

June 2026

Treasure House News



President's Message

I am so excited that summer is just around the corner! The warmer days ahead mean that we get to savor the sunny days and enjoy time with our family. I started my summer travel early and visited Taiwan and Japan for 2 weeks. It was a great time of the year to visit Asia as the weather was not too hot and humid yet. But we did feel the humidity climbing as the day went by and we headed back just when the temperature became toasty.

I am sure many of you have trips planned for the coming months. I have heard of Egypt, Italy and South America from some docents already. You all deserve a long break after all the work you have done by showing up for school tours and meetings. I am grateful for all your help and dedication. Our docent recruitment will start in the summer and training will begin in August. It is an exciting time at USC PAM and we can't wait to see what the next exhibition from the Rubin museum will bring us.

Until then, rest up and enjoy your summer! Safe travels.

Yvonne

IMPORTANT DATES

June 2, 2026 at 10am

Docent Council Board Meeting
(Board members only)

June 11, 2026 at 11:30am

Docent Council Annual Luncheon
Front Runner Restaurant at
Santa Anita Race Track

Gallery Showcase

Portrait of the Palace

By Annette Drey

Alongside the other shape-shifting works in the Forest Gallery, I found the photo-weaving of Dinh Q. Lê especially compelling, not only for its intricate technique, but for the unsettling history it reveals. Using a technique inspired by his aunt's grass-mat weaving, Lê interlaces strips of photographs so multiple images appear at once. In this piece, images of Cambodia's Royal Palace are woven together with mugshots of prisoners. From a distance, the palace looks calm and beautiful; step closer, and the faces of victims emerge. Step back again, and a faint image of a skull seems to appear, a haunting reminder of the immense loss of life under the Khmer Rouge. The artwork explores themes of memory and trauma, shaped by Lê's own experiences of displacement and family separation.



This piece also made me wonder about the history of the palace itself. Built in 1866 in Phnom Penh, the Royal Palace has long symbolized Cambodian identity, royal authority, and spiritual tradition. Its golden roofs and sacred spaces, including the Silver Pagoda, reflect the richness of Khmer culture. For generations, it served as both the king's residence and a center for ceremony, Buddhism, and national pride.

That symbolism changed dramatically during the rule of the Khmer Rouge from 1975 to 1979. Under the leadership of Pol Pot, the regime attempted to dismantle Cambodia's social, cultural, and religious foundations. Even the monarchy, once central to national identity, was stripped of power and meaning. Although the palace was not destroyed, it became a symbol of contradiction.

At the center of this transformation was Norodom Sihanouk, often called the "father of the nation." Initially reinstated as a symbolic figure to give legitimacy to the regime, he was soon forced to resign and placed under

house arrest within the palace grounds. The palace that had once represented royal authority became, in effect, a gilded prison. For many Cambodians, this reflected their own loss of freedom and voice.

Public life, once shaped by ceremony and tradition, gave way to fear and repression. Although the Khmer Rouge rejected hierarchy and religion, it preserved parts of the palace, especially the Silver Pagoda, to impress foreign visitors. This selective preservation exposed the regime's contradictions: it sought to erase the past while simultaneously using its cultural symbols to project legitimacy.

Seen in this context, Lê's artwork becomes even more powerful. The palace is no longer simply an architectural landmark, but a layered symbol of pride, suffering, and distorted memory. It stands as a reminder that even the most revered national symbols can be reshaped by violence, history and collective trauma.

*Khmer Rouge palace,
Beauty versus tragedy,
Historic symbol.*

Featured Article

QINGMING and KITE FLYING

By Annette Drey



The Qingming Festival (清明节), often called Tomb-Sweeping Day, is a traditional Chinese holiday celebrated in early April. It is a time to remember loved ones who have passed away while also welcoming the arrival of spring. Qingming is both reflective and joyful, bringing families together to honor the past and enjoy the changing of the season.

One of the most important traditions of Qingming is tomb sweeping. Families visit the graves of their ancestors to clean and care for them by pulling weeds, repairing stones, and tidying the area. They often leave offerings such as food, tea, wine, flowers, and incense, and sometimes burn symbolic paper items meant to provide comfort for the ancestors in the afterlife. These customs reflect the Confucian value of filial piety, or respect and care for one's family and ancestors. Tomb sweeping is not only about honoring the dead; it is also an opportunity for families to gather, share memories, and strengthen connections across generations.

At the same time, Qingming is also a celebration of spring. After visiting graves, many families go outdoors to enjoy activities such as flying traditional Chinese kites, known as *fengzheng* (风筝). Flying kites during Qingming has special meaning. In some traditions, people write worries or illnesses on a kite and release it into the sky, sometimes cutting the string to let the kite drift away. This symbolizes letting go of bad fortune and welcoming good luck and renewal. The image of a kite rising into the air also suggests a connection between heaven and earth, fitting Qingming's theme of linking the living with their ancestors.



Chinese kites themselves are an important art form with a history of more than 2,000 years. They are usually made with bamboo frames covered in silk or paper and decorated with colorful painted designs. Common images include butterflies, dragonflies, flowers, birds, and other elements from nature. Butterfly kites often symbolize happiness, beauty, and love, while dragonflies represent change and adaptability. These natural images reflect harmony with the world and ideas of growth, longevity, and transformation.

Together, the traditions of tomb sweeping and kite flying give Qingming its unique character. The festival balances remembrance with celebration, honoring ancestors while embracing the new life of spring. Through these customs, Qingming expresses the deep connection between past and present, life and death, and family and nature.

*Qingming kite flying,
Letting go of bad fortune,
Ancestors honored.*

Docent Spotlight

By Richard Ewell



John O'Malley

John O'Malley was born in Cincinnati, Ohio and raised throughout the Midwest. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Marquette University and a Master of Science degree from Mount St. Mary's University. He served in the U.S. Navy for six years as a military journalist, broadcaster, and recruiter. He also worked as an international trade and business writer for the LA Daily Journal, publisher of the nation's largest daily law newspaper, and as editor and reporter at the LA Business Journal.

He worked as a radio announcer and producer for local stations in Portland, Oregon. John was introduced to Asian art and culture when he hosted a world music show on KBOO-FM in Portland, Ore. He became fascinated by the sounds and instruments of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Cambodian, and Vietnamese music. That fascination has led to a lifelong appreciation and curiosity about Asian art and culture.

He is currently a principal of Glendale based O'Malley International Associates, a strategic communications agency specializing in consulting services for businesses, nonprofits, universities, arts groups, K-12 schools, government organizations, and individuals. He helps shape and direct revenue-enhancing and marketing strategies across multiple media platforms and conducts grant proposal writing workshops and technical writing seminars.

John became a docent at PAM to learn more about the beauty and significance of Asian art and culture and to share that understanding with others. He also recently served on the President's Council for the Chinese Garden at The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens.

DOCENT HEROES

Thank you and rest well!

Yvonne Lee

Rose Lee

Lorenzo Vargas

Melissa Patton

Jane Hirschowitz

Susan Sides

Jon Sides

Randy Quinton

Lisa Koizumi

Evelyn Xu

Fran De La Rosa

Eiko Kubota

Candace Siegle

Jin Sook Jung

Richard Ewell

Paige LaCombe

Annette Drey

Kathy Wales

Daniel Grosz

Ana Soulrivier

Karen Margolis

Chuck Woo



Save the Date

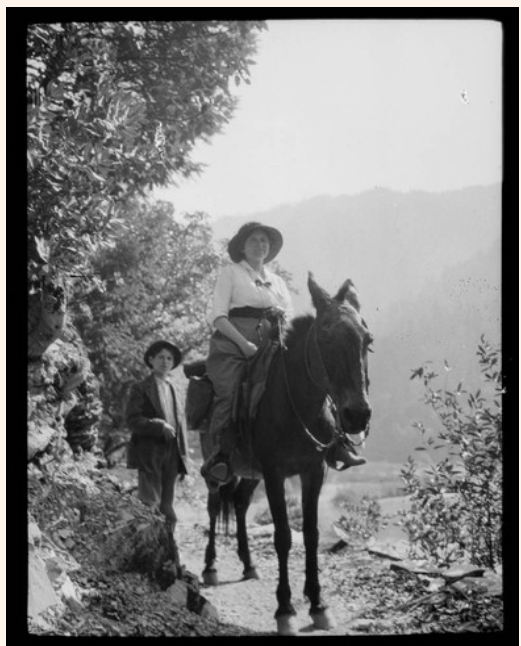
for our Annual Luncheon

Thursday, June 11th

at the Santa Anita Park's
FrontRunner Restaurant

Touring Topics

By Fran De La Rosa



Lest We Forget . .

On my penultimate tour, I had the pleasure of spending a few moments with a chaperone and her daughter. Mom asked, "What is the story of this building?" I took this opportunity to extol the virtues of the woman behind the building. After learning of Grace Nicholson's vision, fortitude, and determination, the mother and her 3rd-grade daughter looked at each other, eyebrows raised, and said, "Wow!" In those few minutes, Grace's story made an impact.

Twenty-three-year-old Grace Nicholson set out for California, unaccompanied, in 1901 by train from Pennsylvania. Considering that train travel was, for part of the 19th century, thought to be hazardous for women (exploding uteruses, speed sickness, mental illnesses), this was a grand achievement. Shortly after arriving in Pasadena, and with only a few dollars in her purse from a small inheritance, she set about opening a business (typing and transcription), made contacts within the community, and eventually became interested in Native American basketry. She traveled extensively in the Southwest, purchasing baskets and befriending people she met along the way.

A fortuitous contact with F. Suie On in 1903, a Chinese importer of some renown, piqued Grace's interest in Asian art, and she started dealing in the "exotic": Asian artifacts. There was a great demand for "Oriental" art and collections among the Pasadena community, and Grace was quick to jump into the trade. She soon purchased a gallery space on Los Robles Avenue (a Greene and Greene structure), where her wares were showcased, attracting a well-to-do clientele eager to soak up the "Oriental splendor and alluring atmosphere of the mysterious, intriguing Far East" (Treasure House brochure).

In 1924, this building, the Treasure House (or "Chia"), was conceived (Greene and Greene demolished). Using \$200,000 (\$3,894,970.76 today) of her well-earned money, Grace commissioned the architectural firm of Marston, Van Pelt, and Mayberry to design her dream, working hand-in-hand with the architects on every detail. Oddly, she had not at that time even visited East Asia. She based her designs on drawings and photographs of Chinese buildings she had seen. The building housed galleries, two apartments, a public library, an auditorium (200-person capacity), and a garden courtyard. "Chia" was completed in 1929.





Working with Grace could not have been easy for the architects. Grace was a strong-willed woman who knew what she wanted and was not afraid to fight for her vision. Even her banker could not convince her that she was making a very big mistake; he wanted her "to build a small, one-story structure that would rent for low prices." Typical Grace, she was not having that!

Grace died in 1948, still living in "Chia" and sharing her vision with her adopted hometown. Over the years, she became a woman of some influence in the civic and art communities, leaving a mark that continues to enchant. "Chia," a bit worse for wear, changed in ways the times demanded, reminding us not only of days gone by but of a fearless woman with big dreams and a bigger heart.

I often stand at the windows in the Docent Room looking at Grace's "flowery" and wonder about Grace. How did she do it? What gave her the inner strength to fight the odds in her time and create an enchantment that, after 100 years, still brings joy and wonder to so many? In the words of my visitors, "Wow!"



Docent Musing

By Annette Drey

When I walked into the “Journey Through Darkness” gallery of the Mythical Creatures exhibit, I was immediately drawn to a mask on the wall labeled “Rangda”. I’ve always loved masks and have collected them from around the world, and I found this one particularly intriguing. After reading the label, I realized the mask was the counterpart to one I had bought years ago, one of Barong, a well-known spirit from Bali. Recognizing there was relationship between the two made me wonder - who exactly are Rangda and Barong, and why are they so central to the spiritual beliefs in Bali?

It turns out Rangda is one of the most significant figures in Balinese culture. She represents more than fear or evil; she reflects a deeper belief that life is made up of opposing forces that must remain in balance. In Balinese Hinduism, harmony depends on maintaining that balance, and Rangda plays a key role in expressing this idea.

She is known as the “Queen of the Leyaks,” or demonic witches, and is associated with black magic and destruction. She is usually shown as a terrifying widow with wild hair, long claws, and a hanging tongue. Her mask is always dramatic, with bulging eyes and sharp fangs. Legends describe her as spreading illness and chaos. Some versions link her to the historical queen Mahendradatta, who was exiled and later transformed through folklore into a feared supernatural figure whom we now know as Rangda.

However, Rangda isn’t just a villain. Her meaning and importance become clearer when she is seen alongside Barong, a lion-like spirit who represents protection and goodness. The two are locked in an endless conflict, but neither ever fully defeats the other. This endless struggle reflects a central idea in Balinese belief: good and evil are both necessary parts of life. One cannot exist without the other, and trying to eliminate either would upset the balance of the world.

This idea is also brought to life in performances like the Barong dance. These aren’t just theatrical performances but sacred rituals meant to protect the community. I remember in an earlier USC PAM exhibit *Bali: Power and Agency in Southeast Asia*, there was an archival film (by Margaret Meade?) of a Barong dance performed in a village. The dancers entered into deep trance states, indicating how spiritually real these rituals are for the people performing them. Through the performance, they directly connect with the forces Rangda and Barong represent.

Even the masks themselves are considered sacred. Ranga masks are often kept in temples and treated with reverence because they are believed to hold spiritual power, not simply artistic value.

Finally, Rangda remains important because she connects ancient traditions to everyday life. She reminds us that true harmony does not come from eliminating darkness, but from learning how to live in balance with it. I am reminded of this every time I look at the Barong mask on my wall.

[Rangda and Barong,](#)
[Opposing Bali forces,](#)
[Both co-existing.](#)



Around Town

By Maureen Nyhan

The Huntington



Japanese Heritage Shoya House Rice Planting

Join us to plant rice in the paddies of the Shōya House and enjoy hands-on learning about traditional Japanese culture and farming techniques with Aaron Hughes, horticulture curator of Asian gardens, at this free drop-in event.

Dates & Times: Wed., June 17, 2026, 12–2 pm and Thu., July 2, 2026, 12–2 pm
[More Information Here.](#)



USC PAM - Movie Screening

Join us for a screening of *Riceboy Sleeps*, the award-winning film that follows the journey of a Korean single mother and her son as they navigate the challenges of

immigration, identity, and belonging in Canada. Presented in connection with the exhibition *Mythical Creatures: The Stories We Carry*. [Trailer.](#)

Date & Time: Saturday, June 6, 2026 1 pm at PAM
[Reservations](#)



Descanso Gardens - Sound of Water

A serene gallery exhibition exploring natural aesthetics, flowing water elements, and curated landscapes.

Curated by Meher McArthur.

Dates & Time: Saturday, June 20 – January 3, 2027, 10 am–4 pm daily.

Location Info: [Descanso Gardens \(Sturt Haaga Gallery\)](#)



Online THE KOREA SOCIETY New York

With a philosophy rooted in simplicity, precision, and balance, Chef Dongsik Ok has reframed traditional Korean comfort food through a minimalist and modern lens.

[More Information.](#)

Dates: The event will be held live on June 2 in New York and available to stream on June 9 by registering:

[Sign up for the Recording.](#)



ArtCenter Pasadena - Movie Screening

Documentary and Q&A on Landscape Architect Laurie Olin, designer of the Getty Center Gardens, *Sitting Still*

Date & Time Sunday, June 7 2026 at 2 pm

Location: Ahmanson Auditorium on ArtCenter College of Design's Hillside Campus, 1700 Lida Street

[Documentary Trailer](#) and [More Info on Laurie Olin Documentary](#)



The Japan Foundation - Sculptural Ceramics

An elegant, dedicated art exhibition focusing on the texture, balance, and modern forms of contemporary Japanese sculptural ceramics.

Opening Reception: Thu, Jun 18, 7 pm - 8:30 pm

Location: Los Angeles, 5700 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 100, Los Angeles, CA 90036

Dates: June 14 – October 12, 2026

[Sculptural Ceramics Exhibition Registration](#)



LACMA - Fashioning Chinese Women: Empire to Modernity

Exhibit traces a century of transformation through more than 70 exquisite ensembles from Shanghai, Hong Kong, and

America. A landmark design exhibition tracking a century of societal transformation

Dates: June 14 – October 12, 2026

Location: Los Angeles County Museum, 5905 Wilshire Blvd.

[LACMA Exhibit Info](#)