

Freer House Annual Report: September 2012 – August 2013



Dear Freer House Members and Supporters,

As we enter a new season, I want to provide you with a summary report on some of the many accomplishments of the past year. Thanks to your membership and support we have seen great progress with expanded programs and here are some highlights.

William Colburn, Director, The Freer House



WSU officials & guests with Julian Raby, Director, Freer Gallery of Art (l to r): Carol Gauthier, Sandra Yee, Jerry Herron, Julian Raby, Hilary Ratner, Stewart Ratner

1. A first ever symposium, *The Legacy of Charles Lang Freer: Detroit and Washington, D.C.*, was held in October, 2012 sponsored by the Freer House with support from WSU, the DIA and the Americana Foundation. **Dr. Julian Raby, Director, Freer and Sackler Galleries**, provided a keynote presentation and local speakers offered talks on Freer's Detroit legacy and donation of his art collection to the Smithsonian. Over 150 people attended the symposium and 85 guests attended the Freer House reception and tours.

2. A restoration plan for the **Whistler Gallery** in the Freer House has been completed by architect Ed Francis and the Resendes Design Group. Supported by a grant from the Weinberg Trust and pro bono services from the Resendes Design Group, the plan envisions restoring this severely altered room to its original design as an exhibit space with a new function as a 'state of the art' conference/meeting room to serve Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute, WSU and the community. A \$750,000 fundraising goal has been launched. The Freer House is working with the WSU Development office and our board, staff and supporters to accomplish this high priority and ambitious project.



Rendering of proposed restoration of the Whistler Gallery, by Michael Brown



Rendering of garden revitalization project, by Tom Holleman

3. A plan for the **Courtyard Garden Revitalization Project** has been completed by K.C. Runciman Landscapes and the Garden Project Committee with support from the Americana Foundation. The plan envisions restoring Freer's unique gardens with areas for outdoor events. Goals include replicating the missing original railing of the Peacock Room porch, historically appropriate new fencing, and a replica of the original Asian stone lantern. Committee members include: Liseann Gouin and Denise Little of the Japan America Society; Tom Holleman, Architect; Dr. David Michener, Curator, UM Matthaei Botanical Gardens; Dr. Thomas Brunk; Erinn Rooks and Donald Wrench, WSU Facilities and Grounds. A \$250,000 fundraising goal has been established. To launch the project, the 1906 garden wall has been restored with \$25,000 in support from WSU and Charfoos and Christensen law firm. Design work has commenced to remedy site drainage and grading issues to facilitate the garden project and help protect the structural integrity of the Freer House.

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Dr. Jeffrey Cohen, Bryn Mawr College

4. The 2013 Freer House Lecture Series has attracted partnership support from the Asian and Islamic Art Forum, the Associates of the American Wing of the DIA, the Americana Foundation and the Freer Gallery of Art. We are honored to announce a new and generous cosponsor, the Detroit Creative Corridor Center, for our 2013 events program entitled, “An International Landmark...A World Class Lecture Series”.

March featured a sold-out presentation by **Dr. Jeffrey Cohen, *Harmony in Design: Freer House, the Detroit Club and the Architecture of Wilson Eyre, Jr.*** Audience response was overwhelmingly positive to the first lecture given in Detroit about Freer House architect Wilson Eyre, Jr. Nick and Lorna Abraham, owners of the Detroit Club, served as Program Hosts.

5. In June, Dr. Debra Diamond, curator of South and Southeast Asian Art, provided an indepth preview of her upcoming exhibition at the Freer/Sackler Galleries on Yoga in Indian Art with a lecture in June entitled, ***Heels over Head: Mr. Freer, Swami Vivekananda and the Art of Yoga.*** The lecture was accompanied by a new exhibit at the Freer House, *Freer, Swami Vivekananda*



Program Hosts: Dr. Madhu & Mrs. Prasad (2nd & 4th from R) and family

and the Art of India. Over 200 people attended the lecture at the DIA and many joined the reception and tours at the Freer House. Event sponsors included: Dr. and Mrs. Madhu Prasad, miindia.com, WISDOM, the Asian & Islamic Art Forum/DIA and the Americana Foundation.



Dr. Debra Diamond (standing), Curator, South and Southeast Asian Art, Freer and Sackler Galleries

6. Interest in the Freer House continues to grow. Numerous arts, cultural and historic preservation organizations have held meetings at the Freer House in 2012-13 and over 1,000 visitors have been accommodated through tours and special events. The building continues to be actively used by the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute and other WSU programs. Visiting groups have included the Society of Architectural Historians, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Association of Professional Landscape Designers. Recent media attention includes the Craig Fahle Show/WDET radio, Today@Wayne, the Detroit Free Press and the Detroit News. NHK - TV (Japan National Broadcasting) filmed the Freer House for a major documentary about collectors of Japanese art shown nationwide in Japan, Nov. 2012



NHK (Japan National Broadcasting) crew filming the Freer House

7. The Freer House organization is supported by its members, donors and the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute (MPSI) of WSU. Staff includes William Colburn, Director, Meghan Urisko, Research Assistant, with support from Rose Foster, Operations Coordinator/MPSI. The organization has a Board of Directors, an Advisory Board and an active volunteer group. Membership in the Freer House has grown to over 300 individuals and households.