

Emma Sonnier

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Emma Sonnier is a curator and cultural program developer specializing in interdisciplinary exhibitions and community programs. She approaches museum work as civil service – sharing stories, cultivating understanding, and building connection across difference.

EDUCATION

Johns Hopkins University

Currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Museum Studies

Remote

Expected Summer 2027

- **GPA:** 4.0
- **Courses Taken:** The Business of Museums, Curatorship: Principles & Practices, Exploring Museum Professions, Private Collections, Collectors, & Museums

Harvard Business School

Negotiations Certification Course

Remote

2025

Loyola University in New Orleans

Bachelor of Arts in History with Concentration in Art History

New Orleans, LA

2017-2022

SKILLS & INTERESTS

Core Competencies: Project Management, Research, Writing, Adaptability, Creative Problem-Solving, Initiative, Integrity, Data Analysis, Empathy, Collaboration, Relationship-Building, Communication

Technical Skills: Collector Systems (CMS), AI, Artwork Archive, Google Workspace, Basecamp, Adobe Suite, Canva, Microsoft Office, Social Media, Tally Form Builder, QuickBooks, Zoom, Kofi, WIX, WordPress

Languages: Proficient in English, Limited Working Proficiency in German and French

Interests: Travel, Mixed Media Art, Installation and Performance Art, Fashion, Live Music/Arts Events, Community Event Planning, Mutual Aid, Female Painters and Photographers throughout Soviet Occupied and Independent Latvia, Contemporary Arts, World Religions, Ballet & Contemporary Dance

WORK & LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

ARCHIVES Exhibitions, Charitable LLC

Curator & Programs Director, ARCHIVES Co-Founder

Lafayette, LA

August 2024 – Present

● **Curation & Exhibition Development**

- Conceptualize exhibition themes, author labels and supplementary texts, lead exhibition design, and ensure thematic alignment for optimal audience engagement and community relevance.
- Curate thematic artwork selections to enhance visitor understanding of core concepts.
- Develop ambitious installations and interactive components to create innovative, mission-aligned displays that increase audience satisfaction scores by 19%.
- Conduct extensive research and both digital and in-person outreach to inform exhibition themes, producing thoughtful content that honors academic integrity and community perspectives.
- Catalog featured work with standardized documentation for inventories, purchases, and exhibition history to ensure administrative organization and efficacy.

● **Fundraising & Community Communications**

- Raise over \$10,000 for an inaugural exhibition by designing comprehensive fundraising campaigns featuring silent auctions, premium prizes, and commissions, directly supporting artist compensation.
- Complete grant applications for state funding to support community events and workshops.
- Function as the primary point of contact with donors and community partners to generate over \$4,900 in exhibition funding.

- Direct fundraising initiatives through targeted email campaigns, social media outreach, partnerships, and relationship-building to provide over \$3,000 for the Acadiana Arts Access Microgrants program.
- Negotiate agreements with artists, venue owners, sponsors, and businesses to establish mutually beneficial arrangements that increase local relevance and reach.
- Resolve disputes and address arising issues promptly and empathetically, ensuring optimal outcomes for all parties involved.
- **Outreach & Charitable Activities**
 - Spearheaded mutual aid events alongside exhibitions, securing 12 large crates of essential food, hygiene products, and clothing donations to support vulnerable populations and prioritize community impact over profit.
 - Launched mentorship opportunities including free quarterly networking nights and workshops, resulting in increased collaboration and wage transparency.
 - Host open panels, feedback sessions, and online surveys to inform programming decisions, ensuring collaboratively grounded alignment with community interests and needs.
 - Actively seek emerging talent at local and remote events to increase artist members and engagement.
 - Attend seminars, lectures, networking events, and art exhibitions both in-person and online to strengthen ARCHIVES' presence locally in Lafayette, in New Orleans, and within the digital arts community.
- **Brand Development & Marketing**
 - Collaborate on developing ARCHIVES' brand identity and marketing strategies for heightened digital engagement.
 - Act as the representative for ARCHIVES in radio, TV, podcast, and social media appearances to increase reach and build community relationships.
 - Oversee graphic design for promotional materials and social media posts, ensuring legibility and brand-alignment to appeal to diverse audiences.
- **Venue Preparation & Operations**
 - Serve as the lead gallery preparator, installing and stewarding featured artwork to ensure safe, errorless installations and artist relations.
 - Oversee exhibition setup, design, and logistics to ensure conformity to facility-offered amenities while respecting structural limitations.
 - Mitigate facility limitations through strategic planning and early on-site coordination to guarantee gallery owner satisfaction.
 - Train and manage volunteer preparators and art handlers to reinforce high professional standards.

Basin Arts

New Orleans, LA

Art Handler

February 2025- May 2026

- Collaborated with program director to ensure safe, smooth artwork installation in office and retail spaces.
- Handled, stored, and transported artwork in compliance with professional standards to prevent losses and damages payouts.
- Executed regular inventories and condition reports for organizational needs and administrative accessibility.
- Operated tools efficiently and quietly under time constraints to increase client satisfaction.

Acadiana Center for the Arts

Lafayette, LA

Visual Arts Assistant, Visual Arts Department

April 2023 – February 2025

● **Curation & Exhibition Development**

- Planned, installed, and executed exhibitions across seven in-facility galleries, assuming lead preparator and assistant curator responsibilities to free the Visual Arts Director for administrative and fiscal priorities.
- Collaborated regularly with and assisted the Visual Arts Director to ensure the smooth execution of exhibitions and events within budgets and institutional limitations.
- Researched artists, artworks, and themes to strengthen exhibition development, ensuring programming was responsive to community perspectives and interests.

- Led collaborations with artists on spatial layout and design, balancing artistic integrity with institutional standards and values to produce cohesive, stimulating exhibitions.
- Authored exhibition texts, interpretive labels, and non-interpretive labels to increase audience comprehension across demographics.
- **Artist & Stakeholder Relations**
 - Coordinated and communicated with artists, lenders, and board members for submissions, contracts, and logistics to ensure smooth, well-documented exhibition cycles.
 - Regularly attended board and Visual Arts Committee meetings to provide informed input on artist selection, thematic direction, and internal operational challenges, creating stronger board relationships and transparency.
 - Designed and implemented 2 online exhibition proposal portals through WordPress to increase accessibility and streamline community participation, ensuring equal opportunities for artists of all career levels.
 - Led the reopening of the Reaux Family Vault gallery, building a student exhibition proposal submission portal to increase ULL student event attendance by over 30%.
 - Compiled and presented exhibition proposals to the Visual Arts Committee, supporting informed, organized selection decisions.
- **Collections Care & Installation**
 - Managed the full care of loaned artworks – including receiving, condition reporting, cleaning, safe handling, packing, and return – mitigating the risk of loss, damage, and insurance liability.
 - Operated power tools and professional installation equipment to safely mount, hang, and display artworks of differing media and sizes.
 - Set up lighting, audio, and new media components for exhibitions and events, creating more immersive audience experiences.
 - Photographed all exhibitions and selected works to produce high-quality images for online publication, artist records, and institutional documentation.
- **Administrative Tasks & Institutional Collaboration**
 - Maintained comprehensive digital records of exhibition details, featured artworks, inventories, purchases, and correspondence, reducing administrative backlog and streamlining workflows.
 - Overhauled and reorganized the Visual Arts Department file hub by year, season, and exhibition title, establishing a structured archive for quick, reliable access to photos and exhibition materials.
 - Facilitated cross-departmental collaborations with Development, Marketing, Performing Arts, and Arts in Education to streamline event execution and boost internal alignment.

Young Rembrandts

New Orleans, LA

Art Teacher

October 2019 – April 2020

- Instructed art classes for 15-25 K-8th-grade students across the New Orleans, Kenner, and Jefferson public school districts to facilitate engaging and educationally meaningful arts experiences.
- Provided personalized guidance tailored to individual skill levels and interests, increasing student confidence and development.
- Implemented classroom management strategies to maintain a structured yet stimulating environment for students with diverse learning needs.

Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum

Lafayette, LA

Research Assistant, University Art Museum

June 2019 – August 2019

- Conducted archival, library, and digital database research on the architecture and legacy of A. Hayes Town to support the development of an engaging and accessible traveling exhibition publication.
- Authored summaries and syntheses of multiple sources with full citations and references.
- Compiled and built bibliographies and sourced visual materials, organizing research packets to support historian Carol Reese's writing process.
- Identified and documented relevant primary and secondary sources, creating the foundation for later writing.

National World War II Museum

New Orleans, LA

Retail Sales Associate

September 2018 – February 2019

- Provided high-quality customer service, assistance, and personalized recommendations.
- Demonstrated expertise in product features to assist customers in making informed purchasing decisions.
- Collaborated with the visual merchandising team to create eye-catching displays that matched the museum's branding and mission.

Mahtook & LeFleur

Lafayette, LA

File Clerk & Runner

May 2017 – August 2017

- Maintained and organized confidential client files, ensuring both accuracy and adherence to privacy standards.
- Supported trial preparation by compiling and organizing exhibits, witness lists, and trial binders for legal proceedings.
- Performed general administrative tasks, including answering phones, routing messages, and greeting clients.
- Monitored office supply levels and coordinated restocking with the office manager to support daily operations.

Bruce Schultz Photography

Lafayette, LA

Darkroom & Field Intern

May 2016 – August 2016

- Supported photographer, Bruce Schultz, in client relations and darkroom operations.
- Organized and operated darkroom equipment, including a portable darkroom tent for on-site portraiture sessions.
- Developed 8x10 tintypes and managed hazardous chemicals while ensuring safety protocols were met.
- Assisted in setting up and handling a selection of vintage cameras, providing technical support during shoots and client interactions.

AWARDS & PRESS

2026

- *Art & Exploration*, "[A Curator's Perspective with Emma Sonnier](#)" (Podcast Interview), Apr. 3.

2025

- *KATC-TV Acadiana's Newschannel*, "Community Stories: ARCHIVES Root" (TV Interview), Dec. 12.
- *The Current LA*, "[The art collective is dead, long live the art collective](#)" (Arts and Culture Edition Feature), Jul. 2.
- *Country Roads Magazine*, "[ARCHIVES: A new platform in Lafayette envisions a better ecosystem for the arts](#)" (Print and Digital Feature), May 21.
- *KRVS Radio Acadie*, "[Art Circle Feature: Emma Sonnier & Candice Leigh](#)" (Radio Interview), May 8.
- *Basin Arts*, "[Art Circle Spotlight: Emma Sonnier](#)" (Interview), Apr. 24.
- *KRVS Radio Acadie*, "ARCHIVES Artwalk Pop-Up" (Radio Interview), Mar. 24.
- *Lafayette Arts Association*, "[The Bird Show](#)" (Selected Juror), Feb. 20.

2024

- *KLFY Passe Partout*, "ARCHIVES x LoudHouse" (Live TV Interview), Oct. 1.
- *KRVS Radio Acadie Après-Midi*, "[ARCHIVES Exhibitions x LoudHouse](#)" (Radio Interview), Sept. 24.
- *The Current LA*, "[LoudHouse Collective and ARCHIVES Exhibitions](#)" (Interview), Sept. 12.
- *KLFY*, "[ARTIST ROUND UP: Zine Making with ARCHIVES & LoudHouse Collectives](#)" (Featured in Online Article) Aug. 10.

2023

- *The Advocate*, "[Lafayette Students to Sell Art, Perform During Art Expo on Saturday](#)" (Featured in Online Article), Mar. 31.

PRESENTATIONS & WORKSHOPS

2025

- *ARCHIVES Exhibitions* and *ULL College of the Arts*, “Next Phase: Surviving Install” (Workshop Developer & Lead), Aug. 14.
- *ARCHIVES Exhibitions* and *ULL College of the Arts*, “Next Phase: Group Critique with Brett Chigoy” (Workshop Developer), Aug. 7.
- *ARCHIVES Exhibitions* and *the Hallway Gallery*, “Next Phase: Conceptualizing Exhibitions with Anne Boudreau” (Workshop Developer), Jul. 31.
- *ARCHIVES Exhibitions* and *Basin Arts*, “Critique Night” (Workshop Coordinator), Jul. 10.
- *Acadiana Center for the Arts*, “Creative Acadiana x ARCHIVES: Figure Drawing Night” (Workshop Developer), Mar. 13
- *ARCHIVES Exhibitions* and *Black Café*, “Artists’ Lounge” (Workshop Developer), Mar. 6

2024

- *Acadiana Center for the Arts*, “Creative Acadiana x ARCHIVES: Preparing for Your First Big Exhibition with Bob Borel & Emma Sonnier” (Workshop Co-Host), Dec. 3
- *Acadiana Center for the Arts*, “ARTIST ROUND UP: Zine Making with ARCHIVES & LoudHouse Collectives” (Workshop Coordinator), Aug. 21

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2026

- *National Emerging Museum Professional Network*, “Museum Advocacy Day”, Apr. 9-10.
- *Johns Hopkins University’s Advanced Academic Program*, “Curated Conversations: Building Intelligent Museums with AI”, Feb. 18.
- *MuseumExpert*, “Panel on Museums and the Executive Orders of 2025”, Feb. 12.
- *MuseumExpert* and *National Emerging Museum Professionals Network*, “Career Development or Resistance? Professional Development Seminar”, Jan. 28.

MEMBERSHIPS

- *International Council of Museums*, U.S., Student Member.
- *National Emerging Museum Professional Network*, Member.
- *Johns Hopkins University’s Story Lab*, Member.

EXHIBITION & PUBLIC ART PROJECTS

2026

- *Lynda Frese: In Development* – Curriculum Curator. University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Fletcher Hall Gallery, Lafayette, Forthcoming Fall.
- *Named & Unnamed: What We Keep, Define, and Forget* – Co-Curator. Developed for Johns Hopkins University’s Curatorship: Practices & Principles course, Feb.-May.
- *Children’s Museum of Acadiana Mural with Lafayette City Government and Dirk Guidry* – Participating Artist. Lafayette, Dec.-Feb.

2025

- *Root* – Curator & Program Lead. ARCHIVES Exhibitions and the Hallway Gallery on Garfield, Lafayette, Dec.-Jan.
- *Next Phase: Hybrid Workshop and Exhibition Series* – Curator & Program Lead. University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Fletcher Hall Gallery, Lafayette, Aug.-Sept.
- *whimsy* – Curator. ARCHIVES Exhibitions and the Hallway Gallery at the Warehouse on Garfield, Lafayette, July-Aug.
- *Boundaries* – Curator. ARCHIVES Exhibitions and the Hallway Gallery at the Warehouse on Garfield, Lafayette, Apr.-May.

- *Lynda Frese: Far-Out* – Co-Curator. Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, Apr.-July.
- *Prairie Stories: Art & Ecological Restoration on the Prairies of Louisiana* – Assistant Curator. Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, Feb.-May.
- *Milton Arceneaux: Monochrome Roots, Vibrant Rhythms* – Assistant Curator. Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, Jan.-Mar.
- *Voice and Form: UL College of the Arts' Formal & Conceptual Development Classes* – Curator. Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, Dec.-Mar.

2024

- *Anne Boudreau: STANDING AT THE EDGE | then, now, when* – Co-Curator. Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, Nov.-Jan.
- *Jesse Poimboeuf and John Slaughter: Enchanting Nature* – Curator. The Framing Shop Gallery, Closing Exhibition, Lafayette, Nov.-Dec.
- *ARCHIVES: Systems* – Co-Curator. Chase Tower, Lafayette, Oct. 5
- *Ceramics Now: Contemporary and Traditional Practices in Acadiana* – Lead Preparator & Assistant Curator. Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, June-Aug.
- *Faith House 4th Annual Women Artists Exhibition* – Assistant Curator. Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, July.
- *Jesse Poimboeuf: Winging It* – Assistant Curator. Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, May-June.
- *Sara Hardin: Unconscious Place* – Assistant Curator. Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, Feb.-Mar.

2023

- *Ralph Schexnaydre: Translating the Sun* – Assistant Curator. Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, Nov.-Jan.
- *Mary Attwood & Ange Riehl: Improvisational Exploration* – Assistant Curator. Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, Sept.-Oct.
- *Kelli Foret Richard: Drawn to Grow* – Assistant Curator. Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, Aug.- Oct.
- *Cūr Nōn* – Lead Preparator. Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, June-Aug.
- *Faith House 3rd Annual Women Artists Exhibition* – Lead Preparator. Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, July.
- *Michelle Fontenot: Peace, Love, & Mosaics* – Lead Preparator. Acadiana Center for the Arts, Lafayette, May-June.

2020

- *H&W Mural with Ken Art* – Participating Artist. New Orleans, May – July.
- *Hive Mind: Loyola Alumni Show* – Student Co-Curator. Loyola University in New Orleans, Jan.-May.