



## ART HISTORY PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS

### Denise Laurin Visual Art

All presentations are researched, written and delivered by Denise Laurin, Fine Artist, Educator and M.A., Art History. The visuals that go along with each presentation are designed to be visually compelling and intellectually approachable. Each talk includes a question/discussion period at the end and a handout for participants at the conclusion. Some talks include special add-ons with estimates provided. These talks are appropriate for adult audiences and can be scheduled throughout the year, although some are designed for specific holidays or seasons. Denise brings her unique life experience as a professor of art, design and art history, fine artist and former graphic designer to her presentations. Please inquire for pricing: [denise@deniselaurinvisualart.com](mailto:denise@deniselaurinvisualart.com).

### AFRICAN AMERICAN ART: FROM OPPRESSION TO FREE EXPRESSION

This presentation explores art that protested slavery in the Antebellum era, harmful art that perpetuated stereotypes, and African American artists who defied these stereotypes. Denise shares highlights from the full flowering of African American art in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, followed by contemporary examples of African American art.

*This presentation is an ideal event for Black History Month in February or any time of year.*

## AGAINST ALL ODDS: WOMEN WHO TRIUMPHED IN THE MALE-DOMINATED WORLD OF ART

Women have always been active in the visual arts. For centuries, the men who dominated the discipline of art history often believed women to be inferior artists and did not include them in their writings. Join Denise Laurin for this discussion that features a sampling of the gifted women who triumphed over the status quo and who emerged as equals in aesthetic and technical skill, despite the obstacles they were forced to overcome.

*This presentation can be given at any time of the year or during March, Women's History Month.*

## THE AMARNA PERIOD: A REVOLUTION IN EGYPTIAN ART AND RELIGION

For armchair Egyptologists and everyone who is curious about the ancient past, this presentation sheds light on a brief period in Egyptian history in which monotheism was introduced for the first time in human history. Through images of ancient artwork, Denise Laurin will weave a fascinating story of artistic and social revolution, and the King and Queen who led it: *Akhenaten and Nefertiti*.

*This presentation can be given at any time of the year. Special add-on: Write your name in hieroglyphics art project. Inquire for pricing.*

## ANCIENT ORIGINS OF CHRISTIAN ART

Where and when did Christian imagery begin? How did the Christian images that are so familiar to us evolve? In a period when paganism and Christianity coexisted, did older belief systems influence the new? This presentation seeks to reveal the ancient origins of Christian symbolism and provide a heightened understanding of early Christian art. Denise Laurin will share ancient depictions, some the earliest ever found, of the Madonna and Child, the Crucifixion, and more.

*This presentation can be given at any time of the year or coordinated with major Christian holidays.*

## ART NOW: THE GLOBAL PRESENT

The globalization of culture has had a profound impact on art. Contemporary art forms forged in the 20th century such as installation, conceptual and performance art have spread around the world. Digital art and AI (artificial intelligence) are new directions that have made an impact on 21st century art as well. In this presentation, we will explore contemporary art from all over the globe that demonstrates the many directions of art today.

*This presentation can be given at any time of the year.*

## ARTISTS OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

One of the most creatively expressive eras in American history, The Harlem Renaissance was the first Afrocentric cultural movement in American History. Encompassing literature, music, philosophy, and visual art, this presentation focuses on major visual artists whose work has influenced African American art through the present day. Art historian Denise Laurin spent a month living in Harlem and being inspired by the cultural influences she found there. This talk focuses on the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance in 1917 through the next generation of artists concluding in the 1970s.

*This talk can be given throughout the year or during Black History Month in February.*

## ARTISTIC “ISMS” OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Western artists began to experiment as the result of social, political and technological upheavals. The art world was splintered into various “isms,” or a vast array of styles. In this presentation, art historian Denise Laurin provides clues for recognizing these various styles:

Neoclassicism

Romanticism

Realism

Impressionism

Post Impressionism

*This talk can be given throughout the year.*

## COUNTERCULTURE: THE BEATLES AND ART IN THE 1960S

Because their impact was felt primarily in music, no books *specifically* dedicated to The Beatles and their relationship with the art world of the 1960s exists. In this compelling and meticulously researched visual presentation, Denise Laurin, M.A. art history and life-long Beatlemaniac, takes a rare look at the artistic thread that runs through their story. Denise will connect the dots between film, fashion, drug culture, activism, spirituality and art movements such as pop, psychedelic, and conceptual art with the Fab Four. The presentation includes carefully curated slides, video and sound. *Optional:* Have attendees come dressed in 60s attire.

*Special Add-on: Include a raffle for Beatle memorabilia (i.e., mug or poster). Item(s) chosen based on your budget. This discussion is appropriate for any time of year, and especially February to celebrate their appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show, or August to commemorate their last concert in the USA.*

## DARK ART: HAUNTING IMAGERY ACROSS TIME

Prepare yourself to experience themes of horror, gore and the supernatural in art. Denise Laurin, M.A., art history will lead the discussion that includes the work of a diverse range of artists and cultures such as Caravaggio, Fuseli, Goya and Redon. She will highlight the contextual circumstances that led these artists to create “dark art.”

*This presentation is perfect for October or can be presented any time of year.*

## EAST MEETS WEST: CROSS-CULTURAL INFLUENCES

European interest in Non-Western art was first stimulated by trade with the East in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. By the mid Nineteenth century, many Non-Western approaches to art, including Japanese, Chinese, and African, had found their way into the vocabulary of

European art. Similarly, Western approaches to art including linear perspective and spatial volume began to influence non-Western cultures. In this presentation, Denise Laurin, M.A. art history, will explore prominent examples of this cross-cultural mix of artistic styles and learn how globalism contributed to far-reaching change in the Western art aesthetic. *This presentation is perfect for May (Asian American Month), or any time of year.*

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY, LEONARDO!

In this visual and sound celebration of the life of Leonardo da Vinci, Denise Laurin, M.A. art history, will probe the life circumstances that contributed to making Leonardo *Leonardo*. From his insatiable curiosity to his personal beauty, we will unlock the components of his special genius.

Optional: *Birthday Cake. Estimate provided depending on expected attendance.*

*Ideal for April programming, as the Maestro's birthday is April 15.*

## HATSHEPSUT: THE WOMAN WHO RULED AS PHARAOH

Cleopatra may be the most famous woman of ancient Egypt, but far more significant and controversial was Hatshepsut, a rare female pharaoh who presided over Egypt from 1479-1458 B.C.E. during the golden age of the New Kingdom. Her unorthodox reign was fully accepted by a flourishing Egypt whose trade routes were expanded and whose artistic creativity is among one of the richest in Egyptian history.

In this presentation by art historian Denise Laurin you will learn about this fascinating and powerful woman, her magnificent mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri, and the rich artistic production she inspired at the Temple of Luxor.

*Ideal for Women's History Month programming or any time of year.*

## HISTORY OF FASHION IN ART

What did people wear before photography documented every aspect of life? We can find answers to this question in the art left behind by these cultures and eras. Often, modern fashion designers are influenced by art, and art and fashion play off each other. In this sight and sound presentation, Denise Laurin, M.A. Art History reveals how art informs us about fashion from earlier times and how fashion and art intertwine in our modern world. We will look at examples of clothing styles, accessories, jewelry, and even hairstyles in this 75-minute walk down the runway of time through fashion. *This presentation can be presented any time of year.*

## HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

In this “snapshot” of the rise of photography, art historian Denise Laurin will share key scientific discoveries that freed 19<sup>th</sup> century and modern photographers to explore the medium’s full potential as an art form and as a documentary tool for communication and social change. While not a comprehensive history, the presentation contains pivotal images that represent the work of significant individuals in the advancement of the scientific, artistic, and documentary aspects of this most ubiquitous of mediums. *This presentation can be given any time of year.*

## IMAGINARY JOURNEY TO GIVERNY: MONET— ARTIST AND GARDNER

For anyone who has never been to Monet’s garden and even those who have, this presentation transports attendees to the quaint town of Giverny where so much of Monet’s inspiration originated. We will discuss the artist’s home and gardens and learn about Monet as both passionate horticulturist and innovative painter. Through a carefully curated visual presentation of photographs, artwork, sound, and virtual tours, Denise Laurin, M.A. art history, will guide attendees to learn about the design of the garden, the plants that grew there, and the artworks they inspired.

The presentation is approximately one hour and thirty minutes in length. Optional: *French Pastries and/or French wine tasting. Estimate provided based on number of expected guests. Ideal for Spring, Summer and Fall programming. This presentation can be presented any time of year.*

## IMAGINARY JOURNEY TO THE WHITE CITY: CHICAGO’S WORLD

### COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION

Time travel to 1893 Chicago to the site of the World Columbian Exposition in this sight and sound experience. Through vivid imagery and scholarly research, Denise Laurin, M.A. art history, describes what it was like to actually *be* there. She will focus on the architecture, art, and overall aesthetic of the event and the artists it inspired such as Walt Disney and Frank Lloyd Wright.

*Appropriate for any time of year, or specifically May 1- October 30, the time frame of the original fair in 1893.*

## THE LAST SUPPER

Art historian Denise Laurin's goal in this talk is to shed light on the origins of the commission for *The Last Supper* by Leonardo DaVinci. She will demonstrate his concept, the painting's psychological content as expressed through visual clues such as gesture and facial expression and explore how this Renaissance master achieved his vision through composition and medium.

*This presentation is deal for the Easter season but appropriate any time of year.*

## PICTURING THE DIVINE

How do images of the Divine differ among the major religions of our planet? Can representations from other religious traditions inform us and contribute to our own understanding of God? Denise Laurin, M.A. art history will explore the symbolism embedded in artwork from the Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, and Christian faiths and thereby gain insight into and understanding of belief systems that differ from our own. *This presentation is appropriate for any time of year.*

## SECRETS OF THE SISTINE

Conspiracy theories abound in the 21st century, but did you know one exists for the making of the Sistine ceiling? Using scholarly sources, art historian Denise Laurin reveals the intrigue behind one of the greatest masterpieces in all Western art in four categories: the characters, the conspiracy, the commission, and the content. Even if you have been to the Sistine Chapel in person, this talk will illuminate your comprehension in a concise and understandable way. *This presentation can be given at any time of the year and can also coordinate with major Christian holidays.*

## SWEET HOME CHICAGO: OUR ARCHITECTURAL GEM

This presentation reveals the events culminating in Chicago's leading role in modern architecture and its place as a rare architectural gem on the international stage today. Art historian Denise Laurin will begin with the birth of the Chicago School and follow Chicago's architectural

progress to some of the newest buildings gracing Chicago’s magnificent skyline. *This presentation can be given at any time of the year.*

## THE MANY WAYS TO LOOK AT ART

Walking into a museum or gallery can be intimidating, but when we understand the language of art—the visual elements and the principles of design—our experience is greatly enhanced. In this discussion of the formal aspects of visual art, art historian Denise Laurin focuses on the tools the artist uses to create memorable works of art from color, line and perspective, to balance, contrast and emphasis. Prepare to feel more knowledgeable the next time you go to an art museum!

*This presentation can be given at any time of the year.*

## TWENTIETH CENTURY “ISMS”— 1900-1950

The 20th Century was a revolutionary time for art. With so many “isms” or movements, how can we differentiate them? In this presentation, Denise Laurin, M.A. art history, focuses on the most significant artists from this period and provides quintessential examples, artistic qualities, meaning and purpose for the following art movements. *This presentation can be given at any time of the year.*

- Fauvism
- Cubism
- Futurism
- German-Expressionism
- Dada
- Surrealism
- De Stijl
- Abstract-Expressionism



## UKIYO-E THE FLOATING WORLD OF JAPANESE PRINTS

Ukiyo-e literally translates *pictures of the floating world*, which refers to the licensed brothel and theatre districts in Japan's major cities during the Tokugawa period

In this sight and sound presentation, art historian Denise Laurin transports her audience to the magical confines of the *Yoshiwara* and discusses the history, process, and various genres of Ukiyo-e, including actor prints, courtesans, nightlife, landscapes, everyday life, and famous places.

*This presentation can be given any time of the year, or during the spring as a celebration of the Cherry Blossom Festival.*

## VISIONS OF LOVE

What is love? The ancient Greek language developed specific words to describe its myriad aspects. In this talk, art historian Denise Laurin presents selected works of art that evoke the concept of love in a variety of meanings: contented, unrequited, passionate and eternal love. The examples range from ancient to modern and come from both the Western and Non-Western traditions.

*This presentation is ideal for Valentine's Day programming and is appropriate for any time during the year.*

## WHAT IS A MASTERPIECE?

In this practical guide, art historian Denise Laurin discusses the criteria that art historians use to determine whether a work of art can be designated as a masterpiece. Several works of Western art that were considered a break from tradition in their day, and even controversial, are featured. The goal of this talk is to stimulate audience members to ask whether objective criteria for judging art exists, or alternatively, how to determine for ourselves what constitutes a masterpiece.

*This presentation can be given at any time of the year.*

Denise Laurin

Artist, Speaker

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**New presentations in development for 2025-26:**

*Decoding Mysterious Meanings: Symbolism in Painting*

*Feminism in the World of Art*

*Museum Highlights: The Frick Collection, New York*

*The Unbreakable Bond: Portrayals of Motherhood in Art*

*Monet and the Sea*

*Patriotism or Propaganda? The Politics of Art*

*Imaginary Journey to Ancient Pompeii*

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Former Adjunct Professor: Illinois Institute of Art-Chicago, Waubensee Community College, Sugar Grove, IL and Elgin Community College, Elgin, IL; AP Art History Instructor (Current) and Studio Art and Digital Photography Instructor (Former), The Beekman School, Private College Preparatory High School, New York, NY.

