

The Docent Muse



September 2007



This issue of *The Docent Muse* is dedicated to Mneme, one of the three original Muses. Her name is pronounced *Nee-Mee* and she is the Muse of Memory. Therefore, in this issue you will find both remembrances of the summer past and reminders of some upcoming events for the fall.

Walk to Remember

Fran Megarry

Encouraging visitors to return to the MIA is a common goal for docents. To that effort, we try dancing to many tunes. There is the tune of VTS, the pristine music of a lecture type tour and the jazzy rhythm of inquiry. We employ various combinations of these methods to encourage guests of all ages to form lasting relationships with our Institute of Art.

Helping guests draw on what is familiar to them, their thoughts and memories, facilitates guests' attachment to our art. One docent used this technique for Nordic tours this summer using the theme A Walk to Remember. Guests were encouraged to draw on their memories of sharp breezes, light through leaves, and the crisp water spray of a waterfall as they looked at the Nordic landscapes of the exhibit. Perhaps unearthing these sensory memories planted the seed for visitors to return to the MIA.

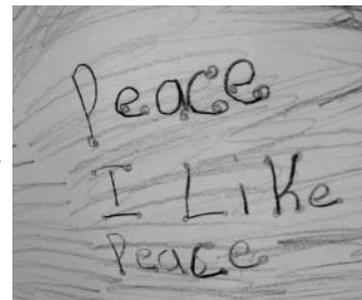
What are the tunes you employ to encourage return visits?

Summer of Peace 2007

Krista Pearson, Art in the Park Associate MIA

The museum partnered with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to co-host the fifth annual *Peace Games in Washburn Fair Oaks Park* across 24th street from the MIA. At least a thousand children from across the city attended this event designed to build cross cultural understanding among the youth of Minneapolis. In addition to the global arts, sports and performances experienced in the park, more than 500 of the young participants enjoyed tours of the Africa, Americas, and Asia galleries.

It was such a pleasure to hear so much positive feedback about how well the tours went. Many thanks to the fine docents who helped out on this day. We intend to host again one more year. So hopefully we see you again in 2008.



Looking Back on Our Summer

A Swedish proverb (*Ord Sprak*) about the sun

Sol i ute
Sol i inne
Sol i hjärta
Sol i sinne

(if you want to be cool, say sool)

Marilyn Smith spent three weeks in Sweden this summer and also led tours of our Nordic Landscapes. She contributed this proverb she found on a stitchery in a Swedish farmhouse.

Sun on the outside
Sun on the inside
Sun in the heart
Sun in the mind

Art-On-A-Stick!

Amanda Thompson Rundahl



The MIA hosted a booth once again this year in the Education Building at the *Great Minnesota Get-Together*. Museum staff sign up to work half-day shifts in the booth throughout the twelve days of the fair. The purpose is to thank museum members who drop by, promote upcoming exhibitions (O’Keeffe), and generally talk up the MIA to passersby.

After several years of giving away “art-on-a-stick” (fans with images from the collection and/or upcoming special exhibitions), many fair visitors take a break from all things edible on a stick and come looking to collect the year’s assortment of MIA fans. For 2007, the fan images were the *Benin Memorial Head*, a detail of *The Comtesse d’Egmont Pignatelli in Spanish Costume*, and *Red Flower* from the O’Keeffe exhibition.

Added fun this year was provided by the super-sized enlargement of *The Gaspard Moeremons*



Family, with cutouts where fair-goers could put their faces and have a photo taken by an MIA staffer.

A good time was had by all!

Mapleviewing

Marianne Yoshida

Our fall luncheon at Kikugawa Riverplace was inspired by the MIA’s colorful Japanese screen, *Maple-Viewing Party*, by Choshun Miyagawa.

This six-fold screen illustrates a traditional Japanese pastime, the observation of the changing seasons.

Here, beautifully-garbed geishas and important samurai guests prepare to enjoy tea (a kettle is brewing), food (in lacquer boxes), and music (a koto is pictured) in an outdoor setting while shielded from public view (curtains show this is a private party). In keeping with the tastes of the 18th century Edo merchant class (like all good *bourgeoisie*, they enjoyed genre scenes), Choshun makes the human activity seem as important as the engagement with nature. Nonetheless, the screen is an example of *ukiyo-e*, floating world pictures, which took their original inspiration from the Zen Buddhism and the concept *mono no aware* referring to the pathos and transience of human life.

While the luncheon on the Mississippi River was hopefully as peaceful and happy an occasion as that depicted on the screen, maple leaves and the Mississippi setting do remind us of this transience.

Joan Herreid Docent Memorial Lecture

Debbi Hegstrom

Don’t miss this opportunity to hear Dr. Shearer West, Head of School of Historical Studies at the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom.

Dr. West has written *Portraiture* (Oxford University Press, 2004) and *Fin de Siècle: Art and Society in an Age of Uncertainty* (The Overlook Press, 1994). Looking at works in our collection, she will address the topic of “reading” a portrait by considering such issues as gesture, expression, costume, setting, patronage, age, and gender.



Monday, September 17 "Looking at Portraiture"

9:30 a.m.-12 noon Pillsbury Auditorium

Tuesday, September 18 "Gallery Talk on Portraiture"

1:30-3:00 p.m. in the galleries

Refreshments will be served on September 17; RSVP

by September 13 to Kristine Harley:

kharley@artsmia.org or 612-870-3013.

Hear Ye, Hear Ye, or else...

Ye kindly olde Gep Durenberger

The 24th Annual MIA Antiques Show and Sale is hereby required attendance for all docents worth their salt.

Entry is free on Saturday October 27.

However, you might enjoy touring the show and chatting with dealers led by the Antiquarian himself-Gep Durenberger (new docent) and MADA Member Jeff DuCharme. There is a \$20 fee for this tour at 10:00 a.m.

Later that day you will enjoy a 1:00 p.m. lecture by Ann Gore, the doyenne of British Decorative Arts. She is speaking again on Sunday and discussing "Extraordinary English Lady Gardeners."

Please check out the Web site: www.miaantiquesshow.org for more details about this four day event.

Both lectures should be priorities for any self-respecting docent, all others may be excused, but not forgiven.

Recollections from the Docent Chair

Patty McCullough

My docent class of 1998, originally 29, has become much smaller. On the 2007/2008 tour sheet, I counted only 14 of us still giving tours on a regular basis. This saddened me, as those two years together represented a real commitment in each of our lives. However, I realize in almost a decade, changes do occur. Two classmates have died, several have moved away, and other priorities, time constraints and family situations may account for the rest.

Those years since graduation have been good ones for me, and I have looked forward to each fall when regular touring resumes. However, unlike most of my classmates, I was active at the museum for almost twenty years before I became a docent!

My husband, Sam, and I joined the museum, according to our membership card, in 1971. I remember the occasional trip to the museum with our three

young children, and sometimes a Saturday matinee in the auditorium such as *Oliver*, and that was about it.

However, in 1976, the first council was established – the Decorative Arts Council. The group who formed it were primarily collectors and students of Americana. We were asked to join as charter members, and it started us down the long road of museum volunteerism. In 1984 this council had the first Antiques Show and Sale, and both Sam and I became very involved, working on most of the 24 shows since that time. We went on to join the Paintings Council in the 1980's and took a number of trips with both councils over the years. I joined the Friends more than twenty years ago and worked on several of its Art in Bloom events and on the Friends' Fashion Show.

However, I never felt I could be a docent. I was quiet and a little shy, and I didn't see myself leading groups through the museum. It was a chance remark by a staff person who indicated to me that I knew a lot about art through my association with the councils and their programs and trips. This was definitely not the case, and when several months later the Friends' newsletter contained a short paragraph about the next docent class starting in the fall, I decided to take the plunge! I was so sure I wouldn't be chosen that I told no one, and when I was notified to the contrary, I was surprised and thrilled.

Since that time I have given many tours, always with a few butterflies. I am still not an art expert, but I'm familiar with many objects; and I do know my way around the museum! Sam has also become very involved; and since he has retired, I am grateful he has an outlet for all his energy. Our two daughters, Stephanie and Alex, have taken Picture Person training for their children's schools, and they always look forward to the Art in Bloom party. The museum has become a daily topic in our dinner conversations and our walks around Lake of the Isles with Loulou, our standard poodle. Loulou also appreciates art. She has never chewed any antique furniture!

I am honored to be the docent chair for 2007/2008, something I could never have imagined when I applied for docent training almost ten years ago. I am so glad I did!

A New Tour E-evaluation

Sheila McGuire

In order to find out how we're doing I will be asking teachers chosen randomly to fill out an electronic evaluation much like the one we ask you to distribute.

While we receive a great deal of feedback on our Art Adventure tours we receive very little feedback on our docent-led school tours. I am hopeful that this electronic format will encourage teachers to take a couple of minutes to share their thoughts about their museum visit. I will contact the selected teachers by e-mail the Friday before their tours and follow up on the Friday after their tours.

The body of the form reads:

Rate your students' overall tour experience –
1=low 2 3 4 5=high

How well did the lead docent's pre-tour call help tailor the tour to your group's needs?

How effectively did the docent(s) involve your students in looking at and discussing the art?

Did the docent(s) use questions and language appropriate to the students' age and abilities?

Yes ___ No ___ Please comment.

What aspects of their visit did your students most enjoy?

Did your museum experience meet your expectations? Yes___ No___

Please let us know what we could do next time to make your experience even better.

Thank you. We value your feedback.

Printed copies of this evaluation form will be available in the same place as the old form. We continue to encourage all lead docents to distribute evaluations with postage-paid return envelopes to teachers on every school tour.

Tour Night at the MIA

Debbi Hegstrom

Looking for *Highlights* tour themes? Interested in doing tours of the Asian collections? Wanting some new ideas? If so, plan to attend "Tour Night" on Thursday, September 27, from 6-9 p.m.!

Docents and CIF guides will present sample tours of *A Taste of Asia*, *Heaven on Earth: Arts of Islam*, and *Highlights of World Art: 1850-present*. All three tours will be offered from 6-7 p.m. and repeated from 7:45-8:45 p.m.

During the break, from 7-7:45, we will have refreshments and CIF guide Nahid Khan will talk about Ramadan (which will be occurring during this time).

We encourage everyone who is planning/required to check out on the Asian collection to attend (attention, new docents)! Don't worry if you can't; as indicated in the continuing education schedule, we will be providing additional training later this year.

In order for us to plan accordingly, please let us know which tours you would like to follow. You can designate one or two topics. If you only plan to attend during one of the time slots, please let us know which one. RSVP to kharley@artsmia.org or 612-870-3013 by September 24.

Art Cart Toga Party

Amanda Rundahl Thompson

Looking for a new adventure? Dust off your toga and laurel wreath and consider training on one or more of the Art Carts this winter!

Docents and CIF guides will be offered training on a new Ancient Greece and Rome Art Cart and also on the existing Japan, Americas, and South and Southeast Asia Art Carts. Training will take place over a series of Thursday evenings and Saturdays, with the Greece/Rome cart training in January and training on the other three in February.

Hear all about it (including the specific training dates and times) and get your first chance to sign up at the Docent Annual Meeting on October 22.

Art Adventure Guide of Class of 2007

Ann Isaacson

The Art Adventure Guide Class of 2007 began on September 5 with 37 talented new guides. This internationally-savvy group comes with educational backgrounds from the University of Tübingen in Germany, *Beaux-arts et Arts Décoratifs Français* in Paris, *Université Libre de Bruxelles*, the London School of Economics, Performing Arts High School in New York, as well as Amherst, Harvard, Yale, and Notre Dame.

They have vocations in art, law, education, and science, including a Yiddish historian, a published poet and a Calypso singer. Of the 37 guides, 20 have prior volunteer experience at the MIA and have expressed their deep desire to be more involved with the museum.

Summer Smackdown

Press Release: 5 Tiny Nordic Countries Take On Picasso and America!!

This summer the Twin Cities was the site of a lengthy battle taking place in two great museums.

Could paintings of Nordic landscapes have a chance against a show that consisted not only of Picasso but all the great 20th century American painters and sculptors?

Here are the final statistics:

Total attendance:	Nordic	30,000
	Picasso	88,000
Tour numbers:	Nordic	5,500
	Picasso	3,000
% people taking tours	Nordic	18%
	Picasso	3%

In conclusion, Art is not a battle, fought over numbers. There really is no loser. Two great museums brought so many people together to look at and to think about art. Everyone wins in the end.

Thanks to Kathleen Barber and Paula Warn of the MIA and Susan Rotilie of the Walker Art Center for their contributions to this article.

Mark Your Calendar for This Year's Annual Meeting

This year's Docent Annual Meeting will take place on October 22 from 9:30 to noon. Please plan to attend.

We look forward to hearing from you about what you would like an MIA Docent Web site to do for you. We'll share our ideas as well. We will also discuss preliminary plans for the next Twin Cities Docent/Guide Symposium, which we will host in October 2008.

By the time we have our meeting the museum will have rolled out a new system to help resolve some of the challenges we all face with lobby congestion. This will be our opportunity to discuss how the new system is working for you.

If we can't arrange an update on the MIA's search for a new director any earlier, we will make every effort to include this on the annual meeting agenda as well. We will also introduce a winter opportunity to train on a brand new Greece and Rome Art Cart and a selection of other Art Carts.

We are counting on you to help us develop the rest of the agenda, so please let us know what you would like to talk about. Please send your suggestions to us by the end of September.

We look forward to hearing from you. Have a great year!



Lost and Found:

If you lost a pair of sunglasses this summer they can be found in Gallery 368