

## Curator's Corner: Oceania Gallery

Bob Marshall

To explore one of the far corners of the earth, and the museum, Docent Muse reporter Bob Marshall met MIA Director and AOA Curator Evan Maurer in Gallery 201, Oceania. Here are highlights from Evan's tour:

How might you get kids to understand where this art comes from? Ask them if they know where Hawaii is. Tell them there are many islands like Hawaii in the Pacific, covering thousands of miles, stretching from Hawaii to Australia. You might mention that these islands are south of China, and in fact these islands were first populated by people coming out of China and southeast Asia, about 40,000 years

ago. The map on the wall shows that we divide the Pacific Islands into Australia and three groups: Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia (Latin and Greek for Black Islands, Smaller Islands and Many Islands). The focus of our collecting, however, has been Melanesia and Polynesia, and it is probably useful to just concentrate on those two – if you want to make regional distinctions with your group.

If you divide the gallery diagonally, the northeast half is Melanesian material, from Papua New Guinea and the surrounding islands, including New Ireland and the Admiralty Islands. Most of these objects have been in the collection for a number of years and



include the large pieces you've probably used on your tours. If I were bringing someone into this gallery for just a highlight or two, I would certainly include one of our New Ireland objects – the Standing Figure with Pan Pipes or the Malagan Pole. They are as good as it gets.

In the case on the north wall are objects from Papua New Guinea. We have so much from this island because it produces so much – because of its resources, the durability of its peoples' rituals, and the inaccessibility of much of the island. Unlike the smaller islands of Polynesia and Micronesia, where Western missionaries and travelers have co-opted local culture, people in the jungles of New Ireland and New Guinea are still producing their historic ritual materials.

As you look around the gallery you'll note that the human figure is the most common subject. Side by side in this Papua New Guinea case are two of my favorites, and you can cover a number of themes just by comparing them. The great *Asmat Dance*

*Costume* is notable first in what it is made of: raffia, feathers, shells and other materials from nature. When a guy gets into that, he is transformed into a jungle spirit. This piece personifies the spiritualization of nature. The tie between the human world and the natural world is an important theme in this gallery, and you can also see it in the small *Bioma Figure* next to it. The abstracted patterns that fill the body tell you that it comes from a lush jungle area. It's beautifully balanced, curvilinear, symmetrical, very schematized.

Papua New Guinea is [Assistant Curator] Joe Horse Capture's favorite, and he particularly likes these two bowls [10, 11 on the floor of the case]. They are displayed upside down so we



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can admire the free form of the design, anthropomorphic and botanical – similar to the *Bioma Figure*. One thing you could easily do with kids is ask them to look for botanical designs, see how many shapes like leaves, for instance, they can find, and use that to point out the connection to nature of these societies.

The southwest half of the gallery contains our Polynesian collection, and it may be easier to start there. You'll notice that almost everything in the south- and west-wall cases has been acquired in recent years. The major exception is this great Moai Kavakava from the Easter Islands, which was purchased when I worked here in the '70s.



The object you'll probably want to begin with is the Maori Poutokomanawa in the center case. Joe considers this piece a "given" for any highlights tour in this area, as does [Curatorial Assistant] Molly Hennen, who calls him "the Dude." Where would you have found him? Well, he was a post figure in a Maori longhouse (we should put up a photograph), so you can use him to make a connection between Maori art and architecture. Look at the swirling lines covering his face. Maori tattoos are marks of identification, even today. Maori chiefs in the 19th century used to copy their face design as their signature!

You can feel the power in his hands, which cover his stomach, the center of the body and a spiritual center. I think the pose relates to fecundity as well as spirituality. You can sense power in the trunk-like legs. And notice the scowls on all the Maori figures. Look also for a tongue sticking out – a symbol of power, a sign of aggression. The curvilinear, interconnected surface design activates all our Maori figures. There is a wonderfully free sense of design throughout the Pacific Islands. In the Malagan pieces you see it in the painted color as well as the carving; in the Maori pieces it's incised in the wood.

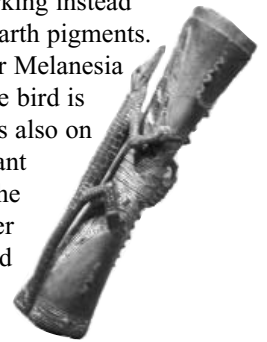
For contrast, you can point out the abstract design in some of the more functional pieces in the Polynesia case. The neckrest and stool, both objects of status, are an extreme of elegance and simplicity, very rarely with any carving on them. These pieces are typical of Fiji and the Cook Islands, and you can see why they were popular with 20<sup>th</sup> century European designers. Another example of pure form is the Maori Patou [clubs] above them. We've got whalebone and jade, and I'm trying to add the third type, of elaborately carved wood. Look at the Maori figure at the far left of this case, and you'll see that he is clutching a club like these. We've added so many Maori pieces for the simple reason that of all Polynesian cultures, they create the most art. It's available and of very good quality.

Look closely at the treasure boxes in the same case and you'll notice the heads on the handles. One reason we see so many human images is the importance of ancestors in these societies (as in China!). The designs pull these objects into the world of people, into the world of the beyond as well as the here and now. That's a very important concept. You will

find members of the aristocracy in Polynesia who can recite 30 generations of their ancestors.

The first case as you enter, on your left, contains objects from all the areas, including Australia and Melanesia, grouped together because of their smaller scale. You can use the great kapkaps to introduce two other, related themes. One is the variety of natural materials used for Pacific Island arts. These are objects of body adornment made of tortoise shell. You'll also find bone, some stone (see the Maori jade earring), pig teeth, shark teeth, tree bark (used both as a painting surface and a source of fiber for textiles) and temporary materials like pith that had to be refreshed with each appearance of the object. The Maori pieces are made of New Zealand hardwood that polishes to a beautiful black, brown or red patina. In Melanesia they are working instead with soft wood, which they paint with earth pigments.

Whether you start with Polynesia or Melanesia you can find animal imagery. The frigate bird is here on the Solomon Island jewelry; it is also on the Malagan frieze. The turtle is important (see our coral turtle from Tahiti); so is the crocodile (the *Kundu drum*). For younger kids, see what animals they can find, and ask them what those animals tell them about the part of the world this art is from.



If you've got anthropologists on your tour, then you'll want to spend more time on the societies involved, and we have plenty of objects here that can help you tell the stories of warfare, harvest festivals and other ritual occasions. For anyone, you can make a basic point about the communal nature of the society with the Admiralty Island *Prestige Bowl* in the center case.

But for most people, the bowl will be less captivating than its neighbor, the Maori post figure, with his swirling tattoos. "Tattoo," you know, is a Polynesian word, and Polynesia was historically the great tattooing center. That's why we associate sailors with tattoos: they picked them up on their voyages to Polynesia. That's another way to get your group into Oceania!

## Ceramics – aka Pottery, Crockery and China

*Lynn Teschendorf*

If I asked you to name a ceramic object in your house, what would it be? A flower pot? Dishes? Think harder. You also have coffee mugs, tiles, baking dishes, electrical insulators, lamp bases, bathtubs and toilet bowls, maybe a figurine or two. Even your washing machine is probably covered with a thin layer of ceramic material.

Ceramics come in three basic types, each escalating in terms of hardness, thinness, fineness of clay, and firing temperature:

1. Earthenware is lowest on the scale. It includes terracotta, maiolica, faience, delftware, and Greek vases. It's porous, so it has to be glazed to be waterproof,

and it chips easily.

2. Stoneware is the next step up. Wedgwood jasperware is an example.
3. Porcelain is the top of the line. The Chinese invented it in about the 7<sup>th</sup> century. (Why do you think we call it “fine china”?), and kept the recipe a secret so they could make a fortune exporting it to Europe. It wasn't until 1709 that a German alchemist named Johann Böttger figured it out – the crucial element is a special kind of clay called kaolin – and finally broke the Chinese monopoly.

Earthenware is the oldest type of ceramic, since it's pretty low-tech. Almost any old clay will do, and you don't have to produce a very hot fire (relatively speaking). Some Venus figurines were made from earthenware 22,000 years ago, and pottery vessels have been found that are 10,000 years old. In Europe, earthenware hit its stride during the Renaissance, particularly earthenware covered with a tin glaze that fired smooth and opaque white, covering the coarse clay body and providing a nice glossy surface for painting with colored slips or bright overglaze enamels.

A lot of tin-glazed earthenware appears quite whimsical.



Take, for example, the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century rage for **soup tureens** in the shapes of roosters and rabbits, cabbages (like the museum's version from Strasbourg) and cauliflower, and many other animals, fruits

– and vegetables. Another rather flamboyant style of tureen had a domed, wavy-edged cover with finials ranging from rosebuds to curled pumpkin stems to leaping fish, scroll handles and feet with upturned toes. A couple of examples are on view in the vitrine just outside of the Charleston drawing room. The one with pink edges, standing on an underplate, was made in Europe. The even loopier, pale green one was made in China for the European market. Doesn't it remind you of the Pillsbury doughboy?

Another wildly popular ceramic during the 18<sup>th</sup> century was the porcelain figure. Some figures had been imported from China during the previous century, but European imitations out of earthenware weren't very successful. Böttger's discovery of the porcelain recipe changed all that. Porcelain turned out to be an excellent medium for the modeling of small sculptures, and Böttger's employer, the Meissen factory in Germany, soon became famous for its light-hearted, brightly enameled figures. You can see an interesting example in the vitrine across the Decorative Arts court from the



soup tureens. There you will find a pair of colorful **Tyrolean dancers** from the Meissen factory, laughing and swirling as they dance. Next to them is a headless, colorless pair that is identical in form. This pair was a Chinese knock-off of the Meissen original, loaded on to the Dutch ship *Geldermalsen* in 1752 for shipment to Europe. Unfortunately, the

*Geldermalsen* sank, along with its cargo. It was salvaged in 1985, and this headless pair, with its colors washed away by seawater, was part of the recovery. For more figures, be sure to see the *People in Porcelain* exhibit in the Family Center,

on through March 2.

By the way, if you're interested in reading the fascinating story of Böttger's often life-threatening search for the porcelain recipe, carried on while imprisoned by Augustus of Saxony (Böttger was supposed to be finding the secret formula for the philosopher's stone that would turn base metals into gold), get *The Arcanum* by Janet Gleeson. It's one of those nonfiction stories that make fiction look tame in comparison. It's got murder, daring escapes, jealousy, greed, ambition, espionage – you name it.

Back to everyday objects. Nearly every home has a vase or two, if not for display, then for flower arrangements. In Gallery 306 (home of the *Gérôme*) you'll find one in the shape of a **mosque lamp**. In France during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ceramics were heavily influenced by Turkish and other Near Eastern shapes and decoration. This pseudo-mosque lamp is decorated with pseudo-Islamic text, blue on the neck, white on the body. The neck also has three cartouches filled with horses bearing crowns on their backs, and there are matching little cartouches on the foot filled with floral designs. The vase is made of humble tin-glazed earthenware, but here's a great example of how richly colored overglazes can transform a humble object into a spectacular one.



Here's another example - the lustreware **Seder plate** in the Judaica case. Its surface positively glows with an iridescent mother-of-pearl finish. That finish is actually an overglaze metallic decoration called “lustre”. The lustre pigment (salts of silver, gold or copper) is painted over the surface of an already fired tin-glazed body. During a second low temperature firing, the metals precipitate out, leaving a thin layer of pure metal fused to the surface. When that layer is very thin, it produces the iridescent sheen seen here. Our old friend Böttger invented a purplish mother-of-pearl lustre that was used at the Meissen factory for many years.



If the Seder plate looks like an oyster plate to you, you're right. It was simply adapted for Seder use by the addition of Hebrew labeling. The labels identify the six symbolic foods served at the Seder, the ritual meal held in the home on the first night of Passover: a roasted/hard-boiled egg, bitter herbs, a green vegetable, a bitter vegetable, a roasted lamb shank, and *charoset* (a mixture of chopped apples, nuts, wine and spices). Being sharp observers, you've no doubt noticed that there are seven indentations, not six. The central space was originally for the oyster dipping sauce. Here it duplicates the space reserved in the lower left for bitter herbs (even if you don't read Hebrew, you can see that the labels are the same).

If you want a variety of uses for ceramics, try sculpture (*Judith and Holofernes* or *Leda and the Swan*), architectural decoration (panels by Louis Sullivan and Purcell), fireplace tiles (Grueby surround), or model shoes or candlesticks (English delftware). Until next time...

## Rosemaling: A Link to Traditional Decorative Motifs

Ron Hovda

For the past twelve years I have been studying and painting the Norwegian decorative art called **rosemaling** which is the stylized painting of flowers, scrolls, tendrils and leaves. From 1700 until about 1850 this Baroque-inspired style of painting on wood reached its zenith.



**Lefse Server**  
Gudbrandsdal style

Ron Hovda  
2002

At the MIA we have two fine examples of rosemaling on the third floor – just off the elevator. As you leave the elevator and look to your right you will notice a marriage chest painted in the style called *Gudbrandsdalen* (1777). The second piece is a cupboard found on your left as you enter the first American gallery (1870, attributed to Aslak Lie, an American born in Norway) It is done in a style known as the *Valdres*.



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These styles and many more developed in isolated mountain valleys throughout southern and central Norway. Some valleys concentrated more on scroll and tendril designs while flowers and leaves dominated the designs in other areas. Each valley came up with its own unique mix.



But it's time to go on a brief tour so we can take a closer look at some of the motifs we find throughout the MIA that relate to these rosemaling designs.

Starting with the frame of the *Portrait of a Cardinal in his Study*, the central strip is delicately painted with leaves, tendrils, flowers and scrolls. The frames of the nearby *Portraits of Moritz and Anna Buchner* as well as those of some of the Madonnas in the gallery include many of these same motifs.

In the next gallery the gilded frames feature similar designs. For example, the frame of Titian's *The Temptation of Christ* emphasizes flowers and leaves while the new self-portrait by Artemisia Gentileschi incorporates scrolls, flowers and overlapping leaves.

You will notice also that some of the frames use mainly acanthus leaves with a few flowers and other designs. We see these same lush acanthus leaves on the capitals of the Corinthian columns of the second floor Fountain Court.



Moving on to the *Venetian Desk*, we discover a concentration of colorful, simple flower clusters surrounded by scrolls – very understated!

In the Lucretia gallery we find some of these designs in the beautiful inlaid *Center Table* (about 1690) by the German Hans Daniel Somme. It has been described as "a tour-de-force of



arabesque patterning, with intricate pewter designs on a red tortoiseshell ground and a border of flowers and putti formed of brass, marble, horn and ebony."

We could continue our tour on the second floor in the Asian and classical galleries but I will leave these discoveries up to you. I think all of us could instill a fresh addition to many of our tours by calling attention to some of these simple details. Who knows? This interest might become an obsession, or, you could even join a rosemaling course!

## An Idea for Your Next Tour: *Portrait of a Woman as Judith*

(Agostino Carracci, Italian, 1557-1602, Oil on Canvas)

Fran McGarry, Junior Docent

The *Portrait of a Woman as Judith* (gallery 342) offers an interesting opportunity for a tour because one can focus on so many different things: the visual elements, the art of portraiture, literature in art, a touch of mystery, etc. In addition, there are two stories in the painting. One is a love story and the other is the familiar biblical account of Judith and Holofernes. We will concentrate on the two narratives.

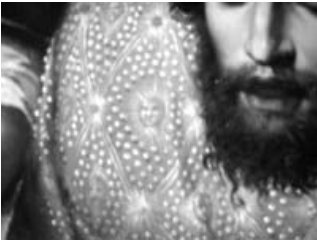


### An Unusual Love Story

According to records of the period, in 1591 Melchiorre Zoppio, a professor of philosophy at the University of Bologna, married Olimpia Luna, the daughter of a prominent member of the Bologna *Tribunale*. But, as time would tell, it was not just a marriage of convenience. It was a marriage of love.

The following year, Olimpia died unexpectedly – probably in childbirth. Her husband Zoppio was so upset at losing her that he asked his artist friend, Agostino Carracci, to paint her portrait. The commission was difficult because the artist had never met Olimpia nor did her husband have any drawings or likenesses of her that he could share with the artist. It was only through Zoppio's verbal descriptions that Agostino became familiar with Olimpia's image. And probably between 1593 and 1594 when, according to one account "Zoppio's friendship with Agostino blossomed," the artist produced a very true representation of Olimpia.

There is also an air of mystery about the painting. Notice the pearl encrusted, diamond shaped, gold brocade pattern of her dress. It is embroidered with celestial bodies which can be interpreted as either a sun or a moon. Does this mean that she was the sun and the moon to her husband? A closer examination of the fabric shows little blue sapphires in the corners of the diamond shapes. These seem to indicate falling stars among the celestial bodies. The pattern probably also has some reference to her family name "Luna" (moon).



### The Biblical Account of Judith and Holofernes

The choice of this story as the setting for the portrait of Olimpia may suggest that the artist wanted to use the images as a vehicle to emphasize Zoppio's love for his wife and his desire to remain near her even in death. A close look at the face of the decapitated head of Holofernes Judith is holding shows that it resembles Zoppio's face!

The presence of the handmaid and the tents in the dark background adds an air of mystery to the setting.

The biblical account of Judith, the widow who saved her people from the Assyrians by beheading the officer Holofernes, inspired numerous works of art. It has been suggested that this may have been done by artists of the day to insure the staying power of their art.

### Possible questions you might use on your tour:

- What are the surprises in this piece?
- What is the scale of the person in relation to the canvas?
- What might we deduce from the artist's use of visual elements such as light and dark?
- What do you notice about how the artist used the space of the canvas?

## Ab Fab tries Heavy Metal

Mary Labrosse

Put your mind to rest, the following is not an accounting of Eddy and Patsy of the BBC's Ab Fab fame raucously touring the MIA in the company of Ozzie Osborne! Inspired by Lynn Teschendorf's forays into the world of decorative arts, the Italian half armor and German armor, displayed on the third floor, have found their way into my "Absolutely Fabulous" (aka Highlights) tours and have been a hit with multiple age groups.

During many tours I would stride purposefully through that gallery leading my group on their way to the *Death of Germanicus* or *Princess Charlotte* yet conscious of the comments behind me: "Wow look at the armor, just like the olden days;" "Hey, that's like the stuff they wore in *Lord of the Rings*;" "I wonder what wars were happening when these were worn." Obviously the interest demanded a visit to the object files, (located in the Decorative Arts files under "Armor") and inclusion on a tour.

Arming myself with newfound knowledge and keenly aware that the installation of the armor is group friendly I

tried it with some fourth graders. The kids enjoyed trying to figure out which armor was best suited for someone riding a horse, and how long it would take to get dressed in a suit of metal and could you do it yourself or would you need help.



We examined the design and how it combined warfare with fashion and if we could think of anything in contemporary fashion that the military has incorporated (baseball caps!).

They were most fascinated by the feet of the German full suit of armor and decided it must have been difficult to walk in it, let alone fight. One young lady declared that the bracket on the torso was meant to hold a jousting weapon like she had seen at the Renaissance Festival, opening up a discussion on other weaponry that might have been used. It took a little bit of detective work to find the etching of the woman on the breastplate of the Italian half armor and determine what she was holding in her hand – a severed head! Nice transition to the Carracci *Portrait of a Woman as Judith*.

One observant student noticed the wearing of armor in the gigantic tapestry *Colossus of Rhodes* from the Artemesia series hanging on the wall between the two armors, which prompted another to look about and discover the armor in *Erminia and the Shepherds*, making it very easy to transition to *Death of Germanicus*, including a short stop at *The Gamblers* to build on the fashion of the day/warfare idea, and at the silver Italian *Tazza* with an armored Caesar atop.



This was definitely turning into a metal tour. Dare I add the Chimu *Ear Spools*, the Brancusi *Bird*, the Pillsbury *Owl*, the Paul Revere *Tea Service*, the possibilities were endless. We were limited only by time.

Lest you have any doubt, the armor was a successful addition to an Absolutely Fabulous tour and I encourage anyone to try it. However, be prepared to include the *Wheel lock rifle* and the *Wheel lock puffer*! (Files for these objects are also in the Decorative Arts Drawer in the docent/guide library.)

## Musings

Tom Byfield

Today brethren and sistern we will discuss MIA special exhibits and our tours thereof, not so much from the standpoint that they need discussing but because of this writer's panic-stricken want for a subject. The last infirmity of a mundane mind is to assume one can write a column.

After two years of vigorous training and numerous papers we were deemed ready to expose ourselves to the unsuspecting public. We swore before losing our red dot and receiving our epaulets to do two or more of these special exhibits each year. We select them long before they are

mounted, a dangerous endeavor, much like the throwing of a boomerang hand grenade. Many of these exhibitions are blockbusters and touring them seems like being in a pristine fairyland with softly-playing lutes, a joy to behold and a delight to work. Think **Chihuly** or **American Sublime**. Others however are so abstruse as to force us into the mold of mercenaries in a foreign land, struggling through the underbrush, lost and without direction. The docent, who like the regimental drummer boy doesn't know what is going on, beats his drum valiantly anyway trying to be part of the action.

Have you ever done a special exhibit where the essence of it seems to slip through your fingers like a wriggling speckled trout? Even after study you can't get to the marrow of the thing and your viewers are equally bewildered. For me, such was the **Jim Dine** exhibit. However, it was while touring this exhibit that I encountered an unusual individual who loved the artist, was knowledgeable and was thrilled to correct my errors. People like this are usually small men with tweed coats, shiny shoes, sporting both a bad haircut and the sensitivity of a dung beetle. They invade your personal space and have a tendency to take over. After a bit you realize you are getting the same attention from the group that you would playing a bassoon solo at an orgy. From then on you have as much chance of recovering your tour as a glass blower with hiccups. Fortunately this rarely happens and in fact may be a singular manifestation peculiar to only my tours. I have to admit that most of my tours are peculiar.

At any rate, next year I vow to be more circumspect in my selections, but next year will come and there I'll be, doing it again. No doubt I will sign up for the exciting exhibit, *The Intaglio Prints of the Fungi of Fiji* and the *Spores of the Azores*.

## Using Quotations On Tours

*Pat West*

Members of the clergy, teachers, debaters and professional speechmakers all know that a well-chosen quotation can enliven and enrich their own words. I keep a little book of quotations that appeal to me, things I find in novels, newspapers, wherever; and I find them useful in my tours. Sometimes I use a quotation as the theme of my tour: "The writer Alice walker said, 'Art is the mirror, perhaps the best that we have, to show us who we are.'" This could be the theme of almost any tour, but I use in most for *Women in Art*.

Kandinsky is an important figure in the history of art, and I love his words: "Lend your ears to music; open your eyes to painting, and don't think. Just ask yourself if it has allowed you to walk about in a hitherto unknown world; and if the answer is yes, what more do you want?" I always quote him when using his painting or introducing abstract art, but it really applies to learning of any kind. However, I usually say, "Of course, we do want to think, but you understand what he is saying."

Picasso is a good source of quotations, too, and is someone almost everyone who comes to the museum knows. He

said, "Art is not for decorating apartments; it is for fighting wars." I find that this helps to explain the difference in art make in cultures where art has religious meaning and power, and shows why artists like Picasso were drawn to African art.

I sometimes quote people who've been on my tours or I quote a curator to make a point. When I talk about Expressionism, I sometimes tell of the woman on a tour who said, "I don't think God wants us to see pictures like these! Why do artists paint death and nudity?" This turned out to be one of the best tours I ever gave.

One of my favorite paintings in our collection is the Caillebotte, and I often recall a tour I was giving to a group of college students. I was making the point that the tradition of painting female nudes goes back to the Renaissance, and asked them to try to picture a male reclining nude. One of the women students said, "No, the male nudes are always standing up." And she pointed to the two Rodins.

I also use something one of my favorite teachers said; "All art is religious, conceptual and abstract." When someone comes up with the cliché, "My five-year-old could do this," I tell them what a former director of our museum said in a superb lecture he gave to the docents: "everyone is entitled to an opinion, but not everyone is entitled to make a judgment."

I never use more than a couple of quotations in a tour and they always help me to make a point or to raise a question. A few weeks ago, on MPR, I heard a speech given by a famous journalist. He began by telling three funny stories, none of which had any relevance to his topic, himself or his audience. He wasted everyone's time.

As you've probably guessed, I give mostly adult tours, but I think children too could be introduced to metaphor and the idea that art can tell us something about what it means to be human. As Yogi Berra said, "You see a lot by observing."

## Art in Bloom

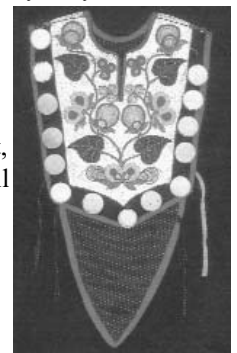
*Janey Leck*

Spring hasn't sprung yet...but *Art in Bloom* planning is in full swing. Which means it's time for many of you to think about this unparalleled opportunity to tour that glorious combination of art and flowers for an audience ready to applaud your every phrase.

This is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary for *Art in Bloom*, opening this year with the preview party on the evening of April 30. Then we docents start on Thursday morning, May 1, and (it seems) tour constantly till noon on Saturday May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Responsibilities include *required* training on Wednesday afternoon, April 30, signing up for lots of tours...and having a Great Time!! A side benefit is increasing our year's tour total in a short, last minute time. Tour sign-up sheets will be posted in the docent study on April 1. You may sign up on a general list by contacting Janey Leck at 612-929-0446.

The theme this year is *Wildflowers/Wild Flowers!* and has two coordi-



nate images. The first is our state flower, the Showy Ladyslipper (*Cypripedium reginae*), a watercolor image by Marian Bagley, which will grace the 2003 poster. Show here is the second image, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Anishinabe Beaded Cape. And it depicts our ladyslipper in its tapestry-like design.

Think spring – think flowers – think *Art in Bloom!*

## A Special Note of Thanks

The family of Gordy M. Aamoth, Jr. would like to thank all the Docents, Art Adventure Guides and Collection in Focus Guides who generously and thoughtfully contributed to Gordy's memorial. Gordy was the son of Mary Aamoth, an Art Adventure Guide since 1991 (the first class to be graduated in that program). He was killed in the the Twin Towers on September 11.

At that time Docents, Art Adventure Guides and Collection in Focus Guides wanted to do something to memorialize



Thomas Hart Benton  
*Planting*  
lithograph (1939)

Gordy and decided that the purchase of a print would be an appropriate gift. They selected the print *Planting* by the American artist Thomas Hart Benton. The Department of Prints and Drawings was pleased to be able to add the Benton print to its collection. In addition, the print will serve as a substitute for many Art Adventure tours.

## The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round...For Free!



Once again this year school bus wheels are turning on their way to the museum due, in part, to the generosity of the Friends of the MIA. For seven years the Friends Transportation Fund has reimbursed selected schools in Minneapolis and

St. Paul for their bus trips to the museum. This endowed fund enables children whose schools and parents might not be able to afford the transportation costs, the opportunity to visit and tour the museum. To date, one hundred and three (103) schools have participated in this program. Around 10,000 children have experienced the beauty and diversity of the world's cultures through touring the MIA's collection as part of this program.

School economics made this year's program more competitive than ever. One hundred and twenty-four (124) applications were received for buses under the regular program. Twenty-six buses (26) were awarded: eleven (11) buses to nine (9) Minneapolis schools and fifteen (15) buses to eleven (11) St. Paul schools. The program was open to grades 3-5 in public, religious, and charter schools. A second part of the

program was added for this year. Since the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) program with the Minneapolis school district lost bus funding for museum visits from its grant, the Friend Transportation Committee decided to help cover some of these expenses. Nineteen (19) buses were awarded to twelve (12) Minneapolis public schools participating in the VTS program. A total of 45 buses were awarded through the two parts of this year's program.

Last year one teacher wrote to us about the importance of this program. She stated, "The docents were super. The Art Institute was fabulous. The children were mesmerized and learned so much. It was a rewarding experience for our inner city students – an opportunity they don't have otherwise. Thank you for funding this for us." We, too, wish to thank all the docents and guides for making these tours so wonderful. In addition, many thanks to Paula and Doreen for their excellent coordination of these visits.

It is our great pleasure to help keep those yellow buses coming!

*Kathy Adams and Kay Raabe*  
*Friends Transportation Co-chairs*

## Year Two: A Remarkable Opportunity

*Reflections by Karen Libbey, Junior Docent*

On a recent January day, I raised my hand in class to ask a question. Suddenly I was being thanked for volunteering to write an article for the next issue of the *Docent Muse*. In a funny sort of way my experience is a perfect metaphor for our second year as Junior Docents. Who would have thought that barely into the second year we would have so many "opportunities?"

Let's review where we left off from last year. I remember walking to my car on a beautiful May afternoon having just turned in another one of those long papers. I was headed to Seafood Palace to join my classmates to celebrate the final day of the first year. Later, as I drove home I felt a sense of loss. What would I do with myself for the next three months, what would I do with all of that time off? I soon realized that the mid summer check out tour would take care of that extra time. I also found that Wednesdays would find me missing all of the familiar, cheerful faces of my classmates and instructors.

The month of July came quickly and all I could think about was planning and writing my first tour. As the big day approached, the butterflies increased along with the loss of sleep. How would I remember all those paintings? Those carefully worded transitions? Somehow I got through the tour, and felt the elated success of my hard work.

Later in July, Ann and her husband graciously invited our entire class to their wonderful lake retreat home. "Sankaku," as it is called, was designed and originally occupied by the late John Howe. Howe was trained as an architect by Frank Lloyd Wright and known as "the pencil in Wright's hand." Not even the rain that fell against the windows of that fabulous home could dampen our spirits. Most of us had completed our first mid summer tour and the excitement and

smiles were infectious. WE REALLY COULD DO IT!

The rest of the summer flew by, and I looked forward to returning to class to begin my second year. Soon came Africa, and the Art of the Americas. Oops! It was time for another oral check out tour. We all chose our themes, and again surprised ourselves that we could actually give these tours.

From that point on the “opportunities” have been endless. There were opportunities to volunteer for Educator’s Evening, to partner with schools for VTS tours, Art Cart training, and Egyptian tours. Have I forgotten anything? Probably.

The holiday season approached and our class was invited again to Michelle’s lovely home for another delicious potluck. The snow fell outside, but conversation and camaraderie created a warm feeling inside.

We quickly moved through the art of China and Japan, and my syllabus tells me it won’t be long before we come to the end of Docent training. Often challenging and sometimes frustrating, it has been another wonderful year. I will miss our Wednesday meetings, but am looking forward to what lies ahead. I’m going to love it here, what a wonderful opportunity!

## Docent Book Group News

The Docent Book Group will meet after the morning lecture on Monday, April 21. The book to be discussed (*Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling*) is a repeat of a Ross King study in the Renaissance, this time looking at the creation of Michelangelo's painting of the ceiling in the Sistine Chapel.



For more information about the book, consult Amazon.com or any of the many other book review Web sites that are available.

## Keeping in Touch...

### Letter from the Docent Chair

When I come into the MIA most days I head for the Friends’ office first. It’s lacking the gorgeous rug and the big beautiful window-view of our Docent office, but it’s been a stopping place for me for years. This year I have a mailbox there, too (it’s for Docent-related museum business), but I’m always involved with some Friends’ projects too.



As Docents, we’re required to join the Friends and I know some of you wonder why. The answer is partially an historical one – the Friends were formed 81 years ago to support the activities of the MIA, which included raising money for art (the lists of objects the Friends have given over the years runs to 4 single-spaced pages – I know because I compiled it 8 years ago from everything from old hand-written acquisition journals to computer entries), starting the museum shop, and organizing the first group of tour guides. This eventually became us, the Docents of the MIA. The Friends’ annual budget includes funds for such Docent-related activities as *Holidays in the Period Rooms*, costume

purchase and maintenance, trips to the Docent Symposium, and the buses that bring urban kids to the MIA for tours.

But there’s more to the requirement that we join the Friends than the fact that the Friends once formed the Docent program and fund Docent projects. The Friends is the volunteer group of the museum, and clearly, we are the major volunteers. We collectively volunteered over 3500 hours last year!!! I think that most of us choose to spend our time at the MIA because we love it. But while we’re at the museum, there are so many other projects that we could get into – *Art in Bloom* looks for good, clever, imaginative people (which we certainly are!). So does the Research and Planning committee. A Plants and Flowers committee handles the annual Holiday Tree and the greenery and flowers you see around the museum. The new First Thursday committee creates interesting programs for Friends’ members only. The Programs committee finds the monthly Thursday morning public lecturers and the Hospitality committee plans the luncheons that follow some of them. And more. The idea is that the Friends welcome our involvement – as Docents we are already proven volunteers and our knowledge of the museum is invaluable. If only we each had a few more hours in each day! On the other hand, remember the old adage: “If you want something done, ask a busy person.” That is us!

Thank you for all that you do for the MIA – and special thanks to those of you who are living and breathing Eternal Egypt this spring.

Carol Burton

## News from Museum Guide Office

### By George, We’ve Got It!

The famous “Landsdowne” portrait of George Washington, on which our portrait by Thomas Sully is based, will be on exhibit in our galleries from August 1st to November 30th. You might recall that just a couple of years ago The Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery went public with its plea to rescue the beloved portrait from the auction block. The Donald W. Reynolds Foundation of Las Vegas, Nevada, rescued it with a generous gift of \$30 million so that future generations of Americans would have the opportunity to see it in a new, refurbished space at the National Portrait Gallery and on its first-ever national tour. We are one of eight sites hosting this special exhibition, *George Washington: A National Treasure*, which features the painting itself, interactive stations, a large-screen video, and interpretive panels. The Reynolds Foundation gift also supports significant programming around the painting and the man, including docent training, public lectures, and performances by a well-known Washington portraitist.

The “Landsdowne” portrait has become an American icon over the centuries. Commissioned by Senator and Mrs. William Bingham of Philadelphia in 1796, Gilbert Stuart painted the portrait as a gift for the British Marquis of Landsdowne, who sympathized with colonial grievances prior to the Revolutionary war. The painting, after remaining in private hands in England, became part of the collection of the fifth Earl of Rosebery in the 1880s. Then, it hung in a castle



in Scotland until 1968 when it was loaned to the National Portrait Gallery. For 32 years, the portrait was the cornerstone of the Gallery's exhibitions. In the Fall of 2000 its British owner decided to sell it at auction if the National Portrait Gallery could not pay him his asking price of \$20 million. Then, the Reynolds Foundation came to the rescue. The portrait's national tour, including its visit to Minneapolis, becomes another part of its illustrious history!

Because the Reynolds Foundation wants the portrait to be accessible to as many Americans who live far away from Washington D.C. as possible on its tour, it has provided funds to bus school children and others to the exhibition sites and produced a beautiful poster and materials for classrooms. While we await George's arrival, check out the exhibition online at [www.georgewashington.si.edu](http://www.georgewashington.si.edu), where you can participate in interactive activities and download information.

In order to ensure that all students visiting the Institute from August to November get to see and learn about the "Landsdowne" portrait, we are planning to station docents by the painting to facilitate ongoing discussions that all groups (no matter what kind of tour they are on) can participate in. All docents and Art Adventure guides will bring all of their groups to the second-floor gallery to see and learn about the painting between 9:30 and 1:30 each weekday. The students can drop in and participate in discussions led by the stationed docents. The video will also add to their learning experience.

*Sheila McGuire*

### **Social Committee Announcement**

The Social Committee is in the midst of planning the Spring Luncheon scheduled for Monday May 19, 2003. The event is combined with the graduation of the Junior Docents, so mark your calendars now for this celebration. Several venues which feature art are being considered, so watch for your invitations in early April with final details. We look forward to seeing you there.

*Candy Gravier and Mary Labrosse*  
*Social Committee Co-chairs*

### **Honorary Docents' News**

In the New Year the Honoraries have been as busy as ever!

- On January 22 they met at Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church to tour the art gallery, the outstanding stained glass windows and the architecture of the church.
- On February 26 the group will visit the Textile Center for a tour and weaving demonstration.
- On March 26 they will gather at Plymouth Congregational Church to see the exceptional embroideries and the church building.
- The Book Club meets on the third Wednesday of each month and is as vibrant as usual – reading and discussing a different book at each session. The "About the Town" group meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month. All Honoraries are welcome to join either or

both of these groups.

- Call Barb Diamond or Pudge Christian with any questions.

### **Spring Docent Muse Deadline**

Many thanks to all those who wrote articles for this issue of the *Muse*.

If you are interested in contributing articles to the summer issue of the *Docent Muse*, please contact Pauline Lambert, Co-editor, at your earliest convenience. **The deadline for the submission of articles for the Summer issue is May 5, 2003.**

