

## **Docent Forum Minutes**

November 1, 2012

1:30-3:30 p.m.

### **Improvisation Exercise**

Tane Danger and Brandon Boat (MIA Improvisation artists-in-residence) spoke about their experiences accompanying several docents on their tours. Docents who participated also made comments about how it worked. We all did an exercise using “Yes and . . .”, a technique that affirms whatever a person tells you and then allows you to build on it. We were encouraged to use these types of exercises in our tour conversations, which help build on visitors’ responses. Exercises such as “Eyes in the back of your head” (one person faces away from a work art as others describe it), using “yay” and “boo” (on Middle School tours), and more have been used to enthusiastic response. These exercises warm up the audience and promote spontaneity. Tane and Brandon will accompany docents on tours by request, or Debbi may ask you if you’d like to have them come along. Tane and Brandon will be preparing a booklet on various tour-appropriate improv exercises.

### **Object Files scanning project**

Barbara Aiken-Ali is looking through the Contemporary Art departmental files and scanning pertinent information into our digital files by particular object. Contact Barbara for information about what we have so far. Contemporary artists are still producing works so it’s a fluid undertaking as they define their work.

We need to determine where these files will ultimately reside and ways to cross-reference the information sources we have.

Study Groups have been formed for the Terracotta Warriors exhibition and the Globalization installation. Those within the study groups are contributing their research on specific objects, which is shared via mgpvunteers.com. There are folders for both of these exhibitions under the “Special Exhibitions” section. Anyone is welcome to do research and add objects. Gail Gresser-Pitsch is coordinating the TCW study group and Kay Miller the Globalization group.

An honorary docent asked about policies related to honorary access to the mgpvunteers.org website, the museum guides resource center, and other areas accessible to active docents. Debbi explained it is museum policy that when a docent is no longer actively touring, these types of access are no longer available. This is the same situation for when employees leave the MIA. It may be advisable to provide a document of what honorary status means so people understand the results of this decision.

### **Accessibility**

Fran Megarry, JeanMarie Burtness, and Terry Edam reported on recent programs that are helping promote accessibility for all our visitors.

Thanks to Jean London and Fran Megarry for making a connection with Faribault School for the Blind. A group of 60 students visited the museum last summer. We provided touch and verbal description tours. The tours provide new experiences through touching works of art, tactile boards, and essence boards. Docents have made several essence boards to assist with object interpretation. (A box of these boards is in the guide resource center.) Boards were passed around for examples to use on tours. Terry Edam has also used tactile boards in Discover Your Story tours and they were very successful.

Fran reported on a national teleconference during Art Beyond Sight month in which she and Debbi participated. Other participants were impressed to hear that we have 40 objects approved for touching at the MIA. We also give public touch tours for anyone during Art Beyond Sight month, held annually in October.

### **Dynamic New Approach**

Debbi gave a brief summary of Kaywin Feldman's talk (given to docents and guides on 10/3/12) on the museum's new strategic plan, called "Dynamic New Approach." The financial charts in the presentation show that MIA revenue sources are either down or flat. Thus, the MIA is examining new sources of revenue, some of which affect the Docent Program, such as charging for parking and private tours. Learning and Innovation, along with Collections and Programs, makes up one-third of the MIA's operating expenses. Membership is down and attendance is flat. School group numbers also remain about the same over the last ten years.

The MIA continues to look at new sources of revenue through a model called Museum, Inc. We also look to enhance visitors' connections to the museum through their use of smart phones and other digital modes. Museum staff is being asked to experiment and innovate with new programs to draw people into the museum. Debbi encouraged docents to watch Kaywin's presentation; it is posted on the volunteer website.

### **Disciplinary Procedures**

A sub-committee has been formed to put a docent disciplinary process in writing. Members include Linnea Asp (chair), Fran Megarry, Jean London, Lynn Broffman, Mary Grau, and Debbi Hegstrom. A report will be forthcoming.

### **Terracotta Warriors in Transit**

A PowerPoint of the warriors being "packed up" in China, transported via bus to Beijing, and then flown to the Twin Cities was shown. The photos include installation of the warriors in our galleries. Some of the photos of the MIA installation will be made available for TCW tours.