



## Kaleidoscope

*From Our President Rachael Bertone*

### Newsletter Contents

	Page
<b>President's Message</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>What's In It for Us</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Symposium Logo</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>What is a NDSC Director</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Docents at the Frye</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Book Reviews</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Special Review</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>What is a Docent?</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Docents Are Special</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2007 Memories</b>	<b>9</b>



"Crossing Borders—Bridging Cultures" is the theme of the Toronto Symposium, and how appropriate it is! Many docents will be crossing the international border to reach Toronto, but when we arrive we will also

experience the opening of "borders" between institutions, between specialties, and between individual docents.

During the symposia it is always exciting to tour world-class institutions, hear innovative presentations, and be motivated by recognized authorities in our field.

However, the best part of any symposium is meeting other docents, in our own or other disciplines, and recognizing the similarities between us.

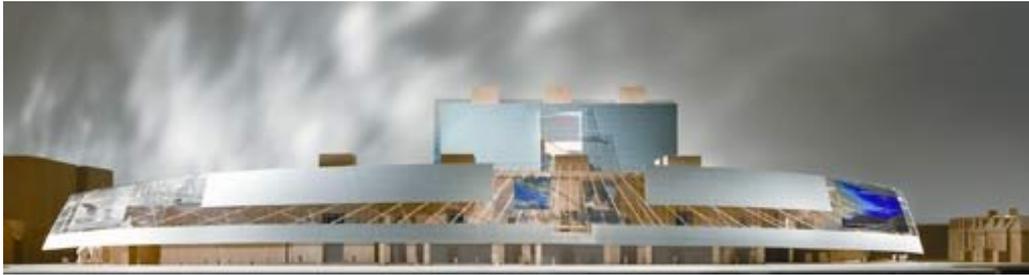
Whether touring in an art gallery, explaining the workings of an historical structure, interpreting a natural sciences exhibit or exploring a garden or park, we all share the qualities of appreciation of our discipline, desire to learn more, and the satisfaction in telling others of our passion.

Unfortunately, there is not room for every docent to attend a symposium, but all docents can benefit from the collective wisdom shared during the symposium by logging on to the website and discovering a source for inspiration and innovation.

**Cheryl Partridge**, our web-master, and **Harriet Neal**, our web-editor are striving to make the website more interesting and accessible by adding current information about docent programs. You can help by sending us news from your institution—openings, recruitment opportunities, special events, and successful techniques.

By working together, we will cross the borders between us, and add to our enjoyment of what we love best...being a docent.

Credits:  
Editor: Harriet Neal  
Committee:  
Paula Calvin  
Patricia Hillerman  
Nancy Rowett  
Phoebe Kline  
Webmaster: Cheryl Partridge



*This is an artist's drawing of the soon to reopen Art Gallery of Ontario, site of the 2009 National Docent Symposium.*

## What's In It for Us?

What's in it for us? This is a legitimate question for any docent or docent organization thinking about sending a delegate to the National Docent Symposium. In 2009 it will be in Toronto, Ontario, so you will need a passport.

The delegate will be exposed to nationally recognized speakers on a variety of hot topics and a panel discussion by experts. Delegates will have a chance to go to the small breakout sessions of their choice and interest where they will hear presentations and have opportunities to ask questions.

The Marketplace will again be featured. This is an opportunity to browse among

displays by museums and docent organization to get ideas and ask questions of the people directly involved.

This alone would be worth the cost in time and money, BUT there is more. Delegates will be hosted at galas by local museums such as Art Gallery of Ontario and Gardiner Museum of Ceramics. And there is STILL MORE. There will be off-site visits to other museums in the area where the delegates get an up-close view of their program and go on personal tours of their facility.

This is just a teaser and a hint (more details to come) to what can be a docent life-changing event. Are you ready to go?

## The Story Behind the Logo



*When you look at an organization's logo, do you ever wonder what it means and why they chose the elements they did? For this one you will have to wonder no more. **Debbie Kennedy**, one of the co-chairs of the 2009 National Docent Symposium explains it all.*

For those of you who have visited us before, you will recognize Toronto's famous skyline. For those of you who

will be visiting for the first time, think of our logo as your personal invitation. The dome shape represents the Rogers

Center, home to our major league baseball team, the Toronto Blue Jays. The tower to the right is the CN tower, “Canada’s most recognizable and celebrated icon”. The remaining structures on either side symbolize our financial district, and Toronto’s strength is the world marketplace. The logo compliments our theme “Crossing Borders: Bridging Cultures,” with the highway suggesting that in 2009, all roads will lead to the National Docent Symposium. Of course, no Canadian

logo would be complete without our Maple Leaf and our National colour – **red**. We are grateful to the Graphics department at the Art Gallery of Ontario for all of its time and effort. **Aleks Grzywaczewska** did a terrific job and we are confident that her design will adapt easily to its many applications. So whatever your mode of transportation in the fall of 2009, we hope that as you approach our city, you will recognize our skyline and share in our enthusiasm in hosting the Symposium.

## **What is a NDSC Director?**

This and “why would I want to become a Director” were questions that I asked myself when I received an email from the recruiting chair for NDSC (National Docent Symposium Council) after I had been to my second symposium. I was in awe of the people who were a part of the organization that put on the gatherings that had so inspired me to work harder at becoming a good docent. At the time I did not realize that the Council Directors did not really put on the symposia – that is done by the host museum docents who sit on the council during the time they host and plan the symposium.

When I found out that the Council Directors provided support to the host museum docents, meeting at the symposium and on the off-year at the site of the next symposium, I was intrigued. Applying and becoming a NDSC Director has turned out to be a wonderfully enriching experience. I have gained docent friends from one end of this country to the other—including Canada. In the company of other directors I will be attending off-year

meetings in Toronto in October 2008. We will get special docent tours of the Art Gallery of Ontario, host site of the 2009 Symposium, and the Gardiner Museum of Ceramics. We will also have an opportunity to visit and exchange information with each other at fun dinners that are being planned for us.

Does any of this sound interesting? If it does, please consider applying to become a director. There are two directors from each of the seven AAM (American Association of Museums) regions. At every symposium a new director is chosen for each region. The term is for four years, and the committees and jobs assigned are fun and not a burden. This is the perfect job for someone who likes to travel, likes to meet new people, likes being a docent, and wants to be a part of what is happening with docents around the country. If this is you, please use the “contact us” link on this site.

**Harriet Neal**



## **University Students as Docents at the Frye Museum**

This fall the Frye Art Museum in Seattle begins a new partnership with Seattle University to provide internships for Fine Arts students. The program is open to sophomores, juniors and seniors who will earn five credits by serving as Gallery Guides (Frye's term for Docents) at the Museum for a one-year term. They will work with students in grades K-12 and with adults, providing tours of Museum exhibits. As part of their internship they will develop research and presentation skills, work with museum staff, and meet with the artists.

The Museum and the University are just blocks apart in the Capitol Hill neighborhood east of downtown Seattle. With 7,500 students, the University is one of the largest independent educational institutions in the Pacific Northwest. The Frye Art Museum, established in 1951, features a founding collection of late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early

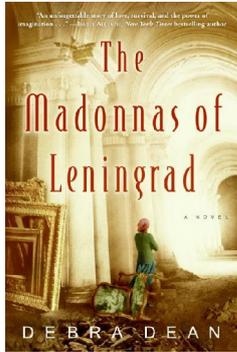
20<sup>th</sup> century art by Munich-based artists, and art by French and American artists. There are also special exhibitions in the galleries. The Museum has a school tour program for grades K-12.

Over the past two years a group of students from Seattle University were part of the Gallery Guide program and provided tours for school groups, and some also were docents for the daily public tours. The success of their participation led to the formalization of an internship program with the University. This program provides benefits for both the Museum and the university students. For the Museum the addition of the undergraduate students brings their energy and enthusiasm to the touring programs. For the students, they interact with members of the public, gain valuable presentation skills, and give back to their community.

Paula Calvin

## Book Reviews

### *The Madonnas of Leningrad* by Debra Dean



Marina's mind is slowly eroding with age. This former docent at the Hermitage Museum is losing her grip on everyday life and her family is very concerned as she slips in and out of reality. But this elderly Russian woman vividly remembers her distant past and the horror of war in 1941, with the Germans approach to Leningrad (St. Petersburg of today). The author enables us to visualize Maria's memories through the dramatic details of her interesting life.

She and her fellow docents must dismantle rooms containing fabulous art

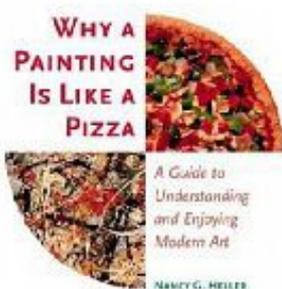
to save them from the destruction of war. Each object is removed, wrapped and stored in crates. The empty frames are replaced back on the walls in the galleries. They will stay on the walls awaiting the paintings' return when the war ends.

Debra Dean moves back and forth in time between Marina's wonderful imagination recreating the past destruction in Russia and the present that currently fills her family with fear that she is losing her mind through Alzheimer's.

This is a debut novel that is beautifully written with compassion and convincing drama.

Janice Morelli

### *Why a Painting is Like a Pizza: A Guide to Understanding and Enjoying Modern Art* by Nancy G. Heller



"I just don't get it," may be a refrain that docents at art museums hear with some frequency. We may encounter skepticism, puzzlement, discomfort and, on occasion, hostility when exposing our visitors to 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century art. Nancy G. Heller approaches the situation with a thesis that is thought-provoking, and she does it in a clearly-written manner that is accessible to the general public.

So, how is a painting like a pizza? According to Heller, there are "...critical ways in which these apparently dissimilar items are related. Both paintings and pizzas depend on visual balance for much of their overall impact, and though each can be judged by a set of generally accepted standards, ultimately the viewers/consumers must evaluate each painting and pizza in terms of their own personal taste." Comparing and contrasting photos of a Jackson Pollock painting and a pizza with vegetable toppings, Heller examines the possibility of analyzing an object in formal terms.

Heller deals with new materials artists are using, as well as with the concept of bending or breaking rules. For instance, the blurring line between art and life is explored through “chairs” by Lucas Samaras and Scott Burson. Acknowledging the challenge of monochromatic paintings, Heller not only discusses minimalism, but ties these works into the common experience of going to a paint store to choose from among the paint chips just the right shade for one’s dining room.

The final chapter may be among the most helpful to docents. Heller

offers “commonsense answers” in both short (and sometimes flip) answers and longer explanations to 8 FAQs we hear most often. How can you tell whether an artwork is good or bad? Which end is up? How can you tell in an Abstract Painting? Why does this artwork deserve to be in a museum? Sound familiar? Heller’s answers to these and other questions are clear and accessible.

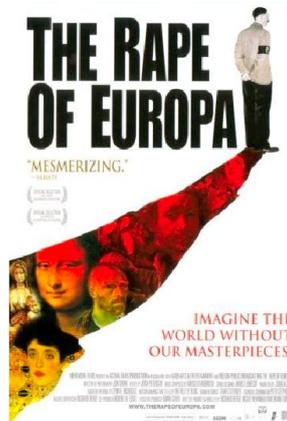
**Phoebe Kline**

## *The Rape of Europa*

*This is a special article about a movie and the book that it comes from. You will probably laugh, cry and cheer as you read or watch “The Rape of Europa.”*

A four-star movie review in the local newspaper led me to sit enthralled for 117 minutes watching *The Rape of Europa*, a fascinating documentary of “The Fate of Europe’s Treasurers in the Third Reich and the Second World War.” After seeing the film, I sought out the book of the same name, written by Lynn Nicholas and published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1994 (paperback about \$12 from Amazon.com).

The documentary film is narrated by award-winning actress Joan Allen, and includes interviews with Nicholas and people who witnessed the Nazi destruction and plundering of thousands and thousands of art and cultural works. The documentary is shown in art theaters throughout the country (Google the title



for locations) and can be purchased on DVD from Amazon.com. It is well worth the Amazon.com price of \$27 as you will watch it over and over. You may want to show it to docent groups.

Adolph Hitler, initially a failed artist who was refused acceptance into the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna,

developed a hatred of modern art and went about systematically ostracizing, destroying and selling “degenerate” art abroad while looting Old Masters from institutions and individuals—often Jewish galleries and citizens—for himself and the Third Reich.

Stories were both sad and inspiring, and many were first-hand accounts by people who were interviewed in the film. The

story of the evacuation of museums in heroic attempts to save art treasures was fascinating, including the transportation of the Mona Lisa in a specially sealed ambulance with a climate control device. When the ambulance was opened at its hiding place in the south of France, the curator accompanying the painting was found unconscious—but Mona Lisa arrived in perfect condition. The curator quickly recovered and watched over the painting until it could be restored to its place in the Louvre at the end of the war.

Art was also destroyed by Allied bombings, and a U.S. commission was established to find and save treasures. Army officers, “Monuments Men” (the soldiers nicknamed them “Venus Fixers”), were art experts whose names you may recognize. They were assigned to infantry troops and were in the first

wave of Allied soldiers that entered occupied towns. Each had a list of treasures to account for, and attempt to save or recover. Deane Keller, Yale art professor, was the Monuments Man assigned to U.S. Fifth Army in Italy. I couldn’t help but sob aloud as I watched crowds cheer in the Piazza della Signoria as Keller led the military convoy of paintings being returned to the Uffizi. For his work in Italy, Keller was awarded the United States Legion of Merit, the Member of the British Empire medal and the Order of St. John Lateran from the Vatican.

I think you will really enjoy the film for its extraordinary stories and images. If you want more, get Nicholas’s book.

Nancy Rowett

## Looking for a Good Book?

Try one of these:

*Full Bloom, The Art and Life of Georgia O’Keeffe*, by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp.

*Strapless*, by Deborah Davis It is the story of Madame Gautreau or Madame X and artist John Singer Sargent and the controversy caused as a result of her portrait entitled Madame X.

## What is a Docent?

What is a Docent? This question is often asked. The literal translation of the word from the Latin word docente, means “teaching.” Some museums prefer to use the word Guide to describe those who give informative tours in their

institution, meaning, “one who shows the way.” Both titles are correct, but there is much more to what we do.

First and foremost, we are the smiling contact that a guest has with the

Museum. We represent our institution. Our job is to engage visitors with the museum and the collections it contains by challenging them to actively participate in their visit. When this happens it makes the long hours we spend in study and research worthwhile!!

Asking and encouraging questions are ways to engage visitors with us and to what we are talking about. Listening to them and helping provide a context for understanding aids in making that connection. But perhaps the most important thing we do is provide our

visitors the opportunity and time to look carefully and perhaps experience the magic moment of discovery! That is what museum guests will remember long after their visit with us.

Being a docent is a wonderful opportunity to learn, to meet people, and to share our institution with others. More importantly it is an opportunity for us to encourage our visitors to look at things in a new way and discover and appreciate the unknown.

**Pat Hillerman**

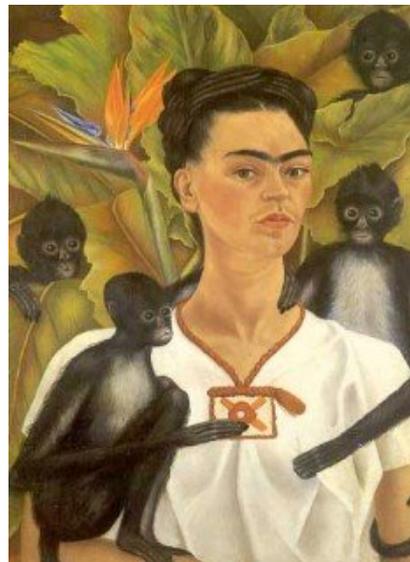
## Docents Are Special People: An Inspiring Tour

*The following is an excerpt from an article appearing in an on-line magazine called Literarymama.com entitled "Doing it Differently – Frida and Me." The author, Ona Gritz and her partner Dan, both of whom have disabilities, were given a tour of the Frida Kahlo exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art by **Fern Denney** who often gives tours at the Museum to blind and visually impaired visitors.*

"You've been blind since birth?" she asked Dan easily as she led us toward the exhibit hall. "Okay, so that means you have no knowledge of colors. That's helpful for me to know."

The first painting was titled *Self-portrait with Monkeys*. I stared at it, realizing that while I'd pored over prints for years, I'd never been in front of an actual Frida Kahlo painting before... **Fern** described the size of the canvas and indicated, by drawing a line at Dan's chest with her

hand, how much of the figure is shown. She had him feel the neckline of my blouse to get an idea of what Frida was wearing and tapped him to show where



Self-portrait with Monkeys, 1943

the monkeys' hands rested on her torso. I was rapt as she built the image detail by detail, finding the precise words for each

texture and expression. We then moved on to Frida's wedding portrait with the famous muralist, Diego Rivera. **Fern** placed my hand over Dan's to show him how Frida's hand rested on Diego's upturned palm. She and I talked about the difference between this flatter folk style and the three-dimensional quality of the first piece, answering Dan's questions about what shadows look like and how artists use shading to create depth.

But the rawness of some of the other images made me catch my breath.

Frida's body wrenched open to show the cracked column of her spine. Nails peppering her skin. Full anatomically correct hearts worn on the outside. I thought of how lucky I am that my disability does not cause pain... Meanwhile, as I walked the gallery that contained the paintings she did create, I found myself falling deeper in love. With Frida for the bravery with which she showed herself... With **Fern** for bringing these paintings to life for Dan with her words. And of course with Dan – for figuring out a way to let me share one more piece of my world with him.

## **NDS 2007- Inviting Reflection, Remarkable Memories (or Igniting Recollections?)**

It is hard to believe it has been more than a year since the NDS 2007 completed its "Phoenix Run." We look back on those busy years of preparation and the actual action-packed days of the Symposium much as a mother does at the birth of her cherished child; the joys of the finished product are more memorable now than the labor pains that



Barbara Nichols, Roxie Stouffer, Kathryn Blake, & Sherry Koopot  
Kathryn is PAM Educational Director and the others were co-chairs of the 2007 Symposium

produced it. (But, we are not so delirious or forgetful that we would contemplate ANOTHER child!) We have each returned to our Pre-Symposium Docent lives. **Roxie** has given up keeping us all in order, (including the budget!) and has been concentrating on helping new Docent Trainees learn to be flexible and fantastic. **Barbara** has taken off her party hat and off-site oversight and has been concentrating on touring and speaking in the community. **Sherry** has given up creating tickets and finding speakers and has been concentrating on finding slides and returning to touring and school presentations. It would appear there is always another docent adventure to keep us busy and captivate our imagination.

The wonderful scrapbook that our Historian made for us enhances our

happy memories. It is loaded with pictures and memorabilia of the Symposium and graces our Docent Room. It gives us great joy to see many of our Docent Family still enjoying and reliving the Symposium through this beautiful book. (Our Historian made a mini-book for each of us! Can you believe that?) We also received many

wonderful comments from attendees after the symposium and also accolades from our Museum Staff. We all three feel a real sense of accomplishment tempered with the knowledge that we never could have been successful without the help and energy of all our Docents.

From the “**Can You Believe This?**” department, we will let you all in on a little secret. As we were gearing up for the 2007 Symposium in our renovated Museum (Phoenix Art Museum – PAM), one of our major concerns was the Courtyard. It had been in pristine condition for our Grand Opening in November 2006. Then, shortly after the new year of 2007, they had to tear up the whole courtyard and replant trees and grass due to some error in design and planting. We sweated out having it ready for the Symposium and our opening event but the Symposium gods (and our stellar construction crew) somehow, one week before the Symposium, had it back in shape for all of us to enjoy. No sooner had the final guest checked out of Camelback Inn, our bills been paid and the final reports written than we were greeted with the “construction fences” once again encircling our Courtyard! It seems that one of the cranes in its haste to replace a major tree had cracked an underground pipe. Once again, the grass and the sidewalks (and it appeared every major plant) had to be redone. We spent another summer walking around construction crews and dirt. It would seem the Symposium occurred at just the right “window of opportunity” for our Courtyard. Happily, we can say 3<sup>rd</sup> time is the charm!

Now **we three** look forward to enjoying **every minute** of Toronto’s Symposium. We know it will be splendid and we are sure the grass will be greener on the other side of the border!

**Roxie, Barbara, Sherry**

## **Contributors to this issue of the Kaleidoscope**

Rachael Bertone  
California Academy of Science  
National Park Service  
San Francisco, CA

Paula Calvin  
Fry Museum,  
Seattle, WA

Fern Denney  
Philadelphia Museum of Art  
Philadelphia, PA

Pat Hillerman  
John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art  
Sarasota, FL

Debbie Kennedy  
Art Gallery of Ontario,  
Toronto, ON, Canada

Phoebe Kline  
Smithsonian American Art Museum  
Washington, DC

Sherry Koopot  
Phoenix Art Museum  
Phoenix, AZ

Janice Morelli  
Art Institute of Chicago  
Chicago, Ill

Harriet Neal  
Prescott Art Docents  
Prescott, AZ

Barbara Nichols  
Phoenix Art Museum  
Phoenix, Arizona

Nancy Rowett  
Rhode Island School of Design Museum  
Providence, RI

Roxie Stouffer  
Phoenix Art Museum  
Phoenix, AZ