

Curator's Corner

Bob Marshall

Five years ago, David Marquis and Joan Gorman of the Upper Midwest Conservation Association (UMCA) spent seven weeks in the U.S. Bank Gallery restoring, in full public view, Castiglione's Immaculate Conception while docents greeted and offered explanations to the visiting public. This fall the two paintings conservators, working at Curator Patrick Noon's request, are the leads in a follow-up exhibition, this time featuring Erminia and the Shepherds by the 17th-century Italian Baroque master Francesco Barbieri, better known as Il Guercino ("the Squinter"). Prior to commencing work, Joan Gorman sat down over coffee with the Docent Muse to give this preview of what lay ahead.

The structural work we had to do on the Castiglione, with the painting on the floor, didn't catch the public's imagination. Conversely, for the Guercino, the lining seems to be fine, but the surface appears much more worn, and that is where David and I will be spending most of our time.

The first thing we'll do is remove the surface grime, literally give the painting a bath (with cotton swabs). Then we'll start working on the very yellowed natural resin varnish and the extensive amount of overpaint. After testing, we see at least three generations of overpaint. The latest, which probably dates from just before the picture entered the MIA's collection in 1962, comes off fairly readily. Then there's a layer of varnish and another generation of overpaint that also comes off fairly well. The oldest generation, however, doesn't easily separate from the original paint layer. We have a saying, "overpaint is there for a reason," and sometimes you have to be careful with how much restoration you decide to remove.

When we get down to the original paint, we will take the picture downstairs to our spray

booth and apply a synthetic varnish, not only for protection but to re-saturate the medium of certain pigments that have become very dry and mat over the years. Interestingly, our stable of varnishes is bigger than it was just five years ago and we have a fabulous new synthetic resin that wasn't available when we restored the Castiglione.

Back up in the gallery, we will fuss a little more with the fills (where there is loss in the painted ground layer). Then comes the long process of inpainting, literally going over the whole surface of the picture, pushing back restoration we couldn't remove without diminishing the work; inpainting areas of total loss; and adjusting areas that might be abraded from earlier cleanings or mechanical damage. Like the Castiglione, the Guercino has the most damage in the lower region of the picture.

When the inpainting is finished, we will apply a final coat of varnish, to saturate the



inpainting and make sure the surface is even. Then comes the last step, putting the Guercino back in its frame.

How different will the painting look when we're finished? For one thing, we know already that the sky will be a knock-your-socks-off ultramarine blue. Some subtle passages in the darker areas, for example the background landscape, have been lost through previous cleanings; and we will try to restore more contrasts there. Most intriguing is the fact that the MIA owns an 18th-century engraving of this painting, which shows details, like a leaping stag behind Erminia, that are no longer visible, except in ultraviolet and infrared photographs. It will be up to Patrick to decide whether there's enough original paint left to restore passages that have disappeared since the time of the engraving. (Copies of those photographs and the engraving will be on display for the docents to explain to visitors.)

In this Issue

Curator's Corner

A Bowl of Rice and a Cup of Tea:

Two Japanese Screens

Meditation and Enlightenment:

Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism

Mysteries in Art Make a Good Read

Disturbing Art

Keeping in Touch

- Letter from the Docent Chair
- News from the Museum Guide Office
- Docent Executive Committee
- Social Notes
- Honorary Docents' News
- Friends
- Juried Art
- George

From the Editors...

There may be a scholarly benefit as well: when the painting was shown at a major Guercino retrospective in Washington in 1991, experts wondered how much was done by Guercino's own hand, questioning, for example, the young boys on the right. Patrick is hoping that by removing the earlier restorations these questions will be answered.

One thing I like about the Guercino is that it's a more approachable subject, obviously less religious, than the Castiglione. There are shepherds and cows and sheep and a pastoral landscape, not to mention an Amazon woman with the coolest breastplate I've ever seen – and a rather convoluted ancient tale that the docents will have fun telling. One thing is for sure: we couldn't do this without the docents there on the other side of the barrier.

A Bowl of Rice and a Cup of Tea

John A. O'Keefe

Some remarks on

Maple Viewing Party, Miyagawa Choshun, 1683-1753

Cherry Viewing Party, attrib. Miyagawa Choshun

The natural world with changing seasons, flora and fauna has been used to reflect human emotion and conditions in Japanese art and literature since the Nara period (645-794 CE). The tradition may be seen in gallery 224 as two screens, *Maple Viewing Party*, by Miyagawa Choshun and *Cherry Viewing Party*, attrib. to Miyagawa Choshun are rotated to reflect the changing seasons. Choshun was a successful *ukiyo-e* genre painter and in both screens illustrates the world of nature and human activities interwoven in harmony.

The narrative content of both screens involves a traditional Japanese social activity taking place outside. This is not a scene from history, legend or mythology, and Edo art patrons could easily identify with the activity and the people pictured. The viewer is drawn into a familiar world to participate or empathize as his/her own experience allows, for the viewer would have seen and known the types of people pictured in daily life. Groups of men and women are engaging in activities such as conversation, listening to music, watching a puppet show (*Cherry Viewing Party*), admiring the view and

enjoying picnic refreshments. Could there also be some seasonal dalliance occurring?

The figures are placed throughout the composition and appear to float on the surface. The illusion of three-dimensional space was generally not a concern for the Japanese artist. The emphasis was on creating a beautiful, decorative surface. The placement of the figures and objects creates an overall pattern that is enhanced with the detailed and complex representation of the textile designs of the *kosodas* (kimonos). Choshun has provided a kaleidoscope of textile patterns by not using a textile pattern more than once. *Kosodas* were used by both men and women to express their status and taste. The cost of *kosodas* was clearly evident in the choice of fabric, the type of surface decoration and the color.

Ukiyo-e Painting

The characteristics of *ukiyo-e* painting emerging out of the *yamato-e* tradition includes: representing daily activities with bold decorative design, rich coloration, strong calligraphic line, the use of diagonal lines, real and implied, and the bird's-eye view that often eliminates the horizon line. The bird's-eye view creates a cropping effect at both the top and bottom of the composition and allows the whole surface to be covered with design elements. The combination of the bird's-eye view and the diagonal lines and angles create a sense of visual movement for the viewer.

Ideas represented in both screens include: the Japanese love of nature, the transient nature of all things, and feminine beauty. A harmonious relationship between humans and the natural world is pictured in both screens. Humans are not overshadowed or threatened by nature. Hills are represented with curving, undulating lines; there are no rugged, craggy peaks as in Chinese landscapes. Choshun has included a reference to the Chinese with the representation of Chinese ink painting on the various folding fans (a Japanese development) that people are using and the decoration on the screens that have been set up to provide protection from the wind in both compositions.

Mono-no-aware



The transient nature of life as expressed in *ukiyo*, “the floating world,” and the phrase *mono-no-aware* is part of these two screens. *Mono-no-aware* may be translated as emotional awareness: perception and feeling of the tragedy inherent in human life, the impermanence of all things, the inevitable . . . , the evanescence of glory and fragility of beauty as time passes. Cherry blossoms lasting only a few days; colored maple leaves; and then after such beautiful color the starkness of bare trees.

Buddhism and Shintoism emphasize the fact that all material things have only a brief existence, including humans, and then vanish. *Ukiyo* was defined in part as “living only for the moment”: savoring the moon, the snow, the cherry blossoms and the maple leaves, singing songs, drinking sake and diverting oneself just in floating, buoyant and carefree, unconcerned by the prospect of imminent poverty, like a gourd carried along with the river current.” (*Tales of the Floating World*, 1661, Asai Ryoji, trans. M. Hickman) As the concept of *ukiyo* developed it soon embraced exhilaration in the vitality of life and living for the moment; not necessarily in the Zen sense.

Captured on both screens are representations of beautiful women, reflecting elegance, refinement, and grooming. Calligraphic lines that swell and taper define figures, ideally posed and elegantly dressed in sumptuous garments. Fashionable dress along with skill in poetry, painting, calligraphy and music were admired much more than actual physical beauty. These are the types of beautiful women who would appear in *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. Choshun only *painted* images of beautiful women. He did not design any woodblock images. Choshun had a great influence on the artists who created memorable *ukiyo-e* images in the woodblock print medium.



Some objects that relate to either screen
River Landscape with a Ferry, Salomon van Ruysdael
Silenus, Camille Corot
Luxembourg Gardens at Twilight, John Sargent
The Birthplace of Herbert Hoover, West Branch Iowa, Grant Wood
The Month of September, tapestry, Flanders
Landscape, Thomas Cole
The Merced River in Yosemite, Albert Bierstadt
Holidays, Maurice Prendergast

Meditation and Enlightenment: Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism

Merritt C Nequette

Much of the MIA's collection is non-Western art, and much of that art is concerned with the religious practices of its home region. I have been asked to write a series of articles on the religions and philosophies which are the basis of these arts.

Time is a circle, with constant rejuvenation.

Time is straight line, with a beginning and an ending.

Most of us in the west think of time in the second category unless we speak of the “cycle of the seasons” or the recurrence of day and night. We tend to like “time lines” when defining history. Probably a majority of the world’s peoples think of time in the circular fashion, and use the image of the circle as one of the “perfect” symbols. We find the image of a circle or wheel in much of the art. (A logical conclusion to this “circle of life” could be reincarnation.)

Yoga

The practice of yoga began in India as early as 5000 BCE. The techniques of yoga are methods of spiritual and physical discipline and a way of concentrating on intuitive knowledge and the unity behind the world of diverse phenomena. The aim of yoga is the achievement of true insight through the liberation of the soul. The means to achieve this are renunciation, abstinence and asceticism, rejection of all comforts and possessions, the killing of desires. Through this, one may attain spiritual serenity and inner gentleness, expressed as inner retreat in contemplative meditation. The “theory” of yoga is essential to understanding both Hinduism and, later, Buddhism.

A “Timeline” of Hinduism

Hinduism has a rich diversity of religious practices, and is extremely creative and adaptable. It has neither a person nor a sacred book as its foundation, and it has a continuity of development from ancient times to the present day. There is no fixed dogma in Hinduism, but neither is it completely arbitrary. A basic philosophy is that the cosmos is an ordered whole ruled by a universal law (*dharma*); the earthly representation of this order is a strictly hierarchical caste system and its purity laws; the world is constantly ending and beginning again; and the belief that this natural world order also acts as a moral order.

c 2500 BCE

The beginnings of Hinduism can be found in the urbanized civilization of the Indus valley (in present-day Pakistan). Although not much is known of the early Indus people, it is thought that they were a matriarchal, agricultural culture with a cult of the phallus and the worship of fertile earth-goddesses. This Indus culture was well-developed socially, and probably included the worship of sacred animals, particularly the bull.

c 1500 BCE

The Aryans, a warring rural people with no urban culture, came over the mountains of the northwest and overthrew the native (Indus) population. They brought their religious system written down in the *Vedas* (Books of Knowledge), which

describe the gods as personified forces of nature. The Aryans are credited with the development of Sanskrit, an artificial language of poets and scholars used almost exclusively for religious purposes. The Aryan faith was henotheistic (one God at a time), so that different gods might be worshipped each in their own time.

c 1000 BCE

The Aryans advanced east and south from the Punjab to the fertile Ganges Plain, conquered the local population in that area, and introduced the caste system. The Aryans became the top three castes, and the indigenous people and their descendants became the fourth caste (*Sudras*). In the course of this millennium, the *Vedas* were succeeded by the philosophically-based *Upanishads* and the more practically concerned *Brahmanas*. These works defined a well-organized system of beliefs overseen by a class of priests known as brahmanas (Brahmins). At this time there is little mention of Shiva and Vishnu or the goddess Shakti, the principal cult divinities in Hinduism.

c 500 BCE

This time period marks the beginning of what is known as the Classical Period in Indian art. Hinduism took on the form it has essentially retained. The influence of the Aryans by this time extended across the entire sub-continent and spread to all earlier cults and religions. Over the next centuries, the personalities of Vishnu, Shiva and Shakti were developed.

However, during this same time Hinduism lost large numbers of followers to Buddhism. The Buddhist influence then spread to the east to China, Japan, and elsewhere.

320-647 CE

After a millennium, during the time of the Gupta emperors, Hinduism was officially recognized.

The 700s

There was a systematic reworking of the *Vedas* (holy hymns) with the associated *Brahmanas* (holy treatises) and the *Upanishads* (secret teachings), which provided Hinduism with a secure intellectual basis. These scriptures are believed by orthodox Hindus to be of supernatural origin and constitute the “basic dogmas” of all Hindu systems. The texts are the source of a broad common ground in Hinduism: the belief in certain gods, initiation rites and the necessity of sacrifices, the strict social rules of the caste system, the belief in an eternal law (*dharma*) and the system of retribution through a hierarchy of rebirths. All of these are written in the scholarly language of Sanskrit.

Hinduism was threatened by the advance of Islam, particularly in the north. The Arabs arrived in present-day Pakistan by 712 CE for a brief occupation. However, there is some evidence that mosques were built in India as early as this century. The monotheistic Islamic civilization was a unique blend of pre-Islamic elements – Greek philosophy, Roman architecture, Hindu mathematics, and the Persian concept of empire.

900-1200

The northern plains of India were raided consistently by neighboring Turks and Afghans, who were lured by the legendary wealth of the temples.

In this same time, the account of the Krishna story was completed.

1206-1526

The Turko-Afghan Sultanate of Delhi put Islamic monotheism in control. Buddhist and Hindu monuments disappeared almost overnight. This monotheism struck at the very roots of the Hindu caste hierarchy. The lower classes were particularly drawn to the egalitarianism of Islamic belief. There were some compromises, however. Some groups founded sects devoted to Vishnu or Shiva and considered themselves monotheistic. One of these groups was the Sikhs in what is now Punjab, who have a strict monotheism, devotion to ten religious masters or gurus, and a faith that is a mixture of Hindu and Islamic elements.

1526-1757

The Mughal Empire was contemporary with the great empires of Spain and China, and much more “modern” in its outlook. Hinduism had a great revival, although the caste system proved to be a problem for the running of the empire. Buddhism and Islam continued to flourish. (The British *Raj* ruled in India from 1757 until 1947, when India became independent. A variety of religions co-exist in India today, although Hinduism has the greatest number of adherents.)

Although this short history of Hinduism has been presented in a Western-style “timeline,” if one looks at the “ups and downs” of Hinduism during this 3500-year span, one can also view its existence as “circular.”

Hinduism

Hinduism, like no other religion, gives its believers freedom in metaphysical and philosophical questions. It is up to the individual whether he/she sees him/herself as a theist, pantheist, or atheist, whether Vishnu or Shiva is the highest personal guiding force in the world, or whether there is a preference to think of this concept in impersonal terms. The Vishnuite and Shivaite systems are later philosophical systems of Hinduism which originated to some extent in competition with the strict monotheism of Islam. The followers have the privilege of ensuring that the god they believe in is the Lord of the World. Vishnu or Shiva is considered to be the only true God. Hence the concept today that Hinduism is monotheistic.

Vishnu

Although little attention is paid to Vishnu in the *Vedas*, he is one of India’s most powerful gods, particularly through his identification with various deities and his incarnation in the various heroes of the great Indian epics. He embodies the principle of the preservation of the world through ethical or heroic deeds. He appears in ten incarnations, with two of particular interest to us. His eighth incarnation is Krishna; his ninth is Buddha.

Shiva

Shiva is the most popular god in Hinduism. He is prefigured in the *Vedic Rudra*, the terrible archer who sends diseases and drives them away again. He is merged with the pre-Aryan god of virility, who is worshipped in the symbol of the phallus. (His vehicle is the bull, which may have



some reference to the ancient Indic worship of that animal.) He embodies both the creative and destructive forces of the cosmos – depending upon his different forms and incarnations. He is sometimes masculine, sometimes feminine, sometimes androgynous. The male Shiva is often depicted with his



Shakti (feminine deity) from whom he derives his energy. In this form the masculine principle symbolizes the passive element of space and the feminine principle symbolizes the active element of time.

The depiction as Lord of the Dance (*Shiva Nataraja*) is considered to be the creative act *par excellence*, in which the dancer symbolizes the impersonal, constantly changing life force. At the same

time, the cosmic dancer releases the world from ignorance, symbolized by the evil dwarf Apasmara on whom the dancer Nataraja stands.

Eroticism?

Much of the art of Hinduism and Buddhism is often considered “erotic” in the West. However, complementarity that leads to “completeness” is a foundation of both belief systems. The male-female relationship is one of the most basic and obvious ways to show this aspect visually.

Tibetan Buddhism

Although we may think of Tibet as being the most-Buddhist country in the world, Buddhism had been in existence for almost 1300 years before it reached Tibet in the eighth century CE. Like many religions, Buddhism has different schools, some of which are considered more “orthodox” than others.

The form of Buddhism found in Tibet is called *Tantric* or *esoteric* Buddhism. This form of Buddhism has a connection to Hinduism. From around 500 CE, the sacred practices of Hinduism were significantly revalued, as mentioned above. The ritual movement that emerged, in which magical elements play a major role, is called Tantrism after its texts, the tantras. It culminated in the belief in *shaktis*, the feminine consorts and companions of the gods and in the theory that the male god can only be effective through the energy given to him by his wife (as mentioned in the Shiva section earlier). The tantric cult is often connected with secret rituals, has a complicated mystical system of numbers and letters, and a sophisticated cult of images. The support of a guru is considered to be absolutely essential.

Schools of Buddhism

Theravada Buddhism believes that the Buddha should simply be regarded as a guide and an exemplar. It stresses the importance of yoga and honors the monks who become *Arahants*, (accomplished ones), who, like the Buddha, have achieved enlightenment. It is sometimes called the “purer” form of Buddhism.

Mahayana Buddhism virtually deifies the Buddha. He is revered as an eternal presence in the lives of the people as an object of worship. Compassion is a particularly important component of the belief. The followers of this branch of Buddhism feel that the Theravada way is too exclusive and that the *Arahants* reserved enlightenment selfishly to them-

selves. The Mahayanists prefer to venerate the figures of the Bodhisattvas, the men or women destined to become Buddhas but who have deferred enlightenment in order to bring the message of deliverance to “the many.”

Tantric Buddhism

Buddhism came to Tibet via Bengal after 700 CE, where it encountered, and to some extent merged with, the native Bon religion. The strongly magical leanings of the old “Red Sect” were introduced into Tibet around 770 by the Indian Prince Padmasambhava. His interpretation of Buddhism was a kind of Tantrism which was closely based on the Bon religion and developed its teachings between 750 and 850. Its followers call themselves “the ancient ones” and cultivate a secret magical teaching which stresses inspiration. The “Red Sects” and the teaching of Padmasambhava were constantly opposed by the reformist and more orthodox “Yellow Sect.” (From around 1400, the “Yellow Sect” has been dominant in Tibet. Since 1642, its leaders have been the Dalai Lamas, ruling as priest-kings.)

In 779 Buddhism was proclaimed the state religion of Tibet, primarily in the form of Mahayana Buddhism, the major division of the religion that dominated late Indian Buddhism. Subsequent religious evolution in Tibet ultimately led to the distinctively Tibetan form of esoteric Buddhism known as the *Vajrayana* path. In the ninth century, Buddhism suffered through a persecution in Tibet, and by the end of the century, was in decline.

A renaissance of Tibetan Buddhism lasted from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries. In the late tenth century, Tibetan monks were sent to Kashmir and beyond to master the teaching of Buddhism. One, Richen Sangpo, returned with monks and texts, and his brilliant translations helped to inspire much of the growth of Buddhist activity. Shortly thereafter, in 1042, the Indian monk Atisha from the Pala kingdom of eastern India arrived, establishing the Tholing monastery, soon a center of the renewed Buddhism that would in turn spread throughout Tibet. Atisha also brought with him concepts of monastic discipline, at a time when such practices had lapsed in Tibet.

Both of these pilgrimages outside Tibet brought back enormous numbers of Sanskrit texts, many of which emphasized an ordered monastic life and practices. But they also included a variety of liturgical methods, many of which were radically different from mainstream practices, and these found a particularly receptive environment in Tibet, partly because of similarities to the existing native religious practices of Bon. These texts and rituals were gathered into what came to be known as *Vajrayana* (the “diamond path” or “thunderbolt path”), or apocalyptic Buddhism. *Vajrayana* Buddhism is a ritually and visually complex form that builds on Mahayana philosophies and their accompanying belief that ultimate Buddha-nature, or truth-nature, resides awaiting discovery within all beings.



Esoteric Buddhism sought to bridge the gap between the phenomenal world of the senses and a higher, absolute world of formless truth. The *Vajrayana* forms

of esoteric Buddhism are based on a belief in the possibility of swift progress toward enlightenment. Instead of having to wait eons, through endless rebirths, for the completion of the process of freeing all beings from the shackles of ignorance, as in most of the Mahayana schools, this could be realized by an individual in a single lifetime. The Mahayana emphasis upon an intellectual, contemplative process is modified into an individualist system based on faith, and centered on devotion to deities and ritual observances. Belief in the awesome possibility of harnessing the powers needed to achieve enlightenment in this existence inspired complex and mysterious practices. Vajrayana literature remains as complex and mysterious as any in the world's religions.

Belief in the possibility of achieving ultimate objectives in this world and this lifetime brought a strong sense of urgency to faith and practice. The need to organize the parts of this vast system into a manageable whole required a large and complex visual system of support and gave rise to the ritual instruments and images that have given the Vajrayana its distinctive flavor, as well as to the huge array of deities representing the tremendous range of powers and practices. (The mandala, as a representation of Buddhahood and the cosmos, is a particularly important visual aspect of this form of Buddhism.)

Mysteries in Art Make a Good Read

Mary Theresa Downing

Often we are drawn to a work of art by the mystery surrounding the artist and the creative processes used to give an object its ability to tell a story, describe a landscape, present a lifestyle or portray a person. Art history has its mysteries too. Are there yet more Vermeers that remain undiscovered? How much did photography and new scientific knowledge influence Impressionism? What happened in the lives of some artists to cause dramatic changes in their creative styles?

The mystery surrounding art has found its way into fictional mysteries. As *Booklist* reviewer Bill Ott puts it, "art-themed mysteries possess natural appeal (stealing a painting is such an irresistibly sophisticated crime)." The following books have appeal for both the art lover and the book lover and most are very good reads.

A series of books by Iain Pears stars former art history graduate student Jonathan Argyll; Flavia de Stefano, a civilian employee in the art theft squad of Rome's police and General Bottando, her boss. *Booklist* reviewer Bill Ott tells us that Pears is a master at melding art history and plot and points out that best of all is his "wonderful grasp of the moral ambiguity at the heart of Italian life." What could be more fun than reading a well-written story where justice triumphs in the end while immersed in art history and Italian life? Because this series is not about just art and crime, but also about the characters and their relationships, I think starting with the earlier books adds to the enjoyment. One of these is *The Bernini Bust*, a title that should catch the eye of anyone familiar with the MIA's collections.

Carlo Arbati is a Florentine police detective and a published poet. John Spencer Hill paints his bachelor existence with humor and warmth. An Italian who doesn't drive and

shudders every time he gets into the car with his *kamikaze* sergeant, he seems like a charming, intelligent man that I'd like to know. He ventures into the world of art in *Ghirlandaio's Daughter*.

Whether or not it includes fine art, any story set in Italy seems to provide an aesthetic experience. Commissario Salvatore Guarnaccia, another Florentine policeman, is the antithesis of Arbati. An unsophisticated southerner who goes home for lunch with his wife and two boys, he feels confounded by his more urbane counterparts. Magdalen Nabb has created a believable and lovable character whose intuitive crime solving is a creative process that is fascinating to watch.

Venice is the home of several very sophisticated fictional detectives. Donna Leon's Commissario Guido Brunetti is married to a beautiful professor of English who brought Henry James on their honeymoon. Now the parents of two children, their exchanges and Brunetti's reflection on Italian mores and morals are enough to make the books worth reading. Humane and intelligent, Brunetti is a good man working in an impossible system run on secrets and bribes. This isn't the Venice of the guide books or even Henry James.

In *Deadly to the Sight* American expatriate Urbino Macintyre helps his friend the Contessa da Capo-Zendrini with the death of an elderly lacemaker who has been blackmailing her. The plot thickens when Macintyre's protégé, a young Moroccan painter, is accused of murdering the Contessa's newly hired boatman. Edward Sklepowich has successfully depicted the ambiguity – sexual, intellectual and artistic – that swirls in the murky waters of Venice in this and his other tales of expatriate life.

Boston is the site of Yankee aristocrat Sarah Kelling and art detective Max Bittersohn's adventures. They become involved in a complicated case of art forgery when a museum guard is found murdered at a posh concert soirée in *The Palace Guard*. *The Recycled Citizen* finds them at a charity art auction that leads to a bizarre murder plot. And one of the characters in *The Resurrection Man* is a Renaissance art expert. The eccentric relatives and fascinating friends that reappear in these books contribute to their charm.

Since so much historically important art was created in the ancient world, finding out more about it when I read fiction is a bonus. Some of the mysteries of ancient Egypt are uncovered in the series written by Elizabeth Peters. In *The Crocodile on the Sandbank* her Victorian protagonist, ardent feminist Amelia Peabody, sets out for Egypt equipped as she thinks fit to begin work as an archeologist. On the way she loses one companion, gains another and rescues a handsome and irascible archeologist, Radcliffe Emerson. She goes on to solve modern mysteries and unearth ancient art, gaining a husband, family and many friends in the process. The last book finds her back in Egypt with her family after the First World War. This is another series which is probably easiest to follow if you start with the earlier books.

Ancient China is where Robert Van Gulik's Judge Dee operates. *The Chinese Gold Murders* take this seventh century T'ang scholar into the world of art. Van Gulik was a historian so these depictions of a Chinese literatus are probably fairly accurate – and the stories are entertaining if somewhat sim-

plastic. Actually, that's really why I read all these books – because they're fun. I hope you enjoy them too.

Disturbing Art

Tom Byfield

This summer while we were on hiatus, actually on of the smaller islands nearby, I began thinking about some of our paintings that disturb me a tad. Like listening to Bach played on a banjo. In prowling the halls of the MIA have you found any paintings that to your eye have an element of incongruity, some feature that seems out of place like a nun kicking dogs and openly cursing on the street after a Vikings loss? Do you ever wish you could take a paint brush and change some of these works for the better? This urge to improve certain paintings has come to me rather late in life.

As a teenager, about the time that Caesar was still wetting his toga, I was more concerned with the vagaries of social intercourse than with art. I thought Caravaggio was an Italian motor home and Botticelli was a kind of pasta. My main cultural attainment was comic belching. Now I know that I'm not as smart as Vanna White, but then who is? With age comes wisdom, but in my case age has come alone. But now with my mantle of maturity draped rather insecurely over my shoulders I feel some license, however dubious, to pass judgment on a few of these pieces.

Let's start with Manet's *The Smoker*. Have any of you been disturbed by the fact that his right eye floats a full half inch higher than his left? We all know that one side of the face does not mirror the other. Actors always want to be photographed on their "good side." One thing that is constant, eyes are always on the same plane regardless of how mucked up is the rest of the face. I think it was old Polykleitos and his buddy Pythagoras (whose theorem is certainly one of my favorites) who first developed that immutable fact. They also said that the space between the eyes is always the width of



one eye. Small eyes are usually set close together giving the individual a shifty look. Plastic surgeons have as yet no cure for that anomaly. But I am beginning to babble and my sainted mother always told me to brook no babbling. Back on track. I suppose Manet painted the eye there for a reason – but would he tell me? Oh no. Would repositioning that soaring eye put right his

present cock-eyed expression?

Next let's talk about Sargent's *The Birthday Party*. It is a perfectly straight forward rendition of a boy mesmerized by a candle-lit cake which is presided over by his rather imposing and buxom mother. My complaint is with the father, a kind of afterthought dressed in black standing in the background gloom with no face! Now maybe Sargent didn't like the man but that's no reason to treat him like an irrelevant cipher. After all, it was his hard work that paid for that cake. I would give him a tailored suit, a red



handkerchief perched in his breast pocket and a tolerantly amused expression on a real face as befit his status.

There is an interesting painting, one that is admired for its sheer virtuosity and its beautiful execution, but one I would not have on my living room wall. It is *Still Life with Fruit, Foliage and Insects* by Mignon. I would not presume to change a bit of it but by the same token, I am not enamored of it. The picture of course has to do with the transience of earthly life, a message I would rather not hear given the fact that although I'm not exactly circling the drain, I can detect a definite undertow. If I want to see rot and decay, I need only go to my refrigerator which smells like Golum's feet and the scene is even animated.

Finally, a recently acquired painting by Fragonard, the grand poobah of French Rococo, calls for a brief comment. Usually he paints with a highly polished surface – all powder, perfume, artifice and frivolity. For instance, he would paint a flirtatious young girl on a swing in a sun drenched luxuriant garden exposing a bit of leg to some love struck swain below. See the Fragonard room at the Frick. Our painting, *The Grand Staircase of the Villa d'Este* is none of these. It is a rather gloomy rendition of a truly magnificent property. If I could paint I would saturate it with glorious sunlight.

Lighten up Jean Honoré.



Keeping in Touch



Letter from the Docent Chair

Welcome to the beginning of our new year together. I, like past chair persons, look forward to serving you. You have chosen a great group of people to represent you on your Docent Executive Committee. I hope you will share your ideas, concerns and good news with us.

In thinking of the year ahead certain words come to mind. I'll call them the "4F's."

Flexibility: We will have to rely on our flexibility to overcome the challenges of the new construction.

Focus: A word that reminds us that our tours need a theme. We need to focus on giving accurate and informative tours. The Monday morning lectures and the use of new objects will keep us current.

Fellowship: the gift we give each other.

Fun: what the program is all about.

I look forward to fun and fellowship with you this fall.

Respectfully,

Kati Johanson

News from the Museum Guide Office

Construction Impact

If you haven't been around here for a while, you may not be aware of just how much progress has been made on the MIA's new addition, the repositioned and redesigned turnaround, and CTC's expansion. If you have been around, you have already encountered re-routed paths in and out of the parking ramps, galleries closing permanently and temporarily (sometimes on very short notice!), objects removed from galleries for safe-keeping, and interesting construction sounds in Target Gallery.

We are all in for exciting months ahead as we add forty percent more gallery space – due to open in Spring 2006. The MIA's website section on the expansion is excellent – informative and fun (okay, fun if you like seeing live shots of the construction). Just go to www.artsmia.org/building-expansion to see pictures and learn about the expansion itself, Michael Graves, building history at the MIA, and the Capital Campaign. If you don't have a computer, remember you have web access from the computer in the Docent/Guide study.

We will continue to do our best to inform you as soon as we find out that a hallway or gallery is closed for uninstalling or painting. Everyone here is making an effort to communicate such changes; we have, nonetheless, had a few close calls requiring extra flexibility on the part of staff and volunteers alike. We all will have to be prepared to readjust our tour routes and expectations over the next year and a half.

Because curators are all working on planning for their new galleries and changes within current spaces, we will not be able to schedule them for as many continuing education sessions as we would like in the next year and a half. We are certain they will be eager to share their new spaces and objects with us after the grand opening. We all will have something to look forward to in the future.

Twin Cities Docent Symposium

Plan to attend the first Twin Cities Docent Symposium, "Tried and True Strategies for Successful Tours" on Sunday October 24, 2004, 10:30 a.m.-4 p.m., at the Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota East Bank Campus. Join with your colleagues from museums throughout the Twin Cities for a day of camaraderie, learning, and fun. Guides from the Walker, Weisman, MIA, and Minnesota Museum of American Art will lead interactive sessions on strategies for: engaging a range of ages, handling the unexpected, and using Visual Thinking Strategies on tours. The cost for the day is \$15.00, which includes lunch. Look for an advance registration form, coming soon to your mailbox!

Sheila McGuire and Debbi Hegstrom

Beauford Delaney

Six years after offering evening guide training for the popular exhibition on *Lives Connected: Jacob Lawrence and Gwendolyn Knight* (which served as a pilot for the Collection in Focus Guide Program), we are excited about the opportunity to invite the Lawrence-Knight guides to train to be Delaney guides alongside docents touring the show.

Delaney guide training will consist of four Thursday evening sessions, which we're also offering on Monday mornings to accommodate the varied schedules of as many docents and guides as possible. With the exception of the Monday and Thursday walk-throughs, the sessions are open to all docents and guides. The training dates and topics can be found on the fall continuing education calendar.

Delaney docents and guides will cooperatively lead tours for school groups, adult groups and weekday, evening and weekend public tours. We see this as an essential tool for raising public awareness of the contributions of Beauford Delaney as a visionary artist of the 20th century. Whether you are touring it or not, we hope you all enjoy the show!

Amanda Thompson Rundahl

Art Adventure Guides

The Art Adventure Guide class of 2004 begins the first day of their six-month training on Wednesday, September 8. The 31 new guides, in the tradition of all junior docent and guide training, will be presenting gallery talks. Gallery talks begin mid-October. To avoid congestion in the galleries on Wednesday afternoons between 1:00 p.m. and 2:30 p.m., a list of the scheduled presentations will be posted on the docent bulletin board.

Ann Isaacson

Docent Executive Committee

Your 2004-2005 Docent Executive Committee met with last year's committee June 14 at the home of Kati Johanson, incoming President. The first meeting of the year will be Monday, September 13 at 12:30 in the MIA West Conference Room. Please feel free to contact committee members if you have questions or concerns about issues pertaining to the docents.

Chair	Kati Johanson '92
Chair-elect	Patrick George '01
Secretary	Joy Erickson '98
Treasurer	Larry Simon '98
Social Chair	Dillon McGrath '85
Communications	Fern Miller '81
Newsletter Editors	E. Sharon Hayenga '98 Hope Bouvette Thornberg '01
Honorary Docents	Pudge Christian
Staff	Debbi Hegstrom/MIA Sheila McGuire/MIA

Meeting Dates

Meetings usually are held at 12:30 PM in the West Conference Room: October 11, November 8, January 10.

Social Notes

This year's opening docent luncheon will be Monday, September 27 at 12:30 at my home, 18 Kenwood Parkway. We live in the St. Paul neighborhood of Crocus Hill, about 4 blocks South of Grand and Dale. If you're familiar with Cafe Latte, you'll find our house about 1/2 mile SE of the cafe.

Our luncheon will be prepared by an Iranian caterer who is known for her delicious meals. In addition to lots of food, some of the Persian rugs from my collection will be on display.

You will be receiving an invitation. I look forward to our luncheon on that delightful autumn day. I hope you will too.

Our winter holiday luncheon will be Monday, December 13, in the MIA's Villa Rosa room with D'Amico catering. There will be more information coming.

Dillon McGrath

Honorary Docents' News

All Honorary Docents are welcome! Our fall season began August 25 with a tour of the American Museum of Asmat Art. September 22 we will be at the Arboretum and on October 17 Georgia George will demonstrate Greek cooking. We'll be on holiday break during November and December.

The Book Club meets the third Wednesday of the month and the group tours on the fourth Wednesday, both at 10:30 AM. For information call Pudge Christian, 651/452-4353 or Barb Diamond, 612/925-9025.

Friends of the MIA

Come for Real Coffee, Anytime!

Dear Docents,

Our past history of friendship is no secret. Our membership rosters intertwine like the intersecting rings of the Friends logo. Our offices are merely steps away from one another. Please know how welcome you are to drop in and have a cup of real coffee and a treat, on training Mondays or any other time, to catch up on news of the Friends and share your own ideas for our mutual *raison d'être*, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts!

*Linda Goldenberg
Chair, Friends of the MIA*

Juried Art

Docent **Barbara Kvasnick-Nunez '92'** has had a painting juried into the Plains Art Museum, Fargo, N.D., Rolling Plains Art Gallery Exhibition entitled "Identity & Vision in Minnesota and North Dakota." Her painting is called *Souls of the People* and uses the Native American moccasins in the AOA gallery for subject matter.

George

We Thought You'd Like to Know...

School age visitors on guided tours: 12,615

School age visitors on self-guided tours: 2,688

Visitors excluding school groups who talked with stationed docents: 9,707

Visitors on George Washington public tours: 293

The Grand Total of visitors who saw George Washington with the assistance of docents: **25,303!**

From the Editors...

Happy Autumn to all from your *Docent Muse* editors for 2004-2005, Hope Thornberg and Sharon Hayenga. Linnea Asp, last year's accomplished editor, has offered guidance, encouragement and two folders of information and old Muses. We're ready to go and, with Merritt Nequette again providing the tech support necessary for production of the *Muse*, and your comments and contributions, we're looking forward to a good year. The *Muse* provides a quarterly communications link between the docent corps and staff. With your help, we hope also to provide in-depth information about exhibitions and related subjects, *e.g.*, culture, religions.

We look forward to hearing from you. Both of our phone numbers and e-mail addresses are in the 2004-2005 Docent Directory. Please let us know what you'd like to read about.

The Winter issue deadline is Nov. 8, 2004, with the winter *Muse* in your boxes on