black by Corporate America*, 1968-2008, Digital C-Print.



Hank Willis Thomas, *Strange Fruit*, bronze sculpture, 2011. In the song, the lyric "Strange Fruit Grows on Southern trees," refers to the frequency in the South of lynching black men.

The splintered words of the book's title reflect the complexity and ill-siveness of equality. Unlike a museum curator, Thomas searches newspapers and advertisements for images of our world, and what he finds challenges popular beliefs not only about equality but about our views of race and gender.

"I started thinking about logos as our generation's hieroglyphs," said Thomas in a 2015 interview with *The Brooklyn Rail*. "They can be embedded with so much meaning, and I really wanted to play off that." As black men were becoming upwardly mobile, Thomas found a black man in plaid slacks in a slick magazine ad, removed the signage, and left us with a stylish middle class man in the same year Martin Luther King was shot. Many images of black men associated them with agility and strength in sports, enhancing their history as slaves confined to hard labor. Thomas's sculptures of black men chained to game balls draws the comparison to team owners and the repetition of slavery's history.

The equating of black men with physical prowess in the media reinforces their identification with physical strength as their primary asset, and in his review of public images, Thomas found a consistent stereotype



Hank Willis Thomas, "Alive with Pleasure! Chorus Line," *Fair Warning Exhibition*, 2010, Digital C-print.

also being applied to the appearance of women. They were all single, young, pretty, energetic, inviting attention, far removed from marriage, motherhood and maturity. This selective identity of women's power lay not in accomplishments or abilities but in their attractiveness to men.

Thomas invites us to consider the subtle yet powerful effect of the popular image of Blacks and women as less than, effectively enforcing an inherent inequality within society, elevating the white male as superior to others in the subtle but powerful language of public imagery.



Mother and son, Deborah and Hank Thomas, Getty Image.

Hank Willis Thomas (b. 1976) is the son of Deb Willis Thomas, a famous artist, author and curator whose pioneering research focused on cultural histories envisioning the black body, women and gender. She was a celebrated photographer, acclaimed historian of photography, MacArthur and Guggenheim Fellow, and University Professor and Chair of the Department of Photography & Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. As a single mom, she took Hank along to her classes, introduced him to her circle of artists and professors, and gave him the philosophical grounding which informed his work as a conceptual artist. He wrote, "While I grew up, my mother worked all the time. She was essentially the

only scholar actively researching the work of photographers of African descent, on a national and international level, without fellowships and very little institutional support. Persistent and with a belief that the work was worthy of a place in the history books, she was a die-hard idealist. These days, she receives fellowship and awards with ease, but for many years she toiled alone."

In 2013 Hank married Rujeko Hockley, who was a curatorial assistant at the Studio Museum in Harlem. They became one of the top power couples in the art world, each in their own way advancing the cause of racial equality, while Rujeko became the associate curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art.



Husband and wife, Hank Willis Thomas and Rujeko Hockley.



Left: Hank Willis Thomas, "Slavery," bronze sculpture, 2018. Right: Hank Willis Thomas, "History of the Conquest," brass and bronze sculpture, 2017, an ironic, meticulous rendering of a small black boy riding a snail. A bitter and amusing rendition of the progress of the black equality movement—as if, one might as well be amused, since it seems to be going nowhere.

Thomas's commentary on racial inequality in 2017-2018 ranged from the brutality of slavery to witty depictions of the historical progress of integration and it is this broad scope which endows his power,

allowing the viewer a full range of response to the widely varying artistic media. From collaged photographs to bronze sculptures, from historical views to contemporary scenes, he shares a wide personal response to his experience as a Black man living in today's America. The artist says he is "re-righting history" with his work.



Hank Willis Thomas, "The Cotton Bowl," *Branded* exhibition, 2011, Digital C-print. "Branded" refers to corporate advertising's constant repetition of dehumanizing identities for less powerful groups, in this case, blacks whose only skill is physical strength and women whose only value is their appearance.



Our acquisition of his recent *Ex Parte U.S.*, 2024 expands his viewed humanity to include a reworked vintage photograph of Japanese Americans reciting the Pledge of Allegiance being relocated to concentration camps during WWII.

The maturing of his work becomes apparent in the commemorative sculptures he was commissioned to design and build in recent years. From the 2022 *The Embrace*, the Martin Luther King memorial in Boston, to the Davidson College *With These Hands* honoring the slave labor that built the school, he embodies the power of love

Left: Hank Willis Thomas, "Ex Parte U. S., 2024," Paint and UV print on Retroreflective Vinyl mounted on Dibond, SBMA. The figures only appear when the image is lighted, a subtle reminder that truth is often denied or hidden, as is the bitter irony of the Pledge of Allegiance the women are taking in the face of their betrayal.

and caring among all peoples as we begin to get things right. ■



Hank Willis Thomas, "With These Hands," bronze weathered hands commemorating the slaves who gave their labor to construct the buildings of Davidson College in North Carolina, 2023



Hank Willis Thomas, "With These Hands," bronze weathered hands commemorating the slaves who gave their labor to construct the buildings of Davidson College in North Carolina, 2023

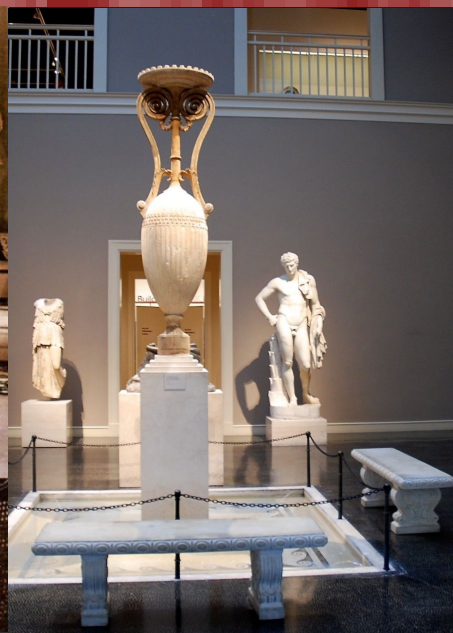
Sculpture installed in Boston Common, Boston, Massachusetts, 2022.

Docent Council 1960

"The Sterling Morton Wing was inaugurated in 1962. To make particularly effective use of this increased gallery space were **the growing number of enthusiastic docents whose program had just been established in 1960 and who were — and remain — critical in increasing the Museum's accessibility to the community.**"

In both Pattie's and Teda's messages about the election of new officers, the theme of service and continuity came through. Whether you are a soon--to-be New Active Docent or an experienced Senior, you are part of the Council's long history. I came across the excerpt from the Museum's 75th Anniversary Catalogue. According to Patsy, it was the Junior League who took on the task of training the first docents and became docents themselves. I felt such a sense of pride reading about the birth of our Council, and the educational agenda of the Museum we so passionately serve through volunteerism. —LM

The Last Page: The Life of SBMA's Lansdowne Hermes



Above: SBMA's Hermes at The Getty for conservation. Private use photo. In-house only.

Left: Photo by Barbara Ross February 2025



Lori Mohr, Editor 2009—
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