

**Evonne Levy**  
**Department of Visual Studies**

**Biography: nominee's education, career history, key achievements and awards.**

Evonne Levy began her studies in art history at Brown University (BA '83, MA '84), where working on an exhibition about the education of the Renaissance artist set her on the path to specializing in early modern European art. At Princeton University (MFA '88, PhD '93), her training in art history and history served as a foundation for her dissertation on a signal cult site of the Jesuit order in Rome. A Rome Prize (American Academy in Rome) and Samuel Kress Fellowship (Bibliotheca Hertziana) funded 3 years of study and archival research in Rome. During that time, she co-curated an exhibition on Jesuit art and architecture that was installed in the Biblioteca Vaticana, the opening of which was presided over by Pope John Paul II. By the time she received her PhD, she had already published scholarly essays in the catalogues of three exhibitions of early modern Italian art.

Levy's perspective on art history was irrevocably changed by a DAAD post-doc in post-reunification Berlin, where the political stakes were high in debates over the fate the National Socialist architecture that remained in the restored capital city. Stimulated by the emotional tenor of the debates, her first monograph, *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque* (2004), recast the dissertation in terms of art historians' tendentious use of the term "propaganda" to mark works of art as dangerous because they were commissioned by controversial institutions - the Jesuits in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, National Socialists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To call a work of art "propaganda" made it less a work of art than an ideological message. By not contending with the motivations for messaging, she argued, art history was at risk of ignoring the very function of much of early modern art produced for an evangelizing Church.

With a bold and controversial thesis (the book was reviewed in 20 journals), Levy's first monograph (which went into a second printing) established her reputation as a leading voice in the burgeoning study of the arts of the Jesuits—a multinational religious corporation that had much to offer to global turn in the humanities. Because of the strong Jesuit presence in South America, her expertise brought her into a SSHRC funded MCRI on the "Hispanic Baroque," leading her to develop a second area of study in Colonial Latin American Baroque art and architecture. The major publication she developed for that project was the *Lexikon of the Hispanic Baroque: Transatlantic Cultural Transformation* (2014), co-edited with the historian Kenneth Mills. The book was highly ambitious in scope and organization, involving an advisory group and 70 distinguished authors in fields across the humanities. It also had an innovative structure: each term of the "lexicon" (Afterlife, Animals, Dress, Miscegenation, Church, Living Image, Opera, Rebellion, etc.) was treated in two creative essays, one by a Hispanist and one by a Colonial Latin Americanist. One reader of the manuscript enlisted by University of Texas Press called it "an ambitious, innovative and important volume," whose scholarship is "outstanding;" the second reader found it a "fascinating, ambitious abecedario," a "unique and significant gathering of accomplished senior scholars who have contributed engaging and penetrating articles on topics as far-ranging as confession, rebellion, saint, ship, sin and the supernatural."

Since 2001, Levy has engaged historiography, the intellectual history of her discipline. She spent the next decade in the archives of modern Germanophone art historians, working out how something as basic as the art historical term “baroque” registered political thought over modern art history’s first century. The research on her second monograph, *Baroque and the Political Language of Formalism (1845-1945)* (2015), was supported by a Berlin Prize at the American Academy in Berlin and subsequently by a SSHRC GRG (ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in Fine Arts). One reviewer characterized the book in these words: “Imaginatively conceived and meticulously worked; dedicated and judicious; deeply researched in archives and ephemera, in major and occasional writings by the core authors and by all those they interacted with; unfailingly lucid in organization and presentation; committed to understanding these figures from within and from their contexts—Evonne Levy’s magisterial study is an honor to her and to the profession.”

In 2013 she began a collaborative project on the worldwide reception of a foundational text of the discipline of art history, Heinrich Wölfflin’s *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Early Modern Art* (1915). This ambitious, multifaceted project, funded by a SSHRC Insight Grant (ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in Fine Arts), spawned conferences in Tokyo, Zurich, Berlin, Washington and Williamstown, a website, a global webinar, and a student film, thereby collectively involving scores of students and researchers. Notably, components of the project were supported by the three major art historical research centers in North America: the Getty Research Center published a new translation of the text and the first critical edition of this key work ever (2015); the Clark Institute (Williamstown, MA) sponsored a workshop on the US reception of the book, and the Center for Advanced Study of the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art (Washington, DC), sponsored the conference “The Global Reception of Wölfflin’s *Principles*” and is publishing the proceedings in their selective and influential *Studies in the History of Art* series (2020).

Levy has also spearheaded and co-edited three provocative book-length publications on GianLorenzo Bernini, the major sculptor of the Italian Baroque. Her 2004 *Bernini’s Biographies: Critical Essays* (2006) disrupted the traditional reading of these books, which were written just after Bernini died, as an archive of facts, and encouraged the scholarly use of them as *interpretive* works. She co-edited an issue of *Sculpture Journal* (on Bernini’s portraits), and co-edited *Material Bernini*, which, responding to the “material turn” in art history, coordinated highly original research and asked new questions of this well-studied artist.

Levy has spent most of her career at UTM (Assistant Professor, 1996; Associate Professor, 2001; Professor, 2014), but she is well known in Europe, Latin America and Australia. She has given lectures in Brazil, Mexico, Bolivia, Germany, France, Italy, Portugal, England, France, Switzerland, Austria, Holland, Czech Republic, Poland, US, UAE, Japan, and Australia; she has been Guest Professor at several major European universities and research institutes. Her leading role in intellectual history, a subfield of art history that has burgeoned in the past decade, has led to the invitations—which are rare in our field—to teach at Frankfurt University and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (the premier art history faculty in France). And, in 2017-18 she was accorded the high honor of serving as the Rudolf Wittkower Guest

E. Levy

Nomination for Distinguished Professor Award

Professor at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, a Max Planck research library in Rome devoted to art history. The contributions of this ambitious, courageous, and imaginative scholar to research were recognized by UTM in 2018 when she was awarded the Desmond Morton Research Prize.