



**THE
ART STUDENTS
LEAGUE**
OF NEW YORK

THE ART STUDENTS LEAGUE PRESENTS

The “Puritan Gladiator” and Us:

115 Years of Life Drawing and Censorship at The Art Students League of New York

(LINK)

Tuesday, August 3, 6 pm – 7 pm, Facebook LIVE



F.M. Howarth, Life Magazine, 1888

New York, NY: On August 3, 1906, newspapers across the United States published stories of a surprising police raid at The Art Students League of New York, during which magazines were seized and a young female clerk was arrested and imprisoned. Americans were used to reading about censorship campaigns aimed at sexual health information and pornography, but this time the subject of the raid was a student publication featuring reproductions of life drawings made by League students. The agent who orchestrated the arrest, Anthony Comstock, was an outsized figure later termed the nation’s “Puritan Gladiator.” Today, a new generation of Puritan gladiators is policing the Internet, removing images similar to those published by League students 115 years ago.

This coming August 3, Dr. Amy Werbel returns to The League to illuminate new dimensions in a topic the art historian has worked on throughout her career: the history of censorship in fine art. After a year of working remotely and presenting artwork largely online, the topic of censorship has taken on new meaning. As we barrel towards a future in which audiences increasingly engage with art on digital platforms, what can history tell us about the direction of art, censorship, artistic agency, and freedom of expression? Join us for an anniversary discussion of the raid on The League, and the differences and similarities between our past and present.



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Amy Werbel: Dr. Amy Werbel serves as a Professor of the History of Art at SUNY-Fashion Institute of Technology. For the past twenty years, her research has concentrated on art censorship at the intersections of law, theology, and sexuality. Her most recent book, *Lust on Trial: Censorship and the Rise of American Obscenity in the Age of Anthony Comstock* (Columbia University Press, 2018), was awarded the 2019 Peter C. Rollins Book Prize of the Northeast Popular and American Culture Association. Werbel's previous book publications include *Thomas Eakins: Art, Medicine, and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Yale University Press, 2007). During the academic year, 2021-2022, she will research art censorship in academic art museums as Fellow at the University of California National Center for Free Expression and Civic Engagement. Dr.

Werbel is a graduate of Harvard and Radcliffe Colleges (B.A. 1986) and Yale University (Ph.D. 1996), and a two-time Fulbright Scholar, to China (2011-2012) and the United Kingdom (2019-2020).

About The Art Students League: The Art Students League of New York has been making high-quality, studio-based art education accessible to all for almost 150 years. Founded in 1875 by a group of independent artists who dreamed of a place where anyone with a passion for art would have the space to make it, today The League hosts over 100 classes, taught in-studio and online. No applications, no prerequisites, and affordable, month-to-month tuition allow students to find their freedom and pursue their artwork free from the constraints of dogma. Our instructors educate students in an environment that values mentorship and collegiality, and centers diverse art-making practices, including painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, and assemblage. Our ongoing lineage of accomplished instructors is matched by our legacy of extraordinary students: Artists who have studied or taught at The League include Georgia O'Keeffe, Norman Rockwell, Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg, Louise Bourgeois, Alexander Calder, Norman Lewis, James Rosenquist, Ai-Weiwei, and many others. www.theartstudentsleague.org/



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The Art Students League of New York

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