Laura Leonard

New York City, NY • (423) 306-1819 • Website
lauraleonard0414@gmail.com • LinkedIn

Curator | American Art | Exhibition Development & Research

Curator and art historian specializing in American art and material culture, with experience developing exhibitions, conducting scholarly and collections research, and translating complex ideas into engaging material for diverse audiences.

Proven ability to advance exhibitions from research and conceptual development through object selection, interpretation, catalogue writing, production, installation, and public programming. Expert in cross-institutional collaboration, project management, budget administration, collections care, and stakeholder engagement across museums and cultural organizations. Published writer and presenter with a demonstrated record of curatorial practice spanning museum exhibitions, traveling exhibitions, academic research, and public-facing programs.

Areas of Expertise

Curatorial Practice | American Art | Art History | Painting & Sculpture | Material Culture
Exhibition & Catalogue Development | Exhibition Interpretation | Scholarly Research & Writing | Collections Research
Project Management | Museum Collections | Cross-Institutional Collaboration | Traveling Exhibitions | Public Programs & Engagement

Professional Experience

Hopkins School | New Haven, CT
Independent Curator | 2025 to Present

Develop and lead the curatorial direction for *Portraits of Hopkins: A Gallery of Noteworthy Graduates, Educators, and Leaders (2027)*, an exhibition tracing the school's educational legacy through institutional portraits spanning the seventeenth century to the present. Research and develop the exhibition framework in alignment with institutional objectives, translating historical records into a focused curatorial narrative. Conduct archival research to support exhibition interpretation and catalogue development. Coordinate collections care including acquisition, framing, private and public collection loans, and display needs. Develop and manage the project budget, track expenditures, and maintain accurate financial records.

- Exhibition scheduled for presentation in the Schwartz Gallery and Keator Gallery, Spring 2027, with accompanying catalogue.
- Write and coordinate all exhibition and catalogue texts, while creating accessible narratives that connect audiences with the historical and cultural significance of the works presented.
- Select artworks from the school's collection and identify relevant works in external collections for reproduction and presentation.
- Assess conservation and display requirements for selected artworks and coordinate appropriate preparation for exhibition.
- Oversee student assistants in subject research and exhibition-content development while developing their proficiency in professional artwork handling, gallery installation, and curatorial oversight.
- Coordinate art handlers, designers, photographers, editors, and custom product manufacturers to advance exhibition and catalogue production.
- Partner with Stoltze Design Group to develop the exhibition's graphic identity and printed catalogue.
- Lead regular client meetings, prepared agendas, documented decisions, and coordinated follow-up actions to maintain project progress and timely delivery.

Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art | Hartford, CT
Art Bridges Project Coordinator & Curatorial Researcher | 2022 to 2026

Supported a multi-year, multi-phase, cross-regional collection-sharing partnership connecting the Wadsworth Atheneum with the Columbia Museum of Art (SC), Mobile Museum of Art (AL), and Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts (AL) through the Art Bridges Cohort Program. Conducted scholarly research on artworks across participating museum collections, incorporating current scholarship and expanded interpretation into exhibition development. Collaboratively authored object labels, interpretation materials, educational gallery guides, and marketing content for exhibitions presented across partner institutions. Maintained object records and organized project documentation

and archival materials to support exhibition planning and institutional continuity. Liaised with registrarial staff regarding exhibition budgets, artwork display requirements, conservation treatments, photography, and related logistics. Coordinated project meetings, established agendas, documented discussions, and followed up on action items to maintain progress across multiple workstreams.

- Partnered with the Krieble Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture to develop exhibition scope and content for a series of collaborative exhibitions centered on an expansive view of American art through the inclusion of regional art and material culture.
- Initiated a two-phase exhibition model that was subsequently adapted by the Art Bridges Foundation for future cohort programs.
- Drove educational programming and interpretation designed to deepen visitor engagement with exhibition themes and objects.
- Led docent training and developed training materials for partner museums for consistent and informed interpretation of exhibitions.
- Delivered public talks on and off-site, co-produced a podcast series, and led community programs to engage audiences with permanent collection objects and special exhibition content.
- Served as courier for traveling artworks, overseeing their safe delivery and proper handling at partner museums.
- Managed project budgets, tracked expenses, and prepared biannual grant and financial reports for museum leadership and Art Bridges Cohort Program officers.
- Developed efficient workflows to streamline communication and coordination across four participating museums.
- Planned and coordinated travel logistics, and professional development activities for annual American South Consortium convenings in Hartford, Montgomery, and Columbia, bringing together participating institutions across the four-year collaboration.

SCAD Museum of Art | Savannah, GA
Docent | 2021

Engaged museum visitors through exhibition interpretation and discussion of works on view, including exhibitions featuring fashion designer Christian Siriano and graphic artist and sculptor Elizabeth Catlett.

- Communicated exhibition concepts and artwork context to diverse audiences in an accessible and engaging manner.

Benjamin Walls Gallery | Asheville, NC
Art Consultant & Broadcasting Supervisor | 2019 to 2020

Advised clients on artwork acquisition and display, applying knowledge of award-winning fine-art photography and audience preferences to guide purchasing decisions. Planned and coordinated fundraising events supporting environmental conservation charities, including logistics for special events and VIP receptions. Managed daily gallery operations, including employee training, sales tracking, prospecting, and client engagement. Developed protocols for traveling exhibitions to expand the gallery's client base and strengthen exhibition operations.

- Promoted to a managerial role after six months based on performance, sales achievement, leadership, and contribution to business growth and market expansion.
- Curated rotating gallery installations and supported the presentation of large-scale fine-art prints with a keen focus on nature and wildlife photography.
- Oversaw company branding and design across physical and digital marketing platforms.
- Developed operational processes, including traveling exhibition protocols and daily summary reporting.
- Contributed to business development through sales performance, client relationship management, and operational improvements.

Additional Experience: Bid Catcher at Everard Auctions and Appraisals | *Intern at William King Museum of Art*

Selected Curatorial & Exhibition Experience

- *Portraits of Hopkins: A Gallery of Noteworthy Graduates, Educators, and Leaders* | Independent Curator
  - Hopkins School, New Haven, CT – Apr 2027
  - Upcoming exhibition and catalogue
- *Peter Waite: Social Memory, Paintings 1987–2025*
  - Curator | Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT – Nov 2025 to Mar 2026
  - Exhibition catalogue published in conjunction with the exhibition
- *(Un)Settled: The Landscape in American Art*
  - Co-Curator with Erin Monroe
  - Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, AL – Jan to Apr 2024
  - Columbia Museum of Art, SC – Jun 15 to Sep 2024 | Mobile Museum of Art, AL – Oct 2024 to Feb 2025
  - Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT – Jun to Sept 2025
  - Illustrated essay published in conjunction with the exhibition
- *Yvonne Wells: Stitched Stories*
  - Co-Curator with Erin Monroe | Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art – Apr to Aug 2024
- *Dusti Bongé: Mississippi Modernist*
  - Co-Curator with Erin Monroe | Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art – Nov 2023 to Mar 2024
  - Exhibition brochure
- *Thomas Day: Southern Entrepreneur and Free Person of Color*
  - Co-Curator with Erin Monroe | Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art – Jun to Oct 2023
- *Alexander Calder: Collaborative Creations*
  - Co-Curator with Erin Monroe | Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art – Mar to Jun 2023
- *Selected Works from Benjamin Walls Gallery*
  - Co-Organizer with Jenny Readling | Art of Adventure: A Weekend of Art & Film, Freshfields Village, Kiawah Island, SC – Feb 2020
- *Reflections: Exploring Humanity Through Modernity*
  - Co-Curator | McGlothlin Center for the Arts, Emory & Henry University, Emory, VA – 2016

Selected Publications

- Leonard, Laura. *Portraits of Hopkins: A Gallery of Noteworthy Graduates, Educators, and Leaders*. New Haven, CT: Hopkins School. Forthcoming Apr 2027.
- Leonard, Laura and Robert Taplin. *Peter Waite: Social Memory, Paintings 1987 to 2025*. Hartford, CT: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2025.
- Leonard, Laura with Erin Monroe. *Unsettled: The Landscape in American Art*. Hartford, CT: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2024. Illustrated essay published in conjunction with the exhibition.
- Leonard, Laura. "Cultivating a Cross-Regional Partnership." *Inside SEMC 49* (Summer 2024): 69–73.

Selected Presentations, Panels & Media

- Guest Speaker, "Creativity in Curatorial Practice," Kathwari Spring Seminars, Western Connecticut State University, Danbury, CT | Apr 2026

- Panelist, "Building (Art) Bridges: Lessons Learned from a Four-Year, Four Museum Collaboration," Southeastern Museum Conference, Baton Rouge, LA | Oct 2024
- Panelist, "Building (Art) Bridges: Insights into Museum Collaboration," New England Museum Association Conference, Newport, RI | Nov 2024
- Co-Producer & Guest Speaker with Drew Baron, "The (Un)Settled Podcast," five-episode subseries on the Binder Podcast, produced for the Columbia Museum of Art | Jan 2024 to Jun 2025
- Guest Curator Talk, "Spotlight: Alexander Calder," Mobile Museum of Art, Mobile, AL | Sep 2023
- Guest Speaker, Savannah College of Art and Design | May 2023. Presented research on the pedagogical and artistic influence of Mary Caroline Richards at Black Mountain College.
- Speaker, "The Meaning in Materials: Exploring the Development of Traditional Appalachian Handicraft," Appalachian Studies Conference, Athens, OH | Mar 2023

Education

Master of Arts, History of Art (S*umma Cum Laude)* | Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah, GA | 2022
Thesis: "Reconsidering the Influence, Inclusion, and Legacy of the Women of Black Mountain College" | *Advisor: Professor Scott Budzynski, PhD Area of Specialization: American Art, Modern and Contemporary*

Bachelor of Arts, Studio Art | Emory & Henry University, Emory, VA | 2016
Kappa Pi International Art Honor Society | *Advisor: Professor Charles Goolsby*

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

Credentials

Comprehensive Appraisal Studies Program

Appraisers Association of America | New York, NY | 2025 to 2026

USPAP compliant through December 2027

Professional Development

- Juror, Clinton Art Society Winter Juried Member Exhibition | Andrews Memorial Town Hall, Clinton, CT | Jan 2026
- Professional Display, "E&H Alumni Exhibition" | McGlothlin Center for the Arts, Emory & Henry University | Oct 2025 to Feb 2026
- Juror, Guilford Art League 77th Annual Juried Exhibition and Sale | The Gallery at Guilford Art Center, Guilford, CT | Sep 2025

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

Professional Affiliations

American Alliance of Museums | Appraisers Association of America | ArtTable | College Art Association

New England Museum Association | Southeastern Museum Conference

Technical & Collections Systems

Collections Management: Argus | TMS | FileMaker Pro

Adobe Creative Cloud: Photoshop | Lightroom | InDesign | Premiere Pro | Acrobat

Productivity & Collaboration: Microsoft Office Suite | Google Workspace | Zoom Workplace

Web & Exhibition Platforms: CultureConnect | Wix | WordPress

Volunteer & Community Engagement

Member, Junior League of Hartford, CT | 2023 to 2024

Festival Volunteer, National Storytelling Festival | Jonesborough, TN | 2022

Volunteer Docent, The Parthenon | Nashville, TN | 2017

Student Representative, Art Exhibitions Committee | Emory & Henry University | 2015 to 2016

Curatorial portfolio and references available upon request