

Docent Job Description and Guidelines

Objective:

The Bechtler Museum of Modern Art is dedicated to the exhibition of mid-20th century European modernism. The collection juxtaposes whimsy with work of significant intellectual depth and historical significance. The overarching goal of the Bechtler's Docent Program is to conduct guided tours of the museum for audiences of diverse backgrounds including school-age children, young adults, educators, seniors, visitors with special needs, and audiences where English is not their native language. For each tour, regardless of its nature, the docent will provide a brief history of the museum, the Bechtler family, offer an explanation of the museum's programs, tour the current exhibition, and inform the audience of future plans and goals of the museum. The Docent should facilitate conversations and lead activities with the visitors. Docents promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of the exhibition as well as help ensure that the Bechtler's visitors have an outstanding experience.

Duties and Responsibilities:

Docents must complete the Docent Training Program. They must study and commit to memory selected reference materials based upon the exhibitions/collection. Docents must maintain a museum membership at the individual level or above, and are encouraged to commit to a one year term of service as a docent. They are expected to lead a minimum of twelve tours per year. Tours will be scheduled throughout the week and during some nights and weekends. The Museum will be closed on Tuesdays and selected holidays throughout the year.

Character and Experience:

Docents of the Bechtler should be enthusiastic, pleasant, flexible, understanding, willing to learn, creative and critical thinkers, and resourceful. They should have an interest in working with people, especially school children. They should have good public speaking abilities, a passion for art and art education. Experience in teaching is helpful, although not required.

Supervision and Training:

The Gallery Programs Coordinator supervises the docent program. Docents must attend workshops and selected programs that highlight the museum's operations, exhibitions, and education programs. Training workshops include a copy of the museum's docent handbook, specific training on images and connections in the exhibition, and specialized training in educational methodologies. Docents will receive in-depth hands-on training that prepares them for leading dynamic tours and facilitating discussions. Docents learn interactive teaching techniques for touring children and adults. Docent training also includes the cultural and stylistic background of visual art as it pertains to the collection. New docents must be able to attend at least six out of the eight training sessions offered to complete the Docent Training Program. Ongoing professional development will take place on the second Thursday of each month. Times will vary. Interviews will be held. Not all applicants can be chosen to participate due to the small size of the docent class. Docents are one of many volunteer opportunities at the museum.

Docents also receive special invitations to lectures, presentations, and events, discounted parking, and a 20% discount in the Museum Store.