

MINUTES OF THE APD COMMITTEE MEETING February 11, 2015 (11:15am, WBLH)

STAFF REPORT

Dianne Stephens and Liz Diamante updated the docents on the following:

DEGL Organizational Structure

- DEA and DET are now a single department, **DEGL**.
- Lynn has asked for team work and collaboration across the docent programs.
- Dianne Stephens is the main point person for adult program docents and Liz Diamante for school docents, but both work together to support the program and support docent learning.
- Both are available to talk and will be involved in all aspects of the docent program.

Docent-led Tours

The core of our thinking about docent-led tours revolves around our visitors. We want all docent-led tours to provide opportunities for our tour audience to be actively engaged with the work of art – in other words, put the art work at the center of the experience.

We know that you share this thinking and this commitment to the art work and to the visitor.

- It is an amazing privilege to be in a gallery with original works of art.
- a docent-led tour provides opportunities for engagement that an audio tour can't match.
- As you know better than anyone, we have a huge variety of visitors.
- Different visitors are looking for different experiences, but if they take a tour, they are all going to have the opportunity to see and spend time with original works of art.
- Research over the last 30 years in education and specifically museum education has shown that more and more visitors want to be actively engaged in their museum experience.
- By providing a well-thought out, variable menu of clearly described tours, we meet the needs of the greatest number of visitors.

Current Menu of Tours

- **EB Dialogues** – the dialogic tour model is appropriate for modern sculpture, which invites the viewer to bring his or her own experience to bear on it
- **Artists' Choices** – newly described as “a shared endeavor of close looking and dialogue”
- The other eight tours remain unchanged but **we hope you will think in terms of providing opportunities for active engagement on every tour.**
- Many of you are already doing this by including:
 - Adequate time for close looking
 - Guided looking
 - Open-ended questions
 - Facilitated conversation or dialogue

Moving Forward

- We will continue to provide training in both **content** and **teaching strategies**.
- Lynn has asked all of DE asked to work intentionally, so we will look carefully at each of our tours to develop a **goals statement** and an **accurate description**.
- We will begin with the WB Highlights/Intro tour:
 - Audience survey(s)
 - Focus group

- Also, we are working to provide better signage for our tours in an effort to reach more visitors.

Points of Clarification from Lynn

- All tours should be 50 minutes in length, including the EB Dialogues which has to date been advertised as 60 minutes (we will correct signage at the next opportunity)
- The full introduction including NGA history and WB architecture is still appropriate for the WB Highlights/Introduction tour.
- The introduction to Pei's building and its relation to the WB is integral to the EB Dialogues tour.
- For all other tours, the full introduction to the Gallery's history does not need to take place at the beginning of your tour, but a brief version can be integrated into your tour, as appropriate, for example:
 - On a Renaissance tour, you might mention the importance of the Kress Collection.
 - French/Dale Collection
 - Future American tours/Corcoran Collection

Using works from the Corcoran Installation

- Nancy Anderson will be talking to you on March 11
- Info on web site
- Sarah Cash's catalogue on order for lounge – and for sale in shops, and on Amazon

Liz and Dianne are happy to talk at any time – and will be looking for opportunities to chat with each of you.

The following is a summary of docent/staff of the comments and questions that followed:

- During the in-gallery training sessions in which we focus on only 1 or 2 objects, could we take time to brainstorm open-ended questions specific to those works which would generate conversation and encourage closer/deeper looking? Reply: Close looking generates discussion relevant to content. Observations are important. The audience will often ask the questions themselves. We should always deconstruct our tours to learn new approaches to see what works and what doesn't.
- It seems that our training sessions have been very narrow in their approaches, stressing the interactive tour. Reply: There are different ways to look at art and we should strive for a balance of content and comments. By opening up to questions we actually need to know more about content. We are not throwing out content. The docents can get content by using the catalogues and curatorial files. The role of information is an important consideration.
- I was a member of the focus group for Artist's Choices tour. We went back and looked at the notes from previous trainings as far back as 1998 in order to review the original intent of the tour. The original approach was very much focused on comparing the works with the same subject matter and bringing out the different impact of the artists' choices through directed questions. Now the approach is to build upon the immediate observations of the viewer after careful looking, scaffolding the information delivered based upon the viewer's observations. Viewer's observations may take the discussion in a very different direction than the docents' original intention in choosing the comparison in the first place, so this process necessitates knowing the work extremely well. Much more information is being delivered with this approach, as we docents make the case for the viewer's observations with facts about the artist,

the period, the context. If the docent honors the original reasons for choosing the comparisons, the art of asking questions to get to those points is critical because starting the conversation with viewer's observations sometimes opens the discussion to imposed interpretations that contradict the research. Meanwhile, we promise to respect the viewer's observations and not embarrass them to encourage them to engage in open discussion with us. Reply: Take 10 seconds and invite your audience to look really carefully and then ask what jumped out. And for another 10 seconds share that and get the conversations started and then tell them the information. Even the tours that are more challenging can be a little bit more engaging.

- For those of us who were trained to present 10 works of art in 50 minutes- when you start with the Q&A and engagement and depending upon your audience which is often large, you will have to reduce the number of works to fit the time schedule which doesn't always offer a complete tour. Reply: Every stop doesn't have to be the same amount of time. I do think the visitors on a West Building Highlights tour would feel short changed if they only saw 6 works. Maybe you can increase the number by using the whole gallery and mentioning for them to come back and look on their own. Connect it with something they are seeing- perhaps the Van Eyck-mentioning the Italian Renaissance collection. Or when in the Italian Renaissance galleries mentioning that there is a whole group of galleries of Northern Renaissance, again to inform the visitors to look at on their own. Think about it not as 8 objects, but rather as stops where 2-3 works might be referenced.
- It would be a great idea that we look at planning our April Education subcommittee session to focus on how to develop questions and field questions on a few works. This would greatly coordinate with our current trainings.
- Chinese Porcelains? The space is currently closed. Any idea of how long it will be closed? Reply: It is being used for storage of the new Corcoran pieces.
- Will there be more training on Artist's Choices? Reply: Yes, we do plan on doing more training on Artist's Choices. It has not yet been scheduled but it will happen on a weekday.

Dianne and Liz thanked everyone for their questions and left the lecture hall to attend the FLD committee meeting.

Dianne Maffia- Post Script

Dianne reported that comments on our training session with Mike Murkowski were presented to Dianne Stephens and Liz Diamante. Marilyn and Dianne Maffia met with them to discuss the feedback. They were attentive, gracious and never defensive. The result is this informative discussion we've had today.

Other docent comments:

The school tours are currently doing 4 stops and spending about 1 hour and 15 minutes in the galleries. The Adult tours are doing 10 stops in 50 minutes. The tours are coming from very different approaches. School tours have been slowed down- to spend more time looking.

We are not being told to act like the school tours. I have been on several tours that are doing 8-10 works and they are engaging their audience. There seems to be a lot of negative talking. I feel that talking negatively about the training in front of outsiders hurts our program and is not productive.

People have different learning styles. Some people cannot absorb the spoken word. I am one of those people.

Organizational Question? Who is in charge of our training?

Dianne Maffia: My guess is that they are working to together on the planning and training calendar. As Dianne said she is our “go to person”. They are both collaborating on the training. Heidi Hinish is ultimately in charge with Dianne and Liz reporting to her. Dianne Maffia said she would double check but to her knowledge that is the positioning.

TREASURE’S REPORT

Olga Kushnir reported a balance of \$1266.42. Expenses: \$300 for the holiday tea, \$100 deposit on the Spring Luncheon and \$34.15 for new bank checks. The FLD’s contributed \$75 toward the cost of the holiday tea.

SECRETARY REPORT

Dianne Maffia asked if all had received the minutes from the September 10th 2014 meeting and if there were any additions or corrections. There were no changes.

BOOK GROUP

Dianne Maffia reported for Betty Sullivan: The book chosen for this book group is Self Portraits: A Cultural History by James Hall. There are currently 15 copies on order in the bookstore; Betty will notify us when they are in. The meeting will be April 23rd at Marylin Mathis’s home. The address is 7921 Springer Road, Bethesda, MD 20817. The meeting will start with refreshments at 10:30 followed by the book discussion at 11:00am.

ENRICHMENT

Kay Johnson has arranged a tour of “Picturing Mary” at the National Museum of Women in the Arts for Thursday March 5th at 11am. There will be a docent lead tour. There is a lovely luncheon café on the balcony for any of those who are interested in staying. There is still one space left if anyone is interested. Kay will send an email to those signed up...if you cannot go please let her know as soon as possible.

EDUCATION

Howard Fogt: Education has been on display this morning. One of the themes will focus on education as a part of training. We will set a date in April to deal with some of the questions on how to conduct tours and form great questions and work on interactive tours and active engagement. One of the thoughts is to select several works from the Corcoran collection as many are new.

CHAIR REPORT

May Luncheon: Marylin Mathis reported on the Spring Luncheon. The date is Wednesday, May 20th from 12-2 pm. It will be held at the Old Ebbitt Grill. 675 15th Street, NW. This is the same venue as last year and the menu will be the same. Everyone was so pleased with last year’s luncheon that it was decided to repeat. Marylin was able to lock in the price following last year’s luncheon. Marylin can use 2 assistants to help with the planning. Please let Marylin know if you are interested.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee members are Anne Marie Marenburg, Chair; Joan Mulcahy, and Maria Elena Weissman. The committee chair will call for nominations 30 days before the vote. A slate of officers' will be sent out to the Docents at least 7 days prior to the vote. The Docents will vote on the slate of officers at the final meeting of the year (May 27th). Officers will be elected by a simple majority and serve a term of one year.

DIV.OF ED. VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES & ADULT PROGRAM DOCENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This document has been posted on the Volunteer website. Please review.

SCHOOL TOURS

Dianne Maffia asked if the docents were being notified by the school docents of their rotations. Most docents were not receiving notice but did contact the school docent for the information prior to the tour. Dianne said she would mention this at Docent Council.

VOLUNTEER LOUNGE

Finishing touches are being completed in the lounge. A bulletin board, lamp, and book cases are going to be installed. Lockers are going to be tested. The lockers will have a combination lock to avoid the loss of keys.

Dianne Stephens asked Dianne Maffia to ask that no one leave out food in the gallery- particularly the lounge. There is a critter problem in the building and leaving any type of food creates problems. Even placing food in the trash can causes issues. Tea bags, sugar etc. should be placed in metal or plastic containers. A garbage can with a lid may be a help and will be suggested. There was a discussion of whether anyone should eat in the lounge but the decision goes beyond the Adult docent core as it is also used by School docents and Art Information volunteers. This discussion would need to go to Docent Council.

VOLGISTICS

Katheryn Gottschalk will be sending out a review of Volgistics. Remember to register for your April tours on February 15th. Only 2 tours of one kind are allowed. The other 2 tours must be different selections.

SCULPTURE GARDEN TOURS

Marilyn Mathis reminded docents validated for Sculpture Garden tours that sign-up begins 2/15 for April. Marylin asked the docents who do this tour to sign up for only one tour in the first two weeks because there are only 4 scheduled tours in a month. After the first two weeks, then its fine to choose more tours.

Dianne Maffia thanked Marilyn Mathis and Stephenie Frasher for collecting the comments about training concerns to present to Dianne and Liz. There have been tremendous changes this year, beginning with Sally Shelburne's training on the EB tour. Other changes include staff changes, an expanded tour schedule, Volgistics, and our new Roles & Responsibilities document.

Docent Comments:

- There has been an undercurrent of uncertainty all year. Many of our questions and concerns were answered today and "Thank you" for doing this.

- I would like to suggest that you communicate back to Dianne and Liz how pleased the group is that questions have been answered.
- I would like to thank you Dianne for being the conduit to discuss these issues and handling it in such a perfect way.

The Docents all agreed.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20pm.