

October 2025

# Treasure House News

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## President's Message

Dear Docents,

We are delighted to know that the installation of the new exhibition is underway. It will be a very exciting and different exhibition involving community participation. Already we have seen requests from old family photos to homemade dishes from your favorite gatherings. We may just find that the exhibition takes on a different cultural meaning for each of us.

School tours will begin in January, 2026; our training and exhibition committee are working on getting all of us ready to tour. Whether you're returning or took a break last year, these programs are designed to equip you with some new tools, fresh perspectives, and the confidence to inspire every guest who walks through our doors.

You will be hearing about a list of programs and support for touring in the next month. Let's all embrace this new journey and work together for our shared purpose and commitment to the museum.

Yvonne

## IMPORTANT DATES

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**October 7 at 10am**

Docent Council Board Meeting  
(Board members only)

**October 14 at 10am**

Docent Council Meeting  
David Kim Lecture on new exhibition

**November 4 at 8:30am**

Docent Council Board Meeting  
(Board members only – note time change)

**November 4 at 10am**

(note first Tuesday)  
Docent Council Meeting

# Gallery Showcase

## Yokai

By Annette Drey

With Halloween around the corner, and after a sneak peek at the upcoming exhibition, it feels like the perfect time to explore the fascinating world of *yōkai*. In Japanese folklore, *yōkai* is a catch-all term for supernatural beings, spirits, demons, and mysterious forces. They can be frightening or funny, mischievous or protective, terrifying or oddly charming. For centuries, they've haunted Japanese art, literature and imagination, embodying both fear of the unknown and fascination with the unseen.

Unlike a single creature type, *yōkai* encompass a wide spectrum. They appear as demons (oni), restless ghosts (yūrei), shape-shifting foxes (kitsune), or even everyday objects that come to life (tsukumogami). They blur the boundary between human and supernatural realms.

### Examples of Yōkai

- Oni: Towering demons with horns, fangs and heavy clubs. They represent anger and chaos. Often compared to Western demons or ogres, oni are not purely evil but considered to be wrathful and uncontrolled.
- Kitsune: Magical foxes capable of shape-shifting. Known as tricksters, they can deceive, amuse, or enlighten; often linked to wisdom and the spirit world.
- Yūrei: Ghosts of the unsettled dead, usually depicted as pale figures with long black hair and white robes. They haunt places tied to their unresolved issues.
- Tsukumogami: Everyday objects that spring to life after a century of use. They can be friendly or mischievous depending on how they were treated.
- Gaki: The “hungry ghosts” drawn from Buddhist belief. They are cursed with endless suffering by their insatiable desires and attachments.

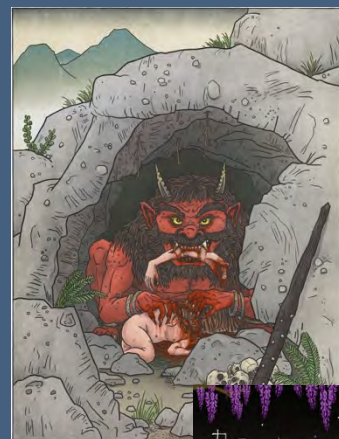
From ancient scrolls and kabuki plays to modern manga, anime, and video games, *yōkai* have remained an enduring presence in Japanese imagination. They embody cultural reflections on fear, mortality, humor, and the mysteries of existence. Today, they still inspire stories that balance the eerie with the playful – reminders that the supernatural, like Halloween itself, can be both frightening and fun.

(See ‘Around Town’ for a related, local activity.)

*Nipponese “yokai”,*

*Watch out for the “oni” (yikes!),*

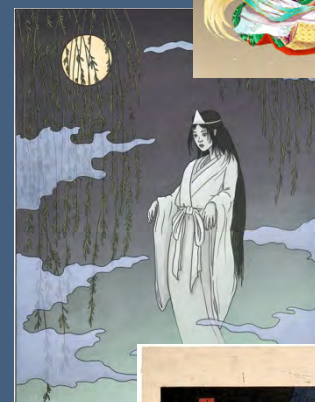
*Fun, folkloric art.*



Oni



Kitsune



Yurel



Tsukumogami



Gaki



## Asian Highlights

### Annual Celebration of Durga Puja

By Bruce Cristol



**Durga Puja** (literal translation: worship of Durga) is a celebration of the Goddess Durga who represents the embodiment of Shakti, the powerful feminine force that governs all cosmic creation, existence, and change — and her victory over a demon named Mahishasura (see below). The genesis of Durga Puja is rooted in the Hindu myth of Goddess Durga's defeat of the buffalo demon, Mahishasura, a story first recorded in the [Devi Mahatmya](#) section of the [Markandeya Purana](#) around the 5th to 7th centuries CE. The festival commemorates this victory of good over evil and evolved historically from private, landlord-organized celebrations in the late 16th century to a widespread

community event, or [Sarbojonin](#), by the early 20th century. She is said to have descended from her home in (Mt.) Kailash with Lord Shiva to her maternal home on Earth. It is said that Mt. Kailash has allegedly never been climbed — by mortals - due to its religious significance.

Durga Puja starts after the completion of Pitru Pakshand and is celebrated during Navratri. It is held for 10 days in the month of Ashvin (September–October), the seventh month of the Hindu calendar. During this time people will recite prayers, perform rituals, and sing songs dedicated to her. This celebration is especially significant in the Indian state of Bengal as well as Nepal. In addition, the celebration now encompasses countries with a large Hindu population, namely Bangladesh, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia. During these days, devotees worship Durga and her nine forms (*Navadurga*) through rituals like fasting, devotional singing, and traditional dances, while celebrating the triumph of good over evil. The festival culminates on the tenth day, Vijaya Dashami or Dussehra, with the immersion of Durga's idol signifying the final victory over Mahishasura.



Mahishasura is a Sanskrit word composed of 'Mahisha' meaning buffalo and 'asura' meaning demon, translating to 'buffalo demon'. Mahishasura had gained the boon that no man could kill him. In the battles between the devas and the demons (asuras), the devas, led by Indra, were defeated by Mahishasura. Subjected to defeat, the devas assembled in the mountains where their combined divine energies coalesced into the goddess Durga. Goddess Durga is one of the most recognizable symbols associated with Hindu

mythology. The trident, with its three prongs, is interpreted to represent many trinities in Hindu mythology, including the three Gunas, three time periods and the three universal cycles. It is believed that the wielder of the trident is a master of all trinities. The trident was used by Goddess Durga to kill Mahishasura.



# Docents On The Go

By Annette Drey and others



Valentina was bid a farewell on her last day by the Docent Council Board. She was presented with a cake and a \$100 gift certificate to Vromans from the Docent Council as a thank you for her many years as our Education Coordinator. She was treated to lunch hosted by Kathy Wales at CalTech Atheneum after the meeting.

## Study Group Activity

### STUDY GROUP 1

By Karen Margolis

The subject for Study Group 1 this month is Vietnam. Each member has chosen a chapter from the anthology by Edward H. Schafer, author of, "The Golden Peaches of Samarkand," entitled "The Vermilion Bird, T'ang Images of the South," a 1967 publication, which was shared by Jin-Sook Jung. The anthology encompasses the history, sociology, religion, international affairs, geography, minerals, botany, animals, and outer space, all taking place contemporaneously with the T'ang in Nam-Viet. The writing is in prose as well as in verse, challenging the reader to deeply explore this civilization. Most likely, this will be our subject matter for several months.

### STUDY GROUP 2

By Maureen Nyhan

We had 2 travel presentations. One presentation was on the Chincoteague, VA, pony swim's 100th anniversary which led to the discovery of Henry Fukuhara, a Japanese American watercolorist, florist and teacher. We watched an episode of California's Gold, highlighting his work from Manzanar. We also had a fascinating presentation by another member's New Guinea travels from back in the 1980s.

The Henry Fukuhara episode can be viewed online here:

[Songbird of Manzanar - California's Gold](#)

## Docent Spotlight

By Richard Ewell

**Ana Soulriver** was born and raised in Cali, Colombia and moved to the U.S. in her teens, with her parents and sister. She earned a



Bachelor's in Business Administration & Entrepreneurship from the University of Texas at San Antonio. She was drawn to Southern California's dynamic blend of architecture, history, and innovation and chose Pasadena as her home. She currently works at NAI Capital, in Pasadena, as a Senior Associate, specializing in commercial real estate and investment sales.

After moving to Pasadena, she became deeply involved in the cultural and architectural fabric of the city. Her love for architecture and storytelling led her to become a docent at the USC Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena Heritage, and the Hollyhock House in Los Angeles. She was drawn to docent work because she believes in preserving and sharing the stories behind our spaces—whether they're historic homes or contemporary developments. She's bilingual and multicultural, with a passion for creating bridges between people and places through design and storytelling. Being a docent has allowed her to stay grounded in history while being active in the future of city development. It's a rewarding intersection of past and progress, and she's grateful to be a part of it.

Outside of real estate and volunteer work, she is passionate about urbanism, adaptive reuse, and how thoughtful design can create more inclusive, vibrant communities. She also enjoys travel, especially when it offers new cultural perspectives—whether exploring local neighborhoods or out of the country destinations.

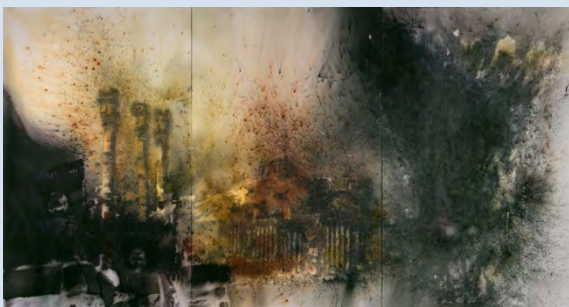
# Touring Topics

By Fran De La Rosa

## Meaning-Making ... and the “Ah-ha” Moment

Meaning is shaped by learners through life experiences, personal perspectives, and uniqueness, depending on factors such as age, social interactions, and socio-economic status, among others. Young visitors make meaning by receiving new information and interpreting that information through their own lens. Older visitors may refine or change their understanding through meaningful interactions. Engaging with visitors, young or old, is one of the most rewarding experiences for a docent. When an interaction leads to a conversation, which leads to a discussion, which leads to an “Ah-ha,” meaning is made.

One of the most intriguing objects in the PAM collection is ‘**Origins of Life**’ by Korean ceramic artist **An Sung Min**. It is an oversized egg with a significant crack in the top quarter. A group of third-grade students was interested in the object. They spent time viewing, evaluating, and wondering about the object. Our conversation began with the title of the work and the requisite questions. Eventually, we got to the obvious: “What came first, the chicken or the egg?” Some said chicken; some said egg. Individuals were thrown off balance by my asking, “Why do you think that?” The wheels were turning, so sure in their responses, until a raised eyebrow made them rethink. Next, I described the shiny interior glaze and asked why the artist made the inside shiny but not the outside. They spent some time pondering, and finally, one girl said, “It’s like people, you can never know the beauty inside by just looking at the outside.” This response took my breath away.



An interaction with middle schoolers sheds further light on meaning-making. Our recent exhibition featured a large piece by **Cai Guo Qiang**, entitled **Palmyra**, which was Cai’s interpretation of the recent destruction of the ancient city of Palmyra. Students engaged in the “jumping in” strategy, where they imagined themselves entering the work and, using their senses (sight, smell, hearing, and touch), discovered and interacted with the environment. They recorded their thoughts at each stage and shared them with the group.

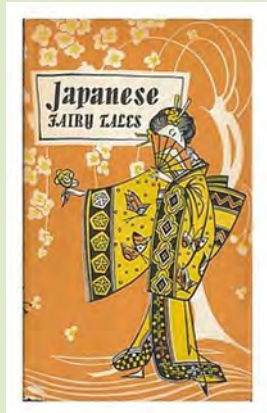
The observations were astute: What do you see? “Chaos.” What do you smell? “Smoke.” What do you hear? “Sirens.” How do you feel? “Afraid.” At this point, the students were told the background of Palmyra. Their responses were somewhat understandable, as many of the students had been impacted by the recent fires. Lastly, “What might the artist be saying?” Silence. More silence. Moments passed. Finally, “War is not good.”

Authors Rika Burnham and Elliott Kai-Kee, in their work *Teaching in the Art Museum*, state: “Museums are places of possibility.” Every visitor we greet, every tour we lead, opens the door to that possibility.

# Library Corner

By Fran De La Rosa

See what your Docent Library has related to the **October THN** articles:



## Japanese Fairy Tales

by Lafcadio Hearn

Call number: J JAP

Lafcadio Hearn's *Japanese Fairy Tales* presents haunting retelling of Japan's folklore, rich with ghosts, spirits, and moral lessons. Though the tales are usually darker and more eerie than Western "fairy tales", the stories

fascinate with their atmosphere, revealing cultural values, fears, and imagination that bridge generations.



## Folktales of Japan

by Keigo Seki

Call number: SS Seki 040

*Folktales of Japan* by Keigo Seki is a comprehensive collection of traditional Japanese folktales, categorized by themes such as origins, animals, supernatural beings, and humorous stories. Drawing from centuries of oral

tradition, Seki preserves cultural values, beliefs, and imagination, offering insight into Japan's folklore, spirituality, and everyday life through engaging narrative examples.

Summaries provided by ChatGPT

# Around Town

By Maureen Nyhan

*The THN welcomes your input! Please send any local or online activities you think USC PAM Docents might be interested in! The deadline is the 20th of the month prior to publication. The earlier the better! You may send them directly to Maureen: [moho1234@gmail.com](mailto:moho1234@gmail.com)*

## Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena



### Heath Ceramics: The Making of a California Classic, (2019)

**Date:** Saturday, October 11, 2025

**Time:** 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

This short documentary explores the life and legacy of Edith Heath, the groundbreaking ceramicist who designed the Museum's iconic building tiles in the late 1960.

## 50 Years: South and Southeast Asian Art



### Good refresher course!

**DATE:** Saturday, October 18, 2025

**TIME:** 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

**SPEAKER:** Museum Educator

**Free:** Space is limited to 20 participants. Sign up is required and is taken at the Information Desk when the museum opens on a first come, first served basis. Learn about the important holdings of South and Southeast Asian art collected during the Museum's 50-year history.

## Yokai - Traveling Exhibition

妖怪大行進 YOKAI PARADE: Supernatural Monsters from Japan

**Free:** Ongoing through November 8, 2025

**Info:** [Yokai at Japan Foundation Los Angeles](#)