



FAAC

CHRONICLE

SPRING 2021

From the President's desk

Greetings! The COVID crisis sent our minds into the normal fight, flight, or freeze response and the constant reminders to social distance encouraged us to stay there. Most of us tried to stay busy by adapting to the work from home cycle and exercising at-home routines. However, the sacrifice of social distancing does not mean we should be completely cut off from activities that are emotionally uplifting. So instead of watching crime, terrorism or political commentary 24/7, let us use the social media tools at our disposal to broaden our knowledge through some of the virtual programs we have in store for you. The FAAC remains active, and I have the privilege of leading this group during these unprecedented times.

As your recently elected FAAC President, I look forward to returning to normalcy. It is gratifying to work with the FAAC, a diverse and committed group focused on promoting the DIA's galleries of Asian, Islamic, and Ancient Middle Eastern art. During the pandemic, our board members and expert DIA staff have shifted to online programs and gatherings. We are fortunate to have board members who are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the mission and vision of the FAAC. They have expertise in the nuances of their individual cultures to enrich our programs. Katherine Kasdorf,

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Associate Curator of Arts of Asia and the Islamic World, has been a unique asset in promoting the cultures our group represents.

We would like to convey our appreciation to all retiring board members who have served FAAC admirably for the past several years. Our special thanks go to Alicia Masse who served as President for the past six years. She and the team coordinated many successful programs. We hope that with the assistance of Larry Baranski, Director of Public Programming, we will continue to bring forward new and exciting programs.

In November, DIA Director Salvador Salort-Pons attended our quarterly FAAC board meeting. He has been very supportive of our group's activities, and was a strong proponent of the Asian galleries' reinstallation in 2017–18. Deputy Director Judith Dolkart attended our February FAAC board meeting. Both provided updates on the activities of the museum, which has been open since July and is following safety protocols for visitors to register in advance of their visit.

Last summer, David Morrison led the way in reviving the dormant FAAC book club. Jumana Cooper, FAAC Vice President, will lead the book club and the newly instituted movie club in 2021.

Unfortunately, all the in-person family-oriented FAAC programs that were planned for this year have been delayed due to the pandemic. However, FAAC and the DIA continue to offer a robust lineup of online programming. As our children and grandchildren are facing an unprecedented amount of “out-of-school” time, have them join you for some of our planned activities as we try to stay connected. Our work together will support our legacy of preserving art for the next generations. We will strive to be a cohesive group by getting to know and to understand each other's cultures more deeply. It is going to be a great year!

Anita Rajpal
President, Friends of Asian Arts and Cultures



Chinese, *Water Buffalo and Herd Boys*, Early Ming, 1368–1460, ink and watercolor on silk, painting 12 1/2 x 120 in. Detroit Institute of Arts 31.284, Founders Society Purchase with funds from Mrs. Walter R. Parker



Atul Dodiya (Indian, born 1959),
Mahatma Gandhi getting out of a car, Bombay, 1944, 2016, oil on canvas, 72 x 72 in. Detroit Institute of Arts 2019.43, Museum Purchase, Modern and Contemporary Deaccession Fund

Katherine Kasdorf - Curatorial Update

If you've been to the DIA lately, you may have noticed some changes to the galleries Asian and Islamic art. Some of these changes follow our regular rotation schedule: To mitigate damage to light-sensitive works of art, we rotate (change) all textiles and works on paper every six months. Other updates feature new acquisitions, bring objects from storage into the galleries, or show familiar objects in a new way.

During the first week of March, the DIA installed the fifth rotation of light-sensitive works in the Robert and Katherine Jacobs Asian Wing. They will be on view through August 2021. You'll see the biggest difference in the gallery of Chinese art, where eight paintings (or sections of handscroll paintings) have been changed. On the opposite end of the gallery, you'll see a different dragon robe on view.

The Korean gallery now features a folding screen with paintings by Yi Ha-eung (1820–1898), on loan from the Cleveland Museum of Art (*Orchids and Rocks*, 1897–98). In the Japanese gallery, you'll see the DIA's screens with *Blue and White Wisteria on a Bamboo Trellis*, as well as a new rotation of hanging scrolls and miniature album paintings. Look for springtime themes in the *tokonoma* case and the Noh theater robe.

The gallery of Indian and Southeast Asian art, the Padma and Raj Vattikuti and Family Gallery, also features a new rotation of paintings on paper, as well as a Sumatran *Tapis Cermuk* (a ceremonial skirt or dress with mirrors) from the Kauer culture, donated by Janis Wetsman in 2019. Perhaps the most prominent change to that gallery is the installation of *Mahatma Gandhi getting out of a car, Bombay, 1944*, by the Indian artist Atul Dodiya (born 1959). In this large-scale oil painting, a recent DIA acquisition, Dodiya combined photorealist and abstract styles to bring together two leaders of India's Independence movement (1857–1947). Meticulously reproducing an archival photograph of Gandhi, he also quotes from the work of artist and poet Rabindranath Tagore, introducing a bird motif and abstract line from Tagore's oeuvre across the top of the composition.

In the Islamic gallery, you'll see a new selection of manuscripts, including a Qur'an from Bukhara (in present-day Uzbekistan) that once belonged to the Indian Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (1592–1666), as well as a bilingual *Liturgikon*, in Greek and Arabic, made for a Greek Orthodox church in Lebanon in 1672. We've also updated our installation of South Asian Islamic art, and in June, we will add a folio rotation to this part of the gallery to accommodate our growing collection of Mughal paintings. In late April, we'll be installing a *Goradiz* carpet from southwestern Azerbaijan, recently donated to the DIA by V. Howard, in the large carpet case.

We hope you will enjoy seeing these new works in our galleries. The museum remains open, Wednesdays through Sundays, with limited capacity, so be sure to reserve a free admission ticket at dia.org/visit ahead of your visit. The health and safety of DIA visitors and staff is our top priority; to learn more about our safety protocols, visit dia.org/reopening.

Recent and Upcoming Programs

All Programs are Online

Sun. Feb. 28, 2pm: "Goddesses of Multiplicity: Changing Contexts of the South Indian Yoginis" — Lecture by Katherine Kasdorf, Associate Curator, Arts of Asia and the Islamic World (hosted by the Cincinnati Asian Art Society).

Thurs. March 4, 5:30pm: Discussion and studio tour with artist Ghada Amer (hosted by the DIA's Friends of Modern and Contemporary Art).

Wed. April 7, 6pm: "Artistic Intersections: Early Modern Encounters between the Islamic World and Europe" — This virtual gallery tour will bring together members of the European Paintings Council, VCESDA, and the Friends of Asian Arts and Cultures, as Dr. Katherine Kasdorf and Dr. Chassica Kirchhoff spotlight objects that demonstrate the rich artistic exchanges that connected Europe and the Islamic World during the 16th and 17th centuries. This intermedial and intercultural tour will include textiles, paintings, prints, and metalworks from the DIA alongside illuminating comparative examples from other collections.


Thurs. May 20, 6:30pm: *Edo Avant Garde* Discussion with the Director — FAAC, together with the Friends of the Detroit Film Theatre and the Freer House, will co-sponsor a Discussion and Q&A with Linda Hoaglund, Director of the film *Edo Avant Garde*, and Dr. Yukio Lippit, Professor of Japanese Art at Harvard University. The film will be available to stream from May 14–23.

May: Asian Pacific American Heritage Month — Online programming throughout the month. More details to follow!



Azerbaijani,
Goradiz Carpet,
ca. 1890, wool
and silk, 120 1/4
x 49 in. Detroit
Institute of Arts
no. 2017.71, Gift
of V. Howard

Our Docent Colleagues



FAAC is privileged to have two accomplished docents, Freda Giblin and Jill Best, as our board members. It is fascinating to learn about their passion for art and their professional lives. As docents—called “Interpretive Program Volunteers” (IPV’s) at the DIA—they are the primary volunteer group that engage the visitors with the art in some of the popular galleries, lead the daily art tours, and provide lectures on the DIA’s art to community groups. We appreciate their contribution as volunteers to the DIA and service to the community. Below, Freda and Jill have graciously provided their outlook on being docents at the DIA. - Anita Rajpal

What DIA docents all have in common is that we not only love art, but are interested in learning about the artists, and about the culture or historical period in which a work of art was made—and then we want to share that knowledge with audiences of all ages. There is nothing like seeing the delight of an individual when they really connect with the art.

Being a docent at the DIA is both educational and fun. Every two years or so, the DIA website (www.dia.org) will post a note in its “Volunteer” tab, announcing that a new docent-training class will begin in September. (Because of the pandemic, a new class won’t take place until 2022 or 2023.) A training class includes about 28 people with a similar love of art, and so very soon you make new friends. If you’re interested in learning about art, it is not at all onerous to meet two Saturdays a month at the DIA for five hours from September to May. A range of people become docents – from students to retirees, and from those who have been volunteering at the DIA for years to those who haven’t volunteered at all.

In the IPV training year, we learn how to engage visitors so they feel comfortable in talking about what they see in a work of art. We also learn how to present a work of art, starting by giving a short talk with a partner, and finally by giving a presentation by ourselves. There are many written materials to support our training, as well as curator talks.

Before we finish training, we present a tour of twenty art objects to Christine Mark, the IPV staff advisor and DIA manager who provides approval for IPVs to give public tours. There are about a dozen works of art that all IPVs must be able to discuss, and beyond those we choose art objects from a range of galleries that we personally love. Most of us end up with twice as many works of art on our list.

As IPVs, we also give offsite talks when requested by various community groups. During the pandemic we are continuing to provide these talks via Microsoft Teams. These talks include the DIA’s history, major works of art at the DIA, women artists at the DIA, Museum Mysteries, and other topics that you can view at this website: [Behind the Seen Talk Descriptions | Detroit Institute of Arts Museum \(dia.org\)](https://www.dia.org/behind-the-seen-talk-descriptions).

IPV education is always ongoing and the museum’s volunteer department supports us in many ways. There are weekly on-line Zoom meetings where docents present a work of art to their fellow docents. “Thursdays at the Museum,” a weekly event at 1:00 pm for adults aged 55 and over, is also a great time to learn more about the museum’s art, view a film, or participate in an art-making project. The art

lectures, given by docents Howard Rosenberg and Ray Henney, are later posted on YouTube.com (search for "Thursdays at the Museum"). To view the event live on Microsoft Teams on Thursdays at 1 p.m., go to dia.org/thursdays and enter your zip code.

The DIA's YouTube channel also includes talks by curators, which anyone can view.

As docents, we seek to provide a positive experience for all who come to the DIA and, as expressed in our mission statement, are committed "to help every visitor find personal meaning in art and with each other."



Freda Giblin became interested in art as a teenager, and served on the DIA's FAAC Auxiliary prior to retiring and becoming a docent in 2016. She previously worked for Wayne State University's Research Division, helping faculty from different areas of expertise develop multi-disciplinary research. Prior to that she helped establish the NIH Perinatology Research Branch at WSU, after having worked in strategic planning at the Detroit Medical Center and WSU School of Medicine. Aside from her interest in art, she takes classical piano lessons and enjoys tai chi and tennis. She holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Goucher College and three degrees from WSU: M.A. in teaching, M.B.A., and Ph.D. in the interdisciplinary area of mentoring and social support. Freda and her husband Bill Block, a retired pathologist, enjoy attending vintage car events. She has a daughter who is a neurologist and pain specialist in Boston, and a stepdaughter (who is a chef and writer) and two step-grandchildren living in Denver.



Jill Best was born and raised in England, before coming to Michigan in 1973. She was privileged to grow up in an internationally minded family, that loved to travel and explore the world. After graduation from high school, she spent a year at the Sorbonne in Paris, before attending Edinburgh University to read English. Upon graduating in 1967, she embarked on her intended career as a high school English teacher. She married Richard in 1972. Then everything changed! Richard, who worked in the auto industry, was assigned to a two-year job posting in Detroit. They never left. Jill was not allowed to teach in Michigan and had to re-invent herself! Fast forward a decade and two sons later. She became a Real Estate agent in Grosse Pointe and very much enjoyed the work. 1997 and everything changed again with a 5-year assignment to Singapore. "The best thing that ever happened!" Jill was fortunate to be able to travel extensively in Asia. She took delight in the multi-cultural society of Singapore, where she was never in a gathering where everyone was the same ethnicity, or who spoke the same mother tongue. In addition, and most importantly, she was able to train and volunteer as a docent at the Asian Civilizations Museum of Singapore. Upon returning to Michigan in 2002, it was a natural for Jill to apply to the DIA to become a docent (IPV). She has been active since 2004 and is a former IPV chair. In normal times she volunteers 4 or 5 days a week.

HOT FROM THE PRESS

FAAC BOOK AND MOVIE CLUB UP AND RUNNING

Hoping that you are all healthy and safe, since we cannot meet personally in these trying times, FAAC initiated a social Book and Movie Club, where we can share and discuss our diverse backgrounds, watch the movies or read the books at your own pace. Meet us via ZOOM for discussion on the dates assigned.

February 24, 2021 at 6:30 pm – Our first movie was *The Red Cliff* (English Sub-titles). The international version duration is 2hr 28min, the Chinese version is 4 hrs. Laurie Barnes, Elizabeth B. McGraw Curator of Chinese Art with the NORTON Museum in Palm Beach attended our ZOOM meeting, and discussed works of art related to the movie theme, including the DIA's *First Prose Poem on the Red Cliff* by Wen Zhengming, dated 1558, which includes both painting and calligraphy. A synopsis of this film follows: "In ancient China, the emperor of the Han Dynasty allows General Cao (Fengyi Zhang) to declare war against the rebellious southern provinces, with the intention of unifying the entire country. Cao's large army quickly advances, killing civilians and soldiers alike. To resist Cao, the southern warlords form an alliance led by Viceroy Zhou Yu (Tony Leung). Outnumbered, Zhou relies upon elaborate formations and unorthodox strategies to fight against Cao's overwhelming forces."

March 25, 2021 at 6:30 pm – At our first book club meeting, we will discuss *West Meets East: Charles L. Freer, Trailblazing Asian Art Collector* by Helen Tomlinson. In cooperation with The Freer House/WSU, Helen Tomlinson will be attending our ZOOM discussion. The book can be ordered from the author's web site: www.charlesfreer.com. Curator and Scholar Susan A. Hobbs comments: "West Meets East is a must read for those who want to learn more about the Gilded Age. Tomlinson's compelling account draws on the conflicted life and complex relationships of an astute American businessman whose Asian art collection became the core of the Smithsonian's The Freer Gallery of Art."

Looking forward to meeting you all.

Jumana Cooper, Vice Chair of Friends of Asian Arts and Cultures

REMINDER: To get your ZOOM invite to attend, you need to send me an Email at jumana@comcast.net.

Movie

Feb.24	<i>The Red Cliff</i> (China) (English subtitles) - https://g.co/kgs/9v9JKx Amazon Prime
April 28	<i>Theeb</i> (Jordan) - https://g.co/kgs/vXvAAg Amazon Prime
June 23	<i>Padmaavat</i> (India) - https://g.co/kgs/oD42hf Amazon Prime
August 25	<i>A Sun</i> (Taiwan) - https://g.co/kgs/4M6RLK Netflix
October 27	<i>About Elly</i> (Iran) - https://g.co/kgs/jwgQh2 Amazon Prime

Book

March 25	<i>West Meets East: Charles L. Freer, Trailblazing Asian Art Collector</i> - by Helen Tomlinson, PhD - www.charlesfreer.com https://g.co/kgs/BL4Abc
June 25	<i>The Silk Roads</i> - by Peter Frankopan - https://g.co/kgs/YUJGAc
Sept 24	TBD

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