BAYOU BEND DOCENT ORGANIZATION
PROVISIONAL DOCENT INFORMATION AND APPLICATION



Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens is home to the early American decorative arts and paintings collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. More than 2,500 objects are on view in 28 room settings and galleries. The objects, made or used in America between 1620 and 1876, include furniture, paintings, prints, metals, ceramics, textiles, glass, and sculpture.

From the time Ima Hogg acquired her first piece of American furniture in 1920, she had what she later described as "an unaccountable compulsion to make an American collection for some Texas museum." In 1957, Miss Hogg gave Bayou Bend and her collection to the Museum. She spent the following nine years transforming Bayou Bend from a private residence to a public museum, creating room settings that suggest early American interiors from particular periods.



In 1961, Ima Hogg hand-selected the first group of docents to be trained as interpreters of the collection. That first provisional class 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. More than 800 women and men have served as docents at Bayou Bend, which has been open to the public for more than 50 years and is recognized locally and nationally as a cultural treasure.



Top: Robert C. Joy, *Miss Ima Hogg* (detail), 1971, oil on canvas, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection, gift of Miss Ima Hogg, B.71.132.
© Estate of Robert Joy **Middle:** Photo of Bayou Bend by Rick Gardner. **Bottom:** Photo by Jacob Power.

BAYOU BEND DOCENT ORGANIZATION





What do Bayou Bend docents do?

Docents share the Bayou Bend historic house and collection with visitors. Docents make a commitment to give guided tours to the public on a weekly basis. They learn through the provisional docent class (January–May) how to interpret Bayou Bend's collection of objects made or used in America between 1620 and 1876, as well as the historic house and the history of the Hogg Family.

What are Bayou Bend docents like?

- **Bayou Bend docents like to challenge themselves.** The provisional class is rigorous and comprehensive—in fact, local graduate students can earn six credits for participating—and is a unique opportunity. Very few museums and universities offer the opportunity to learn object-based American art and history to the general public! After graduating from the initial class, docents participate in continuing education organized by both Museum staff and fellow docents.

- **Bayou Bend docents enjoy interacting with all kinds of people.** Although the heart of the docent program are the guided tours for the general public, docents also participate in school tours, tours for special groups, and major events like Azalea Trail and Fourth of July, which bring thousands of people to Bayou Bend. A Bayou Bend docent might share the collection with anyone from a museum curator to a family bringing their toddlers for their very first museum experience!

- **Bayou Bend docents are all kinds of people.** Docents range in age from their 20s to their 80s; speak languages including Russian, Thai, Chinese, Spanish, French, and Farsi; and have lived everywhere from Houston, Texas, to Lagos, Nigeria.

- **Bayou Bend docents have a strong sense of responsibility.** Docents are entrusted with responsibility for:
  - the collection—to protect unique and delicate objects in an unusual setting.
  - Museum visitors—to provide a thoughtful, interactive, knowledgeable tour experience.
  - each other—whether as docent officers coordinating tour schedules, volunteers planning trips, or members of a refreshment committee, docents support each other and the activities of the Bayou Bend Docent Organization.
  - themselves—for promptness, managing their own schedules and ongoing study, and adhering to the structures and policies governing the Museum and docent organization.

Photos by Jacob Power

BAYOU BEND DOCENT ORGANIZATION

A Bayou Bend docent serves as:

- **an interpreter**, sharing information about the collection with guests, answering questions, and providing a personal, visitor-centered tour.
- **a host**, continuing Miss Hogg's legacy of hospitality at Bayou Bend.
- **a security officer**, ensuring that the collection and visitors are safe.
- **a public representative**, serving as Bayou Bend's link to the public, knowing that the docent interaction will be the impression of Bayou Bend and the Museum that guests will remember after their visit.

Docents are expected to:

- be responsible for a weekly tour, on the same morning or afternoon each week. Specific responsibilities vary throughout the year, including school tours and varied tour formats, and breaks are built into the schedule.
- attend monthly docent meetings from September through May.
- stay up-to-date on collection information, touring procedures, and interpretive techniques for Bayou Bend's unscripted tours.
- always arrive 15 minutes ahead of scheduled tour time.
- make a three-year commitment to BBDO following course completion: July 2019–July 2022.



Docents often have the opportunity to:

- serve in leadership roles with the Bayou Bend Docent Organization after the first "provisional" year of touring.
- do research on the Bayou Bend Collection or related topics.
- give presentations to the public as a member of the Bayou Bend Speakers Bureau.
- volunteer for special events, programs, and committees sharing Bayou Bend's collection in new ways.

The benefits of being a docent at Bayou Bend include:

- eligibility for biannual docent trips to museums, private collections, and historic sites across the United States.
- discounts in the Shop at Bayou Bend and the MFA Shop and on classes at the Glassell School of Art.
- opportunities to participate in exclusive Museum events and continuing education programs.

Photo by Jacob Power

CLASS OF 2019

THE PROVISIONAL DOCENT COURSE



What will I learn in the Bayou Bend Provisional Docent Course?

Provisionals study history, material culture (the study of history through objects), art history, and interpretive skills.

How much do I need to know about history, antiques, or teaching before I start the class?

Nothing! The class covers all the essential knowledge and skills to become a Bayou Bend docent. Past provisionals have included nurses, teachers, lawyers, interior decorators, businesspeople, scientists, students, and community volunteers. Anyone who is interested in the subject material and willing to do the work associated with the class is welcome to apply for the Bayou Bend docent program. Reading materials and homework expectations are at the college level.

Who will my instructors be?

The class is led by Bayou Bend's head of education and docent program manager. Many guest speakers, including museum curators, docent experts, and outside specialists, contribute to class instruction. Experienced docents participate in class as the provisional chair and mentors.

What will I do in and out of class?

During class, provisionals participate in lectures, interactive class discussions, garden and collection tours, special opportunities to study the collection with curators and experts, practice tours, and skill-building exercises. Provisionals also follow and participate in tours for the public, practice with mentor docents and peers, and complete reading assignments and written homework. Provisionals usually find that they need to plan for a minimum of equal amounts of time in and out of class each week; some weeks may require more time.

Important Dates

- Information sessions will be held on September 28 and October 1, 2018. Attendance at one of these is strongly encouraged.
- Applications are due on October 15, 2018. Interviews will be scheduled for November 6–8, 2018. Applicants will be notified of their acceptance before Thanksgiving.
- Class meets from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Mondays, January 14 through May 20, 2019. Class will not meet on January 21 or March 11.

Requirements for Class Completion

- Attendance at all class sessions is highly encouraged. Excluding sickness or emergency, absences must be excused in advance. If a provisional misses more than two class sessions, it will be contingent upon discussion with staff whether they may continue with the course.
- Provisional class members must pass a final test tour with the head of education in June 2019. 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 special 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, 2019.

Photo by Christina Macal

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BAYOU BEND PROSPECTIVE DOCENT INFORMATION SESSIONS



Friday, September 28, 2018, 1:00–2:30 p.m.
or
Monday, October 1, 2018, 10:00–11:30 a.m.

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

If you are interested in learning about the opportunities and responsibilities of the Bayou Bend Docent Organization, 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 21 for the September information session
by September 24 for the October information session

For reservations or for more information, please contact Emily Hermans, docent program manager, at bbdocents@mfah.org or 713-353-1508.



Top: The Music Room at Bayou Bend. **Bottom:** Photo by Jacob Power.

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PROVISIONAL DOCENT INFORMATION AND APPLICATION

Thank you for your interest in the Bayou Bend Docent Organization (BBDO). In order for your application to be considered for the 2019 provisional docent class, please return your completed application and three letters of recommendation by Monday, October 15, 2018. A PDF (digital file) of this application can be downloaded at mfah.org/bbdocents.

Applicant Information

Prefix Name

Address

City State Zip

Home Phone Cell Phone Office Phone

Email

Spouse's Prefix and Name (if applicable)

References

Please request references 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 Email Phone

Name Email Phone

Name Email 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
Name of Organization	City/State	Position/Activities	Dates
Name of Organization	City/State	Position/Activities	Dates
Name of Organization	City/State	Position/Activities	Dates
Name of Organization	City/State	Position/Activities	Dates

Professional Experience

Employer	City/State	Position	Dates
Employer	City/State	Position	Dates
Employer	City/State	Position	Dates
Employer	City/State	Position	Dates

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

Questionnaire

When did you most recently visit Bayou Bend? (It is essential that you have taken a docent-guided tour in the past year.)

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.

Describe a specific experience that you had in a museum that was particularly meaningful and memorable.

What are some of your hobbies, personal interests, or extracurricular activities?

Tell us about a book you read recently that you couldn't put down.

Please return the completed application via email (preferred) or mail by Monday, October 15, 2018, to:

Emily Hermans, docent program manager
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 emailed or mailed directly to the above address.*