

November 2024

Treasure House News



President's Message By Annette Drey

Dear Docents,

With November we continue our transition into autumn. It is also the month of Election Day, feasts of Thanksgiving and World Kindness Day (Nov. 13) designated to encouraging acts of kindness to foster a more compassionate world.

It is also an opportunity for docents to sign up for the numerous tours that are scheduled for this month. See [Link here](#)

I heard from several of the docents how much they enjoyed touring the exhibit, and the positive responses they got from the students/adults they toured. If you are still a bit hesitant, contact one of the docents giving a tour in November, and ask if you can shadow their tour and see how they handle their presentation.

If any of you have an idea for something you would like to contribute the THN, feel free to contact Bruce or one of the Newsletter Committee members. Each of the members is responsible for a monthly column (see the bylines for each article) so you know who to contact, or if it is something that is more general, see Bruce.

Enjoy your October! Find a kind act to do for someone you don't know

Annette

IMPORTANT DATES

November 2 at 11:30 am

Exhibition Tours @ PAM - Cai Guo-Qiang:

A Material Odyssey

[Link here](#)

November 10 from 11am to 5pm

Free 2nd Sunday @ PAM - Silk Road

November 12, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

Docent Council Meeting

November 10, 2024

Movie Screening at Chinese Mann theater. More to come.

December 7 at 11:30am

Exhibition Tours @ PAM - Cai Guo-Qiang:

A Material Odyssey

[Link here](#)

December 10 at 11:30 am

USC PAM Docent Holiday Party

Featured item of the month

Mandala

Place Made: China
Date: Ming dynasty,
Wanli period (1572-1620)

Medium: Cloisonné enamel
on a copper base
Accession Number: 1990.52.3
Category: CEREMONIAL OBJECTS



Mandalas figure in the collections of most Asian art museums, including USC PAM. The actual word mandala means circle. But what is it? A mandala is a spiritual and ritual symbol commonly appearing in Asian cultures. It can be understood in two different ways: externally as a visual representation of the universe or internally as a guide for meditation. In the Hindu and Buddhist Tantric tradition, the belief is that by mentally entering the mandala and proceeding towards its center, you are guided on the path to enlightenment.



Mandalas typically are painted on paper or cloth, or drawn on a carefully prepared ground using colored sand. The mandalas of Tibetan paper or cloth scroll paintings are called tankas or thankas. (the Yamantaka mandala). In their most basic form, mandalas are circles contained within a square and arranged into sections that are all organized around a single, central point.

Sand mandalas use the same principles, but are carefully made of colored grains of sand, completed in a highly ritualized ceremony. They are traditionally destroyed shortly after their completion. The destruction of a sand mandala is a metaphor for the impermanence of life and a means of releasing its healing power. In the current exhibition, Cai utilizes the same concept in his work *Return to Darkness*, replacing sand with pigments of Tibetan painting mixed with gunpowder, then igniting the mandala, destroying the mandala image.

The enameled cloisonne mandala in the Snukal Gallery is named more for its circular design than for its meditative properties.

*Mindful Buddhism,
Mandala art is fleeting,
Like life itself.*

Docent Spotlight



Randy Quinton grew up far from anything Asian in Chattanooga, TN. As a child of the Cold War and Sputnik generation, his early education was directed toward mathematics and science with virtually nothing involving the arts. In college he studied journalism and literature, later transitioning to biomedical engineering, ultimately information technology. The last 30 years of his career were spent in hospital engineering, IT and ultimately healthcare administration for the US Department of Veterans Affairs in Southern California, retiring about 18 months ago.

Randy's post-retirement life has revolved around interests and activities he did not pursue earlier; specifically martial arts/boxing, piano, and a deeper appreciation of the arts. He's particularly fascinated by so-called 'outsider' art — designed by mystics, the mentally ill, or those untrained.. "Parallel Visions" at LACMA in the nineties remains his favorite exhibition.

He lives in Altadena with his wife, Ellie, and their senior, formerly feral cat, Carly. Randy enjoys the PAM docent experience in many ways--- the interesting and diverse fellow docents; continually learning about the culture; and, being around beautiful art. His tours with younger kids are relaxing, in that they provide him joyful hours in this turbulent world with happy people --- which he considers a gift.

Asian Highlights

Zhou Lianxia



周鍊霞

(1906-2000)

Zhou Lianxia, born Zhou Ziyi, was one of China's foremost women painters, poets, and writers during the Republican Period (1912-1949). Her painting style was traditional, but she lived the life of a modern woman in Shanghai, teaching art, publishing poetry, and selling her paintings – something unheard of just decades before.

Born into a wealthy family at the end of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), Ziyi was tutored in poetry as a child and studied painting with several renowned masters. At age 21, taking the artist name Zhou Lianxia, she became a leading artist at the Wang Xin Ji fan shop and married photographer and writer Xu Wanping, with whom she had five children. In the 1930s, Zhou taught painting at a prestigious girls' school, co-founded the Chinese Women's Calligraphy and Painting Society in Shanghai, and began winning international acclaim and awards for her art. She became known for her meticulous depictions of nature, including butterflies, flowers, birds, and particularly her *shinu tu*, or "pictures of beautiful ladies." She also wrote poetry, essays, and short stories, including stories to cheer up her fellow Chinese during the war with Japan.

In 1949, when Zhou's husband Xu traveled to Formosa (now Taiwan) on a business trip, the borders closed between China and Formosa, so the couple was tragically separated for over 30 years. Zhou raised her family alone and took up teaching art again in the 1950s and 60s, this time at the Shanghai Academy of Chinese Painting. During the culture revolution, she got blinded in one eye. In 1980, Zhou emigrated to the United States, where she and Xu reunited after their 30 year separation; thereafter, living with her family until her death in 2000 at the age of 94.

A memoir on her behalf "Swallowtail and Dragonfly" is produced by her granddaughter Evelyn Xu and will be debuting in November at the Chinese Mann Theater.



Touring Topics

Fran De La Rosa

Preparation is critical to success in many endeavors, and touring is no exception. Considering the following points, preparation will come naturally, and touring will be easier.

Know your subject. Become acquainted enough with the subject of your tour to engage in meaningful conversation, dialogue, or discussion with your visitors. Within each subject, there are areas of specific focus that can enhance your tours (themes). For example, in an Animals tour, you may focus on objects that feature animals as subjects that reflect the culture's belief system; the Nature theme focus could be the materials from nature used to create the objects.

Know your audience. If possible, discover who your visitors are. You may know from the pre-visit information provided (Language, Needs, etc.), or you may need to ascertain who they are within the first few minutes of the tour during your introduction. You can quickly discover the energy, interest levels, and many other behaviors that can inform your tour strategies.

Know your goals and objectives. What do you want the visitors to know at the end of the tour? In one hour, you will not seriously "teach" much, but you can go a long way toward piquing a visitor's interest enough so that they will want to find out more at home or school.

Have a tour plan. Determine a progression that makes sense to you. If you know where you want to go (the goal) and how to get there, your visitors will be more likely to make meaning from your tour. The objective should not be to tell visitors what you think they need to know but to give them enough information to discover meaning.

Flexibility, flexibility, flexibility. There are times when circumstances prevent you from following your plan; there is only one thing you can do: pivot! You may have to share an object you know little about, making this an excellent time for you to learn WITH your visitor. Tell them that you don't know much about the particular object and enter into an inquiry together

In the tour. Be mindful of the physical aspects of the space. How much room is around the object? Is the object at eye level for younger visitors? Is there a comfortable space for visitors to complete an activity? Use your voice effectively depending on the conditions and appropriate vocabulary depending on the age of your visitors. Eye contact is always an excellent way to put your audience at ease and maintain their interest.

Enjoy! Humor is an age-old strategy for making connections with people. Smiles and laughter can go a long way toward ensuring a successful touring experience. Make your tour a museum visit everyone will remember.

Study Group Activity

Study Group 1: SUMMER-AUTUMN 2024

July - "The Path", edited by Michael Puett and Christine Gross-Loh. Each chapter dealt with a different early Chinese philosopher. Confucius and Mencius were emphasized.

August - Fiction: "An Artist of the Floating World," by Kazuo Ishiguro. The story takes place in post-WWII Japan. The subject of war, the atomic bomb, Japanese marriage customs, generational differences regarding the outcome of the war. Author: Nobel Prize Winner for Literature.

September - Individual reports on Central Asian countries "Sovietistan"

October - Complete Central Asia reports; revisit Cai Guo Xiang exhibit.

Study Group 2

Dujiangyan Irrigation Project

In 316 BCE (during the Warring States Period) the Qin 'state' was successful in its conquest of the Shu kingdom. The Shu kingdom resided in the Chengdu plain. At that time the Chengdu plain was too dry to be productive for planting of essential agricultural products. Specifically, with only one river, the Min [located just to the west of present-day Chengdu], flowing from the north; hugging the western foothills and emptying into the Yangtze [長江] in the summer wet season, it would flood; whereas, in the dry season there was not enough water for crops. Also, it changed course every year; consequently, it was not navigable. Li Bing [李冰], hydraulic engineer and politician in the former Shu kingdom, was appointed as its governor by King Zhaoxiang of Qin in 277 BCE. Li embarked on finding a way to efficiently irrigate the Plain.



Docents On the Go

The Huntington Library Shoya House Tour

October 7, 2024

Our fellow docent, Darlene Kelly, kindly gave us a tour at the Huntington Library's Japanese garden and Shoya House. It was a beautiful autumn day with the cosmos in full bloom. We immersed ourselves in Japanese history and culture without an airplane ticket.

Thank you, Darlene. You are the best.



Highlights of the Kun Opera: The Jade Hairpin

A special treat was enjoyed by those who attended The Kun Opera's "Jade Hairpin" on Saturday, October 5, 2024 at the Huntington Library's Rothenberg Hall, performed by the Chinese Kwun Opera Society Thunder Music Association and written by the Ming dynasty playwright Cao Lian. The love story reveals the relationship between Pan Bizheng, a young scholar, and the Daoist nun Chen Miaoqiang. "Kunqu" (Kun Opera), one of the oldest and most refined forms of opera in China was performed during the 16th through 18th centuries in the private garden residences of Suzhou.

The instruments used include the Bamboo flute, a side-blown flute called the "di" or an end-blown flute called the "xiao;" "Sheng" a reed pipe; "Suna," a horn; "Pipa" a fretted lute; "Sanxian" a fretless lute, also known as a "three-stringed banjo": "Yueqin," a flat round-bodied lute; Wooden clappers, used to punctuate actions and emotions on stage; "Meyuan," a reed whistle wind instrument; "Tiqin," a bow-wiping instrument; and a "Shuangqing," a plucked instrument. The sounds created by the orchestra complemented the elegant action and singing by the two lead artists. The absence of the names of the actors and musicians is evidence of the magnanimity of these entertainers.

On Sunday, performances of "Highlights of Kun Opera," which included "Captured Alive," from the Water Margin, "A Portrait Retried," from the Peony Pavilion, and "An Unsightly Surprise," from Mistake with a Kite were presented. This rare weekend experience

*Chinese opera,
Live orchestra and singers,
Superb artistry.*



Bhutan - Land of the Thunder Dragon - Happiness

Known for its measurements of the Gross National Happiness (see youtube below for happiness computation), Bhutan is also called the land of the Thunder Dragon because of its wild thunderstorms in the mountain peaks of the Himalayas.

The Bhutanese emphasize the cultural values of kindness, compassion, and respect for all living beings, which contribute to their overall sense of happiness. A happiness quotient is computed, not only based on the qualities listed above, but also including environmental conservation. A significant portion of the land is designated as national parks and protected areas. The Bhutanese believe in living in harmony with nature and recognizing the interconnection between the environment and well-being. Lush landscapes, abundant biodiversity, and pristine air contribute to a serene and tranquil atmosphere, all which foster happiness.

In Bhutan, social cohesion and a strong sense of community are present, with vibrant communal activities, e.g. festivals, religious ceremonies, and community work. People feel connected and valued and there is a strong sense of belonging and happiness. Deeply rooted in the Buddhist philosophy, the citizens pursue inner peace, mindfulness, and compassion. One can witness prayer flags flying, the sound of mantras recited, all creating a spiritual ambiance enhancing the well-being of the Bhutanese people. Because of a slower pace of development, a more thoughtful and sustainable integration of modernity has been allowed.

[Link to "Bhutan: The Happiest Country in the World?"](#)



Other Reminders



Join CHSSC and China Society of Southern California to compare and contrast the life of Tyrus Wong, artist and Disney Legend, on film and in print. Karen Fang, author of the newly published book, *Background Artist, The Life and Work of Tyrus Wong*, will be interviewed about her new book by Pamela Tom, the award-winning filmmaker who created the feature film, *Tyrus*. See speaker bios on Page 3.

Golden Dragon Restaurant
960 N Broadway
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Registration: 5:30PM
Dinner: 6:00PM
Cost: \$40
Golden Dragon Parking: \$5

RSVP: yvonnechang8@gmail.com

There is no charge to attend the program which will start around 7:15.