

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to offer this reference letter for Rina Gitlin Begun, former Docent of the Art Institute of Chicago. Rina was a member of most recent class of docents-in-training, and matriculated into the program in December 2013. While I was very sad to see Rina move away from Chicago and our museum, I am pleased to be able to support her move to another institution, as she has myriad talents and skills to offer.

Entrance into the Art Institute's Docent Program is competitive. Rina was selected from among 80 or so candidates to take her spot in this 30-person class. Diversity was a goal of ours as we assembled this cohort, and Rina brought with her not only a background in Art History but fluency in multiple languages and experience living and working internationally. On top of that, she immediately presented herself as warm, passionate about art and education, and a life-long learner, the key ingredients for being a docent at this museum.

It may be helpful to understand the commitment entailed in being a volunteer educator at the Art Institute to assess Rina's passion for and commitment to this work. The first two semesters of docent training comprise twice-weekly seminars (three hours each), in which we provide a foundation in: Art History through the museum's collection, museum education pedagogy, research and writing skills, and child development. In the third semester, docents-in-training participate in a once-weekly seminar that extends these areas of inquiry and also work with a veteran docent mentor to facilitate tours for K-12 student groups. Being mentored entails a gradual release of responsibility, with the docent-in-training taking on a more leading role in touring over time. In addition, class members research objects in the collection and write papers (comprised of research and lesson plans). Despite the substantial time commitment and effort required to complete the process, Rina—with a travelling husband, four children, and a life outside the museum—committed fully to this course. I was consistently impressed with her perseverance, thoughtfulness, and passion. In this work, she brought together her academic interests with her nurturing character in ways that heretofore I do not believe she thought were possible.

We were so pleased to have her matriculate into the Docent Program with her classmates in December 2013 and to begin touring independently. After three semesters, Rina had emerged as a skillful educator, with creative approaches to works of art and an engaging manner that had her student groups immersed in conversation. Imagine our dismay, however, in learning soon after that her family needed to relocate to Florida! Such is life. Rina was only just beginning to fully

realize all the hard work she had put into becoming a docent here. I am hopeful that she will be able to find a place to deploy her talents in her new hometown. Whether researching, working with the public, or fulfilling some other aspect of museum or cultural work, Rina is well equipped to undertake the intellectual pursuit, work collaboratively on a team, and engage people of all ages. She is warm, creative, passionate educator, and I encourage you to consider her for a position within your institution. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to learn more about Rina.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robin Schnur". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Robin Schnur
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