



## THE FREER HOUSE

Home to MPSI faculty & staff

*Freer House membership, programs and partnerships have flourished in the past two years, and critical groundwork has been laid for improvements to the home's appearance and infrastructure.*

Achieving **IMPACT** by connecting the community to Detroit's history and culture

### Standing Room Only: The Lecture Series

The Freer House created a 'world class' lecture series in partnership with the Detroit Institute of Arts and other sponsors, highlighting the local, national and international legacy of Charles Lang Freer. The lecture series traveled the globe with topics ranging from Freer and the art of China, India and Japan to Philadelphia architect Wilson Eyre's design of Freer's landmark home in Detroit. Guest speakers included prominent curators from the Smithsonian's Freer Gallery of Art and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, as well as distinguished professors from Harvard University and Bryn Mawr College.

Today's lecture series average more than 200 attendees per event, up from the roughly 60 people attending lectures five years ago. The most recent lecture, October's *The Artist's Garden*, garnered a standing-room-only crowd of over 300 guests with more than 250 attending the post-lecture reception at the Freer House and 150 people taking the guided house tour.



people attended the fall Freer House lecture, the best attended 2014 *Arts + Minds* lecture at the DIA.

The Freer House partnership with the Detroit Institute of Arts yielded a world class lecture series highlighting Charles Freer and his art. Attendance averages more than 200 and the October program (seen here) sold out.

### Capturing the Vision: Films, Photographs and Research

Freer House previewed a PBS Arts documentary on the life and art of James McNeill Whistler to about 90 members and supporters in 2014. Freer House and the American Art Wing of the DIA also co-sponsored a special presentation by Whistler biographer, distinguished historian and WSU alum, Daniel Sutherland.

A film crew from NHK, Japan's national broadcasting company, flew to Detroit in 2013 to film the Freer House for a documentary on famous collectors of Japanese art, in-

cluding Charles Lang Freer. The documentary, including a five-minute segment on the Freer House, was broadcast in primetime across Japan on Culture Day, November 5, 2013.

For the first time ever, the Freer House has been extensively documented by a professional architectural photographer. The renowned photographer, Alex Vertikoff, whose work has appeared in *Architectural Digest*, and the Getty and Metropolitan museums, photographed the interior and exterior of the house, providing a set of 30 stunning images for use in Freer House fundraising, promotion and publicity. Some of Vertikoff's images accompany this article.

Public education programs in the past few years include permanent and rotating exhibits on aspects of Freer's life

and the art and design of the house. *A House and Its History* is now on permanent display in the carriage house passageway. The former Peacock Room contains a rotating series of exhibits, including: *Freer and India*; *Freer and Japan*; *Freer's Pilgrimage to the Buddhist Cave Temples at Longmen*; *An Art Collectors Garden*; and *The Peacock Room Comes to Detroit*. Each professionally designed exhibit will be posted on the Freer House website and printed in booklet form, making the exhibits permanently accessible to an even wider audience.

Students from WSU, the University of Michigan and the College for Creative Studies have been involved in several projects, including documenting furniture and objects that once belonged to Freer and are now in the private collection of Dr. Thomas W. Brunk, and researching the original contractors, artisans and suppliers for the 1890-92 construction of Freer House. The students received training in primary research using archival collections at the Detroit Public Library, Reuther Library and the Bentley Collection at U-M, as well as instruction in the use of online resources. Their research provides valuable information to guide restoration efforts and augment the Freer House archives.

### Major Initiatives Restore and Revive

The staff, board and volunteers of Freer House have worked diligently in recent years to launch initiatives to upgrade the interior and exterior of the house. A courtyard garden and landscaping design plan was completed in 2013 with implementation to start in 2015. With support from the Americana Foundation, donations from professional services, and the expertise of Freer House Garden Project Committee members, the revitalized garden will reflect Freer's original plan while incorporating space for both quiet contemplation and outdoor events. Design plans have also been created to restore the Whistler Gallery into a public meeting and conference space, and to transform a ground floor room in the carriage house into an exhibit space and visitors welcome center.



Visitors gather in the garden area behind Freer House, where plans are underway to redesign the landscape to more closely match Freer's original vision.

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## Caring for Freer House Earns Top Honor

Rose Foster, operations coordinator for MPSI for more than a decade, was named WSU's Building Coordinator of the Year. The university selects one person each year for their outstanding effort coordinating the complex systems and services needed to run a campus building. Rose's primary territory, the Freer House, encompasses an extra level of complexity. It not only houses the faculty and staff of MPSI, but is historically significant as the 1892 home of Charles L. Freer. Rose was honored for maintaining the integrity of the house as it hosts art-related events for Freer House members and the public. Rose also oversees services for the nearby Skillman Building and the portion of the Knapp building that contains MPSI's Early Childhood Center.

## High Praise for Freer House

### THE LECTURE SERIES . . .

*"Several of my students attended the lecture at the DIA and even more went to the Freer House tours (some told me they brought their parents, which is great, too!). I was very pleased it was such a success. Looking forward to the next one and hopefully contributing my own Freer research someday!"*

**Lily Wilson, Instructor, Art History, College for Creative Studies**

*"I am continuously amazed and thrilled at the increasing profile of Freer House and the growing recognition of it and its owner, Charles Lang Freer, in Detroit. I only wish I were closer to attend your wonderful events. You are all to be congratulated profusely."*

**Susan Hobbs, Director, Thomas Dewing Catalogue Raisonne Project, Alexandria, VA**

### THE TOURS . . .

*"On behalf of the Detroit Historical Society, I thank you for providing an exceptional 'Behind the Scenes' tour experience at the Freer House. Attendees commented that it was 'excellent because so much great information was given to us,' 'was one of the best tours,' and 'lecturer (William Colburn) is top notch! He's very well informed and communicates well.' Each time we introduce a group to the Freer House, they come back with glowing reports."*

**Rebecca Hope, Manager of Public Programs, Detroit Historical Society**

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# 38,856 and counting



**YouTube** views of the Detroit version of the Japanese pop song *Fortune Cookie in Love*, produced by Yukari Katayama, wife of Consul General of Japan in Detroit, Dr. Kazuyuki Katayama. The Katayamas are good friends and supporters of the Freer House, where scenes of MPSI faculty and staff dancing to the song were shot.