

April 2026

Treasure House News



President's Message

The first day of Spring was met with a 100-degree heatwave in Southern California. This was unseasonably hot for this time of year. I thank those who came out to tour regardless of the heat. All the galleries are open now, and even with occasional interruptions, the students do not seem to mind. Lonnie has passed on some really positive feedback from teachers and students after our tours, and I want to congratulate all of you for a job well done. There is nothing more rewarding than knowing our efforts are being appreciated and recognized, so a big round of applause goes to all the touring docents.

2026 marks the beginning of the many different touring exhibitions that our museum will hold in the coming years. In anticipation of future exhibitions, the docent council will review our current role and structure to keep up with the new demands and to run a more efficient organization. Any changes will be announced at our council meetings before the end of the year.

Enjoy the cooler weather since we never know when the heat will be turned up again. Stay cool and hydrated, everyone.

Yvonne

IMPORTANT DATES

April 7, 2026 at 10am

Docent Council Board Meeting
(Board members only)

April 14, 2026 at 10am

Docent Council meeting
Lecture by: Kalzang Dorjee Bhutia
(Buddhist scholar)

Topic: Relationships between
culture/religion, ecology, and
materiality

Gallery Showcase

Graffiti In The Village

By Annette Drey

David Kim, curator
and graffiti artist



Asian immigration to Los Angeles is often described through stories of hard work, family sacrifice, and the pursuit of opportunity. Yet alongside these familiar narratives is a more complex history shaped by youth culture, urban identity, and the realities of growing up in marginalized neighborhoods. For some young Asian Americans in Los Angeles, gangs and graffiti became unexpected forms of expression and belonging.

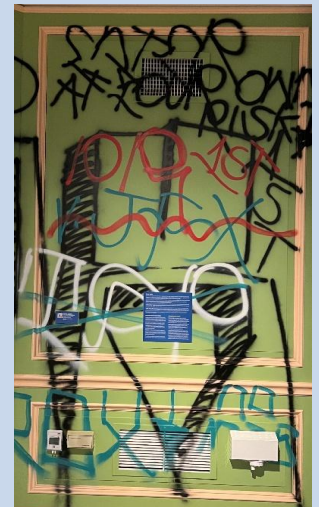
Large waves of Asian immigration reshaped Los Angeles after changes to U.S. immigration law in the 1960s and again after the refugee movements that followed the Vietnam War. Families from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, China, Korea, and the Philippines settled in neighborhoods across the San Gabriel Valley, Chinatown, and parts of central Los Angeles. Many parents worked long hours to build financial stability, often leaving young people to navigate school and city life largely on their own.



For immigrant youth, growing up between cultures can be confusing and isolating. This tension is illustrated in the exhibition as visitors move from the “Village” gallery to the “1st Apartment” gallery. At home, young people were often expected to follow traditional values and strict family expectations. Outside, they encountered a very different world shaped by American pop culture, diverse neighborhoods, and racial tensions. In this environment, identity was not simply inherited—it was something young people had to actively construct.

Responding to these pressures, some Asian American youth in Los Angeles formed gangs, particularly in areas where other ethnic gangs were already present. These groups sometimes developed for protection in neighborhoods where Asian students were targets of harassment or violence. In other cases, they grew from a desire for recognition, solidarity, and power within a city shaped by territorial identities. While the media often portrayed Asian gangs as mysterious or highly organized, many were simply small neighborhood groups formed by teenagers searching for belonging.

Graffiti became one of the visual languages through which these identities were expressed. Like other youth across Los Angeles, Asian gang members and their peers used walls, alleyways, and freeway underpasses as canvases. Names, symbols, and stylized lettering marked territory, honored friends, and announced a presence in a city where Asian American communities were often overlooked. Graffiti functioned both as a territorial signal and a cultural statement.



At the same time, graffiti connected Asian American youth to the broader urban culture. Hip-hop, street art, and tagging were shared practices across racial and ethnic lines throughout Los Angeles. Graffiti culture emphasized style, technique and visibility. Asian taggers adopted and adapted these styles, blending English lettering with nicknames, symbols, and references from their own backgrounds.

Today many of those graffiti sites have disappeared and neighborhoods have changed. Yet the existence of Asian gangs and graffiti reveals something important about the immigrant experience in American cities. It shows that assimilation is not always smooth or orderly. For young people growing up between cultures, identity was negotiated in schools, on streets, and the marks left on city walls.

Gallery Showcase

SIPJANGSAENGDO (십장생도):

Paintings of the Ten Symbols of Longevity

By Annette Drey



Sipjangsaengdo (십장생도) means “Paintings of the Ten Symbols of Longevity.” These are traditional Korean folding screens that show ten natural elements believed to bring long life and good health. They became popular during the Goryeo Dynasty and continued through the Joseon Dynasty. For many years, they were displayed in royal palaces and noble homes as symbols of a long and healthy life.

Sipjangsaengdo paintings show an ideal world where nature is peaceful and balanced. In this world, everything lives in harmony. The ten symbols usually include the sun, clouds, mountains, water, pine trees, turtles, deer, cranes, peaches, and special mushrooms called *yeongji* (영 Korean). Sometimes rocks are also included. Even though they are called the “ten symbols,” the exact elements can vary from painting to painting.



Each symbol has a special meaning. The sun stands for energy and life. Mountains and rocks represent strength and stability because they last a very long time. Water and clouds suggest constant movement and the flow of life. Pine trees stay green all year, so they symbolize endurance and faithfulness. Turtles, deer, and cranes were believed to live long lives, so they became signs of longevity. Peaches were thought to be magical fruits of immortality. The herb of eternal youth, the *lingzhi* (靈芝 Chinese), often shown as a special mushroom, represents health and long life.

These paintings were more than just decoration. They carried wishes and blessings. In royal courts, folding screens with the ten symbols were often placed behind the king or queen during important ceremonies. This showed the hope that the ruler would live a long and prosperous life. Wealthy families also displayed them in their homes, especially during birthdays or celebrations for elders.

Artistically, many Sipjangsaengdo works were painted in the *Minhwa* style, which means Korean folk painting. *Minhwa* paintings are known for their bright colors, bold shapes, and detailed scenes from nature. The style feels lively and joyful rather than formal and strict.

Today, these paintings are still admired as important examples of Korean art. They remind people of the deep respect for nature and the strong wish for health, happiness, and long life.

Touring Topics

By Fran De La Rosa



It's Not Just About the Art - Field Trips

Imagine this: You are riding in a very uncomfortable yellow school bus, on the way to Mission San Juan Capistrano with very excited fourth-grade students. The chatter is lively. At one point, the road passes through green hills, dotted with cows. The noise level rises considerably; they have spotted the wildlife. They are excited beyond words. Apparently, few had ever seen a cow in the “wild”; in a zoo, on television, or in photographs, maybe. But, in real life, never! To be honest, this part of the trip is what most of those students may remember. Not the Mission. Not the history. The cows!

When teachers schedule a field trip, there are generally educational objectives to be met. However, that is not necessarily the trip's most important objective. Field trips offer students opportunities to learn skills that go far beyond the classroom. **New research in the Journal of Human Resources (January 2026) argues that field trips, and the vital educational experiences that they provide, deliver a host of positive social and academic outcomes and are worth the effort.** A few of the benefits include:

Building Social Skills. Communication skills involving negotiation, conflict resolution, and relationship building are developed. Interpersonal skills, empathy, and a sense of belonging are introduced and practiced.

Promoting Active Learning. Students engage with the materials, which enhance retention, deepen understanding, and improve problem-solving skills.

Adaptability. Students are introduced to various environments that may be uncomfortable and challenging, requiring resilience and resourcefulness in new situations.

Different Perspectives. Students may engage with different cultures, personalities, and histories, which helps build understanding and empathy.

Academic Performance Improved. Students experience real-life situations, which can help increase motivation, retention of information, and problem-solving skills.

So what does this information mean to Docent Educators, who spend about 1 to 1.5 hours with a group of students? It means that every moment counts. It means that we need to be organized, informed, and, perhaps, patient. It means that we may make a difference in someone's life.

Further imagine that earlier field trip to the Mission. Yes, the students were excited and learned something about California history. But, on the bus ride? That was where the magic was. Better yet, who knew that a chaparone, a parent, had never seen a cow “in the wild?” Can you further imagine the conversation over dinner, at home, that night? ‘WE SAW REAL COWS!’



Gallery Showcase

JIN CHAN AND THE GOLD MOUNTAIN

By Annette Drey

In Asian traditions, symbols of wealth are rarely simple decorations. They are stories in condensed form. One of the best-known examples is the money frog, called Jin Chan. Often shown sitting on a pile of coins with a single coin in its mouth, the three-legged toad represents not only material wealth, but also transformation, discipline and the unpredictable way fortune can rise and fall. When placed alongside the powerful migrant legend of Gold Mountain, the money frog takes on even deeper meaning, connecting personal luck and a historical journey.



According to legend, Jin Chan was captured and tamed by the Daoist immortal **Liu Hai**. In many versions of the story, the toad was once mischievous or destructive. Liu Hai lured it with a string of coins, captured it, and transformed it from a force of harm into a bringer of wealth. During the encounter, the toad lost one of its legs, which is why it is shown with only three. Thereafter, the creature was said to appear in places that were about to prosper. The coin in its mouth signals wealth entering one's life. Its three legs are a reminder that wealth should circulate rather than be hoarded, while its seated posture suggests stability and watchfulness.

In Feng Shui practice, the money frog is placed carefully near an entrance and facing inward, as if it is bringing wealth into the home or business. But behind this practice is a larger cultural idea: wealth is not merely acquired. It is something that should be welcomed, managed carefully, and kept in harmony with the larger forces around you. Fortune is seen as cyclical, like the moon with which Jin Chan is sometimes associated. Prosperity depends not only on desire but also on balance, timing, and ethical behavior.

This worldview resonates strongly with the Asian myth of Gold Mountain. In Chinese, "Gold Mountain" (金山, *Gam Saan* in Cantonese) was the name migrants gave to the distant lands of opportunity across the Pacific, especially California during the nineteenth-century Gold Rush. For many Chinese immigrants, Gold Mountain represented hope, escape from poverty, and the promise of unimaginable wealth. It wasn't just a geographic destination; it was a mythic place, glimmering with possibility. Yet, like many stories about fortune, Gold Mountain was double-edged. While some migrants did find success, many encountered hardship, discrimination, and loneliness. The dream of instant fortune often gave way to grueling labor in mines, railroads, and laundries. Gold Mountain became a symbol of both hope and struggle. It reflected the belief that prosperity might exist somewhere beyond the horizon, but reaching it required courage, sacrifice and endurance.

Seen together, the money frog and Gold Mountain represent two different but connected ideas about wealth. Jin Chan focuses on attracting prosperity through balance and harmony at home. Gold Mountain, by contrast, represents the opposite direction: venturing outward, crossing oceans and chasing opportunity. One is about inviting fortune; the other about seeking it. Both result in transformation. Just as the troublesome toad was changed into a symbol of good fortune, migrants crossing to Gold Mountain were transformed by their journeys, reshaping their identities in new lands.



Today, the image of Jin Chan still appears in shops and homes, while the story of Gold Mountain remains an important part of immigrant memory. Together they remind us that the pursuit of wealth has always been both practical and symbolic. It is about survival and aspiration, but also about faith in unseen possibilities. Whether sitting quietly by a doorway or imagined across an ocean, the promise of gold continues to shape people's hopes, identities, and sense of possibility.

Docent Spotlight

By Richard Ewell



Jin Sook Jung

Jin Sook Jung was born in Jeonju, South Korea – a city of ancient history and culture. She remembers passing by countless archery ranges and on New Year's Day, playing Yutnori, a traditional Korean board game involving dice. When she was 12, her mother moved to Germany to work as a nurse. Five years later, the rest of the family joined her. Jin Sook attended the University of Hamburg, graduating with a Master's degree in Psychology. She then worked as a social worker for Korean immigrants in Germany. She helped with court translations and visits to the foreign offices for visa renewals. However, her key focus was to help the Korean youth who were struggling to find their own identity.

After getting married, she moved to California in 1990. The focus of her life soon became being a mother to three children. During one of their summer vacations, they decided to visit the Pacific Asia Museum so their children would have the opportunity to experience their own heritage.

Her passion to learn more about East Asian art and desire to share that with others guided her to join the docent program in 2010. This has allowed her to meet many amazing people who have shared the same interests as her. Some of her favorite memories include the visit to a Hindu temple in Chino Hills, and the visit to Dolan's Uyghur Cuisine. Through learning and sharing about other cultures, she has improved her understanding and knowledge of her own heritage.

Docents On the Go

By Annette Drey

The Opening Night of Mythical Creatures



Docents shown with the artist of the "Night Crossing" Gallery

On Saturday, March 7, docents attended the long-awaited opening of "Mythological Creatures: The Stories We Carry". Davd Kim, curator, gave a tour of the exhibition. Food and drinks were provided.

Visiting the Sant Anita Racetrack

The Event Committee was very excited to do an event walk through at the beautiful restaurant at the Santa Anita Racetrack. The food was tasty and the view was just stunning. Please look out for RSVP information in the coming month.



Featured Article

Impact of the US-Led Conflict Iran on the China Belt and Road Initiative

By Bruce Cristol



The U.S.-led conflict in Iran has created significant challenges for China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI [一带一路]), a vast network of infrastructure and trade projects designed to connect Asia, Europe, and Africa. As tensions escalated into military action, the conflict disrupted key energy routes, threatened major investments, and exposed the geopolitical limits of China's economic influence in the Middle East. These developments demonstrate how regional instability can affect global infrastructure strategies and reshape the strategic calculations of major powers.

China's BRI, launched by Xi Jinping in 2013, depends heavily on stable transportation corridors and reliable energy supplies. Iran occupies an important position within the BRI's China–Central Asia–West Asia Economic Corridor, serving as both a transit route and an energy partner. However, the military campaign against Iran—reported as Operation Epic Fury and led by the United States with support from Israel—has severely destabilized this strategic region. One immediate consequence has been the disruption of maritime trade through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important shipping lanes. Interruptions in this narrow waterway have forced shipping reroutes and delayed the movement of oil, liquefied natural gas, and other commodities vital to China's economy.

Infrastructure projects connected to the BRI have also faced increasing risks. Chinese investments in Iranian ports, railways, energy networks, and electric grids have become vulnerable to military strikes and political uncertainty. Several projects have slowed or stalled entirely, placing billions of dollars in planned development at risk. Although China has invested heavily in Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, instability in Iran weakens the broader regional network that supports these investments and transport corridors.

Energy security represents another major concern. Iran has served as a key supplier of discounted crude oil to China, exporting most of its oil to Chinese buyers. At the same time, the wider Gulf region provides roughly one-third of China's liquefied natural gas imports, particularly from Qatar. Military conflict and shipping disruptions threaten these flows, raising the possibility of supply shortages and higher energy costs for Chinese industries.

The crisis has also highlighted the limits of China's diplomatic and economic influence in the region. Beijing previously signed a 25-year, \$400 billion strategic partnership with Iran aimed at strengthening cooperation in energy, infrastructure, and technology. Yet the outbreak of war has demonstrated that large financial commitments do not necessarily guarantee political leverage or regional stability. Even with significant investments, China has had limited ability to shape events or protect its economic interests.

Despite these challenges, the long-term relationship between China and Iran may continue. Iran still depends heavily on China as a buyer of its oil and as a supplier of technology and industrial goods. For this reason, many analysts believe that any future Iranian government will likely maintain economic ties with Beijing, even after the current conflict subsides.

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Docent Musing

By Karen Komai Margolis



At the turn of the 20th century, many Japanese immigrant men came to the U.S. to work. With anti-miscegenation laws,

and longing for female companionship, many men sent to their homeland in Japan for “picture brides.” Photographs, both authentic and false, as well as resumes were exchanged. The men sent money for the bride’s passage. Sadly, I’m not privy to other details of the arrangements. All I know is that both of my grandmothers came to this country as “picture brides.”

Immigrants from Asia entered the country at Angel Island, and then crossed into San Francisco. It was not unusual for a bride to be accompanied by a relative, whose name she would take to simplify her entry. Most families were acquainted with each other before these arrangements were made. However, the individuals being matched in most cases, did not know their intended partners. As you might imagine, such matches were a gamble.

A story told to me by my grandfather was about one such unfortunate match. Neither the groom nor the bride were satisfied with their partners. As fate would have it, the bride had a difficult delivery of her first-born daughter. In Japan, couples desire their first-born child to be a son. The complicated delivery resulted in the bride losing her ability to have any more children. The upset husband sent the daughter back to Japan to be raised, rejected his wife, and sent for a new bride.

The abandoned wife, having lost her child and husband, went to live with a sister who had also come as a picture bride. Fate was kind to this unfortunate woman. A close friend of her brother-in-law was a frequent visitor to their home. The two fell in love. In order to get a fresh start, where the bride’s history was unknown, the couple decided to move to Los Angeles to be married. They tied the knot on Valentine’s Day. Later, the couple adopted one of the bride’s sister’s daughters—my mother!

DOCENT HEROES MARCH 2026

Thank you, Docent Educators!

Fran D.	John O.
Kathy W.	Jon S.
Eiko K.	Susan S.
Yvonne L.	Melissa P.
Lorenzo V.	Evelyn X.
Rose L.	Chuck W.
Candice S.	Jin-Sook J.
Ralph T.	Ana S.
Annette D.	Lisa K.
Jane H.	Randy Q.
Richard E.	

NOMINATED OFFICERS FOR 2026-2027

The following Executive Committee officers have been nominated for the 2026-2027 docent year. Voting will take place at the **May Docent Council meeting which will be held on May 12**. Officers will be elected by a simple majority, inducted at the June Recognition Luncheon and assume their responsibilities on **July 1**.

President: Yvonne Lee
Vice President: Randy Quinton
Secretary: Rose Lee
Treasurer: Richard Ewell
Membership Chair: Eiko Kubota

ANNUAL LUNCHEON ANNOUNCEMENT



Save the Date

for our Annual Luncheon

Thursday, June 11th

at the Santa Anita Park’s

FrontRunner Restaurant

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

The Huntington



Filipina Food

Celebrate the legacy of Filipina food scientist Maria Ylagan Orosa with food and activities for visitors of all ages, including gardening and reading, in the Kitchen Garden.

DATE & Time: Sunday, April 12 from 11 AM – 2 PM

[Click here for Info](#)



Live Presentation:

Zhi Garden: Designing a Waterborne Sensorium in the 17th-Century Chinese Garden. Feier Ying, June and Simon K. C. Li Fellow in East Asian Garden and Landscape Studies, explores the role of waterscape in Ming dynasty garden culture.

DATE & Time: Thursday April 16 at 2:30 PM

[Info and Reservations](#)



Norton Simon Museum

Afternoon Salon: Indian Sculpture in Depth

DATE & Time: Saturday, April 26, 2026

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Educator: Gorman Bentley

Drop In



Asian Art Museum San Francisco

"An Armchair History of the Yuan Dynasty," with docent Seik-ye Lau

DATE & Time: April 7, 12:00 pm

Take out" a taste of art! Join museum docents and fellow art lovers for

interactive lunchtime encounters with selected artworks from the collection. We'll gather on Zoom to look closely at compelling works using high-resolution images and uncover fun facts. Each weekly session explores a different topic; unmute to join the conversation.

[Live Docent Presentation](#)



Online Anytime

[Korean Moon Jar](#)