

The Docent Muse



June 2012

Tusen takk, a thousand thanks

JeanMarie Burtness,

Docent Executive Committee chair 2011/2012

In my husband's Norwegian-heritage family, people still utter the expression *tusen takk*, which means a thousand thanks. I appreciate the thoughtful and fair ways that members of our Docent Executive Committee (DEC) considered a variety of docent-related concerns brought to our monthly meetings this year. The committee also dealt with the minutiae of updating the titles in documents, such as changing 'Education' to 'Learning and Innovation Division' in addition to the responsibilities of their positions.

Many thanks to Chair-elect Fran Megarry, Secretary Terry Edam, Treasurer Toni DuFour, *Docent Muse* Editor Mary Bowman, Social Co-Chairs Liz Short and Suzie Marty, Communications Chair Nan Lightner, Honorary Docent Representative Helen Bowlin, and Senior Educator of the Docent Program Debbi Hegstrom.

One of the benefits added for touring docents has been that each docent has been able to reserve a complimentary ticket for each Affinity Group lecture. Thank you, Debbi Hegstrom, for arranging this perk for docents.

DEC hosted the Fall and Spring luncheons, giving us times to get caught up with the celebrations and events in each other's lives. I am grateful to be part of a group with such dynamic, creative, and committed individuals who enjoy touring, like learning new things, and like positively interacting with our visitors, guides, and MIA staff. As new docent classes join our ranks, we add to our circle of friends and gain fresh ideas and inspiration. As my grandmother used to say, "Now that is a blessing!"

I was asked at the Spring Luncheon, "What have you learned as the 'prez' of DEC?" Part of DEC chair position also involves serving as liaison between the docent program and the Friends of the MIA Board. I learned that the docents are under the aegis

(a word I particularly like) of what is now referred to as the Learning and Innovation Division and are partially sponsored by the Friends. The Friends started the docent educational training program in September 1962.

Next fall, docents will be celebrating 50 years of docent training at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. It was also an eye-opener to learn that Friends events such as *Art in Bloom* and Art PerChance raise money for so many worthwhile programs that directly affect MIA docents. Many thanks to the Friends for their continued financial support for docent training, the children's fund, and the transportation fund.

It is a delight to be a volunteer docent and be part of a large organization whose mission is "inspiring wonder through the power of art." *Tusen takk*, my friends.

Lucretia Interpreted

Terry Nadler

In the March issue of the *Docent Muse*, Tom Rassieur, John E. Andrus III Curator of Prints and Drawings, shared his thoughts about the *Rembrandt in America* exhibition: how it came to be, what he's learned over the years about the "real" Rembrandts, and suggestions on what to emphasize on docent-led tours. As promised, here is Tom's interpretation of Rembrandt's *Lucretia*, the MIA's one and only prized Rembrandt painting. He tells a fascinating story of personal integrity and loss.



"We are so fortunate to have *Lucretia* at the MIA. Painted in 1666, it's one of Rembrandt's very late pictures. And he's painted it after losing Hendrickje Stoffels, the woman that he loves for the

second half of his life. He's portrayed her in a horrible situation. I see it as a deeply autobiographical work.

"Rembrandt has created a work of art that is so profound that it is known the world over. When he is making this picture, he is combining many different threads.

"First of all, in his late period, Rembrandt becomes very interested in the art of Titian. He had been interested in Titian all along. But Titian takes on a special meaning for him. Titian has an old-age style. Rembrandt is recognizing his own age. And he is doing the things that Titian did – painting broadly with the palette knife, and lavishing attention on paintings. At the same time, he's thinking about his place in the world and the place of Hendrickje. This is a moment of great, deep reflection.

"One of the central moments in Hendrickje's life was when she was called before the church council. Rembrandt and she both were. He didn't go because he wasn't a member. He wasn't a communicant. When Hendrickje went, she was forced to confess to living with Rembrandt as a whore. At that moment, she was pregnant and obviously so. And this was simply beyond the bounds of civility in Holland.

"But the fact of the matter is that Rembrandt couldn't legally re-marry because he was in a bind. He was required under the terms of his marriage to Saskia and her estate to turn over her share of their wealth to their son Titus. And he couldn't do that because he was always behind on his payments. He bought a house that he couldn't really pay for. And he was always collecting art. So he never had the cash to pay his son. He couldn't re-marry. He wasn't free to do so.

"But love happens and he's living with Hendrickje for a number of years. When the church council called her, and ex-communicated her, that meant that she not only was rejected by the institution of her faith, but she also became socially unacceptable and so Rembrandt also became socially unacceptable. She lost her social safety net. At that time, in your old age, you'd be starting to be taken care of by members of your church if you were to fall into poverty. Rembrandt's and her fortunes began to spiral down, in part, due to the loss of patronage and due to their new social standing as outcasts. So she really does face poverty. It's a terrible moment in her life.

"After her death, he paints a picture of Hendrickje in the guise of Lucretia, a 6th century BC Roman matron who dealt with the dilemma of an unwelcome sexual advance.

"Lucretia had been put in a horrible bind by a Roman general named Tarquinius. Tarquinius comes



to her and says that if she doesn't sleep with him he'll tell everyone that she did. And she doesn't want either part of that bargain because she doesn't want her reputation impugned and doesn't want it reflecting badly on her family. She makes the horrific choice to take

her life. So there she is in the painting, having stabbed herself and dying. The depth of emotion in her face is so much that you want to cry when you see it. Rembrandt saw his love in that same bind in the society that he and Hendrickje lived in.

"Now if you go back to Titian and Venice, there's a community where courtesans could live respectable lives and were honored. And there were portraits painted of them by Titian, and by others. The format of what Rembrandt has painted is like that of a courtesan image, a half-length image of a woman in gauzy robes, the gauzy undergarment and richly brocaded sleeves.

"In a sense, Rembrandt is making a multi-layered statement about social place, about cruelty of power, improperly used power, and a woman falsely accused, put in a horrible position. He has a dream of another time and place, Renaissance Venice, where one of his idols is painting, and where a woman like Hendrickje could live in peace and respectability. So this is a painting that is functioning at a level of complexity that very few other artists have ever achieved."

Then out-of-the-blue, Tom says, "And frankly, I've made it all up! That's my reaction to that picture. And it's an educated guess. But for me, a lot of building blocks fall into place when I explore that hypothesis."

What? Made it all up? Tom, what do you mean?

He clarifies: "Other people can make up their minds. And that's what's so great about pictures – you make it up. The images are not to be interpreted

by some individual with a god-like statement of truth. I think you can analyze any given work of art from a lot of different angles. And find various truths in it. They're just like texts, you know. How many analyses have there been of Shakespeare and the Bible, and any other great creation? The same can be said of the pictures. I simply give my own reaction to it and other people's reactions may be more valid. Mine happens to fit what I'm thinking today."

So with all the years Tom has closely studied and thought about Rembrandt, he invites each of us to interpret Rembrandt in our own way. And in so doing, we become personally engaged with the work.

One final question: Is *Lucretia* a symbol of Rembrandt, himself, in his sorry state of loss and bankruptcy? Tom thinks that might be going too far, "He's in it. But I don't think it's himself. He's certainly got a strong identification with the subject. But the timing of the picture and the issues that are involved seem to fit so much better with Lucretia's and Hendrickje's story." Tom describes the painting as "gut-wrenching" for Rembrandt. At the May MIA Friends' lecture, Tom mentioned that he thought Rembrandt painted *Lucretia* in one day (!), due to the force and determination of his brush strokes, without giving it a second thought.

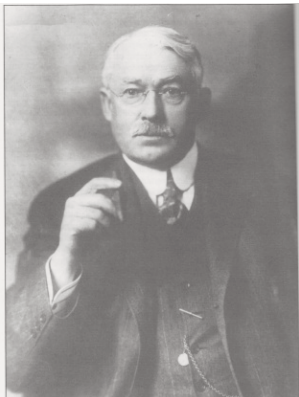
As Tom finished the interview, he tipped his hat to the MIA docents. "One thing that I love about our educators here and our docent staff is they're trained not to have a single answer."

My thanks to Tom Rassieur for generously sharing his time and insight into Rembrandt's genius!

A Personal Connection to Rembrandt

Terry Nadler

Do you have a personal connection to Rembrandt? Helen Leslie does. Her great-grandfather, Hershel V.



Hershel V. Jones in his late fifties (1910 decade)

Jones, owned Rembrandt's *Lucretia* before the MIA acquired it in 1934. Helen is in the 2009 docent class and a classmate of mine. So I decided to talk to her and find out more.

She never met her great-grandfather, but she has memories. "My paternal grandmother, Frances Jones Leslie, was the

youngest of H.V.'s seven children. I grew up knowing that my great-grandfather was a collector of art and books and that he was one of the founders and benefactors of the MIA." He also was the editor and publisher of the Minneapolis Journal at the time (today's Minneapolis Star Tribune).

Helen continues: "I also knew that the *Lucretia* was a prized possession which hung in his house on Park Avenue and 25th in South Minneapolis. Unlike the Ladd print collection, which he acquired for the purpose of donating it to the MIA, H.V. enjoyed the *Lucretia* for several years until his death. He may have intended that it would eventually go into the MIA collection, but it is my understanding now that he did not donate or bequeath it to the MIA." It was purchased through the William Hood Dunwoody Fund.

In addition, she remembers her great aunt Tessie, H.V.'s first child, as a keen collector of art. In 1968 the MIA exhibited the collection of prints, paintings and period furniture that Tessie and her father donated to the museum. Helen kept an article her mother, Connie Leslie, clipped from the Minneapolis Star newspaper. Barbara Flanagan, veteran reporter, was reviewing the opening of the MIA's exhibition.

"Herschel didn't grow up with beauty or with books. In his house on the little 26-acre farm in New York, there were only nine books available. Jones read them all – over and over again. At 10, he hand-printed a newspaper... at 12, he discovered the library. But it cost \$5 to join. Jones worked a year at odd jobs along with his chores to earn the \$5. Then the world opened wide.

"He worked and read and spent spare hours setting type for the local printer. At 18, he bought the small newspaper. By 22, he was ready to sell out and head west.

"Nobody knows for certain when he began collecting, but it is agreed that he started with books. Reading books had been his true education. He later learned about rare art prints, fine rugs, china and furniture. In his prime, Jones could enter a room and instantly pick out the gem in a collection. He had trained his eye and his mind well."

Flanagan finished her article with Herschel's youngest daughter, Frances Jones Leslie (Helen's paternal grandmother) remembering: "He would select one thing and tell you a story about it, a story so fascinating that you would never want to leave.

Yet he was a very simple, modest man. He loved to share his collections with people.”

Helen concludes by saying, “My family always had a strong connection with the MIA. My mother took me and my brothers to the museum regularly starting when we very young. I remember “visiting” *Lucretia* on a regular basis. I remember attending Gallery Club on Saturday mornings with my mother. The program provided lectures and tours for the parents and gallery and art projects for the children. It was a marvelous experience for me. All in all, I feel very at home at the MIA. I hope our tours give other children the opportunity to feel that this is their museum too!”

I want to thank Helen Leslie for sharing her memories of the Jones family and Rembrandt’s *Lucretia*.

It’s big! It’s 365, 24/7. It’s the Sports Show

Charlie Ellis

And yet. Not as many people tuned in as we might have expected. Lots of pondering, head scratching, here’s what I woulda done.

My guess? Sports folks were shy of the show because it was in an art museum and art folks were shy of the show because it had sports as the advertised content. Anyone in either group who didn’t make it to the museum to see it missed out on a wonderful, challenging story about media and sport.

This was a great year for the Minneapolis Institute of Arts with *Edo Pop* leading the way, an imaginative and beautiful showcasing of the museum’s collection of *ukiyo-e* art and its afterlife in contemporary Japan. The *Sports Show* was the second MIA exhibition of the year, this time showcasing the thoughtful curator of photography, David Little.

When first chosen to tour this show, all I had to go on was the title: *The Sports Show*. I imagined, well, I can’t recall quite what I imagined, but it wasn’t a positive imagine. Sports and the MIA? I couldn’t make the connection.

Well, I can now. This show, apparently about sports, in fact takes the measure of media as it interacts with a specific segment of culture, a segment



uniquely suited to its strengths. Media can stop action, make it go faster, slower, allow us to see again, and again if we want, a moment of unusual grace, controversy or excitement.

David Little’s choices led us through the gradual evolution of the special relationship between the functional advantages of media, capturing events that often happen faster than we see or in places we can’t get to, or from angles to which we don’t have access even if we are present in person. This relationship, headed toward the full-blown marital moment of the *Sports Show*, the spectacle that is today’s always-on access to sports, has not only a purely technical story, but a cultural story as well.

When the cameras began to flash, like in the early days of basketball shown in Frances Benjamin Watson’s cyanotype of women learning the game in 1896, and as the images produced got fed into the ever hungry mouths of printing presses grinding out newspapers and magazines, the images and the moments they documented became part of the historical record.

That record included Roger Bannister breaking the tape and the four-minute mile, Y.A. Tittle’s very public moment of private despair, Jesse Owens in the 1936 Olympics, amazing technical advances by two servants of the 20th century’s most radical political ideologies, fascism and communism, and the eerie moment at the end of the 1966 Soccer World Cup, when the victorious British crowd sang *When the Saints Come Marching In* to be answered by the German crowd’s rendition of the first verse of the German National Anthem, the so-called Hitler verse. (Note that this was not photography or videography but recorded sound.)

The record also included fall after fall after fall of boxers, anonymous and unconscious in the moments before they hit the canvas, underscoring Joyce Carol Oates wonderful line from the exhibition catalog, “You play basketball, you play baseball, but nobody plays boxing.”

While great photographers like Robert Mapplethorpe and Richard Avedon produced iconic images of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Lew Alcindor, highlighting the myth-making possibilities in the special relationship, other artists recorded images whose valence changed through time, exposing attitudes toward race. The 1977 video work focused on O.J.

Simpson could not be seen without first passing through the later experience of his trial.

This show limned a love story, featuring a long courtship with many twists and turns, but one ending in a final spectacular wedding of photography, video, media distribution and the never-ending, literally now never-ending, story of sports throughout the world.

Thanks, David. It was an honor to represent your vision to MIA visitors.

Toni Malau

The official unveiling of the Kongo ivory statuette of St. Anthony of Padua, purchased by active, sustaining



and honorary docents to honor Sheila McGuire, took place in the MIA's African galleries on May 15.



Curator Jan-Lodewijk Grootaers did the honors before a crowd of enthusiastic docents and the pleased and appreciative Ms. McGuire.



Musings from MGP

Debbi Hegstrom

Happy end of season – sort of! We will have a full summer schedule with the Rembrandt exhibition. I know those who will be touring are busily getting ready.

I'd like to cap off the year by highlighting some of the Big Ideas circulating in the museum world. After attending two major museum conferences recently, National Art Educators Association and American Association of Museums, these are the hot topics everyone was talking about. We are riding a wave of change in museum practices!

Five keys to innovation and creativity:

- 1) Curiosity – why/how does something work?
- 2) Break the rules – what if we did...?
- 3) Embrace risk and learn from failure
- 4) Meet the real and larger needs of the community – what do they want?
- 5) Collaboration is power – have a shared vision

And some corresponding Big Ideas:

Making art together to learn about process and prototyping – for both kids and adults

Resource-sharing and co-creating

Experimenting, creating a lab environment

Disruptive change

Immersive and transformative museum experiences

Collaboration across museum departments

Learning best practices from other professions

Shared authority: multiple voices from inside and outside the museum

Dynamic storytelling and narrative – the story changes based on the group

Partnerships with community organizations

Future engagement – what does it look like?

Improvising and becoming more nimble

Do It Yourself movement

These are things we will be talking about as we move forward to a Dynamic New Approach (the title of the MIA's new strategic plan). We will be sharing aspects of the plan with you in the coming months.

As a docent/guide group, you are already experimenting, collaborating, sharing best practices, storytelling, partnering with the community, improvising, and more. You are at the forefront of the visitor expe-

rience, always ready to adapt to your groups and their needs and requests. I express my heartfelt thanks for everything you do to make the MIA a friendlier and more accessible place for the thousands of visitors you interact with over the course of a year!

Dateline: Minneapolis January 7, 1915

M. I. Artsinger

The "Inaugural Exercises" are being held at the Minneapolis Auditorium this afternoon at 3:00 p.m. They should be starting right about now. The Minneapolis Symphony, under the direction of Emil Oberhoffer, will perform at the beginning and ending of the proceedings. Dr. John Edward Bushnell, pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church, will give the invocation. This will be followed by a number of speakers: John Van Derlip, president of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts; Dr. George Vincent, president of the University of Minnesota; James J. Hill, from St. Paul; Burt Fenner, from New York representing the architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White; Charles Hutchinson, president of the Art Institute of Chicago; Dr. Edward Robinson, director of the Metropolitan Museum, New York; Joseph Breck, director of the MIA; the Honorable Winfield Scott Hammond, governor of Minnesota; and the Honorable Wallace Nye, mayor of Minneapolis.

I'm over here at the brand new museum, and am going to make a final check to make sure everything is in order for this evening's reception for the members of the Society. Why don't you come along with me? We still have an hour or so of daylight coming through all those lovely north windows in the galleries. And I know I can do without all the speeches. Besides, I heard they have a full house over at the Auditorium anyway.

The *Inaugural Exhibition* will run for a month, and this first weekend is free of charge. We expect quite a few people. There are 410 objects in the exhibition so we have to get moving. We are standing just inside the great doors of the entrance. The portico with its six Ionic columns and grand stairway from Twenty-fourth Street is impressive.

As we move from this spacious entry area, we are in a large octagonal hall featuring casts of Greek sculpture from the fifth century BC. Someday, hope-

fully, there will be a "real" Greek or Roman sculpture here. To the east on our left and west on our right, the corridors are delimited by seven Tuscan columns each. The exhibits on the first floor are roughly divided into reproductions and originals. Let's go east first.

The corridor is lined with the Parthenon pediments, and *Venus de Milo* is ensconced at the end. There are alcoves on the south side. Our visitors will be taken from fourth century subjects to Hellenistic and Roman, terminating in a southeast hall featuring Romanesque and Gothic casts. I hear that Mr. Pillsbury is starting to collect ancient Chinese bronzes, and perhaps some day they will be in this space. The Gothic casts, however, are unusual in this country, and they will be helpful to our visitors for comparison to the original works of art to be found in the west end of the building.

We proceed to a large two-story hall featuring



reproductions of the Italian Renaissance. These are nice, but I'm sort of a fountain person, and I think a large fountain in this space would be very attractive. Balancing the room of Gothic casts on the east side of this atrium is a

gallery featuring works of Michelangelo.

The west corridor has the grand marble staircase, with its windows overlooking the south lawn, leading

up to the second floor. The corridor itself features pieces representative of the eighteenth century. These casts have been finished in a way to indicate the original material. The period rooms are on the north side of the cor-



ridor. Here we find some of the original art works in the exhibition.

The Gothic Room features a number of exquisite tapestries. Sadly, most of these will be returned to the owners at the end of the exhibition. However, all of the Gothic sculpture is part of our permanent collection, and is a good start for further accessions. We are fortunate that our Board members have so many contacts with people in various parts of the country who were willing to loan artworks from their private collections for this opening. And of course, many of our local people are also collectors in their own right. But right now, there are very few pieces that the museum owns.



A case in point. The Renaissance Room has objects that are almost all our own: Italian furniture, paintings of the Italian school, and a large embroidery loaned by Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan.

The next room represents the seventeenth century, but everything has been loaned. The crowning jewels are the group of Rembrandt etchings from Mr. Morgan's collection. There is a Franz Hals, a Pieter de Hooch interior, and an interesting portrait by Ferdinand Bol, which will remain with us for a time longer.

The eighteenth-century room represents many schools in painting, although English predominates with the Constable and the charming Reynolds self-portrait, plus a Gainsborough portrait from the Ehrich Galleries in New York. A David portrait represents the French school; Italy is represented by a seashore painting by Francesco Guardi; Spain by a remarkable self-portrait; America by a Peale portrait of the artist, his wife and daughter. Also in this room is some English and American furniture of the Colonial period, plus a case containing seventeenth- and eighteenth-century lace that was for some time on view at the Metropolitan Museum.

At the end of the corridor on the south side is the Oriental Room, featuring a large group of *cloisonné* enamels, some very fine Japanese prints – both of these groups from local collectors – and four Persian miniatures from Mr. Morgan's collection.

The light is fading, but we must see the second floor. A large gallery is at either end with galleries on the east end featuring European artists and the west end by American. The central gallery features Mr. J.J. Hill's fabulous collection of nineteenth-century French paintings. There is some understanding that he will bequest these to the museum, which would be a significant acquisition.



In the west gallery are various American artists. An entire room in this wing has been allocated to the work of Winslow Homer, allowing us to see his development from watercolors of the tropical seas, along with others of the subdued colors of the coast of Maine. Significant oil paintings of his were loaned by the Chicago Art Institute, the Toledo Museum, and Mr. Freer.

In another room is a further loan from Mr. Freer, which includes four pastels and an oil painting by Dewing, seven pictures by Tryon, and five delightful studies by Whistler. There are also two very decorative Chinese painting of the Ming period.

In the east gallery are works by various European artists, representing the schools of Spain, Germany, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries. One room is devoted to modern British artists, such as D.Y. Cameron, William Orpen, and Watts. Two rooms are occupied by the French impressionists, with works by Manet, Monet, Renoir, Degas, Pissaro, and Sisley.

Two other galleries on this floor are occupied by the Martin B. Koon Memorial Collection, and the John Scott Bradstreet Memorial Collection. These will remain intact for at least ten years.

Like its counterpart on the first floor, the east wing also has alcoves, which contain six tapestries from the Herter Looms in New York, a group of etchings by Anders Zorn, some original contemporary drawings, and medals of the modern school. There is one alcove that is sure to attract much attention – a loan from Mr. Thomas Fortune Ryan of New York consisting of a large and rare Persian rug in front of which is a charming group by Rodin representing two babies playing.

So now you have seen everything that's here for the moment. The seventeen rooms and six alcoves are

pretty well filled. Everything seems to be where it's supposed to be and I think we're ready to open the doors. Mr. Pillsbury has a corps of ushers plus students from the Art School ready to help the visitors find their way around.

Our daylight is fading quickly, and I have to get something to eat, change clothes and be back here before everybody descends on the place. I'm in charge of selling the exhibition catalogue. It's a beautiful book of 75 pages with sixteen illustrations. It lists the names of the Board members of the Society, the names of all those who lent works for this exhibition, a floor plan of the museum, titles and descriptions of all the works, and the price is pretty good – 15¢!

**Dateline Minneapolis
February 8, 1915**

M. I. Artsinger

I'm really tired today. What a month! To say it was a grand opening exhibition is an understatement. It's a sad time, too, because much of what has been on display will be packed up and sent back to the owners. But we do have a number of objects that will stay with us for a longer time, and some new loans are arriving. And of course, we do have our plaster casts that will remain. And great news – Mr. Hill has announced that his collection will remain in the museum for an indefinite time. The *Inaugural Exhibition* closed yesterday at 5:00, and we're closed today and tomorrow to catch our breath. But we don't have a lot of time, because we will re-open again on Wednesday with forty or more paintings from the last international exhibition at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh.

But let me tell you a bit about last month. The last thing mentioned in my January column was the inaugural catalogue. I must have done really well. We sold 10,000 copies. One thing not mentioned at all so far is the Lunch Room, which did a spectacular business during the month. It was crowded both at the noon hour and later in the day for tea.

One thing that was very nice was the fact that Dr. Spaulding, superintendent of schools, gave permission for teachers to bring their classes during school hours. Over 5000 students visited between January 11 and January 28. This included all the eighth graders in the city, a few seventh grades, and a number of high school students. The teachers carefully shepherded their charges through the exhibition,

and volunteer helpers were stationed in each gallery to explain the art to the students. That's something that could become a part of the museum experience some day.

With the success of the past month, I do start to think about the future of this place. It certainly seems to have won the hearts of many in the city. There were great plans for this complex. However, there have been problems. The original idea was to have the art museum, a theater space, symphony hall, and the art school. Maybe Mr. Walker had a point – we may be too far from downtown. It's a lovely spot, but I seriously doubt that the symphony will ever be a part of this. Maybe a theater.

On the other hand, the Art School seems to present its own problem. It just officially moved from the Library into this building on January 25, and there is already talk of moving it out to its own place on this campus, because the museum can use the space on the ground floor for its own purposes.

Oh, yes, the opening night. We had between 4000-5000 guests between 8:00 and 10:00 p.m. Counting that night, our official attendance for the month was 74,168. Our biggest day was Sunday January 10, which of course was a free day for the opening weekend. The registering machine showed 10,086 entrants, but we know some people were so crowded that they never had a chance to sign in. So there were probably 11,000 people between 1:00 and 4:15 when we had to close the doors to further entrants. That stranded about 1000 more people queued up on the thirty steps to the front entrance in freezing weather. Speaking of weather, as all good Minnesotans must, we had a pretty good month for the opening. It was never above freezing, but it really never went below zero either. I think I heard someone say that the whole month ranged between 2° and 20° so that wasn't too bad. But it did mean a lot of heavy coats and furs on the people who came.

I think we're off to a great start. I'll make a prediction and you can see if it works out. We started with approximately 20 spaces in this building. I wager by the time of the centennial there will have been at least four or five additions to the building, and maybe there will be around 134 galleries. Why not? And maybe a theater. And an art school. But the symphony will stay downtown. It will be fun to see.

With the indulgence of the new Editor of the Muse, M.I. Artsinger may continue his reports of the early days of the MIA.

Docents are Floral Artists, Too

This year six docents offered floral arrangements for the April 26-29 *Art in Bloom*.



Carolina Zarate and friend



Suzanne Zander and friends



Linda Jeffrey and friend

JeanMarie Burtness and Gordon Hayward, author of *Art and the Gardener*, and his wife, Mary. Gordon was the featured speaker for *Art in Bloom*



Ziya Tarapore



Holly McDougall



Lisa Berg



And the "Winners" Are...

Mary Grau

The results are in from my recent – and totally unscientific – docent survey. To recap, here are the questions I posed:

- 1) What was your “go to” object when you were touring this year?
- 2) What about an object that you used for the first time this year?
- 3) The museum is burning to the ground – if you can rescue this object you can keep it. Which object would you choose?

I heard from 46 of you; it will come as no surprise that the responses demonstrate that we’re a diverse bunch with eclectic tastes. As you would hope with an encyclopedic museum we use and love objects from virtually all of the time periods and collections represented at the MIA. In my best amateur survey researcher fashion, however, I have attempted to identify patterns and common themes in your answers. Here goes.

If the museum goes up in flames *Lucretia* will be safe. In fact there will be a crowd of people coming to her rescue; 7 docents would love to take her home. Mentioned next often as an answer to question #3 were the *Ife Shrine Head* (5 rescuers); the *Islamic Lion* (3); and at 2 rescuers apiece Van Gogh’s *Olive Trees*, Sargent’s *Luxembourg Gardens at Twilight*, the *Pillsbury Owl*, Morisot’s *Artist’s Daughter Julie with her Nanny*, the *Jade Chrysanthemum Plate* and the *Lakota Winter Count*. Three people want the *Tatra*; a couple of them plan to throw a few extra objects into the car as they make their escape. Some folks limited themselves to objects that fit nicely in the hand: the *Venus Figure*, a *netsuke*, the coral topped fork and spoon. For others size would be no object; the *Roman Matron* and the *Tiber Muse* will both be saved. Also *Your Dog*. A couple people mentioned that *Jade Mountain* should survive a fire and therefore wouldn’t need to be saved – and at least one person noted that the *Amida Buddha* has already made it through a fire. So we’re practical as well as eclectic.

The most commonly mentioned “go to” objects in question #1 were the *Tibetan Mandala* (4 mentions); Chuck Close’s *Frank* (3); Roslin’s *Comtesse d’Egmont Pignatelli in Spanish Costume* (3); the *Nick Cave Soundsuit* (2); and *George Washington* (2). The objects most often identified as new discov-

eries in response to question #2 were Cy Thao's *Hmong Migration* (4 responses); *Soundsuit* (3); Morimura's *Inner Dialogue with Frida Kablo* (2); Mona Hatoum's *Cube* (2); and the *Tlingit Screen* in the Americas galleries (2).

The objects that appeared as answers in more than one category included *Jade Mountain* (questions 1 and 3); *Soundsuit* (1 and 2); Bonnard's *Dining Room in the Country* (1 and 3); Schiele's *Paris von Gutersloh* (1 and 3); *George Washington* (1 and 3); *Beginning Form Meets Spiral* by Hoshino Satoru (1 and 2); *Madonna of the Mines* (1 and 2); the *Tlingit Screen* (1 and 2); Goya's *Dr. Arrieta* (1 and 3); *Hmong Migration* (1 and 2); the *Pillsbury Owl* (1 and 3); and *Lucretia* (1 and 3).

Finally, the objects mentioned most often over-all in responses were *Hmong Migration*, the *Soundsuit* and the *Ife Shrine Head*, each with 5 mentions, and leading the field, *Lucretia* with 8. A special award goes to the *World Beats* exhibition and Gallery 276 for being the gallery containing more objects mentioned in the survey than any other; the works in that gallery by Kehinde Wiley, Willie Cole, Yue Minjun, Yasumasa Morimura, Nick Cave and Cy Thao all appeared in your responses.

Many thanks to all of you who participated in the survey; it's been a pleasure reading your always informative, sometimes surprising, often eloquent and ultimately inspiring answers. I've had so much fun that I'm sharing the wealth.

Editor's Note: If you're interested in more detail, go to the Object Files on the MGP Volunteers website and look for the title "Mary Grau's Three Questions" for a complete list of survey responses.

**happy pix ...
happy peeps ...
happy event**

Spring luncheon at the Conservatory - May 14



Did You Know?
There's a new brochure at the Visitor Member Services Information Desk titled "Exercise your mind and your body at the MIA." Borrow a pedometer and stroll through the museum looking for the 16 art stops on second and third floor. The self-guided tour equals about ½ mile or about 1,000 steps.

Artists Satoru Hoshino and Kayoko Hoshino visit the MIA

Kay Miller

Beginning Form Meets Spiral 06-1 by Satoru Hoshino
2006.24 - G237

Docent Linda Krueger and I were staffing the MIA's Japanese art cart on April 24 when a diminutive Japanese woman stopped by with her American host. In the course of conversation, the American woman mentioned that they were in the galleries with the Japanese woman's husband, who was looking at a work he had done for the museum.

"Oh," we asked, "which piece?"

When we learned that the piece was *Beginning Form Meets Spiral*, we were thrilled. Not only is the installation one of the most popular with visitors, Linda had just presented the work for our Asia checkout tour. It is one of our all-time favorite, go-to works.

In minutes, Hoshino Satoru joined us at the cart. You would have thought Linda and I were meeting a rock star. We told Hoshino how much we loved his work, that we often used *Beginning Form* on tours and what a powerful impact it has on visitors. He clearly was pleased. He smiled in assent when we asked if we might ask a few questions. Hoshino's English was limited, but he was the soul of graciousness. It took a while for us to be understood and for him to respond. Here is a summary of our discussion:



Q. In doing an installation, do you start with a plan?

A. Yes, but it is a flexible one. The small pieces are pre-formed. As Hoshino puts them up, he adjusts his plan to achieve the overall look he seeks.

Q. We understand that you were here, at the MIA, to do the installation.

A. Yes. But Hoshino had never before installed similar works in a corner. All previous works were on straight walls. It was curator Matthew Welch's idea to put it in a prominent corner of the MIA, thinking it would give the work greater visual impact.

Q. How do you like it?

A. Very much. He liked the results when he first put it up. Coming back to see it, he found that he liked it even more. It feels like it is there for a long time, he said with a smile.

Q. How did he attach the pieces on the wall?

A. Hoshino embeds each separate pottery segment with a sharp spike or tack, which is then driven into the wall. Welch wanted to make sure that none of the pieces fell off. So Hoshino supplemented the tacks with silicon glue.

Q. We know that the direction your art took was powerfully affected by a massive mud slide in 1986. We looked for examples of your work since last year's tsunami, but couldn't find any. Was your approach changed by this more recent (2011) disaster?

A. No. His approach had been completely changed by what Hoshino called the "mountain tsunami" (mudslide) in 1986 that destroyed his studio, half his house and buried much of his finished work. But he, his wife and children were safely away from home when it hit.

Hoshino said the mudslide gave him a new understanding of the power of the earth, of nature, of the very materials he used in his art. But he had already incorporated that experience and his resulting epiphany into his work when the more recent disaster hit. He and his wife, potter Kayoko Hoshino, built their new studio further south in Japan.

Hoshino paused. With great compassion, he added that because of what they had been through, he understood the great losses other Japanese people suffered in last year's disaster.

We were at the end of our art cart shift. We asked if we might photograph Hoshino by his installation. While Linda watched over the cart, I photographed Hoshino and his wife. They mentioned that Hoshino was in town to give a talk at the University of Minnesota. I said that we were aware that Kayoko Hoshino is also a well-known potter www.sk-hoshino.com.

Then, I asked if he would mind staying just a minute while I switched places with Linda, who really is the expert on this piece. She came back a minute later and said that Hoshino wanted to make sure that I had a photograph with him, if I wanted one.

The Den of Ubiquity

Tom Byfield

Our middle-aged kids recently had us book out a weekend to celebrate the 60 years since our wedding. A wedding where Jeul looked stunning and I just looked stunned. That we have remained together so long is a tribute to her unwavering patience in waiting for me to grow up. Like every marriage we have been through a lot together, most of it my fault.

It was a wonderful two days. The kids even flew their sister in from Seattle for the occasion. One afternoon was spent in our condo examining the detritus we had collected over those 60 years. We had discussed distributing this collection to them as soon as that celestial choir we can hear faintly in the distance builds to a crashing crescendo. There was Aunt Babe's dented brass spittoon, Grandma's collection of Hummel figurines, a couple of antique tables at least 30 years old and some of my poorly executed oils which may have debatable sentimental value if that.

At one point we drifted into the den where I cloister myself like a Benedictine monk complete with my naturally-occurring tonsure to prepare for tours. I suspect that every docent has his or her own *sanctum sanctorum* devoted to the MIA. The shelves are filled with books of art: a collection of Famous Museums of the World, the complete Time-Life Famous Artists Series, volumes of drawings by eminent artists. Scattered throughout the room are the more esoteric books which defy any logical reason for their acquisition: *Diamond Cutting for Fun and Profit*, *The Pre-Darwinian Art of the Galapagos*, a bank of seventeen years of *Arts* magazines and the *Docent Muse* publications in annualized order. My grandfather was a packrat.

One bookcase is devoted to three-ring binders for all the notes from all those years of continuing education lectures. Because of my basic insecurity, I am a compulsive note taker. It started in college. I have a memory like a leaking garden hose and was told by some nitwit that writing things down is the secret of a good memory. He lied. Hey, I even find myself taking notes at the obligatory soporific triennial Defensive Driving Course in spite of the fact that by now I can recite it verbatim. On one shelf sit boxes of 4x6 recipe cards that are filled out for each object I have used on tours. They contain all the minutiae

that sometimes turn my tours into a credible imitation of Cliff Klaven with his "little known facts."

So, looking the den over, I spread my arms expansively and said, "Someday this will all be yours." It was not difficult to tell they viewed this largess with all the enthusiasm of a Yassir Arafat at a B'nai B'rith picnic. Well, excited or not, they will have to deal with it. Like Pilate, I wash my hands of this whole archival clutter. By the way, we have told our kids if they decide to fete us on our 70th and want us all to be together again, they should bring our urns.

Honorary Docent News

Helen Bowlin

The MIA has a large cadre of honorary docents who are active and interested in the Twin Cities Arts community. Many attend docent lectures and social events. We are very interested in maintaining our important connection with the MIA.

Honorary docent activities include a book club which meets in members' homes, enjoying a delicious lunch prepared by the hostess. Books discussed in 2011-2012 were:

The Bastard of Istanbul by Elif Shafak

Peony in Love by Lisa See

Sarah's Key by Tatiana de Rosnay

The Power of One by Bryce Courtenay

The Long Song by Andrea Levy

Even Silence has an End by Ingrid Betancourt

The Hare with Amber Eyes by

Edmund de Waal

Headlong by Michael Frayn

To the Heart of the Nile by Pat Shipman

The Gift of Rain by Twan Tan Eng

Team of Rivals by Doris Kearns Goodwin

The book selections are art related or have focus on contemporary issues.

Monthly programs have been interesting and stimulating.

September: Tour of Baker Associates Consumer Design

October: The Museum of Russian Art - oriental antiques

November: Curatorial tour of *Edo Pop* given by Matthew Welch

April: Tour of the Weisman Museum's new galleries

May: A walking tour of the gardens at the Arboretum

June: A visit to the American Craft Council with an architectural tour of that building

July: Curatorial tour of the *Rembrandt in America* exhibit given by Tom Rassiour

Honorary docent activities connect with the arts community, especially with the MIA. Collectively we have many years of touring. We may miss that wonderful opportunity but we stay connected and continue to enjoy some stimulating activities. Join us!

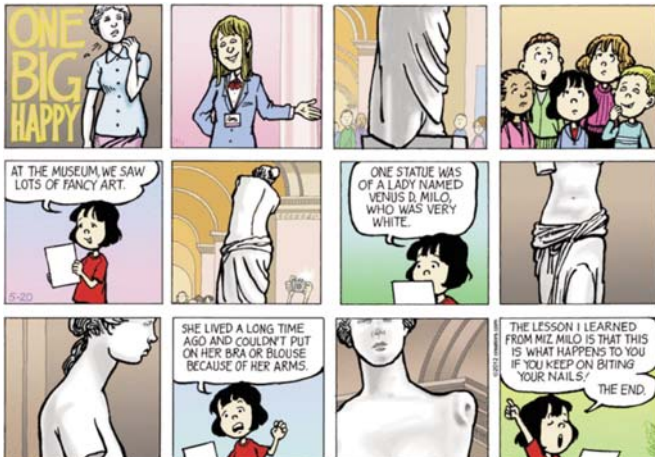
A Note from the editor

Mary S. Bowman

It's amazing how quickly this year has gone by! It has been a privilege and a pleasure to serve as editor of the *Docent Muse*. Now some thank-yous are in order. The monthly DEC board meetings will be one of my happy memories of this year. It gave me an opportunity to get to better know docents outside of my 2005 class and Thursday touring buddies. Board meetings are not necessarily expected to be enjoyable; these were. Thanks to Chair JeanMarie Burtness for helping to make that happen.

More thanks to board members Suzie Marty, Liz Short, Nan Lightner, Helen Bowlin, Fran Megarry, Terry Edam, Toni DuFour and Debbi Hegstrom. Last but certainly not least, our online publisher, Merritt Nequette, deserves all the praise and gratitude I can muster. He was unflappable, patient, and through it all kept his sense of humor.

I had no idea what saying yes to being editor was going to be. Former editor Emily Shapiro gave me much helpful information and encouragement to start me on my way. To everyone who contributed to this year's issues, you are the people who make the *Muse* possible. Thank you to everyone who said yes to my requests, and especially to those who offered without being asked. All of you made this job a pleasure.



Your articles gave me so much new information about the treasures inside the museum! I am confident that next year's editor, Marilyn Smith, will enjoy this as much as I have.

I hope that everyone who has thought about writing for the *Muse* will try it in the coming year, and that those who have already contributed will continue to do so.

I wish all of you a very fine summer and an excellent year ahead!

Tusen takk to the Docent Executive Committee 2011-2012

