

## WELCOME

*Lin Stein, Chair, DEC*

As incoming chair of the Docent Executive Committee, I would like my first official action to be extending a sincere welcome to the newly-graduated Docent Class of 2015. I know I speak for all of us Seniors when I say we stand ready to offer our great and deep wisdom and insight to you as you begin your new touring life. Did I mention we're also very modest? Seriously, though, I think you'll find our docent family to be very supportive, and eager for your success in your new endeavor. One of the many things I've always appreciated about the Docent Program is the willingness of other docents to share ideas and help each other in so many ways.

Seeing all of these fresh faces brings back memories for the rest of us, doesn't it? It seems like only yesterday when I lost over half of my group of second graders when their chaperone decided to stop off at the restroom on our way to our last piece without alerting me to the detour. I can still feel the sense of utter astonishment when I turned around to find myself alone with the two little girls I had been talking to as we walked to our last piece! And the utter embarrassment of having to alert the guards to the fact that almost a whole tour group was lost in the museum. And one of the remaining little girls was the daughter of the chaperone, and when she discovered her mother was lost, she started wailing loudly. New docents, always remember: don't walk too fast, no matter how pressed you think you are for time, and keep looking behind you. *Always look behind you. Assume nothing!*

On another topic, a great way to stay informed and up-to-date on what's happening around Mia is to read the minutes of the DEC. Minutes from each of our monthly meetings are posted in a notebook in the Docent Lounge as well as on the IPE Volunteer Website. We have a full agenda each month, and as part of the discussion, Debbi shares news of what's happening in the museum.

As summer winds down and we get back into the swing of things at Mia, I wish all of you another great, rewarding year of touring. See you at the museum!

## DOCENT FALL LUNCHEON

*Michele Yates and Kathy Rothenberger*

Honoring the Class of 1992

Monday, September 18, 2017, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Target Reception Hall

Join us for a buffet lunch and a presentation of the current *Horse Power* exhibit given by Thomas Rassieur, John E. Andrus III Curator of Prints and Drawings.

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## SAVE THE DATE

Monday, September 18, 11:30-1:30

**Docent Fall Luncheon**

Target Reception Hall

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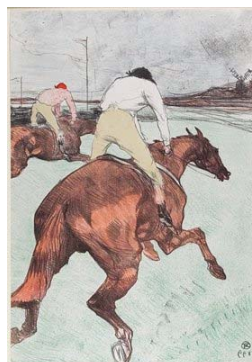
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Musings from IPE

2017-2018 Docent Executive Committee



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec; Printer: Henri Stern, Paris; Publisher: Pierrefort, Paris  
*Le Jockey*, 1899  
Color lithograph on chine volant paper  
Purchase through Art Quest 2003 and The William Hood Dunwoody Fund  
2003.214  
G315

RSVP to:  
Gail Gresser-Pitsch  
2633 Huntington Avenue S.  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

Checks for \$25 payable to Docents of Mia must be received by September 10, 2017.

## DOCENT STUDY GROUPS

*Nancy Kelly*

All docents are welcome to join one of the new and/or ongoing study groups for docents. The **Accessibility Study Group** (formerly the Touch Tour Study Group) has been working for a few years to find ways to improve Mia tours for guests who are blind or have low vision. The group will include other areas of accessibility as well, such as tours for persons with cognitive and developmental issues. [Fran Megarry](#) is the chair of this study group. See Fran's article in this issue of the *Muse*.

The **Legacy Study Group** originally began as the Birthday Year Study Group. The group has been meeting for a few years and docents are learning about the people who shaped Mia from its beginnings as well as people's ongoing and future commitments. This group researches and shares information about those who have donated their art collections or who have created funds through Mia for purchasing art. The group celebrates the legacy of Mia. [Dick Ploetz](#) is the chair of this group.

The **Math and Art Study Group** will be one of the new study groups. The group will look at geometry, scale, perspective and other areas of math in art. [David Fortney](#) will chair this study group. See David's article in this issue of the *Muse*.

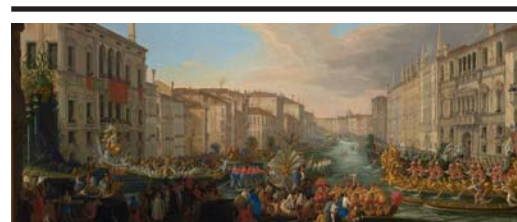
**Brainstorming Tour Topics** will be another new study group for docents. The group will work on new ideas for themes and tours that will be appealing to our audiences for the public tours. [Rose Stanley-Gilbert](#) will chair this study group.

If you are interested in joining a study group, please feel free to contact the chair by email to ask questions and to become a member of the group. The time commitment with each study group will vary but usually meets monthly.

## HORSE POWER: SMALL EXHIBIT WITH BIG VARIETY

*Meg Ubel*

A nightmarish etching by Francisco de Goya, a large engraving of fanciful sea creatures, photographs of animal locomotion and a Frederic Remington bronze: what do all of these works have in common? They're part of the *Horse Power* exhibit currently on view in G315 and G316 until March 11, 2018. This exhibit of over 70 objects, while focusing on works on paper, represents a wide variety of media, time periods, artists and subject matter. The commonality is the horse, a



### **Eyewitness Views: Making History in 18th-Century Europe**

Special Exhibit  
September 10 – December 31  
Target Galleries

#### **Stats:**

Curators:  
Peter Björn Kerber, Curator at Dulwich  
Picture Gallery, London, formerly  
Assistant Paintings Curator at the  
J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles,  
Patrick Noon, Elizabeth MacMillan Chair  
of Paintings, Mia

Number of estimated visitors to this  
exhibit: 50,000

Number of docents trained and assigned  
to give tours: 44

Tours begin: Sunday, September 17  
Tours end: Saturday, December 23

beast that has figured large in human culture, history and mythology and has captured the imagination of artists for the last 500 years. In the relatively small space of these two galleries, you'll see horses fighting, frolicking, working, racing and doing battle, not to mention horses transformed into mythical creatures that bridge fantasy and reality. Tom Rassiour, head of the Prints and Drawings Department, will give us a complete overview of the exhibit at the Docent Fall Luncheon on September 18.

In the meantime, consider these three objects as a sampling:

*The Wreck of the Ol' 97*, 1944, Thomas Hart Benton

This lithograph is based on a well-known ballad of the same name describing a rail disaster that occurred in 1903. A speeding mail train jumped the track in Virginia and fell 75 feet into a ravine below, killing eleven people including the engineer. Benton, an American Regionalist artist and music enthusiast, changed the location in this work to reflect the Midwest landscape of his native Missouri. This print is not large but packs a punch. The drama and action of the moment are captured in the belching smoke and swirling clouds, the man forcibly reining in the horse as a woman tumbles off the back of the wagon. YouTube recordings of the song by Johnny Cash and others are readily available and have been a hit with kids while viewing the object.

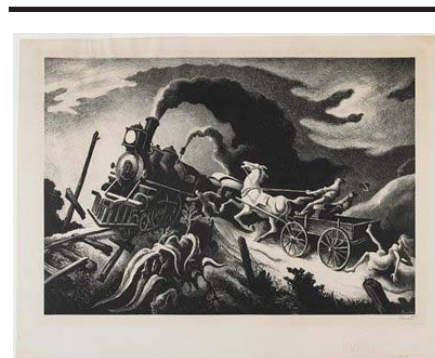
*Anthropology: We're Not Your Indians Anymore*, 1995,  
Wanbli Koyake (Francis Yellow)

Koyake is a Lakota Minneapolis-based artist noted for creating works on found paper such as old bank notes and postcards. He created this piece in the pictographic style of a Plains painted animal hide, but pointedly used pen, ink and tempera directly on a computer printout listing the Euro-American cultural terms for Native American peoples, supplied to him by the Peabody Museum at Harvard. *Anthropology* vividly depicts Native people wearing indigenous dress astride horses running down Euro-American academics who are waving their textbooks and yelling outmoded tribal names. The result is a subtly humorous political commentary as Native Americans take control of their own cultural story. This work can be effectively contrasted with a number of other Native American-related works in the exhibit by artists such as Charles O. Buffalo, Fritz Scholder and George Catlin to stimulate conversation on portrayals in Native art.

*Skijoring*, 1937 (printed 1992), Lill Tschudi

This linocut print by a Swiss female artist depicts in crisp curving black and white lines a horse and rider pulling a skier in the sport of skijoring. The scene pulses with motion, while the composition is compressed into the unusual shape of a circle (try asking your group to consider why the artist chose a circular shape, as opposed to the squares/rectangles in the rest of the gallery). Skijoring is a winter sport in which a daring person on skis is towed by a horse, dog or motor vehicle at high speeds while maneuvering through a course with various gates, hoops and jumps. The subject is likely to resonate with Minnesota viewers and showing photographs of modern equestrian skijoring will add to the excitement, especially for kids.

Whether you are looking to spice up a Safari tour or explore a deeper



Thomas Hart Benton; Publisher: Associated  
American Artists, New York  
*Wreck of the Ol' 97*, 1944  
Lithograph  
Gift of Richard L. Hillstrom in Memory of his  
Parents, Martin and Alma Hillstrom  
P.85.62  
G316



Wanbli Koyake  
*Anthropology: We're Not Your Indians Anymore*,  
1995  
Mixed media (Pen, ink, tempera) on Peabody  
Museum Culture Term Authority List (c)  
The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund  
97.114A-C  
G316



Lill Tschudi  
*Skijoring*, 1937 (printed 1992)  
Linocut on Japan paper  
Gift of Funds from The Print & Drawing Council  
P.95.16  
G316

theme, *Horse Power* presents a good opportunity to include a print or drawing on a tour. The galleries are centrally located near the period rooms, and the objects, while mostly relatively small in size, are arranged for easy viewing. I encourage you to take a look, and attend the Docent Luncheon to hear Tom Rassieur's talk.

## EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MATH AND ART

David Fortney

On May 25 and 26, nearly 300 seventh-grade students from Richfield Middle School visited Mia to explore the relationship between math and art. The ten docents involved with these tours were both challenged and rewarded by the level of preparation on the part of the teachers and the level of engagement of the students.

Many, if not most, of the docent corps have never been assigned this tour topic. To help us prepare, a number of Richfield's math teachers did a walk-through with four of the docents a week in advance of the scheduled visit. Hearing them discuss why they liked particular objects helped to clarify what they wanted to achieve on the visit.

The teachers suggested we use works that allowed the students to identify perspective, proportion, scale and vanishing points. They had a few pieces they hoped all tour groups could at least see as they had studied the works in class. These included *They Say Minnesota Nice* by Wanbli Koyake, which uses the removal of the Lakota from Minnesota as its point of reference, as well as Chuck Close's *Frank*, a perennial student favorite and a great object for a discussion of "scaling up."

As luck would have it, there happened to be a group of three works all having a canyon theme hanging together in gallery 301, which was ideal to do a compare and contrast on perspective and scale.

The students had spent considerable time in class learning about proportional reasoning. The students were familiar with questions like: What do you see? What does it remind you of? How do you feel about it? What questions come to mind? Where is proportional reasoning in the art piece? With the exception of the last question, this may have a feel similar to VTS, however these seventh graders could go much deeper.

Let me share a brief example. The students were looking at *Off the Coast (Lake Superior)* by Alexis Jean Fournier. I was able to ask the group "where is the vanishing point?" The students were able to respond knowledgeably without me first explaining "vanishing point." They came to Mia with that level of knowledge. They could then go on to identify what the artist had done in the piece (such as using scale) to create a sense of depth and perspective.

While we have all used *Doryphoros* on many occasions, including a discussion of proportion, on this tour we explored actual math relationships and talked about the hypotenuse of a right triangle.



Wanbli Koyake  
*They Say Minnesota Nice*  
(*Minnesota Nice Oyakepelo*), 1995  
Acrylic on paper  
The William Hood Dunwoody Fund  
96.5  
G301



Alexis Jean Fournier  
*Off the Coast (Lake Superior)*, 1886  
Oil on canvas  
Gift of Sheila and John Morgan  
2012.45  
G302

After the visit, the teachers gathered comments from the students on what they had seen and learned. Rarely do we get to hear this type of specific feedback, so we want to share it with a wider Mia audience. These are direct quotes from students:

“After the trip to Mia, I now see that math can be anywhere. It doesn’t always have to be on a piece of paper. Math can be used and be seen everywhere.”

“I noticed balance, proportional reasoning, vanishing points and the perspective. I enjoyed the tour where our docent showed us the symmetry in ancient robes and structures.”

“I used to think people would just paint to paint something because it was fun to do and cool to look at.”

“Now I look at art in a different and much more mature way.”

The level of student engagement coupled with the degree of teacher preparation made for one of the best docent experiences. If you get the opportunity to tour this topic, I think you will find that it is worth your efforts.

By the way, Richfield Middle School has already booked a return visit with the same theme for May 2018!

## DISCOVERING ART... THROUGH TOUCH!

*Fran Megarry*

Have you ever noticed your colleagues and a few guests wearing gloves as they head up to the galleries? We hope this article encourages docents to consider being trained to help guests with low and no vision experience art through touch. As Nancy Kelly has said many times after giving a touch tour, “I always learn so much from every touch tour I give.” So true, and we hope others will consider becoming involved in these very rewarding and important tours.

Touch tours are offered for children and adults who have no or low vision. Mia curators have approved 42 objects that may be touched on these tours. A docent usually has at most three guests and plans a route just like a regular tour. Each docent will also develop a theme to enhance the three or four objects chosen for guests to experience.

There are four elements that may be utilized on touch tours:

Help guests touch approved objects (see the complete approved list on the IPE site).

Use elaborate verbal descriptions for objects we are unable to touch.

Help guests experience Tactile Boards – boards with a raised surface that replicate elements of a painting.

Introduce Essence Boards – small boards with just the essence of a painting or object that cannot be touched. On one side, guests may touch the essence of the object, and on the other side, a color print of the whole object is affixed allowing guests with low vision to look closely at the work of art.



### **Spread the Sunshine**

*Suzanne Zander*

The Sunshine Fund is used to purchase cards and flowers to be sent to docent colleagues experiencing surgery, severe ill-health, or the loss of a loved one.

In the cabinet where we put our bags, etc. will be a container marked *Sunshine Fund*. Please give a suggested \$5 donation (Of course, more would be welcome and checks can be made payable to Docents of Mia.)

If you know of a docent who is in need of sunshine, please contact me – [Suzanne Zander](#).

Thanks in advance for keeping the sun shining brightly!

Dale Chihuly

*Sunburst*, 1999

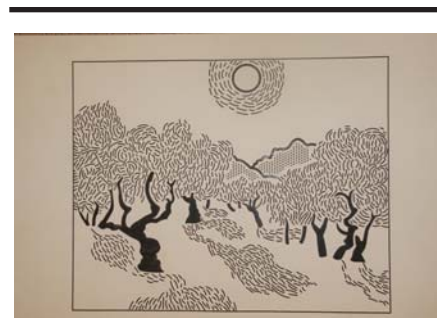
Blown glass, neon, metal armature

Gift of Funds from

Donna and Cargill Macmillan Jr.

99.132

G100



Tactile Board

This fall we plan to host another Essence Board creation event. Begin thinking about an art object you believe would make a good Essence Board. By the way, these boards may be used on regular tours. The creation session will be a come-as-you-can, all-day event in one of Mia's studio rooms. Materials will be provided but participants may also bring supplies. Check the docent cupboards for the current box of Essence Boards and feel free to use them on tours.

Our team hopes more docents will consider doing touch tours. We are also hoping docents may be interested in our Accessibility Study Group to consider best practices for touring guests for whom accessibility accommodations are needed for a better museum experience. If interested in participating in any area mentioned above, please contact me - [Fran Megarry](#).

## GUSTON'S *BRONZE*: A MEDITATION

*Brenda Haines*

Charlie Botzenmayer and I both included Philip Guston's *Bronze* in our final docent training check-out tours last spring. He chose it because to him, it's simply beautiful. One of his favorite paintings at Mia. I chose it because I find it powerful, but unpleasant. With its centered cluster of red, gray, and brownish hatch marks over a background of scrubbed, dirty-looking flesh tones, it reminds me of a jagged, bloody wound. Were we looking at the same painting? How could we have such different reactions, and was it possible that one painting could legitimately support both responses?

Artists of the New York School turned to abstraction as a means of stripping art of its accumulated historical baggage. They sought to convey emotion and meaning while removing subject matter and obvious external references from their works. One form this took was 'Action Painting,' which focused on the physical movements of the artist's body in space during the act of painting. The resulting canvas became a record of the movements the artist made while thoroughly engaged in the process of creation.

This interest in process came from exposure to the ideas and practices of Zen Buddhism, which promotes meditation as a means of achieving enlightenment and freedom from suffering. It teaches that the only reality is the present, that the past and future are illusions. Only by fully engaging in the sensory experiences of the present moment can one avoid suffering. The act of painting itself, if done with focused attention, becomes meditative.

Compare Guston's *Bronze*, to *Yamantaka Mandala* created by Tibetan monks using colorful sand. Typically, a finished mandala is destroyed as a reminder of the impermanence of life, but Mia's has been preserved as a record of its creation. The viewer is invited to experience it with the same focused attention with which it was created. "Look at any inspired painting," Guston once said, "it's like a gong sounding; it puts you in a state of reverberation."

Does that mean that Charlie's original reaction to *Bronze* was right and mine was wrong? No, there is room for both reactions. I was pick-



Essence Board



Philip Guston  
*Bronze*, 1955  
Oil on canvas  
The Julia B. Bigelow Fund  
58.34  
G375



Monks of the Gyuto Tantric University  
*Yamantaka Mandala*, 1991  
Colored silicate and adhesive on wood  
Gift of Funds from the Gyuto Tantric University;  
3M; Construction Materials, Inc.; and  
The Asian Art Council  
92.44  
G212

ing up on something else going on in the picture. The color scheme that I found unpleasant is a recurring theme with Guston. Even later in his career when he made a return to representational art in the volatile '60s (painting cartoonish images of Ku Klux Klan members), he often used the same choices of red, grays, browns, and flesh tones. Could there be some emotional significance to this choice?

Philip Guston was born Phillip Goldstein in Montreal, where his Ukrainian Jewish parents had moved to escape religious persecution. While still a child, Guston moved with his family to Los Angeles where they were exposed to persecution by the Ku Klux Klan. Not long after, Guston's father killed himself in their shed, and Guston found the body.

Given his father's suicide, his Jewish heritage, the Holocaust, and harassment by the KKK, could there be some significance to Guston's repeated choice of what I can only term visceral colors? Perhaps Guston returned repeatedly to what I saw as "wound" colors because they were emotionally charged for him and impacted his art.

Subjectivity plays a part in one's reaction to all art. Perhaps even more so with abstract works which eschew explicit subject matter than in more representational pieces. When Charlie looked at *Bronze*, he saw lyrical beauty while I found the same strong brush strokes and choice of colors disturbing. While we both responded to the powerful expressiveness and sensuous quality of the piece, we heard its message with different ears. Now that I know more of its story, I have a deeper appreciation for the complexity of the work. Buddhism tells us that pain and joy are all part of the same experience – just as beautiful music will have dissonance as well as harmony. While I still see conflict and tension when I look at *Bronze*, it no longer distracts me from seeing the beauty as well. There is always something more to see. We should never stop looking.

## MUSINGS FROM IPE

*Debbi Hegstrom*

Welcome back to another year of touring! The coming of fall always brings me a sense of heightened anticipation and the opportunity for growth – I guess I'm just a perpetual student.

We have a new contingent of docents who are starting their first full year of touring. Please introduce yourself and extend words of welcome to them. New docents bring an enormous amount of enthusiasm and good will to the group. Perhaps ask if you can follow a tour with one of them!

We look forward to exciting special exhibitions and several rotations in the galleries. By now you have looked over the Continuing Education calendar; plan to join us for as many sessions as possible. We will all work together to ensure that our visitors find meaningful connections in our galleries and have the best experience possible.

You are the face of the museum and we are grateful for the great work that you do!

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### 2017-2018 Docent Executive Committee

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