

Management of the Freer | Sackler Hands-On Collection

- **Docent Undertaking.** The program is initiated and run by the docents, with support from the museum's education department.
- **Personnel.** Work is carried out by the Hands-on Committee, a standing committee of the Docent Council. The chair is appointed by the chair of the Docent Council; 5-8 members are recruited by the committee chair. There is an assigned staff liaison and help from an education department volunteer (when available). The staff liaison attends all meetings and supports the docents in all activities.
- **Source of objects.** Most hands-on objects have been donated by docents or staff. A few are de-acquisitioned museum pieces or objects donated to the museum but not deemed "museum quality." Some inexpensive items are purchased. Photographs are donated by and credited to the photographer, or reproduced from legally available sources.
- **Decisions about objects.** The committee decides about adding or eliminating objects from the collection, based on a discussion of the usefulness and rationale for use. If a new object is added, it is also reviewed by the appropriate curator of the museum for appropriateness. Objects typically are removed from the collection because of lack of use or poor condition. The committee also considers one-time only objects for use with special exhibitions.
- **Organizing the collection.** The committee created the organizing framework for cataloging, labeling, and storing objects, including the contextual photographs. The conceptual framework adheres to the basic divisions of the museum (e.g. Japanese, Chinese, Himalayan, American, etc.) augmented with a simple numerical system. There is a printed listing of the hands-on holdings and, in the case of contextual photos, a searchable, digital data base as well.
- **Housekeeping.** The committee is responsible for periodically checking the collection for needed repairs/replacements, correct placement of objects in the storage cabinet drawers, monitoring and replacing sign-out sheets, noting new needs, and replenishing school tour supplies. Object usage is calculated annually, a task recently undertaken by the Education Department volunteer.
- **Training.** The committee plans and conducts occasional informal training in lunchtime sessions, designed for the entire docent corps to illustrate and brainstorm usage.