

## BAYOU BEND DOCENT ORGANIZATION PROVISIONAL DOCENT INFORMATION AND APPLICATION Class of 2018



### BAYOU BEND AND THE BAYOU BEND DOCENT ORGANIZATION

The Bayou Bend Collection began in 1920 when Miss Ima Hogg was having her portrait painted in the studio of Wayman Adams in New York City. Intrigued by the mid-eighteenth-century chair in which she was posing, Miss Hogg offered to purchase it. When the artist refused to sell it, Miss Hogg acquired a chair that was as close to that Adams chair as possible. The purchase of that simple Queen Anne armchair was the beginning of a lifelong passion for collecting, as Miss Hogg became one of the first serious collectors of early American furniture.

In 1957, Miss Hogg gifted her home and collection to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH). Today, Bayou Bend houses the early American decorative arts collection of the Museum, with more than 2,500 objects made or used in America between 1620 and 1876 on view in 28 period room settings. The collection includes furniture, paintings, prints, metals, ceramics, textiles, glass, and sculpture.

In preparation for Bayou Bend's public opening in 1961, Ima Hogg invited a group of 22 women to attend a training class to be docent interpreters of the collection. The provisional class of 1961 was the beginning of what is now known as the Bayou Bend Docent Organization (BBDO), which today numbers more than 200 active and 300 sustaining members. These dedicated volunteers donate their time and expertise, leading tours of the house and interpreting the collection through ongoing scholarship. Since 1961, more than 800 women and men have joined the ranks of the BBDO and served as docents at Bayou Bend.

Over fifty-five years later, the docent role remains the same as envisioned by Miss Hogg; docents serve as hosts, public representatives, teachers, and guardians of her superb collection of American decorative arts. The BBDO is self-governed by a board of 18, and docents work in partnership with Museum staff to fill many different and evolving needs of both the Museum and its guests.



*Ima Hogg, photographed for the January 1953 issue of Vogue magazine, MFAH Archives.  
Photograph of Bayou Bend by Rick Gardner.*

## THE PROVISIONAL COURSE

The provisional docent course covers material on American history, American decorative arts, and interpretive skills. At the conclusion of the course, provisionals are expected to deliver tours of Bayou Bend that are knowledge-based, visitor-centered, cohesive, and personal. This course is very interactive and class members are expected to be prepared and participate actively in class activities and discussions.



### Attendance

- Class meets from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Mondays, January 22–May 21, 2018. There is no class on March 12.
- Class members may miss no more than two of the class sessions. Excluding sickness or emergency, absences must be excused in advance.
- Class members are responsible for the information that was provided on missed weeks by independent study, or by consulting classmates or mentor docents.

### Class Preparation and Homework

- There will be reading in the class textbooks and written assignments in preparation for classes each week.
- Additional time outside of Monday class is required for shadowing tours, tour practice, studying, and research.
- Class members find that it is essential to practice or study in the collection, either in study groups, with a mentor, or independently. While there is no specific time requirement for this, most find that this practice and study are needed to pass the test tour at the end of the course.

### Requirements for Class Completion

- Provisional class members must pass a final test tour with the head of education in June 2018. At that time, interpretive skills and collection knowledge will be evaluated and discussed. The evaluation sheet that will be used will be shared with participants the first week of class.
- Provisionals must complete a research project that supports the scholarship of Bayou Bend (focusing on collection objects, artists, Hogg family history, etc.) and makes use of the Kitty King Powell Library. Specifics will be shared during the early weeks of class. This project is due by September 1, 2018.

### The Provisional Year (July 2018–June 2019)

- After class members pass the final test tour, they are placed on the tour schedule for eleven months of active touring. After successfully completing one final check-in tour with a mentor at the end of the provisional year, provisionals become full active members of the BBDO.
- Provisionals must be willing, available, and flexible to tour as needed:
  - Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday mornings or afternoons; Friday and Saturday mornings (*assigned in four-month shifts*)
  - School tours, group tours, and station-guided tours
- Attendance is required at General Meetings on the third Monday of each month, October through May (excluding December and January) as well as the September luncheons and January coffees.

Above, left to right:

Made by American, *Easy Chair*, c. 1750–1800, mahogany, maple, white pine, and original wool needlework on linen canvas, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, gift of Miss Ima Hogg, B.60.89.

Engraved by Robert Havell, Jr., after John James Audubon, *Louisiana Heron*, 1834, hand-colored aquatint on wove paper, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, gift of Miss Ima Hogg, B.71.2.

Joseph Blackburn, *Portrait of Abigail Erving Scott*, 1760, oil on canvas, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, museum purchase funded by the Theta Charity Antiques Show, B.2016.4.



## EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERS OF THE BAYOU BEND DOCENT ORGANIZATION



### A Bayou Bend docent is a:

- **Host**, continuing Miss Hogg's legacy of gracious hospitality at Bayou Bend.
- **Teacher**, sharing information about the collection with guests, answering questions, and providing a personal, visitor-centered tour.
- **Security officer**, ensuring that guests abide by the rules and regulations of the Museum.
- **Public representative**, serving as Bayou Bend's link to the public, knowing that the docent's performance, attitude, appearance, and personality will be the impression of Bayou Bend and the Museum that guests will remember after their visit.

### Qualities of a Bayou Bend docent:

- Is a team player.
- Is reliable, flexible, and respects all rules.
- Enjoys learning and sharing knowledge with guests of all ages and backgrounds.

### Docents are expected to:

- Be responsible for a weekly tour. The tour schedule is a four-month format with the following requirements:
  - Two months of *touring* once a week
  - One month of "*odd-job*" *tour assignments*, varying by week
  - One month *OFF*
  - All docents are off in August
- Attend all General Meetings—these are typically held on the third Monday of each month, October through May (excluding December and January).
- Attend both a September luncheon and a January coffee.
- Participate in ongoing continuing education opportunities.
- Be flexible in regard to types of tours: school, group, and station-guided.
- Be thoroughly fluent in collection information, as tours are delivered without the use of scripts.
- Always arrive 15 minutes ahead of scheduled tour time.
- Make a three-year commitment to BBDO following course completion (includes provisional year of touring—therefore, July 2018–July 2021).
- Stay up-to-date on collection information, touring procedures, and interpretive techniques.



## BENEFITS OF BEING A DOCENT AT BAYOU BEND

In addition to the camaraderie with an exceptional organization of more than 200 active docents, there are many benefits to membership in the Bayou Bend Docent Organization:

- Eligibility for annual docent trips to museums, private collections, and historic sites across the United States
- Discounts in The Shop at Bayou Bend and the MFAH Shops
- Discounts on classes at the Glassell School of Art
- Invitations to exclusive Museum and Rienzi docent events

## Continuing Education

The Bayou Bend education department offers a wide range of frequent continuing education opportunities, building on the firm foundation of the provisional course, personal study, and touring experience.

Opportunities include:

- Presentations by educators, curators, and scholars from Bayou Bend, the MFAH, and other museums
- Interpretive skills workshops
- Library and research sessions
- Visits to other museums, historic sites, and artist's workshops
- Presentations by fellow docent experts
- Technology classes
- Rienzi and Bayou Bend Book Club
- Public lectures and programs, including the David B. Warren Symposium and Ballard Lecture Series

## Additional Touring and Presentation Opportunities

In addition to regular touring duties, Bayou Bend docents are encouraged to participate and become involved in:

- Special topic tours for adult programs
- Family and home school tours
- Girl and Boy Scout Badge Day tours
- Summer History Camp tours and activities
- Speaker's Bureau
- School tour presentations



## INFORMATION SESSION INVITATION



### Bayou Bend Prospective Docent Information Sessions

Friday, September 29, 2017, 1:00–2:30 p.m.

OR

Monday, October 2, 2017, 10:00–11:30 a.m.

*MFA* **H** *Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens*  
Lora Jean Kilroy Visitor and Education Center  
6003 Memorial Drive

If you are passionate about antiques, interested in history, and looking for a meaningful volunteer experience to share your knowledge with others, please join us! Our Information Sessions will give prospective applicants a chance to discover more about the Bayou Bend Docent Organization, the provisional docent course, and the commitments and benefits of this unique volunteer position. Join us for a brief program with docents and staff, with time to explore the Kilroy Visitor and Education Center at Bayou Bend.

**R.S.V.P. (*acceptances only*)**

**by September 22 for the September Information Session**  
**by September 25 for the October Information Session.**

For reservations or for more information, please contact Emily Hermans, docent program manager, at [bbdocents@mfa.org](mailto:bbdocents@mfa.org) or 713-353-1508.



*Above: Jonathan Fairbanks with Bayou Bend's first docent class, 1961, Hickley & Robertson.  
Left: Photographs by Rick Gardner.*

## BAYOU BEND DOCENT ORGANIZATION PROSPECTIVE PROVISIONAL DOCENT APPLICATION Class of 2018

Thank you for your interest in the Bayou Bend Docent Organization (BBDO). In order for your application to be considered for the 2018 provisional docent class, please return your completed application and three letters of recommendation by Monday, October 16, 2017. A PDF (digital file) of this application can be downloaded at [mfah.org/bbdocents](http://mfah.org/bbdocents).

### Applicant Information

DATE	PREFIX	NAME
ADDRESS		
CITY	STATE	ZIP (including 4 digit extension)
HOME PHONE	CELL PHONE	OFFICE PHONE
E-MAIL		
SPOUSE'S NAME (if applicable)		

### References

*References should come from employers, volunteer organization leaders, or close friends who can speak to your character, personality, and ability to successfully complete the provisional course and serve as a docent at Bayou Bend. Please do not submit reference letters from family members or acquaintances.*

NAME	E-MAIL	PHONE
NAME	E-MAIL	PHONE
NAME	E-MAIL	PHONE

### Education

NAME OF SCHOOL	DEGREE	MAJOR	YEAR
NAME OF SCHOOL	DEGREE	MAJOR	YEAR
NAME OF SCHOOL	DEGREE	MAJOR	YEAR
NAME OF SCHOOL	DEGREE	MAJOR	YEAR

**Volunteer Experience**

NAME OF ORGANIZATION	CITY/STATE	POSITION/ACTIVITIES	DATES
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**Professional Experience**

EMPLOYER	CITY/STATE	POSITION	DATES
EMPLOYER	CITY/STATE	POSITION	DATES
EMPLOYER	CITY/STATE	POSITION	DATES
EMPLOYER	CITY/STATE	POSITION	DATES

**Questionnaire**

When did you most recently visit Bayou Bend? What do you remember about your visit? *(It is essential that you take a docent-guided tour before submitting your application.)*

Where did you learn about the Bayou Bend Docent Organization? What compelled you to apply?

Tell us about your experience with teaching or public speaking.

Briefly describe your interest in American decorative arts and history.

How are you hoping to benefit from becoming a docent at Bayou Bend?

Do you speak any languages other than English fluently enough to give a tour?

**Please return the completed application via e-mail (preferred) or mail by Monday, October 16, 2017, to:**

Emily Hermans, docent program manager  
*MFA* ■ *Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens*  
P. O. Box 6826, Houston, TX 77265-6826  
bbdocents@mfah.org  
713-353-1508

**Please note:** Letters of reference should be e-mailed or mailed directly to the above address.