

December 2025 

Treasure House News



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IMPORTANT DATES



**Meher McArthur
Discusses her new book
12/5 at 6:00 PM**



Annual Holiday Luncheon

**December 9 - Auditorium of USC PAM
10:30 am Social Hour
11:00 am Program
12 noon Potluck Luncheon**



Conversations & Chats to Prepare for 2026 docent touring

**12/1 Conversation: 10:30 to 12:30 in Auditorium
12/8 Brown Bag Chat: 11:30 to 12:30 in Grace Nicholson
12/15 Conversation: 10:30 to 12:30 in Auditorium**



President's Message

As 2025 is coming to an end, it is time to reflect on events that occurred this year. It had been a somewhat challenging year on various occasions but with the commitment from our dedicated board members, we have managed to problem solve and bring our docent community back together.

Our "Conversations About" series continues to have a good turnout! Seeing everyone exchanging ideas, engaging in deep discussion and having a good time while learning reminds me of why I had signed up to be a docent in the first place. It was the desire to learn and share my knowledge, and along the way, I had a chance to know many of you and learned to look at art on a whole new level. Learning alone can be somewhat unmotivating but learning with a group that shares the same interest and passion can be such a rewarding experience. Please come and join us if you have not already done so and you too can benefit from the sharing.

I would like to wish you all Happy Holidays, and I look forward to a new touring season in 2026!

Yvonne

Gallery Showcase

Garden Artistry

By Annette Drey

*Foo dogs, Stones, Jizo,
Welcoming garden objects,
Sit by wise scholar.*

As we wait to learn which objects will appear in the upcoming exhibition on mythical creatures, we can continue exploring features already on display at our museum—specifically, the artworks and architectural elements found in the USC PAM garden. Many of us pass through the central garden without pausing to consider the sculptures surrounding us. Several pieces have been highlighted in earlier articles, such as the gongshi (scholars' rocks) featured in September 2024 and the architectural details described in September 2025. This overview introduces additional pieces that enrich the garden's atmosphere and significance.

Guardian Lions: Three pairs of Guardian Lions stand throughout the garden, with another pair positioned on the museum's roof to safeguard the building and its visitors from harmful influences. Commonly called "Foo Dogs," they appear in male–female pairs. The male grips a ball symbolizing worldly power, while the female restrains a playful cub, representing protection and nurturing care.



Scholar Official: This seated figure represents an Imperial Chinese scholar-official, a highly respected class of leaders trained in classical Daoist and Confucian texts. Appointed only after passing demanding civil service examinations, scholar-officials served as the moral, intellectual, and administrative guides of the empire.

Sundial: The carved marble sundial, dating to the final years of the Ming Dynasty, is exceptionally rare; its only comparable counterpart is in the Forbidden City. Beyond its practical use in timekeeping, the sundial symbolized imperial authority, linking the emperor's rule to the sun's movement and suggesting his harmonious governance over the realm.



Jizō Bosatsu: In Japan, sculptures of the Bodhisattva Jizō are placed along roadsides and pathways to protect travelers, children, and the souls of the unborn or deceased. Jizō acts as a compassionate guide, assisting beings through the Buddhist afterlife toward eventual salvation.

Ancient Stones: The garden's large sculptural stones evoke the famed Taihu Rocks of Lake Tai in China. Celebrated for their dramatic perforations, weathered surfaces, and irregular forms, such stones are regarded as miniature cosmic mountains where Daoist immortals might dwell. They express an ideal balance between humanity and the natural world.

Asian Highlights

Mythical Creatures

By Bruce Cristol

India

*Ancient deities,
Creative and destructive,
An Indian blend.*

China

*Indian spirits,
Transition to Chinese Yecha,
Variable mix.*

Japan

*Eight million Kami,
Manifested in all things,
Rich in yokai.*

With the USC Pacific Asia Museum featuring an exhibition titled “Mythical Creatures”, this article will highlight three countries in South and East Asia: **India**, **Japan**, and **China**. This article focuses on these three Asian countries and the diverse pantheons associated with each of them.

India’s pantheon is vast, reflecting the complexity and integration of Hinduism’s many traditions. **Japan** features a blend of Shinto and Buddhist deities. **China** is also highly diverse, encompassing Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and folk religions, each with its many deities and philosophical concepts.

India

As the birthplace of Hinduism, India has a massive and incredibly diverse pantheon of gods and goddesses. The Trimurti (Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva) are central figures, but there are countless others, such as the goddess Devi in her many forms. These deities are associated with a wide range of concepts, from creation and preservation to destruction and renewal. Other religions originating in India, such as Buddhism, also have their own pantheons of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.



Japan

Shinto, the native Japanese religion, refers to "eight million kami" (Yaoyorozu no Kami), a number that is synonymous with infinity or eternity, indicating that new deities and spirits can always be recognized. Kami can manifest in all things, animate and inanimate, from weather and landscapes to plants and rocks, contributing to the immeasurable count. Japanese folklore is rich with yokai (monsters, spirits, and demons) and kami (gods or divine spirits). The number of yokai is often estimated at around a thousand different species in popular culture, though some references to classic texts illustrate a few hundred specific types.



China

Chinese Yecha (Agile Demon) originated in India (like Buddhism) and was integrated into the folklore of China accordingly. The two Chinese characters 夜叉 are transliterations of the Sanskrit word, *Yaksha*, referring to a class of nature spirits in Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist traditions that although they can be benevolent, are sometimes mischievous or malevolent. There are gender differences as well. The male Yecha is quick and agile, but ugly and lives a painful life. Females differ in that although like the male are both agile, quick and powerful, they are also beautiful.



Docent Spotlight

By Richard Ewell

Jane Hirschkowitz grew up on Long Island to science-minded parents in an education and arts-committed community and enjoyed support and opportunities from all. She has been excited by history and culture since first visiting Colonial Williamsburg as a small child.

She attended college at Smith; entered pre-med, exited with a degree in art history. After graduation she joined the staff at the Museum of the City of New York, a history and art museum. Her first assignment was in the education department, booking school groups and giving tours. Soon after, she had the incredible opportunity to become the assistant to the curator of the historic collection of toys and objects of childhood (dolls' houses, dolls, games, chinaware, books.)

With training by an esteemed English historian/artist/writer/raconteur, it was an incomparable experience (including brewing a proper pot of tea every afternoon; and pouring glasses of sherry on special days.) Later, she became the curator herself. During that time, she completed a Master's Degree in the History of Decorative Arts from Parsons School of Design/The New School.

When her family relocated to Los Angeles for her husband's work in television production, she did a few professional museum projects, then office work, and volunteering with school and other youth activities. A highlight was meeting Susan Sides, her son's elementary school teacher.

Returning to museums was always a goal, especially at the Huntington, whose collections align with her interests and training. She became a docent there. Susan encouraged her to check out PAM as well.

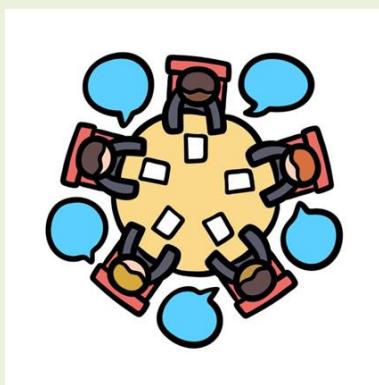
Joining PAM has been a wonderful, expansive experience, learning about Asian art and history and making new connections and insights. She has come full circle, grateful again to share with museum visitors, objects of meaning and delight

Docent Heroes

By Fran De La Rosa

Thank you to all Docent Educators who attended "Conversations" and "Chats" sessions - Weeks 1 and 2!

Annette Drey
Richard Ewell
Daniel Grosz
Jeanne Heilman
Jane Hirschkowitz
Jin Sook Jung
Lisa Koisumi
Eiko Kubota
Paige LaCombe
Rose Lee
Yvonne Lee
Karen Margolis
Diana McCrohan
John O'Malley
Randy Quinton
Linda Risch
Jon Sides
Susan Sides
Candace Siegle
Ralph Thlick
Lorenzo Vargas
Kathy Wales
Chuck Woo
Melissa Patton
Fran De La Rosa



Upcoming Sessions: **12/1 and 12/15**

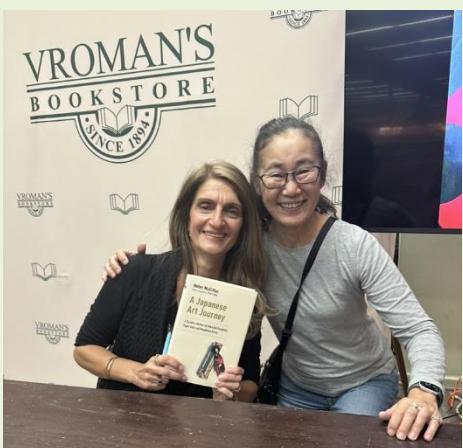
**Learning together makes us
stronger together**

Docents On The Go

By Annette Drey



Docents enjoyed seeing objects from PAM's permanent collection that were included in Dr. Diva Zumaya's talk at the November Docent Council meeting. Her topic was Chinese porcelain exported to Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. Dr. Zumaya (from the Huntington) appears in the upper left of the first photo - behind Randy.



Several USC PAM docents enjoyed Meher McArthur's presentation on her new book, *A Japanese Art Journey* at Pasadena's Lamanda Park Library and at Vroman's Bookstore in Pasadena. An art historian specializing in Japan, Meher traced her personal and professional journey—from her Indian, Persian-Scottish roots to her role as PAM curator in the early 2000s. Her book interweaves autobiography with explorations of Japanese art and aesthetics, each chapter introducing a key

cultural term. The book signings offered an engaging look at her cross-cultural insights and lasting contributions to the museum and its docent community.



During Thanksgiving week, several docents attended The Golden Wish Jr., a musical produced by our own Evelyn Xu. The story follows a young man granted a magical wish whose quest for universal admiration brings unexpected consequences, ultimately teaching him the meaning of love and the value of self-acceptance. After the premiere, we enjoyed a VIP reception, generously hosted by Evelyn.



Touring Topics

By Fran De La Rosa

Mirror, Mirror ...

After a particularly good (or challenging) tour, do you share your experience with colleagues? Or do you have another outlet (a journal or notebook) for expressing your thoughts? If so, you are engaging in what is labeled “reflective practice.” For educators of all types, this is a common habit.

There are several forms of reflective practice. Three of the most common are: reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, and reflection-for-action. All encourage us to look critically at our own practice.

Reflection-in-action is basically “thinking on your feet.” As the tour proceeds, one continually reads the group. What is working or not? How can the tour be realigned if needed? This requires the Docent to be ready to change direction at any point once it is evident that something is not working.

Reflection-on-action is looking at the tour in hindsight. Overall, what worked? Did your choices prove to be engaging, and were the visitors responsive? Did you learn something from your visitors? Was there any area that needed more attention or improvement? Were your management strategies sound, or could they use some tweaking?

Reflection-for-action is about looking forward. Can the knowledge gained from this tour be used in planning a future one? Often, this type of reflection takes place as you plan an upcoming tour or look back on a specific grade level or theme.

Reflection keeps your tours fresh and growing. A Docent should not generalize about visitors based on one or two previous experiences. Not all Kindergartners should be kept outside, as they are unable to control themselves in a gallery. Don’t expect every high school student to be morose and unable to take their eyes off their phone. If you expect a behavior, there is a good chance you will get it. When you approach each group with an open mind, you will often find that your preconceived ideas were wrong.

As a Docent, I have built a network of colleagues with whom I can share successes, failures, questions, and seek help. After a recent tour, I shared the following:

“I found out today that spending time outdoors with rambunctious 9-year-olds is not necessarily prudent. Outdoors, this group was a pain in the butt. Once we got indoors, they were amazing. Clipboards in hand, they participated wholeheartedly. Gloucester: A+, materials theme A+, even went to the color room because they were curious about how paint color is made and whether, indeed, it comes from nature. Betye Saar: 10 fourth graders sitting on the floor with closed eyes, imagining their journeys, was a sight to behold.”

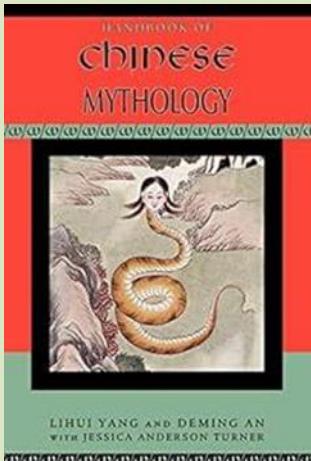
“We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience.”

- John Dewey

Library Corner

By Lisa Koizumi

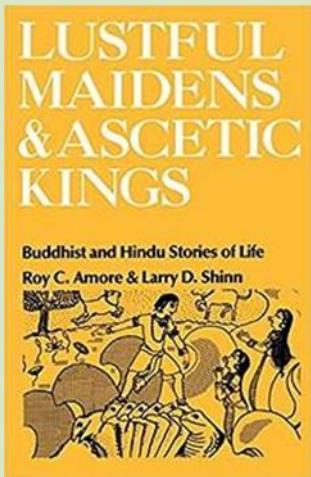
See what your Docent Library has related to the December THN articles:



Handbook of Chinese Mythology (Handbooks of World Mythology)

by Lihui Yang
Call number: 299.51 Y

This book offers an accessible overview of China's major mythic traditions, exploring creation stories, legendary heroes, cosmic deities, cultural founders, and supernatural beings that shaped Chinese identity. Drawing on classical texts and folk traditions, it explains the origins, themes, and variations of key myths while highlighting their influence on religion, literature, and daily life. The book provides clear commentary, historical context, and organized entries, making it a valuable introduction to Chinese mythology.



Lustful Maidens and Ascetic Kings: Buddhist and Hindu stories of life

by Roy C. Amore
Call number: SS Amor 063

Located in the children's section, the book explores Buddhist and Hindu stories that illuminate the tension between spiritual discipline and worldly desire. Through tales of devoted ascetics, seductive figures, moral tests, and transformative encounters, Amore shows how these traditions grapple with human weakness, ethical choices, and the pursuit of liberation. The book highlights shared narrative patterns across the two religions and reveals how storytelling shapes cultural understandings of virtue, temptation, and spiritual growth.

Holiday Announcement



Donate Your Treasures for Our 12/9 Holiday Party

With Thanksgiving approaching, many may be clearing out their homes — it's a perfect time to donate gently used items to support the docent fundraiser!

We're looking for gently used items like:

- ✓ Unique home décor
- ✓ Clothing & accessories
- ✓ Handmade items
- ✓ Collectibles

Drop-off at: Docent Office
By: December 5, 2025
Questions? Contact Eiko Kubota
All proceeds support Docent Council!

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

Ending soon at the Los Angeles Korean Cultural Center: **The 34th Annual Exhibition of Korean-American Calligraphy Association**

DATE: Through December 5, 2025

TIME: 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM



[Calligraphy Exhibit Info](#)

Tradition in Motion

This immersive media art exhibit brings Korea's history and culture to life.

DATE: Ongoing, please check for end date (Possibly 12/31/2025)

TIME: 9:30 AM – 4:30 PM



[Immersive Exhibit Info](#)

Japan House (3 Hours Free Parking)



Cuisine and food related exhibits and experiences:

[The Art of Food Replicas](#)

DATE: Through January 25, 2026

[A Kaiseki Ryori Experience](#) (dining) for reservations
[Holiday Floral Design Project](#) December 3; 2 Sessions

Huntington Library in December

[Lecture: Pacific Islander Eco-Poetry](#)

[Bonsai Workshop](#)

Japan Foundation

[Check out some interesting events at Japan Foundation](#)

Further Afield:

Bowers Museum: Global Threads



Opening Lecture & Book Signing with Dr. Sarah Fee
“How India’s Cotton Cloth Forever Changed Fashion and the World”

Date & Time: December 13 | 1:30-3:00 pm

[Lecture Details](#)

SF Asian Art Museum

[New Japanese Clay](#)

[2024 New Generation Bamboo Art Prize Winners](#)

San Diego Chinese Historical Museum

[Asian Pacific Historic District Walking Tour](#)

Date & Time: December 7 | 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Online:

Date & Time: December 19 | 7:00 - 8:30 PM

YOKAI Architecture by Naoyuki Kunikiyo

Architect Naoyuki Kunikiyo, a senior designer on the overall masterplan design of the *EXPO 2025 Osaka-Kansai Expo*, will deliver this lecture on architecture that transcends human presence through the lens of *yokai*—the supernatural monsters that have long been intertwined with everyday life in Japan.

Docent Musings

By Jeanne Heilman

“Unforgettable!”

My husband Roger and I have been fortunate to travel to many places. My favorite travel day was in 1986 when my husband and I went to the Eastern Highland show in Goroka, Papua New Guinea. It was an annual festival started in 1956 as an initiative of the Australian Kiaps. Kiaps are district officers and patrol officers, representatives of the British and Australian governments with wide-ranging authority to keep the peace and to curb tribal warfare.

The Goroka Show, also called the Eastern Highlands Show, is a well-known tribal gathering and cultural event in [Papua New Guinea](#). It is a [sing-sing](#) (annual gathering of tribes or villages) held every year close to the country's Independence Day (16 September) in the town of [Goroka](#), the capital of the [Eastern Highlands Province](#). About 100 tribes arrive to share their music, dance and culture.

Originally, the tribes competed with the winning tribe keeping all of the profits. However, today, the profits are split equally among the tribes. People show their distinct culture, dance and music and share traditions. Villagers paint and decorate themselves for the sing-sings. It was a rare treat for us to witness these festivities first hand. It is also a photographer's paradise, and since I like to take pictures, I was in heaven.

*Unique adventure,
New Guinea special event,
Trip of a lifetime.*



*A big thank you to
Karen Margolis
For all of this issue's haiku!*

