

## Five Buddhas

Fern Miller

For 500 years after his death, the Buddha was represented in symbolic form: by a footprint, a wheel, an empty throne, a stupa. In the first century CE, the Buddha began to be represented in anthropomorphic form in Mathura, India, and in Gandhara (present-day Northwest Pakistan and parts of Afghanistan). The Mathura images served as a model for Buddha images created in Southeast Asia, where Theravada Buddhism predominated. Mahayana Buddhism evolved out of Theravada in Gandhara. It included two new concepts: that of the Bodhisattva, the Buddha-to-be, and that of Maitreya, the Future Buddha. The Gandharan Buddhas provided prototypes for images later developed in China, Korea, Japan, and Tibet.

In 327 BCE, Alexander the Great invaded the area and introduced Greek ideas. Gandhara continued to have religious, commercial, political, and cultural links with Central Asia, Greece, and the Roman world. Many of the early Buddhist images contain caryatids and atlantes (female and male figures used as supporting columns). Some Buddhist images resemble Greek Apollos and deified Roman emperors.

### **Gandharan Buddha, 3<sup>rd</sup> century, Bamiyan**

During the reign of King Kanishka, 78 CE, the earliest Buddhist images appeared on coins. After that, thousands of Buddhist images were sculpted.



The Buddha was deified, and images were enshrined for worship in the chapels of monasteries and in the niches of stupas. The lower arms are missing on this Buddha, but we can guess that his left arm expressed charity or a blessing, the *varada mudra*. His right hand probably conveyed reassurance, "fear not." This *abhaya mudra* was one of the most common. To the right against the east wall of this gallery we can see the Hindu god

Shiva expressing the same gesture with his lower right hand. *Mudras* had their source in ancient Indian dance and were absorbed by both Hinduism and Buddhism. This Buddha wears a simple monk's robe that covers both shoulders. The sculptor expresses volume in the way he forms the pleats of the robe around the body. Notice the left knee projecting in a *contrapposto* pose. The back of a Gandharan sculpture was left unfinished because it was installed against the wall.

Stylized wavy hair covers the Buddha's head, including the cranial extension or ushnisha. Gandharan sculptors did not depict the Buddha's hair in the snail-shell curls that became prevalent in other areas. At the base of the sculpture is a small scene framed by Corinthian pilasters. The Buddha sits on a cushion between two standing men who gesture as though they are involved in conversation. On the right and left side of the base is a lotus design. The majority of Gandharan sculptures are in grey schist, a medium-to-coarse-grained metamorphic rock native to the area.

### **Benediction Scene, 8<sup>th</sup> century, China**

In the first century, Buddhism was brought into China from Gandhara along the Silk Road. As Buddhism traveled to different lands, it retained its principal iconography. However, the Buddha took on the facial features of the new converts and the stylistic preferences of particular areas and time periods. By 715, the Chinese version of Mahayana Buddhism had become a national religion.

This sandstone plaque is one of a series of relief sculptures showing episodes in the life of the Buddha.



The straight lines that form the throne lead your eye directly to the Buddha, who is shown in three-quarter frontal pose. The flowing lines of his robe define volume and make him appear animated. His face is very full in the characteristic style used by T'ang sculptors. To the left of this plaque is a *Standing Buddha* made two centuries earlier. Contrast the effect of this more restrained style.

Surrounding the Buddha are his first two disciples, two bodhisattvas, and three guardian figures. They are sculpted in relatively low relief and appear flatter than the Buddha. His first two disciples, Ananda and Kasyapa, stand on either side of him. On the other side of this gallery is a free-standing sculpture of Ananda. A *lokapala*, or guardian of the faith, standing to the left of other guardian spirits, is similar to those in our T'ang

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*Tomb Retinue.* The Buddha blesses a kneeling figure; notice that his feet rest on a lotus, and behind him is a leaf-shaped mandorla. The bodhisattvas have plainer halos.

### **Amida Buddha, 12<sup>th</sup> century, Japan**

When Buddhism came to Japan in the sixth century, it had a transforming effect. It brought with it Chinese culture: architecture, painting, city planning, and maybe most important of all, the Chinese language in which the sutras were written.

This is the *Amida Buddha*, who rules the Western Paradise. Pure Land Buddhism became the official religion of the Heian Court (784-1185). It was an age of luxury and splendor with wealth concentrated in the hands of a few noble families. Still, Pure Land Buddhism appealed to all classes. The way to paradise lay in fervent belief in Amida. All you had to do was chant the name “Amida” in order to be guaranteed a place in the Western Paradise after death.



Originally, this sculpture was covered in gold leaf. We see the underlying cypress wood. Amida displays the *abhaya* and *varada mudras*, the two gestures we imagined on the *Gandharan Buddha*. An *ushnisha*, the large mound on the top of his head, symbolizes superior knowledge, his enlightenment, and wisdom. At the base of it is a jewel. His hair has small, short locks, which curl to the right. The crystal on his forehead represents a source of light. His eyes are also crystal. The Buddha’s elongated ears remind us that he removed his heavy earrings when he gave up his life of luxury and left home to discover the meaning of life.

The Buddha sits on a lotus. Hindus adopted the ancient Indian symbol of the lotus, the *axis mundi*, as the symbolic connection between heaven and earth. Buddhists made it the symbol of purity.

### **Walking Buddha, 15<sup>th</sup> century, Thailand**

Theravada, the oldest form of the Buddhist religion, traveled to Burma and Thailand in the fourth century. In the Pali language, Theravada means “the way of the elders.” Sukhothai artists of the 14<sup>th</sup> century created the Walking Buddha as a freestanding icon. They were inspired by sculptural reliefs that represented his descent from Heaven, where he had gone to preach to the gods and visit his mother. This is one meaning of the Walking Buddha. It was also understood to represent the Buddha’s spiritual conquest of the world. After he left home and gave up his wealth, Shakyamuni got off his horse and never rode again, neither on an animal nor in a cart. Notice the left foot on the ground, the right foot raised a few inches; together, they give the impression of movement. The image symbolizes the teaching Buddha who left his footprint across the Thai landscape.



Ancient Pali stories and poems describe each body part. The Buddha has a chin like a mango stone, a nose like a parrot’s beak, eyebrows like lotus leaves. Can you guess what his arm and shoulder resemble? They are as smooth and rounded as the trunk of a young elephant. The image is meant to connect the Buddha with nature. The bronze *Walking Buddha* is unique to Thailand. In Thailand a flame finial extends from

the *ushnisha*. This represents the Buddha’s moment of Enlightenment. To the right of this sculpture are four Buddhas also shown at this moment, a popular subject in Burma and Thailand.

### **Lacquer Buddha, 18<sup>th</sup> century, Burma**

The larger Buddha in the center of the group of three is new to us. It is stunning in its blackness and simplicity. The sculpture was first modeled in clay. Then layer after layer of lacquer was applied. He wears a simple robe with a stylized flap of cloth over the right shoulder, like the robe in the small Thai Buddha to the right and the *Walking Buddha*. His elongated ears extend to his shoulders as do those of the bronze Buddha to his left and the *Enshrined Buddha*. He has snail-shell curls like those of all five Buddhas in this area. The group of three and the *Enshrined Buddha* all display the “touch the earth” gesture (*bhumisparsamudra*).



The earth-touching gesture is specific to Buddhism. It signifies his enlightenment when he receives the answers that he left home to discover. But before the Buddha received this gift, the demon Mara interrupted his meditation, tormented him, and sent his daughters to seduce him. The Buddha resisted all of Mara’s temptations, and he calls on the earth to witness his victory. He extends his right hand downward. His left hand lies in his lap pointing to his right arm. His legs are crossed in a yogic position. The Buddha’s Enlightenment imparts the Four Noble Truths and the Eight-fold Path. The Four Truths are: life is suffering; suffering comes from desire; eliminate desire and suffering goes; follow the eight-fold path to eliminate desire. The Eight-fold Path consists of right views, intentions, speech, and actions; right concentration, livelihood, effort, and mind.

Artists have always given form to the religious ideas of their people. When they express them in the lasting materials of sculpture, these images transcend time and space. Although we may not be able to read Pali or Sanskrit, Chinese or Japanese, the art of these cultures inspires and teaches us.

## **Curator’s Corner**

**Bob Marshall**

*The MIA’s world-class display of Chinese art got even classier on October 31 with the opening of four new galleries. Shortly after the opening, Bob Jacobsen offered the docents the following comments on the new ceramics display. A fuller recapitulation of his comments will be made available to all guides in early December.*

We’ve arranged the old MAEP Gallery into an overview of Chinese ceramics, from the Stone Age to the Sung. The first point, as you enter, is the antiquity of the ceramics tradition in China, with objects in the first case dating to 5000 BCE. By and large it’s a painted-pottery tradition, with obvious similarities to other Neolithic cultures throughout the world. For technique, look at the large storage urn on the far right: it is obviously hand-built – you can see the coils piled on each other – but it is very complex. It’s at least two pieces put together, and beaten on an anvil to thin the walls and smooth

the surfaces. But then very early on, at least by 2000 BCE, the Chinese are using a fast-turning wheel, which enables the Long-shan potters to create these extraordinarily light, literally eggshell-thin, black-burnished ceremonial objects in the middle of the case.

The most interesting story in Bronze Age ceramics, the opposite case, is imitation. Early on, the bronzes react to pottery forms from the Neolithic period; but around the 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE, we see ceramics imitating the bronze forms – and we’ve put two bronzes in the case to make that point. It’s easy to see that this set of bells imitates a bronze model. I would also point out, under the wall label, the earliest example we have of purposeful glazing, a 10<sup>th</sup>-century Western Chou vessel with glaze dripping down its shoulders.

As we move around the corner to the Han period, we see painted ceramics that appropriate the color scheme of lacquer, like the large hu, with its purple, white and red lacquer colors. Glazing is now routine, as we see in the yellow and green vessels. What is new is the pictorial design that you see on the shoulder of this brown vase. Compare this with, for instance, the design on the lintel in our Han Gallery.

Turning around, we come to a case of celadon – which, I should emphasize, is a descriptive term. The Chinese call it “greenware,” but it encompasses a range of colors beyond green: cream to olive to brown to blue. You can compare the “soul jar” on the right, with its very Taoist images of deer and birds to carry the soul into the afterlife, with the lidded cinerary urn that likely would have held the ashes of a Buddhist monk. The top is a stupa shape, with a Buddhist jewel. The Buddhist gets reincarnation, not an afterlife.

To our left is a case of T’ang innovations, some technical, some esthetic, including the introduction of blue and white together. And very important to the future of ceramics worldwide: for the first time anywhere a picture is painted underneath a protective glaze, most apparent in this image of a heron in the reeds.

Next is our showcase for one of America’s great collections of brownware. Very popular in Sung, this style moves to Japan with the tea ceremony, but almost disappears in China. I would certainly point out, in the far corner, this 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century flower vase with the flared top. It has beautiful glazes and is one of the greatest Asian shapes known.

When we get to the case with Ting ware, you can point out that ceramics in China have gone from utilitarian vessels to store water to objects that are not only collected by the royalty but in this case made exclusively for the court.

By contrast, in the final alcove we have Tz’u-chou ware, which is absolutely middle class. In the past you’ve seen a number of these brown-and-white pieces, but now they are all together and you can talk about the various techniques, most of which we have on display. The last small dish in this case is a very early example of overglaze enamel, which leads to the more refined works, post-Sung, displayed down the Jade Corridor.

In the final case, we see at left most of our early Sung Yao-chou celadons. Especially rare, and fun, is the small plate with a design of boys playing with dogs in a garden containing tai-hu rocks. Then we get to Lung-ch’uan, one of the most

beautiful types of celadon. The best would be the color of our double-fish plate, a world masterpiece. Below it you see another piece with perfect color, then one of good color, and to the right, not-so-good color, sort of grey and dull. You get to teach that connoisseurship now, if you want.

When you add the figural objects in our Han and T’ang tomb galleries and the Yuan, Ming and Ching porcelains in the cases along the Jade Corridor, you can now give a pretty comprehensive tour of the Chinese ceramic tradition.

## Another Curator’s Corner

Sheila McGuire

*Recently Sue Canterbury talked with the Docent Muse about her upcoming exhibition, Beauford Delaney: From New York to Paris. We began by talking about why she chose to put together an exhibition of Delaney’s work and concluded with a discussion of what she would like to have people leave knowing about Delaney and his art.*

I must say that in some ways I tend to like underdogs, and I like to turn over new dirt in terms of research. It’s very interesting when an artist comes along by whose work you are intrigued, but of whom you know nothing.

I was introduced to his work within the first year that I was here – which would have been the spring of 1999 – through a local collector who had works done by Delaney, someone who had actually known him in Paris. I found his works very interesting and, as I read more about him, I was intrigued by his life, his social circles in New York and Paris.



As I started looking into his art I noticed this really tremendous aesthetic gap between his late New York and his later Paris works. Anything I saw from Paris was usually from 1960 and afterward. There was this whole gap in there that had not ever been presented. It was during a trip to Paris that I saw some of these things.

One of the things that really shocked me, opened my eyes, was the raincoat painting that we now have. When I saw that, I thought, “I’ve never seen anything like this.” It has a definition that his later abstractions do not have, because they’re completely soft – they’re sort of amorphous, ethereal. And this raincoat one still has lines. I felt like I was looking at something that was very transitional. As I encountered more works, I could see there was a group in which you could really see the transition from New York – his letting go of line and the same pallet, and a change of technique in terms of paint application. And, I could see him experimenting.

Suddenly, I felt like I could reason out the two different bodies of work, because these works that I was running across in France were the visual bridge to what came before them and after them. In a sense, then, it was knitting his two bodies of work back into one, because the visual bridge was there now. This particular aspect intrigued me because it had never been looked at before.

Beyond that, I wanted to bring to light works that were

outside the usual suspects presented at gallery or small museum shows, which usually exhibit the same works. By borrowing primarily from private collectors I can bring a whole new group of works to the table that future generations can look at, compare, and contrast. They can disagree with my ideas or theories, if they'd like, but the works as a set – they're there, they're there to be seen at last.

The exhibition catalogue serves as a great foundation for further dialogue. In Sylvain Briet's bibliography and chronology of exhibitions in the back, we've endeavored to include the names of works that were exhibited and the artists with whom Delaney was exhibiting in New York and Paris. And the essays consider him in the light of the New York School, and of course, the Paris School at the other end, because his Paris abstractions are really in the French manner of what they called "warm abstraction." This explains why his abstraction is so different from the New York School, which is much more bravura, machismo-oriented, and architectonic.

The show is traveling to three additional cities. The first venue following ours is Knoxville, Tennessee, where Delaney was born. I'm really excited for it to go there because when Beauford left and went to Paris, his reputation dropped off the map in a sense. His brother who remained in the United States and then went back to spend his last few years in Knoxville, was a much better known artist there. Delaney never came back, so his art has been almost lost to his own city. I am very excited that Knoxville has this opportunity to learn about one of their native sons. Then the exhibition goes to the Greenville County Museum of Art in Greenville, South Carolina, and on to the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

One thing I would like people to leave knowing or seeing is that these early Parisian works are a visual bridge between the great works from the New York years and the later Parisian years, which are also in the exhibition. The other is that what ultimately knits this body of work together is Delaney's concept of universality and our oneness, that we are all connected to the same origin. We see him working out this concept in his late abstractions with interest in cosmogony and use of astronomical phenomena. In his early works, he's painting wonderful urban landscapes peopled by individuals of every color, sexual persuasion, everything. Basically, it is saying that we all issue from the same common source.

Despite discrimination and poverty, he maintained the vision that, if we only chose to, we could all live harmoniously. I think it's rather a good lesson to anyone, to think about how things could be, if we would only choose that higher part of ourselves.

## **Bah Humbug!**

*Tom Byfield*

Do you ever get the vague uncomfortable feeling that something ominous is about to happen? It is an inkling like the irritating texture of uncertainty lying just below the threshold of conscious perception. Usually it has to do with some promise or assignment yet to be revealed. Often this occurs in mid-November when the sun is beginning its annual hibernation and the descending gloom causes testy condo inmates to scream maledictions at nuns on the street. That anxiety is

often followed by the chilling realization that soon Christmas will pounce upon us, the unprepared celebrants of that yearly rite. Panic ensues. We are forced to admit that if "the letter" isn't written NOW it will never pass through the postal digestive system in time. Yes, I'm talking about the dreaded printed Xmas letter, that seasonal bane that infests many of our mailboxes this time of year.

The format of most of these epistles is predictable. The obligatory recital of trips taken followed by a depressing description of the surgical indignities suffered during the year, a kind of Christmas organ recital. Then on to the children and their disgusting triumphs, who incredibly have learned to walk on water. Just once wouldn't it be refreshing of read "We don't know what to get Billy this year – there are so many rules on what you can send to someone in prison." Finally it gets to the exciting visit of Aunt Bursa and Uncle Rictus, on the wife's side, from Flasher, N.D., people you don't know and with any luck will never meet. At any rate the season is almost here when we will be writing and receiving these odious anathemas. Now that I have vented my spleen I feel much better. A vented spleen is an ugly sight indeed and mothers would do well not to expose young children to one.

By this time if you are still with us you are wondering what does all this have to do with Art? Well nothing, but hang on – I am about to make a brilliant transition back to the MIA where we belong. When speaking of upcoming commitments, and remember we were, there is a certain group of docents who know that December breeds another daunting obligation that must be met. I refer of course to those touring the Period Rooms. They are committed – and maybe they should be – to give up to eighteen tours a season. Many of them are in costume, and therein lies the rub. Getting in and out of these outfits can be as much fun as kissing a cactus. Most of these dresses require help what with straps, stays, laces, petticoats and padding to adjust. Some frocks have large hoops as part of their armamentarium. When wearing one of these creations you would be well advised to sit yourself down with great care lest the hoop pop up in front like a half opened convertible top, exposing to the world the Lord only knows what sights. Some of these gowns are heavier than horse blankets and with multiple layers, twice as hot. After back to back tours in one of these ruffled overcoats one discovers what it is like to be cocooned in your own personal sauna. After an hour patches of fungus begin to form on the skin and body odor starts interrupting radio transmissions. Your route can be traced by the water trail left behind. These ladies have their dressing room conveniently located on third near the Period rooms.

You may have noticed one male docent in all his plumage skulking furtively in the back corridors with the slightly embarrassed look of the piano player in a bordello. He too has his private dressing room. It is located near the Docent Lounge. There is even a place for him to sit but he must remember to put the seat down first. His 18<sup>th</sup> century costume, however handsome, has no zippers, snaps, pockets or running water. It is nonetheless infested with buttons, thousands of buttons to negotiate before a tour. However, with practice, his nimble fingers got the hang of it and now it takes no longer

for him to dress than it did Noah and his wife Joan to build the ark. No wonder the stylish Lord of that time needed a valet to strap him into his vestments. That the MIA has failed to provide said valet only testifies to the complete disregard for the health and welfare needs of its minions.

So when you pass these costumed stalwarts in our hallowed halls this Christmas season, don't look at them askance since no one likes their skance examined anyway. Rather, give an encouraging thumbs up and, if inclined, a little curtsy might brighten their day.

## Threads of Wealth and Status

*John A. O'Keeffe*

Dress, seldom considered an aspect of fine art in the Western world, has been a major form of artistic expression in Japan since the Nara period (645-710). Clothing not only shared many of the design principles, styles and motifs found in painting, lacquer, ceramic and other arts, but also conveyed important messages about the person. Located in gallery 224 is an *uchikake*, an outer kosode or kimono created during the Edo period (1615-1868) that reflects an affluent society.

During the Heian period (794-1185) various types of apparel were worn but the principle form of dress for both men and women of all classes was the kosode, the forerunner of the modern kimono. Images recording everyday life show common people wearing the kosode as an outer garment. The kosode was worn as an undergarment by the aristocrats of the Heian period.

During the sixteenth century the kosode was elevated from an undergarment to fashionable outerwear by the samurai rulers. The simplicity of the kosode suited the creed of the samurai that focused on simplicity and frugality. The attire of court nobility was unsuited and impractical for the active life of the samurai. The simple cut of the kosode enabled men and women to actively participate in the activities of living. The samurai in their new role as rulers were aware of their social standing and set about to create their own status symbols of power and wealth.

The simple and relatively unvaried shape of the kosode was enhanced by the elaborateness of surface design. Simplicity and frugality soon gave way to textile designs and patterns which reflected power, wealth and culture. Non-loom techniques such as tie dyeing, embroidery, stenciling, hand painting, block printing and appliqué provided artisans greater freedom of creative expression in designs that met the demands of the ruling samurai.

The kosode is cut from a single length of fabric about fourteen to sixteen inches wide. The length is determined by the sex of the person who will wear the garment. Women's kosodes are generally cut longer in length. The woman wearing this garment would have had the skill to gather up the excess fabric in just the right way to be alluring and fashionable.

The kosode is comprised of seven pieces of cut fabric. Two lengths are draped over the shoulders and joined with straight seams down the center back and sides. Two shorter pieces are sewn together for the sleeves; two panels for the overlap in the front, a long collar and neckband complete the

garment. There are no pockets on a kosode; this provided the impetus for the development of netsuke. This simple and uniform design was an economic use of fabric.

The simple structure of the kosode had a further advantage as when the garment required cleaning. The garment is taken apart and the individual pieces are washed as appropriate for the fabric and textile design. The geometric shape of all the garment parts allows for blocking to be used successfully for drying the pieces. After drying the garment was reassembled.

The steps involved in making a kosode were complex and involved numerous artisans. After the fabric was selected the kosode would be cut, laid out and the design areas would be indicated including what technique would be used to create specific design motifs. The garment would then be taken to various artisans who would ply their skills in bringing the design to life. After all the design elements had been completed the garment was then sewn together and was ready to be worn.

This kosode is identified as an *uchikake* because of the roll of padding at the hem. The roll of padding weighted the garment down providing some protection from the wind and helped control the drape and flow of the kosode. The textile techniques used to create this garment include the woven design of the fabric, stencil resist, embroidery, and gold couching, all selected by the original owner as was the design of the tree peony. The design identifies this garment as one that would be worn only during spring; the season symbolized by the tree peony.

The woven design of the silk fabric is an over-all *wan-fret* pattern of ten thousand wishes with lotus buds, flowers and stems arranged in a repetitive pattern. The stencil resist design of tree peony was created by applying a waxy material stencil to the fabric that left only the areas to receive the reddish-brown dye exposed. After the dye was brushed on and allowed to dry the waxy material was removed. Embroidery with silk thread and gold couching also creates leaves, stems, blossoms and buds of the tree peony. Gold couching is created by wrapping silk thread with gold foil. Both the embroidery and gold couching create surface texture and a feeling of depth that enhance the overall design.

Sources for kosode design ideas included woodblock printed pattern books, a favorite poem or the natural world. Another source was the popular woodblock prints that reflected *Ukiyo-e*, the floating world of pleasure. Famous artists and calligraphers were also sought after to design or actually create the design on the garment. Garments such as this were more than just forms of conspicuous consumption they were also a form of cultural expression for the wealthy.

Think about ways in which these objects relate to the *uchikake*:

*Pieta with Saints John the Baptist and Catherine of Alexandria*, Master of the Saint Lucy Legend  
*Portrait of Moritz & Anna Buchner*, Lucas Cranach the Elder  
*Portrait of a Lady*, Gabriel Metsu  
*Self-portrait*, Francesco de Mura  
*Sampler*, Abigail Lyon (gallery 382)  
*Pockets*, Rachael Baker Pocopson (gallery 382)

## Love, Lust and Life

Marge Buss

Sometimes the gift of your time is the best gift of all. I experienced this truth a few weeks ago when a dear friend of mine accepted and scheduled an art tour I gave her as a baby shower present.

She chose the topic and theme “Women in Art: Love, Lust and Life” and invited ten friends as her guests. As this was my first private tour with a requested topic I wasn’t sure how it would pull together and how I would feel about presenting a tour to close acquaintances, but I dove in and tried to choose pieces that I knew would be special to my guest of honor and her group. Knowing her so well made this easy and fun.



We started with the Paleolithic *Venus Figure*, in honor of my friend’s fertility prowess. (Before she got pregnant I had sent her the *Venus Figure* post card to bring her luck. It worked!) In honor of her faith, we then moved to the medieval sculpture, *Catherine of Alexandria*, to show a woman’s love of

spiritual commitment. From there we visited *Lucretia*, a woman who took the audience’s breath away and stole their hearts with her sad story of plundered virtue. Next we lightened up with *Mlle. Lange as Danaë* to dig into the “lust” theme with voracity! The group loved this one and the contrast between *Lucretia* and *Lange* worked wonderfully. From there we looked at the loving relationship portrayed in Bouguereau’s *Temptation*, a piece they were thrilled to see that inspired their want to talk about *The Bohemian* the MIA sold. I had to think quickly about my response and hope I did the right thing by saying that The Minneapolis Institute of Arts has the finest curators and administrators, who know their business exceptionally well and made a professional, careful decision regarding the de-accession.



Feeling a transition was in order I continued by suggesting we move on and look at another loving relationship with Berthe Morisot’s *Julie with Her Nanny* which proved to be a great contrast to *Temptation* and gave us material to thoroughly enjoy discussing Impressionism. They delighted in discovering the man scurrying away in the background and got the full effect of how blotches and blobs could translate into a nurturing, loving picture. It was then time to go modern so we looked at Picasso’s *Woman in an Armchair* to get the



love/hate relationship that Cubism can so cleverly portray, and finally ended our tour with Jacob Epstein’s *Female Figure*. We came full circle from the 20000 BCE *Venus Figure* of fertility to the 1913 CE modernly sculpted *Female Figure* of fertility to show that in the course of some 22,000 years the essence of woman and life has really not changed.

Turning to my dear friend I concluded our tour by stating, “And now we welcome your new baby boy into the world. We are all so happy you were a fertility figure too.”

I learned that the richness of giving the gift of art to those you care for is enhanced by knowing what clicks with them. Knowing my group personally improved my ability to hone in on their comments and read their questioning expressions in a more intimate way which allowed me to travel the paths of their minds. Every one of them said they were coming back to look at more of our art. I was smiling big. The downfall: People you know talk a lot. The tour lasted two hours. Yikes! I never thought it would, but what could I have taken out?

The next time you need a gift to give and want to make it something special, consider passing on your incredible knowledge and love of art. It’s the best gift of all.

## Sub Rosa

Sally Lehmann

Here is a bit of trivia I happened upon in the *Dictionary of Quotations* which pertains nicely to the Tudor period room. “When we desire to confine our words, we commonly say they are spoken under the rose”

Sir Thomas Browne in *Pseudoxia Epidemica* V.XXII.

In its Latin form “under the rose” – sub rosa – as an expression meaning “in secrecy, came into use in English about the time of the early Tudors. Banquet halls sometimes had a rose carved in the ceiling to signify that whatever was spoken under the influence of wine or within the license and protection of hospitality was to be regarded as confidential.

*Dictionary of Quotations* edited by Bergen Evans MCMLXVIII

## Keeping in Touch



### *From the Docent Chair*

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Carol Wedin and Darlene Carroll for their continued attention and care of the docent lounge conversation area. The banquettes in this well-used room required cleaning this year. Carol and Darlene found a qualified upholstery cleaner and arranged to have the work done. The expense exceeded the amount budgeted in the docent funds for lounge maintenance. Darlene graciously offered to pay the difference.

The on-going expenses for the lounge are the replacements of the special bulb in the light fixture, the rug pad and the plants. Prior to the creation of the Lounge Maintenance fund, Carol and Darlene have assumed the expenses and personally dusted, vacuumed and cared for the plants – surely a labor of love. The Lounge Fund, like the Sunshine Fund, needs contributions from each of us. Thanks to the Art Adventure program for its significant contribution. Please place your contributions in the envelope on the bulletin board.

Look for a new notebook in the docent lounge. It was decided last year that the minutes of the Docent Executive meetings should be made available to all. We represent you and welcome your questions, comments and ideas.

Thanks to each of you for the time and commitment you give to the mission of the MIA.

Kati Johanson

## ***News from Museum Guide Programs Staff***

### **Beauford Delaney Public Programs**

Be sure to take advantage of the great programming scheduled during the Delaney exhibition. Check your November/December Arts magazine, page 6, for lectures, family events, films, art classes, and tours. Join the celebration!

*Sheila and Debbi*

### ***We thought you'd like to know***

Docents: Do not worry about having low tour numbers this year. We are very aware that tour requests and numbers are much lower than last year at this time. In fact, we have served nearly 10,000 fewer visitors than from July through October of last year. The tour coordinators make every effort to distribute whatever requests they do get among all of the docents on a given day.

*Sheila McGuire*

### ***We're Looking for Docents...***

and you can help! If you have friends, family, or acquaintances who might be interested in joining our docent corps, now is the time to recruit them. You can call their attention to our call for docents in the next issue of Arts magazine, under the "Be Involved" section. In the meantime, here's a "cut-out" you can give them:

## ***Holiday Luncheon***

"Celebration and Appreciation of Arts and Friendship" is the theme for our holiday luncheon on Monday, December 13 in the MIA's Villa Rosa room. D'Amicos will serve a delicious buffet at 12:15 with vegetarian selections included. Get out of the cold Minnesota winter and retreat into the warm environment of friends appreciating each other.

Invitations will be sent to all and your check for \$26 received by December 6 will be your reservation. This amount includes \$24.50 for catering and \$1.50 for invitations and other miscellaneous expenses. Please leave checks in Dillon McGrath's mailbox at the MIA or mail to her at 18 Kenwood Parkway, St. Paul MN 55105. Questions? Call Dillon at 651/221-0918. Don't miss the event of the year!

*Dillon McGrath, Social Chair*

## **From the Editors**

Thanks to docents and staff who contributed to both the Fall and Winter issues of the *Muse*. We appreciate your willingness to help make the *Docent Muse* belong to us all. And thanks to Merritt Nequette who patiently and graciously formats and produces this publication.

We look forward to hearing from you. Our phone numbers and e-mail addresses are in the 2004-2005 Docent Directory. Please let us know what you'd like to read about. And please consider writing for the *Muse*. The Spring issue deadline is February 7, 2005

*Hope Thornberg and Sharon Hayenga*

Discover the wonders of art in conversations with people of all ages by becoming a docent at The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. We're looking for people who want to combine their love of learning and effective communication skills with creativity, enthusiasm, and curiosity about art and culture. The Department of Museum Guide Programs is now accepting applications for the volunteer docent program through March 15, 2005. No previous coursework in art or art history is required.

The next class begins in the fall of 2005. We provide a lively, rigorous two-year course of study about the museum's permanent collection and touring techniques. Classes are held on Wednesdays, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., September through May. Mornings consist of interactive classroom lectures, and afternoons are spent working in the galleries. Touring with children begins during the second year. After two years of preparation, you agree to give 40 tours per year for a minimum of three years. Once you have graduated, continuing education classes directed toward specific areas of the collection will be required on some Monday mornings.

For more information or to request an application, call 612-870-3013. Applications will be reviewed as received, and interviews will be scheduled during April and May 2005.