

Lyme

ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS

10
Point Manifesto



Cover painting by noted artist, T. Allen Lawson, who attended Lyme Academy”

10 Point Manifesto

for the revival of the
Lyme Academy of Fine Arts
as it plans for its 50th Anniversary in 2026

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There is still a need for Lyme Academy's mission

In the Academy's early years the mission statement was simple and powerful, "*The mission of the Lyme Academy of Fine Arts is to provide education and training in the history, traditions, principles and skills of Drawing, Painting and Sculpture as a foundation for one's future development as an artist.*" This mission is as relevant in 2020 as it was when it was first articulated at the Academy's founding nearly 50 years ago. The philosopher and critic Roger Scruton created a documentary before he died called "Why Beauty Matters," which begins with these words: "At any time between 1750 and 1930, if you had asked educated people to describe the aim of poetry, art or music they would have replied beauty, and if you had asked for the point of that you would have learned that beauty is a value as important as truth and goodness. Then, in the 20th century, beauty stopped being important." At its best, Lyme Academy teaches time-tested skills and techniques that makes skill building and mastery the center of its mission and avoids the temptation to be all things to all people, chasing the latest art fads.

An Academy, not a College

The process of obtaining and maintaining accreditation as a degree granting institution had forced the Academy to erect an elaborate infrastructure of buildings, staffing (a bursar!) and overhead that forced tuition to be set at unsustainably high levels, at close to \$50,000 per year. From its founding and for many years thereafter (some would say during its heyday in the 1980's and early 90's) the Academy did not award degrees but instead focused on developing the skills of its students. For future Lyme Academy students, advancement would be based on skill-building and mastery rather than seat-time and credit accumulation. Freed from the requirements and constraints that attach to accreditation, the Academy can return to its roots and become a leaner organization that consequently will charge significantly less for a course of instruction of under \$10,000 per year.





Serving the Needs of Many Kinds of Students

A diverse study body enriches the experience for all – and will help to make the Academy financially viable. “Our students are young, old, middle-aged, working, retired, professional artists, homemakers, college students, artistic novices and experienced art students” so read a promotional brochure for Lyme Academy from 1992. Building on this tradition, there are four principal types of students that the Academy will enroll in the future:

- (1) (1) a selective group of **Core** students, who study full-time, year-round as a pathway into a vocation as an artist;
- (2) **Adult Learners** including **retirees** and **career changers** pursuing their passion for creating art, especially during extended blocks of time in the summer & fall;
- (3) **Pre-College** students, particularly those in **high school**, exploring serious art instruction, after school, on summer/holiday breaks and on the weekends;
- (4) **Teachers** seeking professional development to become more proficient as educators during times that their schools are not in session.

Each type of student will require courses that are offered in a time and manner tailored to their needs.



The Campus as Vibrant Community Hub

One of the hallmarks of Lyme Academy for many years had been its organic connection to the town of Old Lyme and Lyme, its cultural antecedents (the Florence Griswold Museum, the Lyme Art Association) and to the wider community in Connecticut, New England and beyond. That connection has atrophied over the last 10 years and needs to be rebuilt and those partnerships renewed. Further, the Academy needs to re-activate its beautiful campus in new and inventive ways. Can the student cafeteria welcome a local proprietor to run a place where anyone could get a cup of coffee and a sandwich? Can the former campus bookshop become an art supply store to serve the needs of both students and local artists? Could the Sill House become a home for an organization that would make use of the building's character and history? Could the Academy's library become an extension of an existing library? Could the campus' classrooms become a place for offerings by other educational institutions seeking a presence on the Connecticut shoreline? Realizing this vision will take a considerable amount of bridge-building to both the Town of Old Lyme and to prospective partners. As provider, exhibitor and interpreter of the Fine Arts, the Academy is fully committed to an important public mission to enrich the cultural life of the region. To lead the institution and make the facilities come alive, the Academy will hire an Executive Director, whose job it will be to oversee the campus, manage operations and raise funds.



A Rural Haven for Emerging & Established Artists

Old Lyme has long been a gathering place for artists seeking a refuge from the hurly-burly of urban life. “In 1899, the painter Henry Ward Ranger visited the home of Florence Griswold in Old Lyme, Connecticut. Ranger had recently returned from Europe and Lyme reminded him of the French Barbizon Forest. With its beautiful and varied landscape, Lyme offered an ideal retreat from the noise heat and hectic pace of New York City.” (from the **Lyman Allyn Art Museum**, *American Impressionism and the Old Lyme Art Colony*). Might Old Lyme hold new allure for artists seeking a place apart from the density of urban places at this moment in time? To this end, the 24 separate artist work spaces formerly given over to Senior Studios could become individual studios rented to local established artists who in turn could mentor emerging artists as part of a year-long residency that runs from September to August each year—a new kind of Senior Studios. Throughout the year there would be quarterly open studio exhibitions designed to bring the work of these fledgling artists to a wider public.

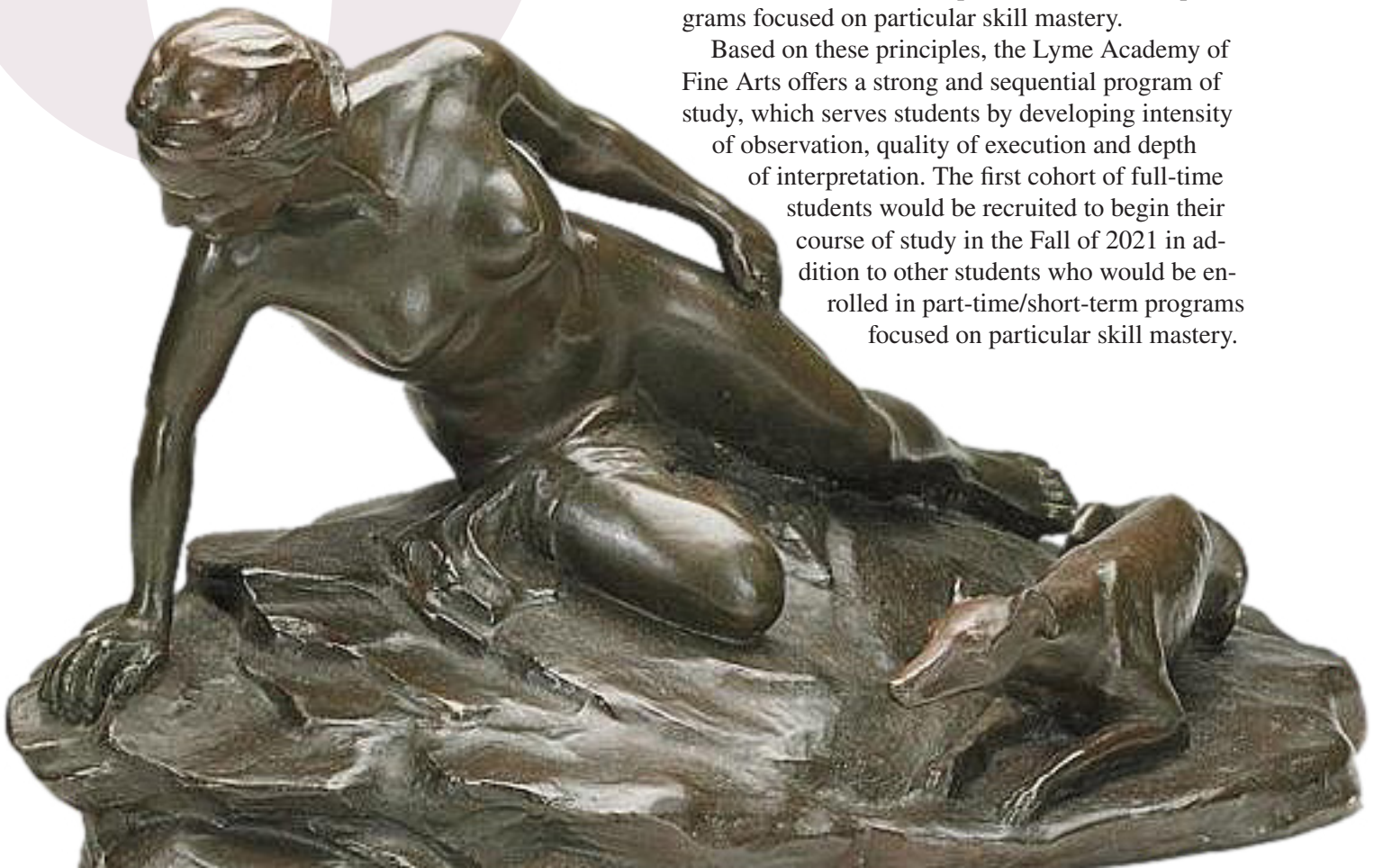


Core Curriculum Rooted in Elisabeth Chandler's Ideals

The classic program of study at Lyme Academy – the Core – consisted of coursework devoted to foundational subjects: Drawing; Painting, Color & Composition; Sculpture; Anatomy and Art History. The curriculum is based on a respect for classical values in a Fine Arts education. That is, the emphasis of the program is figurative and realistic. Lyme Academy would be offering training based on studio practices that were primarily taught from the Renaissance to the present. The curriculum would be designed to be completed in two to three years, if a student devoted themselves full-time to their course of study. Cohorts would be limited to 20 students each,

to insure a degree of selectivity among applicants chosen for admission. Once admitted, the small size of the student body would ensure that each student received personal attention from faculty around an individualized plan for that student's development as an artist. The goal is to provide a foundation, which will enable individuals to find their own style in their own contexts with energy and confidence. The Lyme Academy of Fine Arts offers a strong and sequential program of study, which serves students by developing intensity of observation, quality of execution and depth of interpretation. The first cohort of full-time students would be recruited to begin their course of study in the Fall of 2021 in addition to other students who would be enrolled in part-time/short-term programs focused on particular skill mastery.

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A Vision Carried Forward by an Artistic Director

Freed from the requirements that accompany being an accredited institution of higher education, Lyme Academy would be able to engage established artists who have the experience, technical skills and ability to teach as opposed to the academic credentials and advanced degrees required by colleges and universities. This faculty of art instructors would be led by the Artistic Director/Deane Keller Chair, who would carry the torch lit nearly 50 years ago by Elisabeth Chandler. The Artistic Director is responsible for implementing the artistic vision and focus of The Lyme Academy of Fine Arts and will work with the Board of Directors to ensure that Lyme Academy is faithfully guided by its mission and realizes its goals for education, artistic excellence and service to the community. For Core courses the Academy would draw extensively on the many artists living in Old Lyme, Lyme, Chester, Essex, Hadlyme and the surrounding area. Courses that run for a limited duration could bring in artists & alumni from around the country to teach, including those with established reputations who have followings and could bring that interest with them to classes offered at the Academy. During the 2020-21 academic year, as the academy undertakes its relaunch, one-off courses taught by established instructors represent an important opportunity to keep Lyme Academy visible.



An Important Voice in the Art Conversation.

For over 100 years, Old Lyme has shaped the American understanding of art dating to the work of artist Henry Ward Ranger who established an art colony where he painted from direct observation. Lyme Academy could rejoin that conversation through a number of initiatives including a national sculpture, painting & drawing competition as well as a lecture series from prominent thinkers and artists. Lyme Academy should also explore affiliating with the Art Renewal Center (ARC) which promotes education in realistic art and has as the first principle of its mission, “to promote a return of skill-based training, standards and excellence in the visual arts. The rich artistic heritage of 2,500 years of accumulated knowledge in creating traditional, realistic images touching upon universal and timeless themes.” When the ARC was founded in 2002, it had 14 schools in its network and today has close to 80.

Reconnecting and Reengaging the Academy's Alumni

Since its founding in 1976, thousands of students have graduated from Lyme Academy, creating an extensive network of alumni. They are the living embodiment of the Academy's ideals and will be brought back to lecture and teach at the Academy as well as being invited to a homecoming celebration each Spring to take part in commencement exercises when Core students complete their studies and to participate in the Academy's annual alumni show.



An Investment in Career Development & Placement

Unlike what your parents told you, it is possible to make a living as an artist and as someone who can apply artistic skills to such fields as architecture, education, illustration, and character design. Part of the Lyme Academy program must be to connect its students and alumni with the pathways to a sustainable life based on the notion that the skills that the Academy provides are foundational. Well-resourced career development support would also be connected to prospective employers such as animation, film, video games, graphic design, gaming, world building, decorative arts to reflect their needs back to the Academy to align with the core artistic skills that the market is demanding.

