

MESC

EDLINE



A Quarterly Publication of Museum Educators of Southern California February, 1991

From the Board

President's column

by Betsy Quick

As you all know, Museum Educators of Southern California is an incorporated non-profit organization with written by-laws by which the organization is structured. These by-laws direct such issues as rights of membership, annual meetings, dues, and voting regulations. In keeping with the by-laws, the Board felt it appropriate to establish a more formal procedure for nominating and electing officers. At the November board meeting the following guidelines for the Nominating Committee were developed.

The Board-created Nominating Committee will be composed of five persons who meet the following requirements: 2 persons from the Board who are outgoing officers; 2 persons from the General Membership who are active individual or institutional representatives in good standing and who actively participate in MESC business (70% attendance at committee meetings for at least one year); and 1 person who is a past Board Member, in good standing in the organization.

Approximately one third of the positions will come up for re-election every two years thereby ensuring a continuity in

MESC's programs and long range plans. Persons being considered for officers and committee chairs on the board should: 1) be active members of MESC--individual or institutional representatives in good standing; 2) have served on a committee--actively participating (70% attendance at meetings for at least one year); and 3) be able to attend monthly Board meetings during the work day and sometimes in the evening.

If you are interested in serving as an officer or committee chair and meet the minimum qualifications please notify any member of the present Board in writing by March 15th. In addition, the Nominating Committee will solicit the membership in writing for possible names. As the Nominating Committee completes its work, a slate of officers will be presented to the membership for the May-June election.

We look forward to hearing from those of you wishing a greater involvement in the leadership of MESC. Of course, we are delighted that MESC continues to be an organization that elicits such strong and enthusiastic support from all its members.

Betsy Quick is Director of Education at UCLA's Fowler Museum of Cultural History.

Bivas
Article

From the Board, cont.

Involvement opportunities

MESC is an all-volunteer organization. Call the chair of the committee that interests you and offer your help!

Membership Handles mailings for the organization and keeps track of current members. Devises and implements plan to expand MESC membership. Cathy McCarty-Procopio, J. Paul Getty Museum, (213) 459-7611.

Publications Supervises distribution and marketing of MESC publications and plans future projects. Peggy Kayser, Skirball Museum, (213) 749-3424.

Newsletter Writes and publishes the quarterly MESC Newsletter. We are seeking individuals with IBM or Macintosh graphics experience, as well as writers to submit articles on a regular basis. Those interested in being guest editor for an issue are also welcome. Wade Richards, J. Paul Getty Museum, (213) 459-7611.

Program Helps coordinate logistics for our speakers and panel sessions. Kim Kanatani, Museum of Contemporary Art, (213) 621-2766.

Museum-School Collaborative Helps teachers make better use of museum resources while helping museum educators understand better teachers needs. Teachers are especially welcome on this committee. Neil Anstead, Cleveland Humanities High School, (818) 701-6481.

Development Investigates funding sources and prepares applications for grants to support MESC activities. A good way to learn the basics of fundraising. David Fears, (213) 657-1660.

Public Information Responsible

for networking and outreach to other professional organizations. Works with the Membership Committee to recruit new members. Sue Childs, Westside Arts Center, (213) 395-1443.

Stand up and be counted

Following close on the heels of the 1990 census, MESC has undertaken a survey of its membership to find out the present composition of the organization. By now you all should have received a questionnaire designed to find out who MESC members are, and what they want and need from the organization in 1991 and the years to come.

The questionnaire is divided into several sections, including Member Profile, MESC Programming, and the MESC Management Seminar. If you are an institutional member, each person in your education staff should complete a copy. Additional copies can be obtained from MESC Secretary Jennifer Bevington at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. Call (213) 744-3344.

MESCalendar

Upcoming events of interest

March 12: Evenings for educators, LACMA

March 19-24: National Art Education conference, Atlanta

May 6: Docent League meeting at William S. Hart Park

May 20-23: American Association of Museums annual meeting, Denver

Please send notices for the events calendar to Wade Richards at the J. Paul Getty Museum.

Last Time at MESC

It's all in the approach:
viewing objects of diverse cultures
Program highlights

by Karen Giles

The goal of the MESC meeting held on December 7th at the Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum was to stress the need to develop educational materials and teaching strategies which are sensitive to and embrace the concerns of the diverse audiences which we encounter today in our institutions of learning. The guest speaker was Dr. Vesta A. H. Daniel, Associate Professor of Art Education at Ohio State University. Dr. Daniels is also co-director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Institute for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio and serves as the Scholarship Chair for the National Art Education Association's Committee on Minority Concerns. Dr. Daniel has been working in the area of multicultural education since 1976 and has lectured internationally on issues related to this topic.

Dr. Daniel opened her presentation with formal comments about multiculturalism and its relationship to the American educational system.

"Multiculturalism is alternately defined as an approach or philosophy which seeks to make education available to all groups, reduce discrimination against stigmatized cultural groups, value cultural pluralism, and to reject the notion that the objective of schools and other educational institutions should be to lessen or eliminate cultural differences. Moreover, multicultural education is a commitment to growth and reflection which works against the forma-

tion of cultural and ethnic stereotypes and supports the development of a world view. Educators exercising the tenets of multiculturalism will offer students cultural experiences which will prepare them to be problem solvers and to reduce culture based conflicts."

Dr. Daniel stated that a goal of scholars contributing to ethnic education is to help students become globally competent or globally literate. This means that "an individual possesses the skills and attitudes which enable him or her to function well with ethnic cultures within their own and other nations." Global educators encourage thinking globally and acting locally. Dr. Daniel suggests that "... our goal as visionary educators should be to translate the ideals of international tolerance into positive and affirming behaviors and attitudes to be applied in our daily lives."

Some predictions made by William A. Henry III of Time Magazine were shared with the group:

Currently one American in four defines himself or herself as Hispanic or non-White.

If current birth rates persist, the Hispanic population will have further increased an estimated 21%, the Asian presence about 22%, Blacks almost 12%, and Whites a little more than 2% when the 20th Century ends.

By 2020 the number of U.S. residents who are Hispanic or non-White will have more than doubled to nearly 115 million while the White population will not be increasing at all.

By 2056 the average U.S. resident as defined by the census statistics will trace his or her descent to Africa, Asia, the Hispanic world, the Pacific islands, or Arabia--almost anywhere but white Europe.

Though these statistics predomi-

nantly focus on the future, Dr. Daniel stated that "A multicultural nation is not a promise for the future, it is here". With this in mind, Dr. Daniel encouraged us to consider how our own teaching materials and strategies contribute to or detract from the enhancement of a national multicultural community. Our American society is made up of many different cultures and ethnic groups. Each has made and is making contributions to the fiber of the national community. The diversity inherent in a multicultural society serves as an enriching force in that society. It is the job of the educator to make certain that students become familiar with their own cultural or ethnic group's contributions to our nation as well as the contributions of other groups. "Corrected curricula will assist children in determining their relationship to people representing diverse histories who share similar humanistic concerns."

Dr. Daniel raised two main issues which signal problematic areas found in the educational arena which seem to prevent the implementation of a sound multicultural curriculum:

. One issue is the ahistorical nature of most educators who learned the various academic disciplines through the Eurocentric, middle class, mainstream standard. Educators tend to teach the content they were taught and use many of the same teaching methodologies through which they themselves learned. She said that "when it comes to knowing about other ethnic groups, especially ethnic minorities, we are ignorant and that ignorance is reflected in our educational curricula and materials".

. "Racist behavior and exclusionary ideologies are supported by the federal, state, and local governments and are demonstrated in our public schools and institutions of higher learning. On these points most of

us are aware of the existence of the first amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which protects the freedom of expression. Interestingly, this amendment quite possibly works against the cause of multiculturalism because it permits the use of racial epithets and harassment in the name of the educational process if the language used is carefully couched in the protected verbiage of education. It can be used, for example, to make a relevant point in the education process, irrespective of its potential for offense and its pejorative character."

These issues must be addressed if we are to attain what Dr. Daniel refers to as "cultural holism, which...is a reality that emphasizes the importance of the whole culture or unit and the interdependence of its parts".

Following Dr. Daniel's formal comments, she showed slides that she uses to introduce art education students to multicultural issues and presented several classroom art projects her students had developed in her course. This portion of the meeting was filled with lively discussion that continued through lunch.

Helping our visitors learn to view objects from diverse cultures in a meaningful way will continue to be a topic of critical interest to all educators.

Dr. Daniel's MESC presentation was audio recorded. If you are interested in borrowing the cassettes, contact Kim Katanani at MOCA, (213) 621-2766.

Karen Giles teaches art history and art appreciation at Arcadia High School and is an intern in the Department of Education and Academic Affairs at the J. Paul Getty Museum.

EdLine Focus

LACMA reaches out

by Lori Jacobson

In recent years the Education Department of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art has been expanding its outreach programs in response to the changing cultural needs and ethnic make-up of surrounding communities. New publications and activities were developed for adults and children whose orientations to art differed from those of our conventional middle-class constituents. Moreover, the department organized a Community Resource Advisory Committee to help create a network with the communities that had little or no connection to the Museum.

The advisory committee held its first meeting in May of 1988. The Museum's goals was to bring together a group of representatives from diverse communities who are responsive to the different cultures that comprise the population of Southern California. To initiate the process of forming a multicultural advisory body, the Museum called together persons from the Latino and African-American business, cultural, and education communities. Expansion of the advisory committee to include other cultural groups will begin next year. Committee guidance was needed to generate communication between museum staff and community resource people, media, and organizations, in order to identify target audiences and to promote effectively museum programs within these various communities. A primary objective in forming the committee was to reach a constituency that rarely, if ever, turned to

the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for recreational and educational activities.

During its first two years, the advisory committee discussed the kinds of community resources that can be of assistance to the Museum. Their suggestions included organizations to participate in the free bussing program for Sundays in the Museum, artists to serve as workshop instructors, and promotional contacts for programming for exhibitions such as *Hispanic Art in the United States and Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries*.

The first major outreach project the committee worked on in conjunction with the Education Department was the exhibition *L.A. Expressions: the Cultural Shift*, which was featured in the art rental and sales gallery August 3-31, 1990. The work of eight emerging artists was presented, including that by four Latino and four African-American artists. A limited edition poster co-designed by George Evans and Joe Bastida Rodriguez and a small catalogue were published.

Recently, the Museum offered a special two-day seminar entitled *The place of African-American artists in twentieth century art history*. This is the first in a series of seminars the Museum plans to offer that focus on current art topics that are not necessarily reflected in the Museum's permanent collection or special exhibitions. The six-hour seminar was taught by Dr. George Nelson Preston, Professor of Art at the City College, City University of New York. Dr. Preston, a specialist in African-American art, has organized numerous exhibitions of contemporary art and has lectured and published extensively in this field.

The Museum's major family outreach program is the multicultural Sundays at the Museum program. These programs

are offered the last Sunday of each month from June through September. The activities are designed for children aged 5 to 12 and their parents to take part in together. A wide variety of multicultural activities are offered at each Sunday in the Museum program, including story-telling, art making workshops, poetry writing, participatory dance and music workshops, and children's tours. A special children's music, theatre, or dance performance is also included in each day's program. In recent years, special theme Sundays in the Museum programs, such as "A Persian Bazaar," "Romance of the Taj Mahal," "A Celebration of Hanukkah," and "A Celebration of Christmas and the New Year" have been particularly successful in attracting special segments of the population. Two free buses, along with Museum admission, are offered to community groups or schools in underserved areas of the city for each of the Sundays in the Museum.

The upcoming fall 1991 exhibition, *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries* will be the basis for a wide range of public programs, and Education department staff have been working with three different community-based committees on the program planning. In September of 1989, the museum encouraged the formation of an outside planning committee, which now has non-profit status, to work towards the goal of planning a city-wide festival of Mexico in conjunction with the exhibition. This committee, called the Artes de Mexico Festival Committee, is working with a diversity of performing, visual and other arts organizations to ensure the success of this festival.

The major outreach program planned in conjunction with the exhibition is a family fiesta in the park--a collaboration of the Craft and Folk Art Museum and the Los

Angeles County Museum of Art. Conceived as a day of family-oriented activities, the event will focus on traditional and contemporary Mexican art forms, including the performing, visual, literary, culinary, and other arts. Held in conjunction with the *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries* and *Folk Treasures of Mexico* exhibitions, the fiesta will include a wide variety of art making workshops, traditional folk art and food demonstrations, storytelling, and performances of music, dance, theater, and poetry. Holidays like *Dia de los Muertos* (November 2, Day of the Dead) and various Christmas-related observances will be featured aspects of the fiesta. A small fiesta advisory group was formed in January, and has been assisting staff from the two museums in identifying artistic and community resources for this event. The Community Resource Advisory Committee is also offering suggestions for artistic resources and community contacts for the in-house museum programs planned in conjunction with the Mexico exhibition.

Additional outreach programs at LACMA will be discussed in the next issue of MESC EdLine.

Lori Jacobson is an Assistant Museum Educator at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Curent Issues: History Museums

Interpreting history through historical objects

by Sherill E. Hatch and Max A. Van Balgooy

Think about the last guided tour you took in a history museum. How did the guide deal with the historical objects you saw and the

spaces you passed through? Did the tour emphasize historical events, people, and concepts without mentioning many of the museum objects? Or perhaps it emphasized the objects, listing their names and descriptions? One of the major challenges history museums face today is how to help visitors understand the past by interpreting history through objects. That sounds rather basic, but it can be difficult to avoid the common extremes of teaching history without objects or teaching objects without history. The first type of presentation, while it may be interesting, could as easily be given in a lecture hall (or in the museum parking lot, for that matter) as in the gallery. The second type, however informative, leaves visitors wondering, "Why does this matter?"

At the Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum we have been trying to balance these two extremes. We want both to include objects in our interpretation, and to include them in ways that go beyond identifying and describing them. The Homestead Museum, a six-acre site twenty miles east of downtown Los Angeles, features the historic houses of the Workman and Temple families and interprets southern California history in the 1840's, 1870's, and 1920's. Most of our visitors are either adults on a guided tour or fourth-graders on a field trip as part of our "A Journey Through Time" program. We provide the volunteers who present these interpretive programs with fourteen weekly sessions of initial training, followed by ongoing enrichment sessions. This year we have tried more than ever before to enable our docents to link historical objects and other aspects of history, so that the programs they present will both emphasize the historical context of those objects.

The Homestead's docent training program includes lectures on historical information, workshops on interpretive technique and material culture, assignments including a brief research paper, and a series of tour development workshops. Throughout the training, we want docents to discover not only that objects illustrate the past, but that they are the past. Because objects don't just give us information about history but were themselves part of history, it is

vital that museum educators explore the objects in their museums. The Homestead's training lectures use objects and photographs extensively to demonstrate historical concepts. For instance, a wooden Renaissance Revival mantle clock from the 1870's shows changes in artistic styles, production methods, and people's attitudes towards time.

In one training workshop the docents closely examine an historical object (perhaps a refrigerator, a camera, or a staircase) to discover what it can tell about the past world of which it was a part. The docents ask four questions:

1. What does the object look (feel, sound, smell) like? (physical appearance, materials, wear marks)
2. How does/did it function? (how it works and how it was used in its original environment)
3. How does it compare to other similar objects--in other times and other places?
4. What did it mean to the people who used it?

The research paper assignment builds on this object reading workshop, as docents select another object and analyze it in the same way but in more depth. This year's docents analyzed objects as diverse as a polar bear rug, a 1920's toaster, and adobe brick. Tour development workshops give the Homestead's docents a chance to synthesize the ideas and practice the techniques they have encountered through lectures and workshops. In these sessions we focus on ways to interpret history through objects on a tour. A radio can be used to talk about how families in the 1920's listened to jazz music or political speeches in their homes. We stress that simply pointing out the object--"That's an interesting (or beautiful, or ingenious) radio"--will not help museum visitors understand past people's lives. On the other hand, if a docent discusses music or politics without mentioning the radio, the tour may as well take place in a lecture hall instead of in a museum.

What have been the results of the Homestead Museum's increased efforts to incorporate objects in our docent training program? We have discovered that the members of this year's training class are extremely

attentive to objects and their importance in understanding the past. One docent told us that the object research paper made him look at the object in a very different perspective and relate what he learned to his tour. The new docents place historical objects in their contexts, helping visitors to see what place the objects had in the lives of the people who used them. However, we've found that these docents still have difficulty seeing the value in closely examining objects; they are content to rely on documents (such as trade catalogues) that tell about an object, rather than questioning what the object might say about itself.

Next year we plan to revise the training program to better demonstrate the importance of reading objects with one's senses. We'll do this both through re-thinking the workshops and through doing more object reading in the lectures. Overall, we are pleased with the understanding of historical objects which the Homestead's new docents have gained from the training. We hope some of our philosophy and strategies will be useful to other museum--all types of museums. We'd like to encourage an ongoing discussion of how museum educators can make links between museums' collections and visitors' lives by emphasizing the meanings collections have in their worlds--the worlds of natural history, art, and history.

Sherill Hatch is Education Coordinator and Max von Balgooy is Director of Education and Public Affairs at the Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum in the City of Industry.

MESC EdLine welcomes letters to the editor. Here's your opportunity to share your thoughts on important issues in the field with your colleagues.

AASLH Conference: a resource for museum educators

by Bradley B. Williams, Ph.D.

The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) celebrated a milestone this past fall when it held its Golden Anniversary Meeting. The AASLH, headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee, has been providing counsel, technical services, and fellowship to historical museums and historical societies for fifty years.

The conference, held over five days at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C., offered a breadth of programs and sessions, many of interest to museum educators. The exhibit hall featured a wide array of products and services. And the conference site provided ready access to the capital city's numerous museums and points of interest.

The meeting began with a series of workshops for interested participants. Three were of particular interest to educators. "Teach the children: Architecture and Heritage," hosted by the National Building Museum, provided practical ideas for funding, creating, marketing, implementing, and evaluating architectural heritage education programs. Anna Slafer, of the host museum, discussed ways to use architecture as a teaching tool. Caneta Hankins, of the Center for Historical Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University, discussed the strengths and weaknesses of various media approaches. Strategies for preparing classroom teachers and art specialists to present heritage education programs was the focus of remarks by Michele Olsen, of Project ARCHI-TEACHER in Champaign, Illinois.

The Charles Sumner Museum and Archives, the first black public school in the District of Columbia, was host to a session addressing the questions surrounding inter-

preting timely social issues to the public. Speakers such as Susan Miner, Education Director of the Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum, Rick Beard, Associate Director of the Museum of the City of New York, and Myriam Springuel, Project Director for Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, presented various rationales for involvement in controversial topics. Case studies of success programs at such museums as Ganondagan State Historic Site in Victor, New York, and at the New York State Museum were presented.

The authors of AASLH's "Nearby History" books led a workshop on providing teaching ideas and methods using local history resources in classrooms and museums. Ronald Butchart focused on researching and interpreting the history of local schools. Mansel Blackford provided a perspective on local business history. James P. Wind discussed local churches as resources for understanding local history and its role in the larger world.

The conference theme, "Diversifying Cultural Perspectives," was reflected in a number of sessions for museum educators. Jacqueline Cook, Curator of Education at the Washington State Capital Museum, chaired a panel called "Seen, but Seldom Heard: Native American Children in Learning Situations." Panelists pointed out that children not only learn differently from one another, but also express their newly gained knowledge in different ways. Debbie Finley-Justus, Chairman of the American Indian Community Center in Spokane, Washington, explored the importance of examining the ethnic make-up of visiting classes and demonstrated how to use community resources to recognize and mitigate differences in learning styles.

"Interpreting the African-American Experience in City and State Museums"

brought together educators representing the South Carolina State Museum, the African American Cultural Center in North Carolina, and the Valentine Museum in Virginia. They discussed how African-American history exhibits have brought new understandings of history to the messages presented by traditional mainstream museums.

Susan Schreiber, Director of Interpretation for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, led a panel exploring "Issues in Researching and Interpreting Cultural Diversity in Historic Sites." Panelists from Hawaii, Colorado, and Minnesota discussed how to deal with obstacles encountered when attempting a broader interpretation of an historic site. In a roundtable discussion, they addressed overcoming preconceptions of tour guides, perceived expectations of audiences, and internal politics and relations with the community.

Other sessions addressed such issues as conducting visitor studies, developing innovative outreach programs, planning collaborations between schools and museums, using interactive computers in exhibits, and living history interpretations in museums.

The exhibit hall, which was open throughout the conference, provided opportunities to examine new products and to review a variety of museum services. Museum educators were interested in the book displays by AASLH Press, American Association of Museums, and the Preservation Press. Representatives were on hand to discuss educational services provided by the Institute of Museum Services, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. Acoustiguide and Antennae Audio Tours both showed off the latest in recorded interpretation devices.

The AASLH meeting also provided

many chances to meet new colleagues, to exchange information and ideas, and for impromptu visits to area museums or in organized tours and events. All-day tours visited museums in Richmond and Alexandria, Virginia, and Baltimore, Maryland. Another tour visited the historic public school buildings in the District of Columbia. Reception was held at the National Archives, the National Building Museum, and the National Museum of American History among other places.

In all, the AASLH Annual Meeting provided a rich resource for museum educators. The 1991 meeting will be in Dearborn, Michigan. For information, call (615) 255-2971.

Bradley Williams is a development associate for Loyola Marymount University and former director of the Pasadena Historical Society.

Professional Activities

Art world marks loss from AIDS

by Wade Richards from AP and other reports

December 1, 1990 marked the third "AIDS Awareness Day" sponsored by the World Health Organization. To mark the day, museums, galleries, and arts organizations across the country participated in the second observance of "A Day Without Art," a national day of action designed to promote greater awareness of the epidemic, and to honor friends and colleagues who have died as well as those who are living with AIDS. At least 3000 arts organizations in the United States participated--including the National Gallery, the Metropolitan

Museum of Art, and numerous local institutions.

Each institution chose its own way to participate. Some museum visitors gazed silently at shrouded sculptures and blank walls, while other galleries closed in a coast-to-coast observance. Some held memorial exhibitions, and others took the opportunity to educate its public about AIDS. At the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe, who died of AIDS in 1989, went on display. The skylines in Manhattan and San Francisco dimmed for fifteen minutes, as the floodlights on the Empire State Building and the Golden Gate Bridge were turned off. Even MTV, single-handed creator of the video generation, observed the day with "A Minute Without Television."

Display cases at the Museum of Modern Art in New York held white letters on a black background spelling "REMEMBER", while the Cooper-Hewitt Museum displayed a dozen panels from the AIDS memorial quilt. At the Metropolitan Museum of Art, several notable pieces were removed, including a Rembrandt portrait, Renoir's *Two Girls at the Piano* and Matisse's *Nasturium and Dance*. The Corcoran Gallery darkened three contemporary art galleries and donated admission fees to AIDS organizations.

Locally, the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art participated. This year the Getty Museum joined with other organizations in supporting *The Witness Project: A Census of AIDS in the Arts*, which attempts to measure and acknowledge the incalculable toll AIDS has taken on America's artistic community. It records the names of artists, museum staff, and other arts professionals whose talent and vision are no longer with us because of AIDS. The Museum

shared its recognition of that loss with its visitors in the form of a roster from the Witness Project. Visitors were urged to count the lost years of life, and to add names to the list.

Organizations interested in participating in next year's observance of "A Day Without Art" may contact Visual AIDS, c/o Art Matters, Inc., 131 W. 24th St., New York, NY, 10011. The phone number is: (212) 929-7190.

The genesis of an idea

or

How *Bivas Freskas* came to life

by Adele Lander Burke

A longstanding goal of the Hebrew Union College Skirball Museum has been to use its significant collection of Jewish art and artifacts as a tool for teaching about the Jewish historical experience. Whether the visitors are adults or children, it is clear that one's understanding of historical events and cultural practices is enhanced when real objects are at the center of the learning experience. Each time the Museum mounts an exhibit, the education department explores all the ways that the exhibit can be used to teach our audience about the Jewish experience.

In 1989, the museum world began to focus on the forthcoming 1992 Quincentennial observances that were beginning to take shape around the country. The Skirball Museum, like other Jewish educational institutions, decided to examine 1492-1992 from a particular Jewish perspective--namely the impact of the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492.

It has long been a desire of the Museum to promote Sephardic heritage through our exhibition and collection pro-

gram. Unfortunately, the Skirball collection has but a few fine examples of Sephardic ceremonial artifacts--certainly not enough to mount an entire exhibit on this subject. The Sephardic objects we do have in the collection are not from pre-1492 Spain; rather they reflect the many countries to which Spanish Jews fled after the expulsion--including Italy, Holland, Morocco, Turkey, Rhodes, Greece and America. As we pondered how best to tell the Sephardic story with but a few objects, we began to explore various options. Should we try to acquire more objects for the collection, or should we borrow an exhibit from another museum, or should we use our own objects in a creative way?

Based on experiences in other museums, we decided to explore the possibility of developing an educational program in the form of a play that would draw sharp focus on but four objects from the Skirball collection. The Skirball Museum was particularly fortunate to receive a grant from the Maurice Amado Foundation at the behest of the Tarica family whose purpose was to promote an understanding and appreciation of Sephardic heritage. The Foundation was happy to support the Museum's efforts to secure a playwright who could create an original play for children about the Sephardic experience. The Museum next decided to commission talented playwright and director Joyce Klein to write and direct a play on this topic. Joyce was exceptionally qualified for the task--previously she had written plays for the Jewish Museum in New York and has had a successful career using theater as a Jewish educational tool both in America and in Israel where she now lives.

The concept behind the play was to choose four Sephardic objects which would "come to life" on the stage as the people

behind the objects tell their stories. With funding secured and a playwright engaged, the project went into full swing. Joyce came to Los Angeles last August to begin the research phase of her work. With assistance from the Museum's curator, Grace Cohen Grossman, and the education coordinator, Adele Lander Burke, Joyce chose the objects she would write the play about. A title was chosen: *Bivas Freskas! Tales Sephardic Objects Tell*.

After Joyce returned to Jerusalem to continue research and begin to write the play, the Museum education department began all the preparations at our end. The education department has long held that visitors' museum experiences are enhanced when they arrive with some prior orientation; so, along with creating an outreach campaign to schools, museum membership and the public, a comprehensive two part lesson was developed and sent to schools who would bring classes to the play. The lesson, developed by two graduate student interns from HUC's Rhea Hirsch School of Education, focused on the Sephardic experience in the four countries presented in the play: Italy, Rhodes, Turkey, and America.

When Joyce Klein arrived in December, the production of the play went into high gear. To insure a quality production, the Museum hired professional actors through Actor's Equity. A professional stage manager and technical director were also hired to assist Joyce in producing the play. Costumes were rented; professional lighting and staging were secured. Numerous details had to be attended to--such as finding a bulk distributor for Jordan almonds, a traditional Sephardic sweet, or creating replicas of the Museum objects on which the play was based. Programs were printed, tickets sold, and the play went on.

To date, thirty-four Jewish religious

and day schools from throughout Southern California representing some 1400 children have reserved space at one of the 15 performances scheduled. By the end of the run another 1000 adults and children will have come to public performances of the play.

A tremendous amount of time, energy, and money goes into a program such as *Bivas Freskas! Tales Sephardic Objects Tell*. Was it worth it? From the perspective of one museum educator, the answer is an unqualified yes. The goal of museum education is to enhance the visitor's understanding and appreciation of the objects on view, and the play certainly accomplished this goal. After each performance I have had the pleasure of watching visitors of all ages rush into the galleries to see the real objects. They don't just look at the four objects in the play; their awareness of the importance of objects has been extended and they are lingering in front of case after case to really look at the contents, to really read the labels, and to try to learn more.

As Hebrew Union College continues to build the Skirball Cultural Center in the Sepulveda Pass, where an expanded Skirball Museum will make its new home, we can only hope that there will be more opportunities to bring objects to life through theater and other creative approaches.

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

Docent meeting highlights evaluation

by Fritzie Wernig

On Monday, October 22, 1990, the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana and the Docent League of Southern California sponsored a meeting to discuss museum evaluation projects. In the opening panel

discussion, representatives of various institutions spoke about evaluation from their perspectives. Scoti Erdmann of the Bowers Museum and Ann Bunn, an art education consultant, touched on the differences between evaluation and research. They also discussed some of the material contained in MESC's 1987 study, *Museum Audiences Today*, dealing with evaluation methodology in depth and information about growing advocacy of the team approach for all program development. The team approach would include docents since they are the museum's direct channel to the visiting public. In addition to Ms. Erdmann's and Ms. Bunn's remarks, I shared our experience conducting visitor research at the Getty Museum.

In the discussion after the panel presentation, one participant asked how museums actually use the information gleaned through evaluation. Respondents mentioned new orientation programs, interactive learning spaces, and more legible object labels as changes that had been made in response to visitor input.

At the end of the panel discussions, participants were asked to form break-out groups consisting of eight or nine people, which were then sub-divided into smaller groups. We were assigned a museum position such as director, curator, public relations person, docent, educator, etc. My group's assignment, taking the point of view of a director, was to develop an evaluation questionnaire to be used by various participants. The workshop was very interesting and I was struck by the similarity of many of the questions generated.

Additional information on evaluation will be featured at MESC's April meeting. Watch your mail for details.

Fritzie Wernig is a docent at the J. Paul Getty Museum.

In the Community

Current Events

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

Westside Arts Center offers workshop at the Santa Monica Pier. View instruments from around the world and then try your hand at making your own. Artist Joan Hamill will show how to transform simple materials into exotic musical instruments such as African thumb piano (mbira), shekere, rubber band banjo, chimes, or shaker. You always get to take your art-work home!

This free festival will take place on Sunday, March 24, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Children from ages 3 to 99 are invited to attend. This drop-in art event is designed to stimulate creativity in a festival-style atmosphere. It is a great outing to get the entire family involved. Reservations are suggested since a large crowd is expected.

The Westside Arts Center also has spring art classes beginning April 1. A variety of drawing, painting, and sculpture class for children ages 2 through 12 will be offered during the ten-week series. All the classes are taught by professional artists who are also experienced in working with children. They teach the fundamentals of art in a supportive and nurturing environment. Projects are open ended so that children can experiment and learn about the creative process. The faculty works to bring out the creativity in each child while helping the child appreciate his or her art and build self-esteem.

Children ages 4 to 12 can spend

their spring break week (April 8 to 12) at the Westside Arts Center participating in a creative array of special workshops.

Class topics include papier-mache animals, photography without a camera, clay masks, spring clothes and hats, batik, natural fiber weaving, robot storybooks, and making a spring garden mural.

Artist Kathy Rea will be at the Westside Arts Center on Saturday, April 13 to teach people ages 4 and up how to make simple folk toys. People can learn to make a kaleidoscope, a balero, and other classic toys.

Celebrate John Muir's birthday at the Westside Arts Center when you hear stories about his life and re-create the scenery of Yosemite. On Sunday, April 28, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., artist Jane Greenberg and storyteller JoAnne Lewis will guide and inspire you in the creation of a large, colorful mural and the production of trees, flowers, waterfalls, and the animals that roam Muir's favorite mountains.

The Westside Art Center is located on the lower level of the Santa Monica Pier (under the Carousel). The address is: 1602 The Promenade, Santa Monica. People have trouble finding WAC on the Santa Monica Pier--they keep looking for it at the Santa Monica Third Street Promenade. For details and more information about any of the programs described above, contact Susan Childs or Jane Greenberg at the Westside Arts Center at (213) 395-1443.

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, Newsletter Editor, MESC, c/o The J. Paul Getty Museum, P.O. Box 2112, Santa Monica, CA, 90406.

MESClassifieds

Positions available

Chairperson. The Docent League of Southern California is looking for a chairperson. This is an opportunity for an interested individual to meet docents from area museums and to become involved in program planning for future League meetings. Contact Isabel Rosenbaum at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County at (213) 744-3341.

Registrar. The Skirball Museum of Hebrew Union College is seeking a registrar to work with its growing collection of Judaica. Responsibilities include care and maintenance of collections, loans, object inventory, and processing of acquisitions. Requires B.A. degree (Masters preferred) and two years experience working in museum registration. Knowledge of domestic and international shipping methods and packing techniques, rights and reproduction agreements, excellent organizational skills, and knowledge of computer registration methods are also required. The Skirball Museum will be moving to the Sepulveda Pass area of Los Angeles at the end of 1992 to the Skirball Cultural Center of American Jewish Life. The selected candidate will have the responsibility of guiding the computerization and transfer of the collection to the new site, as well as the security and storage of the collection. Please send resume and salary history to Peggy Kayser, Administrator, Skirball Museum of Hebrew Union College, 3077 University Ave., Los Angeles, CA, 90007.

Gallery educators. The Museum of Contemporary Art is looking for qualified individuals to prepare and conduct innova-

tive gallery tours for elementary school students. After an initial training period, educators will plan and present interactive tours, 6-10 hours weekly from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Tuesdays through Fridays. Requirements are: background in art history, art education, studio art, museum education, or a related field; and at least 2-3 years experience facilitating interactive gallery tours for young children. Fluency in Spanish is desired. Hourly wage is \$10.00. Please send cover letter and resume to Kim Kanatani, MOCA, 250 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles, CA, 90012.

Administrative assistant. The Center for Childhood seeks a part-time administrative assistant to work directly with the Executive Director, 10-15 hours per week, up to \$15.00 per hour. Applicants should have solid secretarial skills, including computer word processing, telephone, drafting correspondence and other skills necessary to help run an organization. The administrative assistant also helps with generating newsletters, proposals, and project summaries. Attendance at committee meetings and other related activities in the Los Angeles area occasionally required. Needs to work out of own home or office with access to computer (Macintosh preferred). Important personal attributes: ability to work independently, good communication skills, and an interest in childhood issues. The Center for Childhood is a non-profit organization that tracks the needs of children and links needs to resources to enhance children's lives. Activities are wide in range and include: initiating collaborative, community-based projects; co-sponsoring conferences; generating exhibitions on childhood, play, and creativity; and serving as a resource to individuals and organizations interested in improving the daily life of children. For more information, contact

Nancy Walch, Executive Director, The Center for Childhood, 11693 San Vicente Blvd., Ste. 183, Los Angeles, CA, 90049, (213) 475-6254.

Curatorial internships. Pending funding, the Museum of Contemporary Art is offering two one-year internships in the curatorial department, to begin October 1, 1991. Each carries a stipend of \$15,000 and a travel allowance of \$1,000. Duties include orientation to six museum departments, followed by direct involvement in two major upcoming exhibitions and/or the coordination of a permanent collection catalogue. Both interns will collaborate and work independently. Preference will be given to candidates who have completed graduate level course work in museum studies, art history, studio art, or education and have a demonstrated interest in dealing with works of art, artists, and the public. Candidates should send a cover letter and three letters of recommendation, at least two academic, by May 1, 1991 to the Personnel Director, Museum of Contemporary Art, 250 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles, CA, 90012. MOCA is an equal opportunity employer.

Museum educator. The Pasadena Historical Society is seeking a museum educator to plan, schedule, and implement educational programs including docent training, junior docent program, student tours, and outreach activities. BA required in education, history, museum studies, or a related field. Ability to work with volunteers a must. Part time position, or full time if combined with curatorial duties. For more information, call (818) 577-1660. Send resume to Executive Director, Pasadena Historical Society, 470 W. Walnut St., Pasadena, CA, 91103.

Please send notices of position openings to the newsletter editor, Wade Richards, J. Paul Getty Museum, P.O. Box 2112, Santa Monica, CA, 90407-2112; or call (213) 459-7611, ext. 362. Fax: (213) 454-8156.

MESC
c/o J. Paul Getty Museum
P.O. Box 2112
Santa Monica, CA 90406

Adele Burke and Carol Zawatsky
Education Coordinator
Hebrew Union College Skirball Museum
3077 University Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90007

MESC

MUSEUM EDUCATORS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Membership Categories

Institutional: Allows a museum to be represented by an open number of attendants at any regular meeting; includes memberships sponsored by institutions and/or their support groups.

Individual: Valid only for the person in whose name the membership is held.

Student: Open to individuals with valid student identification.

Annual dues (check one)

- ☐ Institutional.....\$35.00
☐ Individual.....\$15.00
☐ Student.....\$10.00

- ☐ Renewal
☐ New membership

Name _____

Title _____

Institution _____

Address _____

City and Zip _____

Phone (day) _____ (eve) _____

Amount enclosed _____

Date _____

Make checks payable to: MESC

Mail to: MESC, c/o J. Paul Getty Museum, P.O. Box 2112, Santa Monica, CA, 90406