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President's Letter

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Dear Membership,

Greetings and Happy New Year! I'm honored to step into the role of President of WAAC and look forward to our next annual meeting in Portland this September. Plans are underway with the Portland Art Museum (PAM) and possibly a couple other venues for functions but they're still in the planning stages. I'm hoping the meeting will be educational for the WAAC membership and the greater Portland arts community as well.

The annual meeting was last held in Portland in 2002, which doesn't seem very long ago, but much has changed since then. The Portland Art Museum has a new Executive Director, and the museum purchased the former Masonic Temple next door (in 1980s), which was renovated and now holds the Jubitz Center for Modern and Contemporary Art.

Former president, Claire Dean, wrote much regarding the city of Portland in the 2002 *WAAC Newsletters* so I thought I'd augment her information about Portland with some fond memories of my time and history, especially as I have come to know the city, its art organizations, and conservation community.

In 1993, my husband Steven was offered a graphic design position at Nike. We were living in Los Angeles, and I came up with Steven for the interview to see what Portland was like. It was so green and beautiful although it was a rainy, 60 degrees Fahrenheit day in July; but I soon came to see coffee would take care of that. Coffee is a staple in the Pacific Northwest, which has an abundance of coffee hut drive-thrus and Starbucks.

Just before our move to Portland, I received my acceptance letter from the Winterthur Conservation Program at the University of Delaware. Both opportunities were too good to turn down so I decided to commute from Delaware to Portland. Fortunately, I spent the next two summers in Portland, the first as an intern at PAM, and the second as an intern on the restoration of the Astoria column, with Claire Dean and Jonathan Taggart.

As I came to see, the Portland Art Museum has a great history; it's the oldest museum on the west coast and one of the seven oldest in the nation. I was really amazed when I

learned that the 1913 Armory Show traveled to Portland, which was the only west coast venue. Sally Lewis, whose collection of Roman classical bronzes I was rehousing, was friends with Brancusi and many European artists and was instrumental in bringing the show and modern art to Portland. She later donated her sculpture, Brancusi's *A Muse*, to the museum.

During my summer internship at PAM, I was fortunate not only to have the opportunity to watch artists Mike and Doug Starn install their work *Sphere of Influence*, but also to sit a few feet away from them in the park a few times during lunch. (I still kick myself for not going over to say hello.) I also saw Spaulding Gray's monologue, *Gray's Anatomy*, which I missed in LA because it sold out within the first few hours, unlike Portland, where we bought tickets the same week. I started to see there were some great advantages to living in this small beautiful city.

Conservation also has a long history in Portland. The Pacific Northwest Regional Center was established in the 1970s at PAM with the help of NEA funding. Unfortunately over time, the regional center did not last because as with many centers established throughout the country with NEA money, sustainable funding was not established or forthcoming. However, PAM kept the laboratory and conservation work continues on the museum's collections.

When I interned at PAM in 1994, the conservation lab was located on the same floor as the Museum Art School, which is now the Pacific Northwest College of Art. This was the last time I would see both the school and conservation lab, which were subsequently moved off site while PAM went through renovations over the next few years. I'd like to thank again the two conservators at PAM, Sonja Sopher (now retired) and Elizabeth Chambers, who offered me the opportunity for my internship.

Although I anticipated coming back to Portland after graduation, I was side tracked by a post graduate internship. Then Steven was transferred to Nike Europe for the next three and a half years; so I didn't make it back to Portland again until 2000. In the next newsletter, I'll pick up from here and talk about the past ten years in Portland as much will pertain to where I intend to go with the theme of the meeting, "Expose Yourself to Art, Collaborations in Conservation," or at least something along these lines.

President's letter, continued

Before I finish, I'd like to thank outgoing president Scott Carrlee, who put together a wonderful meeting in Juneau. The papers presented were informative, ranging in topics from the set up of painting conservation studios to sculpture conservation to archaeological conservation projects in Alaska, which very much reflected conservation in the extreme. It was my first time to the beautiful state of Alaska, and I look forward to another chance to return to see the large mosquitoes I heard so much warning about, but never saw.

Many thanks to the nominating committee, Marie Svoboda, Suzanne Friend, Albrecht Gumlich, and Dana Senge, and special thanks to the members who ran for office. I hope and encourage all of you to run again. Serving on the WAAC board of directors has been a great experience and opportunity to make new friendships in the western conservation community and participate in conservation's future.

Best wishes to all for a peaceful and happy 2010,

Marie LC