



GREATER PHILADELPHIA AREA DOCENT CONSORTIUM

GPADC Crossroads Meeting
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Perelman Building
2525 Pennsylvania Avenue
February 10, 2020

9:30 AM Meet & Greet

Our host, the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA), provided an elegant breakfast buffet, which attendees could enjoy while renewing acquaintances and making new contacts. Festive birthday napkins contributed to the celebratory atmosphere as the GPADC marked the 20th anniversary of its founding.

Attendance: 60 attendees from 25 member organizations; 4 attendees from 3 guest organizations.

10:00 AM Welcome and Program

Opening Remarks – With a color, balloon-filled “Happy Birthday!” on the screen behind her, GPADC Chair Barbara Moll introduced herself and then remarked how – for 20 years now -- the GPADC has offered opportunities for docents/guides and key museum staff members from organizations all over the Delaware Valley to “mix, mingle, and share information on docent issues.” She welcomed representatives from the following guest organizations who are considering joining the GPADC: Carpenters Hall, the American Philosophical Society, and the Brandywine River Museum.

Barbara is a Weekend Guide at the PMA, and she remarked how special it makes her feel when a guard at the door recognizes her and says, “Welcome home!” a feeling probably shared by most, if not all, who were present when they walk through the doors of their own institutions. She remarked that the Perelman Building, where we were meeting, is named after Ruth and Raymond Perelman, who contributed funds for major restorations, renovations, and expansions to the 1927 Art Deco building that is listed on the National Historic Register. The original tenant was the Fidelity Mutual Insurance Company.

Welcome - Barbara then introduced the PMA’s Assistant Volunteer Services Manager, Victoria Fletcher, who oversees some 350 PMA volunteers and an additional 200 guides. Victoria welcomed us all on behalf of Marla Shoemaker, the Senior Volunteer Services Manager, and congratulated the GPADC on 20 years of success, with its current member organizations now numbering 36. She mentioned that the PMA would be offering docent-led guides of its current exhibit in the Perelman, “Off the Walls, American Art to Wear,” after the meeting.

10:10 AM Presentations by Six Former GPADC Chairs

A PowerPoint slide listed the names of the chairs to date of the Greater Philadelphia Area Docent Consortium:

- Evelyn Doyle (Michener Museum), 2000-2002
- Fern Denney (PMA Weekday), 2002-2004
- Sam Shaffer (Rosenbach), 2004-2006 [not present]
- Bonnie Brown (Woodmere), 2006-2009
- Ellen Semple (Delaware Museum of Art), 2009-2012
- Jody Sprague (Morris Arboretum), 2012-2015

- Janet Krevenas (Philadelphia Zoo), 2015-2018
- Barbara Moll, (PMA Weekend), 2018-2020

In 1999, a national meeting of docents was hosted by the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Volunteer docents from various local institutions held *ad hoc* meetings to help enhance the visitors' knowledge and access to Philadelphia area museums and other cultural offerings. These meetings proved so engaging and energizing that a core group decided to found the GPADC in 2000. They hashed out goals, by-laws, venues, and created its first Steering Committee. The organization grew slowly but surely, because its leaders were ready to listen to new ideas and work cooperatively with other docents.

Six former chairs successively rose to speak for a few minutes at the podium: Evelyn Doyle, Fern Denney, Bonnie Brown, Ellen Semple, Jody Sprague, and Janet Krevenas. Collectively they provided a fascinating overview of the history of the founding and ongoing development of the GPADC, including the usual format for meetings (topic-driven with round table discussions), the initiation of the first biennial Crossroads meeting in 2004, determining a fee for annual dues, designing a logo, creating a website, and much more.

10:35 AM – Invitation to Submit Nominations for Steering Committee Service

Barbara returned to the podium. She announced that she would be stepping down as GPADC Chair effective June 1, 2020. She invited attendees to nominate themselves or other persons whom they think would qualify via the GPADC website. Step-by-step instructions were given: click on "Say Hello," enter "Nomination" in subject line, provide name and summary of interests, talents, qualifications. Three members of the current Steering Committee will review the nominations.

The Steering Committee consists of Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary/ies (Corresponding and Reporting), Treasurer, plus four Members-at-Large. It is understood that Members-at-Large are in training to serve as officers.

The deadline for submission of nominations is March 6, 2020.

10:40 – 11:00 AM Presentation on the Paul Robeson House/West Philadelphia Cultural Alliance.

Barbara Moll introduced Vernoca Michael, who is Executive Director of the West Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, and an award-winning entrepreneur for her success as co-owner and CEO of Blue Horizons, voted the #1 boxing venue in the world and located at 1314 North Broad Street, Philadelphia (where some fight scenes for the Rocky movie series were filmed).

By way of introduction to the excellent documentary film that ensued, Vernoca stated, that she "could not ignore [her] Uncle Paul's legacy": Paul Robeson spoke 22 languages fluently, he made 13 movies, [he](#) [s](#) [a](#) star athlete who held records in football and five other sports, he was a scholar, and he was an all-American hero. She said that despite the persecution that he faced at times in his life, Paul Robeson steadfastly supported America. The film included biographical details about and images of Paul Robeson, scenes showing the Paul Robeson House today, and emphasized that the House and the West Philadelphia Cultural Alliance reach out to community with special programs and by mentoring youth through a chess club.

After the film, Vernoca invited attendees to call the Paul Robeson House; the guides there are happy to give tours. She also proudly announced that they had recently been able to hold a “mortgage-burning” celebration, as the House has now paid for in full.

11:00 AM History of the PMA, “The Parthenon on the Parkway”

Barbara Moll introduced Justina Barrett, who holds a Masters in Early American Culture from Winterthur and who currently serves as the PMA Site Manager for its Historical Houses in Fairmount Park.

Justina’s talk outlined the history of the PMA in the wider context of Philadelphia history, which included references to the Waterworks, the founding of Fairmount Park, the Centennial exposition, and the 1877 establishment of the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Arts in Memorial Hall. She then talked about the Pennsylvania Museum rapidly outgrowing its space, the growth of the commuter communities and rail systems to the west, the concept of Fairmount Park serving as a link from Center City out to the Main Line and other areas, and the construction of the Parkway, modeled after the Champs Elysée in Paris to connect them. Eli Kirk Price, President of the Fairmount Park Commission and active in various other civic entities, was a key figure behind summoning public support for first the Parkway and later the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Other key figures were architects Horace Trumbauer, Julian Abele, and the PMA’s first Director, Fiske Kimball, who was a noted architectural historian and helped preserve the historic houses in Fairmount Park.

It was Kimball who introduced the concept of having “period rooms” at the PMA where visitors could “walk through time.” It took decades to achieve this vision, with help during the Depression from WPA resources, the addition of the Asian collections from India and China in 1940, and the installation of the Japanese Tea House in 1957.

Justina took us beyond the history of the main building to the other sites overseen by the PMA: the Perelman Building, the Rodin Museum, and Cedar Grove and Mt. Pleasant in Fairmount Park. In 2007 the underground parking garage and adjacent garden on the west side of the museum were completed. Currently major renovations are underway to rearrange the interior of the main building.

Justina’s lively presentation was accompanied by a rich panoply of PowerPoint images. She managed to cover a broad topic with just enough depth and description to make it engaging without being overwhelming.

Justina cheerfully fielded some questions from the audience at the end of her talk and then was warmly thanked by Barbara Moll.

11:45 – 11:50 AM Introduction of *Off the Wall: American Art to Wear*

PMA Guide Patricia Danzon provided a brief overview of the exhibit, *Off the Wall*, and explained how PMA docents would guide visitors “by zone” through the exhibit.

11:50 AM Concluding Remarks

GPADC Chair Barbara Moll thanked everyone for coming and participating in the GPADC 20th birthday celebration. Our Spring Meeting will be hosted by Eastern State Penitentiary on May 18, 2020.

12:00- 1:00 PM Zone-Guided Tours in Exhibition

The PMA guides were highly welcoming and knowledgeable as they provided background information about some of the many fabulous and colorful textile creations on display. The hour spent in the gallery seemed to fly by!

Respectfully submitted,

Kerry L. Bryan
Recording Secretary