

Meeting Date and Time ( meetings held at The Mint Museum of Art, 2730 Randolph Road)	Book	Author	Description
Tuesday, September 15, 2009 at 6pm	<u>Lust for Life And Letters of Vincent van Gogh</u>	Irving Stone  Mark Roskill	<p>No artist has been more ruthlessly driven by his creative urge, nor more isolated by it from most ordinary sources of human happiness, than Vincent Van Gogh. A painter of genius, his life was an incessant struggle against poverty, discouragement, madness and despair. Lust for Life skillfully captures the exciting atmosphere of the Paris of the Post-Impressionists and reconstructs with great insight the development of Van Gogh's art. The painter is brought to life not only as an artist but as a personality and this account of his violent, vivid and tormented life is a novel of rare compassion and vitality.</p> <p>This thorough collection of van Gogh's letters has been assembled with an artful eye and sensitivity to the artist's thinking. The result is an atypical take on Vincent van Gogh that avoids putting too much stress on his troubled mental state and too much straining by the editor to shape a narrative out of van Gogh's epistolary clues. Instead, we see the thoughtful and contemplative side of this creative genius, as well as his concern for the impact his art and life had on those people closest to him.</p>
Tuesday, October 20, 2009 at 6pm	<u>Lulu Meets God and Doubts Him</u>	Danielle Ganek	<p>Mia McMurray, assistant to Simon Pryce, a medium-level art dealer, ushers readers into the Soho gallery scene as they launch a show by Jeffrey Finelli, who is unknown but extremely talented. His major piece provides the novel's title. On opening night, Finelli is hit by a taxi and dies. Demand for his pieces skyrockets, and niece Lulu becomes part of a world she never wanted to know. Ganek portrays hangers-on, wannabes, nouveau riche, powerhouse dealers, poseurs, and artists. As for Mia, a blocked painter, she wishes the shows were hers, and her accurate though cynical observations reflect both her dissatisfaction and her intellectual acuity. Lulu becomes the darling, finding her place in this crazy scene. Mia, despite the lies and backbiting, not only survives but also finds a new path. Former <i>Woman's Day</i> editor and art collector Ganek has written a debut that reads like an amusing fairy tale as it offers a view into a world few readers are likely to have experienced.</p>
Tuesday, November 17, 2009 at 6pm	<u>Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling</u>	Ross King	<p>Almost 500 years after Michelangelo Buonarroti frescoed the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome, the site still attracts throngs of visitors and is considered one of the artistic masterpieces of the world. <i>Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling</i> unveils the story behind the art's making, a story rife with all the drama of a modern-day soap opera. The temperament of the day was dictated by the politics of the papal court, a corrupt and powerful office steeped in controversy; Pope Julius II even had a</p>

			<p>nickname, "Il Papa Terrible," to prove it. Along with his violent outbursts and warmongering, Pope Julius II took upon himself to restore the Sistine Chapel and pretty much intimidated Michelangelo into painting the ceiling even though the artist considered himself primarily a sculptor and was particularly unfamiliar with the temperamental art of fresco. Along with technical difficulties, personality conflicts, and money troubles, Michelangelo was plagued by health problems and competition in the form of the dashing and talented young painter Raphael. Author Ross King offers an in-depth analysis of the complex historical background that led to the magnificence that is the Sistine Chapel ceiling along with detailed discussion of some of the ceiling's panels. King provides fabulous tidbits of information and weaves together a fascinating historical tale.</p>
<p>Tuesday, December 15, 2009 at 6pm</p>	<p><u>Burning Bright</u></p>	<p>Tracy Chevalier</p>	<p>Author of <i>Girl with a Pearl Earring</i>, set in the home/studio of Vermeer, and other novels, Chevalier turns in an oblique look at poet and painter William Blake (1757–1827). Following the accidental death of their middle son, the Kellaways, a Dorsetshire chair maker and family, arrive in London's Lambeth district during the anti-Jacobin scare of 1792. Thomas Kellaway talks his way into set design work for the amiable circus impresario Philip Astley, whose fireworks displays provide the same rallying point that the guillotine is providing in Paris. Astley's libertine horseman son, John, sets his sights on Kellaway's daughter, Maisie (an attention she rather demurely returns). Meanwhile, youngest surviving Kellaway boy Jem falls for poor, sexy firebrand Maggie Butterfield. Blake, who imagined heaven and hell as equally incandescent and earth as the point where the two worlds converge, is portrayed as a murky Friar Laurence figure whose task is to bind and loosen the skeins of young love going on around him—that is, until a Royalist mob intrudes into his garden to sound out his rather advanced views on liberty, equality and fraternity.</p>
<p>Tuesday, January 19, 2010 at 6pm</p>	<p><u>Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Reinvented Architecture</u></p>	<p>Ross King</p>	<p>Filippo Brunelleschi's design for the dome of the cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence remains one of the most towering achievements of Renaissance architecture. Completed in 1436, the dome remains a remarkable feat of design and engineering. Its span of more than 140 feet exceeds St Paul's in London and St Peter's in Rome, and even outdoes the Capitol in Washington, D.C., making it the largest dome ever constructed using bricks and mortar. The story of its creation and its brilliant but "hot-tempered" creator is told in Ross King's delightful <i>Brunelleschi's Dome</i>. Both dome and architect offer King plenty of rich material. The story of the dome goes back to 1296, when work began on the cathedral, but it was only in 1420, when Brunelleschi won a competition over his bitter rival Lorenzo Ghiberti to design the daunting cupola, that work began in earnest. King weaves an engrossing tale from the political intrigue, personal jealousies, dramatic setbacks, and sheer inventive brilliance that led to the</p>

			<p>paranoid Filippo, "who was so proud of his inventions and so fearful of plagiarism," finally seeing his dome completed only months before his death. King argues that it was Brunelleschi's improvised brilliance in solving the problem of suspending the enormous cupola in bricks and mortar (painstakingly detailed with precise illustrations) that led him to "succeed in performing an engineering feat whose structural daring was without parallel." He tells a compelling, informed story, ranging from discussions of the construction of the bricks, mortar, and marble that made up the dome, to its subsequent use as a scientific instrument by the Florentine astronomer Paolo Toscanelli.</p>
Tuesday, February 16, 2010 at 6pm	<u>I Am Madame X</u>	Gioia Diliberto	<p>Mystery is often more alluring than knowledge. A fictional memoir of the legendary American-born beauty Virginie Gautreau, the subject of John Singer Sargent's famous 1884 painting, <i>Portrait of Madame X</i>, Gioia Diliberto's <i>I Am Madame X</i> risks dashing cold water on one of the loveliest and most persistent mysteries in Western art history: what the model is thinking. Following in the footsteps of Tracy Chevalier's <i>Girl With A Pearl Earring</i>, though with much more historical documentation at her disposal, Diliberto gives voice to a woman whose memory rests on this single painting. A gem of Belle Époque Paris, Virginie Gautreau had fled Louisiana with her mother during the Civil War. Married at a young age to a French banker, she attracted every kind of attention with her unusual beauty and her daring fashion sense. Her affairs were widely whispered about. Diliberto presents a vivid picture of Virginie's life and times, and brings to life one model's troubled but stimulating relationship with the artist who immortalized her.</p>
Tuesday, March 16, 2010 at 6pm	<u>The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History</u>	Robert Edsel	<p>At the same time Adolf Hitler was attempting to take over the western world, his armies were methodically seeking and hoarding the finest art treasures in Europe. The Fuehrer had begun cataloguing the art he planned to collect as well as the art he would destroy: "degenerate" works he despised.</p> <p>In a race against time, behind enemy lines, often unarmed, a special force of American and British museum directors, curators, art historians, and others, called the Monuments Men, risked their lives scouring Europe to prevent the destruction of thousands of years of culture.</p> <p>Focusing on the eleven-month period between D-Day and V-E Day, this fascinating account follows six Monuments Men and their impossible mission to save the world's great art from the Nazis.</p>
Tuesday, April 20, 2010 at 6pm	<u>Keeping the World Away</u>	Margaret Foster	<p>Based on an actual painting, <i>The Corner of the Artist's Room in Paris</i> by Gwen John, Forster's novel recounts the history of how the painting came to be and imagines its effect on the women who have owned it. The story begins with Gwen herself, an independent, intelligent, and spirited artist. She loses herself in a passionate affair with the sculptor Rodin, and as the years pass and his visits become less and less frequent, she does the one</p>

			<p>thing she knows best--she paints a picture that represents the woman her lover wished Gwen could be: quiet, serene, and content. Gwen gives the painting to a friend and so launches its journey into the hands of several women across different countries and generations. Writing beautifully and seamlessly weaving each woman's story into the one before, Forster gives the painting a life of its own, evoking passion, yearning, and even hope in the women who possess it. This is a lovely and compelling work of literary art.</p>
<p>Tuesday, May 18, 2010 at 6pm</p>	<p><u>7 Days in the Art World</u></p>	<p>Sarah Thornton</p>	<p>The art market has been booming. Museum attendance is surging. More people than ever call themselves artists. Contemporary art has become a mass entertainment, a luxury good, a job description, and, for some, a kind of alternative religion. In a series of beautifully paced narratives, Sarah Thornton investigates the drama of a Christie's auction, the workings in Takashi Murakami's studios, the elite at the Basel Art Fair, the eccentricities of <i>Artforum</i> magazine, the competition behind an important art prize, life in a notorious art-school seminar, and the wonderland of the Venice Biennale. She reveals the new dynamics of creativity, taste, status, money, and the search for meaning in life. A judicious and juicy account of the institutions that have the power to shape art history, based on hundreds of interviews with high-profile players, Thornton's entertaining ethnography will change the way you look at contemporary culture.</p>
<p>June, July and August no meeting – summer book TBD later</p>			