



## **GREATER PHILADELPHIA AREA DOCENT CONSORTIUM**

### **GPADC Winter Meeting via Zoom**

**16 January 2024**

### **In Conjunction with The Woodmere Art Museum**

#### **Welcome**

GPADC Chair Monica welcomed all participants to the Winter meeting,

Before the program began members were asked if they wanted to share anything new going on at their institutions.

Velma Jackson, (VJ) from the Free Library on the Parkway and GPADC Secretary shared that the Parkway Central Library will resume Saturday hours January 20th.

Ellen Semple, from the Delaware Art Museum, and GPADC member-at-large informed us that the Rossetti's exhibit has two weekends left before it ends. Turnout has been great.

Bonnie Brown, from Woodmere Art Museum and GPADC member-at-large, stated that their MLK Jr. Family Festival was very successful, bringing out 300 visitors.

Veronica Michael, from the Paul Robeson House and Museum, shared there will be a 125th year birthday celebration of Paul Robeson, an exhibit will on display to commemorate this event. She is the niece of Paul Robeson and has been instrumental in carrying on his legacy. The city named a street after him. Now the sign on 49th and Walnut is Paul Robeson Way. His birthday on April 9th will be celebrated in Philadelphia in perpetuity.

Debbie Carr, from Morris Arboretum, said it has a new name and logo. The new name is Morris Arboretum and Gardens. The garden railway track has been extended 300 feet. The Rose Garden has been reopened after renovations, making it more accessible and available for weddings.

Tito Caba, from Historic Fair Hill, remarked that they also had a MLK Day of service. 150 volunteers from the community showed up to clean up, share words and songs to commemorate Dr. King.

### **GPADC announcements:**

- Crossroads/Spring Meeting will be held at Glencairn Museum on April 17, 2024. Monica informed everyone that Crossroads is unlike our regular meetings; it's longer, taking up most of the day. There's programming, discussions, lunch, and tours.
- The guest speaker will be Lauren Stichter, director of art Education at Moore College of Art. She will speak about neuro-divergent populations, and how to meet their needs during our tours.
- Leah Smith, from Glencairn will be our host. Leah spoke a little about Glencairn. It's an actual castle that was built by Raymond Pitcairn in Bryn Athyn, Pa. It has a collection of religious art. Bedrooms have been turned into galleries representing art throughout the ages. It's a beautiful space filled with mosaics and stained glass. An exhibit by Rudy Bostick, who painted biblical scenes on cardboard will be on display during Crossroads.

Monica requested volunteers to work on the Crossroads Committee.

It will involve helping organize the menu, the program, and helping out during the day of the meeting. All Crossroads Committee meetings will be on Zoom. Monica provided her email and anyone interested can reach out to her.

Next, it's an election year for GPADC officers. Secretary, Treasurer, Vice Chair and one or two members-at-large positions will need to be

filled. Several SC members shared their stories about the positive experiences they have had being on the steering committee. Anyone interested in filling those positions can email Monica at [monicagondek309@gmail.com](mailto:monicagondek309@gmail.com)

### **Discussion Question:**

- If you had an idea about a perfect GPADC meeting, what would the topic be? What would you like to see happen that benefits your institutions?

Some responses were as follows:

- how to make people feel comfortable in a group
- find ways to connect to young people
- how to be an engaging guide
- how to be a good storyteller

Some suggestions for training were as follows:

- informal interpretation may be a useful skill to help docents engage visitors

- Training teenagers to become docents to encourage and connect with younger visitors has proven to be successful. Inviting local high school musicians to perform at your institution was suggested as a good way to engage a younger population. Oftentimes, their friends will come to see them.
- Tapping into resources available at your institutions by listening to other docents and their teaching strategies can be beneficial.

## **Program**

GPADC Chair Monica Gondek introduced GPADC member-at-large Bonnie Brown and thanked her for putting on this presentation at such short notice.

Bonnie started the slide presentation with a picture of Woodmere Museum. It is a historic mansion in Chestnut Hill. Presently, Barbara Bullock-Fearless Vision exhibit is there showing a retrospective of her artwork.

Barbara is in her 80's and has a lifelong commitment to making art. She taught from pre-school to university level students. She was born in North Philadelphia in 1938. The family wasn't wealthy, but she always loved art in school, afternoon programs, and clubs. She graduated Germantown High School in 1956. She worked in childcare and as a private cook. She didn't have the means financially for higher education, so she took art classes

at Fleisher Art Memorial and Hussian School of Art. She met other African American artists from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art who invited her to meet with them weekly and work along side each other.

Many pictures were shown from the exhibit, each more stunning and colorful than the last, with titles like Remembrance, Chasing After Spirits, Spirit Rain, Healing Altar, I Go There All the Time, Spirit House #3, and Most Precious Blood.

Ms. Bullock's artwork is life sized and filled with symbolism. Many of her pieces have cowrie shells which signify wealth and prosperity. They are also a feminine sign of fertility and birth. The snakes featured in her work signify change. Lizards are symbols of dreams and desires.

In her 30's she was the director of art at Ile Ife Humanitarian Center in Philadelphia. It was opened in 1969 under dance choreographer Arthur Hall. The influence of dance can be seen in her work during that time.

Later years she was able to travel to over 200 countries around the world. She was able to translate that in her art by reflecting what she saw and experienced in the cultures. African culture inspired many of her pieces. Panthers stalking, lively African dancers, slithering snakes, and birds that seem to fly off the canvas are some of the spell bounding images she has created. She loved seeing the costumes, and learning about the spiritualism, and mythology of the people.

In the 80's and 90's Barbara became an artist in Prints in Progress in Germantown. These workshops brought art to children that had limited access to it. She felt that art isn't just in the classroom, it's in the neighborhoods. She went on to hold over 200 art residences with schools. She believed it should be safe spaces for making art. She did a whole series on different types of healers.

Barbara changed from a two-dimensional painter to doing three-dimensional paper and paint collage sculptures. While traveling abroad she found her medium of painted paper. She discovered an innovative way to manipulate and shape paper. She used water based French flash paint and painted on both sides of the paper; she also added other substances to give the surface texture. She found that when she then cut the paper, she could soak it and mold it to create forms with it.

Other projects we were shown from the exhibit were lesson plan from her private collection, an interactive alligator figure puppet, pop-up books and boards she utilized from discarded games. Playing games was important to her, teaching children about loss and gain.

Barbara's Katrina series, saddened about the loss of life and culture in New Orleans was reflected her works. Used Furniture is a piece from that series. Barbara Bullock's art makes you feel, think and wonder. El Dancers is a piece she did portraying 5 dancers in different poses and is installed at the 46th and market El stop. Here in Philadelphia. There is another version of Dancers at the Philadelphia Airport.

Stories My Grandmother Told Me is a wonderful mixed media piece. Most Precious Blood is a stunning representation of how she felt after Trayvon Martin's death.

Bitches Brew and Straight Water Blues depict the different ways she portrays music in her art.

Otherworldly is a piece she interpreted through her art about what the world was going through during Covid.

Barbara Bullock would describe herself as being from the planet but not from any particular community. Indeed, she is a phenomenal artist, a Philadelphia treasure, and a living legend.

This concluded Bonnie's excellent presentation. Throughout the presentation, there was lively discussion among the members about their interpretation of what we were seeing.

Respectfully,

Velma Jackson  
GPADC Recording Secretary