

FROM THE EDITOR

With the morning's paper comes the headline, "The Picture is Bleak for Museums' Future," reporting on studies by UNESCO and the International Council of Museums of enormous, perhaps terminal, losses for large and small institutions all over the world. Big tourist-draw institutions "like the Stedelijk and Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Kunsthistorisches in Vienna are losing the equivalent of \$2.75 million a month."

Museums such as the Uffizi in Florence, the Vatican Museums in Rome and the Louvre and Pompidou Center in France remain closed even after eased country-wide restrictions. But even re-opened institutions face huge obstacles.

As noted by Director Dr. Katie Luber in her interview last month, Mia's strong patron base, loyal, local audience and public funding may position it better than other institutions. But for those of us who have made Mia our cultural home and inspiration, an axis of our social network and the focus of our volunteer energy, bright future prospects may not overcome today's dark doubts and concerns. We worry...for the institution; for our friends who work there; for the worthy mission of the museum, a mission of which we are a vital, dynamic part.

Departing the academic year – surely with a whimper, not a bang – in this issue are notes from leaders and messages from fellow docents doing what we do...connecting to the art.

Stay safe. Wear your mask. See you on the other side.

—Ed.



Spring
(left of a pair of Flowers and
Insects of Spring and Fall),
mid 19th century
Yamamoto Baiitsu
Ink and color on paper
Purchase Through Art Quest
2003 and The William Hood
Dunwoody Fund
2003.197.2
On View in Gallery 223

DEC MEMBERS 2020-2021

Congratulations to our newly-elected members of the Docent Executive Committee:

Chair - Sheila-Marie Untiedt

Chair-Elect - Kit Wilson

Secretary - Lyn Osgood

Treasurer - Terry Keir

Social Chair - Mary McMahon

Communications Chair - Jan Lysen

Muse Newsletter Editor - Meg Ubel

Honorary Docent Representative –
Maureen Lannan

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the DEC. We are all grateful for your commitment of time and leadership.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Katherine Crawford Luber, PhD

Nivin and Duncan MacMillan Director, Minneapolis Institute of Art

I hope this note finds you and your loved ones safe and well during this uncertain time. I enjoyed speaking with you at our recent virtual tea and look forward to when we are able to see each other again in person.

While I do not yet know when Mia will be able to reopen, we have begun preparations. Our staff has formed a Reopening Core Team made up of one representative from each division at Mia. The team is working to coordinate resources and implement procedures that prioritize the health and safety of each and every person who walks through our doors. The team is looking into sourcing supplies and equipment we may need, such as masks, hand sanitizer, and no-touch doors.

In addition, Mia is part of a growing collective of approximately thirty Twin Cities arts and culture organizations working together to coordinate advocacy efforts and align reopening strategies and communications. Speaking with one voice, we can leverage our cumulative impact to make our voices heard in the most powerful and inclusive way.

Thank you again for your continued dedication and engagement. Please continue to be safe, and take good care.

HELLO FELLOW DOCENTS,

Tamara Meyer, DEC Chair, 2019-2020

Questions with no answers – When will things get back to normal? What is “new normal?” How are families, friends and neighbors doing? How is our Mia community doing? What about our local, state, national and world communities? What more will we learn later on today, tomorrow, next month, next year...and what can we all do to help each other?

How have each of us used our time to isolate and socially distance? How has technology impacted our daily lives? Have you become familiar with a new Netflix series, a new podcast series, a new blog, or a new online learning series? Have you come to know neighbors in a more meaningful way? Are you now Zoom and FaceTime savvy?

I am grateful for the distraction of a garden to escape the 24/7 news cycle. Just as a garden surprises one each year, so does the resilience of the human spirit. Our collective spirit seems stronger than what can actually happen to our physical bodies.

What a touring and guiding year it has been. *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists* exploded onto the scene and drew in guests from all over the United States. Followed by *Artists Respond and Artists Reflect*, opening the door for difficult conversations surrounding the Vietnam War experience. Listening to the veterans who served was

riveting. The current exhibition, *When Home Won't Let You Stay: Art and Migration*, will more than likely be a virtual experience for most, including stories of historically complex, difficult, and tragic life experiences. Yet those artists, creators, and storytellers continue to inspire us to be better, and to look for the light in the darkness.

A very big Thank You to Nancy Kelly, Fran Megarry, and Jean Marie Burtness who represented Mia at the National Docent Symposium. Through their innovative leadership they presented their touch tours for the blind and low vision guests. Thank you to all those who are serving as part of the Center for Empathy and the Visual Arts (CEVA). Your work continues as does our training in diversity and inclusion. Speaking of training – Thank you Debbi, Ann, Kara and Sheila for your continued leadership, especially now as we move toward the unknown. Thank you once again to Jennifer and Paula for all you have done and continue to do for docents and guides. Your sunny patience and notoriously polite natures are missed.

The Docent Executive Committee has been one of the most satisfying volunteer experiences I have had because of the people I had the pleasure to work with: Sheila-Marie Untiedt, Kathryn Schwyzer, Karen Kletter, Jim Allen, Jan Lysen, Mark Catron, Debbi Hegstrom, and the late, wonderful Pat Wuest. We all admired Pat's lovely wisdom and grace. Your collective talents have made my job easy. I am humbled by your commitment to always do your very best on behalf of all of us. Thank you for taking up the issue of accessibility, which we hope will become an ongoing topic in future docent/guide discussions and forums.

And now as we navigate into the future with no clear answers and lots of questions, one thing is clear above all else. The next time we actually are in each other's presence, we'll revel in that simple pleasure and be present with all of our senses. Have a most delightfully delicious summer surrounded by what is meaningful to each of you.

Peace.

ANCIENT SPIRITUAL IMAGE IN MODERN STEEL AND NEON

Terry Keir

Perhaps the red glow first catches your eye as you walk into the gallery, or maybe it's the size or exotic, eerie form of the sculpture, or the initial uncertainty about the materials, an amalgam of neon and steel: this sculpture commands attention. Ernest Whiteman created a sculpture using materials of today to connect visitors to the ancient past.

Visitors, especially students, are fascinated by the sculpture. It appeals to people on many different levels. They notice the anthropomorphic aspects, but the figure is not quite human. This leads to a discussion of what the figure represented to Whiteman and the Inunaina (Arapaho) people, a reverence for the natural world. Visitors are interested in the materials used to create the sculpture, and why it



Untitled, 1991
Ernest Whiteman
Steel, neon
The David Draper Dayton Fund
92.140
On View in Gallery 261

glows. Students respond to questions regarding Whiteman's use of steel and the "aging" process to achieve the look he desired. The heart line inspires visitors to consider what it symbolizes (the "life force," in many cultures), and the way Whiteman uses it to create balance in the artwork.

I am fascinated with the way Whiteman has processed the steel. The rough texture of edges cut with a plasma cutter contrast with the smooth surface. The surface of the metal has a natural look resulting from the salt solution that rusted the metal and the faint blue and green paint that drips down the surface. This coloration resembles the pictographs on canyon walls of Wyoming and Utah that inspired Whiteman. This might be what connects me most to this sculpture. I have taken many road trips to the West and Southwest, and this piece calls out to the rugged beauty and history of that region.



When I started to use Whiteman's piece on tours, I thought it would be interesting to search for images of petroglyphs near the Wind River Reservation in southern Wyoming where Whiteman grew up. Mia documents indicate that Whiteman was influenced by petroglyphs he saw in Dinwoody Canyon near the reservation. I started scrolling through Google images from Dinwoody searching for an image similar to the sculpture. Spiraling down the Google rabbit hole, I moved to images beyond Dinwoody until I happened upon an image from the *Buckhorn Draw Pictograph Panel*, located in the San Rafael Swell, Utah. It was the same image as Whiteman's sculpture. The pictograph was painted 2000 years ago, and Whiteman has made it into contemporary art.



IT'S THOSE EYES

David Fortney

Egon Schiele's *Portrait of Paris von Gütersloh* is one of the premier paintings in Mia's collection. I first encountered our Schiele in 1982 or 1983, shortly after I relocated to the Twin Cities from Des Moines. I return to it often. Why am I so drawn to it? Why do visitors have such a visceral response to this work? How do you feel when you look at this painting?

I see anxiety, fear and uncertainty here, a person who has lost his moorings. I experience Paris as being under intense emotional distress, expressed, in part, in the presentation of his body. I experience the work as psychic isolation. Schiele's color palate is disquieting, harsh and glaring. I have heard it described as acidic. The subject's posture is transfixing. But I think the palpable anxious tension here lies in the subject's eyes. They stare at the viewer. These eyes demand your attention. They are riveting and hypnotic. Schiele's compelling treatment of his friend's eyes invites a conversation with visitors regarding what this person is feeling. Those conversations are often lively.

Visitors can experience these sentiments and relate to Paris on an emotional level from the work directly; they don't require a lot of background. Information we might offer about Schiele or regarding Austria

in 1918 may provide context, but is totally unnecessary to an exploration of the emotional content of the piece.

What else has Schiele done to create these discomforting feelings? Partly, it is the work's use of line and its angularity. From the subject's forehead to the lines defining his clothing, Schiele has offered little to soften or smooth the lines. Even the subject's necktie adds to the edginess.

Gütersloh's hands convey a message of ambivalence and internal conflict. He seems to beckon you to come nearer while at the same time telling you to stay away. Viewers are able to discern this conflict with little assistance from a guide, although at times I have found I may need to prompt them with a question such as "What message does this person convey with his gestures?" I find that some visitors are so taken by the eyes, they may overlook the hands.

Some critics have suggested that this work is unfinished. This belief is generally premised on the fact that the painting, Schiele's last major oil, was created in 1918, shortly before Schiele's death on October 31 at age twenty-eight, in the global flu pandemic. Other observers, who believe the work is finished, point to the fact that the work is both signed and dated, although the artist may have simply realized that he had taken the work as far as he was able. I have on occasion told visitors about the question of whether or not the work is finished and invited them to discuss what more they think could be added to make the work more "complete." I've found this to be an interesting exercise and another way to foster visitor engagement.

I thought about this painting in the week following the closing of Mia in response to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. I wondered how visitors would respond to this work in the future and whether responses would be amplified by current events. Perhaps the lived experiences of Schiele and his contemporaries will resonate more with our visitors going forward in light of their own lived experiences from 2020.

Few works in the collection can trigger the engagement that Schiele produces. Take another look at this amazing work.



Portrait of Paris von Gütersloh, 1918
Egon Schiele
Oil on canvas
Gift of The P.D. McMillan Land Company
54.30
On View in Gallery 377

WARRIOR'S SONATA

Jeanne Lutz

As if written in his own one-armed scrawl,
a jagged hum how he misses
the *al dente* touch of Henry's hands,
that pebble on the beach
blossoming into something
between glory and death.

For this, the warrior feels blessed,
and though he had hoped
for more than a head with the eyes
banged loose – a nose, say, or even one good ear –
he is proud of his ribs, hips,
humble penis intact, one
Thor-like buttock. And the polished
Kneecap – beautiful.

The warrior wants to tell Henry
how he longs to forgive the world,
forget, and let himself fall.
From his glistening beach
he dreams of the studio at Hoglands:
torn bronze, fleeces of sheep,
knives, shells, bones,
photos, dentist's tools,
strips of wax; misses
how Henry returned like a sea wave
tenderly to touch
the heroic slope of his clavicle.

Other creatures have orbited the warrior since.
Though gulls peck the meat from his body
as they might the fins from a fish
for food and sport,
he knows that a warrior must stay upright
and defend till the end –
that a pedestal hinders,
no matter how lovingly it licks
the stump of his thigh.



Warrior with Shield, 1953-54
Henry Moore
Bronze
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Cowles
54.22
On View in Gallery 371



Some/One, 2005
Do Ho Suh
Stainless steel, military dog tags, fiberglass resin
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and Gift of Funds
from the Sit Investment Associates Foundation
2012.77A-D
Not on View

MY MEMORABLE MIA

Merritt Nequette

The *Ife Shrine Head* has been one of my favorite objects in Mia's collection since I first saw it twenty-some years ago. Not only was it very different from other sculptures in the African collection, but it was in superb condition for a 700-year-old terracotta object.

As the story goes, she may have been a queen or at least of a royal family, indicated by the elaborate hairdo and the neck rings. The ancient Yoruba may have been a matrilineal society, and this object is an idealized portrait. The lines on the face probably represent scarification, a sign of beauty. Scholars have offered various opinions. An alternate suggestion is that the lines represent a veil that would be worn by royalty in the Yoruba tradition.

The Yoruba did bury their sculptures under giant trees in sacred groves. As late as the early 20th century, they were brought forth at certain times of the year for sacred rites, and then replaced in the ground. She represented the ancestor and was held in esteem.

However, without knowing all the background information, the object itself is powerfully serene, at peace, perhaps a bit authoritative, and somewhat mysterious. What is she thinking? What would she like us to know about her? I invite you to spend some time with her – perhaps in quiet meditation.

As an extension of this writing assignment, I would like to comment on my favorite small installation from some years back. I believe it was in gallery 262, and juxtaposed Do Ho Suh's *Some/One* and the *Warrior with Shield* (found elsewhere in this issue). These two objects, set facing each other, highlighted a series of wars and conflicts listed on the wall of the gallery. Sad to say, in the columns, ranging from the ancient Greeks to the present, I discovered that I had been alive for all of the final column, and some of the preceding column.

When I came upon this exhibition while looking for objects for an upcoming tour, it was one of my "breath-taking" moments in being a docent.



Shrine head, 12th-14th century
Ancient Yoruba
Terracotta
The John R. Van Derlip Fund
95.84
On View in Gallery 250

MUSINGS FROM IPE

Debbi Hegstrom

First and foremost, I wish for the safety and well-being of you and your loved ones in these difficult times. I mourn the death of George Floyd and am committed to the work that needs to be done to repair and remove the injustices of systemic racism.

Since the last issue of the *Docent Muse*, IPE staff has spent a lot of time talking about and planning for virtual tours. This means live, interactive sessions with groups of visitors. We see this as a wonderful opportunity to keep you, our volunteers, and our visitors engaged with Mia.

We are getting a number of requests from those who miss us: our loyal book tour attendees, teachers and professors, religious and social groups, and life-long learning organizations. With a new, digital format, we have the added opportunity of reaching out to people who may not be physically able to come to the museum. And Mia's audience can expand nationally and globally. In thinking through this new offering, we are designing for a sustainable tour experience that will last beyond our current pandemic situation. We will provide a new channel of access to Mia's collection.

In our initial meeting/discussion about adult virtual tours with a group of about 50 docents and guides, we outlined how we can put this idea into practice. A virtual tour will be like an in-museum tour, complete with a theme, transitions, key ideas, and questions for discussion. And we discussed the many added benefits of a digital platform. We will be able to:

- Choose images from Mia's vast collection of objects, some of which rarely go on view.

- Easily compare and contrast works of art that may be galleries apart, as you look at them side by side.

- Add great contextual resources to aid during the discussion and after, including videos and links to internet sites.

- Work with other docent or guide colleagues to plan and give the tour.

- Provide staff support for questions or technical issues.

- Record practice tours for you to view, to make improvements, and for other docents/guides to view, to learn and build confidence.

- Roll out and promote virtual tours via the website and social media with new, exciting visibility!

We are concentrating on adult and university tours now, but will also be offering training for school groups in the future. Stay tuned.

We look forward to working with you on this new adventure!



Crazy quilt, c. 1882

Unknown artist, United States

Silk, velvet, printed silk ribbons, silk and cotton thread
 Gift of Carolyn Crandall Bremner and Family
 in Honor of our Grandparents,
 Dr. Frank and Jennie May Allen
 2017.10

On View in Gallery 304