

MESC

EDLINE



A Quarterly Publication of Museum Educators of Southern California

October, 1990

From the Board

EdLine Deadlines

Interested in submitting an item for future issues of the MESC newsletter? Please be aware of the following deadlines:

Issue date: December 7, 1990

Deadline for articles: November 23, 1990

Issues to be covered: AASLH annual meeting in Washington, Western Museums Conference meeting in San Jose, October meeting at Bowers Museum

Issue date: February 8, 1991

Deadline for articles: January 25, 1991

Issues to be covered: December MESC meeting with Vesta Daniel on interpretation of cultural objects, focus on history museums

Issue date: April 26, 1991

Deadline for articles: April 12, 1991

Issues to be covered: February MESC meeting on pioneers of museum education, NAEA national conference in Atlanta

Issue date: June 21, 1991

Deadline for articles: June 7, 1991

Issues to be covered: April MESC meeting on evaluation and focus groups, AAM annual meeting in Denver, focus on science museums and zoos

Issue date: October 18, 1991

Deadline for articles: October 4, 1991

Issues to be covered: June MESC meeting on gender issues in the museum, MESC summer seminar, National Docent Symposium in Denver

In addition to the above special topics, please be aware that in every issue we have some regular

columns. *Focus On* highlights one of MESC's member institutions, usually the current or recent host site for our programs. *Last Time at MESC* summarizes our programs for those educators who could not attend. *Current Issues* and *Professional Activities* address broader philosophical questions in the field, as they affect our work here is Southern California. *In the Community* and *MESClassifieds* offer ways to publicize exhibitions or workshops and job openings. Last of all, the *Book Review* column can alert colleagues to especially helpful literature that they might otherwise not make the time to read.

One thing all these columns have in common is that they need member input to be interesting and useful (not to mention, to happen at all!). What are the issues that you want to share with your fellow educators? What is the latest bee in your bonnet? What recent exhibition or program are you particularly proud of? EdLine is your chance for a day in the sun. If any of these ideas appeals to you, please call the newsletter editor, Wade Richards, at (213) 459-7611, ext. 362.

MESCalendar

Upcoming Items of Interest

October 23: WMC Education Pre-conference, "Looking Out, Looking In: Discussions on Multiaudience Learning," San Jose

October 24-27: Western Museums Conference, San Jose

December 7: MESC meeting--Vesta A.H. Daniel, "Interpretation of Cultural Objects"

February (date TBA): MESC meeting--"Pioneers of Museum Education"

March 20-24: NAEA conference, Atlanta

April 26 (date tentative): MESC meeting--"Evaluation and focus groups"

May 19-23: AAM annual meeting, Denver

Focus On

UCLA Wight Art Gallery Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden

by Cindi Dale

Many have said that it is the best kept secret in West Los Angeles. The UCLA complex of the Wight Art Gallery, the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, and the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden, in fact do exist, and have existed for over 25 years. Beginning in 1952 with the arrival of Frederick Wight, professor in the Department of Art, the University officially committed to collecting and exhibiting works of art. Shortly after this, in 1956, the first major collection of works of art on paper were gifted to the university by the Grunwalds, and act that helped to establish a foundation for the graphic arts at UCLA. Through the sixties the collection continued to grow to the point where it necessitated a building to house the art. Consequently, a new wing was added onto the Dickson Art Center in 1970. The new wing was inaugurated as the Frederick Wight Art Gallery (for collecting and exhibiting) and the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts (for collecting and studying). In the midst of all of this growth, then Chancellor, Franklin D. Murphy had a vision and seized the opportunity to build the largest public sculpture garden in the western United States. Today, the Wight Art Gallery encompasses approximately 13,000 square feet of exhibition space and mounts at least eight changing exhibitions each academic year. Some exhibitions are organized by staff and others come to the Gallery after originating at other major insti-

tutions.

An independent unit from the Gallery, the Grunwald Center is housed on the second floor of the Gallery building. The Grunwald Center includes over 35,000 works of art on paper from the 13th through the 20th centuries. Its important holdings include: the core Fred Grunwald Collection of 19th and 20th century French and German prints, the Rudolf Baumfeld Collection of Old Master prints and drawings, and Japanese woodblock prints from the Frank Lloyd Wright Collection. Individual artists represented in the Center include Rembrandt, Hogarth, Hiroshige, Cruikshank, Matisse, and Jasper Johns. The collection is the source of several large and small scale exhibitions through out the year and is available for scholarly study by appointment.

Once a dusty parking lot, landscape architect Ralph D. Cornell transformed what is now the Franklin D. Murphy into a rolling five-acre natural setting that is designed to encourage public use. The Garden showcases works by 70 of the greatest European and American sculptors in the late 19th and 20th centuries including Matisse, Noguchi, Hepworth, Zuniga, Anna Mahler, Rodin, and David Smith.

The Wight Art Gallery and Grunwald Center function with a shared mission statement: to make their collections and programming accessible to diverse audiences, both at the University and in the general community, and to explore the interdisciplinary interpretation of historical and contemporary art in innovative ways. Both the Gallery and Grunwald continue to broaden, question, and challenge the current values and research in the visual arts, at both the national and international level. Toward that end, we have diversified our programming and we are working to expand our audiences on and off campus.

The best example of this type of program is the current exhibition, *Chicano Art:*

Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985 (CARA), an interpretative exhibition of the Chicano art movement. Coordinated by the UCLA Wight Art Gallery and the CARA National Advisory Committee (forty plus members), this multi-disciplinary exhibition is the first be directed almost entirely by individuals from the nation's Chicano community. CARA is a manifestation of a broad community spirit, and contributes immensely to the appreciation and understanding of Chicano culture in the United States. This exhibition is intended both to provide a cultural and historical context for Chicano art, and to begin a dialogue about how art produced outside the mainstream in the United States is affected by, and affects, our definition and understanding of American art and culture.

The principal theme of the exhibition is the identification and exploration of the character of Chicano art and its relationship to *el Movimiento*, the Chicano civil rights movement. Socio-historical periods in Chicano history prior and subsequent to the Movement, are included in order to facilitate the gallery visitor's understanding of the rich diversity of Chicano art.

The structure of the exhibition is based on the dynamic relationship between the social objectives of *el Movimiento*, and those of the concomitant Chicano art movement. Interpretive components, were designed to introduce and guide the visitor unfamiliar with the Chicano community through the premises and objectives of this art as it developed over time in the United States. Archive photos, historical timelines, maps, videos, and a slide program, are integral aspects of the exhibition, providing an important socio-historical context for the art work.

It was decided that CARA should be presented as an interdisciplinary interpretive exhibition, rather than as only a book, film series, or painting exhibition, because most of

the manifestations of Chicano culture are multi-dimensional, both conceptually and physically. Much of the impact of the objects would be lost if they were not presented visually, aurally and spatially. The multi-dimensional character and the interpretive nature of the exhibition best present the complex context of the Chicano cultural heritage and the needs and attitudes out of which they developed.

The impact of this exhibition will be substantial for the audiences who actually visit the venues as it tours nationally and internationally, but it will also extend beyond this group to a much larger audience through the curriculum, programming, catalogue, brochure, audio-visual programs, and the outgrowth of activities stimulated by this exhibition, i.e., complementary exhibitions at other sites throughout the country that will be mounted to coincide with CARA as it tours.

Cindi Dale is Director of Education and Community Development at the UCLA Wight Art Gallery, which hosted MESC's October meeting.

Last Time at MESC

Educators as Catalysts

by Adele Lander Burke

On August 13 and 14, approximately 75 museum educators from all over Southern California gathered for MESC's first annual Gallery Teaching Seminar. Hosted by the Southwest Museum on August 13 and by the J. Paul Getty Museum on August 14, the goals of the seminar, as presented by seminar chair Diane Brigham, were threefold: 1) to enable people who teach in museums to develop and improve their skills in teaching with objects;

2) to offer a wide range of approaches and models to gallery teaching by focussing on a variety of collections; and 3) to foster a collegial atmosphere between volunteers and professionals in the field of museum education. By all accounts these goals were successfully fulfilled over the two days of workshops, lunches, and discussions.

The seminar was designed so that everyone could participate in the five workshops offered. The participants were divided into groups of approximately 20 who remained together throughout the two days and were assisted by a group facilitator. The facilitators, each of whom was a professional museum educator, not only took care of the mechanics of moving the group from gallery to gallery, but they also led a group discussion that helped to sharpen the focus of what was being offered in the workshops. Group facilitators were David Fears of the Municipal Art Gallery, Cal State LA art education professor Beatrice Taylor, and Cathy McCarty-Procopio of the Getty Museum.

In Scoti Erdman's workshop, "Engaging Diverse Audiences," the group was asked to try to learn more about their audiences before they come to the museum. Scoti, who is at the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana, stressed how important it is for the museum educator to go out to the community, to assess the community's needs and to be prepared to meet the visitor on his/her own terms. She suggested using multilingual gallery guides and conducting a visitor survey so that we really know who our audience is.

Deborah Klochko of the California Museum of Photography in Riverside, led a workshop entitled "Objects as Artifacts: How to Read an Object," in which photographs were presented as historical artifacts. After the group participated in some hands-on activities with photographic images, Deborah showed how object-oriented learning can be

achieved in different collections by handing out objects from the Southwest Museum's collection for the group to ponder and learn from. Deborah stressed that at times the historical or art object itself can be the focus for gallery teaching.

In the workshop "Use Your Eyes! Visual Perception Gallery Activities," Carla Fantozzi of the Municipal Art Gallery and Diane Brigham of the J. Paul Getty Museum presented a series of activities designed to get the visitor to look longer and more carefully at an object. They posited that by developing perceptual skills, the visitor will be better prepared to understand the content of what they are seeing.

Ann Bunn, Visual Arts Consultant, and Sally Kurnick from Cal State Long Beach University Art Museum utilized the architectural features of the Getty's main peristyle garden to present "Questioning Strategies: Making the Right Connections." Based on Dr. Karen Hamblen's taxonomy of questions, Bunn and Kurnick modeled their questioning approach, then gave the seminar participants an opportunity to reflect on the questioning process. They concluded their session by giving the participants some hands-on experience in developing questions.

In the workshop "What is Its Story? Putting Objects into Context," Betsy Quick of UCLA Cultural History Museum and Adele Lander Burke of the Hebrew Union College Skirball Museum explored how the gallery teacher can utilize an art object to teach cultural history. Using the Getty's French silver exhibit, they showed how one can go beyond the artistic properties of an object to teach about the historical period in which an object was created. A visitor can be motivated to learn history when the object serves as a catalyst for inquiry.

In addition to the stimulating workshops and facilitator-led discussions, each

participant received a Resource Packet of articles on museum education that had been compiled by the workshop presenters. Beatrice Taylor coordinated the production of the Resource Packet.

Evaluation of the seminar has been very positive. The participants, who ranged from docents to gallery teachers, to classroom teachers, to graduate students in museum studies, felt they gained a lot from both the formal presentations and the informal discussions that ensued. As the year progresses, MESC will be interested in hearing how the seminar participants have utilized what was taught in the workshops and will consider offering another seminar in the summer of 1991.

Adele Lander Burke is Education Coordinator at the Skirball Museum of Hebrew Union College.

October Meeting Looks at Community Partnerships

by Susan Doniger

MESC's October 6 meeting at the UCLA Wight Art Gallery stressed the need for museums to interact with their local communities by taking a partnership, rather than a leadership role during all phases of exhibition planning and execution. Entitled *Companeros: Museums and Communities as Partners*, the program used as a case study the current exhibition at the Wight, Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985 (CARA). This show, the product of over five years work from planning to completion, aimed to highlight two aspects of Chicano society: resistance against the politically and culturally dominant culture of the United States, and the affirmation of closely held values within the Chicano community. The exhibition, which runs until December 9, features over 130 works

selected from across the U.S., including heavily Chicano areas such as California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, but also from the Northeast, Midwest, and Pacific Northwest. A first-ever national advisory board of over forty Chicano artists, scholars, and activists served in place of the traditional curatorial team--providing a new model for exhibit planning in the future.

MESC members were invited to arrive early for the October program, to give them a chance to tour the galleries. Then, a panel discussion gave session participants the opportunity to draw on the first-hand experiences of the Wight Art Gallery staff who grappled with the difficult and challenging task of coordinating the exhibit. Panel speakers were: Edith Tonelli, Director of the Wight Art Gallery; Cindi Dale, the Wight's Director of Education; and Thomas Hartman, Wight Gallery Director of Design and Facilities, who substituted for Tomas Ibarra-Frausto of the Rockefeller Foundation, originally scheduled but unable to attend.

The speakers described the exhibit's goals and objectives and discussed some of the questions they were forced to consider in preparing for the show. Among them were: Did the exhibit have dignity? Did it maintain a focus on the art? Did it maintain aesthetic values while reflecting working class roots? Was the exhibit natural in scope, while retaining regional differences? And finally, did the CARA exhibit reflect a multi-vocal (i.e., many voices) Chicano sensibility in all its aspects--installation, design, catalogue, educational programming, and community outreach?

While sorting through these complex issues, the Wight Art Gallery staff commented on the expanded role that this particular exhibition demanded of them as museum professionals. The unique partnership approach to planning required increased personal involvement with the local community, as well as an

unprecedented long-term commitment to a team of museum staff and committee members. What will be required of museum staff under such working conditions, and what are the implications that this planning strategy imposes on museums in the future? These are all questions that pose challenges and imply probable changes for museums.

After describing their experience, panel speakers invited comments from the audience. Some participants questioned whether the choice of venue--at a westside location like UCLA--was appropriate given the nature of the exhibit? Would the location discourage the participation of the local Chicano community--the very audience that the museum hoped to reach? Also debated was the large amount of wall text at the entrance to CARA: did the panels serve the goal of community accessibility? While discussing these issues, members gave the exhibit high marks for the educational aspects, particularly the video pieces on murals and Chicano artists that will be available to schools around the country. Also praised were the widely-held values that the exhibit embodies: family, marriage, work, and religion--all of which can be highlighted as part of a school curriculum about Chicano culture.

The CARA exhibit continues the debate over the museum's role in exhibiting arts that have been neglected in the past, and for audiences that have likewise been neglected. CARA offers a two-fold agenda: one the one hand, it reclaims the art and artifacts of a grassroots political movement; at the same time it reaffirms that community's right to fully participate in the planning process for exhibits that interpret their history.

Susan Doniger is a Program Assistant in the Education Division at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

In the Community

Current Events

This column highlights exhibitions, education programs, and other special events at MESC member institutions.

Between 1890 and 1930 more than four thousand magicians were performing in America's vaudeville circuit. Travelling from city to city, magicians such as Harry Houdini, Chung Ling Soo, Howard Thurston, and Harry Kellar were electrifying audiences in theaters, circuses, and dime museums. To celebrate these famous magicians from the turn of the century, the Homestead Museum will present a special evening of modern magic on Saturday, October 27, with shows at 6:00 and 8:00 p.m. Located in the City of Industry, the Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum is dedicated to studying, preserving, and interpreting the history of southern California from 1840 to 1930. For more information, please call (818) 968-8492.

A dream has become a reality in the California Museum of Photography Study Center. For many years staff, photography researchers, scholars, and CMP donors have envisioned a research archive that could house all the Museum's collections. With the completion of the Study Center, the collections are stored better than ever before, and have been organized with researchers' needs in mind. The CMP Study Center will afford unique opportunities to examine simultaneously both photographic masterworks and the equipment used by the artists who produced the works. College classes can meet to view examples from the collection in the Study Center. The new darkroom, adjacent to the collections

area, will help CMP respond to reproduction requests faster than ever. The Study Center is open for research on Tuesday, Thursdays, and Fridays, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. by prior appointment. Call Roy McJunkin, Collection Manager, at (714) 787-4787 for appointments and further information.

This fall, also at the California Museum of Photography, a multi-dimensional, tripartite program of events explores attitudes towards death. The exhibition, *Memento Mori: Death in Nineteenth-Century Photography*, is complemented by a series of international films from the 1930s to 1960s, and a symposium on cultural attitudes towards death.

The exhibition explores the photographic depiction of death in the Victorian era. These expressions of mourning are unique in the history of Western society. At a time in which the tendency was to dwell upon mortality and continuously to exalt the memory of deceased persons, photography played an important role. Photographs provided a means to retain the presence of the deceased person. As outward manifestations of grief, photographs--like funeral and burial customs--reflected inward transformation. The largest section of the exhibition features images that were commonly found in people's homes. These include post-mortem photographs, views of cemeteries, and funerary memorabilia. It also contains pictures which purport to be actual photographs of spirits.

The film series, *Ghosts, Spirits, and the Great Beyond: A Cinematic Survey*, includes works by such directors as Sergei Eisenstein, Jean Cocteau, Hans Richter, and Victor Halperin. Ranging from the dramatic to the comic, these feature length and short productions reflect the diversity of cinematographic approaches to death and the afterlife. The films will run every Saturday night from October 27 through December 1. For more informa-

tion, please call the California Museum of Photography at (714) 787-4787. This item contributed by Stacy Miyagawa, California Museum of Photography.

Is EdLine on your mailing list? Please send us notice of upcoming classes, workshops, and exhibitions, so that we may share this information with your colleagues in the field. Send press releases to Wade Richards, MESC, c/o The J. Paul Getty Museum, P.O. Box 2112, Santa Monica, CA, 90406.

MESClassifieds

Please send notices of position openings to the newsletter editor, Wade Richards, MESC, c/o The J. Paul Getty Museum, P.O. Box 2112, Santa Monica, CA, 90406; or call (213) 459-7611, ext. 362. Please note publication schedule under *From the Board*, in this issue.

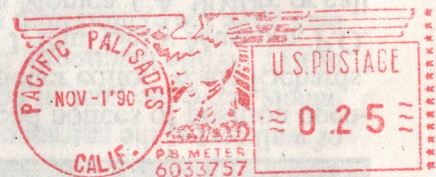
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Adele Burke and Carol Zawatsky
Hebrew Union Coll. Skirball Museum
3077 University Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90007

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