

# Docent Doings

November 2014

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## President's Message

You may not be able to tell by the weather, but persimmons, pomegranates and chrysanthemums in the markets, pumpkins on doorsteps, and Mexican sage blooming on the hillsides all remind us that Thanksgiving is inching closer.

The closer it gets, the more I think about the many traditions my family and I celebrate; one of those is to add a new tradition each year. Last year we added an Italian fava bean custom I had recently read about.

For this custom, you'll need to put a container (I used an Italian canning jar) filled with dried fava beans on the dining table. Guests take turns selecting beans and telling those gathered what they are thankful for. The idea is to empty the jar and to have each guest leave with a pocketful of favas, beans known for their good luck and, some say, their medicinal properties.

Of course, fava beans will be a part of my Thanksgiving table again this year, but I'm going to need a lot more beans since I have all of you who have enriched my life and given me so very much to be thankful for.

I hope that this Thanksgiving you find your own pockets full of beans, your homes filled with family and friends, and

your day filled with joy. Happy Thanksgiving!

Nancy Kiddie  
President  
Sustaining Docent 1999

## Touring Tips

Please enjoy another installment of "Touring Tips," these courtesy of Bonnie Fenton:

-Try some of the techniques we learned as trainees that may not have been taught to all trainees. I'm thinking of the Think/Pair/Share (take a moment to think then turn to a partner and share your idea). This strategy is especially good with the more quiet groups. Also, the students can use their bodies to show horizontal, vertical, diagonal or assume a shape in the artwork.

-If possible, ahead of time, have the teachers form groups with a mixture of boys and girls.

-If using note cards, keep them together with a hinged metal binder ring.

-Use visual aides – elementary students love them!

-For a transition – give them a clue about the upcoming artwork and have them guess something about it.

-This one is a little tricky – If a student does not have a nametag on, pick out something on their clothes to ID them when you call on them. It can be fun, but it has potential for embarrassment. Thankfully, most students have nametags.

-Maybe most important on this list – use everything the student says to you!! It validates them and makes the group think. Also, more students will speak up.

### **Bonnie's Tips Learned from Others**

-From Connie Sakamoto: Because I was not familiar with elementary students, I was surprised when I saw how Connie simplified information for them. For example, for one of the biennials, she asked the students to explain the meaning of OC then had them find it on a map.

-Also from Connie: Ask for a volunteer to be a line leader. This keeps the students in line and close together. The students can line up behind the leader in any order they want. You can ask for a volunteer to be a door monitor.

-From Sandy Simar: Start your tour in your least favorite zone or with your least favorite artwork or the artwork you know the least about; that way, you can spend more time on getting to know the students in the beginning, and give just a taste of the artwork.

-From Nancy Kiddie: Have students look carefully at an art work for a few seconds, then have them turn around and tell you what they remember from it.

### **“Fun” “Interesting” “Experimental” “Much better than one way lecture type tours”**

Above are some words visitors used to describe the demonstration tour given at the Continuing Education workshop on Monday, October 27<sup>th</sup> by gallery educator Melanie Gregg. Eight invited guests of docents Nancy Kiddie and Lynda Wilson agreed to take a mini-tour of Frederick Hammersley's work *Come* and Ed Kienholz's *End of the Bucket of Tar with Speaker Trail No. 2*. Afterward the group filled out feedback sheets on their interactive tour experience. In addition, Melanie took time to write a reflection piece on giving the tour. You can read more about visitors' reactions as well as Melanie's meaningful insights about her tour in the October 29<sup>th</sup> *Education Updates*. Based on the very positive feedback we received from docent observers of the mini-public tour, we will be planning another expanded observation opportunity for the next exhibition.

**Take a friend along:** I would like to encourage docents to invite fellow docents to shadow their school and public tours of *The Avant-Garde Collection* as a way of learning from one another and expanding our tool kit of touring techniques. For those scheduled to give public tours, consider asking friends to join you for those, too. You may discover, as I have, that doing this not only enlivens the tour but also is a great way to connect the community with the museum.

**Did you know that you can schedule a private tour for friends with no cost for admission?** This is a great perk for you and another way for the museum to

become better known in the community. I have scheduled tours for groups of my friends several times over the past two years. Friend tours can be a great laboratory for testing out questions and reactions to works. I have had my guests comment that they have even started checking the OCMA website on their own to see what is going on at the museum. If you are interested in scheduling a private tour for your friends, first check the tour calendar to make sure another tour is not scheduled for the time you are interested in. Then email Kelsey Ward at [kward@ocma.net](mailto:kward@ocma.net) with your request.

Lynda Wilson  
VP of Education  
Sustaining Docent 1997

### **Collected Thoughts on OCMA's Day in Venice**

On October 16 members of the OCMA Docent Council traveled to Venice Beach for a studio visit with Billy AI Bengston, lunch at Larry's Restaurant, and a private tour of the Shulamit Gallery. When asked to reflect on the most memorable part of the experience, here is what some of the participating docents shared:



OCMA docents, Billy AI Bengston, and Foxy (Billy and Wendy's dog). Image credit to Wendy AI

"For me, the theme of the day was family and art. Spent a lovely day with my docent family. We were welcomed into Billy AI Bengston's home/studio with the added treat of visiting with him and his family. We explored art in the beautiful Shulamit Gallery owned by the Shulamit family. Best of all, we had the pleasure of meeting Jenni's fiancé!!"  
Diane Cherniss  
Secretary  
Provisional Docent 2014

"My favorite part of a Day in Venice was sitting in Billy AI Bengston's living room in Venice... it was really like a salon, being surrounded by his incredible art (everywhere) and having Billy talk to us about what the art scene was like in Venice and Los Angeles in the 60's. He had a certain point of view about art that he shared with us. He and his wife were so welcoming and hospitable. I will long remember this experience."  
Joanne Mercer  
Observations  
Active Docent 2005

"I enjoyed seeing Billy AI Bengston's home decor. His kitchen floor was painted in quirky colors and patterns. Some of his kitchen cabinets looked fabricated by him with the tops made of custom wood planks. Even the way he (or his wife Wendy) arranged the vinegar bottles looked artistic. The vinegar bottles reminded me of the artist -- "full of piss and vinegar." The living room chairs were custom upholstered by him in interesting fabrics. At the end of the tour, I enjoyed seeing his interaction with his daughter whom he was very proud of and obviously doted on. I think she is the greatest work of the self-described "bad boy."  
Jayne Klunder  
Active Docent 2013

"I would say our almost two hours with Billy Al Bengston at this studio/home was the most memorable. He's now 80 years of age, was a very gracious host and, very revealing with his comments both a bit of his personal life as well as his career. It was also fun to walk from Billy Al's studio to lunch a few blocks away and from there, on the boardwalk, to the Shulamit Gallery. A number of us grew up in the LA area and as youngsters, knew Venice from our years going to the beach. It was interesting to see the changes in the Venice area in the last number of years. From a run down, kind of dangerous spot, its now appears to be a very vibrant 'arty' and people watching area. At least that's my take on the Venice we walked through."

Joyce Rosenblum  
Field Trips  
Sustaining Docent 2000

"Having never visited a "famous" artist's studio I wasn't sure what to expect. We were graciously welcomed by Billy Al and his wife, Wendy Al, who encouraged us to tour the entire house at our leisure. I was thrilled to see so many art pieces by well renowned artist contemporaries of Billy Al. Some of the pieces, Billy Al explained, had been given as gifts or bartered for a bowl of his homemade soup put together from tossed out vegetables from a nearby restaurant. The visit was reminiscent of the classic story "struggling artist makes good." The weather was lovely, the company invigorating and the day will remain in that special spot in my brain that stores only the very best memories."

Mary Blacker  
Provisional Docent 2014

"I felt so fortunate to be sitting in Billy Al Bengston's living room surrounded by his art, drinking coffee, and asking him so many question he so freely answered about art then and now, his art, and his "pals" What a fabulous day!"

Jeanne Johnson  
Supporting Docent 2000

"Each part of the day exceeded my expectations. We were surrounded by paintings and all manner of artifacts. It was a most memorable and inspiring day."

Edie Turisk Levin  
Tuesday Day Mentor  
Active Docent 2011

"Meeting with Al Bengston at his home in Venice was a treat! The art has not changed from the 60s only the people have. It's still Avant-garde to me"

Celia Niemerow  
Thursday/Friday Day Mentor  
Provisional Docent 2014



Billy Al and his daughter in conversation with OCMA docents and staff. Image credit to Celia Niemerow.

"It is always a unique experience to talk with an artist, and this was no exception. Billy held court in his home/loft and chatted about his journey as an artist and some of the stories from the "old days." What was remarkable was that we were given freedom to roam throughout the living space with its hardwood floors and high ceilings being surrounded by a wonderful collection of Billy's work. There were some works from other artists, presumably traded between artists. This gave a real insight into the lifestyle of the artist even though he was reluctant to answer several direct questions with little more than vague quips (which in itself was revealing!). I personally was taken aback by the paintings that I had never seen. This artist could be a one-man show at OCMA, and wouldn't that be fun!!"

Valerie Greeley  
VP of Membership  
Active Docent 2011



Mary Blacker, Jenni Stenson, Susana Schwartz, Edie Levin, Jeanne Johnson and Celia Niemerow enjoy the rooftop at Shulamit Gallery in Venice. Image credit to Shulamit Gallery staff.

## Important Dates to Remember

**11.03.14/10:00am**  
**Docent Council Board Meeting**

**11.03.14/11:30am**  
**Docent Council Book Club**  
Join fellow docents in the community room for a discussion around Love and Treasure by Ayelet Waldman.

**11.06.14/8:00pm**  
**Cinema Orange | *The Making of an Avant-Garde: The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies 1967-1984***

6:30 – 8:30pm Grilled Cheese Truck onsite  
8:00pm Film screening in Lyon Auditorium

**11.09.14/11:00am**  
**Free Second Sunday | *Global Holiday***

11:00am – 3:00pm Soho Taco Truck onsite  
11:00am – 4:00pm Hands-on art making  
11:00am – 5:00pm Free exhibition admission  
Don't miss a special Chinese dragon dance performance by students from the University of California, Irvine.

**11.10.14/10:00am**  
**State of the Museum Address + Docent Council Meeting**  
Hear from new director and CEO Todd De Shields Smith as well as the heads of other museum functions as we look at the year ahead. Learn about upcoming events and programs for 2013-2014.

**11.20.14/7:00PM**  
**Third Thursday | *West-Coast Avant-Garde Part 2: The New Garde***  
5:30pm – 7:00pm StuffINit Burger Truck onsite  
6:00pm Gallery tour  
7:00pm Panel discussion: Tom LaDuke,

Glenn Kaino, and Alexandra Grant.

**11.23.14/11:30am**

**Studio Sunday | Tinker Time**

11:30 am – 1:30 pm Studio workshop  
Led by local artist Brent Langieri,  
checkout Chris Burden's *A Tale of Two  
Cities* for inspiration and then head to  
this workshop for all the tools and  
gadgets you'll need. Robots, action  
figures, and racecars are welcome.

**Docent Kudos**

Big thanks to Katherine Jacobs, Pat  
Jorgensen, Joanne Mercer, and Young  
Shin for leading spotlight talks at  
Evening for Educators. Special thanks  
to Lynda Wilson for organizing  
Continuing Education and recruiting  
several "visitors" to attend. Thank you  
to Melanie Gregg for allowing us to  
watch her public tour experience.  
Thank you to Nancy Kiddie and Anita  
Mishook for recruiting the bulk of  
"visitors" to attend. Thank you to Mary  
Blacker for consolidating her decades  
worth of experience working with special  
needs students into a most helpful  
document. Thank you to Mary Blacker  
and Joaline Stedman for sharing their  
touring experience this summer.

**Save the Date  
Annual Holiday Party**

Monday, December 8, 6:00-8:00pm

Join your fellow docents and the  
museum staff in celebrating the holidays  
with food, drink and merrymaking in the  
OCMA pavilion. Invitation to follow.

**Avant-Garde Collection  
Research**

Research for the *Avant-Garde  
Collection* is available online at:

<http://avantgardecollection.wordpress.com>

**Avant-Garde Collection Previsit  
Materials and Lesson Plan**

Should you wish to reference them, the  
materials provided to teachers prior to  
their visit can be found at:

[http://avantgardecollection.wordpress.com/  
other-exhibition-resources/](http://avantgardecollection.wordpress.com/other-exhibition-resources/)

**January Reading Group  
Selection**

The reading group will not be meeting  
during the month of December.

On Looking: Eleven Walks with Expert  
Eyes, by Alexandra Horowitz, will be  
discussed on Monday, January 5, 2015.

**Upcoming Birthdays**

**November:**

Mary Ann Mahoney – 11/19  
Jackie Engebretson – 11/20  
Bonita Stern – 11/23

**December:**

Celia Niemerow – 12/5  
Diane Cherniss – 12/16  
Jenni Stenson – 12/23

## **Call for Contributors**

*Docent Doings* is looking to increase its offerings of unique, original content pertaining to the OCMA docent experience. If you attend a fieldtrip, view a film during Movie Madness, take part in book club, or participate in any other docent activity and are interested in writing about your experience, we'd love to hear from you! For details please email Desiree Glenn at [desiree.glenn@gmail.com](mailto:desiree.glenn@gmail.com)

## **Deadline for the next *Docent Doings***

Friday, November 21, 2014

Submit all copy to:

[desiree.glenn@gmail.com](mailto:desiree.glenn@gmail.com)