

Symbolism and Myth: A Comparison of Two Triptychs

Eleanor Nickles

The painting, *Pieta with Saints John the Baptist and Catherine of Alexandria*, by the Master of the St. Lucy Legend in the form of a triptych, commands a central position in our 3rd floor Medieval/Renaissance gallery. We do not know much about the artist. He is believed to be from the city of Bruges and the painting is dated



between 1493 and 1501. The date is determined from the inclusion of the belfry tower in the back-ground, which we

know had previously been burned and later rebuilt.

We think this artist was principally a portraitist with an interest in real people. His paintings usually show detailed landscapes as foils for figural compositions. A portraitist he may well have been, but the times demanded religious pictures with sacred subjects. And that is what we have here – the crucified Christ is shown sprawled across the lap of his mother, Mary. The figures fill the space in a rather awkward artificial scene. The composition of the painting is highly structured. It is an orderly, symmetrical composition. Note that the Virgin Mary sits at the center of the main panel. The side panels of the triptych show John the Baptist on the left side and St. Catherine on the right, adding to the symmetry and balance that characterizes the painting.

A sense of depth is absent as the figures are up front, in our faces, and seem rather flat. There is an attempt at perspective in the misty background showing the city of Bruges in the fog. The painter uses oil paints together with tempera on a wooden panel. The combination

gives a lustrous, colorful effect to the figures and their garments. This rich coloration gives an aristocratic and luxurious feel to an otherwise somber scene, a deeply tragic religious story.

Indeed, the issue arises as to whether we can properly classify this as an early Renaissance painting, or whether it is still encased in the trappings of the medieval era. Certainly the painting has Renaissance elements with the crude attempt at perspective and the interest in contemporary dress (we note the figures themselves are from the Biblical narrative, but are mostly dressed in the fashion of the 14th century). But the panels clearly also contain elements of the medieval spirit. The subject matter is Biblical. The triptych format of the painting is reminiscent of the small chapel altars found in the great Gothic cathedrals of the middle ages or in small altars in the homes of the faithful in the late 14th and early 15th centuries. Triptychs were commonly sold at local fairs and on street corners.

Johan Huizinga, in his book *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, refers over and over to a medieval atmosphere of saturated symbolism – symbolism carried to such an extreme that one frequently has difficulty in separating the sacred from the secular. This blending of the holy and profane becomes so complete that there is a danger that holy things will become too common to be felt and lose all meaning. He points us to the 15th century mystic, Henry Suso, who took only three bites of an apple to commemorate the tripartite Holy Trinity. After Christmas, he did not eat an apple at all because the infant Jesus was too small to eat an apple. He drank his stein of beer in five gulps to remind himself of the five wounds of Christ. Out of reverence for the Virgin Mary, he paid homage to all womankind and walked in the mud to let a beggar woman pass. This tendency to crystallize religious thought into imagery permeated all of late medieval life, art included.

This melding of the sacred and secular is quite apparent in the St. Lucy painting. We see St. Catherine standing on the wheel, the instrument of her torture. She holds a sword, the instrument of her death. And finally, she carries a book, the symbol of knowledge. She was known for her scholarship. In the other panel, we see John the Baptist surrounded by the lowly dandelion, a symbol of grief over the departed Christ. The commonplace (dandelions, wheels,

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From the Editor...

books, or swords) becomes holy. And the holy becomes commonplace. We even have the Holy Family in a Bruges landscape.

Our triptych is representative of an art for the aristocracy, the court, and the upper echelons of the church hierarchy. It is not art for the devout bourgeois townspeople of the day. The employers of the brothers Van Eyck or Rogier van der Weyden were certainly not members of the bourgeois either. The St. Lucy triptych shows the donors dressed in luxurious garments typical of the 14th century aristocracy. Huizinga would, no doubt, place our own St. Lucy triptych in this category of late medieval painting overflowing with intricate, detailed, realistic and symbolic imagery. The realism of this painting and the symbolism that permeates it is, perhaps, another manifestation of the tendency to encase religious thought in the guise of images. Along with Johan Huizinga, we might say that the Master of the St. Lucy Legend joins the brothers Van Eyck in the effort to give concrete shape to every concept by immersing them all in imagery and symbolism. Their world is a unified one – the sacred and the secular are one and the same. This painting represents a piety that, once let loose, absorbs the whole domain of life.

The MIA's other triptych, Max Beckmann's *Blind Man's Buff* stands in stark contrast to the beautiful realism of the St. Lucy painting. First, we know a great deal about the artist. Max Beckmann was a German citizen who served as a medic in World War I. The war proved to be a traumatic experience for him. He later traveled as an artist to Paris, Florence, and Weimar. He taught at the Frankfurt Academy during the period when German Expressionism flourished. After his work was exhibited in the 1937 Nazi exhibitions of "Degenerate Art," he sought refuge in the Netherlands for the remainder of the war. After the war he emigrated to the United States where he taught at Washington University in St. Louis and later at Columbia University in New York. He died in 1950.

The composition of the *Blind Man's Buff* bears some semblance of form to the St. Lucy piece. It is, of course, a triptych. Beckmann, in his own writing, testifies to his debt to medieval religious painting. He expresses gratitude to the 15th century Flemish master, Mathias Grunewald, who was best known for his triptychs. And like the St. Lucy Master, Beckmann gives us a crowded format where the figures are up front and "in our face" – exceedingly so. People are kneeling in the panels similar to the medieval donors of the 14th century piece.

Aside from a similar format to the St. Lucy piece, the Beckmann triptych stands in decided contrast to the work. With *Blind Man's Buff* there is clearly a cubist influence. There is a crowding of figures and an angularity reminiscent of El Greco or Albrecht Durer.

Starting at the center panel we see a mass of raw images. The symbolism is crude. Musicians (a harpist, a flutist, and drummer) crowd together. Their bodies have classical overtones. The sheer size of the bodies reminds us of Greek sculpture. But there is a sense of crude sexuality mixed with overtones of barbarism. We are struck by a sense of uncontrolled freedom – freedom gone berserk. There

appear to be no limits, and no discipline. Forget about composition, symmetry, structure or perspective. The figures seem totally absorbed in themselves and their own world. All sense of community, all sense of the common good seem absent. This is a story of individual freedom run riot.



The left panel shows a woman kneeling and holding a candle. A man whispers into her ear. The right panel shows a blindfolded man surrounded by two worldly beauties. Perhaps Beckmann is showing us a young bridal couple beginning their marriage and facing the turmoil of the center panel – the rabble, the crowd, the confusion, the endurance tests that marriage often presents.

What is the message of this painting and how does it differ from the St. Lucy triptych? Basic to Beckmann's code is a presumption of a dualistic universe and a recognition of the conflicting claims upon man's divided nature. Man has a capacity for both good and evil. "I assume that there are two worlds," he tells us, – "a human, pragmatic life and another that transcends ordinary time and existence." (He never really leaves the Lutheranism of his childhood.) Beckmann is clearly pushing us to get as close to life as possible. We hear his pleas that we come to terms with the dark side of life, to recognize the ambiguities of life, the gray areas that we encounter everyday. He writes: "It is the dream of many to see only the white and the beauty or only the black and the ugly. But I cannot help but realize that only in recognizing the humanity of man can we come to terms with the need for redemption."

Beckmann is not fooling us. He tells us that the whole world is up for grabs. Life is a circus (the circus is a favorite image in Beckmann's other triptychs) and we must find our way. He offers us an open-ended message. Note the clock which has no numerals one and twelve. Time has no beginning and no end. For Beckmann, the holy is encompassed in the mundane, the everyday, certainly not hidden in ossified imagery. For Beckmann, common ground is holy ground. Looking back to the St. Lucy painting, we might say that the 14th century triptych is religious art with a non-religious message. It is a painting that is full of decoration and beauty. But it does not demand anything of the viewer other than that we admire the beauty, the realism of the surface decoration, and, not least of all, the skill of the artist.

In contrast, Beckmann gives us non-religious art but with a compelling religious message. He takes us below the surface decoration and possibly presents us with a much more powerful message than the St. Lucy altarpiece with all its surface decoration. In place of the security of fossilized forms, precise imagery, and pervasive symbolism, Beckmann

takes us on the path of myth and mystery. His painting, he would tell us, is myth. But for Beckmann, there is Truth in the Myth.

Reference: Huizinga, Johan, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*. St. Martin's Press, 1949. Originally published in Leiden in 1924.



The Off-Duty Docent

Tom Byfield

Some docents subscribe to the belief that regularly prowling the halls of the MIA just looking at all the goodies in our stare palace supports a kind of cultural hygiene necessary for mental or spiritual health. We all do it to see what's new, or moved, or in some cases slated for dishonorable discharge. The latter refers of course to the painting by a vowel-infested French artist of a sad-eyed little waif squatting on a curb, waiting for the rest of the string section to show up. Far better writers than this one have explored all the permutations, combinations and ramifications of this transaction so I won't pursue that dead end in this column, but will try to get back on track before my original train of thought leaves the station before me.

When aimlessly wandering through the galleries are you sometimes tempted to intrude upon people puzzling over some work of art? Maybe they don't understand what it is saying. Maybe they are having a high old time trying to make sense of some abstraction or perhaps someone in the group is voicing completely wrong information about a piece. Should you step up, introduce yourself and do the decent docent thing or chomp on the old lingual appendage and move on? When I am tempted to demonstrate my erudition, my deep and profound grasp of all that is art, I have to pause and think about an experience I had many years ago.

Way back in my salad days when the Dead Sea was just getting sick, Jeul and I, along with our next-door neighbors, the mortician and his wife, took a trip to England. This was a decision not lightly made, we had numerous beers first. One day we decided to do Windsor Castle having exhausted our credit cards at Harrod's. We were strolling on the beautiful grounds in the warmish English mist when we were joined by a peculiar little man. Physically, he was a waste of skin, as thin as an Amish phone book, wearing a tweedy suit of unfashionable vintage. His face kind of cascaded down onto his chest like an old, sad-eyed Basset hound. He introduced himself as Farnsworth Middleton-Twyne and asked if we were tourists. He suggested that perhaps we would allow him to guide us for the day.

I wondered to myself if a fee was involved but was too embarrassed to ask. Not my friend. With the graceless haste of a Civil War surgeon, he bluntly said, "How much?" "Oh, nothing," the little fellow said. "When I retired it was to spend more time with my wife, but she talked me out of it. So I come here a few times a week and escort people around Windsor."

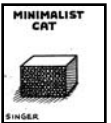
Thus began a rather deadly afternoon. Farnsworth must have majored in intellectual obtuseness and aided by the natural decay of his faculties made himself dull enough to put

insomniacs in a coma. We learned more about Windsor than we ever wanted to know and as the day progressed, we began exchanging panicked looks. How do we rid ourselves of this monotonous bore without offending him? Despite our subtle hints that we would rather be alone, he stuck to us like white on rice. (I have never understood what that means, but it does have a zingy ring to it).

Finally in the Grand Reception Room, a gilded symphony of Louis XV excess, an example of how God might have decorated heaven if he had the money, we found our solution. It was quick, painless and humane. While Farnsworth took a loo break, we ran like scalded dogs and left Windsor giggling like sophomores on a panty raid.

So, when your urge to teach and inform is imbued with all the zeal of a newly-minted missionary, and when tempted to thrust yourself uninvited on defenseless museum patrons, pause and remember Farnsworth Middleton-Twyne. Back off, go down to the lounge, drink some of that wretched coffee and look in your box. Maybe you'll be able to satisfy that zeal and find a tour that will set you to grinning like a poodle that just got its fanny sniffed by a big, handsome Great Dane.

My name is Tom Byfield and I approve this column.



Mini Landscapes

Pauline Lambert

Note: Pauline worked on this article throughout much of the last year when she was co-editor of the Muse. She had not completed it, and her last revisions were made in April 2003. Her husband, Merritt Nequette, has worked with her drafts, and hopes that the article is useful to the docents.

When most of us do a tour based on landscapes, we usually concentrate on a series of works characterized by open spaces where nature is the major focus. This might be in a somewhat manicured form (Claude Lorrain, *Pastoral Landscape*), in a rather natural state (Jasper F. Cropsey, *Catskill Mountain House*) or in a more modern/stylized form (Vincent van Gogh, *Olive Trees*) but all of them might aptly be identified as "view" landscapes.

However, there are many other things in the museum that could be classified as mini-landscapes. Since they come in a variety of contexts, these works can add interesting touches to our tours. Let's examine a few of them.

Living Landscapes

Both the *Garden of the Chinese Scholar* and the *Japanese Tea House* are outdoor settings which serve as sources of meditation for those who use them. With regard to the Chinese garden, traditional plants and special rock formations create a link with nature for the scholar, providing a source of harmony and balance as well as inspiration for his poetic and artistic work. Like Chinese landscape painting, the garden is not a literal imitation of a natural landscape, but a capturing of its essence. It is a reflection of the Chinese view of the universe.



For those visiting the Japanese tea house, the garden serves chiefly as a preparation for the meditative experience of the tea ceremony itself. Like the Scholar's Garden, this arrangement forms a mini-landscape where each piece has its purpose.

When entering the garden, one immediately senses the calming atmosphere created by the carefully arranged stone path, the cleansing water basin, the softly-lit lantern and the pit of carefully discarded leaves. While everything in the garden is natural and rustic, everything has been carefully orchestrated by the tea master. For example, the meandering path is arranged so that the visitor is automatically aware of the route of the stones and his mind becomes aware of its need to focus on the ceremony to come. So much emphasis is given to this initial focusing effort that, if a person were to return for another ceremony, the tea master would have rearranged the stones in a different pattern. And, whether the setting is a monastic temple or an urban establishment, all things are carefully orchestrated by the tea master to produce the maximum preparatory effect on the visitors.



A Spiritual Landscape

The Tibetan mandala is perhaps best described as a visual translation of the Buddhist cosmos, a spiritual landscape. It serves as a means and an invitation to enter into the Buddha's awakened mind in order to reach the ultimate goal of total enlightenment. According to Tibetan Buddhism, everyone has a seed of enlightenment in them which can be discovered and fostered by contemplating the mandala. One does this by working one's way through the various levels of spiritual growth and knowledge, represented by the various structures of the mandala form.

This mandala is dedicated to the deity Yamantaka, Conqueror of Death. Its design denotes the order and harmony of an enlightened mind, as shown through its symmetrical organization, tight structure and the use of geometric forms such as the square and the circle. The complex symbols and calculated combination of primary colors express the principles of wisdom and compassion that are the foundation of Buddhist philosophy. The outer corners containing symbols of the five senses remind us that true knowledge comes through spiritual enlightenment rather than from our fleeting impressions.



The journey begins at the exterior rim which represents the earthly level of existence where one sees images of suffering and decay: skeletons, floating limbs, scavenging animals, trees, mountains, and burial grounds – all of which are symbolic of the Buddha's life and teaching. Next comes a circle of flames in a rainbow pattern of bright colors, then a ring of vajras (thunderbolts symbolizing compassion), and finally a band of lotus petals, signifying spiritual purity and representing various deities. One then encounters the square walls of Yamantaka's palace with gates at the four compass

points. The palace is filled with symbols, including masked guardians, umbrellas, jewel trees, wheels and deer. Within the innermost square, which is divided into triangular quadrants, is a circle containing symbols of nine Buddha deities, with Yamantaka at the center.

However, as physically elaborate as this cosmic landscape is, at the end of the occasion for which it has been made, it is usually dispersed into a stream as a witness to the transience of life. Fortunately, because of a special situation, our mandala remains in a permanent installation so that we can share this unusual landscape with visitors on a regular basis.

A Textile Landscape

Some landscapes appear in very stylized forms like the one on the imperial robe which was made for the wife of Ch'ien-lung (*Empress's Twelve Symbol Robe*) (not currently on view) who reigned from 1736-95. This landscape is in the form of embroidered images of clouds, waves, and mountains. It is a fabric microcosm of the universe.

Remember when exploring the robe's landscape features that, for the Chinese, the most significant elements of their natural universe are water and mountains in a context of harmony, not domination. The idea that wisdom and peace can be found in the viewing of mountains and rivers, indeed the vitality of various forms of nature and their connection with the spirit world, is central to both Taoism and Buddhism.

In the hem and sleeves of the robe we find a series of multi-colored lines that represent standing water. The semi-circles above the diagonal stripes represent frothy ocean waves and the three prism-shaped rock-like formations above the waves symbolize mountains. The heavens are represented by a band of colorful stylized stringy clouds that curl on top of the waves and float up in little ovals through the robe.

During this dynasty, everyone who attended and served at court wore special robes. Their rank and status was indicated by the cut, color and symbolic decoration of their robes. There are other important symbols on the robe, the dragon being the most prominent and the most important, but they do not relate directly to our landscape theme. This robe, or textile landscape, served as a reminder of both the natural world and as a symbol of imperial power.

Medieval Miniature Landscapes

Master of the Legend of Saint Lucy, *Lamentation with panels of Saint John and Saint Catherine*. In this triptych the focus is obviously on the figures with Mary and the crucified Christ at the center of the tableau. However, the background is highlighted by a miniature depiction of the local city of Bruges. From a religious point of view, this permitted the artist to give his Crucifixion scene a more contemporary and therefore more meaningful context.

The artist also provides an interesting twist to his landscape. At the time this painting was done, the geographic status of Bruges had declined considerably. In earlier times the North Sea channel had reached well into the city providing easy access to ships full of various products. But as the chan-



nel silted up, that access diminished, allowing Antwerp to replace Bruges as a commercial and artistic leader of the area. This transformation had already taken place by the time this painting was completed so what we see here is an impressive but no longer accurate version of the scene.

In the Daddi triptych, the St. Francis panel provides a landscape of sorts, with rocks and odd sizes and placement of trees. The artist obviously felt that Francis needed a context in nature. By contrast, the opposite panel of the crucifixion has no landscape at all.



Decorative Arts Landscape

Tiffany & Co. *Presentation tray*. Seventeen prominent Minneapolis businessmen commissioned the tray for St. Paul railroad magnate James J. Hill upon the completion of the Stone Arch Bridge in 1884. As president and chief stockholder of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba railroad, Hill had constructed the bridge, creating access to the heart of the city's business district for the first time. Recognized throughout the world as one of the great engineering feats of the 19th century, the bridge was a symbol of the city's prosperity and progress.



Narrative decoration was typical of 19th century presentation silver.

The large flat area in the center of the tray features a view of Minneapolis and the Stone Arch Bridge, and the perimeter contains eight vignettes of events from Hill's life. The bridge, constructed of granite and limestone between 1881-83 allowed freight and passengers to move across the river that divided the city and its milling district.

An Abstract Landscape

The George Morrison pieces in the Institute's collection are vastly different in material and technique, but have in common the artist's lifelong involvement with the natural world and with our principal reference point to the universe, the horizon, which he often sees as the endless meeting of sky and water.

In *Collage IX: Landscape*, Morrison contends that this art form, which he developed in the mid-sixties, is an extension of painting; that he paints with wood rather than oil or acrylic. "The little pieces I picked up on the beach were like the shapes in the paintings. The old textures were already there: the crusty old grain in the wood. It was a made surface." As in his drawing, the first step of the working method is the determination of the horizon line. Then, however, Morrison begins laying out pieces in the lower left-hand corner, moving toward the horizon line – the one constant, known element in an otherwise continuous process of moment-to-moment choice.



The Seemingly Silent Landscape

When we think of a still life painting, it usually does not evoke an active scene. It is more likely to engender thoughts and images of tranquility and reserve, even when couched in a décor that reflects the patron's status and wealth. However, a closer look sometimes reveals a rather busy environment, with Mignon's *Still Life with Fruits, Foliage and Insects* being an excellent example.

Upon close examination this artist reveals an almost hidden world where insects and snails populate a silent landscape that reflects – not the luminous fruit one perceives at a distance – but the deteriorating world of rotting vegetation and decaying wood. The resulting impression is one of transience and impermanence.

However, the scene, taken in its ensemble, presents a detailed landscape. We see, for example, the rotting tree which forms a central core around which the other vegetative and animal elements are arranged. The transience of the scene is heightened by the crumbling arch in the background and the piece of stone that has fallen from what was once a solid building. An acorn hangs from the decaying branch and a butterfly flutters – as symbols of spring and rejuvenation.



This combination of natural and man-made elements echoes the kinds of composition developed by more traditional landscape artists.

mcn note: There are two other objects that Pauline may not have intended to use, because there are very few notes, but others may wish to explore these landscapes as well: **A Marble Landscape** (Ming or early Ch'ing dynasty *Standing Screen*) and an **Imaginary Landscape** (Magritte's *The Promenades of Euclid*). In the latter case do we see what we think we see?

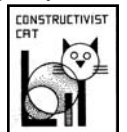


Art in Bloom Thank you Linnea Asp

Those of you did tours, volunteered or just wandered the galleries of the MIA during *Art in Bloom* were fortunate indeed. I was at the museum on Thursday and Saturday, and saw many happy museum-goers taking in art and floral displays. Someone I spoke to commented that "The flowers are better than ever this year!" My favorite aspect of this multi-day event was the lovely aromas that drifted through the museum. It is a once-a-year experience to have my nose as busy as my eyes in the galleries. I also love seeing how floral artists interpret familiar artworks in another medium. It adds another dimension to my understanding of pieces in the collection.



I'm sure I echo the sentiments of all who attended the event – thank you to everyone who worked so diligently to make *Art in Bloom* happen!



Keeping in Touch



Letter from the Docent Chair

I find myself writing to you for the last time with a bit of regret. It has been an honor being Docent Chair this year, and I am experiencing sadness seeing the year come to an end. I continue to be amazed by docents and all that we do as volunteers. Where else could we find such a committed group of men and women?

I've been pondering this question, "Why do we do it? Why do we volunteer so many hours of our time?" I'm sure that there are as many reasons as there are docents. Lately, I've noticed that one of the reasons I do this is more philosophical. I see in the amazing creations of artists a glimpse of the "Great Creator." I am drawn to the beauty and creativity the Creator has put into humans which comes out in our art. I see this Creator's imprint in the works of the artists.

It is similar, in a way, to why I am so attracted to a beautiful sunset or a drive through the great mountains of the West. When I see a beautiful sunset, I always try and find someone to come quickly and see it with me, so I can share with them that special moment. I remember driving through Glacier Park with my children when they were younger. I kept telling them to look here and to look there and isn't it just breathtaking. As I recall, they didn't always respond with the enthusiasm I had hoped for.

I guess touring at the MIA is similar. I want to share with all those who come to the museum my amazement at what these artists have accomplished. I ask our guests to look here and look there, and isn't it just amazing! Sometimes the responses are less than what I hoped for, and sometimes they are more, and that is what makes it all worth it.

Going back to my initial comments about hard-working volunteers, my greatest thanks and appreciation goes to this year's DEC committee whose hard work, often unseen, kept things running smoothly. Thank you to Kati Johanson, next year's Chair. You will be in capable hands with Kati. Thank you to Linnea Asp who oversaw the production of each interesting issue of the Docent Muse. Thank you to Susan Tasa who faithfully took minutes at all of our meetings, and to Christine Meenan who watched over the money so carefully. Thank you to Barbara Edin and Maria Eggemeyer who organized all of our wonderful social events this year. Thanks also to Pat Wuest who made sure important messages got out to everyone. I also want to thank Pudge Christian, the Honorary Docent representative, who was so faithful in attending, and Debbi Hegstrom and Sheila McGuire who were always ready to share their expertise with us.

Have a wonderful summer, everyone. Enjoy the sunsets, the mountains, and anything else that brings about that sense of awe and wonder within you.

Peggy Dietzen



News from the Museum Guide Office

Some of you have recently answered your phone to hear the words, "I'd like to follow you on a tour." Whether you greeted this request with anxiety or joy (perhaps that's a stretch), we'd like you to know that Sheila and I have very much enjoyed "tagging along." I especially view it as a chance to get to know you and your touring style better. Through an initial round of evaluations, we have witnessed your part in providing memorable visits to the museum for children and adults, and we've heard many people exclaim that they must come back again! Between juggling the teacher's requests with your own plan, navigating crowded galleries, diverting to substitute art objects, and keeping the interest of energetic school children with active hands and bodies, you do an amazing job! Your enthusiasm is infectious.

We continue to stress the importance of a clearly-stated theme, transitions that get the group anticipating the next object, and open-ended questions. These are areas that hold a tour together and encourage visitors to talk about what they are seeing. You fill in the content, based on where the group shows interest, creating a truly interactive tour!

Thank you for all that you do! We have a rich variety of touring topics and know that it is all made possible through your hard work and dedication. We have had many questions recently about our new, improved tour titles. Look for a list explaining old and new tour titles—in your boxes soon!

Having completed two Cultural Complementarity discussion sessions to date, many of you have remarked that it was a wonderful opportunity to get to know one another better and to draw on the rich blend of skills that we have among us. If you have not yet attended please note the remaining dates and times:

Saturday, May 22, 10:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

and

NEW SESSION ADDED:

Monday, May 24, 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

RSVP to Kristine Harley (612-870-3013) or sign up in the Tour Office.

Enjoy the summer!

Debbi Hegstrom

New Books in Docent/Guide Library

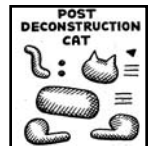
There are four new library books in the Docent/Guide study for you to investigate:

Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture*.

Vidya Dehejia, *Indian Art*.

Nichi and Hozumi, *What is Japanese Architecture? A Survey of Traditional Japanese Architecture*.

Pratapaditya Pal, *Himalayas: An Aesthetic Adventure*.



Calendar Notice

Twin Cities Museum Guides Event

Just a reminder to put Sunday October 24 on your fall calendar. A committee of docents/guides and staff from area art museums is planning the first-ever citywide museum guides' symposium. This event is by and for tour guides and will be held at the Weisman. More details coming soon...

Honorary Docents' News

The Honorary Docents have had a great winter series of talks by Ted Hartwell, Lisa Michaux and Richard Campbell, each on their respective exhibitions. We enjoyed, appreciated and learned from each one.

Our tours continue with St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church, a tea at the home of Ruth Waterbury, a tour of Baker Associates, Consumer Design and finally in July, a tour of The Museum of Russian Art.

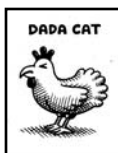
All honoraries are invited and welcome, especially those of you who have just become honorary. Remember: Book Club the third Wednesday and Tours the fourth Wednesday, all at 10:30 am. Questions? Pudge Christian, 651-452-4353 and Barb Diamond, 612-925-9025.

Docent Research Council

This group of book-loving docents plans to meet on Monday, June 21 after the morning lecture at the Black Forest restaurant on Nicollet. If weather permits, lunch will take place in the lovely patio behind the restaurant.

The book is *The Flanders Panel* by Arturo Perez-Reverté. This mystery centers on a modern-day painting restorer who finds a cryptic message in one corner of a Flemish painting.

Dining al fresco, mystery writing, scintillating discussion – you won't want to miss it! Contact Dale Swenson (dmsswenson@aol.com) if you'd like to attend.



Art Adventure Guide News

The Art Adventure Guide Program had a good year despite the fact that the number of tours was down. A few highlights include a day-long Art Adventure workshop designed by guides. The workshop began with a survey to gather suggestions for discussion topics and tour techniques. Small groups discussed such issues as “How do you respond when a child asks you if *Shiva Nataraja* is a real god?” and “What do you do when a child gets sick in the gallery?” The day also included a VTS update and demonstration by Mary Lewis and gallery sessions led by guides.

Another highlight of the year was this year's Spring Fling. On May 3, guides toured the new Mill City Museum. We rode the “flour tower,” watched a model flour tower explode, got a bird's-eye view of the stone arch bridge and all came back with a new appreciation for the history behind our own *Mill Pond in Minneapolis* by Alexis Fournier.

A personal highlight was interviewing for the Art Adventure class of 2004. It was a pleasure to meet with such an interesting and diverse group of people all of whom have a common interest in bringing the world of art to children.

Ann Isaacson



From the Editor...

First of all, I have enjoyed a wonderful year serving as *Docent Muse* editor. Thanks to all who responded to my pleas for articles this year. I am especially grateful to Merritt Nequette for all of his support in getting these issues together and printed on schedule. He is a whiz with computer layout, digital photography and editing.

Secondly, thanks to all of you who responded to the plea by the Docent Executive Committee in the last issue for the Docent/Guide Lounge Fund Drive. The Art Adventure guides pledged a generous \$100 donation to this worthy cause. Please think about how much you enjoy the rug and banquettes when you are in the lounge, and feel free to put a check for whatever amount you can in the designated envelope on the bulletin board above the prop files. Thanks!

Finally, many of you indicated interest in submitting articles for the *Muse* in the docent questionnaire last year. I have tried to follow up with most of you. Again, I ask all docents to think about articles you might wish to share with your colleagues. Touring tips, thoughts about works in the permanent collection, new ideas for transitions – you name it. All would be welcome in future issues of the *Muse*. Today we vote to approve new Docent Executive Committee officers for the coming year. The candidates for *Muse* editors are Hope Thornberg and Sharon Hayenga. Keep them in mind when the writing muse strikes!

Linnea Asp

The “artcat” cartoons appearing in this issue were taken from the St. Paul *Pioneer Press* of April 21-22, 2004, and are the work of Andy Singer's *No Exit*.

