

## Mother and Child Tour

Linda Jeffrey

On Saturday, December 30, my senior docent mentor (Mary Gilbert) and I presented a “Mother and Child” tour to the pictured entourage of young mothers and children. We had lots of



fun preparing and presenting this tour, especially since both Mary and I had our own daughters (Erica and Erika) and our young grandsons (James and Sky) participating. Our daughters had no trouble finding friends with young children who wanted to come along. The tour was in the morning to avoid conflicts with afternoon nap schedules.

We started the tour at the family center, taking mothers, strollers and babies inside to acquaint them with the facility. We advised them that if they needed a time out for a diaper change or a cranky or crying child, this would be the place to head for. The family center is a child friendly place with small tables, benches, and interactive screens for the children to play with. Food is allowed in the family center too, so several of the mothers brought lunch along for their babies.

We could barely squeeze all the babies and strollers onto the old antique elevator, and since there was no more room left for Mary and me, we bolted up the stairs to meet it. Later in the tour we used the elevators in the new Target Wing, which worked very well between second and third floors, especially because there are two elevators available side by side.

We kept the pace brisk, and didn't linger too long at any one object. We were able to present eleven objects, and allowed enough walking between them to keep the babies stimulated. We had some crying, and little James even decided to take a snooze during the tour. A few babies got restless in the strollers and had to get out and toddle around. This was very acceptable to all of us.

Our goal during the tour was to portray the many images of mothers across cultures and time periods. We wanted to support these young mothers who toured with us, and to honor them in their role as caregivers to a new generation. We sought to show them a diversity of images to think about, from the gritty *Migrant Mother* photo to the opulent richness of the Largilliere painting of *Madame Aubry and her Son*.

Here are the objects we presented, in order: 1) *Venus Figure*; 2) Yoruba African maternity figures; 3) Cradle covers and

bonnet in Native American gallery; 4) Photos - *Migrant Mother* and *Homeless Family in Los Angeles*; 5) *Daddi Triptych*; 6) Largilliere portrait of *Madame Aubry*; 7) Navez portrait of the *Gaspard Moeremans Family*; 8) Millais - *Peace Concluded*; 9) Morisot - *Julie and her Nanny*; 10) Sargent - *The Birthday Party*; 11) Picasso - *Baboon and Young*.

We thought the tour went well, and we think there is no harm in starting the MIA experience at a very young age. Before we know it, these same children will be touring in the Art Adventure program in the primary grades of their schools. Mary and I know only too well how fast children grow up, having experienced it first hand with our own families.

## Curator's Corner: Prints of the Sixties

Bob Marshall

On March 17 a new exhibition will be unveiled in the *Contemporary Works on Paper Gallery (263)*, where *Marks of Intention: Abstract Art on Paper, 1945-2005* has held sway since the *Target Wing's* opening last June. Titled *The 1960s: Prints and Editions*, it is being curated by Dennis Michael Jon, hot off his *Vermillion Editions Print show*. Dennis graciously afforded the Docent Muse the following sneak preview.

You may remember I said an exhibition of figurative prints was coming next, but that was delayed one rotation so we could make a connection to the San Francisco Psychedelic shows that opened February 10. But this show owes its existence to more than a tie-in: the 1960s was a very significant decade in the printmaking world, for a number of reasons.

First – and this does relate to the photography and poster exhibits – this was a time of rebellious experimentation, of provocation, of pushing, if not bursting, the envelope. I always think of Andy Warhol's famous quotation, “Everything is art,” which means *anything* can be art. Abstract expressionists had been the dominant artists since the 1940s, and now the time was ripe, for the Pop artists especially, to reject their ideas – specifically, the idea of art as idiosyncratic self-expression.

Second, it was a fertile period for a new generation of very important and innovative artists. In 1960, Warhol, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Larry Rivers, Helen Frankenthaler, Claes Oldenburg, Roy Lichtenstein were all in their thirties; Frank Stella, Chuck Close, Jim Dine, Ed Ruscha, Lee Bontecou and David Hockney were still in their twenties.

Third, the decade saw the birth and growth of the collaborative print workshop: Tatyana Grossman's pioneering Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE) opened on Long Island in 1957; artist and entrepreneur June Wayne founded Tamarind in Los Angeles in 1960, followed by Gemini in 1962, and then Tyler Graphics in New York. Whereas before, printmaking had been largely an individual endeavor, now painters and sculptors could create editioned work with the assistance of profes-

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sional printers, without having to master the demanding techniques themselves.

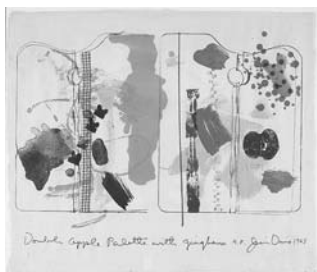
Finally, there was the rapid growth of the art market in the 1960s, and in this, printmaking led the way. Prints were affordable in a way that paintings were not, and they allowed the middle class to become collectors. And by selling a work to 50 or 200 people, instead of just one, artists were not only tapping a new source of revenue, they were advertising their name and building a market. (Albrecht Durer had already figured this out in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.)

This explosion in printmaking is reflected in our collection. Dayton's Department Store was selling contemporary art in its Gallery 12, and many of the MIA's prints came from there, either bought by local supporters or Gus Foster, our print curator at the time. The MIA owns six or seven hundred works on paper from the 1960s, and the hardest part of this show for me is that we only have room to display about 50 examples.

In the final groupings, I suspect you will detect some themes you can use on your tours. I've mentioned Pop art, in which we are particularly rich. It's not just by Americans either. Note the wry cross-ocean references in the works by British artists David Hockney and Allen Jones. Art also tended to the topical, as you can see in Richard Hamilton's *Swingeing London*, a marvelous collage of newspaper clippings featuring Establishment reaction to the Rolling Stones. You have to remember how controversial "sex, drugs and rock'n'roll" were to many people back then.

But the 1960s is not just Pop. One of our newer acquisitions is a 1960 abstract lithograph by Grace Hartigan, published by ULAE. Before he turned to abstraction, Richard Diebenkorn was a figurative artist, and here is a work from the Tamarind studio that looks abstract at first but is actually a representation of a woman seated with arms crossed; it's from a very small edition of ten and hasn't been on view for some time. Rauschenberg studied with the famous painter and theoretician Josef Albers at Black Mountain College in North Carolina and once said the most important thing he learned there was to do the opposite of what he was taught; so I had to put an Albers in the show. He was 76 when he made this screenprint, and had been making squares since 1950.

There happen to be a good number of black-and-white works in the show – often from artists you think of as major colorists, like Warhol, Hartigan, Diebenkorn and Philip Guston. Jim Dine eschews color for silver ink on black paper in *Palette*, but then he splashes colors wildly in the related *Double Apple Mount with Gingham*, another work I haven't shown recently. The colors create a flat surface. But then there



are the two palettes, which create the illusion of space. The colors are laid on the palette like paint; but then they extend beyond it. And once you think there is no depth to the piece, you see the strip of gingham cloth. The apple exists both as an image and a word. There is a lot going on, and Dine creates a compelling ambiguity.

Another work with color and text is a 1962 lithograph by Jasper Johns based on a famous painting, also called *Painting with Two Balls*. Johns' work is about color, surface texture and gesture. He tries to negate the subject by using something basic and familiar – numbers, targets, flags; in this case two balls and three rectangles made of the three primary colors, red, yellow and blue. You're forced to look at the drawing technique – the gestural lines – and then the manipulation of color on the stone, perhaps using his fingers. Johns includes the title of the print as part of the composition, further emphasizing the idea of text and symbol as object.

If I had to pick two favorites – works I don't want you to miss – I would choose Warhol's 1964 screenprint *Cagney* and another work by Johns called *Ruler*. Both, incidentally, come from extraordinarily small editions. Johns, again, takes an everyday object, a 12-inch ruler, and creates the impression of



dragging it across the printing plate. He's left the lower third of the composition blank, but added tiny lines at the bottom to reinforce the statement that this is important negative space, not something left over. It's a simple, yet engaging work that forces you to look hard and scrutinize the artist's intent. And I love the texture and color of the paper Johns has chosen.

The Warhol piece is unsettling on many levels. It glorifies the image of James Cagney the movie star, but in the role of a gangster. He has two pistols drawn, but the shadow of a machine gun points at him ominously. Cagney is off-center, cut off at mid-thigh and cropped at the top. The printing is intentionally crude, and the Benday dots in the background give a commercial feel appropriate for an artist who called his New York studio "The Factory." This is Warhol challenging the Establishment, expanding the definition of "art." That is a large part of what the 1960s, and this show, are about.



Look for Dennis Jon's article on this show in the March issue of *Arts* magazine.

## John O’Keeffe Memorial Gift

Thank you to all of you who contributed gifts of funds in memory of John O’Keeffe. Matthew Welch purchased a beautiful gilt bronze *Buddhist Reliquary* with these gifts, supplemented by the Louis W. Hill, Jr. Fund. The reliquary is now on view in the Buddhism gallery where the *Apsara* has been. Matthew’s label copy provides meaningful insights into this stunning object, which we are all confident John would have loved to use on his tours!

Japan, Edo period  
*Buddhist Reliquary*, 17<sup>th</sup> century  
Gilt bronze, rock crystal  
The Louis W. Hill, Jr. Fund and  
gifts of funds in memory of John  
Austin O’Keeffe

This Japanese reliquary is in the shape of a *hōju* or “wish-granting jewel.” Such jewels are frequently encountered as an attribute of Buddhist deities and symbolize their ability to respond to the prayers of devotees. The veneration of relics has been an important part of Buddhism since the death of the historic sage, Shakyamuni, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. According to tradition, the cremated remains of the Buddha were divided into nine groups and memorial stupas were created to house them as places of worship. Some 230 years later King Asoka is said to have divided the nine groups of relics into 84,000, which he used to create stupas throughout India. This custom spread with the transmission of Buddhism throughout Asia. At some point, polished pebbles, stones, bits of sand-worn glass, and possibly bits of bone from high-ranking Buddhist priests, began to serve as substitutes for actual relics from the Buddha. Although this example probably dates to the late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century, it is in the ornate style of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. A carefully fashioned rock crystal container, filled with relics, functions as the wish-granting jewel. Delicate bronze flanges form the cosmic flames of the jewel. The jewel sits atop a lotus, just as Buddhist deities stand or sit on lotus thrones, symbolic of their purity. The lotus is supported by a beautiful and ornate stand. A small keyhole in the base of the object allows the “flames” to open, so that relics can be removed and used to sanctify other places in preparation for temple construction. Because the creation of a Buddhist object – be it a painting, sculpture, or implement – is considered an opportunity to accrue religious merit, artists lavish particular care and artistry on their fabrication. Reliquaries, because of their important function as holders of actual or symbolic relics, were especially prized objects.



## A Quiet Family Tour

Tom Byfield

A month or so ago I was asked by two of our kids if I would lead a tour of the now-closed *Passion for Paintings* for them and a few friends. I use the term “kids” loosely here as they both are uncomfortably straddling fifty and exhibiting the vague unease of being middle-aged. I don’t have the heartlessness to draw attention to myself as an example of what comes next. One of our three children is actually older than I am.

They had heard how their antediluvian father – a man educated beyond his intelligence – was accomplished in displaying abstract confusion in the same way a midget is good at being short. They thought it would be fun to share his unique ability to practice the art of oral scrimshaw at the MIA with some of their buddies. They assured me that they all were eager for this learning experience so I assumed that with my usual ebullience, charm, wit, benevolent demeanor and diligent preparation, I would give them a tour that would blow them away like teenagers at a Purple Groin concert. I soon discovered that I was dancing in the end zone prematurely.

I scheduled the tour for 6:30 on a Thursday evening, naively assuming that at that hour we would have the place to ourselves for a quiet intimate get-together. I was wrong. Before we went in, I gave the preliminary introduction to the tour. This drew some people in the area who became a part of our group. As we moved along we attracted more attendees like rottweilers to a poodle in heat. What began as a little gathering of a few friends became a jostling horde, with my original flock being moved outward toward the periphery as we progressed from picture to picture.

It was slow going as many had questions, some of which I could even answer. One young man asked if Caravaggio was a friend of St Francis of Assisi, while another wanted to know if Gainsborough was still alive. I said, “No, he is dead. At least I sincerely hope so, as they buried him years ago.”

One foreign-looking man with the mark and even the pose of an educated mind sidled up and in a conspiratorially-lowered and accented voice posed a query. Curious as to his origin, I asked where he came from. It sounded like he said he was a Sumerian. I was surprised, as we usually don’t see too many of those in Minneapolis – St Paul, maybe, but not Minneapolis. However, with my anemic hearing he very well could have said “Hungarian.” He asked in all sincerity which of the paintings were copies of the originals. He assumed that not only the paintings in the exhibit but other masterpieces in the MIA were kept safely in the bowels of the museum and only reproductions of them were hung on our walls. The little devil that perches on my shoulder from time to time whispered, “Tell him yes, many of these are copies, only the poor ones are originals. This is common practice in most museums. The *Mona Lisa* in the Louvre, for instance, was lost years ago due to a breakout of fungal smut, starting no doubt when it was hung in the bathroom of Francis I. Other famous masterpieces have no original at all, just reproductions.” He probably wondered why I was grinning insanely as I explained that

no, they were all real, not an imposter in the bunch.

While I was waiting after the tour for our little group to peruse those paintings we didn't cover, a slight little man approached me. He had a narrow French goatee and a broad French accent. He said he had been an impressionist artist all his life, but was getting tired of the whole thing and wanted to know where to go to learn to paint abstracts. My little devil again had a totally inappropriate suggestion which I with fortitude resisted. I mentioned that the MIA had some excellent examples but to totally immerse himself in the dregs of abstract expressionism, deconstructive post-modernism, and all the other rhetorical gymnastics applied to art today, he should hie himself to the Walker. He thanked me and sauntered away as only the French can saunter. I realized in spite of the confusion of an unexpectedly large tour group, my kids and their friends were having fun and I thoroughly enjoyed meeting those unusual people along the way. It would seem that every crowd has a silver lining.

## Keeping in Touch



### ***Letter from the Docent Chair***

This year I signed up to tour Winterthur. I know absolutely NOTHING about any decorative arts from that time period. Ask me about something from the Modernism collection and I can somewhat bluff my way through but ask me about tall clocks from Boston in the year 1749 and I am at a total loss. Inquiry could only go so far at this point in my tour I fear. But cowardliness and laziness must be put aside (and my calendar did decide for me) and I must go forth and tax my brain once again!

On that note, I also experienced another new type of challenging tour just last week. I had the honor of spending an hour with some of the happiest and most excited group of adults I have ever encountered. They were visiting with an organization called Magnifying Abilities, located in Chaska. Their goal is to provide social and recreational programs for persons with mental disabilities, enhancing their community involvement while teaching them important life skills. I started my group off with the Japanese *Ni-o Guardian Figures*, asking them to imitate the expressions and talk about how the figures may have been used. We progressed through Asia heading towards Egypt, stopping to enjoy the model boat and the mummy. The group leader at that point requested some Monet so we headed upstairs to check out the "weather forecast" with the Impressionism paintings and some of the American paintings on the way. Our next stop was the *Connecticut Room* where a lengthy discussion ensued regarding the "best bed" usage during those cold winter nights. Another obvious highlight of course was the Otis elevator, which we can all relate to!

None of this is particularly unique but what I want to express is my joy I felt that afternoon seeing their faces when they were simply describing what they saw and how they felt during this carefree outing. I selfishly felt a definite purpose that day and took great joy in telling the chaperones that the visitors "warmed my heart" giving me a similar sense of warmth that the Chihuly *Sunburst* provided the group on their

way out. All the hugs, handshakes, and smiles made my afternoon.

### **Some docent particulars to discuss now!**

Unfortunately some of our fellow docents will undergo surgical procedures, experience illness or family deaths. Teri Edam, a member of the Docent Executive Committee is in charge of sending out cards or flowers to fellow docents. Teri has a great grapevine but occasionally cannot always hear everything. Please contact Teri at tedam@stanclouthier.com or 952-922-5663 if have any pertinent information for her. Monies from our Sunshine Fund are used for this expense. Of course feel free to contribute to this ongoing fund. The envelope is located on the docent bulletin board. Much appreciated!!!

Mark your calendars for the luncheon honoring the graduation of the new docent class of 2005. Plans are underway for the May 21 event with details coming soon. Currently Lyn Osgood, docent Social Chair is trying hard to keep those costs down. With service charges and taxes almost equaling the actual cost of the food and thereby almost doubling the cost of the luncheon, we are aware of the uncomfortable total amount. We need to remember though this is such a wonderful event to reconnect with other docents we seldom see.

There is one more item I do want to mention of which I am particularly proud. I am also the newsletter editor of the Friends newsletter along with Mary Ellen Alden. This year we started a new column called *Collection Connection*. Each month we feature a piece of art from the MIA's collection that relates to the Friends' monthly speaker the second Thursday of each month. We feel it is a way to focus on the relationship between the guides and the Friends. We are all here because of our interest and devotion to art. Each of us expresses it in a different manner.

Well back once again to my Winterthur challenges. By the time you all read this, rest assured you can now ask me all about tall clocks and I will indeed have many pearls of wisdom to share – after of course studying my lecture notes, the catalogue, and stumbling through those first few painful tours. Ask away; I promise I will try not to bluff!

Pam Friedland

### ***From the Museum Guide Programs Staff***

Dear Docents,

Thank you for braving all the elements this Minnesota winter has sent our way! Come wind, rain, ice, snow, or bone-chilling temperatures, you have made your way here for tours. The front lobby at 10:00 a.m., teeming with energetic and enthusiastic students, is enough to warm anyone's heart. How lucky we all are that you choose to spend so much of your time here with our visitors.

In November, 13,341 visitors participated in tours, "spotlights," discussions, and art carts led by you and the guides. This is an 18.38% increase over last November. In December docents and guides served 13,043 visitors, an increase of 14.05% over last December.

Having served 51,916 visitors in the first 6 months of this fiscal year, we are ahead of last year's numbers by 35.64 %, and the prior year's by 11.22%.

This holiday season, docents toured 3,115 visitors through *Holiday Traditions* in the period rooms and 508 visitors through the *Purcell Cutts House* decorated for the holidays. I hope you are as impressed as I am.

Thank you for making the docent program such an attractive volunteer opportunity. We are always receiving inquiries from eager candidates regarding when we will again be offering docent training. However, because of your long-term dedication to this job, we are in a great position to wait until 2009 to begin the next docent class. With 44 junior docents about to hit the floor (not running, though!) and 141 current senior docents, we don't anticipate any difficulties providing docent-led tours to everyone who wants them for years to come. We will send a letter to everyone who has expressed interest in getting involved thus far. Knowing that you are often the first point of contact for many inquiries about the program, we appreciate your help in spreading the word.

Thank you also for the great turnouts we have had for Monday morning continuing education sessions last year and, again, this year. We love seeing so many of you! I know I have quoted Tony the Tiger before, but I feel compelled to do so again.



"You're Grrrrreat!"  
Happy 2007!

Sheila McGuire

### **Honorary Docents**

The Honorary Docents meet the fourth Wednesday of every month to enjoy art-related tours of interesting places in our area.

In November we met at the Minneapolis Grain Exchange. Not only did we appreciate the beauty of the building designed by John Bradstreet, an Arts and Crafts designer, but we were impressed by the monumental trading room.



The grains for your morning Wheaties are bought and sold there. One billion bushels per day pass through this trading room. It is the largest cash market in the Midwest.

Some of the MIA's significant benefactors made their fortunes on this floor.

Arlene Baker

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

One more chance this season to become famous with an article in the *Docent Muse*. The deadline for submissions for the Summer issue is Friday, May 4.

Put articles or ideas in my junior docent mail folder, or e-mail them to mcnequette@stthomas.edu

The following poem appeared in the *Docent Muse* a few years ago. Composed by a now-wishing-to-be-anonymous author, it may apply to some of my colleagues in the docent class of 2005. *Ed*.

### ***Fear of Touring*** ***Confessions of a Junior Docent***

*I think my tours will never be  
Considered to be of high degree  
For I am clearly not dramatic  
I fear they all sound somewhat static*

*Iry-en-Akhet and Paleolithic  
I thought my new tour might just be terrific  
But my transitions weren't seamless  
My theme not dynamic  
Should I throw in Korean, Chinese and Islamic?*

*As if I had this option; Chinese was a blur  
And then I remembered, the great  
Wang-Hsi-chi  
Of Jade Mountain fame, now how did I know it?  
With his forty-one friends, he, too, was a poet*

*Please accept my apologies if I sound cryptic  
I've decided on "Highlights", and I'll  
Show a triptych  
Personal, portable, painted by Daddi  
And beneath Francis' robe is the hint of a body*

*The beginnings of humanism, now I remember  
I think it was something I learned in December  
Almost two years ago when I foolishly thought  
The mysteries of art to me could be taught*

*My classmates are eager, all twenty-eight  
They are planning their tours at a dizzying rate  
They use VTS and ask just the right question  
But the thought of it all gives me indigestion*

*Perhaps I'll improve when my touring is steady  
Both Sheila and Debbi have told me I'm ready  
But I know I'd feel better and less on the spot  
If just for awhile I could keep my RED DOT!*