

PAOLA'S STUDIOLO: Spring Program 2024

Presented Live on Zoom

10am Los Angeles and Phoenix, 1pm NY & Toronto, 6pm London,
7pm Florence

Full Season of 11 live interviews \$208. Each event is recorded and yours to keep.

Early Bird Registration \$188 (*until January 20, 2024*)

To register: www.paolavojnovic.com/donate

- Jan 27** *The Art of Spotting a “Sleeper”:* A Conversation with Nicholas Cox
- Feb 3** *Venice, The Remarkable History of the Lagoon City:* A Conversation with Dennis Romano
- Feb 17** *Food and Venetian Diplomacy in Early Modern Istanbul:* A Conversation with Eric Dursteler
- Feb 24** *Risk in Renaissance Art:* A Conversation with Jonathan Nelson
- March 2** *The Arsenale, Venice’s “Factory of Marvels”:* A Conversation with Ross King
- March 16** *The Importance of Traditional Atelier Art Training, Past and Present:* A Conversation with Artist Daniel Graves
- March 30** *The Gondola Maker:* A Conversation with Laura Morelli
- April 13** *Italian Humanism and the Renaissance of Art:* A Conversation with David Fideler
- April 27** *Still Life ~ A Love Letter to Florence:* A Conversation with Sarah Winman
- May 11** *Manuscript Painting for the Confraternities of Venice, from 1260 to 1520:* A Conversation with Lyle Humphrey
- & Bonus Interview:
- May 25** *The Art of Living Well in Venice:* A Conversation with Mimi Todhunter



Every art dealer dreams of spotting a “sleeper,” a stellar painting whose identity and authorship has been lost over time. Nicholas Cox, a specialist in portraiture from the 17th to the 20th centuries, travels widely to discover beautiful paintings and drawings for *Period Portraits*, his widely-followed Instagram account. His inventory includes quality oil paintings, drawings, and mezzotints from both British and European artists.

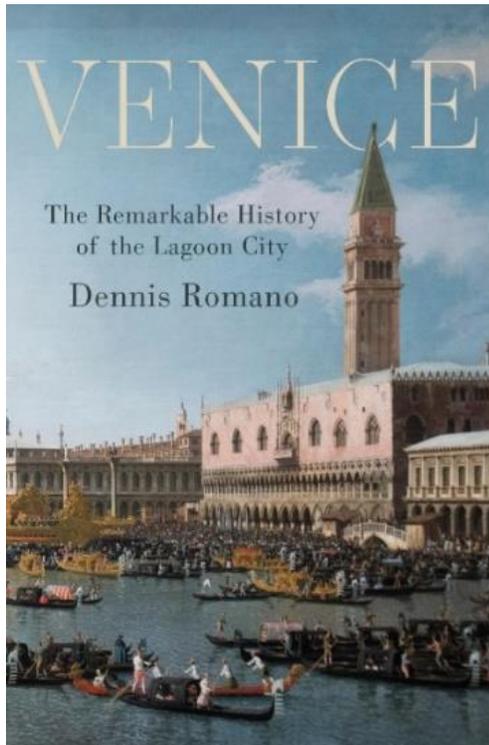
In this special 76th edition of Paola’s Studiolo interview, Nick Cox explains why a keen eye, connoisseurship, and a large art library are his keys to spotting these “sleeping” treasures. In this session, you will have the chance to view a

previously unseen work by Lavinia Fontana (1552 - 1614), the noted Baroque artist from Bologna. Nick will share with you his process of discovery of this exceptional miniature portrait and how it is now a significant addition to the full catalogue of Fontana’s oeuvre. Art dealer Nick Cox, based in North Yorkshire in England, was the very first to launch on Instagram as an online art dealer and, a decade later, he has a loyal worldwide following who regularly watch his posts and his “paintings of the day.” Nick’s background in high fashion (as an editor at *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar*) inform his specific interest in costume and his stock of highly decorative paintings.



Feb 3

Venice, The Remarkable History of the Lagoon City: A Conversation with Dennis Romano



No city stirs the imagination more than Venice. From the richly ornamented palaces emerging from the waters of the Grand Canal to the dazzling monuments of Piazza San Marco, visitors and residents alike sense they are entering “another world,” as 14th-century poet Petrarch remarked. A sweeping and comprehensive overview, Dennis Romano’s *Venice: The Remarkable History of the Lagoon City* examines the city’s history from its formation in the early Middle Ages to the present-day, and traces its evolution as a city, city-state, regional power, overseas empire, and now as a world-renowned tourist destination. Beautifully illustrated with over 80 images and maps, Romano’s book examines the lives of the women

and men, noble and common, rich and poor, Christian and Jew, all of whom built the city and forged its unique amphibious civilization. The Washington Post recently reviewed the book; you can order it here.

Dennis Romano is the Dr. Walter Montgomery and Marian Gruber Professor of History Emeritus at Syracuse University. He is the author of numerous books and articles on the history of Venice. His extensive background in art history includes his appointments as a Guggenheim fellow and a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington and at the Folger Shakespeare Library. He is an honorary member of the Ateneo Veneto (Venetian Athenaeum). He lives in Washington, DC.



Feb 17

Food and Venetian Diplomacy in Early Modern Istanbul: A Conversation with Eric Dursteler

“The best thing that an ambassador has in his house is a good chef.” During the early modern period, food played a critical role in Venetian diplomacy in Istanbul. The sharing and exchange of food and drink represented a form of culinary diplomacy that was an integral, costly, time-consuming part of the process of developing and maintaining the sort of personal relationships that were the heart of diplomatic relations. Sumptuous banquets, endless supplies of wine, fine cheeses, and other exotic foods, all represented important diplomatic tools that Venice’s ambassadors drew on as they struggled to maintain the Republic’s precarious relationship with the Ottoman Empire during the 16th and 17th centuries. Their goal was to preserve Venice’s status and relevance in the rapidly-changing, often-perilous Mediterranean world.



Eric Dursteler is Professor of History and former department chair at Brigham Young University. His research focuses on the tangled history of the Early Modern Mediterranean, focusing on gender, language, food, and identity. His publications include *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (2006), *Renegade Women: Gender, Identity and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (2011), *The Mediterranean World: From the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Napoleon* (2016), and *In the Sultan’s Realm: Two Venetian Ambassadorial Reports on the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (2018). A graduate of Brown University, he has received grants from the Fulbright Commission, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Harvard Center for Italian

Renaissance Studies, the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, the European University Institute, and the Folger Shakespeare and Huntington libraries.



Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, encountered significant production and reception risks.

Jonathan Nelson, a Renaissance art historian (Syracuse University), and Richard Zeckhauser, an economist and decision theorist (Harvard University), collaborated to produce a new book, *Risks in Renaissance Art: Production, Purchase and Reception*. The authors wove insights from their two disciplines and examined risk from the perspective of patrons, buyers and artists, concluded that risk had a major but previously overlooked impact on Renaissance art.

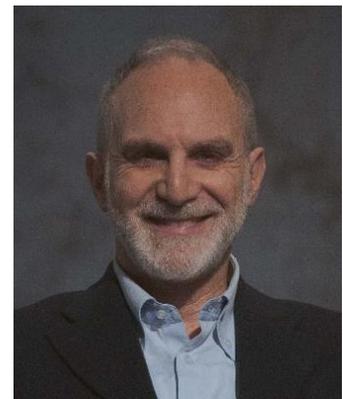
This book introduces new concepts such as *Production Risks*: when Francesco del Giocondo commissioned Leonardo da Vinci to make a portrait of his wife, Mona Lisa, he could have never imagined that the artist would also make a topless version! But given Leonardo's reputation for late and non-delivery, his patron *should* have

been alert to this production risk. Indeed, he never received the portrait.

Major losses were common in the Renaissance art world, but these stories were often buried, while successes got proclaimed. This study corrects this rosy record and shares intriguing cases where parties involved suffered significant losses.

You can get your copy of this ebook [here](#) (available free until January 25th).

Jonathan Nelson is a Teaching Professor at Syracuse University, Florence; Research Associate at the Kennedy School of Harvard University; and co-editor of the "Elements in Renaissance" series of Cambridge University Press. A specialist on Filippino Lippi, the subject of a 2022 monograph, he recently wrote a major article on Ethiopian Christians in the paintings of Filippino and his contemporaries. He was the lead speaker and advisor on the December 2022 documentary on [SkyTV](#), "[The Black Italian Renaissance](#)". Professor Nelson has also written volumes dedicated to Michelangelo, Leonardo, Botticelli, Sister Plautilla Nelli, and Robert Mapplethorpe.



March 2 *The Arsenale, Venice’s “Factory of Marvels”*: A Conversation with Ross King

We are so delighted to welcome the author Ross King back to Paola’s Studiolo, to talk about one of the most important and iconic locations in Venice: the Arsenale.



In the 1500s, it was described as the “foundation of Venice’s greatness and the bastion of Christendom.” Right up to the present day, the Arsenale looms large – it houses gondola makers, and is also the site for the world-renowned contemporary art, architecture, and film *Biennale* exhibitions.

Without doubt, the Arsenale was the most impressive and sophisticated industrial facility of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Ross King will explore how the Arsenale engineers in Venice drew upon the then-newly-discovered philosophical works by Aristotle as well as on the scientific and architectural expertise of Galileo and Palladio. Focusing on art history, he will talk about how the Arsenale inspired such artists as Titian and Vittore Carpaccio.

Ross King is a Canadian novelist and non-fiction writer. He began his career writing two works of historical fiction in the 1990s, later turning to non-fiction, and has since written several critically acclaimed and best-selling historical works. Among his publications are *Brunelleschi’s Dome*, *Michelangelo and the Pope’s Ceiling* and, most recently, *The Bookseller of Florence*.





Self-Portrait by Daniel Graves, 2020. Oil on hemp, 40 x 50 cm.

Daniel Graves (American, b 1949) is a painter of figures, still lifes, and landscapes, an etcher, and the Founder of The Florence Academy of Art. Graves lives and works in Florence, Italy, his permanent home since 1978. He has posed the question: “*What is the relevance of realist art in the 21st century?*” and explores those answers at his academy in Florence. He notes that “*Artists and teachers often talk of the masters who have inspired and influenced our work, and the classical ideals that have taught us to look equally at the great art of the past and to the real world of the present.*” Daniel Graves believes that art based on classical tradition does not result in an imitation of nature but that the imitation of nature is a first step to making art – imitation, that

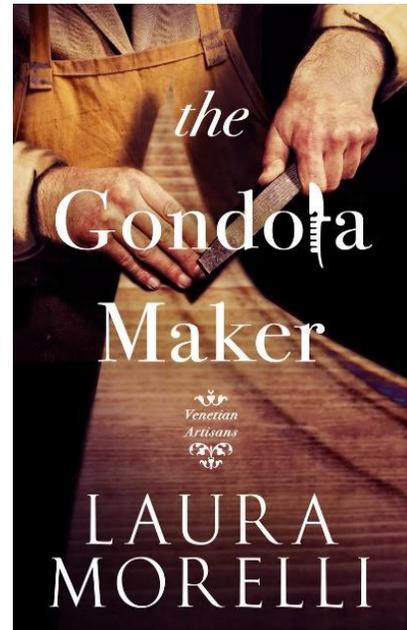
is, in the sense of representing the world around us. The classically-trained artist strives to create beauty so that their art might achieve a universal significance. He asks, “When we stand looking into the eyes of a Rembrandt self-portrait, how much closer can we get to knowing the soul of another marvelous human being? Rembrandt’s hands mixed the paint we see, but what is actually before us is a blend of his image with ours and that of every human. There is no substitute for this experience.” In this Studiolo talk, Daniel Graves will speak with us of how he and his students in his Art Atelier explore beauty, craft, feelings, and ideas through their realist painting.



Daniel Graves, photograph by Hershey Felder

Graves graduated from the Maryland Art Institute and continued his studies at the Villa Schifanoia Graduate School of Fine Art in Florence; he later apprenticed under Nerina Simi who maintained a classical nineteenth-century studio there. With such a rich background of training, Graves has evolved a personal style of oil painting that adroitly fuses the classical heritage of Old Masters’ achievements with his own contemporary point of view.

We are delighted to welcome art historian and author Laura Morelli back to Paola's Studiolo, to talk about her book, *The Gondola Maker*. In the heyday of the Venetian Republic, some 10,000 gondolas transported dignitaries, merchants, and goods through the crowded canals and lagoons of the water-logged city. Today, only about 400 gondolas glide through the waterways of Venice. But across the city and the outlying islands, a handful of boatyards (*squeri*) still make and repair gondolas using modern techniques and power tools, although each year, fewer and fewer authentic gondolas are turned out by hand. A small group of specialized master boat builders working in historic boatyards now holds the craft—literally—in their hands. Join Laura to explore the fascinating history of the Venetian gondola.



Then, dive deep into the creation of her historical novel, *The Gondola Maker*, a story set in the vibrant Venetian boatyards of the 16th century.

Laura Morelli holds a Ph.D. in art history from Yale University and is an award-winning, bestselling historical novelist, often tapping into the lives of Italian artists.

ABOUT THE GONDOLA MAKER

Venetian gondola-maker Luca Vianello considers his whole life arranged. His father charted a course for his eldest son from the day he was born, and Luca is positioned to inherit one of the city's most esteemed boatyards. But when Luca experiences an unexpected tragedy in the boatyard, he believes his destiny lies elsewhere. Soon he finds himself drawn to restore an antique gondola with the dream of taking a girl for a ride.

April 13

Italian Humanism and the Renaissance of Art: A Conversation with David Fideler



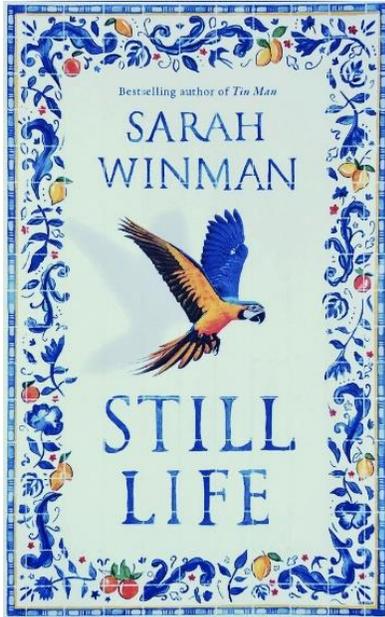
Join scholar and historian David Fideler as he explores Italian humanism and the birth of the Renaissance.

Italian humanism was an attempt to recover and apply the lost knowledge of Greece and Rome in order to create a better society that would nurture the development of more excellent individuals. The culmination of this humanist project was the birth of the Italian Renaissance, which had a profound impact on both art and architecture. In this presentation, Dr. Fideler will look at the dramatic differences between Medieval and Renaissance art and explore the humanistic ideas that helped bring Renaissance art into being, including the great masterpieces of Renaissance

art that we love today. Reflecting the spirit of humanism, the use of linear perspective became a defining aspect of Renaissance art; as well-known works such as those of Piero della Francesca, Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, Michelangelo's *David*, and the works of Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael all deeply embody the ideas and concerns of Renaissance humanism.

[David Fideler](#), who holds a Ph.D in philosophy and the history of science and cosmology, has worked as an editor, college professor, educational consultant, and the director of a humanities center. He studied ancient Greek philosophy and Mediterranean religions at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Restoring the Soul of the World: Our Living Bond With Nature's Intelligence* (2014), editor of the *Cosmopolis Project* website, and editor of the humanities journal *Alexandria: Cosmology, Philosophy, Myth, and Culture*. He now writes and teaches about how classical and Renaissance ideas could enhance the world today. David's book *Breakfast with Seneca*, on the Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca who deeply influenced the early Renaissance humanists, has been published in 16 languages. Dr. Fideler now lives in Perugia, Italy.





Writer Sarah Winman’s book begins in wartime Florence. It was 1944 and in the ruined wine cellar of a Tuscan villa, as bombs fall around them, two strangers meet and share an extraordinary evening together. Ulysses Temper is a young British soldier and one-time globe maker; Evelyn Skinner is a sexagenarian art historian and possible spy. These two unlikely people find kindred spirits in each other and Evelyn’s talk of truth and beauty plants a seed in Ulysses’ mind that will shape the trajectory of his life – and of those who love him – for the next four decades. Moving from the Tuscan hills to the East End of London and the piazzas of Florence, *Still Life* is a richly peopled novel about beauty, love, family, and fate.

When asked to describe her book in one sentence, she said: *“It is a story of found family and opportunity and love and the value of art.”*

Sarah Winman is a British author and actress, whose debut novel, *When God Was a Rabbit* (2011) became an international bestseller. She grew up in Essex, England, and now lives in London. She attended the Weber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art and went on to act in theatre, film and television. Her second novel, *A Year of Marvelous Ways*, was a Sunday Times bestseller, and *Tin Man* was shortlisted for the Costa Novel award 2018.



May 11

Manuscript Painting for the Confraternities of Venice, from 1260 to 1520: A Conversation with Lyle Humphrey

It is well known that the confraternities and guilds of Venice—the *scuole* and *arti*—played a fundamental role in the religious, social, and civic life of *La Serenissima*, and they were major patrons of art. Throughout the late Middle Ages, these *scuole e arti* explored the theme of Christ's Passion in striking manuscript paintings created for their formal statute books, called *mariegole*. While *mariegole* of the 14th and 15th centuries illustrate the Flagellation and Crucifixion—events described in Scriptures and in Medieval devotional literature—those of the early 16th century feature the Man of Sorrows, a subject lacking an association with any particular moment in Christ's life. Curator Lyle Humphrey will discuss works related to the devotional practices and theological concerns of the *scuole* and *arti*, in order to understand their function and significance. The analysis in turn, will shed light on the spiritual, moral, aesthetic, and professional concerns of a large, diverse segment of the Venetian population between about 1260 and 1520.



Image: The Cleveland Museum of Art, Delia E. Holden and L.E. Holden Funds, 1959.128: Detached miniature from a *mariegola* of the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista, Christ Enthroned with the Virgin, St. John the Evangelist, Angels, and Battuti from the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista, Venice.



Dr. Lyle Humphrey is Associate Curator of European Art and Collections History at the North Carolina Museum of Art. Her research and publications explore a range of topics in Northern Italian painting and manuscript illumination and the collecting of ancient, medieval, and early modern art in America. Since joining the NCMA in 2013, she has curated exhibitions including a rediscovered bronze medallion designed by Gianlorenzo Bernini (2014), and a loan exhibition of Venetian paintings and early manuscripts, *Glory of Venice: Renaissance Paintings 1470–1520*. In 2015, her book on the manuscript patronage of Venetian confraternities and guilds was published by the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice. Lyle Humphrey earned her M.A. and Ph.D. from New York University's Institute of Fine Arts.

May 25

Mimi's Magical World in Venice: A Conversation with Mimi Todhunter



I am honored to welcome as the 85th guest of Paola's Studiolo my dear friend, Mimi Todhunter. A citizen of the world, Mimi has lived in Italy, her adopted home, for over 25 years. With her great passion for all things Italian, her love of art and beautiful interiors, and her gift for bringing people together, Mimi is a marvelous hostess with a wonderful style and so much wisdom, knowledge, and practical tips to pass on to the rest of us. Her love for entertaining is infectious. At her elegant lunches, dinners, and parties in the *piano nobile* of the Palazzo Duodo in Venice, she welcomes art lovers, creatives, scholars, museum curators, distinguished artists, and musicians to mingle with family and friends as well as other visitors from all over the world. On her

[Instagram](#) account, she uses the hashtag **#mimismagicalworld**, and in *At Home in Venice*, her online business, she helps the rest of us create our own magical worlds by accessing beautifully designed and artisan-made ceramics, glass, candlesticks, lamps and other artifacts from Italian craftsmen. Mimi organizes exclusive tours with fabulous dinners in palazzi and visits to artisans, artists, restaurants. In this Studiolo visit, she will share some of her favorite spots around Venice. She'll also answer all your burning questions about La Serenissima!

Mimi was born and raised in New Zealand, and left at age 21 for Sydney, Australia. To see the world, she worked on an ocean liner at a time when people still travelled in the grand style between Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. On one voyage, the ship docked in Lisbon, and it left a lasting impression, *"It was a Sunday, and families were out walking in the lovely squares, everyone so beautifully dressed. At that moment, I knew that Europe was where I wanted to stay. I had come home."* For the past 18 years, her home has been a glorious 15th-century palazzo on the Grand Canal in Venice, where she loves to entertain and welcome visitors from around the world.



ABOUT THE HOST OF PAOLA'S STUDIOLO



Paola Vojnovic is an art historian specializing in the Italian Renaissance. With two graduate degrees (Syracuse University and Università di Siena) and more than twenty years spent researching and writing about Renaissance art and artists, Paola brings an exceptional level of expertise and passion to her work.

She has been published in magazines, books, and periodicals, and is the creator and host of Paola's Studiolo, a virtual meeting room of leading scholars, museum curators, and thinkers of our time. Last year, Paola appeared in the ABC-7 NY segment on Dante, marking his 700th death anniversary, and was also a part of "When the World Answered," a PBS documentary about the 1966 Great Flood of

Florence.

As one of the most sought-after official tour guides in Florence, she knows every corner of this Renaissance city, and is an exceptional tour guide. In that role, she has had the privilege to meet people from all walks of life in addition to powerful influencers from the worlds of entertainment, media, and politics, such as James Ivory, Sarah Dunant, Beyonce and Jay-Z, Reba McIntire, and Anthony Bourdain. Paola is a member of the Renaissance Society of America, and often acts as a liaison between museums and clients to provide special behind-the-scenes access and thus ensure visitors an unforgettable, once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Read more about Paola in [an article](#) written by Hershey Felder for The Florentine.

I have loved attending Paola's Studiolo. Her approach to curating fascinating sessions is a treat for both novices and experts. If you have an interest in Italian history, art, and culture, Paola provides an approachable and accessible way to remain engaged with these topics. Paola's Studiolo showcases amazing speakers, expert reading suggestions, and thoughtfully designed themes to create a truly enjoyable learning experience. Her Studiolo is my favorite part of the week.

Sarah H., California