

The Heckscher Museum of Art

DOCENT

Volunteer Handbook

The word **docent** derives from the Latin *docere*, which means to teach. Docent volunteers are a vital part of The Heckscher Museum of Art Education and Public Programs Department. Through the sharing of knowledge, docents bring the artwork on view to life for museum visitors. Enthusiasm, a desire to learn, and commitment are several of the most valuable characteristics of a docent.

At The Heckscher Museum, docents play a variety of roles including leading gallery tours, acting as Docents-in-the-Gallery to answer visitor questions, and assisting Museum staff at public programs that inform, stimulate, and educate visitors about the Museum and the artwork on view.

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Mission Statement: *The Heckscher Museum of Art serves the people of the Town of Huntington and surrounding communities. Through exhibitions of its permanent and loan collections of art and related museum programs, it seeks to provide inspiring and transformative educational experiences to encourage a broader understanding of our past and present and enrich the quality of life of the individuals it serves.*



2 Prime Avenue
Huntington, NY 11743
631.351.3250
www.heckscher.org
Education Department
631.351.3214

This handbook was written with the assistance of a docent committee and is designed to help volunteers understand and enjoy the docent experience.

Museum History

In 1920 the German-American industrialist and developer August Heckscher opened the Museum and surrounding park for the benefit of the people of Huntington and the surrounding region. Operated by a private foundation, the Museum presented works by Old Masters such as Lucas Cranach, Gustave Courbet, François Girardon, and Henry Raeburn as well as important American painters like Edward and Thomas Moran, Asher B Durand, and George Inness. One can detect a certain Romantic spirit in the preference for images of Venice and the American West within the original collection. In the era before World War II, Long Island was essentially rural with an array of large country estates along the north shore. Figures like Henry Clay Frick, Louis Comfort Tiffany, and Theodore Roosevelt owned large estates along the North Shore. For a decade, the Museum enjoyed a charmed existence.

The situation changed dramatically with the crash of the stock market in 1929 and the Great Depression. The foundation governing the Museum was no longer able to operate the Museum and so the collection remained static and was accessible on only a very limited basis. Eventually the efforts of concerned citizens in the late 1940s, including local art teachers and members of the Huntington Township Art League (now the Art League of Long Island), with some assistance from the Town of Huntington resulted in the reopening of the Museum to the public on a regular basis. In 1954 ownership of the institution passed to the Town of Huntington.

The modern life of The Heckscher Museum really began in 1957 when the Town of Huntington delegated operational responsibility for the Museum to the Board of Trustees of a newly formed non-profit corporation lead by George Wilhelm. Almost immediately the collection began to grow. Plans were developed for a more active exhibitions schedule and a program of educational activities. In 1962, Eva Gatling was hired as Director, one of the first women to direct an art museum. During her tenure, the Museum made its most important acquisition since the foundation with the purchase of George Grosz's *Eclipse of the Sun*— a monumental painting from the height of his activity in Berlin in the 1920s. Many more objects were added to the collection during her sixteen-year career, including a number of works by Arthur Dove who, like Grosz, had lived in Huntington for an extended period.

In the mid-1960s and 1970s, dreams of expansion were born with initial plans requested from Marcel Breuer. Subsequent directors placed great emphasis on education programs and improved exhibitions. The staff grew in number and professionalism. The addition of the Baker/Pisano Collection of American works in 2001 was the single largest gift to the Museum since the founding donation. A major historic preservation and renovation project, under the direction of Centerbrook Architects, was initiated in 2007, upgrading the exhibition space and highlighting the original architectural features of the building.



Penrhyn Stanlaws,
August Heckscher, 1925,
Oil on canvas
August Heckscher Collection



August Heckscher at the Museum
public dedication ceremony
July 10, 1920



Director Eva Gatling

The Heckscher Museum of Art

General Information

Location

2 Prime Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743

The Heckscher Museum is located in Heckscher Park in the Town of Huntington. The Museum is located on the western side of the park.

Hours

Wednesday - Friday | 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Saturday and Sunday | 11:00 am - 5:00 pm

Monday and Tuesday | Closed

First Friday | 10:00 am - 8:30 pm

On the *First Friday* of each month, the Museum is open extended hours until 8:30 pm. A musical or other performance is scheduled to begin at 7:00 pm. Admission is FREE for all after 4:00 pm.

Closed Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day

Admission

Huntington Township Residents

\$6.00 Adults, \$4.00 Seniors (62 and over)

\$4.00 Students (10 and over)

FREE viewing for Township Residents with proof of residency:
Wednesday after 2:00 pm, Saturday before 1:00 pm

Non-Residents

\$8.00 Adults, \$6.00 Seniors (62 and over)

\$5.00 Students (10 and over)

FREE *First Fridays*, extended hours 4:00 pm - 8:30 pm

FREE Museum Members

FREE Children under 10

Administrative Offices

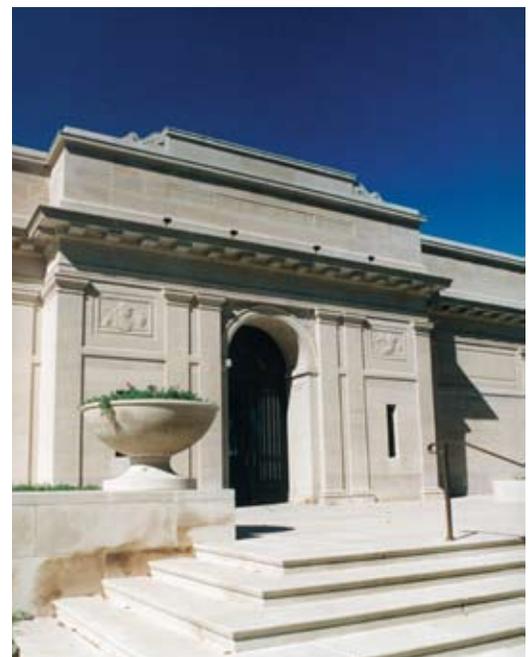
The Museum offices are located in the Administrative Cottage, the small stone building adjacent to the Museum. Office hours are weekdays from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Museum Phone Numbers

Administrative Cottage Main Line: 631.351.3250

Education and Public Programs Department: 631.351.3214

Museum Main Line (Front Desk) : 631.351.3252



Website

The Museum website address is

<http://www.heckscher.org>

Docents should take time to explore and familiarize themselves with the information available on the website. It is a quick and easy way to keep up-to-date on what's happening at the Museum.

- Current, upcoming, and past exhibitions
- Hours of operation
- Calendar of all the public programs
- Press releases
- Educational materials
- Permanent Collection information (see image on right)

On the bottom, right-hand corner of the homepage, is a section called "From the Collection" that is dedicated to the Permanent Collection.

- Collection on View

Click "COLLECTION ON VIEW" to access all of the Permanent Collection works of art that are currently on view.

- Search the Collection

Click "SEARCH THE COLLECTION" to search the online database.

The Heckscher Museum of Art
Huntington, New York
LOGIN FOR SPECIAL FEATURES
HOME | LOGIN search

INFORMATION COLLECTIONS EXHIBITIONS EDUCATION CALENDAR SUPPORT

Town of Huntington residents admitted FREE - Wednesday after 2:00 pm and Saturday before 1:00 pm.
Click for more information.

Long Island Biennial: Call for Entries
The Heckscher Museum of Art and Cinema Arts Centre are now accepting entries for the Long Island Biennial 2012, a juried exhibition featuring work by visual artists and filmmakers who live in Nassau or Suffolk County.
LEARN MORE

Events
Voices & Visions Artist's Talk with Mark Wagner January 5, 2012
Meet Mark Wagner whose currency collage *Took For Granted* is featured in the Museum's *Ripped: The Allure of Collage* Exhibition.
LEARN MORE

From the Collection

Joe Constantino
The Barn at Mattituck, 1997
Photograph, silver gelatin print from infrared negative
10-3/8 x 13-3/8 in.

COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS
SEARCH THE COLLECTION
COLLECTION ON VIEW

E-mailing the Museum

All staff members may be contacted at their Museum e-mail addresses, which they access during regular office hours, Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. E-mail is the primary form of communication between the Education and Public Programs staff and docent volunteers. All new docent volunteers are asked to provide an e-mail address.

Museum staff e-mail addresses follow the formula `lastname@heckscher.org`. A full listing of current staff and e-mail addresses is available on the Museum website under "INFORMATION."

Visitor Services

Visitor Services personnel, who work at the Museum Visitor Services Desk, are full- or part-time employees of the Museum supervised by the External Affairs Department. They welcome all Museum visitors and handle Museum admission as well as all merchandise sales at the Visitor Services Desk. Docents should introduce themselves to these staff members when they join the team.

Security Guards

Security Guards are full- or part-time employees of the Museum supervised by the Director of Security and Building Services. Their primary role in the Museum is to protect the artwork. They also assist in setting up for public programs in the galleries. Docents should introduce themselves to these staff members when they join the team.

Restrooms

Public restrooms are located on the lower level of the Museum and are accessible only by the stairway in the rear of the Central Gallery. **If a visitor requires handicapped bathroom facilities**, please request that a guard escort the guest to the handicapped bathroom facilities located in the Administrative Cottage. The guest must be accompanied by a Museum staff member or volunteer.

Protecting Works of Art

Sketching and Writing in the Galleries

These activities are allowed only in the presence of Museum personnel and with **pencil only**.



Proper Viewing of Works

Visitors must stand at least 12 inches (the distance of one Museum floor tile) from all artwork at all times. Docents must set the example and be aware of where visitors are standing.

Photography in the Galleries

Photography is not permitted in the galleries without prior written permission from the Executive Director. If a visitor needs an image of an artwork, please advise them that select images of artwork in special exhibitions are available online, under “EXHIBITIONS” and most Permanent Collection images are available online by searching the online database under “COLLECTIONS.”

Food and Beverages are not permitted in the galleries, except during special functions.



Smoking is prohibited in all areas of the Museum.

Resources for Children and Families

The Museum offers activities for children and families that are designed to enrich the museum experience. These resources are always available during open hours and docents should be aware of their availability, particularly for those with young children.

“Create Your Own” Hands-On Activity

The Museum offers a “Create Your Own” hands-on activity in the galleries for all ages in conjunction with the rotating special exhibitions on view. Visitors are invited to leave their artwork at the Visitor Services Desk and select works of art are often featured on the Museum website.



“Explore the Exhibitions” Activity Page for Kids

The Museum offers an “Explore the Exhibitions” activity page for kids that includes artwork searches and other activities for young visitors. This activity page is available at the Visitor Services Desk to all museum visitors and on the website.



QR Codes in the Galleries

QR codes (scannable codes that lead to website URLs) are available to visitors and can be found next to select artwork in the galleries. With a simple scan on a smartphone, these codes allow visitors to bring supplementary internet resources (e.g. videos, images, websites) right into the galleries on their smartphones.* Visitors without smartphones can obtain a handout with a transcription of the content and/or list of the web URLs used for each QR code at the Visitor Services Desk.



*A free QR Code Reader app is required. A Visitor Services staff member can assist visitors if they have any questions/concerns while using this technology.

Public Programs



The Museum offers a broad range of public programs for all ages throughout the year. *The Guide* (see images on right), a quarterly publication, advertises these programs. Individual flyers are also created for programs offered (see images above). These materials are all available at the Visitor Services Desk in the Museum.

All programs are also listed on the Museum website (<http://www.heckscher.org>) by clicking on "Calendar" and then browsing by date. Most programs are organized and run by the Education and Public Programs Department.

Docent volunteers should familiarize themselves with the programs offered by the Museum. Docents are needed to assist at public programs and may sign up throughout the year. (See *Docent Assignments* on page 8 for details.)



January
2012

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11

selected day

event day

other months

no single-day event

museum is closed

» EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

Click any date to see what's happening.

Download current program guide.



How to Become a Docent Volunteer

Docents come from many different backgrounds and experiences. What is most important is to have a love of art, a love of learning, and a love of sharing with others. The Museum is always looking for new docent volunteers to join the team.



How to Apply

1. Fill out a *Docent Volunteer Application* (see page 12) and submit to the Education and Public Programs Department for review.
2. You will be contacted for an interview with the Education and Public Programs Department.

Trainee Requirements

Once accepted into the docent trainee program, you will receive a Permanent Collection catalogue and be assigned a docent volunteer mentor to offer guidance and feedback. The following must be completed within a period of six months after acceptance:

- Attend three docent training sessions
- Observe four tours presented by different docents
- Choose two works of art currently on view, prepare discussion points, and present to your mentor
- Prepare a tour and present to your mentor and an Education and Public Programs staff member
- Participate in a performance evaluation with your docent mentor and a Museum staff member

Upon the successful completion of the above requirements, the docent will receive a certificate and badge. In order to maintain status as a docent, the docent responsibilities outlined below must be met.

Docents are observed regularly in order to ensure and maintain a high quality visitor experience.

Docent Responsibilities and Benefits

Museum Membership

Docents are expected to become members of The Heckscher Museum at whatever level they choose. While the donation of your time is very important to us and is appreciated, maintaining a Museum membership demonstrates your commitment to the Museum mission and allows you to encourage others to join. For further information on membership, please call 631.351.3006 or see our website.

Required Volunteer Hours

Docents are expected to complete **a minimum of two docent assignments (one hour in length) per month**. If illness or another event prevents you from meeting this commitment, please consult with the Education and Public Programs Department to make up the missed assignments at another time.

Reduced/Free Admission to Regional Museums

Annually, The Heckscher Museum issues staff identification cards to docents. Staff cards are honored by many regional museums and provide you with reduced or free admission to those institutions.*

*Museum policies vary. It is best to contact the museum you plan on visiting ahead of time to ensure they will honor the card.

Docent Training Sessions

Training sessions are held approximately once a month during daytime hours in the Museum. When necessary. Additional training sessions are scheduled when necessary. Docents are notified of any updates or changes via e-mail.

Education and Public Programs and Curatorial staff members conduct the docent training sessions. **Docents are required to attend at least two-thirds of these training sessions.** During training sessions, docents:

- Receive materials and information about upcoming exhibitions.
- View and learn about exhibitions
- Share their experiences
- Share exhibition-related research
- Sign up to be a Docent-in-the-Gallery (DIG) or lead a Private Group Tour
- Sign up to assist Education and Public Programs staff at upcoming public programs

Research and Preparation

Attending Docent Training Sessions is an essential part of being a successful and prepared Docent.

Guided Research

At Docent Training Sessions docents are provided with background information on upcoming exhibitions. For each exhibition, docents receive the following:

- PowerPoint presentation preview of work on view provided by the Curator
- Illustrated checklists
- Object label text
- Introductory wall text

Private Gallery Walk-Throughs

Once an exhibition is installed, docents are given a private walk-through with the Curator.

Education Resource Guides

Docents are e-mailed a link to all Special Exhibition Educator Resource Guides as developed by the Education Department, which include additional exhibition information.

Informational Binder at the Visitor Services Desk

Depending on the special exhibition on view, background materials are available at the Visitor Services desk. Docents are welcome to come into the Museum to review this material.

Independent Research

It is best practice to supplement the materials from the Museum with independent research conducted in the library or on the internet. Choose internet sources carefully to ensure material is from authoritative sites, such as those of universities, museums, foundations related to the artist or art movement being researched, or government sites and respected news or art publication sites. If independent research yields significant findings, docents are encouraged to share this research with the Education and Public Programs Department staff and other Museum docents.



Docent Assignments

Docents play many roles in the Museum. The following provides details about these assignments and their responsibilities. **Docents are required to volunteer at least 24 hours per year (2 hours per month),** in whatever roles they feel would be most beneficial for themselves and the Museum.

Be a Docent-in-the-Gallery

The Docent-in-the-Gallery is “stationed” in the galleries to answer visitor questions about the current exhibitions. A **Docent-in-the-Gallery is encouraged to conduct tours, but are not required to do so.** They float throughout the Museum galleries as needed. Docents are asked to sign up for one-hour time slots within the following hours:

Wednesday through Friday | 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Saturday | 2:30 pm - 4:30 pm Sunday | 1:30 pm - 4:30 pm

For additional information see “Being a Docent-in-the-Gallery” and “Organizing and Leading a Tour” on page 9.

Lead a Private Group Tour

The docent leads a guided tour of the museum for a pre-registered group of adults. These programs focus on the special exhibition on view at the time, unless otherwise indicated. Docents are notified of the number of adults and their group affiliation prior to the program so that they may prepare more effectively. Days and times vary. Tours are generally 1 hour in length.



Lead an Outreach Program

The docent leads an art presentation offsite for a pre-registered group of adults (For example: library, assisted living facility, 55+ community). Docents are supplied with a Museum laptop and digital projector with a PowerPoint presentation. The docent engages the audience with guided questioning to actively involve them in the artwork. (Training with the laptop and digital projection equipment is available upon request.) Days and times vary. Programs are generally 1 hour in length.

Assist at a Public Program

The docent assists Education and Public Programs staff members at a public program in the Museum. Responsibilities range depending on the nature of the program and the audience it serves (For example: preparing/distributing art supplies, overseeing an art activity, and giving guided tours). For more information, see page 5. Days and times vary.



How to Sign Up

Docents may sign up to be a Docent-in-the-Gallery and to assist at a public program in person at regularly scheduled Docent Training Sessions, by calling the Education and Public Programs Department at 631.351.3214, or e-mailing the designated staff member. Docents are contacted by phone for group tours and outreach programs, as groups are booked with the Education and Public Programs Department and need is demonstrated.

Absences

Docents must make every effort to fulfill their assignments or arrange for a substitute. If well in advance (e.g. several weeks) you realize you cannot meet your commitment, use the docent contact list to find a substitute and inform the Museum of the change. If however, a conflict arises on the date of your assignment, please call the Museum’s main line at 631.351.3250 and inform the Office Manager or Visitor Services personnel of your absence.

Being a Docent-in-the-Gallery

A Docent-in-the-Gallery will find that the level of visitor interest in docent information will vary. Some visitors will have many questions, while others may want to be left to look around on their own. It is the docent's job to ensure that, no matter what a visitor is in search of, he or she knows a docent is available.

Tips to keep in mind:

- **Welcome visitors and introduce yourself.** As visitors enter the galleries, welcome them and introduce yourself as a docent who is available to answer any questions they may have.
- **Circulate.** Only one docent-in-the-gallery is assigned at any given time. Therefore, make sure that you move through the galleries during your assignment, demonstrating that you are available to answer questions about all the works on view at the time.
- **Observe and respond.** Note visitors' reactions to the artwork and movement through the galleries. If visitors are all gathered around a particular work of art that you have more information to share with them about, approach and speak up. On the other hand, if a visitor makes it clear that he or she would prefer to walk through the galleries independently, respect this request and step back. Docents are encouraged to share visitor responses to exhibitions at Docent Training Sessions.
- **Note the number of visitors you speak with during your assignment.** Report this number in the Docent Sign-In Book at the conclusion of the assignment.

Organizing and Leading a Tour

A docent's job is to help visitors appreciate and better understand the works on display by providing both general and specific information. Your presentation, which ideally is between 45 and 60 minutes in length, should not be a lecture but rather a "conversation" with the Museum visitors. Questions and other techniques that encourage guests to actively participate should be included in your presentation. And, most importantly, present in a style that demonstrates enthusiasm for and appreciation of art and inspires others to become interested, too.

The following will help guide you in preparing for and presenting your tour in the Museum:



Prepare an introductory statement

You want to let guests know what you will be talking about. Include general facts listed below.

- Exhibition theme, if applicable
- Biographical information, if the exhibit is about one or select artist(s)
- Specific art movement, if the exhibit pertains to such
- Origin of the exhibit, such as the name of lenders of works on view or whether the works are from the Permanent Collection
- Medium/media, if the show focuses on one or several distinct media
- Time period covered by the exhibit
- Number of works on view

Select the works to include in your tour

Choose a select number of works of art that you feel comfortable discussing and that appeal to a broad audience. Focus your research efforts on these particular works of art.

Determine the order in which you will discuss the works

Logistics may be the most important factor here, since you want to avoid crisscrossing the galleries. Your tour should have a smooth flow so that the group can move easily through the galleries.

Select the information you will include for each work

As you prepare, try to think of open-ended questions you might ask visitors to help spark interaction. Avoid questions with “yes” or “no” answers. Instead, ask questions such as, “What does this look like to you?” or “How does this painting/photograph/sculpture make you feel?” Whenever possible, follow up a visitor’s answer with “What do you see that makes you say that?” to help continue the conversation.

For each individual work of art discussed, make sure to cover the following.

- Biographical information about the artist
- Date and medium of the work
- Relevant information about the medium
- What the artist was exploring at this time
- Who or what is the subject of the work
- Who or what influenced the artist in creating this work
- Other artists who may have been influenced by the work



Develop a Conclusion

Conclude with a statement relating back to the introduction; this brings the tour full circle and helps visitors tie up loose ends of information.

Piece it all Together

Some docents use index cards with bullet points for each work, while others write out their tour in advance. Use the method that will help best retain the information.

Practice the Tour

Read tour notes aloud at home to become familiar with the material. While having notes is not prohibited when conducting a tour, notes as well as wall text should not be read to visitors. So, practicing is important. However, reading relevant quotes from artists is encouraged. Guests generally enjoy this additional information.

On the Day of the Tour

Before the tour begins, walk through the galleries and let visitors know that a tour will be conducted and where they should meet. While waiting to begin, engage guests in conversation. Have they visited The Heckscher Museum before? Where did they travel from? What interested them in coming? Are they artists? This creates a rapport. Tell visitors how long the tour will take and the exhibitions/galleries that will be covered. Let them know that every work will not be discussed, but that questions will be answered after the formal tour. Before beginning to speak, make sure to give a brief history of the Museum and August Heckscher. (See page 1.)

Note the number of visitors on the tour. Record this number in the Docent Sign-In Book at the conclusion of the assignment.

Presentation Tips

Remember the tried-and-true formula for successful public speaking:
Tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and tell them again.



Pace Yourself

It's okay to take a few moments to look at a work in silence. This allows visitors to process the information you've just given them and to study the works you have discussed. Speak at an even pace and loud enough to be heard by everyone in the group.

Thank Your Audience

Encourage them to visit again. Let them know of any upcoming special events and indicate where they can obtain additional information.

Note the Number of Visitors You Speak With

Report this in the Docent Sign-in Book at the conclusion of your assignment.

Docent Etiquette

When On Duty, Be Professional and Personable

A docent has the power to make a guest's visit memorable. Appearance, demeanor, enthusiasm, and warmth make the difference! Present in a professional manner and show excitement about the artwork on view.

Wear the Museum Identification Badge

All docents are issued Museum Identification Badges at the end of the trainee program. Please wear this badge at all times when in the Museum.



Docent Sign-In Book

After the completion of an assignment, please complete the sign-in sheet maintained at the Visitor Services Desk. Record the following:

- Name, date, hours
- Number of guests engaged during the assignment
- Number of independent research hours conducted in preparation (if applicable)

How to respond if... You Don't Know the Answer to a Question

Docents are not expected to know "everything." Although docents must make a good-faith effort to be well prepared, inevitably questions arise which a docent may be unable to answer. Should this occur, offer to research the answer and get back to the guest. The guest may leave his or her contact information, including email address, at the Visitor Services Desk and the docent may follow up.

Observing Docent Tours

Observing another docent's tour can be valuable, especially for new docents. As a courtesy, request permission from the docent on duty to observe the tour. Do not wear the ID badge when observing and refrain from asking questions or making comments. Ask questions privately after the tour.

When Off Duty in the Galleries

If in the galleries preparing for a tour or visiting with guests when another docent is on duty, avoid interfering with your colleague's activities.



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 Education Department
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The Heckscher Museum of Art

DOCENT Volunteer Application

Please print clearly. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. Qualified applicants will be contacted for an interview at the Museum. Mail completed application to the address above, ATTN: Education Department.

Date ____/____/____

Mr. Ms. Mrs. Other _____

First _____ Last _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Home Phone () _____ - _____ Cell Phone () _____ - _____

Email* _____@_____

Education/Degree(s) and Employment History

Docent Assignment Interests (Check all that apply.)

- Being Docent-In-The-Gallery
- Leading Tours - Adult Groups
- Leading Tours - Adults with Special Needs
- Leading School Programs - Grades K-12
- Leading School Outreach Programs - Grades K-12 (Offsite: Nassau & Suffolk Counties schools)
- Leading Outreach Presentations - Adult Groups (Offsite: Libraries, 55+ Communities, etc.)
- Assisting at Public Programs - Adult Programs
- Assisting at Public Programs - Kids/Family Programs

Have you/do you volunteer at other museums or non-profit organizations? Yes No

If so, where did/do you volunteer? _____ When? _____

Why would you like to be a Docent Volunteer at The Heckscher Museum?

What do you expect to learn and/or gain from this experience?

*Required.