

Laura Leonard

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Professional Summary

A dedicated and dynamic museum professional with experience in exhibition development, research, and project management. Adept at curating a variety of scale projects, from gallery displays to traveling exhibitions, while offering fresh perspectives on American art and material culture. Passionate about fostering public engagement, works collaboratively to offer enriching programs and interpretative elements to appeal to wide-ranging audiences. Deeply committed to expanding narratives in American art by promoting inclusivity and accessibility to create meaningful connections between art, audiences, and the broader cultural landscape.

Education

MA, History of Art, Savannah College of Art and Design, 2022, Summa Cum Laude

Thesis: "Reconsidering the Influence, Inclusion, and Legacy of the Women of Black Mountain College"

Advisor: Professor Scott Budzynski, PhD

BA, Studio Art, Emory & Henry University, Emory, VA, 2016

Kappa Pi International Art Honor Society

Study Abroad, Studio Art Centers International, Florence, Italy, 2015

Advisor: Professor Charles Goolsby

Area of Specialization: American Art, Modern and Contemporary

Continued Education

Comprehensive Appraisal Studies Program

Appraisers Association of America, New York, NY, 2025–2026

Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) compliant through December 12, 2027

Experience

Art Bridges Project Coordinator and Curatorial Researcher

Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, December 2022–present

Supported by the Art Bridges Foundation, this position is a multi-year, multi-phase, cross-regional collection sharing partnership between the Wadsworth and three partner museums: the Columbia Museum of Art, Mobile Museum of Art, and Montgomery Museum of Fine Art.

Curatorial responsibilities

Working with the Wadsworth's Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture, develop exhibition content for review by the Art Bridges Cohort Program Officers

Collaboratively write interpretation materials, object labels, and marketing materials

Conduct research on artworks to present current scholarly information and expanded interpretation, for objects at the Wadsworth Atheneum and at each partner museum

Write educational gallery guides to further themes and concepts of each exhibition

Liaise with Wadsworth registrar to budget and address logistics for artwork display needs, conservation treatments, and new photography

Assist with educational programming and interpretation

Devise content and materials to support docent training at each partner museum
Lead curator talks for a variety of groups to directly engage visitors with artworks and exhibitions

Administrative responsibilities

Managing budgets, tracking expenses, preparing grant and financial reports for the Museum CEO and Director as well as the Art Bridges Cohort Program Officers
Create efficient workflows to streamline communication among the four partners
Oversee project development by coordinating meetings, setting agendas, and taking notes
Schedule, plan, and coordinate annual convenings of the American South Consortium, Art Bridges Cohort Program: Hartford, CT April 26–28, 2023; Montgomery, AL, January 25–27, 2024; Columbia, SC, June 19–22, 2024

Independent Curator

Self-Employed, August 2025–present

Curatorial responsibilities

Research and develop exhibition framework based on project objectives set forth by the client
Select artworks from the client’s collection and address conservation needs for display
Identify and request permission to use relevant artworks in other collections
Review archives, digitize relevant documents, and implement museum quality storage solutions when possible
Draft and finalize all text for exhibition and catalogue, build focused narratives to connect the client’s audience with exhibition content

Project management

Draft project budget for client approval, track project spending and maintain accurate records
Coordinate with various third-party vendors, including art handlers, designers, photographers, editors, and custom product manufacturers
Work with design group to produce exhibition’s graphic identity and printed catalogue
Organize regular meetings with the client, provide meeting agendas, take notes, and follow up with next steps to maintain timely progress

Bid Catcher

Everard Auctions and Appraisals, Savannah, GA 2022
Assisted auctioneer by relaying phone bids from potential buyers

Docent

SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA 2021
Art museum at Savannah College of Art and Design
Shared information with visitors about exhibitions on view, such as Christian Siriano “People are People,” and “Elizabeth Catlet: Points of Contact”

Art Consultant + Broadcasting Supervisor

Benjamin Walls Gallery, Asheville, NC, May 2019–December 2020
Gallery showing large-scale fine-art prints of nature and wildlife photography by Benjamin Walls.
Promoted to a managerial role after six months for exceeding sales goals, demonstrating leadership, and achieving measurable success in business growth and market expansion
Advise clientele on acquisition and display of artworks
Curate rotating gallery installations

Planned and managed fundraising events for environmental conservation charities
Coordinate logistics of special events and VIP receptions
Create protocols for traveling exhibitions to expand the client base
Oversaw company branding and design across all physical and digital marketing platforms
Developing company processes such as traveling exhibition protocol and daily summary reports
Managed daily operations including training new employees, tracking sales, sales prospecting, and deepening client engagement

Intern

William King Museum of Art, Abingdon, VA, 2015–2016

Founded in 1989 and housed in a historic 1913 former school, the WKMA is a non-profit art museum and Virginia's only nationally accredited museum west of Roanoke.

Worked under curator to prepare objects for special exhibitions, such as "From These Hills," a biennial exhibition to showcase contemporary artwork from the Southern Appalachian Highlands

Gained understanding of registration processes, including receiving and condition reporting for loaned artworks, permanent collection inventory and storage, and gallery preparation

Publications and Media

Upcoming: Leonard, Laura. *Portraits of Hopkins*. New Haven, CT: Hopkins School. Anticipated September 2026. Exhibition catalogue to be published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name.

Leonard, Laura and Robert Taplin. *Peter Waite: Social Memory, Paintings 1987–2025*. Hartford, CT: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, November 6, 2025. Exhibition catalogue published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name.

Leonard, Laura with Erin Monroe. *(Un)Settled: The Landscape in American Art*. Hartford, CT: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2024. Illustrated essay published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name.

Leonard, Laura. "Cultivating a Cross-Regional Partnership." *Inside SEMC* 49 (Summer 2024): 69–73.
https://issuu.com/insidesemc/docs/inside_semc_-_summer_2024

Barron, Drew, with **Laura Leonard**, co-producer and guest speaker. "The (Un)Settled Podcast." Five-episode subseries on the *Binder Podcast*, produced for the Columbia Museum of Art, January 2024–June 2025. Audio and video available on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and iHeart.

Exhibitions

Upcoming: "Portraits of Hopkins," Independent Curator, Hopkins School, New Haven, CT, May 2026. Exhibition catalogue.

"Peter Waite: Social Memory, Paintings 1987–2025," Curator, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, November 6, 2025–March 15, 2026. Exhibition catalogue.

"(Un)Settled: The Landscape in American Art," Co-curator with Erin Monroe, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, AL, January 29–April 14, 2024; Columbia Museum of Art, SC, June 15–September 8, 2024; Mobile Museum of Art, AL, October 12, 2024–February 2, 2025; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, June 12–September 14, 2025. Illustrated essay.

“Yvonne Wells: Stitched Stories,” Co-curator with Erin Monroe, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, April 11–August 11, 2024

“Dusti Bongé: Mississippi Modernist,” Co-curator with Erin Monroe, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, November 16, 2023–March 17, 2024. Brochure.

“Thomas Day: Southern Entrepreneur and Free Person of Color,” Co-curator with Erin Monroe, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, June 29–October 22, 2023

“Alexander Calder: Collaborative Creations,” Co-curator with Erin Monroe, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, March 21–June 4, 2023

Selected works from Benjamin Walls Gallery, Co-organizer with Jenny Readling, presented at “Art of Adventure: A Weekend of Art & Film,” Freshfields Village, Kiawah Island, SC, February 14–17, 2020

“Reflections: Exploring Humanity Through Modernity,” Co-curator, McGlothlin Center for the Arts, Emory & Henry University, Emory, VA, 2016

Professional Development

Upcoming: Guest Speaker, “Creativity in Curatorial Practice,” Kathwari Spring Seminars, Western Connecticut State University, Danbury, CT, April 8, 2026

Spring seminar series hosted by the Kathwari Honors Program exploring design and creative thinking in business management, historical analysis, anthropological studies, curatorial practice, and musical composition.

Juror, Clinton Art Society Winter Juried Member Exhibition, Andrews Memorial Town Hall, Clinton, CT, January 2026

Professional display, “E&H Alumni Exhibition,” McGlothlin Center for the Arts, Emory & Henry University, Emory, VA, October 6, 2025–February 28, 2026

Exhibition celebrating the diverse outcomes of Emory & Henry’s art department graduates, featuring twelve alumni from 1998–2025

Juror, Guilford Art League 77th Annual Juried Exhibition and Sale, The Gallery at Guilford Art Center, Guilford, CT, September 2025

Panelist, “Building (Art) Bridges: Insights into Museum Collaboration,” New England Museum Association Conference, Newport, RI, November 2024

Panelist, “Building (Art) Bridges: Lessons Learned from a Four-Year, Four Museum Collaboration,” Southeastern Museum Conference, Baton Rouge, LA, October 2024

Guest Curator Talk, “Spotlight: Alexander Calder,” Mobile Museum of Art, AL, September 2023

Guest Speaker, Savannah College of Art and Design, Virtual, May 2023

Presented research on pedagogical and artistic influence of Mary Caroline Richards at Black Mountain College to a graduate seminar led by Professor Ariane Noël de Tilly, PhD

Speaker, “The Meaning in Materials: Exploring the Development of Traditional Appalachian Handicraft,”
Paper presented at the Appalachian Studies Conference, Athens, OH, March 2023

Awards

Thesis Proposal Award, Spring/Summer 2022

“Reconsidering the Influence, Inclusion, and Legacy of the Women of Black Mountain College”
Kappa Pi International Art Honor Society, 2015

Volunteer

Member, Junior League of Hartford, CT 2023–2024

Festival Volunteer, National Storytelling Festival, Jonesborough, TN 2022

Volunteer Docent, The Parthenon, Nashville, TN 2017

Student Representative, Art Exhibitions Committee, Emory & Henry University, Emory, VA 2015–2016

Professional Skills

Proposal development (exhibition, project, grant), public speaking, team and project management, data recording and analysis, grant reporting, event coordination, company operations development.

Software Proficiency

Collections Management Software: Argus, TMS, Filemaker Pro

Adobe Photoshop, LightRoom, InDesign, Premier Pro, Acrobat

Microsoft Office Suite, Google Workspace, Zoom Workplace

Website and application platforms: CultureConnect, Wix, WordPress

Professional Affiliations

American Alliance of Museums

Appraisers Association of America

College Art Association of America

New England Museum Conference

Southeastern Museum Conference

Curatorial portfolio and references available upon request.