

Honolulu Museum of Art  
Minutes of the Docent Council Board Meeting  
Thursday, November 5, 2015

In Attendance: Carol Root, Debra Gray, Betsy Robb, Jan Tucker, Jenny Engle, Christine Park, Georgia McKenzie, Dwight Lowrey, Evelyn Redman, Marianne Dymond, Jeri Simons, Lizzy Lowrey, Dietra Cordea, Sabra Feldstein, Tomoko Kamiya, Karen Ley

President Carol Root called the meeting to order. Welcome was extended to Georgia McKenzie who is the newest member of the Education Department. Those in attendance introduced themselves to Georgia. She shared that one aspect of her job will be to help teachers understand the DOE benchmarks and evaluate how successfully the school tours are meeting the benchmarks. In this regard she will be observing the school tours in the galleries during the school year.

Carol let everyone know that the report of the National Docent Symposium is now available online and includes a link to the national website.

Following are the various committee reports:

#### The Adopt-A-Gallery Committee

A discussion took place regarding the transition from the binders in the docent room to an online format for updating information on the objects both permanent and transitory in the galleries. Most of the docents present at this meeting have used the binders but do obtain most of the information used in giving tours from online resources.

It was noted that Mif Flaharty who headed the Adopt-A -Gallery program for many years would go into the galleries, note changes and update the binders accordingly. In addition, she would often add additional information such as biographical information for an artist whose work(s) was part of a current exhibit.

Betsy stated that it might be possible to upload the most relevant information from the binders; however, Kate Helligso, a volunteer, had scanned and posted online much of the information in the school tour binders, and that project had taken one year.

Betsy noted that there is a data base called TMS (The Museum System) which the museum uses to keep track of the collection; however, the docents do not have access to this data base. The curators do post information including labels regarding past, current and upcoming exhibitions on the docent website under the heading Arts and Artists. As an example, Harajuku and Days of Grace are listed on the upcoming exhibit list.

One of the problems in attempting to keep all of the information regarding the objects in the galleries absolutely current is that the objects on display change almost daily and at times the curators may not have all the labels up until after a show opens, or sometimes a label goes online but due to a last minute change, the object described never goes on display.

In answer to Betsy's question, "What information would the docents like in regards to the

artworks?” several ideas were floated: Several docents would like to see images with the labels; Dietra appreciates the gallery tours that Betsy gives. In this regard, Betsy reminded everyone that she reviewed all the galleries when she was training the foreign language docents and believes that these videos should still be available on You Tube

Debra would like to see listed not just a gallery number, but a descriptive word for that gallery, For example instead of simply “Gallery 4” she would like to see “Gallery 4 - Portraits”.

Per Carol, Lynn proposes that instead of individuals, perhaps a group of docents could “adopt a gallery” and make sure that any new objects were posted online. Tomoko would appreciate an E-mail from the curators notifying the docents of changes in the galleries as there is not always time to go into the galleries prior to each tour.

Jenny suggested that perhaps an online list of updates could be kept separate from the standard gallery object lists. Betsy has offered to request of the registrar an object list from each gallery, but emphasizes to the docents the importance of always checking the gallery for changes prior to giving a tour.

#### The Education Committee

Education Department Curator, Betsy Robb passed out a chart entitled Education in Numbers, compiled by Director Stephan Jost which demonstrates a 34% increase in museum attendance over the past three years.

The Education Department notes that the number of docents who are signing up for the school tours has increased, whereas there are often vacant slots in some of the adult tours especially the Zip and Spotlight tours. Dwight offered an explanation for this, namely that if a docent prepares for and signs up for a school tour, the children will be there; whereas, often there are no visitors to attend the afternoon adult tours. This is disappointing after a docent prepares for a tour, changes out of shorts and tee shirt, drives to the museum only to find that there is no tour. Lizzy suggests placing a placard near the registration desk to let visitors know at what time there will be a tour of a given exhibit or gallery. Jeri added that another logical venue for tour announcements would be the cafe. Betsy reminded everyone that the museum administration does not approve of “signage” but shared an idea she heard at the National Docent Symposium. One of the museums used a round “dot” cut from a yoga mat, placed on the floor near an object to announce a tour. Betsy will bring up the subject of signs with Stephan.

Betsy passed out a draft regarding a Logic Model for evaluation of the museum’s education program. At a meeting in October, the HMA education staff created a draft of universal survey items which could be used for any HMA event or activity involving 5 to 12 year old students.

Jenny announced a workshop for teachers given by Melanie Rick of the Kennedy Center. Fifty teachers, sixteen from outer island are planning to attend. Docents are also invited to attend. It will take place on Tuesday, November 10 from 9:00 AM until 11:00 AM in the Doris Duke theatre. The presentation for the afternoon will take place in the galleries.

On Friday, November 13, there will be a farewell gathering for Vicky Reisner who has been the Director of Volunteer and Visitor Services for many years.

## The Treasury Committee

Co-chairs Dwight Lowrey and Evelyn Redman report that there is currently about \$ 15,000 in the treasury and that this amount should be sufficient to cover the operating expenses for the year. If there should be funds remaining at the end of the fiscal year, the use of those funds would be discussed at that time.

## The Hospitality Committee

Marianne Dymond announced that a farewell party for Mif Flaharty will take place at Marianne's home in Kailua on Monday November 16, and that those docents who were in Mif's class as well as docents who have served on the Docent Council during the past two years, should have received an invitation by E-mail.

Preparations are underway for the Holiday Luncheon which will be on Thursday, December 3 at the Oahu Country Club. Invitations should be out by Monday, November 15 and docents wishing to attend should do so by November 20.

Last year the Treasury subsidized the luncheon expenses at a cost of \$ 2.00 per docent. The cost of the luncheon has increased from \$ 25.00 last year to about \$ 28.00 or \$ 29.00 this year. Lizzy proposed that perhaps the annual docent fee could be increased from \$ 20.00 to \$ 30.00 to cover the increased costs of the luncheons; however, the objection to this idea was that not all the docents are able to attend the luncheons. It was agreed that the cost of the luncheon should not exceed \$ 30.00 per person.

It was suggested that a potluck might be held at HMA or Spaulding House instead of renting a venue such as the country clubs but it was pointed out that the docents already have a potluck twice each year.

The Education Department will review how many of its staff will attend.

The subject arose of the choice of speakers at the December luncheon and several proposals will be considered, among them, Stephan Jost, the new HMA chef Jacob Silver, other new HMA staff members, HMA curators, or even representatives of another local museum such as the Bishop or Iolani Palace.

## The Foreign Language Docents

Per the Japanese speaking Representative, Tomoko Kamiya, filling the needed slots remains a challenge, but the docents are very willing to help one another in this regard.

The Korean speaking Representative, Christine Park reports that the docents are managing well.

## The Docent Room Committee

Per Carol, Joyce Azama of the Docent Room, would welcome suggestions as to how to keep the table free of "clutter". Joyce recommended getting a container for pens, pencils and binders,

## The Book Club

Dietra Cordea, who had headed the Book Club for the past three years is “retiring” from that post at the end of this year. Lizzy Lowrey expressed appreciation for Dietra’s dedication in leading the book club during these years and for the innovations that she instituted during her tenure. The incoming co-chairs will be Lizzy Lowrey and Lynn Hiyakumoto.

Dietra shared that the book club which began with just one monthly meeting in 2007, has since expanded to meet the growing number of interested readers and now offers two meetings per month. Due to the increasing number of participants, the discussions, which had initially taken place in the courtyards or in the galleries have been relocated to the basement lecture room. After the discussion of the book there, the members reconvene in one of the galleries to consider art works which relate to the theme of the book.

The Book Club chairperson(s) compiles a list of 11 books for the year, attempting to include selections which can be tied to objects in as many different galleries as possible as well as one book per year which is appropriate for an exhibit at Spaulding House.

The chairperson recruits docents who express an interest in leading the discussion of a given book, and that docent may also choose to lead the gallery discussion or team with another docent who agrees to share the presentation. The chairperson maintains an E-mail list of anyone who wishes to be kept informed about the upcoming meetings. About one week prior to the first meeting of the month, the chairperson sends out a list of discussion points compiled by the docent who will lead the upcoming session for the readers to think about. The chairperson alerts the front desk personnel prior to the meeting and asks the guards to assist in setting up the discussion room. The discussion points are xeroxed and brought in for the members.

The HMA administration has requested that the docents not attend the book club in numbers greater than those attending from the general public. The goal is to have not more than twenty people in a gallery at any given time. It may be necessary in the future to increase the number of Book Club meeting days to three per month.

Carol had wanted to pose several questions to the docents relating to their perceptions of the docent training, their goals as docents, and the need for a possible docent survey to assess these issues, but due to lack of time, this discussion will be postponed until the next council meeting.

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will take place on Thursday January 7, 2016

Minutes submitted by Karen Ley

