

## BEHIND THE SCENES – NYC EXHIBITIONS AND MUSEUMS

**Coordinators:** Anita Highton and Joan Rosenbaum

Have you ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes of exhibitions? How they are conceived? And created? Participants gain an understanding of the underlying process. They experience the content of the exhibition through discussion of readings and images, and learn about the background of the institutions in which they are shown. The focus of this study group is on current exhibitions - Fall 2015 - including, for example *The Power of Pictures* (The Jewish Museum), *John Singer Sargent* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art) and the *Frank Stella* exhibition and the new Whitney Museum and others. Brief lectures by coordinators and interviews with guest curators and educators augment the readings and discussion.

### Readings and other Required Materials:

1. Sam Roberts, *Object Lessons in History*, Sunday Review, New York Times, September 27, 2014.
2. Steven Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects*, Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2010, ISBN 978-0-8122-2155-8
3. Stephen E. Weill, *Rethinking the Museum and Other Meditations*, Smithsonian Institution, 1990, ISBN-13: 978-0874749533
4. Selected essays from exhibition catalogues as they become available, and chapters from books published by museums about their history.

**Joan Rosenbaum:** currently part-time arts consultant. Director of The Jewish Museum for 30 years until 2011; head of museum funding for the State Arts Council, 7 years and a Curatorial Assistant, MoMA, 7 years.

**Anita Highton** is a retired dermatologist with a life-long love of art. She has been volunteering at several NY museums for many years, including leading art exhibition tours as a docent. Additionally she visits as many museums and galleries as possible in the US and in other countries.

\* \* \* \* \* **Syllabus** \* \* \* \* \*

### Questions to be considered:

How is an exhibition conceived and created?

What issues are involved in making a temporary vs. permanent exhibitions?

Which interpretive strategies best communicate the exhibition concept or artist's intent?

What are the particular challenges and opportunities of a single artist museum? (Noguchi), Subject (Jazz), historical moment (Merchant House).

For all of the above there will be a focus on 7-9 selected museums and exhibitions, interviews with curators and directors, background reading and talks about exhibition content and museum history.

**First session:** introductions, including why people interested in the class; presentation of basic information about the process of creating an exhibition.

**Second and third sessions:** The New York Historical Society, institutional history, current challenges and developments and behind the scenes presentation on Picasso mural exhibition.

**Fourth session:** The Power of Pictures. Photography exhibition at The Jewish Museum of work of Soviet Russian photographers. Interview with curator; history of museum with coordinator; prior readings from catalogue essays and background on early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian history and art.

**Fifth session:** Noguchi Museum- permanent and temporary exhibitions

**Sixth and seventh sessions:** John Singer Sargent at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Institutional history/context; inside perspective on exhibition Interview with a Sargent expert; select catalogue essays and any appropriate reviews or articles issued at the time of the exhibition (this kind of information will be used for all shows).

**Eighth session:** – Archaeology exhibition (to be determined) at The Institute for the Study Archaeology. Curator interview and catalogue essay sent in advance. Discussion of the challenge of presenting academic and often little known material cultural objects in a way that has broad appeal.

**Ninth and Tenth session:-** Frank Stella exhibition and the new Whitney Museum. Curatorial input, art history background, catalog essay. Presentation about the historical development the museum.

**Eleventh and Twelfth session:** Will include class presentations of exhibition proposals and one or two presentations from the following: Cooper Hewitt, Bard Center for the Study of Material Culture, Merchant House, The Harlem Jazz Museum, Noguchi Museum, Museum of the American Indian.