

The Docent Muse



May 2011

With Gratitude from the Chair

Marge Buss, Docent Executive Committee Chair

Greetings to everyone.

I've had some trouble writing this last "Letter from the Chair" to you. I am filled with a dichotomy of thoughts and feelings as I end my term. So much has taken place this year. We began the year with the Junior Docent class entering its second year of training. We welcomed to the MIA staff an accomplished Director of our newly formed Department of Learning and Innovation. We launched Book Club tours. Many docents, in preparation to tour Art in Bloom, had a continuing education class at a greenhouse! The DEC worked cross-departmentally to represent you and laid the ground work for strengthening your Board. The year culminated on May 24, 2011, when we celebrated a beautiful graduation event and welcomed 39 new Senior Docents into the fold. Congratulations to the Class of 2009!

Your DEC Board worked every month to represent you. In that vein, we welcomed as special guests Director Kaywin Feldman to our April meeting and Dr. Katherine Milton to our February meeting, thereby creating communication bridges between docents and the museum leadership.

On another occasion, also in the spirit of bridging, the DEC Board invited Molly Huber as a special guest to its November meeting. Molly, a former assistant curator in the MIA's Department of Oceanic Art, is now the Chair of the Board at the Hennepin History Museum, just across the street from the MIA. Please visit it.

By June 30, 2011, many of you will have exceeded your 40-hour yearly touring requirement. If I were paying you, I'd make sure you got time and a half for that. Bravo!

This year, each volunteer DEC Board member dug in and performed their duties on behalf of you. I

would like to thank them here and, when you see them, perhaps you would like to thank them too:

JeanMarie Burtness – DEC Chair Elect

Jane Stull – Secretary

Morry Rothstein – Treasurer

Emily Shapiro – Newsletter Editor

Ruth Leadholm – Communications

Julie Bolton and Michele Byfield Angell – Social Chairs

Helen Bowlin – Honorary Docent Representative

Kay Miller – Junior Docent Representative and the two staff positions below.

Bridging information from staff to our Board and from our Board to staff at each DEC meeting was the ever dependable Debbi Hegstrom. Thank you, Debbi, for being there for us without fail in the face of an overwhelming load of responsibility this year. Also, thanks to Sheila McGuire who, as head of Museum Guide Programs, listened to and considered our proposed initiatives for next year's docent events.

And now, please welcome next year's DEC Board, who will be seated effective July 1, 2011:

JeanMarie Burtness – DEC Chair

Fran Megarry – DEC Chair Elect

Terri Edam – Secretary

Toni DuFour – Treasurer

Mary S. Bowman – Newsletter Editor

Nan Lightner – Communications

Liz Short and Sue Marty – Social Chairs

Helen Bowlin – Honorary Docent Representative

and the two staff positions above.

As we wrap up this year, I'd like to reflect on the essence of us. We give museum-wide, self-created and -researched tours. We connect with the public as the museum's face and voice in every corner of these hallowed halls. We educate and we entertain. The art we show to accomplish our work are gifts from the gifted of the past and the present – the artists. Our permanent collection is exquisite and our special exhibits

are top notch. Just think of the best of the best we offered our public this year: *The Thaw Collection*, *Titian and the Golden Age of Venetian Painting*, *The Peter Marino Bronzes*, and *The Mourners*. But the best MIA exhibit I have seen offered during my ten years as a docent has been seeing what you do week in and week out – being a proficient, adaptable, learned, and professional group of public servants who just happen to love a museum. You are the pinnacle of what docents can be.

Farewell – it has been my honor to serve you all.

Greetings from the Honorary Docents

Helen Bowlin, Honorary Docent Representative, DEC

Our honorary docent group continues to be active and interested in MIA lectures, special events and exhibits. We have a very active book group of about twelve former docents that meets in homes once a month. The books we have read this year include *The Nine*, by Jeffrey Toobin, *The Help*, by Kathryn Stockett, *The River of Doubt*, by Candice Millard, *The Razor's Edge*, by W. Somerset Maugham, *Half Broke Horses*, by Jeannette Walls, and *Stones for Iberra*, by Harriet Doerr. Our selections have included books that are art-related as well as books concerning contemporary issues. All honorary docents are welcome to join our book group.

We also have enjoyed tours of MIA special exhibits presented by the curators of those exhibits as well as tours of other venues. Here are some examples.

September: Eike Schmidt, Curator of Decorative Arts, Textiles and Sculpture, discussed the MIA collection; and Glenn Keitel, honorary docent, discussed public art in the Twin Cities.

October: Dr. Marguerite Ragnow, Director of the James Ford Bell Library, discussed the *Ricci Map* and other related Ricci materials housed at the library; and Libby Arendt Baker, daughter-in-law of honorary docent Arlene Baker, gave us a tour of her home and art collection.

November: Joe Horse Capture, Associate Curator in the Arts of Africa and the Americas Department, presented a tour of the special exhibit, *The Thaw Collection of American Indian Art*.

April: Patrick Noon, Curator of Paintings, gave us a tour of the special exhibit, *Titian and the Golden Age of Venetian Painting*.

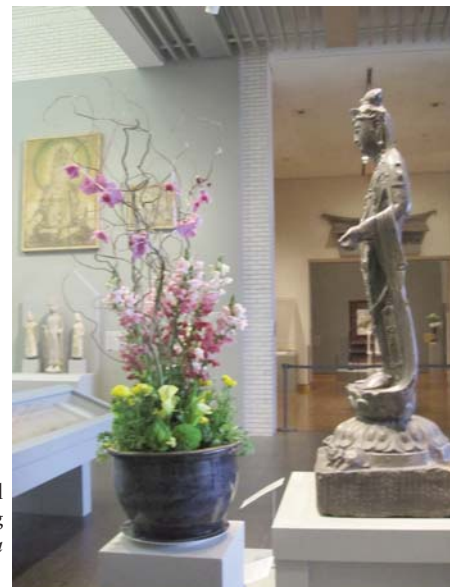
May: We visited and toured the Hindu Temple of Minnesota in Maple Grove.

June: We will participate in a docent-led tour, *Dancing With the Divine – Arts of India, Tibet and Southeast Asia*.

All honorary docents are welcome to attend these events. Please come – we have fun!

Docents Are Floral Artists Too

This year, four docents contributed their floral art creations to *Art in Bloom*. Enjoy these photos of their work!



Annie Arkell
interpreting
Avalokitesvara



Linda Jeffrey
interpreting
Bronco Buster



Linda Jeffrey interpreting *The White Bridge*



Lisa Berg interpreting *Fanatics of Tangier*



Suzanne Zander interpreting *Portrait of a Lady*

Docents are Friends = Friends are Docents

As an arm of the Friends of the Institute, we have a voting seat on the Friends Board. Your Docent Executive Committee Chair fills that role every year. Please renew your Friends membership when your notice arrives. Activate your Friends membership if it has lapsed. Support the many ways the Friends enhance visitor experiences at the MIA.

Thank You! A Report From the Field

Sheila McGuire

I bet all of your ears were ringing last March 16. I was honored to be invited by a committee of peers to facilitate a breakout session on “Best Practices in Tour Guide Programs” for the National Art Education Association, Museum Division’s Preconference. I couldn’t say enough about how the key to our success lies in our terrific volunteers. Educators from around the country were impressed by the rigor of our interview process, the fact that you all learn and practice teaching techniques before you study content, your commitment to developing open-ended questions and custom-designed tours and, most recently, your experimentation with iPads and participatory activities on your tours.

Before our afternoon breakout sessions, however, we were privileged to hear from a panel of distinguished individuals who shared summaries of their important research and reports. These summaries helped all of us better understand and imagine the future of museum education. They also posed important questions: What technology do we need to know about right now and over the next five years? How will population trends affect museums? How has “No Child Left Behind” already affected the arts in our schools and museums? In case these reports are not already stored in your iPad iBook libraries or bookmarked on your computers, I will share them with you here.

Maria Medvedeva, Sociologist, University of Chicago, presented core findings from the Center for the Future of Museums’ report, “Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums.” (CFM is an initiative of the American Association of Museums.) This report found that “the U.S. population is shifting rapidly and, within four decades, the group that has historically constituted the core audience for museums – non-Hispanic whites – will be a minority of the population. Museums must be proactive to ensure that our audiences reflect our communities. It is imperative that museums benefit all of society.” Intrigued? Read more:

<http://www.futureofmuseums.org/reading/publications/upload/Demographic-Transformation.pdf>

Holly Witchey, Advanced Academic Programs, Museum Studies, Johns Hopkins University, presented the results of “The Horizon Report: 2010 Museum Edition,” by The Marcus Institute for Digital

Education in the Arts (a program of the New Media Consortium). In brief, the six technologies The Horizon Report says will be essential to museum education are: (1) in the next twelve months: mobiles and social media; (2) two to three years out: augmented reality and location-based services; and (3) four or five years away: gesture-based computing and the semantic web.

Don't worry too much if you don't know what some of these terms mean – they are emerging technologies. This link will take you to the insightful report: <http://www.nmc.org/pdf/2010-Horizon-Report-Museum.pdf> If you want even more information, here is a link to the New Media Consortium's general 2011 Horizon Report: <http://www.nmc.org/publications/2011-horizon-report>

Robert Sabol, President-elect of the National Art Education Association and Professor of Visual and Performing Arts, Purdue University, revealed just how great an impact the “No Child Left Behind” law has had on schools. His message to us was that the role of museum educators is now more important than ever. Follow this link to his study: http://www.arteducators.org/research/NCLB_Proj_Report_2-10.pdf

Finally, Claudine Brown, Assistant Secretary for Education and Access, Smithsonian Institution, spoke passionately on making the arts essential NOW! In short, her four policy recommendations are: (1) expand access; (2) revitalize informal education; (3) create learning communities across disciplines and fields; and (4) create a culture that uses evaluation. She stressed (as did many at this conference) the importance of adding the Arts to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields to make STEAM.

I left this session with great optimism because I know we are already thinking about and taking on these challenges in the work we do every day for visitors to our museum.

As a little postscript, you made me so proud the next day as well. I presented on our iPad project with Kris Wetterlund in the very first timeslot of the conference itself. Museum peers in a standing-room-only crowd were so impressed by the many ways you all have been involved in this project, from your early ideas about content development to your participation in training and full integration of the iPad technology into your tours. Thank you for always inspiring me!

The Participatory Museum: Further Exploration and Reflections

Debbi Hegstrom

Asking questions people want to answer

We believe that engaging visitors through asking questions is an integral part of a tour. But as Nina Simon stresses in her book, *The Participatory Museum*, we need to think beyond asking a question just for the sake of asking a question. Rather, it is important, first, to ask questions that people *want* to answer and second, to which you are *interested* in knowing the potential answers. As Simon says, “Otherwise, what’s the point?”

She challenges us to ask questions that:

- trigger an immediate response
- induce grappling
- motivate us to authentic expression
- draw from personal experiences
- are open to anyone
- encourage speculation (Ask “What if?” instead of “What is?”).

In part 2 of our Participatory Museum workshops with docents and guides, we asked attendees to come up with questions to which they were interested in hearing answers. Working in pairs or small groups, each group wrote its question on a piece of paper so that it was visible. Then, they went into the galleries to test it out. Holding up the paper was a device to attract attention and tested whether it was a question people wanted to answer! Based on this exercise, here are some sample questions related to specific objects that you could use to engage visitors on a personal level:

Chinese landscape paintings: Describe a time when you felt very small. How did your surroundings, physical or social, impact your feelings?

Henry Moore, Warrior with Shield or John Everett Millais, Peace Concluded: How has your life been impacted by war?

Kehinde Wiley, Santos Dumont – The Father of Aviation II: How do you feel about the placement of this painting in the context of the other works in this gallery? What is your reaction to what is depicted in this painting?

Modernist Design (G379): What if you could play with or use any object in this gallery. What would you choose? (Imagine taking the *Tatra* for a spin on the *Autobahn*...)

Here are some more general questions that could be used with a variety of objects:

- What animal would you choose to represent yourself?
- If you met (person in work of art), what three questions would you ask him/her?
- What kind of music do you hear based on the patterns or colors or textures of this (work of art)?
- What movie star would you choose to play (person in work of art) and what do you see that makes you say that?

We know the value of questions that help people to look very closely. They can lead to memorable discoveries. But we can build on these questions by asking people also to make personal connections to what they see – to relate their lives and reactions to the works before them.

Creating activities people want to do

Another level of participation happens when we ask visitors to engage in some type of activity related to a work of art. In designing these activities, Simon asks us to contemplate:

- How is a museum visit enriched by participatory activities?
- How do visitors interacting with one another contribute to making a better museum experience?
- How can we create spaces and activities in the museum that will lead to interaction among visitors?
- How do “visitors” become “users”? (She sees this as key to ongoing involvement because it invites ownership.)

These are big questions, to which we are just beginning to come up with ideas and answers. How can we relate these questions to what we do on tours and spotlights? We need to experiment, make mistakes, and experiment some more. So, we decided to try out an assignment on our class of junior docents, who are eager to do almost anything. (I will note, however, that there were a few reluctant reactions.) Again, working in small groups and after some grappling, many creative ideas came out of this exercise. I am highlighting four here that would be easy to do without a great deal of preparation. We encourage you to try out activities like these on your tours and spotlights.

Auguste Rodin, The Age of Bronze: The docent took instructions from each tour member in turn on how to position herself to mimic the pose of the sculpture. Through very close observation, participants built on each other’s suggestions to make sure that every nuance of the pose was represented. The exercise emphasized how Rodin’s exactitude in portraying the human nude played a vital role in the sculpture.

George Bellows, Mrs. T. in Cream Silk No. 2: The group was welcomed into the gallery as “members” of Mrs. T.’s family and given a card on which to write their reactions to the painting. To avoid being cut off from their inheritance, they switched cards with other participants and then the comments were read aloud, with great dramatic affect. This underscored the fact that Mrs.T.’s family was not exactly pleased with the way in which she chose to be represented – although some people did see the image as endearing!

Special Exhibition: Facing the Lens: Portraits of Photographers: Tour members selected images of shapes from a stack of details derived from photographs in the gallery. They then sought to find from which photo the detail came. People began to consult with and help one another, especially on the details that were harder to find. The exercise got the participants to look very closely and emphasized elements of composition, something each photographer in the exhibition took into consideration. And they engaged with one another!

Kuba, Yet Belt: The group briefly discussed some of the objects and designs associated with the royal family that are found on the belt and that speak to the qualities of a ruler. Then they were asked to create a symbol or simple drawing that embodied characteristics they would like to have in a leader. (They were given many materials to choose from, but this could be done with small pieces of paper and colored pencils.) Each person explained his or her symbol and all were strung on a belt or chain. The range of individual responses showed how a group can make a community expression of what it takes to be a great leader.

Let us know what other ideas you come up with and how it went!

My sincere thanks to Learning & Innovation staff and docent colleagues for their many creative ideas that made this article possible.

Update on Public Book Tours

Emily Shapiro

Following the recent completion of the first three-month cycle of the MIA's new public book tours, several participating docents met with Debbi Hegstrom and other interested docents to share their experiences. Those docents who plan to offer these tours in the future may benefit from the following key pieces of advice that were shared at this meeting.

- *Establish "who your audience is" at the outset.* Don't expect that everyone or even anyone will have read the book. Ask who has read the book and what they thought of it. Provide a brief summary of the book if needed. Note whether your group is composed of the same or different generational or cultural groups and focus your tour accordingly.
- *Explain to your visitors that these tours are not "book reports" or "book reviews" but, rather, that the tours simply offer a new way to engage with the art in the museum.*
- *As in any other tour, be prepared to be flexible.*
- *Try to be thematic rather than too specific.*
- *Read selected passages from the book from time to time to connect back to the book and, perhaps, entice those who haven't read it to do so.*
- *Remember that visitors will expect to talk during the tour, not merely listen, just like they might do in a book group.*
- *Focus on making the tour fun and entertaining!!*

The following activities were suggested as additional ways to develop and promote the book tour initiative:

- Continue current "guerrilla marketing" efforts and encourage interested docents to distribute flyers to appropriate organizations in their neighborhoods.
- Make information about book tours more accessible on the MIA website.
- Add a "blurb" about the book on the MIA website to draw in visitors.
- Coordinate book tour theme selections with themes covered in the MIA's summer art classes.
- Create a "book tour" game for the 2011 Art Perchance event.
- Create and promote a "Third Thursday" book club.
- Create an online book tour blog for interested docents.

- Encourage docents to consider using a book tour theme in their "Highlights" tours.

Debbi Hegstrom also shared some news concerning future book tours. Public book tours will be a selection on the upcoming docent annual questionnaire, allowing docents to choose to be available for these tours. The Docent Program also may try to advertise

and offer private tours for book groups, based on a list of additional books, similar to the current "tour topic" list. If a book group calls in requesting a tour on one of these titles, "book tour docents" would be contacted by Jennifer and Paula to see if they would like to volunteer to lead the tour. It is believed that such a list might lead to a lot of repeat business by book groups.

Finally, Debbi noted that flyers for the summer cycle of book tours (*Blue Arabesque*, by Patricia Hampl and *The Savage Garden*, by Mark Mills) are now available and will be circulated among libraries, book stores and other appropriate locations. Images of art works relating to *Blue Arabesque* have been added to the MGP's iPads for use by touring docents. The book tours are being advertised on the MIA website, in the MIA's electronic newsletters and press releases, and at the MIA visitor/information desk. Book tour bookmarks also are available for docents to hand out to tour participants and interested groups.

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Making New Docent Friends

Carreen Heegaard

Remember those first few weeks of docent training when you were getting to know your classmates around food and between lectures and in the hallways in search of, as yet, unfamiliar art?

Some friendships continue after our official docent training ends, but it is harder to keep up and I, for one, miss those casual yet important connections. So, I'd like to invite each of you to do what I did for this article: ask a fellow docent to meet for

coffee to get to know him or her better and, if you like, submit your findings to *The Docent Muse* so we can all benefit from what you learn.

Sharon Bigot and I are both “Friday docents.” We have crossed paths many times with nothing more than a casual exchange of hellos and “how was your tour?” I approached her with my idea for a “get to know a fellow docent” interview and she graciously accepted the invitation.

Sharon was born and raised in Ivanhoe, Minnesota and spent summers with her parents on driving trips along the East Coast and into Canada. Her father loved history and had hopes of retiring to Prince Edward Island one day because of its temperate weather and beauty. The retirement in PEI didn’t come to pass but I can see that the seeds of a love of learning, of travel and of beauty were planted in a future docent during those early years.

Sharon’s mom had a job-share arrangement in the 1950’s, in which she rotated weeks as a Deputy County Auditor. She loved the jack-of-all-trades aspect of the work. Sharon’s dad began his career as a county agricultural agent and ended up as the “Big Weed” – chief of all weed inspectors for the state of Minnesota.

Sharon earned her undergraduate degree at the University of Minnesota’s School of Pharmacy. While in school, she won a SPAN (Student Project for Amity among Nations) scholarship for a three-month study abroad program in Australia. She traveled there by ship and, along the way, spent six days apiece in Japan and in Hawaii. She also was able to visit Fiji, the Philippines and Hong Kong. Sounds like quite the adventure for a Midwest girl in 1960!

Sharon met her husband of 45 years when she got her job at the University (now Fairview University) Hospital. Sharon loved her 26 years at the hospital where she did research on investigational drugs, specializing in charts and graphs for intravenous medicines used as standard preparations for chemotherapy. Her one son, Peter, has a PhD in Computer Science and recently moved back to the Twin Cities after many years in Tucson.

In 1981, Sharon began her docent training but stopped after one year, due to life demands. She led Art Adventure tours for three years and claims that this where she learned to “punt” because the museum was under construction and half the objects were not available. She was a hostess at the Purcell-Cutts

House in 1994. When she restarted the docent program in 1998, she found it quite a bit different. Diane Levy had been in charge of her first docent training and, being a former English teacher, Diane was very interested in requiring the docents to submit written research papers. The new leadership took a different approach to training, with greater emphasis on interactive touring techniques.

White glove tours are one of Sharon’s favorite types of tours, but she loves everything from pre-school to memory loss tours and anything else you throw her way. She loves the variety and learning something new all the time. Sharon and I recently shared a “Music and Art” tour for some performing arts high school students from Winnipeg. I bumped into her in the hall while we were both preparing and we were both giddy like kids on a treasure hunt comparing notes. Did you see this one? What about that one? Oh my, how will we cover it all? We didn’t, but now we know how many opportunities there are for next time.

It was fun to have the excuse to get to know Sharon a bit better. As a result of our chat, I may be headed to PEI for my summer vacation this year!

Book Review: *The Sky Over the Louvre*

JeanMarie Burtness



Set during the terror of the French Revolution, *The Sky Over the Louvre* is a graphic novel that shows the Louvre, the former royal palace filled with art, being turned into a public museum. This book is one of several graphic novels co-edited by the *Musée du Louvre* and Futuropolis, a French graphic novel publishing company. The English translation of *The Sky Over the Louvre* became available in April 2011.

Fabrice Douar, deputy director of the Louvre’s publishing division, explained the connection between the Louvre’s art collection, which officially stops at 1848, and the graphic novel by saying, “The graphic novel is heir to the classical art of drawing ... We wanted, in part, to shake up the dusty image of the museum by inviting people to see the back-and-forth between contemporary art and our collections.”

(quoted in “The Louvre Commissions Stories – About Itself,” by Sasha Watson, *ARTNews*, March 2010)

In the opening pages, French people wander through the galleries of the Louvre. Thirty-eight small colored reproductions of well-known paintings and sculptures are featured throughout the book. Art history buffs will delight in spotting Georges de la Tour’s *The Cheat with the Ace of Diamonds* hung across from Veronese’s *The Wedding Feast at Cana* and Jean Clouet’s *Portrait of Francis I, king of France*.

The book’s plot begins with the posthumous portrait, *Marat Assassinated*, being discussed by artist Jacques-Louis David and politician Maximilien Robespierre. For both men, politics and art are interconnected. Robespierre and other philosophers believe that the French Revolution needs a new image to replace the way the French people think about God and the church. Robespierre asks David to create a painting of a “Supreme Being” that can be used in an upcoming festival and other public ceremonies in his government.

Later, at the National Convention, Robespierre reveals that bandits killed a 13-year-old boy when he yelled “Long Live the Republic!” His death is used as propaganda and becomes intertwined in David’s search for a model for the “Supreme Being.” Instead of painting what Robespierre has commanded, David sketches and paints *The Death of Joseph Bara*, concerning another young man who died during the Revolution.

Frame by frame, artist Bernar Yslair uses sepia tones in his paintings combined with black ink sketches that are dramatically highlighted with blood red splashes and washes. Some chapters in *The Sky Over the Louvre* are extremely gruesome. Public guillotining, dismembered bodies, and dark dungeons are graphically shown. In 66 pages, scriptwriter Jean-Claude Carrier creates memorable episodes that tell the story of this complicated and brutal time.

This graphic novel is one that adults interested in art and the French Revolution will want to read, perhaps a couple of times. The book shows how people suffer under leaders who use terror and violence for their own goals. In that respect, *The Sky Over the Louvre* fits well with two other politically charged graphic novels used in many high schools: *Persepolis*, by Marjane Satrapi and *Maus*, by Art Spiegelman. The same topics of the horrific consequences of war and revolution also are highlighted in the MIA’s

exhibition, *Collateral Damage: Scenes from a War*, currently on view in the MIA’s first floor Target Wing through July 24.

Tenth Man on the Field: the Twins’ Curator

Mary Grau

Spring is finally here, and the MIA docents’ fancies have turned to thoughts of ...how about baseball? Hopefully by the time you read this article, the Minnesota Twins will be closer to .500 and Joe Mauer will be back in the lineup, but even if the team continues to struggle here’s a story that could brighten your day. Museums aren’t the only places where you find curators; the Twins have one too.

In 1966 Clyde Doepner was a young college graduate looking forward to his first job teaching high school history and coaching the school baseball team in Pine Island Minnesota. He was thrilled when (along with all the other high school baseball coaches in the state) he received a complimentary Twins season pass from team owner Calvin Griffith. Clyde’s appearance at Griffith’s office to thank him for the pass – the only person to do so, according to the legendary curmudgeon – eventually led to a friendship with Griffith and other members of the owner’s family.

During the Twins’ last year at Metropolitan Stadium Clyde learned that, in preparation for the move to the Metrodome, Griffith was planning to throw away many boxes of team documents and photographs, some of which had made the trip to Minnesota from Washington DC. This trove included numerous letters from U.S. presidents who had thrown out the first pitch at Washington Senators games over the years. As a historian and lifelong collector himself, Clyde was concerned that an important part of baseball history was about to be lost. He received permission from the team to take much of the material home with him, where it was added to his growing personal collection.

After Carl Pohlad purchased the Twins, Clyde continued his informal relationship with the team. When the team was about to make another move, this time to Target Field, he became the official Twins curator. His job includes setting up and overseeing public displays of baseball memorabilia, archiving the Twins collection, adding to it, as appropriate, and serving as a resource for both the staff

and the public. He also leases to the team his substantial personal collection of memorabilia – at last count over 7,000 items.

In a recent interview Clyde was happy to answer a few questions about his work.

Muse: Do you know of any other teams with someone like you on staff?

CD: As far as I know I'm the only full-time team curator in baseball who does what I do: both leasing my personal collection to the team and working for the organization.

Muse: Tell us a bit about your duties as collector and archivist for the Twins.

CD: I collect items resulting from significant events. Some items, like the balls used for the first pitch and the first hit of the season, and the umpire's line-up card and manager's dugout card from the first game of the season, are decided ahead of time. Others, like the ball and bat used in a Jim Thome home run as he approaches 600, have to be dealt with quickly as the event happens. Part of my job is persuading the fan who catches a Jim Thome home-run ball to return it to the team.

Muse: What standards do you use to decide what is worth collecting?

CD: I collect anything and everything I can get regarding an event. Ten years from now an author working on a book might need what, today, is a seemingly insignificant fact.

Muse: How do you deal with authentication issues?

CD: Authentication has gotten much easier in the last five years or so because it's handled by Major League Baseball. The league has people responsible for authentication at each game, and items like the ball used for the first pitch on opening day are all marked with a hologram. Everything that Francisco Liriano used in his May 3 no-hitter was hologrammed the next day – the balls, his uniform, the whole works.

Muse: Do you ever work with the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY?

CD: They're my biggest "competitor." The Twins organization owns its balls, bats and uniforms, but of course we want to cooperate with the Hall of Fame, and some of the players are collectors too. We try to work collaboratively to be fair to everyone.

Muse: Is the collection displayed?

CD: There are displays in a number of places at

Target Field that are accessible to game ticket holders. The material on Rod Carew, Kirby Puckett and Harmon Killebrew is in the Legends area, there is a display on the suite level, and some items are in the common areas throughout the stadium. Tours of the stadium are available on non-game days for a small charge.

Muse: Do you have a favorite piece of memorabilia?

CD: Yes – the next item I get, and the exciting part is that I don't know what it will be!

Muse: How about a favorite Twin?

CD: That's easy – Harmon Killebrew. He is the classiest individual that I have ever met. He played the game the way it should be played. He was the "face" of the team when they arrived in 1961 ... he is still the face of the Twins today; the fan favorite then and the fan favorite today.

The next time you're at Target Field be sure to check out the results of Clyde's efforts. And keep him in mind when you catch Jim Thome's 600th home-run ball!

[*Editor's note: This interview took place before the untimely death of Harmon Killebrew on May 17, 2011.*]

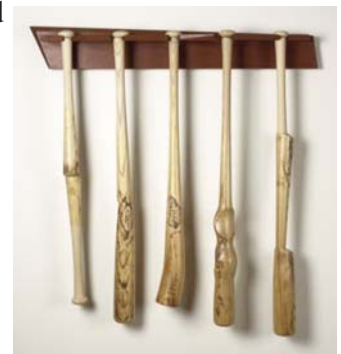
Hiding in Plain Sight: Rejects From The Bat Factory

Joanne Platt

Springtime at the MIA signifies many things: *Art in Bloom*, the final days of the popular Titian and Marino Bronze exhibitions, the graduation of the newest docent class, and ... baseball. Yes, baseball!

As I wandered the halls of the MIA in search of an overlooked object to write about, I paused in the Contemporary Craft Gallery (275). Mark Sfirri's clever *Rejects From the Bat Factory* (2002.63a-f) caught my eye and seemed

an appropriate choice for the May issue of *The Docent Muse*. After all, baseball season commences with spring training and springtime is a time of rebirth and fresh starts. What better way to celebrate spring's renewal than by examining a humorous wall sculpture that



encourages the viewer to consider a fresh and innovative approach to a centuries-old medium?

Wood has been used for artistic as well as functional purposes since ancient times. It was one of the oldest means by which humans could achieve beauty in their life. Woodturning has traditionally been a medium for making functional objects, such as bowls, banisters, and chair legs. Cultural upheaval in the 1960's and 70's created new interest in all traditional crafts and a new generation of woodworking artisans emerged. The highly specialized practice of shaping by lathe has offered more complex possibilities over the past half-century, and artists have rediscovered the medium of wood and the wonderful objects that can be made from it by turning, carving, and incising. In the past fifty years, wood turning has gone from being the exclusive province of tableware and furniture makers to a sculptural medium of personal expression.

Wood artist Mark Sfirri regularly blurs the line between woodworking and sculpture. He first began turning wood with a mechanical lathe in the 1970's, while studying at the Rhode Island School of Design, from which he earned both his Bachelor and Master of Fine Arts degrees. Sfirri was heavily influenced by his mentor, seminal wood artist Tage Frid, who encouraged Sfirri to use his primary tool, the lathe, in new and innovative ways.

As Sfirri stated on the Michener Art Museum website, "My mentor said that the lathe is a very creative tool that most people don't use that way. They make bowls and spindles and that's it. So I thought I should really try to do something here."

Sfirri uses the lathe to create conventional bowls and spindles, which he then manipulates by using the multiple-axis technique. This method requires repeatedly repositioning a piece of wood on the lathe at different angles during the turning process. The resulting pieces combine convex and concave surfaces with curvilinear contours, creating rhythmic asymmetrical forms.

Rejects From the Bat Factory was influenced by Sfirri's son, who requested a home-made, lathe-turned baseball bat. Inspired, the artist realized that the bat's spindle form could be a great way to experiment with new shapes and cutting methods on his lathe machine. The woodworker used the multiple-axis technique to create this wall sculpture of five mutant hanging baseball bats with arty deformities

that render them more fit for decoration than for playing ball. Indeed, Sfirri has taken an iconic piece of sports equipment and rendered it unusable, while turning it into art.

Created out of ash, the wood traditionally used to make baseball bats, each bat variation is unique, and infused with humor. Imagine attempting to hit a ball with the fifth bat, in which the small and large ends are reversed. Or the center bat, which is curved and flat at the wide end – is this bat to be used exclusively for curveballs? The first bat on the left has two handles, one on each end, meeting off center in the middle. Sfirri has even included humorous commentary, with jesting and playful assessments burned into the bats, such as "HARDLY PROFESSIONAL," "ODDLY TEMPERED," and "CURVED." Mounted on an asymmetrical mahogany display rack, these bats both amuse and inspire through their novelty.

Mark Sfirri's multiple axis technique allows him to explore form in a spontaneous and creative way. As with any art, *Rejects from the Bat Factory* reflects the deep consideration of wood's special possibilities and a truly innovative attempt to explore them.

Overheard in the Galleries

While presenting the Martinez vessel for a group of kindergarten students, an AA guide pulled out her box of imaginary clay and passed out a "ball of clay" to each student. She proceeded to show the students how to roll their imaginary ball of clay into a snake to demonstrate the coiling method. As she was rolling her imaginary clay snake, a little boy in the back of the room raised his hand and, with an extremely sad look on his face, announced, "I didn't get any!"

Ask the Decent Docent Advice Column

Firstly, Dear Docents, let me thank you *so much* for your kind words about my maiden voyage on the sea of print medium. That is to say, I am SO happy many of you seemed to get some value from my meager thoughts in the last *Docent Muse*. Thus heartened, I once again offer some modest musings on the following inquiries:

Questions: How does a decent docent explain nudity in the museum to kids? Does/should this explanation change for adults?

Answers: Ah! Excellent questions, Dear Docent! Indeed, in our modern Midwestern culture, varied and rich as it is, what we wear (and how much!) is something we confront each and every day (I know

that *moi* personally spend *hours* on my daily couture!) Add to this the fact that the visual poetry of the human form is a subject that has fascinated



artists since man put flint to limestone millennia ago. Witness our own dear little Paleolithic *Venus Figure* (as she is called on www.artsmia.org – I prefer to think of her as the *Ultimate Woman!*).

NOW, correct me if I am wrong but isn't she *absolutely exquisite*? And not a stitch (or hide) on her. But her diminutive size and lack of *explicit* detail propel her, for the most part, beyond the spotlight of this controversy. Perhaps our inquiry would be better served by looking (and looking and *looking!*) at that handsome hunk, *Doryphoros*.

Not only is he worth ... *studying* ... but he is likely the most ... *problematic* ... art object for those dear visitors of ours who might either have fewer trips around the sun under their belts (that is, young) or be just the teeniest bit squeamish about total ... *flesh* ... exposure.



SO, how should we, as enthusiastic docents approach this topic? Well, I say, dear colleagues, we should face it *head on!* *Talk openly* and with great *seriousness* about why, WHY an artist might choose to do the human form in all of its absolute GLORY!

Personally, I usually tell my groups, whether those of tender years or the more seasoned among us, that I can think of at least THREE reasons why an artist might depict a person in the buff:

1. The artist is a flagrant *show off!* I mean *really!* One *must* be an artist of great perception, skill and talent to produce *Doryphoros!* Look at him! The swell of his muscles, the sleekness of his sinew, the turn of his toe, the curve of his jaw, the lines of his limbs! Need I say "*exquisite*" again? That Polykleitos! He *da man!*

2. The artist wants his/her work to exist over time without being *stuck* in a single time period. I

mean, most of us with the slightest bit of cultural literacy can approximately figure out from which era certain garments come. Toga? The ancient Mediterranean. Kimono? Japan. Cone-bra bustier? The Eighties (Read: Madonna). Get my point? If Madonna REALLY wanted her image to be *timeless*, would she really have made the fashion choices she did? I KNOW you get my point ...

3. And, finally, the human form is absolutely miraculous and *beautiful!* I mean, just *look* at *Doryphoros* again! And why wouldn't you? He's *gorgeous!* And he's not the only one! Our lovely MIA is *teeming* with examples of this. Let's just encourage our dear visitors to take a *vacation* from the norms we might apply to ourselves as we "walk along the pavements gray," and enjoy the rarified atmosphere of a place where art can just *be!* And that is at least one aspect of what art and the MIA are all about, is it not? The lovely opportunity to take ourselves out of our lives and concerns, duties and notions, and go somewhere else for a brief moment. To *look!* To *enjoy!* To *appreciate* the fact that we are NOT all the same! We are *museum visitors* and *docents* after all! We are here!!! And, by Zeus, we *love* it here!!!

And once my groups and I have discussed these possibilities, it is absolutely *amazing* how many MORE reasons visitors, both young and old, will come up with as to why it is an absolutely FABULOUS idea for artists to depict their subjects *sans* clothing. Ah, but we have lovely discussions!

So, on that note, Dear Docents, I will leave you for today. It is time for me to think about leaving my abode, so I must toddle off to my closet and choose my costume for the day. But ... perhaps ... the day is rather warm ... do I REALLY want to cement myself in a certain time period or era? Do I perhaps want to show the world the absolute *miraculousness* of MY human form? Hmmmmmmm...

Overheard in the Galleries

Usually I tell my groups that the museum is like going on a 'trip around the world' and I will ask them to guess where in the world they are as we walk through the galleries. One day, as we came into the Native American gallery I asked them "Where are we now?" Coming closer to the circle of moccasins, one of them excitedly yelled out, "A shoe store!"

The "Secret" Gallery

Terry Nadler, assisted by Michael Bennes
(MIA Visitor & Member Services)

Have you ever walked through the back corridors on the first floor of the MIA to get to the Target Wing?

Then you have walked by the "secret" gallery. "Secret" gallery? Yes, secret because it's viewable only to those of us who have an MIA access badge. Have you stopped to look at the art?

This one-wall installation is opposite the vending machines and MIA staff lounge. It's art created solely by MIA staff. And what a treat! About a dozen artworks are exhibited of various media. The exhibition rotates 3-4 times a year.

The MIA Staff Art Show was suggested by an MIA employee back in 2007. It acknowledges the artistic endeavors many MIA employees pursue outside working hours. Some of the MIA staff who have submitted their art over the years include those who work in Security, MIA Registration and Visitor & Member Services.

In order to exhibit, MIA staff must submit their artwork to two people on the "Team MIA" committee (Lori Erickson: MIA Donor Relations and Jill Meyer: Development Operations) according to the following process. The MIA employee fills out a submission form and e-mails it to the committee. The submission includes a wall label, the work's dimensions and an electronic copy of the art work itself. Lori and Jill review the art work for appropriateness and whether wall space is available to install it. Once approved, Lori and Jill decide where each art work should be placed on the wall so that each one complements the others in some way. Finally, the staff artist gives the work to MIA Facilities to install.

A few of these MIA staff artists are highlighted in this article.

Buckner ("Buck") Sutter, one of the MIA's Security Guard Captains, submits his artwork often. He is a photographer and digital artist in his spare time. He has sold more than half of the art he has displayed in the MIA Staff Art Show to other MIA staff. Photography is Buck's passion.

Currently, his photograph, *Desert Winds*, is exhibited.

"My latest work is about the dreams and the personal symbols which orbit my inner mind's eye. Through the use of toy cameras, scanned negatives, digital photos and older film prints taken from

decades ago, with the aid of various computer software programs, I have attempted to recreate dreams from my youth ... As an adult these become ... places of safety and possibility. I follow, with a modern twist, the tradition of the pictorialists who emulated painting and etching in their photographic expression."



To see more of Buck's work, go to his website: www.bucknersutter.daportfolio.com

In his role as the MIA's Senior Preparation and Exhibition Designer, Bill Skodje takes great pride in what is installed in the galleries – especially The Cargill Gallery, where he regularly arranges exhibits. But his interest in art goes way back.

In 6th grade, while his teacher wasn't looking, he'd slyly take plasticine clay and model figures and furniture, creating tableaux under the shadow of his desk. Then a great opportunity came along. His father, a civil engineer, was assigned a job in Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka), as part of a UN effort to deal with floods. So Bill and his family made their way to Ceylon, winding their way through Europe and visiting the great art museums along the way. The most impressive visit for him was the Athens National Museum – to see the sculpture – his favorite! He knew then, for sure, he was going to be a sculptor.

Recently Julia Modest, who organizes Target Sunday activities, asked if Bill would sit in one of the galleries and sculpt in order to show children and adults how sculptors work. He agreed and chose the *Algarði relief (Pope Liberius Baptizing the Neophytes, 59.17)* in gallery 313. At the end of the day, Bill took the clay relief home, placed it on the shelf and forgot about it. But then, this spring he heard MCAD was giving a course in bronze casting. He thought, "Hey, I've got this clay relief, why not take the class and make it into a bronze relief!" Here's an image of Bill's relief.



Bill tried his hand at all the art media while in college. But he found his passion in sculpture. Yet today, he's not afraid to dabble in other media, particularly water-color paintings and sketches.

Gail Kern is one of the MIA's Security Patrol Officers and a part-time Lieutenant. She has worked at the MIA for six years. Her artistic preferences are acrylic and oil, drawing, creating collages, and most recently, comics. She calls her style Surrealist Satire, "because there is always some snarky message within the symbolism of each piece." Among those who have influenced Gail, she credits "Hieronymus Bosch, Richard Scarry, the children's book illustrator, graphic artist Red Grooms, and many artists in Juxtapoz Magazine."

Like many of the MIA staff artists, Gail got interested in art at a young age. She credits her grandmother for corralling her restlessness and leading her to art: "When I was very young I had very high energy and was mischievous. My grandmother found that when I made art I was focused and quiet for long periods of time, so she insisted I make a lot of art."

One of her acrylics on paper, entitled *Born on the Day of the Dead*, was shown recently in the MIA Staff Art Show.



She was inspired by noticing "frolicking skeletons on Day of the Dead decorations" found in the museum gift shop. She wanted to represent "the most absurd way the skeletons could be celebrating life." As you can see, she succeeded!

To see more of Gail's work, go to the website: www.MNArtists.org

Michelle Layland also is a Security Officer. She has worked at the MIA for the last six years and at other museums for ten additional years. The textile piece she currently is showing in the MIA Staff Art Show is entitled, *Yearning for Spring*. It was inspired by "the harsh, seemingly never-ending winter and my cravings for something soft and spring-like." She hopes to have captured "that hopeful wistfulness that we all feel when spring is almost here at last."

Michelle spins her own yarns, recently having had "a lot of fun mixing pale greens and purples with large handfuls of white woolly



locks as the snow started melting away and the plants started blooming." Her intent is to produce textiles which are "pretty exuberant, but ... also practical and meant to be worn comfortably and to be flattering." Wearable art!

Michelle has an active imagination. She has knit a kimono "with an obi – out of garbage bags." She also has used other nontraditional material like old cassette tape, plastic bags, baling twine, Kevlar and human hair.

While textile art is her current passion, Michelle also has worked in mixed-media, incorporating painting, drawing, sculpture and crafts in her artworks.

She remembers being interested in art "as a tiny child. Ever since I could pick up a crayon, I was drawing things for other little kids. My mother is also artistic. So I grew up playing with paints and pencils." She also learned to use found objects in her art. "To this day, many of my art pieces have bits scavenged from here and there, given a second chance at greatness."

Michelle continues to be inspired by nature, like the "vibrating magenta of a flower" and other plants that provide dye for her textile art. And she is always on the lookout for new ideas, gathered from "movie monsters, Gothic music, fantasy literature, Japanese anime, Steampunk, and ideas from various dear friends that are just so good or so funny I have to run with it."

To see more of Michelle’s work, go to her website: www.msflodermaus.com

These are just four of the very talented MIA staff artists. Thank you, artists, for your enthusiastic participation in this article!

Other MIA staff artists interviewed for this article will appear in a future issue of *The Docent Muse*: Tim Piotrowski, Dave Digre, Steve Lang, Steven Paul Hanson, and Mike Judy. Thanks to these artists, as well!

Treat yourself. The next time you happen to be walking the corridors over to the Target Wing, take a few minutes to look at the creative work of these imaginative and artistic MIA staff!

Thank you Notes from 4th Graders

Dear MIA,
Thank you for the amazing things we saw. I learned that all is art, art is all. There are all kinds of art. My favorite part was ... ALL OF IT!
Your friend,
Grace

*Dear Minneapolis Institute of Arts,
Thank you for having me! I had lots of fun. My favorite part was the scavenger hunt. I learned that the Chinese had porcelain pillows! (Imagine how it would hurt if you banged your head on your pillow!)
Sincerely,
Clarice*

Dear Mary,
One thing I liked at the Minneapolis Institute of Art was the place where you could go in and there were trees. It’s kind of like the Japanese garden except you could go in and the alarm wouldn’t sound. ... Thank you for being my tour guide. Sorry for asking a lot of questions. I went there before in 2nd grade and read about the stuff but didn’t really care. I like it now because before I was younger and now I am older and I really felt enlightened.
Sincerely,
Alexandra

Exhibiting Minnesota’s Artists at the MIA

Kay Miller

Liz Miller spent four days on a ladder, stretching the royal blue, brown and mustard-colored cutouts of her Ornamental Invasion across one of the two second-floor galleries dedicated to the Minnesota Artists

Exhibition Program (MAEP). Miller had a plan. But getting the cloth to drape just right was largely intuitive. Absorbed as she was, Miller smiled, hearing kids’ comments from the other side of the installation barrier.

“Look! It’s a dragon!” one kid said. “No, it’s some kind of war,” another countered. “It’s got guns. And swords.” Other children saw birds, fish and plants. “Is it paper?” one asked. “No! It’s felt.”

Miller is one of hundreds of Minnesota artists who over the last 35 years have been chosen to exhibit at the museum through MAEP, a unique program housed at the MIA. It started in 1975-76, after a group of 30 Minnesota artists approached the MIA and the Walker Art Center, asking that they dedicate exhibition space for artists living and working in the state. The MIA agreed to do it. The program has been going strong ever since.

“There’s nothing else quite like MAEP in any comparable encyclopedic museum,” said Chris

Atkins, MAEP coordinator, who works under Contemporary Art Curator Liz Armstrong. But it is a seven-person panel of artists – not Atkins – that selects



work to be exhibited. Each panelist is an artist who serves a two-year term, bringing his or her own skills, knowledge and networks to the selection process. The results are highly varied and original shows, from avant-garde pottery and impressionistic photographs, to installations and paintings.

“Exhibits are rotated very quickly – every 10 weeks – with three weeks in between for repainting and installing the next show,” Atkins said. He constantly works two or three shows ahead. “A huge amount of artistic energy is channeled into it.”

Atkins has tried painting but is not an artist himself. He was snared into the love of art history after taking an elective class, on a whim, at the College of Wooster, south of Cleveland. That launched Atkins’ career as a writer, critic and arts administrator. He received a graduate certificate in

museum studies from Harvard University and both an M.A. in art history and an M.Res. degree in visual cultures from Goldsmiths College, University of London. Before joining the MIA, he was deputy director of Franklin Art Works in Minneapolis. He also has served as a visiting assistant professor at Macalester College and has taught at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design.

Perhaps the most popular of MAEP shows was last year's fourth *Foot in the Door* show, an event held once every decade. Self-identified artists of every age and stripe from as far away as Grand Marais lined up for an hour to hand over their creations. The only rule: it had to fit in a one-foot-square box. "They were happy as could be. They came back with their friends and families. It was great seeing a kid pull on a mom's arm, saying, 'That's where my painting is.' Seven thousand people attended that opening!"

The advantages for an artist who is chosen to show are manifold. "Artists get a lot more exposure. Thousands view their work in a major, internationally known museum. Their work here is in concert with the range of world cultures. You walk through the Native American galleries, through African textiles, through contemporary photography and arrive at MAEP. They're given a chance to experiment and make some work they wouldn't have otherwise," Atkins said.

As MAEP coordinator, Atkins does all the behind-the-scenes organizing to insure that the panel has the information it needs to make selections. More importantly to artists like Miller, he personally makes sure that artists have a vast array of help and encouragement to mount their best possible show.

"Chris drove all the way to Good Thunder to visit my studio, in addition to making time for many phone conversations to discuss various exhibition details," Miller said. "He and the curatorial staff were amazingly responsive to my request for images related to weapons. Without their help, I could not have completed this project. Similarly, the technical support was great – from painting to lighting – there was help all along the way."

Miller has long been interested in the dark side of ornamentation, including the decorative etching and scrollwork on swords and shotguns: beauty mingled with implied and practiced violence. She had been studying textiles, wallpaper and patterns in

France, especially at Versailles. Atkins became her sounding board. She was thinking about invasions – armed conflicts, but also invasive species that insinuate themselves into ecosystems. She asked Atkins for material about weapons in the MIA collection. Cori Wegener, Associate Curator for Decorative Arts, Textiles and Sculpture, supplied detailed information and pictures of weapons and armor from the African, Asian and Oceanic collections.

"Look over here," Atkins says, standing in Gallery 264 and pointing. "That's precisely the shape of swords visitors see on their way here from the African gallery." Tucked into felt are images of pistols and triggers from weapons made from steel and wood. Miller has replicated these shapes – invasion-like – over and over, cutting the shapes out with dozens of pairs of rechargeable shears. Atkins loves the way the exhibit envelopes the viewer. He feels as if he's walking through it.

"My job is to help the artist know what the space can do and make sure that the work fits properly and has room to breathe," Atkins said. He invited Miller to visit the gallery when it was empty, giving her a feel for the space and its echoes. The registration staff painted the gallery a shade of teal she had found on a color chip. As the installation took shape, the staff took professional photographs, incorporating them into a glossy, four-color brochure with Atkins' professional description of Miller's *oeuvre*. Press releases went out. Three Thursday night events were devoted to her show: an opening reception, an artist talk and a night with special guests to comment on her work and its relevance. On top of it all, Miller received more photos for her portfolio and was paid a generous honorarium to help with the costs of production.

Given the size of galleries – a combined 2,600 square feet – artists often feel they have to stretch their work to measure up, Atkins said. "People raise their game because it's a museum."

Michael Kareken, for example, already had been painting easel-sized hyper-realistic paintings of piles of garbage, plastic and metal car parts. His third-floor studio has giant windows that overlook the RockTenn Recycling plant in St. Paul. But he knew that he'd have to create much larger paintings to measure up.

"I go to the museum all the time," Kareken said. "It's a bit intimidating to imagine my work in the

context of artists I admire, like Rembrandt and Sargent. I was worried that it would look thin. But I felt very validated, that I wasn't disgraced by being in that company."

He loved being in the gallery and listening to viewers' comments or seeing what they wrote in the guest book. They filled one. MAEP added a second. Kareken was delighted when people stopped and really studied his paintings. They'd look from a distance, then come up close, spending a long time trying to figure them out. Some people thought they were photographs. In his studio, the farthest away Kareken could view his paintings was 40 feet. But at the museum, he could see them from as far away as the rotunda or even the stairs. And he was surprised that they could "read" even from that distance.

The show had a massive impact on Kareken's career. First, he said that it "goosed me" to work in a large scale that he'd only vaguely thought about before. Suddenly, he was much more ambitious. Treatment by the museum was first-class – "I felt like a king!" He got a McKnight grant using ideas he was developing for the show and a Bush Foundation grant from work in the show. Afterward, a patron bought the largest "bottle" painting for more than three times the amount Kareken normally makes in a year from painting sales. With the grants, honorarium and sales, he was able to take a year off from teaching at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design and paint. His new body of work was featured in shows in New York and at Washington and Lee University in Virginia. As he takes the big step of seeking gallery representation in New York, he's armed with the MAEP brochure and photographs that the MIA staff produced.

"It's impressive. I say, 'I had a show at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts,' and they say, 'Oh! You must be pretty good.'"

There are many ways that docents can learn more about MAEP artists' work, including by visiting the artists' websites, but especially by attending openings, artists' talks and guest night discussions. "Accessibility is the big thing," Atkins said. "The artists are right there and you can talk with them, one-on-one." In addition, Atkins said that he is happy for docents to call him at 612-870-3035 or email him at catkins@artsmia.org with any questions.

Tales and Scenes from the Junior Docent Graduation

Emily Shapiro

The graduation festivities for the Docent Class of 2009 were held at the Woman's Club of Minneapolis on May 24, 2011. Partygoers sampled delicious *hors d'oeuvres* and exotic beverages (ever hear of the mixed-drink called the "Bella Donna?" Perhaps the Venetian painters of Titian's era enjoyed them too!) and enjoyed views of Loring Park from the Club's balconies.



They were then treated to a comic revue, performed by the Class of 2009, of the new graduates' docent training years, including the following scenes: an ambulatory, but somewhat disheveled *Lady Teshat* and a very animated *Shiva Nataraja*; the check-out tour of "Sister Wendy" and her wooden ruler (apparently not intended to be used to demonstrate the "one-foot rule"); and a demonstration of a unique, new "participatory museum" activity: the firing of ceramics IN the museum gallery (but pencils only for note-taking, please!)



The Class of 2009 also taught their more-veteran colleagues new devices for remembering key facts on tours. For instance, sing the following lyrics a few times to the tune of *Frère Jacques* and, soon, you'll be able to rattle the Chinese dynasties off without batting an eye:

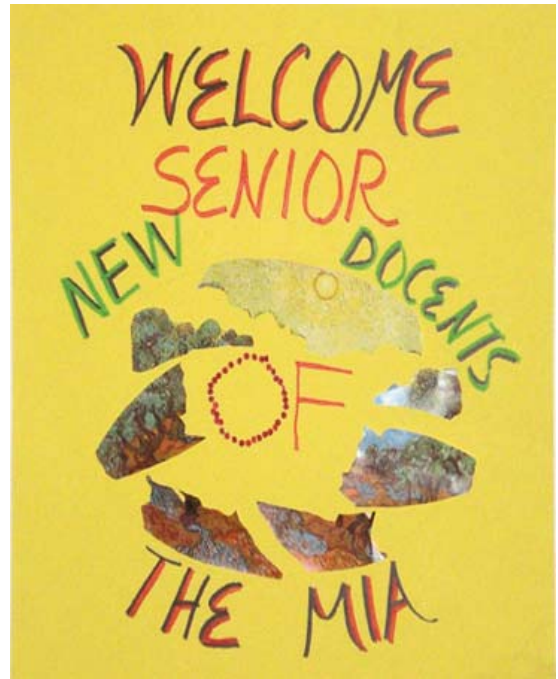
Chinese Dynasty Song
 Shang, Zhou, Qin, Han
 Shang , Zhou, Qin, Han
 Sui, Tang, Song
 Sui, Tang, Song
 Yuan, Ming, Qing, Republic
 Yuan, Ming, Qing, Republic
 Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong

To see and download these photos and many others from the Junior Docent Graduation Party (plus everyone cut out of the pictures shown here) go to <http://gallery.me.com/eshapiro2/100159>

Lastly, the Class of 2009 honored their MIA teachers and supporters with hand-made, hand-crafted gifts, demonstrating that this class can not only TALK about the art, they can CREATE it!



*Congratulations to all of you
from your fellow Senior Docents!*



As the May issue of *The Docent Muse* goes "to press," I want to express my appreciation to all of the docents and MGP staff who contributed to the *Muse* over the course of the past year. These contributions came in many forms – articles, photographs, cartoons, and ideas. Each one made us – as readers – think, laugh, and learn. A huge thank you also goes out to Merritt Nequette, our faithful and gifted publisher, who year after year patiently takes several heaps of text and photos and transforms them into a newsletter we can be proud of. Most of all, thank you to Mary S. Bowman, who has agreed to serve as editor of the *Muse* during the coming year. Please show her your gratitude and support by responding to her requests for contributions when they come and adding your own voice to YOUR newsletter. You'll have fun, I promise. I know I did!

Emily Shapiro