
DOCENT TOURS FOR DOCENTS

Lin Stein

Hello to all of my frozen-solid docent friends! Isn't it great on these winter days to come into the warmth of Mia and our family of docent buddies?

Several docents have expressed interest in docents doing tours for other docents. This happens already on an informal basis, and I'm wondering if there is enough interest to make it a bit more organized and on-going. I think most of us agree that doing and going on tours with our docent colleagues is a great way to share information and ideas, and might be especially worthwhile for our newly-graduated docent friends. If any of you are willing to present one of your favorite or especially well-received tours, please let me know. Also, please let me know if you would be interested in working on organizing these tours on a more regular basis.

SPOTLIGHT ON JILL AHLBERG YOHE

Lisa Berg

Recently, I had the good fortune to sit down with Jill Ahlberg Yohe, Mia's Assistant Curator of Native American Art, to talk about some of the recent gallery changeovers. Since her arrival in 2014, she has acquired not only important and beautiful historic objects such as a stunning collection of Navajo textiles, but also beautiful and thought-provoking works by Native artists working today. What, I asked her, would she like docents to know that would expand our understanding of Native American art and improve our tours?

To begin with, Jill expressed a deep admiration for the Native peoples who are represented in the galleries. This extends even to the land on which Mia is built. "First," she said, "at the beginning of any tour through these galleries, we should acknowledge and thank the Dakhóta people. This was their land long before any of this art was created." She suggested using the *Dakhóta Feast Bowl* as a good object to illustrate this.

Building on that foundational premise, Jill talked about her goals and the process she employed in changing over the galleries and including so much contemporary art in conversation with historical pieces.

"Contemporary artists are working with the same traditional artistic, scientific, and cultural knowledge, often with the same techniques (with new twists) as the historical artists," she explained. "Their art is informed by contemporary concerns and information as well as the historical background of their people. Native art has always been contemporary." There is change, she says, but it is in the context of a continuum that connects the contemporary with the historical.

SAVE THE DATE

Thursday, April 12, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Docent Forum

Friends Community Room

Thursday, April 19

The Wolves

Spring Docent Event

Jungle Theater, Minneapolis

Thursday, April 26 - Sunday, April 29

Art in Bloom

Thursday, May 3, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.

repeated 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Final IPE required session

Pillsbury Auditorium

Monday, May 21, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Spring Docent Luncheon

Target Reception Hall

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2017-2018 Docent Executive Committee

Jill is pleased with the reception the re-installations have received and she expressed delight at the close attention people are paying to the objects themselves. One example of this close attention has even resulted in a re-installation. Recently, one of our museum guards noticed that the Lakhóta headdress made of eagle feathers seemed to be drooping and getting closer to the floor of its case. The Lakhóta tradition maintains that this type of object and its eagle feathers should never touch the ground. Jill took immediate action so this would not happen. The mount on which the headdress rested was re-designed and the headdress was re-installed with a Lakhóta religious professional in attendance, smudging and performing traditional rites, alongside Mia's expert Registration staff and MCAA Textile Conservator Beth MacLaughlin.

What are Jill's favorite objects? It is no surprise that she loves the Navajo textiles in the collection since her PhD work was focused on them. But also, she said, she leans toward contemporary works that not only inspire, but also demonstrate the incredible resilience that runs through Native communities.

Another favorite object is the Robert Rauschenberg piece, *Opal Gospel*, a "book" of Native American stories, songs, poems and images printed on transparent acrylic pages in a Lucite base now on display in Gallery 261. This piece allows the viewer to arrange the individual pages to create new stories using the same elements that comprised the traditional ones. Not only is this a beautiful piece but it eloquently raises an issue that has been on Jill's mind – that of "historical erasure and appropriation."

Rauschenberg claimed a Cherokee grandmother but this could not be verified by tribal records. "To claim Cherokee ancestry is not just to empathize with the Cherokee people's history, but to literally claim a connection to it," Jill wrote in a Mia Story (October 4, 2017). In addition to sometimes profiting from possibly non-existent cultural connections, these false claims ultimately minimize the importance of the Native Nation's history and experience. This is a discussion that Jill welcomes and encourages docents to have with visitors to the Native American galleries.

However, these concerns were not the most challenging aspect of the gallery changeover. What was? "Logistics," she replied. This is a big museum with many curators who all want their spaces to be as wonderful as possible. "There is only so much our Registration department can do with such great demands on their time."

Finally, I asked Jill what she would do if she could use the gallery space any way she wanted. Her eyes lit up. "I would get rid of the cases and use the entire height of the walls." She imagined a space where she could install works that would tumble from the ceiling and live in the air. "And color. I'd change the wall colors to be more vibrant and alive." But mostly, she said, she would like to create spaces where the art objects could live and breathe in the way they were meant to when they were created.



Dakhóta Bowl, c. 1750-1850
Maple burl, brass tacks
The Putnam Dana McMillan Fund and
The Driscoll Art Accessions Endowment Fund
2002.56
G259



Robert Rauschenberg
Opal Gospel, 1971
Publisher: Racolin Press, Briarcliff Manor,
New York; Producer: Styria Studio, New York
Color Screenprints On Ten Acrylic Panels
In Lucite Base, Stainless Steel Cover
The Martha T. Wallace Fund
P.76.2
G261

BOUNDLESS PEAKS INSPIRES MEMORIES

Joanne Platt

The four women in wheelchairs peer at Minol Araki's *Lotus Pond*, captivated by the panoramic vista surrounding them on three walls of the gallery. My question, "What colors do you see?" results in responses of pink, gray, and white. "What do you see that is pink?" "Flowers!" I mention that these are lotus flowers, one of the most revered flowers in Japan. I proceed to ask about each woman's favorite flower, did she have a flower garden, and if so, what kind of flowers did she grow?

Recently, I used the sweeping landscapes by Minol Araki in the exhibition *Boundless Peaks* for a *Discover Your Story* tour for visitors with memory loss. The Rakhma Peace Home visits Mia frequently, and I strive to show them artworks that they have not seen on previous visits. From a practical standpoint, *Boundless Peaks* offers large-scale paintings, which can easily accommodate five to six wheelchairs and the stools for the volunteers who push the visitors, allowing everyone unobstructed views of the art. *DYS* tours are different from other tours – they are not content-driven as much as they are responsive experiences. Docents use art as a springboard to encourage visitors with memory loss to access their memories, and ideally, to share those memories with the other participants.

Araki's landscapes invite quiet contemplation, which works well for *DYS* tours. It can often take the visitors a little time to process what they are seeing and then to put it into words. Sometimes visitors may drift off and lose focus or attention, but we can never truly know what they might be getting out of the experience. On this particular day, however, the four women were remarkably attentive, even curious about the scenes before them.

My opening question of "Describe what you see" as we look at *Bird on a Persimmon Branch* elicits responses about a tomato. Araki's deft brushstrokes in washes of black and gray create an engaging depiction of a mynah bird, but it is the pop of color, the orange-red of the persimmon hanging from the tree branch, which captures the eye. I mention that although it looks very much like a tomato, it is actually a persimmon, a fruit favored by the artist. I ask the women what their favorite fruit is (most liked apples), and how they like best to eat it (in pies). I then ask if anyone has ever eaten a persimmon. No one has, so I pull out of my bag a whole persimmon and a container with slices of the fruit for the women to hold and smell. Props are an integral part of the *DYS* tours, since the senses of smell and touch may also stimulate memories. (In the spirit of full disclosure, the sliced persimmons were a treat we shared at the conclusion of the tour downstairs in the Target Wing atrium.)

The horizontal 12-panel *Snow Monkeys at Play in Autumn and Winter* elicits the liveliest response from the women. This engaging depiction of snow monkeys bathing in hot springs, climbing trees, playing in the snow, and generally demonstrating human behavior evokes memories of past times with family members, especially their children. One

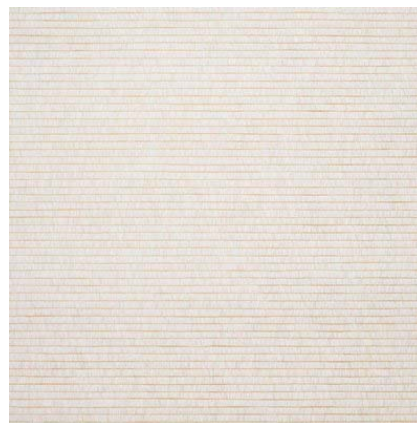
DOCENTS VISIT LOCAL ARTIST STUDIO

Jeanne Lutz

Twenty docents recently took advantage of a special invitation by Dyani White Hawk to visit her Northeast Minneapolis studio in January. There she explained how her varied life experience, straddling and balancing between landscapes of Lakhôta/European cultural heritage and contemporary/traditional upbringing, fuels the layered compositions of her art. She often works 12-hour days and is presently focusing on a series for an exhibit in Denver.



Her works include a unique style of painting, mixed media with beading and quilling, and works on paper. Mia currently has one of her paintings in Gallery 261. "My works are intended to increase exposure and inclusion of Native American contributions and thought within contemporary arts," she told us, "which in turn reinforce the importance of a Native voice within contemporary arts."



Dyani White Hawk
Untitled, 2016
Acrylic on canvas
Gift Of Funds from Nivin MacMillan
2016.74
G261

woman recalls that she and her four children used to go sledding in the winter at a local park. When asked about other outdoor activities, the visitors also mention ice skating, snow-shoeing, and snowball fights. Another woman notices the snow clinging to the monkeys' fur, and the group of three monkeys clustered together, which she refers to as a family since they appear to be hugging one another. I ask about her family, how many children she has, and what shared activities they enjoy doing together. We all agree that hot chocolate sounds tasty after time spent frolicking in the snow.



Minol Araki
Snow Monkeys at Play in Autumn and Winter, 1992
 Ink and color on paper mounted on 12 panels
 The P.D. MacMillan Memorial Fund and Gift of David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama in honor of Matthew Welch in recognition of his Outstanding Achievements in the Advancement of Japanese Art at the MIA
 2015.34A-L
 G265

Araki's artwork inspires awe with the sheer monumentality of his sweeping washes of color that seem to envelop the viewer and incorporate them into the scene. On this *DYS* tour, his art drew the visitors with memory loss into his world, entrancing them with its beauty, and allowing them to access and share their memories with each other and with me. What a truly gratifying experience for us all!

TO BE OR NOT TO BE: THE UNION OF ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

Brenda Haines

The union of England and Scotland is once again in the news. According to First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, Britain's struggles to chart a way out of the European Union are boosting the case for Scottish independence. Brexit has put the union of the UK's four nations under strain because, while Wales and England voted to leave the EU, Northern Ireland and Scotland voted to remain. The resulting Brexit chaos has ignited renewed discussion of Scottish succession.

Mia's own *The Union of England and Scotland (Charles I as the Prince of Wales)* celebrates the creation of the union in 1603 when Charles' father, James VI of Scotland, inherited the English throne from Elizabeth I of England, uniting the kingdoms of Great Britain and Scotland for the first time. In 1629, Charles commissioned Peter Paul Rubens to paint a ceiling mural for the Banqueting House at Whitehall Palace in London as a memorial to his father and to glorify the Stuart dynasty.

The location was an appropriate choice. Built by James and designed by Inigo Jones, the Banqueting House was the first building in London to be completed in the revolutionary Neo-classical style, which would transform English architecture. Rubens' ceiling would be the frosting



Peter Paul Rubens
The Union of England and Scotland (Charles I as the Prince of Wales), 1633-34
 Oil on gessoed wood (oak) panel
 The William Hood Dunwoody Fund
 26.2
 G313

on the cake of the Stuarts' showpiece, a relatively public space for the era since common folk were allowed access to the minstrel's gallery from an exterior door in order to observe the king and court as they dined.

Rubens relished large commissions. He often worked out his compositions in oil on comparatively small wooden panels to serve both as proposals to patrons and as guides for his assistants. Mia's piece is one such study.

It depicts Charles as a naked and robust young child, borne aloft in the sky as three classically-attired women, the personifications of England and Scotland, and Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom and war, hold the double crown above his head. Two cherubs carry the coat-of-arms of the United Kingdom overhead and, below, a third cherub sets fire to armor, shields, and staffs.

The work is painted in extravagant Baroque style, emphasizing movement, color, and sensuality. The sinuous column of entwined figures snakes heavenwards as if there were no ceiling to act as barrier between the viewer and the action occurring overhead. Rubens' expert use of foreshortening takes into account the location of the viewer; the cherubs holding the coat-of-arms appear to recede into the distance. The colors are those of the rainbow, heavenly sky blues, golds, pinks, whites, and the silvery gray of clouds. The flesh tones are pinky white and the bodies are fleshy and ample, signifying abundance. The burning armaments promise an end to hostilities. This is a propitious union, bringing both peace and prosperity to the land.

It is an effective visual expression of the Stuarts' belief in the divine right of kings: a king's authority comes from God and is subject to no earthly authority. A king's power, they asserted, is absolute, beyond human judgment or censure.

It is not without irony, therefore, that Rubens' ceiling would have been one of the very last things Charles saw on the afternoon of January 30, 1649, when he stepped out of a first-floor window of the Banqueting House onto a scaffold that had been erected for the purpose of his execution.

Rubens' composition, it turns out, was a piece of propaganda. The robust child prince of his painting never existed. Charles was a sickly baby, "weak in body," who had difficulty learning to speak and retained a life-long stammer.

Nor did Charles' reign bring peace and prosperity to the land. His insistence on his own absolute right to rule without limit by Parliament (he dissolved Parliament four times in the first five years of his reign and then reigned for eleven years with no Parliament at all), his insensitive authoritarian handling of religious issues (attempting to force the Anglican Book of Prayer on the resistant Scottish Church), and the ruinous debt he incurred pursuing unpopular wars and amassing an art collection numbering close to 1,800 objects, led to civil wars between England, Scotland, and Ireland, and, eventually, to war within England itself between the Royalists who supported Charles and the



SPREAD THE SUNSHINE

Suzanne Zander

Thank you all for the continued support of our Sunshine Fund. 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. The container marked Sunshine Fund can be found in the cabinet where we put our bags, etc. Please keep the sun shining brightly by giving 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](#).

Dale Chihuly
Sunburst, 1999

Blown glass, neon, metal armature
Gift of Funds from

Donna and Cargill MacMillan Jr.
99.132
G100

Parliamentarians led by Oliver Cromwell. Charles lost the war, was arrested, convicted of treason, and sentenced to beheading.

After Charles' death, Parliament abolished the office of King, and England officially became a Commonwealth. Charles' extraordinary art collection was seized and sold to replenish government coffers exhausted by years of conflict, civil war, and Charles' imprudent expenditures. As bad as he was at being King, Charles was a gifted collector, considered to have a deep and sensitive appreciation of art. His collection included works by Dürer, Titian, Van Dyck, and a Da Vinci that sold recently for 450 million dollars. The current exhibit *Charles I: King and Collector* at the Royal Academy of Arts in London displays many of his art pieces brought together for the first time in 350 years.

Eleven years after Charles' execution, the monarchy was restored and his son, Charles II, the "merrie monarch," took the throne, but not as an absolute monarch. The civil war had established the monarchy's dependence on parliament to raise funds, thus effectively paving the way for Britain's modern constitutional monarchy.

The current, complex issues surrounding Scotland and the UK are not driven by religious controversy, but by economic interests and Scotland's belief in a unique identity. If Scotland does vote to break with England as 2018 unfurls, one wonders which country would commission Rubens, if he were alive today, to glorify that.

SHADOWS AND LIGHT

Rose Stanley-Gilbert

When the *Hard Bodies* exhibition opened, visitors and docents were amazed by the unique beauty of each lacquer piece. Was the "Wow" factor the lacquer itself or something more? Thinking about shadows and light, I spoke with Jonathan Hamilton, Mia's Lighting Designer and Exhibition Preparator.

Currently, Jonathan handles all the lighting at Mia, but he didn't start there. He began as a painter and worked with theater lighting in college. At Mia, he worked for eleven years setting up exhibitions and then apprenticed in Lighting Design. I appreciate his kindness in sharing the information for this article.

Andreas Marks, Curator of Japanese and Korean Art and Director of the Clark Center at Mia, and Jonathan worked together fine-tuning the exhibition's lighting. Bright downlights were avoided because lacquer's reflective quality creates glare. Subdued lighting enhanced the subtle, deep richness of color. In Tanaka Nobuyuki's *Inner Side - Outer Side*, the lighting was adjusted to bring out the rich reds on the backside.

Beams of light can be narrow (to highlight) or wide (to diffuse). On Igawa Takeshi's *To the Night*, the light was narrow (an angle of only eight degrees). Sharp reflections glimmer on the wall behind. Ask visitors to think about the night sky...how does the lighting relate? Find other small patterns of reflected light acting as grace notes for the lacquer objects.

LIGHTING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In 2013, Mia was one of the first museums in the U.S. to convert to all LED lighting. Now, most museums have followed that trend. The LED lighting reduces UV and infrared rays which are the most damaging light to sensitive artworks. LED lights last longer and save money.

In the not-to-be-missed gallery video, artists talk about the importance of shadows in their lacquerwork. Kofushiwaki Tsukasa's *Fallen Moon* has multiple shadows, varying in darkness. How does it remind one of a stroll in the moonlight?

Most objects at Mia are illuminated by both a warm yellow light (showing texture) and a cool blue light (sharpening details). Aaron Rio, Andrew W. Mellon Assistant Curator of Japanese and Korean Art, planned the Japanese galleries to have the dramatic, soft glow of a candlelit Buddhist temple. Yellow light predominates to create that environment. An exception is Fukami Sueharu's *Windy Seascape II*. Rio wanted to emphasize the watery coolness of the porcelain's glaze. Only a blue light was used, with a bright spot to define the wave's knife-edge. Compare this with the warm light bathing other objects in the room: Yoshida Hiroshi's *Sailboats*, the *Lying Dragon Plum Tree* screens and Honda Shoryu's woven bamboo and rattan.

I began by wondering what made each lacquer object so spectacular. From Jonathan, I learned that this puzzle was the secret to his work. Lighting should enhance an object's beauty and yet allow the object to be in the "spotlight."

CRACKERS AND CHRISTMAS WITH TOM

Boyd Ratchye

The Lord Docents Join Tom Byfield

The Lord Docents wanted to enjoy the Christmas Season, at least the joys of the seasons. Hold on, you ask, who are the Lord Docents? Well, a band of brothers, brothers in art at Mia – every male in the Class of 2009 – all six of us. We meet each month for a lunch, say at Matt's Bar or Club 580.

This December we wanted to find our own Dickens and Tiny Tim just to celebrate a good year with *Luther* and *Del Toro*. And we were looking for something special to close out 2017. When we came of age at Mia – remember our certificates – we had found a trail blazer, an *Über* Docent – Tom Byfield, from up North – Hallock, Minnesota.

He was a sure-footed guide to life in the art world; he had explained this life: the art object you like; the one students from Ada or Superior remember; the piece that all could discuss. We learned that interest meant most curators will sooner or later remove it, to be replaced with 355 lbs. of wheat or contemporary coal; just remember, it's art and there's no right answer. Wait it out; there'll be an exhibit about something sometime sooner or later. Words from the wise and we did enjoy him and his leadership.

But he'd left us for a new home in Cottage Grove, so we decided we could celebrate him and the Season there. We called him, scheduled a lunch at his place, and all hied off one-by-one to Cottage Grove.



Front Row l-r: Clyde Steckel, Lady Officer, Tom Byfield
Back Row l-r: Jim Allen, Dick Ploetz Boyd Ratchye, Terry Nadler

Our man Tom was at the table as we came to his lavish digs and its sunlit, large dining room. He was in his wheeled throne as befits a Senior Lord Docent. He was already entertaining the first Lord Docent to arrive, Clyde Steckel.

Any good theologian (and Clyde is one) would be first at a Christmas table and he was. Tom had had his minions set a table for six but there's always room for one more at Tom's table in the Christmas season. We wanted to include Tom's daughter-in-law, a retired officer from the Saint Paul Police Department. She had helped Tom to be at the table and happily joined all.

Dick Ploetz, Jim Allen, and I all arrived almost at the same time – like one side of Santa's sleigh or, more suitably, Santa's slowest lowest elves to join the frolic. Terry Nadler arrived last – Santa's most English, most nearly Yorkshire elf – he came all charged with Christmas gifts from his English past and the Christmas spirit.

With Terry and a celebration on hand, no December lunch is complete unless you have crackers, not Triscuits spread with Velveeta or something, but real crackers from real Fortnum and Mason in real London, England. Each of us had one. In fact, Terry brought eight so he could share and have two for himself. A generous Christmas spirit. Hurray for him and for us.

Maybe you've never seen a cracker or heard one. You've missed something and you've missed the best part: each of us working through the cracker and the instructions and the noise. Terry was engaging to train us: A cracker? It's a party favor – you pull one end, I pull the other, we do that sharply, it pops and it's a party now.

Each may pop or not, or every once in a while. That's part of the fun of a cracker; mine didn't pop – it just fell apart between Lady Officer and me. But this Christmas lunch we had four bright pops and that was plenty. Tom and Terry each got a pop. Hurray!! In your cracker, there's more favors: one's a joke/question on a scrap of paper. A really lame joke – but they're all puns so Dick Ploetz was elated. I can't remember any of these jokes but stop Dick when you see him and he can tell you the question and the answer. Next, a candy, and last and best, a crown for each of us – fitting and suitable for six kings and our Lady Officer.

We wish you all a Happy New Year and a fine lunch at the end of 2018.

MUSINGS FROM IPE

Debbi Hegstrom

Here's an update on exciting things happening in the docent program.

Our tour reflection and feedback process is in full swing. Kara, Ann, and I are enjoying following tours and debriefing with you afterwards – we're seeing your creativity and flexibility in action! We're discussing what comes up on tours and collecting best practices, which we'll share with you and our other guide programs.

THIRTY SECONDS WELL-SPENT

Rose Stanley-Gilbert

At the beginning of each public tour, consider showing visitors the new comment cards.

They are in the Info Bar cupboard (top shelf on the left). Feedback from our visitors is always welcome, whether it is a compliment or a way we can improve, or a great new idea.

If someone would like to speak with Mia staff, there is an option to leave contact information inside the comment card brochure.

When completed, it can be dropped off at any of the help desks.

Based on your feedback from the first two required CE sessions, our recent third session focused directly on potentially problematic tour situations and how we can consciously apply our efforts toward welcoming all people to the museum. Remember to watch the recording if you missed it and fill out the reflection form. There was a wealth of ideas shared and we'll continue the discussion at our fourth required session in May.

By the time you read this, we will be staffing "Stop and Chat" about *Power and Beauty in China's Last Dynasty*. I salute those of you involved for embracing this concept and brainstorming with us about what success looks like in this new format. See Mia's website for a description: Click on the *Power and Beauty* image on the front page and then choose "Events" from the menu at the top. All "Stop and Chat" times will also show up on Mia's calendar, along with the description. And be sure to check out the "Exhibitions" menu on the IPE Volunteers website for a wealth of related resources.

Our docent study groups are working on new ideas for public tours and providing accessible programs and services. Join a March public tour every day at 1:00 p.m. for ways to "Look Beyond the Label." Docents will share several different approaches to looking at art, with a goal of empowering visitors to make their own discoveries - without relying on label copy. Our Accessibility Study Group has recorded several verbal descriptions, which we look forward to having available for visitors sometime this spring. They also have created several new "essence boards" that can be used to provide tactile information about certain aspects of a work of art such as texture, pattern, and shape. These boards are in the Tour Office cabinet and can be used on any type of tour.

The book tours continue to be very popular and well-attended. If you are interested in following a tour or giving one, see Paula and Jennifer about upcoming titles. Planning the tours is a collaborative process and you will benefit from the many ideas for themes and objects shared by this group.

The Docent Executive Committee is currently reviewing and revising the Docent Program Guidelines. We expect to have the updated version available this spring for all docents to review.

As I work with you on these programs and projects, I am reminded every day what a dedicated and talented group of volunteers you are and the abundance you bring to Mia! Thank you for everything you do.

2017-2018 Docent Executive Committee

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