



CALIFORNIA PATRONS OF THE ARTS IN THE VATICAN MUSEUMS

October 2018

Messaggero

35th Anniversary Chapter Leaders Meeting

By Debra Colletti

At the end of September 2018, approximately 50 Patrons from around the globe traveled to Italy at the invitation of International Director Fr. Kevin Lixey to attend the 35th Anniversary Chapter Leaders Meeting. Attendees, each of whom donated the cost of his or her travel, lodging and related expenses, came from all corners of the United States, as well as Canada, Singapore, U.K., France, Belgium, Monaco and Rome. The California representatives were Greg Stanislawski, Debra Colletti, James Low and John McDonnell.

After settling into the Villa Gazioli, our bucolic home for the next four days, the Chapter Leaders immediately got down to business. Father Lixey and the entire Patrons of the Arts at the Vatican Museums staff warmly greeted us and set forth the ambitious agenda. The conference consisted of four days of meetings, lectures, tours, worship and of course meals. We alternated our time between meetings at Castel Gandolfo, the summer Papal Palace, and the Apostolic Palace at Vatican City. A highlight of the conference occurred Friday morning when we attended a private audience with the Holy Father. Pope Francis welcomed us and thanked the Patrons for thirty-five years of support to the

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Bramante Courtyard



Chapter Leaders at Castel Gandolfo

Leaders *from page 1*

Museums. Each of us was able to greet him individually to offer our prayers, supplications and in some cases gifts!

We were honored to be joined throughout the weekend by **Dr. Barbara Jatta**, Director of the Museums. Dr. Jatta shared her vision for the Museums and encouraged us to think big with respect to our mission and future restoration projects. The primary focus throughout the weekend was the most pressing need: the ongoing multi-year architectural restoration of the Bramante (Pinecone) Courtyard. The Bramante Courtyard is part of the larger Belvedere Courtyard, designed by Donato Bramante and commissioned by Pope Julius II soon after his becoming Pope in 1503. Projected to cost approximately 6,000,000 (US\$), the restoration is underway thanks to the generosity of several major donors. The group toured the Courtyard and marveled at the work that has been performed to date. Our guide was Vitale Zanchettin, architect for building preservation at the Museums. The northern Nicchione Wall (where the famous Pinecone is housed) has been reinforced and restored to its dazzling original appearance. However, the south, east and west walls and a new lighting system are still in need of funding. The proudest moment for the California Chapter occurred during this tour while the group was gathered on the terrace atop the Nicchione Wall: Chairman Greg Stanislawski's announcement that the California Chapter will commit \$1,000,000 over a three year period towards the Bramante project!

Another important agenda item was the explanation of the



Fr. Lixey and Company

newly created Vatican Museums North American Service Office (NASO). Launched in June 2018 and located in Chicago, the NASO will provide real time support to and communication with Chapters in the United States and Canada.

Other topics covered at length included: the process from adoption to completion of a restoration project; the status of the Vatican Gardens and the Holy Stairs projects; the newly purchased database software which will facilitate the flow of membership information between the Chapters and the main Patrons office at the Museums; the updated PAVM website and the use of social media and high resolution videos; and the procedures for chapter and individual visits.

Sunday began with Holy Mass jointly officiated by Fr. Lixey, Msgr. Terence Hogan (North American Chaplain), Fr. Michael Rock (Philadelphia), and Fr. Jack Wall (Illinois). During the working sessions, the newly completed "Legacy Video," produced and paid for by the California Chapter, was screened for the group.

In January 2018, James Low, Secretary and head of the Media Committee, accompanied a video crew to Vatican City for a week of unprecedented access to the Museums, the restoration labs, and the Museums' personnel. The result is a video that promotes generally the PAVM and can be used by all the chapters. The Legacy Video features stunning visuals of the Museums' collections, as well as commentary by Dr. Jatta, Fr. Lixey, and PAVM staff. Also, footage of interviews conducted with various chapter leaders during the previous 2017 Leaders Conference in Phoenix was included, thereby allowing every chapter to utilize the Legacy Video as a promotional tool.

On Sunday afternoon, the group was honored to attend afternoon tea at the private home of Dr. Jatta and began the process of saying good-bye. We bid each other safe travels home, all grateful for our time together, all re-energized about our mission to safeguard and to maintain the artistic patrimony of the Vatican Museums, and all vowing to meet again soon. ■



Debra Colletti, Greg Stanislawski, Dr. Jatta and James Low



Scenes of Castel Gandolfo



Fr. Lixey and PAVM staff



Vitale Zanchettin



Nicbione Wall, Bramante Courtyard

Patrons Gather In San Diego

By Debra Colletti

Approximately thirty five California Patrons greeted the start of summer on Sunday June 24 when they visited the San Diego Museum of Art. We were honored to have **Fr. Kevin Lixey**, the International Director of the Patrons, join us for this event. One of many cultural venues within the idyllic grounds of El Prado, the Museum is home to an extensive collection of Impressionist and post-Impressionist works by French and American painters. We were ably guided through the galleries by docents Bob Stein and Karen Soohoo. We stopped to admire works by Vincent van Gogh, Toulouse Lautrec, Edouard Vuillard and Amedeo Modigliani and in particular the American artists who were influenced by their styles.

Among the Patrons' favorites was Mary Cassatt's "Simone in a Blue Bonnet" (ca. 1903) which impressed with its use of broad, hastily painted brush strokes. Born in Pittsburgh, Cassatt attended the Pennsylvania

Academy of Fine Arts before moving to France where she studied under established French painters such as Degas. Her works frequently depict scenes of women and children in private and public life. Although Cassatt painted twenty versions of Simone, many of which are considered unfinished, the version on display in San Diego was completed as evidenced by the artist's signature.

William Merritt Chase, another American Impressionist, maintained a studio in New York where he made his living painting still lifes and portraits. Chase spent many summers in the Shinnecock Hills of Long Island where his family had a home and where he directed a plein-air art school. His "The Chase Homestead, Shinnecock"

(ca. 1893) depicts a woman in the foreground bending to examine or to collect something in the brush on the side of a footpath. Her face is covered by a hat leaving the viewer to focus on the bucolic setting of the natural landscape, the lighting and the family home in the background.

Another Patrons' favorite, the American artist John Singer Sargent was born in Florence, Italy and remained an expatriate most of his life. He studied in Paris where he was exposed to French Impressionism. His portrait of "John Alfred Parsons Millet" (ca. 1892), depicts the four year old son of Sargent's friend and colleague, Frank Millet. The child's loose curls and white shirt are painted in a broad Impressionist manner.

Forty years after its inception



James Low, Debra Colletti and Greg Stanislawski



Bob and Eileen Haub



Robert, Claudia and Marianna Pecora

in France, the Impressionist movement made its way to California. The quintessential west coast Impressionist style is depicted in the plein aire works of artists such as Charles Reiffel.

Robert, Claudia and Marianna Pecora generously hosted the reception which followed. Patrons enjoyed drinks and passed hors d'oeuvres on the terrace of the nearby El Prado Restaurant. Father Lixey brought news from the Patrons office in the Vatican Museums and updated us on restoration projects such as the Bramante Courtyard, the multi-year restoration currently underway at the Museums. Many thanks to the Pecora family for the opportunity to linger with fellow Patrons, to share our "impressions" of the exhibit, and to discuss our summer plans. ■



Reiffel's "In The San Felipe Valley"



Cassatt's "Simone"



Sargent's "John Alfred Parsons Millet"



Chase's "The Chase Homestead, Shinnecock"



Marianna and Claudia Pecora with Fr. Kevin Lixey



Kathy Rolfes-Treadwell, George Treadwell and Bob Haub



Barbara Nielson, Ann Delaney and Pat Manzo

Patrons Enamored Of Knights In Armor

By Debra Colletti

On Sunday September 23rd, fifty Patrons attended the exhibit **Knights in Armor** at the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana. The exhibit, on loan from Florence, Italy, showcased a collection of masterpieces of European arms and armor dating from the Medieval and Renaissance ages.

The concept of knights in shining armor and their virtues of courage, honor and charity is much entrenched in our popular culture. With origins in the 8th

century, the historical reality of knighthood is that the title was usually conferred on mounted warriors who excelled in their military and horsemanship endeavors.

Over time, the martial prowess of the early knights became aligned with the ideals of chivalry, a code of conduct for the courtly Christian warrior. This stereotype was idealized in literature and songs of gallant and heroic deeds. Real life examples include the Knights of Malta and the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre in

Jerusalem both orders entrusted with the care and defense of pilgrims in route to the Holy Land. The typical candidate for knighthood was the second-born son of noble families who could expect no inheritance. Knighthood

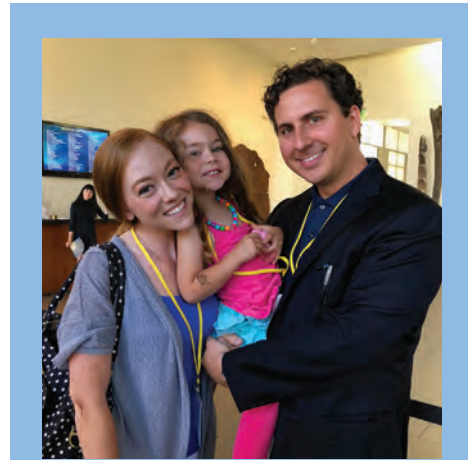
was a livelihood for these individuals to earn land grants and compensation in their own right by serving noble families and patrons.

Patrons learned from our docent Mark Bustamante that early armor consisted only of chain mail and later plate armor was employed on both rider and his horse. The sets could weigh as much as 100 lbs. Pole arms were originally modified farm tools. Overtime plate armor, helmets, swords and jousting poles became very elaborate and refined,

with intricately engraved designs and sentiments of love and valor, making them artisanal pieces in their own right. Northern Italy and Germany were the main manufacturing centers where their fabrication was elevated from a trade to an art form. As gunpowder and the improved efficiency of firearms became more

prevalent on the battlefield, the suit of armor became less practical and lost its functionality. By the mid-17th Century, suits of plate armor were no longer used in European combat.

The onsite reception that followed was hosted by **Dr. Richard and Sherry Van Meter** and **Audrey and James Low**. The well-stocked bar and buffet of four different kinds of sliders and endless seasoned french fries



Audrey and James Low with daughter Alice



Sherry and Dr. Richard Van Meter



Potential members Kapil Mabendra and son Ryan

was heavily patronized. Table seating enabled us to comfortably settle in to enjoy our refreshments and each other. Thank you to the Van Meter and Low families for sponsoring this very well-received event! ■

Knights *continued from page 6*



Mary Ann and Mike Smith



Janet Feeley



Potential member Judith Abbad and Birgit Carey



Miriam Greaney and Beverly Sobraske

Mastiff Dog Comes Home

By Debra Colletti

The Mastiff Dog (Cane Molosso), is bounding back to the Octagonal Courtyard after repair and restoration thanks to the generosity of **Bruce and Patricia Meikle**. The sculpture depicts a guard dog standing on its forelegs with straight ears and open jaw. The piece dates back to the 1st Century AD, however its prototype can be from in the 3rd Century BC Hellenistic Greek world where this breed of hunting dog was very popular among the dynasties and aristocratic classes. Discovered



in 1506 during excavations conducted in vineyards on the Esquilino, the Mastiff arrived at the Vatican Museums in 1770 during the pontificate of Clement XIV.



The large number of visitors that pass through the Octagonal Courtyard was the primary cause of the damage sustained by the sculpture. Enthusiastic subjects of photographs and selfies had the tendency to put their hand in the Mastiff's mouth which culminated in the lower portion of its jaw to break off and to shatter in 2016. The restorers found coins that had been inserted inside the mouth by eager visitors, maybe in the hope similar to that of tourists at the Fontana Trevi that they would return to the Museums on a future trip if they were to leave a coin! An innovative process employed by the Scientific Research Laboratory was used to reassemble the fragments and the jaw was reattached. In addition, the piece underwent a thorough cleaning using chemicals and lasers which freed the superficial layers of powders and mineral deposits from the surface.



The Mastiff, with some new safeguards in place, will return to its post between the Octagonal Courtyard and the Animal Room, and will delight visitors to the Museums for many many years to come. Our sincerest gratitude to the Meikles for making this restoration possible. ■

Save The Date



Project Blue Boy restoration The Huntington Library San Marino, CA

Thursday, December 13, 2018

This is a very special limited event with unprecedented access to see Christina O'Connell as she restores Thomas Gainsborough's painting.

Thank you for your 2018 membership!

Please resolve to keep our mission of patronage going in the New Year! Look for your 2019 renewal reminder in your email and in the regular mail soon!



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Greg Stanislawski, Chairman • Greg.Stanislawski@claconnect.com
• 626-793-3600

Monica M. Lomenzo, Coordinator • mmlomenzo@gmail.com

California Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums
301 N. Lake Ave., Suite 900, Pasadena, CA 91101