

## Docent Literati Rug

Darlene Carroll and Carol Wedin

### History - 1996

In 1996, Docent Supervisor Diane Levy decided to improve conditions and replace the dangerously worn rug in the existing Docent Lounge, present location of Arts Break Café (sales and prep area only). Because of our interior design backgrounds we volunteered on this project. No sooner had we begun drafting plans when we were notified that the docents would soon relocate to a larger area in the MIA expansion project. As the scope of the project grew, so did our ideas.

Several years earlier, Carol attended a lecture at the MIA sponsored by the Asian Arts Council. The speaker was Rita Lama, a young Nepalese woman who had started a small carpet business on the outskirts of Kathmandu. Carol dreamed of designing a rug to be woven in Nepal. Sharing this idea with Darlene led to the dream of designing a rug that symbolized docent ideals.

A letter to Rita resulted in an enthusiastic partnership. We began to develop the design of the rug in the context of the entire space. We drafted floor plans, designed banquet seating, researched fabric, and garnered paint chips and carpet samples. Bob Jacobson assisted in the selection of Tibetan and Buddhist symbols. A packet of ideas and samples was sent off to Nepal.

The Docent Literati Rug, as we were now calling it, would be the focal point in the new Docent Lounge. But how were we going to pay for it? Our meager budget would only cover basic bookshelves and a few files. Yet, we really wanted a welcoming, aesthetically-pleasing space where docents could both congregate and prepare for tours. Hoping to build community

spirit, we sent a letter to each docent explaining our idea and asking for a contribution to the rug. Not surprisingly, we received an overwhelming response from docents and staff.

With generous contributions, we could proceed. Rita had communication capabilities in Kathmandu, so when electricity functioned, faxes and e-mails circled the globe. In May, the longed-for e-mail arrived. Our "strike-off," or small woven sample, had been shipped for our approval. With hearts pounding and great anxiety, we opened the package and unrolled the square meter sample. It was indeed finely woven, but something was lost in translation somewhere between the Mississippi and Vishnumati rivers. The rug seemed to be trying to satisfy American tastes, but our goal was for the rug to reflect the culture of its creators.

Bob Jacobson responded to our anguished plea for help. Bob knew Rita, her work, and even owns one of Rita's rugs. Bob agreed that the rug was beautifully woven, but he strongly advised that if we intended to have the rug by our deadline, we needed to become more involved in the actual design process. Carol's husband was even more direct. Walt suggested that we immediately apply for visas and personally oversee the creation of this Docent Literati Rug. Before leaving, we needed a drawing of our mental images. Richard Rehl, a local graphic artist and rug designer, worked closely with us to put our ideas into a tangible reality to be hand-carried to Nepal.

### Kathmandu, Nepal - July, 1997

Carol made arrangements for a reasonable monthly rental in a Kathmandu mission house. We bargained for an unused concrete classroom on the top floor of the building. Our furnishings were spindly and spare, but the view of the heavenly Himalayas from the large windows took our breath away.

We were humbled by our simple abode, but shopping was convenient. Outside our door was a fresh meat market with live chickens, a goat, a concave chopping block, and a bloody axe. And next to that, a garbage dump that attracted wild dogs, sacred cows and hordes of flies and mosquitoes. Traveling during the monsoon season had its advantages, too. There were few tourists and we could easily hail a *tuk-tuk*, a 3-wheeled polluter driven by young Nepalese men, who were as foreign to driving as they were to Kathmandu. By the second day, your two MIA docents were directing their own tours!

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The rug was to be made in a village a half-hour *tuk-tuk* ride to the end of the road and a trudge through monsoon mud away. No one spoke English but Rita, the owner of Trina Carpets, which she founded and named after her daughter in hopes of Trina having a better life. After introductions, a cup of tea and lots of smiley nods, we started our work. Needed was a full scale (5' x 8') graph to be produced from Richard's drawings. The artist lived several miles away, reached by walking a path through rice fields. Communication was accomplished with paper and pen. Within a couple of days, the full-sized graph was finished and we all gave a sigh of relief. The first step was accomplished.

Workers took us under their wings. We assisted a grandmother whose job was to card and spin the wool. Her young granddaughter sat by her side and spun when she got home from school. Most village children didn't have the opportunity to go to school, but Rita personally paid for the education of the children of her workers. Rita also provided housing for her workers. Trina Carpets was a large extended family, and we were readily adopted by our new teachers and friends.

We cleaned, combed, carded, spun and dyed the wool. We helped hang the hot and heavy skeins out to dry on tin roofs. We repeated the entire process when colors didn't materialize as we had envisioned. We worked most days of the month, but also found time to learn our way around Kathmandu and regularly visited a yogi for private instruction. *Om mani padme om.*

Despite our meditative sessions, we were feeling more and more anxious about our rug. We originally hoped the rug would be completed in a month, but actual weaving had yet to begin. The "factory" was a tall structure with a corrugated tin roof over a densely packed dirt floor. Lighting consisted of two bare fluorescent bulbs hanging precariously from threadlike wires. Weavers sat on wooden benches with their babies beside them in plastic tubs. Mothers nursed as they wove; toddlers played at their parents' feet. Children were well cared for and adored. Rita's workers were proud and hardworking, grateful for their jobs, and pleased that their children were getting an education. We learned a great deal from them during our month in Kathmandu.

Our last days in Nepal we watched the rug rise up the loom in slow motion. Two weavers sat side by side, each with large, colored graph paper in front of them directing their every move. By the time we said our last good-byes, ten inches of the Docent Literati Rug was on the frame, enough for us to be assured that we – and you – would be pleased.

We hosted a farewell party for workers, passing out Horlick's food supplements to every man, woman, and child. Tears welled up in the workers' eyes as they received these gifts. The women were especially grateful since the supplement was packaged in a decorative glass jar with a colorful plastic screw top. A gift within a gift! We also handed out trays of candies that were a real treat for everyone, especially the children. All of this, we told them, was a gift from the docents of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. As we waved farewell, we knew we would never see our friends again, but

their spirits would always be with us, woven into our memories and the Docent Literati Rug.

### **Unveiling the Rug – November 1997**

On November 17, 1997, the long-awaited Docent Literati Rug was the focus of the Monday morning lecture. We presented a slide show, "Nepal, Land of the Literati Rug," featuring photos that Carol had taken during our stay. And, thanks to the generous donations from docents and staff, we were able to have Rita Lama, owner of the rug factory, visit from Nepal. Wearing her native dress, Rita explained the step-by-step process of creating our rug.

Next came the dramatic unveiling of the rug in the Wells Fargo Room where Tibetan prayer flags and Nepalese artifacts were displayed. After an Indian/Nepalese luncheon, the rug was ceremoniously installed in the Docent Lounge.

### **Literati Rug Symbols**

#### *Four Signs of the Scholar:*

- scrolls – mastery of painting and calligraphy
- chessboard – skill at chess
- lute – proficiency at music
- books – mastery of language and poetry

#### *Other Buddhist Symbols:*

- endless knot – interweaving of lives
- fish – freedom from restraint
- artemesia leaf – dignity and protection
- mirror – wealth in art
- wheel of life – Buddha's teaching of the universe
- lotus – purity and perfection
- clouds – universe in miniature
- jewel – supreme value of truth
- floating scarf – connection of all things

### **Docent Holiday Party – December 1997**

Upon hearing the plight of the people of Nepal, especially those involved in the creation of our rug, docents Dorothy Geis, Angela Sangster, and Holly McDougall spearheaded a campaign to share our holiday blessings with those in the small village. (At that time, Rita employed 35, twenty of whom had young families.) Generous as always, docents welcomed the challenge by donating dollars for food supplements for the families and used clothing for infants and toddlers. A large box of donations was shipped off to Nepal. Pictures of Nepalese children dressed in clean American clothing were returned along with words of gratitude and joy.

### **Past to Present - 2004**

At the time of our move there were approximately 125 docents. Now there are 323 people using the Docent/Guide Lounge! Allocated funds didn't allow us to complete the project as we envisioned, but we came a long way. Extra mailboxes were added, seating was doubled, library shelving and files were tripled, personal storage increased from one drawer to six, and exhibit space for docent art expanded to two walls. An attempt was made to introduce another piece of art. Following the Dale Chihuly show, we sent him a letter describing our rug and asked if he would consider designing a light fixture for the lounge. His letter of refusal came with an autographed copy of *Chihuly Over Venice*. Hence, the

chic-but-not-Chihuly hanging light fixture in the corner.

The other artist connected with the lounge is Jack Lenor Larsen. Mr. Larsen spoke at the symposium held in conjunction with the exhibit, “Jack Lenor Larsen Company and Cloth.” Krista Stack Pawar, daughter of MIA’s Textile Curator Lotus Stack, was head of the Larsen Design Studio as well as project manager of the design in the fabric we selected for the banquette seating. We wrote to Mr. Larsen telling him about our project and the selection of one of his museum-quality fabrics. Mr. Larsen offered the fabric to us at production cost only. Also, the Jack Lenor Larsen Company Archives were jointly given to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Goldstein Gallery and the Northwest Architectural Libraries at the University of Minnesota. Because of the wealth of our collection, there usually are some Jack Lenor Larsen fabrics on display in the third-floor galleries. How about adding one of these beautiful fabrics to your next tour?

## Lounge Fund Drive

Dear friends and colleagues,

If you didn’t know the history already, you learned in the Docent Literati Rug story that we have an amazing work of art in our Docent/Guide Lounge. We also have comfortable banquettes to relax on before and after tours. These textiles, together with the rotating works of art on the walls, create an aesthetically pleasing space that adds to our experience at the museum every time we are there to do our important work.

What you may not be aware of, is that Carol Wedin and Darlene Carroll have graciously and tirelessly worked to make sure that the rug is regularly vacuumed, the light fixture in the corner has working bulbs, the banquettes are spot-cleaned when necessary, and the plants in the window are watered and replaced as needed.

In order to maximize the life span of these objects, we need to create a fund that will help routine maintenance to happen, plus cover additional expenses that may arise in the future. This could include professional cleaning of the rug and banquettes, replacing the rug pad, or even reupholstering the banquettes if necessary. The Docent Executive Committee has decided to ask for voluntary donations to a Lounge Maintenance Fund. If you feel moved to donate, please put checks payable to “Docents of the MIA” with “Lounge Fund” on the memo line in the specified envelope posted on the bulletin board in the lounge. The docent treasurer will keep track of the fund like the current Sunshine Fund (also created with voluntary donations).

The Docent Executive Committee appreciates donations of any amount. Thank you!

## In the Galleries

*Bob Marshall*

*Which of us has never used the Portrait of a Boy to save one of our tours? OK, now which of us has ever made full use of the decorative arts that surround the dead boy? Assistant Curator Jason Busch recently explained to the Docent Muse the organizing principle behind the galleries in the southeast corner of the third floor – and how they relate to this sum-*

*mer’s upcoming blockbuster show.*

Right at the top of the stairs you will find a chest-on-chest and a silver tankard, both made in Connecticut, that were brought out to Minnesota in the 1860s. They are paired with a Scandinavian tankard and chest that arrived in Wisconsin about the same time. This mixture of European culture and New England culture is reflected throughout the early settlement of our region. Also contributing to the story of western migration is the Thomas Cole painting and the weathervane of the archangel Gabriel which crowned the Winslow House in St. Anthony, a jumping-off point for so many families that came here in the 1850s, both to settle and to vacation on Lake Minnetonka.

From the story of people and objects coming to the region we move into Gallery 304, which looks at objects of American manufacture during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – mainly utilitarian objects, but still great examples of design. We don’t have a period room of this era, so this gallery provides our context for works such as a porcelain pitcher by the Tucker firm of Philadelphia, made at a time when American companies had trouble competing with porcelain from Europe. The floral motifs derive from the idea of bringing nature into the home, which had been fashionable since the Rococo movement. Continuing the nature theme, we have placed this table with a *trompe l’oeil* shell design beneath the Severin Roesen still life. The wood around the design is painted to imitate expensive mahogany or rosewood – although whether this fooled anyone or was just a display of artistic skill we don’t know.

There are more floral motifs, faux-grain and painted decoration on the adjoining Wisconsin cupboard, but these represent Scandinavian influence again. Note the hardware in the shape of a shield with stars and stripes, a popular motif when America was gearing up for its 1876 centennial celebration.

Gallery 303 focuses more on material from this region, largely through paintings. Henry Lewis traveled the length of the Mississippi River painting its landscapes. His work is paired with the wonderfully crisp view of St. Anthony Falls (including the Winslow House) by Ferdinand Richardt, who is representative of the European artists who were attracted to the Mississippi by, among other things, the poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Edward Thomas was in the tradition of artist-soldiers painting along the Mississippi. His painting of Fort Snelling, with Native Americans prominent in the foreground but the fort dominant in the background, is a cultural artifact.

These corner cupboards, probably made outside St. Louis around 1800, have designs and colors inspired by French-Canadian architecture. We believe there were two others in the set: when placed in the four corners they would have created an octagonal room, a popular French floor plan.

The central object in this gallery is the Rosedown dresser, part of a 13-piece bedroom suite that was destined for the White House if Henry Clay had been elected President. He wasn’t, and the entire suite was purchased by Daniel Turnbull for his mansion in Louisiana. Its design, reflecting the Gothic Revival, is unique in American furniture, with its zigurat

format and the pillars that recall a cathedral.

New Orleans was the biggest city in the Mississippi River Valley and Natchez in 1860 could boast of more millionaires than any other city in the country. Minneapolis at that time trailed other river communities – Memphis, St. Louis, Dubuque, the Quad Cities – but there were wealthy individuals like Henry Sibley and Alexander Ramsey for whom luxury pieces like Turnbull’s bedroom set were accessible. On the other side of this gallery we show later examples of this: the silver candelabra that descended in the Hefelfinger family and the grandfather clock that belonged to the Weyerhaeusers, both made by Tiffany.

Our show, which Christopher Monkhouse and I are curating, will focus on the decade prior to the Civil War, when the Mississippi River was not just a commercial highway but was a design conduit, transmitting ideas about style and art. The premise of the show is to bring together the disparate regions of the river – the South, the Mid-, the North – not to point out the differences that we already know existed in the economy and the culture, but to point out the similarities. The Twin Cities, by the way, is now the largest metropolitan area along the river; and the MIA is the only art museum actively collecting 19th-century decorative art from the entire Mississippi River Valley.

With the coming reinstallation these galleries will change somewhat, but we want to build on the progression we’ve just seen: migration to the Midwest, movement up and down the Mississippi, late 19th-century interest in the American West, then melding into the turn-of-the-century Prairie School movement – a circle covering a century of American design, with our area at the center.

*“Currents of Change: Art and Life Along the Mississippi River, 1850-1861,” featuring 175 objects from the MIA, Minnesota Historical Society and 50 other lenders, will be on display in the Target Galleries from June 27 through September 26, 2004.*

## ***The Little King***

*Tom Byfield*

Admit it, we all have our favorite pieces when touring. We use them often and they are like old friends, allowing us to whip up a Masterpiece Tour that would make Sheila grin like a demented Howdy Doody. We also have objects we rarely or never use. Some we aren’t familiar with, some we don’t find exciting, and some we are as happy to see as a big-fingered proctologist. Sometimes, however, we are trapped into explaining a piece we don’t know at all, and find ourselves caught between Iraq and a hard place. This usually happens when you are about to take a group on a tour and the teacher says, “Oh, and by the way, please show them —,” a piece you have never used and know as much about as you do of paleoclimatology.

I led a tour of seventh graders who appeared to have burnished the veneer of studied indifference to a high luster. Everything, however, was going well and we seemed to have reached a tentative *rapprochement*. We were going from the sublime to the ridiculous, that is, from *Rendezvous*, the beautifully understated statue of a handsome Apache woman by

Houser to the *Aphrodisiac Telephone*, when one girl, apparently not overly awed by my persona, asked if I would stop and explain a piece that somehow had sprung up overnight like an opportunistic mushroom. I had never seen it before. It was an amorphous sculpture that resembled irregular upright pillars of slag from a bad iron smelter. Others joined her supplication and I was pinned there like a moth on a science fair project board. I couldn’t very well deny them as I had foolishly assured the group I wanted this tour to be open, fun and welcoming to all their questions.

Since I had no idea what this abomination was or the artist who perpetrated it, I decided my only recourse was to use VTS and let them tell me about it. I asked as directed in the VTS Constitution and Bylaws (Section 4, Paragraph 2), “What do you see here?” After a profound silence that lasted long enough for me to need another shave, the alpha girl finally said, “It’s a black something.” I validated her response and asked, “What more do you see?” One little fellow with front teeth as big as tombstones and a space between them as wide as Ethel Merman’s vibrato lisped “What ith it? Tell uth about it.”

In a desperate effort to strip away the veil of my ignorance, I knelt down pretending to tie my shoelace and read the label. No help there. Abstract artists use titles like “Contemplation” or “Improvisation II” which means they don’t know what to call it either. For no apparent reason this artist named his *The Little King*. “But what ith it?” our dentally-challenged waif said again. In an effort to both silence and dazzle them with brilliant verbal tap-dancing, I threw terms at them like “neoplasticism” and “non-objective abstract expressionism.” I could almost hear their eyeballs glazing showing that they, like me, had no idea what I was talking about.

I finally did what I should have done in the first place, fall on my sword and admit I hadn’t a clue. To my astonishment they all began to smile, delighted to see I, too, was stumped and had stepped down from my pedestal. The moral of this story is don’t write checks your knowledge can’t cash.

Getting back to *The Little King*, you must remember I am an uncompromising old crustacean, having been inducted into codgerhood years ago, who still thinks modern art is what happens when artists stop looking at girls and persuade themselves they have a better idea. So I am unrepentant in saying that whatever their other contributions to society, abstract artists could still be an important source of protein.

## **Collection in Focus: South and Southeast Asia**

*Amanda Thompson Rundahl*

We just keep growing, and growing and growing! The Collection in Focus Guide Program is now nearly 80 guides strong. On January 8, twenty-two new guides began training on the museum’s South and Southeast Asian collections. Joining them in the class are 26 CIF guides with previous training in other areas of the collection. They are a large and boisterous (sometimes even downright loud!) group of individuals with an amazing array of cultural traditions, knowl-

edge, skills and life experiences to share with all of us. (I am learning a lot!)

The 13-session Thursday evening training course covers the arts of India, the Himalayas and Southeast Asia, which includes galleries 211-213, the Indian objects in gallery 209 and the Hmong textiles in gallery 110. Instructors for the training include MIA education and curatorial staff as well as guest speakers from some of our local South and Southeast Asian communities. The guides-in-training study the collections and learn touring techniques such as VTS. In addition to two gallery presentations during class, each guide gives an hour-long checkout tour at the end of training. Beginning this summer, they will lead evening and weekend tours of the South and Southeast Asian objects and staff the South and Southeast Asia Art Cart currently in development.

For anyone who might be interested in the material covered in training, the classroom portion of each session is videotaped. The tapes are available to be checked out in the video cabinet in the docent/guide study. They are on reserve for the CIF guides-in-training through April 1. After that date, anyone may sign them out.

Please join me in welcoming the new CIF guides when you see them around the museum. I hope you enjoy getting to know them as much as I have.

## Bella Italia

*Lisa Mayotte*

After two wonderful years of study, 17 members of the class of 2001 celebrated their graduation with a delightful trip to Italy. After studying the great artists of Italy, it was marvelous to see masterpieces in real life. Here is a brief account of the adventure.

Rome was our first taste of Italy. And in three days, we covered a lot of ground – Tivoli on our arrival day, with its beautiful gardens and incredible fountains. Ancient Rome, with the Forum and Colosseum, followed, along with a visit to Michelangelo's *Moses* at the church of St. Peter-in-Chains. Then a real favorite: the Vatican and the awe-inspiring Sistine Chapel and Michelangelo's *Pieta*. A side visit to the Borghese Gallery gave us a chance to see many paintings and sculptures in a magnificent ancient palace. All too soon, it was time to board the motorcoach that would take us up to Florence.

Assisi was a memorable stop en route. We strolled cobblestone streets, peeked into many churches and toured the Basilica of St. Francis, with its masterful frescos by Giotto and Cimabue. It was a tired but happy crowd that finally rolled into Florence and the lovely Hotel Ville sull' Arno, located right on the river.

In Florence, the whirlwind of art continued, with visits to the *Accademia*, the Cathedral with the *Doors of Paradise* by Ghiberti, the Piazza della Signoria and the serene Church of Santa Croce. The Uffizi Gallery kept us busy for a morning, as did the Bargello and the Boboli gardens. And the pleasures of shopping in Florence distracted many as well.

Then on to our last stop, charming Venice, with half of the group stopping at a Palladian villa, and the other half traveling straight to Venice. The Hotel Gabrielli-Sandwirth

was a delight, located just steps from the Piazza San Marco. On our one full day in Venice, we toured San Marco's Basilica and the Doge's Palace, with the Bridge of Sighs. The group then scattered, to tour the Guggenheim, the *Accademia*, shop, or ride a motorboat down the Grand Canal. After our farewell dinner, many took a last ride on a gondola to bid farewell to this enchanting town.

The best part of all was traveling with such a congenial group. Group dinners were scintillating and meeting the many spouses was great. This was an unforgettable time and a fitting grand finale to our two great years of study. Our thanks to Toni Dufour for arranging this fabulous trip.

## Trivia Quiz

For the February 23rd Docent Class: "Violets to Vinegar: Five Artful Women"

- Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717)
- Élisabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun (1755-1842)
- Berthe Morisot (1841-1895)
- Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986)
- Elizabeth Catlett (b. 1916)

Match the above artists with the following statements:

- \_\_\_ 1. The father of this artist was a pastel portrait painter.
- \_\_\_ 2. This artist first began to work with clay late in her life.
- \_\_\_ 3. This artist is known for "living her painting and painting her life".
- \_\_\_ 4. The father of this artist is known for his exquisitely detailed engravings of cities.
- \_\_\_ 5. This artist stated that good art depends on "making what you know best"

True or False:

- \_\_\_ 6. Elizabeth Catlett became a citizen of Mexico because she was dissatisfied with the treatment of African-Americans in the US.
- \_\_\_ 7. Edouard Manet was one of Berthe Morisot's teachers.
- \_\_\_ 8. Georgia O'Keeffe didn't start using oil paints until she was more than 30 years old.
- \_\_\_ 9. Maria Sibylla Merian not only observed, wrote about, engraved and painted a book on caterpillars, she also published this work.
- \_\_\_ 10. By age fifteen, Elisabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun was earning enough money through her painting to support her mother and younger brother.

Fill in the blank:

11. Elizabeth Catlett was married for 56 years to fellow artist \_\_\_\_\_.
12. Alfred Stieglitz took more than 300 photographs of Georgia O'Keeffe. Most of these were detailed close-ups of different parts of her body. Her \_\_\_\_\_ may have been his favorite part of her body, for they were photographed the most.
13. Although she is best known for her portraits, Élisabeth-Louise Vigée-Lebrun also painted more than 200 \_\_\_\_\_ during her lifetime.
14. Berthe Morisot was especially interested in painting *en plain air* so it was arranged that the Barbizon painter

\_\_\_\_\_ would be her teacher.

15. While living in Amsterdam, Maria Sibylla Merian was able to observe insect specimens collected in the East and West Indies. However, these collections were missing the origins and subsequent transformations of the insects. "So I was moved," Merian said, "to take a long and costly journey to \_\_\_\_\_".

For answers, see the last page.

## Keeping in Touch

### *Letter from the Docent Chair*

It has been very enjoyable for me to meet more of you as we work together, especially those of you who tour on Tuesdays. I realize that the relationships we form are a very special part of what it means to be a docent. I especially enjoy those times when we are able to relax and have lunch or coffee together. However, the group we are probably closest to is our class. We went through a lot together and formed strong bonds with strong common interests.

I had a conversation with some docents from the class of 1988 the other day. I found out that they make a point of getting together in smaller groups a few times a year for dinner at each other's houses. Because spouses or significant others are also included, they all know each other very well. They have also done a fair amount of travel together. I began to wonder if other classes have developed ways to keep in touch. A very unscientific survey showed me that many do. The class of 1981 has a book club, and they meet for a holiday brunch each year. It also sounds like some of them have done extensive traveling together. The class of 1975 still tries to meet for a yearly get together. I think that is really impressive since they have been doing it for almost thirty years! Other classes also have holiday parties or try to meet for lunch occasionally. Many docents travel together. Because we have similar interests, we enjoy being together.

I encourage all of us to spend some time with one another. Keeping up those class relationships helps to keep us bonded together. We can broaden our relationships by getting to know docents from other classes too. I have been very impressed with each docent that I have gotten to know. It takes a special type of person to commit so much of his or her life to the learning and sharing of art. I look forward to many more opportunities to get to know more of you.

Peggy Dietzen

### *News from the Museum Guide Office*

#### *Impressions of India*

As I prepared to travel to India, I pondered the words of my *Eyewitness Travel Guide*: "India, for first-time visitors and long-term residents alike, can be a powerful assault on the senses – noisy, frenetic, vibrant, and chaotic; a land of incredible contrasts and paradoxes... Overwhelming at first, this country of a billion people...can gradually unfold rare delights."

I offer here some memories, impressions, and "rare delights" from a month in India, made possible by the MIA's

Freeman Foundation "Lens on Asia" grant.

Women dressed in brightly-colored saris balancing water vessels or tree branches stacked on their heads

Brilliant green parakeets peeking out from behind intricately-carved temple niches

Temple deities decorated with textiles, flowers, sandalwood paste, and silver or gold leaf

Blessings from an elephant touching his trunk to my head

Sweet, warm, flavorful masala chai

Culinary feasts of strange and wonderful foods

Peacocks strutting among piles of cow dung drying in the sun

Ubiquitous vendors proffering special deals "just for you, ma'am"

Animals on village roads and city streets, sleeping or foraging for food: serene Brahmin cows and bulls, huge boars and tiny piglets, chattering monkeys and unkempt dogs

Bronze statues dancing in the eternal cosmos

Smiling school children, eager to say "Hello" and shake my hand

Palm trees along a lagoon as far as the eye can see

Aromatic spices filling the air with fragrances both familiar and unknown

Beggars putting hand to mouth with a desperate, unspoken message

Auto-rickshaws incessantly honking and weaving through traffic – with me inside!

Wedding parties of brides and attendants dressed in sumptuous, gold-embroidered silks

The Taj Mahal surpassing expectations

Camel-pulled carts competing with cars and buses for space on the superhighway to Delhi

"Bollywood" (Bombay Hollywood) movie posters hawking stories of love and desire

Mughal palaces adorned with mirrored halls and lacy stone façades

People, noises, smells, tastes, colors, textures, everywhere!

I look forward to sharing images and stories with you in a presentation sometime in the future. *Namasté*: the god in me honors the god in you.

Debbi Hegstrom

### *Honorary Docents' News*

The Honorary Docents are continuing, after the November/December holiday break, to meet at 10:30 am every third Wednesday of the month for book club and the fourth Wednesday for tours.

Ted Hartwell gave us an interesting and insightful tour in January of Werner Bischof photographs. In February, Richard Campbell will take us through the Russian Avant-Garde installation, and in March, Lisa Michaux will tour the Whistler exhibition.

New schedules will be mailed soon – all honoraries are invited to join us! Any questions or comments? Call Barb Diamond or Pudge Christian.

## ***Spring Luncheon***

Barbara Edin and I were sitting around having lunch at the Arts Café on a frigid day in January. Looking forward to spring and warmer times, we started thinking about our next docent luncheon.

Here is how we imagined the event:

1. A perfect spring day for Monday, May 17th, 12:30 p.m.
2. Sitting at tables chatting and eating delectable lunches in the Sculpture Court
3. Gazing at the beautiful Minneapolis skyline in a verdant spring setting
4. Listening to the sinuous sounds of a harp played by fellow docent, Joanne Robillard
5. A great time had by all

So this is our tentative plan and the ball is rolling. We will give you an update when warm air blows our way.

*Maria Eggemeyer*

## ***Docent Research Council (Book Group)***

The Docent Research Council (Book Group!) meets again on Monday, March 1st at 12:30 pm in the West Conference Room. The discussion will center on the book *Andy Warhol* by Wayne Koestenbaum. The topic is fascinating, so plan to be part of this lively exchange. All are welcome.

## ***!!!Attention all Docents, Art Adventure and Collection in Focus Guides!!!***

A gentle reminder to anyone using the copy machine in the Docent/Guide Lounge – please remember to put 5 cents per copy in the small tin in Doreen & Paula’s office. The museum’s educational program has a limited budget for copying and it is in need of regular deposits to cover expenses. Put your nickels to work – every little bit helps!

Also, it’s time for some early spring cleaning... The museum maintenance crew does not clean office areas, except to empty wastebaskets and occasionally vacuum. You may have seen Paula and Doreen cleaning their space regularly. Well, all guides who use the Docent/Guide Lounge and Library need to take ownership of those spaces and help to keep them neat and tidy. If you see empty coffee cups around – toss them. If you notice papers on counters – file them away in the proper folder. Props mislaid? Replace them to the appropriate file or box. Anything you are willing to do to keep our spaces kept up will be appreciated. Thanks!

*Docent Executive Committee*

## **Answers to Trivia Quiz**

- |      |       |                    |
|------|-------|--------------------|
| 1. b | 6. F  | 11. Francisco Mora |
| 2. d | 7. F  | 12. hands          |
| 3. c | 8. T  | 13. landscapes     |
| 4. a | 9. T  | 14. Corot          |
| 5. e | 10. T | 15. Surinam        |

## **From the Editor...**

Another issue of the *Docent Muse*, my third, and I feel the year ticking along. Many of us have had a busy time touring since July 1. I know I’ve spoken with quite a few docents who have their required forty tours in already. Thanks to all who contributed their time and effort to write articles for this issue. There’s only one more issue for this year, please note the deadline and publication dates below, and let me know if you have something to add to it! You may also contact me with suggestions and comments. I am available by phone (763-551-1558), e-mail (New! linneaasp@comcast.net), or docent mailbox.

*Summer Docent Muse:*

Submission deadline: Monday, May 3

Publication deadline: Monday, May 17