

April 2025

Treasure House News



President's Message

Dear Docents,

A big thank you to all those who signed up to tour after our last Docent Council Meeting, and to those who continue to fill out the touring calendar. You are our heroes. As docents, this is our most important responsibility, and in this role we serve as an important asset to the museum. As we engage visitors, we provide a more meaningful museum-going experience for them and encourage museum goers of the future.

Art Night was well attended by the public. It was nice to see so many people filling our galleries. It gave life to the exhibition and provided an special opportunity for many first time USC PAM visitors.

Also, it is time to start thinking ahead as to what committees you would like to participate on next year. Talk to Committee Chairpersons or to your fellow docents. There are many ways in which you can support our docent program.

Enjoy Spring!

Annette

IMPORTANT DATES

April 1 at 10am

Docent Council Board Meeting
(Board members only)

April 8 at 10am

Docent Council Meeting and Lecture

April 11

Pushing the Boundaries of Traditional Art
Forms: A Conversation with Young Joon
Kwak, Rafa Esparza and Jennifer Long
(RSVP began 3/3)

April 13

Free 2nd Sunday@PAM - Teen Takeover

June 10

Docent Council Annual Awards Luncheon

Gallery Spotlight

Nude Poppies

By Annette Drey



A discussion of Cai Guo Qiang's art making process can start at this painting, beginning with the large photo on the left wall showing him making a drawing for this work. Cai begins with the smaller illustration in his hand, and by using a grid pattern, he blocks out the same proportions and enlarges the drawing to the wall size painting you see in front of you.

The simple question, "What do you notice?" is a particularly useful start to a discussion of this work. The responses: lines, color, a flower, lots of open space, bumpy surface, etc., can lead in many directions. Why does Cai call this work a "painting"? What are some painterly tools he uses? Line, color, positive/negative space, shape, texture, emphasis/focus, value (light and dark), etc.

If students have difficulty seeing a flower, have them stand back and focus on the center. Most of them will respond, "Oh, yeh." Introduce the title, "Nude Poppies". Cai Guo-Qiang has created several works that feature poppies, including paintings and a fireworks display. His work often explores the explosive power of gunpowder, and the pain and catastrophe that can result.

Is Cai also a scientist? His love of experimentation, his fascination with the unpredictable and his use of unusual materials would support that. Cai loves to use dichotomy in his work. Can gunpowder remind one both of destruction and creation?

Let's look at Cai's comments about his own work: (primary source material.) "My work is sometimes like the poppy flower. It has this almost romantic side, but yet it also represents a poison to society," says Cai Guo-Qiang. "So, from gunpowder, from its very essence, you can see so much of the power of the universe—how we came to be. You can express these grand ideas about the cosmos. But at the same time, we live in the world where explosions kill people, and then you have this other immediate context [of the poppy] for the work."

Gunpower has always been used for human destruction. Yet, Cai creates art (something positive) from a negative. The process is violent (explosions and burning surfaces) which creates beautiful drawings for visual pleasure. He uses the poppy flower as a symbol in his work, a beautiful flower to look at; but, it can also remind one of the drug trade that is so destructive for mankind. Here, the appearance of the flower is nice, but something sinister lurks in the background. "Artists always try to open a skylight for themselves," muses Cai, "where the moral and the evil can both enter."

*Symbolic poppies,
Beauty versus destruction,
Lessons for mankind.*

Docent Spotlight

By Richard Ewell



Nancy Lan was born in Taiwan, the daughter of a well-known eye doctor. She was fortunate to be able to attend the top local schools after which she attended Fu Jen University. She moved to the US to attend graduate school at Kent State, receiving her PhD in biochemistry, and went on to do post-doctoral studies at the U. of Illinois. Having finished her formal studies, she worked as a research fellow at UC San Francisco Medical School, and on the research faculty of USC and Caltech. Her husband, John Hall, is a retired civil engineering professor at Caltech. Together they have a son, Galen, who lives with his wife and son in NYC.

Even though her father was an artist, she had never spent the time to understand his work or talk to him about art, since she was so busy pursuing her own career, including co-founding a pharmaceutical company. When the timing was right, she decided to retire early and to spend more time studying and practicing art, especially ceramics. After taking some courses in art history at PCC, she decided to use what she had learned by becoming a docent at PAM in 2010. She enjoys being a docent; and, from time to time, she thinks of her father and how he must be proud of her.

She has traveled extensively throughout her life and still loves to go back to Taiwan to visit. She is interested in just about everything and enjoys learning about things she doesn't know about.

Asian Highlights

Khmer (Cambodian) New Year

By Karen Komai Margolis



In mid-April, Cambodians celebrate the most important holiday of the year – **Khmer New Year, called “Choul Chnam Thmey,” meaning “Enter the New Year.”** Originating from Hindu Brahmanism, celebrations were historically held on the first day of the first lunar month in autumn (November and December). With the advent of Buddhism, the 13th century Khmer king changed the holiday to April, the fifth lunar month, of the lunisolar calendar. 95% of the Khmer people were farmers, and were busiest from November through March. After the harvest season and just before the rainy season, April provided respite from the sweltering heat. In 2025, the three-day New Year celebration lasts from April 14th through April 16th. Laos, Thailand, and Southern Vietnam observe these same days.

On the first day, “Moha Songkran,” well-dressed people gather for prayers, burn candles and incense sticks at shrines, bring offerings to the monks and receive blessings at temples. On the second day, “Virak Vanabat,” people make donations to charities helping the less fortunate, and attend special ceremonies at the monastery dedicated to family ancestors. The third day, “Vearak Loung Sak” is dedicated to washing Buddha with a mixture of scented water and perfume, washing away evil deeds, and bringing good luck. Children wash their grandparents and parents to apologize for any mistakes made in the past year, while receiving good wishes and advice for the future.

Cambodian adults and children eat special dishes: “kho” (stew), fish curry, and papaya salad, meanwhile taking part in several traditional games, dancing and playing in the streets. Chh Chhoung: Two groups stand opposite each other, throwing the “chhoung” (a rolled cloth) from one group to another. When someone gets hit, one group starts dancing and the other group sings to the dance. Chab Kon Kleng is played by adults on the first night of the first New Year’s Day. One player is the hen who protects her chicks from an evil crow. Both sides sing a song of bargaining, while the chicks hide behind the hen, and the crow is challenged to catch as many chicks as possible. Leak Kanseng: Children sit in a circle with one holding a “kanseng” folded in a round shape. They walk around the circle while singing a song, and the “kanseng” is put behind one of the children in the circle. The child discovers the “kanseng” and picks it up and playfully hits the person next to him with it.



“Soursdey Chhnam Thmey!” is a Khmer New Year’s greeting presented with a slight bow, and with hands held together as in prayer.

Reference

<https://theaviaryhotel.com>
[tripadvisor.com/Female Tuk Tuk-Drivers-of-Siem-Reap Angkor](https://tripadvisor.com/Female_Tuk_Tuk-Drivers-of-Siem-Reap_Angkor)
<https://kampatour.com/cambodian-new-year>
<https://www.travelbeginsat40.com>

*Buddhist Khmer fete,
Cambodian New Year’s Day,
Pray, play, dance, and sing!*

Touring Topics

By Fran De La Rosa

Uncertainty

Have you had this experience? You plan a great tour for your ideal group. You welcome them, make a connection, and the tour is going great—until you get to the one object for which you have planned the most: “The Saddle Rug!” You’ve researched saddle rugs, Tibet, and symbology. You are ready. But the object isn’t there! A rug IS in this space; just not the one you “know.” What do you do?

According to Maggie Jackson, author of *Uncertain: The Wisdom and Wonder of Being Unsure*, the “best of thinking begins and ends with the wisdom of being unsure.” As Docents, we have studied the cultures, artists, and objects we will present to our visitors, with the idea that we will share our knowledge. But, this knowledge is most useful in predictable situations. What do you do when the situation changes or you get a question you’ve never heard from a visitor? This is where all your preparation, knowledge, and experience kick into gear, and you embrace the uncertainty and move into it.

Docents are often considered “experts” and are expected to provide knowledge. There are, however, two types of experts: routine experts and adaptive experts. Routine experts work within their comfort zone. They have studied and are literate in their fields. They can conduct a tour without issue. On the other hand, adaptive experts:

- Inhabit the question that tries their thinking..
- Test the possibilities.
- Do the uncomfortable.
- Love mistakes and detours.
- Partner with the visitor.
- Work with curiosity.

Think about it: if you, the “expert,” give your visitors all the information about the object at the outset, you are not activating their curiosity, questioning, or engagement skills. However, if you approach the object with “well, what do you think” or “what do you notice,” you are more likely to jumpstart a meaningful conversation. Using “hedge” words such as maybe, could be, possibly, or even “I don’t know” can significantly change your visitors’ engagement.

So, I challenge you to embrace the uncertainty in your tours. You don’t even have to wait for an external event to force you into it; try presenting a new object, perhaps one you don’t particularly like, to your group. Or, better yet, don’t spend too much time planning the tour!... Do the uncomfortable! It will be well worth it.

March Touring Heroes

A big thank you to the docents who signed up to tour during March 2025:

Ana Soulriver
Annette Drey
Candace Siegle
Carmen Choy
Chuck Woo
Daniel Grosz
Eiko Kubota
Evelyn Xu
Fran De La Rosa
Jane Hirschkowitz
Jeanne Heilman
Jin Sook Jung
John O'Malley
Jon Sides
Kathy Wales
Lisa Koizumi
Lorenzo Vargus
Melissa Patton
Nancy Lan
Shari Litsey
Susan Sides
Yvonne Lee

Unique Nippon arts,
From outside influences,
A new creation.

Hiroshige art,
The floating world of
Edo, Japanese treasures.

DOCENTS ON THE GO

By Eiko Kubota

Susan and Jon Sides are hosting Tai Chi lessons at USC PAM auditorium every Monday. Tai chi, also known as Taijiquan, is a gentle, mind-body practice involving slow, flowing movements, meditation, and controlled breathing, originating as a martial art but now primarily focused on health promotion and well-being. It offers numerous health benefits, including improved balance, flexibility, strength, and coordination, as well as stress reduction and enhanced mental well-being. Please join their class and be healthy!

*Mind and body health,
Endurance, strength and balance,
Tai-chi for docents.*



STUDY GROUP 1:

After viewing the Bhutanese movie entitled: "The monk and the gun," members discussed the satirical work, describing some of the challenges as the country transitioned from a benevolent monarchy to a democracy. The story revolves around the acquisition of an antique gun by a monk and a foreign dealer who wants to buy it. Meanwhile, the people are faced with learning how to vote. In this country where the people value the quotient of "happiness" over that of economic success, many amusing anecdotes are revealed. Questions of the pros and cons of a democratic nation are explored. The film is highly recommended. The surprise ending is truly inspiring.

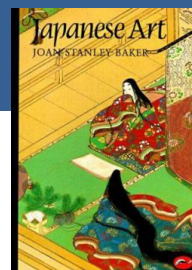
LIBRARY CORNER

By Fran.De La Rosa

Japanese Art (World of Art)

Joan Stanley-Baker

702.52 S

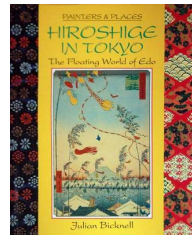


The uniqueness of Japanese culture rests on the fact that throughout its history Japan has continually taken, adapted, and transformed diverse influences from Korea, China, the South Seas, Europe, and the Americas into distinct traditions. Extensively revised, updated, and expanded since its first publication, this authoritative survey of the arts of Japan, from the prehistoric period to the present, brings together the results of the most recent research on the subject. Profusely illustrated with examples from all the arts - painting, calligraphy, the decorative arts, and architecture - and with a wide-ranging bibliography, Japanese Art addresses itself equally to those who come to the subject for the first time and to the student. It is a concise overview of a fascinating and perplexing culture in which interest has never been greater than it is today.

Hiroshige in Tokyo: The Floating World of Edo

Julian Bicknell

700.92 H



"Hiroshige in Tokyo: The Floating World of Edo" by Julian Bicknell explores the work of Utagawa Hiroshige, a key figure in ukiyo-e art. The book captures the essence of Edo-period Japan, highlighting city life, nature, and culture through vivid illustrations.

Bicknell provides context on Edo's social and artistic landscape, enriched by personal anecdotes about Hiroshige's life and influences. The narrative deepens the reader's appreciation of his art, particularly his relationship with nature and seasonal themes. Notable works like "The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō" demonstrate the connection between urban life and the natural world.

*Unique Nippon arts, From
outside influences,
A new creation.*

*Hiroshige art,
The floating world of Edo,
Japanese treasures.*

AROUND TOWN-IN PERSON

By Maureen Nyhan

LACMA

Line, Form, Qi: Calligraphic Art from the Fondation INK Collection

April 6 – October 19, 2025



An examination of the innovations in calligraphic art, *Line, Form, Qi: Calligraphic Art from the Fondation INK Collection* highlights experimental works of modern and contemporary calligraphic art made by artists including Fung Ming Chip, Gu Wenda, Inoue Yūichi, Lee In, Henri Michaux, Nguyễn Quang Thắng, Qiu Zhijie, Tong Yangtze, Wang Dongling, Wei Ligang, and Xu Bing. Works on view reveal the evolution of the pictograph, explorations of the relationship between content and form, the development of new scripts, and the abstraction of the written word. Accompanied by a scholarly exhibition catalogue, *Line, Form, Qi* is the second in a series of exhibitions of works from the Fondation INK Collection, a 400-piece collection of contemporary art in the spirit of ink that was promised to LACMA in 2018.

[Line, Form, Qi Collection Details](#)

Exhibits Closing at Bowers The Eternal Garden: Titanium Art by Aka Chen

April 13

Free with General Admission



Spanning a diverse range of sizes from small vases to 30-foot-wide polyptychs, these sculptures feature ethereal branches cradling exquisite jewelry representations of blooming botanicals and animated wildlife, all crafted from jewels and titanium.

[Aka Chen Exhibit](#)

LACMA

Running Lines: A Calligraphy Demonstration by Yahon Chang

April 6, 2025 | 2:00-3:30 pm



Celebrated Taiwanese calligrapher Yahon Chang marries ink, performance, and time-honored artistic practice in this live demonstration, accompanied by prominent classical pianist Steven Lin. Chang will also join curator, Susie Ferrell, in conversation to further expound on both the work he creates that day, as well as his work in the exhibition *Line, Form, Qi: Calligraphic Art from the Fondation INK Collection*.

Free: [RSVP](#)

Huntington Lecture

Lorraine Wilcox, professor at Emperor's College, presents the writings of three female doctors from late Imperial China.

April 10, 2025 - 2:30-3:30 pm Rothenberg Hall;
free with admission

[Imperial China: Three Woman Doctors](#)

Norma Kershaw auditorium | closing lecture

SUNDAY | APRIL 13 | 1:30 – 2:30 PM

Join Dr. Xu Yang, Associate Curator at the Museum and Art Gallery of the University of Hong Kong, for an illuminating exploration of traditional Chinese garden design. Through iconic examples such as the Garden of Perfect Brightness (Yuanmingyuan)—an imperial estate renowned for its breathtaking landscapes and artistic ingenuity—Dr. Yang will uncover the philosophies and cultural significance behind these masterpieces. This talk offers valuable context for appreciating *The Eternal Garden: Titanium Art by Aka Chen* on the exhibition's closing day.

Ticketed Event: Members \$15 | General \$20

[Garden Design Lecture Reservations](#)

AROUND TOWN-ONLINE

USC Dornslife: A Book Talk featuring the authors of *Mugai Nyodai: The Woman Who Opened Zen Gates*

Unraveling the Stories of Mugai Nyodai

Tues April 15 | 4PM PST



Who was the real Mugai Nyodai (1223–1298), medieval zen poet of Japan? The webinar features two of the book's authors, Monica Bethe and Patricia Fister, who will discuss aspects of the book and share some of the extant portrait statues and paintings of Nyodai and other material objects associated with her.

[Detailed Information on Mugai Nyodai Lecture](#) | [Register for the Zoom link](#)

Japan Foundation Los Angeles: Kami Worship in Early Japan

Japan and Kami

Wed April 09 | 7:00pm - 8:15 pm PST



Kami is a generic name for the various divinities (or metahuman entities) venerated in the Shinto tradition. Kami include figures from ancient Japanese mythology, features of the natural landscape, deified historical figures, gods brought to Japan from China, Korea, and India, and spirits from folkloric beliefs. In this talk, after presenting the most important aspects of Shinto by placing them in historical context, Dr. Fabio Rambelli will discuss the main features of the ancient kami with special reference to their cosmology.

This is the first lecture in a four-part series that will explore the various relationships that exist between Japanese culture, Shinto, and its deities.

SAVE
the
DATE

**Docent Council
Annual Awards Luncheon**

June 10th, 2025