



## JAZZ AND ART: A FAMILY CONNECTION

Meg Ubel

As most of Mia buzzed with the usual amped-up energy of February's jazz-themed Family Day, the mood in Gallery 259 was unusually mellow. Kids and adults gathered around George Morrison's *Collage IX: Landscape* while the smooth sounds of jazz guitar filled the air.

Perched on a chair next to the collage, amplified archtop jazz guitar in hand, was Briand Morrison, professional musician and George Morrison's only son. Briand was presenting a special version of his show, *Musical Impressions*, in which he connects and responds musically to his father's art. He featured both his own compositions and riffs on tunes ranging from Miles Davis' *Blue in Green* to Jim Morrison's *Moondance*.

But he also had stories to tell. Between songs he offered reminiscences and family anecdotes while strumming a bit, the guitar an extension of his thoughts. People were drawn in to the gallery by the warmth of his music, and held by the sight of the massive wood collage and the connections to be made. Here was a chance to get a view of an artist and his work that was uniquely personal and profound, so I took a seat.

Briand was born in New York City to a pair of rising artists, George Morrison and Hazel Belvo. He spent his early years in Providence, Rhode Island, where George was teaching at the Rhode Island School of Design. When Briand was nine, the family came to Saint Paul where they renovated a decommissioned church into a home and studio. George became Professor of Indian Studies and Studio Art at the U of M, and Hazel taught art at St. Paul Academy, later becoming Chair of Fine Arts at Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD).

## SPRING DOCENT FORUM

Wednesday, April 8, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Friends Community Room

Please mark your calendar for the upcoming Spring Docent Forum. We will be focusing on the many aspects and issues surrounding accessibility. We are in the process of developing the agenda, an outline, and points for dialogue. We want to hear from you and include your thoughts in the development of this forum. Please send your suggestions for topics regarding accessibility or any other topics that you would like this or future docent forums to address. We look forward to hearing from you.

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Summers were spent on the Cape Cod National Seashore. Briand spoke of parents who were very loving and who promoted strong values of education. He also playfully recalled an “unabridged upbringing” in which his father took him to see the film *A Clockwork Orange* at age ten. Music filled the house: both parents played guitar and sang folk songs, and dinner parties usually ended with music around the table. His older half-brother gave him an electric guitar when he was seven, and within a few years he had formed a rock band with friends.

These days Briand lives in Grand Portage with his partner, fellow musician and manager Roxann Berglund, in the Red Rock home and studio built by George and Hazel in the early 1980s. He plays jazz, both solo and ensemble, around the Northland and occasionally visits the Twin Cities.

The original *Musical Impressions* concept was produced as a Blu-ray disc containing a slideshow of 128 high-definition images of George’s drawings, paintings and collages accompanied by twelve of Briand’s original compositions. With the help of an Arrowhead Regional Arts Council grant, he tailored *Musical Impressions* for live performance. He now regularly presents the live show at libraries and museums around the region. During the performance a visual sequence of George’s works is displayed as Briand improvises on the spot, responding to the mood of the audience and their reaction to the art.

Asked if the father-son connection is critical to this confluence of jazz and art, Briand responded that he is in the midst of creating two more *Musical Impressions* shows: one with the art of his mother Hazel Belvo, and one with the work of fellow Minnesotan and Native artist Jim Denomie. He found the music for George and Hazel’s work came to him “automatically” because he knows them so well. The Denomie project is taking more time, as he has felt the need to create a completely different sound (which he refers to as “Anishinaabe jazz”) involving Indian drumming and singing along with guitar.

George Morrison’s life and working style emerged in my further conversation with Briand and Roxann. Docents know that George was Ojibwe, born on the Grand Portage Reservation in the village of Chippewa City. Briand remembers his father as quiet and introverted, but also “quite the intellectual.” Some of this may stem from the year that George, age ten, spent bedridden at Gillette Children’s Hospital in Saint Paul, treated for a tubercular hip, where he immersed himself in books, drawing and his first real exposure to the resources of a city.

As an adult living in New York City, George was surrounded by the emerging Abstract Expressionist movement and the associated Greenwich Village scene: listening to jazz and bebop at the Five Spot Cafe and Cedar Tavern along with other avant-garde artists like Franz Kline, Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning. Art and ideas were traded and nurtured among the New York School artists. Briand recounted that he was baptized in Central Park by Allen Ginsberg, with Kline appointing himself his godfather.

As an artist, George mostly worked alone, from his imagination, often at night. At times he would create a painting in a single all-night ses-



Briand Morrison



George Morrison

sion – what he called an “all-in-one-shot,” exemplified in his action painting, *Untitled*, also found in Gallery 259. Briand noted the large quantity of paint used in that work, possibly squeezed directly from the tube, layer upon wet layer. This sort of art was an expensive proposition for a young artist, and George never did make a living solely from his art.

George never talked about his Native culture with Briand, who believes that George wanted to spare him the suspicion and prejudice inflicted upon Native Americans at the time. Briand noted that before about 1970, “being Indian was not good” in American society. The civil rights movement in the 1960s and the activism of the American Indian Movement (AIM) stirred things up and raised awareness so that “being Indian became more acceptable.”



*Untitled*, 1960  
George Morrison  
Oil and acrylic on linen  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Weber  
75.75  
G259

Returning to Minnesota in 1970, George connected to his Ojibwe heritage while preparing to teach a course in the newly-established Indian Studies Department at the U of M. George rejected the label of “Indian artist” and avoided traditional Native motifs or an illustrative approach in his work; but he did start to blend his New York/European abstract style with a sense of place rooted in spiritual connection to the natural landscape and his native Minnesota. This was especially apparent in his use of the horizon line that figures prominently in his paintings, drawings and collages from mid-career onwards. The horizon line gives an indication of landscape, and is an accessible point of reference for our visitors of all ages. Briand commented that he always assumed the horizon line originated from the ocean landscape on Cape Cod until he came to Minnesota and realized that Lake Superior was its true inspiration. George felt that having been born and raised by the lake, it had somehow been transplanted into his mind, so that even when not looking at the vast expanse, he was always very conscious and aware of it. He has said that Lake Superior is “like a presence in itself. It is alive and changes by the hour.”

The other star of the show on this Family Day radiated calm solidity from its place on the wall next to Briand. *Collage IX: Landscape* is a piece that docents know well – 70 square feet of meticulously-fitted pieces of driftwood on a plywood base described by George as a “painting in wood.” He made his first collages in the mid-1960s using wood collected during yearly summer visits to Cape Cod. The family stayed in a rented duplex a few blocks from the ocean, and Briand remembers roaming the beach daily with other kids, always on the lookout for driftwood that George would like. Doing that, he feels that “in a very remote way” he helped to make the collages.



*Collage IX: Landscape*, 1974  
George Morrison  
Wood  
The Francis E. Andrews Fund  
75.24  
G259

George began to create collages in earnest in his large basement stu-

dio in the former church hall of their Saint Paul home where his extensive stock of wood pieces was spread out and, as Briand recalls, a “humongous” table was set up for collage assembly. George would draw a horizon line on the base with a pencil to guide the work, and spent countless hours laying out the pieces, fitting them together with attention to shape, color, texture and grain, before gluing them in place. George said he appreciated driftwood for its sense of history – it has a connection to the earth, yet has come from the water and perhaps traveled great distances. *Collage IX: Landscape* was his first wood collage created in Saint Paul, and was purchased by Mia after the museum director attended a party at George and Hazel’s house and saw it on display there. A number of corporate commissions followed, including a collage for General Mills which is displayed at the company headquarters in Golden Valley.

Gallery 259 is quiet again now. But the next time you include one of George Morrison’s works on a tour, it might be helpful to let a little mellow jazz waft through your mind.

For those interested in Briand Morrison and his *Musical Impressions* show, check out his [website](#). Of course, there is more to George Morrison’s life than can be recounted here. An excellent resource recommended by Briand and Roxann is George’s own memoir *Turning the Feather Around: My Life in Art* for more of his personal reflections on his life and work. The book is available from the Minnesota Historical Society [Press](#).

## WHEN HOME WON’T LET YOU STAY:

A Conversation with Gabriel Ritter,  
Curator and Head of Contemporary Art

Janis Lysen

With only a few weeks until the opening of *When Home Won’t Let You Stay: Art & Migration*, Gabriel Ritter, Curator and Head of Contemporary Art, sat down to discuss the stakes, challenges and opportunities presented by this exhibition.

Ritter comes to this Special Exhibition from a powerful personal perspective. “My father was born in a refugee camp in Germany following WWII and was fortunate to emigrate to the US,” he said, noting that all Americans with the exception of Native Americans are descendants of immigrants. “Migration has always been with us, but the scale today is monumental.” It is estimated that one in seven people in the world today are international or internal migrants who have moved by choice or by force.

This exhibition brings together twenty-one contemporary artists from more than a dozen countries, each sharing their particular response to migration and displacement of people worldwide, using painting, photography, sculpture, video and installations. It was originally organized, developed and curated by the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Boston. Mia has added to the artists’ voices showcased in the exhibition by commissioning additional artworks and by including voices of community members who have lived the experiences of migration and displacement.



*Wall, east of Nogales, Arizona/El muro, al este de Nogales, Arizona, 2014*

From the series *Border Cantos*, 2004-16

Richard Misrach

Pigment print

Courtesy the artist; Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York; Frankel Gallery, San Francisco; and

Marc Selwyn Fine Arts, Los Angeles

© Richard Misrach

Ritter notes that the exhibition suits Minnesota's own unique, multi-faceted experience of migration and forced displacement. Here European migrants forced Dakota and Ojibwe/Anishinaabe peoples from their ancestral homes, often onto reservations. Many Minnesotans are Scandinavians whose ancestors came in search of land, work and new lives. Later, people from Vietnam, Laos and Somalia moved here to escape war and turmoil in their homelands. Minnesota has a complex history of receiving, usually welcoming, refugees and immigrants, with the highest per capita number of refugees in the United States.

Ritter believes this exhibition gives Mia the opportunity to share with the community a place to learn, have difficult conversations and practice empathy.

The exhibition's most public display is the U.S. premiere of Ai Weiwei's work *Safe Passage*, displayed on the pillars of Mia's 24th Street entrance. The pillars are covered with bright orange life vests used by migrants making the hazardous crossing of the Mediterranean to Europe. Near the exhibition entrance, wallpaper with over 5000 photographs and video footage shot by Ai Weiwei make the journey more personal.

To account for the Native voices missing from the ICA show, Ritter arranged Mia's commission of a work, *Let Us Pray for the Water Between Us*, by the indigenous artist collective Postcommodity. A large agricultural chemical storage tank is suspended in the Bruce B. Dayton Rotunda and will act as a resonant instrument "to acknowledge and honor, through living breathing sound, the role of indigenous tribes as important stewards of water, air and land in Minnesota and throughout the Americas" (from the artist statement).

Nearly all of the works from the ICA show will be displayed at Mia. In addition, Mia will show its own work by Aliza Nisenbaum, *Nimo*, *Sumiya*, and *Bisharo Harvesting Flowers and Vegetables at Hope Community Garden*. Her other paintings in the show are tender portraits of a family who immigrated to Queens from Mexico.

Ritter notes that two other artists will also be familiar to us. South Korean artist Do Ho Suh shows us a translucent structure representing rooms from his childhood home. Yinka Shonibare, CBE, a dual-identity British Nigerian artist, created the installation *The American Library* filled with over 6,000 books wrapped in Dutch wax-printed fabric. The books are embossed with the names of immigrants and those affected by the Great Migration in the US who have made a mark on American culture. The didactic notes that indigenous voices are missing from this library, ignoring their cultural contributions.

One of the most challenging art works is *Incoming* by Richard Mosse. Mosse uses a thermal imaging camera, an advanced weapons system for surveillance, to track two of the busiest and most dangerous migration routes into Europe. The camera registers contours of heat differences within a scene, creating alien-looking bodies. This is not an entirely collaborative work with the refugees being filmed; only some of those featured were consulted for consent. It is a way to bear witness in a compelling, emotional and unrelenting way.

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## "HOME"

by Warsan Shire (b. 1988, Kenya)

No one leaves home  
unless home is the mouth of a shark.

You only run for the border  
when you see the whole city  
running as well.

Your neighbors running faster than you,  
the boy you went to school with  
who kissed you dizzy behind  
the old tin factory  
is holding a gun bigger than his body,  
you only leave home  
when home won't let you stay.

Many works are actually missing a human presence. Kader Attia's *La mer morte (The Dead Sea)* may appear inert at first glance, a display of jeans, denim jackets, trousers and T-shirts covering the gallery floor. This work reminds us of the over 100,000 migrants and refugees that crossed the Mediterranean in 2018, resulting in nearly 2000 deaths by drowning.

Overlying the harrowing journeys depicted here is another level of experience depicted by artist Carlos Motta exploring the challenges faced by queer migrants. In *The Crossing*, refugees offer their personal narratives of brutal, deep-rooted discrimination faced by LGBTQI+ people throughout the world.

Mia commissioned work from a local artists collective for the end of the exhibit. CarryOn Homes (COH), with five artists from five countries who have been telling the stories of immigrants and refugees in the United States, has created handmade pillows with used cloth from immigrants and refugees to fill the *COH Living Room*. You can sit on these pillows – this will act as a space of respite, reflection and healing. There are also resources here for visitors who want to learn more or take action after experiencing the show.

Ritter asserts that he is most proud of the incorporation of local community voices in the exhibition. Supplementing the usual labels will be parallel didactics providing unfiltered reactions from those with personal lived experiences of migration or forced displacement. Juline Chevalier, Head of Interpretation and Participatory Experiences, helped to conduct interviews with local advisory committee members, artists and asylum seekers to add this commentary, which also features their photographs, a quote and QR code to allow visitors to access the full interviews.

As docents for *When Home Won't Let You Stay: Art & Migration*, we will have the opportunity to help visitors understand what is going on in the world and to assess contemporary art works bringing empathy to the migrant experience. The exhibition may be overwhelming, even retraumatizing for those who have been displaced, so we will want to meet people where they are as we guide them through these powerful artistic statements. This exhibition doesn't provide answers but is sure to spark more questions.

## VIEWING ART THROUGH MULTIPLE LENSES

Karen Kletter

**Lenses:** We all wear them. Although we don't usually see them, they help us see. If we change them, we see differently. If we fail to change them, we are blinded. If we ignore them, we lose sight of the insidious power of perspective.

And, importantly, lenses can enable docents to enrich the tour experiences of their guests. Docents Kay Miller and Emily Shapiro proved as much as they presented their "Lenses Tours" to the *Let's Talk Tours* study group in February.



*The American Library* (detail), 2018

Yinka Shonibare CBE

Hardback books, Dutch wax printed cotton textile, gold foiled names, and website

Courtesy the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York and FRONT International: Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art with funds from VIA Art Fund, Cleveland Public Library and The City of Cleveland Cable television Minority Arts and Education Fund  
© Yinka Shonibare CBE



*Incoming*, 2014-17

Richard Mosse

Three-channel HD video (black-and-white)

Installation view, *Richard Mosse: Incoming*, The Curve, Barbican Centre, London, 2017

Courtesy the artist; Jack Shainman Gallery, New York; and carlier gebauer, Berlin  
Photo: Tristan Fewings  
© Richard Mosse

These tours emphasize changes in perspective and points of view to encourage visitors to engage more deeply; to create a deeper grasp and visual memory of each piece; to consider how art reflects its era; and to be more aware of their own values and societal roles. Kay and Emily started their tour development by selecting and defining their various lenses, building on Debbi Hegstrom's work for last May's *Points of View: Current Conversations*.

They begin their tours by distributing brief written descriptions of eight lenses to help with the learning process. They reported that by the tour's end, participants had become familiar with the various lenses and were quite comfortable using multiple lenses when looking at a work of art.

Here are the lenses:

*viewer response* (viewing a work for personal meaning);  
*socio-economic* (seeing a work's societal or economic impact);  
*historical* (looking to historical context or systems of meaning);  
*gender* (assessing gender-related attitudes and issues);  
*IDEA* (looking for issues of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility);  
*empathy* (examining emotional impact on the viewer's ability to understand another's experience);  
*story-telling* (looking for narrative potential); and  
*spiritual* (delving for religious, faith-based, spiritual or cosmic meaning).

Kay Miller speaks of the process: "What is the lens approach? How does it differ from the superficial way most of us look at art? Emily and I started out talking about the usual lens with which we and most museum-goers approach works of art: Look at the label, scan the picture, move to the next work. If we use a lens at all, it's often the same one, based on our personal bent and predilections. As a former reporter, storytelling tends to be my go-to lens: I make sense of most art by telling myself a story about it."

Since discussions at the first pieces on a tour were the longest and most involved, they chose more complex, enigmatic pieces that invited depth. Kay began with *Men and Women Fighting*, by George Tooker, because it "has long puzzled me." The object's richly enigmatic character offers fertile ground for the storytelling lens - visitors quickly found custody battles, spousal violence, and family tragedy. Participants built creatively on the stories of one another. They also posed many questions: Why is the woman in orange ripping her bodice? Why is everyone barefoot? Where and when is this taking place? Why are the men angry and the women distraught? Why are the men carrying sticks? What happened to the child on the ground? Kay noted, these "questions led us quite naturally into using additional lenses: *gender* (what is this male-female struggle about and where might we see it today?); *historical* (where did Tooker get the idea for this painting and why wasn't he explicit about its meaning?); *viewer response* (what conflicts might this reflect in today's world?). Using the *empathy* lens, Kay asked the group to first pick the person in the portrait that they'd like most to know and then to pick the person they'd avoid at all costs. This is a great way to encourage discussion of personal choices.



*Men and Women Fighting*  
 George Tooker  
 Source: avax.news

Emily showed us that we don't necessarily need a narrative or even a representative work to use a lens approach. Her introduction reminded visitors that each person enters the museum with a perspective based on upbringing, belief system, experiences, and personal and community connections. She encouraged her group to remember that perspective as they look at art through several alternative lenses – personal, historical, gender, race/ethnicity, empathy, spiritual, and storytelling.

They enjoyed a particularly deep discussion viewing Thierry Oussou's, *Confidant*. Here is where “slow looking” and lenses really earn their place in your tour toolbox. The painting is mysterious and perhaps off-putting to some. By starting with the story-telling lens and then noting what is displayed in the surrounding gallery (Emily calls it the “gallery lens”) and guiding her group through the IDEA lens (race, heritage, inclusion), and finally to using the empathy lens, Emily allowed her group to fully explore the work. Both Emily and Kay ended their tour with objects in the *Enduring Souls* exhibition with great success. Check out their complete tour documents on IPE to learn more.

Emily and Kay came to think of the lens process as “VTS on steroids.” It involves the same deep questions, and the second, third and fourth looks VTS invites. Good questions are essential. So is having excellent background to add – but only as it becomes relevant. Perhaps the biggest caveat is to *be spare in adding your own narrative. The goal is to share just enough to spur additional observations by the group.* As we all know, restraint can be difficult, but if you add too much, you risk pre-empting a discussion that visitors find incredibly satisfying.

After giving six lens tours (all for OLLI, Osher Life-long Learning Institute), Kay and Emily had lots of experience to share with the Study Group. Visitors have raved about the lens technique because it opened their eyes to the art, the maker, and to themselves as viewers. I'm always amazed at the creative and thoughtful tours docents are developing. Sharing that research and those experiences is the goal of the *Let's Talk Tours* study group. You are welcome to join us. If you have a tour or know of a tour that could be shared contact me, [Karen Kletter](#). Also, check out Kay and Emily's more complete discussion of lens techniques and tours on the IPE [website](#) under “Peer Sharing.”

## TALKING ABOUT TOURS – DOCENTS IN D.C.

*Fran Megarry, Jean Marie Burtness, Nancy Kelly, Bruce Robbins*

Mia docents were well represented at the recent National Docent Symposium in Washington DC: Jean Marie Burtness, Nancy Kelly, Fran Megarry and Bruce Robbins all enjoyed the experience, and Nancy, Jean Marie and Fran presented a workshop on touring with blind and low vision guests.

Our docent presenters showed Mia's innovative leadership in revealing the treasures of the museum to the blind. Jean Marie used her portion of the workshop to describe Mia's commitment to inclusion and accessibility, including professional training to lead “touch tours” of



*Confidant*, 2017

Thierry Oussou

Mixed media collage and pigments on black paper

The Allen and Kathy Lenzmeier Endowment  
For Art Acquisition

2018.2

Not on View



Fran Megarry, Jean Marie Burtness, Nancy Kelly



selected objects; use of tactile boards; and docents' creation of "essence boards" using low-cost materials. Jean Marie showed how essence boards focus on an important aspect of the art and how they are created.

Nancy described the work of the Mia Docent Accessibility group – eight docents and a senior educator who meet regularly to improve our services for people with disabilities, including those who are blind and low vision: audio Verbal Descriptions; 3D printed objects; the Accessibility Brochure; and Sensory Bags.

Verbal Descriptions are 6- to 11-minute recordings, each presenting one of Mia's most loved works (currently including *Olive Trees*, *Doryphoros*, *Yoruba Shrine Head*, *Jade Mountain*, and Max Beckman's *Blind Man's Buff*, with more in production). These are available on an iPod at our Visitor Services desk and one is included in our Sensory Bag.

Nancy noted Mia's use of 3D printed art replicas, including several created by Mia's photographer Charles Wallbridge and others still in production in a new project with a group of high school students from Mounds Park Academy. She described Mia's new Accessibility brochure, which is available online and in the lobby. The brochure details all the resources available for accessibility issues.

Bringing all these resources together are "sensory bags" that will be available for check-out at the Visitor Services desk. These include a welcome and instruction sheet; museum map; an iPod with earphones loaded with the five verbal descriptions and all our other audio tours; 3D printed replicas; a Tactile Diagram of Van Gogh's *Olive Trees*; an essence board of Cézanne's *Chestnut Trees* and feedback forms. Nancy noted, "Sensory bags will give persons who are blind and low vision the ability to have an independent experience when they come to visit our museum."

Nancy also spoke about a tour with John Lee Clark, who is blind and deaf, and an instructor of Protactile Communication, a relatively new method of interaction with persons who are deaf and blind or low vision: "John, his intervenor, and I used Protactile Communication on a touch tour; this enabled us all to communicate not only information but emotions, laughter, joy, sadness and excitement. It involved using the body and various touching techniques to express words and phrases with emotions and emphasis. This type of communication supplements sign language for people who are deaf and blind, putting their hands over the signer's hands."

Fran's portion of the workshop focused on the future. She asks, "Gloves or No Gloves? Wouldn't it be lovely to have touch tours without gloves? For some guests the gloves do not allow for the detail they may need to discover the essence of the work of art. Young children who have had multiple medical procedures are often hesitant to use them. For many guests leaving the gloves on for several pieces is uncomfortable. The Louvre has a gallery where guests are permitted to touch real art without gloves. In fact, everyone is welcome to touch the art in that gallery."



*Chestnut Trees at Jas de Bouffan*, c. 1885-1886

Paul Cézanne  
Oil on canvas

The William Hood Dunwoody Fund  
49.9  
G355

Fran introduced the concept of Haptic Reality: "Imagine what this is by thinking about your phone in vibration mode. Different levels and frequencies of vibration may give blind and low vision guests a sense of depth and scope of images of two-dimensional works as they are touched. We will have to wait to see what exciting tools engineers develop for us."

And Fran pushed the frontier still further by imagining the exploration of critical thinking skills with blind and low vision guests: "Yes, as we tour, we all know the dates, artists, locations and other details of a work, but guests may be eager to discover other things as they touch. The guest could express ideas about the art and support those ideas with what they are touching. Admittedly, it will take longer to tour by utilizing these skills. But when guests begin to touch the entire work and to consider things like power, beauty, angst and anxiety, the learning experience will become much deeper. And so those familiar questions will arise...What surprises you? What do you wonder? Where do you feel power, beauty, angst expressed? What suggests simplicity or frugality, respect, dignity, economy or strength? We hope our workshop overview hints at what the future looks like and will help all of us as we open the doors of our institutions for all."

Their trip to D.C. also offered our traveling docents opportunities to explore.

#### **From Bruce Robbins**

A decade had passed since my last D.C. visit. I have Mia to thank for getting me to where I could spend days marveling at art. At the National Docent Symposium there were so many people like us, life-long learners with passion for what museums can do. We had two great plenary speakers, Kaywin Feldman and Karleen Gardner, and docents from other museums presented some fascinating workshops. Tucson Museum docents had an exciting show called "30 Americans." The complete exhibit presented 30 important works by 30 influential African American artists who addressed diversity and intersectional politics in unique ways. The exhibition, taken from the Rubell Family Collection, has travelled for ten years to many museums. [Jean Marie was also excited by this workshop.]

I also attended "Art without Borders: Outreach to the Refugee Communities" (Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY). This is an exciting story about how a small museum has made a large impact upon numerous community groups and cultures in and around their city by moving ideas and even works from the museum out into the community. Let me know if you would like to see the materials from these workshops. Maybe you might consider attending another year!

#### **From Jean Marie**

Ask me about my cheerful chicken! In our symposium hospitality bags we each received an original artwork the size of a cigarette pack. Mine has a mixed media chicken created by an artist at SusanRossiter.com. Her works and other artists' small works are distributed by Art-o-Mat repurposed antique cigarette machines. To use the Art-o-Mat machines, people are able to take a peek at the choices, insert five dollars, and then the art plunks out. Wouldn't this be an amusing addition to Mia?

Docents from the Toledo Museum of Art included suggestions, mod-



Jean Marie's "cheerful chicken"

els, and short writing bursts using paintings from their museum in “Ekphrastic Writing through Engaging VisList Activities: Start Your Museum’s Successful Poetry Contest.” We came away with our own poetic efforts and handouts to guide us through their process.

#### From Nancy

The National Docent Symposium afforded us all amazing opportunities to connect with other docents who share our interests and thirst for knowledge. High-quality sessions created by docents and staff of museums throughout the United States and Canada related to many of the issues we deal with at Mia every day. But the symposium also created informal connections. Although I could not attend “Interpreting Tough Subjects with Dignity,” created by docents at the National Museum of African American History and Culture, at breakfast one morning I sat next to the docent who put on the program, and she shared great information with me, and we continued to exchange emails about the topic later.

#### And from Fran

The National Docent Council offers wonderful resources for docents even beyond the semi-annual symposium. Check out its [website](#) for ideas on school touring, audience engagement, docent recruitment and training, accessibility and technology. You can also find there our complete PowerPoint, information about their closed Facebook forum and the symposium’s [Docent Handbook 2](#).

As one of two Midwest Regional Directors (Bill Sitzer is my colleague from St. Louis Art Museum), I encourage Mia docents to consider attending the 2021 National Docent Symposium in Kansas City. I also invite you to be a point-of-contact at Mia to receive updates about NDSC activities. If you’d like to suggest another docent or staff member that would be most welcome, too.



#### LET THE SUNSHINE IN

Our Docent community has for years utilized the Sunshine Fund to extend support and condolences to one another in times of loss, grief and illness. A thoughtful card or bouquet can mean so much.

But now, our Fund needs your help! Please consider a gift to the Sunshine Fund today.

Make checks payable to  
Docents of the MIA  
c/o James Allen  
2 Ironwood Lane  
Saint Paul, MN 55127

Or Venmo to ‘Mia Docents.’

And thank you!

*Sunburst*, 1999  
Dale Chihuly  
Blown glass, neon, metal armature  
Gift of Funds from  
Donna and Cargill MacMillan Jr.  
99.132  
G100