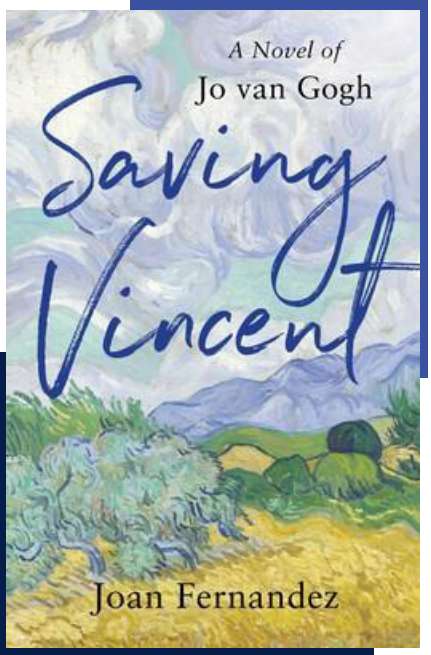
Novelist, Joan Fernandez, reveals the hidden true story of the woman who made Vincent van Gogh the artistic giant he is today



St. Louis, MO, and Sedona, AZ–In the tradition of "The Paris Bookseller" and "Her Hidden Genius," Joan Fernandez's novel "Saving Vincent" (She Writes Press, April 15, 2025) is inspired by the true story of a woman overshadowed in history by the giant talent she saved: Vincent van Gogh.

How did a failed belligerent Dutch painter become one of the greatest artists of our time?

In 1891, timid Jo van Gogh-Bonger lives safely in the background of her art dealer husband Theo's passion for selling the work of unknown artists, especially his ill-fated dead brother, Vincent. When Theo dies unexpectedly, Jo's brief happiness is shattered. Her inheritance—hundreds of unsold paintings by Vincent—is worthless. Pressured to move to her parents' home, Jo defies tradition, instead choosing to open a boarding house, raise her infant son alone, and promote Vincent's art herself. Her ingenuity and persistence draw the powerful opposition of a Parisian art dealer who vows to prevent her success, and so sink Vincent into obscurity. How will Jo overcome the forces working against her, and save herself along with Vincent?

An Amazon bestseller (#22 in Biographical Historical Fiction), "Saving Vincent" has earned thirteen awards and honors, including First Place in the Missouri Writers Guild's Walter Williams Major Work Award.

"Saving Vincent: A Novel of Jo van Gogh"

Joan Fernandez | April 15, 2025 | She Writes Press | Historical Fiction
Paperback | ISBN: 978-1-64742-870-9 | $17.99
Ebook | ISBN: 978-1-64742-871-6 | $9.95
Audiobook | ISBN: 979-8-9959655-0-3 | $19.95

CONTACT & BOOKINGS

For event inquiries, interviews, or media appearances, please contact:
joanferndz@gmail.com | www.JoanFernandezAuthor.com | 314-913-3383

Praise for the book...

"**An intriguing art- and history-filled tribute** to an oft-overlooked dynamic woman."

—Kirkus Reviews

"[This is] . . . **a great story** . . . and timely application of advocacy principles for women, especially. Jo's experience **demonstrates agency in a man's world and holistic fulfillment**. Each chapter exemplifies a bend in the road, a triumph and pitfall, in the process of creating a successful marketing campaign."

— Penelope Schmidt, gallery owner

"The author unfolds the narrative at a great pace, with historical accuracy, and **we are gripped!** . . . each character is drawn with precision and care, mixing historical evidence with literary imagination. . . **a brilliant story**, based on documented fact, but transformed through a feminist lens. We sorely need more of these stories, celebrating the women who were there in the shadows all along."

—Daily Art Magazine

"**Fernandez** does an excellent job in her portrayal of Jo as a strong, determined woman ahead of her time in the male-dominated art world... *Saving Vincent*... forces readers to become deeply invested in Jo as a woman, creating **an unforgettable portrait of resilience and passion. Very highly recommended.**"

—Readers' Favorite, Five Stars

"A climate of progressive change backdrops a determined widow's efforts in the male-dominated art world in the **lovely historical novel** *Saving Vincent*."

—Foreword Clarion Reviews

CONTACT & BOOKINGS

For event inquiries, interviews, or media appearances, please contact:

joanferndz@gmail.com | www.JoanFernandezAuthor.com | 314-913-3383

Praise for the book...

"You've probably never heard of Jo van Gogh, but were it not for her, none of us would have ever known there was a Vincent van Gogh. In this **skillfully researched and propulsive** story, **Joan Fernandez** shares the untold history of a true unsung heroine who saved her brother-in-law's artwork and legacy. You will root for Jo van Gogh from beginning to end."

—Renée Rosen, **USA Today** bestselling author of *Let's Call Her Barbie*

"Art history buffs—like me—who never learned how Van Gogh's paintings survived will welcome *Saving Vincent*. Drawing on voluminous research, **Fernandez** brings to life the unexpected story of Jo van Gogh-Bonger. I found it **tremendously gratifying** to discover the vital role she played at a time when women were virtually excluded from the art world."

—Jude Berman, author of *The Vow*

"*Saving Vincent* is a **luminous, captivating** novel about a woman who was truly ahead of her time."

—Camille Pagán, bestselling author of *Good for You*

"**Fernandez** brings Jo's untold story to life with brilliant historical acuity. . . [her] portrayal of Jo as a strong, smart, and indomitable woman is both inspiring and empowering. . . Lovers of Van Gogh's work will find this story **intense, vibrant, and deeply moving**."

—Publishers Weekly, BookLife

"*Saving Vincent* is a captivating tale that weaves together themes of courage, ingenuity, and an unwavering belief in the beauty of art... **Fernandez** not only uncovers Jo's significance but also enlightens us about the crucial role she played, weaving a rich tapestry of storytelling that **underscores the profound importance of art in our lives**."

—Midwest Book Review

CONTACT & BOOKINGS

For event inquiries, interviews, or media appearances, please contact:
joanferndz@gmail.com | www.JoanFernandezAuthor.com | 314-913-3383

Awards & Honors

An Amazon bestseller (#22 in Biographical Historical Fiction), *Saving Vincent* has earned thirteen awards and finalist honors since its April 2025 release.

AWARDS

2026 First Place	Missouri Writers Guild, Walter Williams Major Work Award
2025 Grand Prize, Second Place	IAN Book of the Year (Fiction)
2025 Winner	Independent Author Network (First Novel Over 90,000 Words)
2025 Gold Medal	Readers' Favorite (Historical Personage)
2025 Bronze Medal	Independent Publisher Book Awards, IPPY (Popular Fiction)
2024 Winner	American Writing Awards (Art)

FINALIST HONORS

2026 Short List	Chanticleer International Book Awards (Goethe Award)
2026 Finalist	International Book Awards (Historical Fiction)
2025 Finalist	Next Generation Indie Book Awards (First Novel Over 90,000 Words)
2025 Finalist	Next Generation Indie Book Awards (Historical Fiction Pre-1900s)
2025 Finalist	National Indie Excellence Awards (Historical Fiction)
2025 Finalist	American Fiction Awards (Historical Fiction)
2024 Finalist	American Writing Awards (Women's Fiction)

SELECTIONS & FEATURES

2025 Selected	Indie Missouri, the Indie Author Project's statewide library collection
2025 Featured	BookBub, "17 Biographical New Historical Novels Based on Real People"



author
(joan fernandez)

CONTACT & BOOKINGS

For event inquiries, interviews, or media appearances, please contact:
joanferndz@gmail.com | www.JoanFernandezAuthor.com | 314-913-3383

Joan Fernandez's Bio

Award-winning Author | Speaker | Storyteller of Women Who Shaped History



250-WORD BIO

Where overlooked women's stories come to light—and light the way.

Joan Fernandez is an award-winning historical fiction author and engaging speaker who brings long-overlooked women out of the margins and into the spotlight. Her debut novel, *Saving Vincent* (April 2025), tells the powerful true story of Jo van Gogh-Bonger—the sister-in-law of Vincent van Gogh—whose intuitive brilliance and fierce determination transformed Vincent's legacy from obscurity to global acclaim.

An Amazon bestseller (#22 in Biographical Historical Fiction), *Saving Vincent* has earned thirteen awards and honors, including First Place in the Missouri Writers Guild's Walter Williams Major Work Award.

Joan's 36-year marketing career included 22 years at **Edward Jones**, where she became a general partner and led teams in investment communications and market research. That experience shaped her deep research, narrative insight, and passion for reframing history through a more truthful, inclusive lens, and fuels her **mission: to tell stories that restore visibility, dignity, and power to the women history has forgotten**.

Since publication, Joan has given more than sixty talks at museums, libraries, literary festivals, and women's groups, including her signature talk, **Jo van Gogh-Bonger: The Woman Who Would Not Let Van Gogh Die Twice**, and "The Van Gogh Entrepreneur." She also leads workshops on ethical storytelling and the creative process.

As the founder of the **Historical Fiction Affinity Group** within the **Women's Fiction Writers Association**, Joan is passionate about fostering community, especially among women. She divides her time between St. Louis and Sedona, Arizona.

CONTACT & BOOKINGS

For event inquiries, interviews, or media appearances, please contact:

joanferndz@gmail.com | www.JoanFernandezAuthor.com | 314-913-3383

Joan Fernandez's Bio

Award-winning Author | Speaker | Storyteller of Women Who Shaped History



100-WORD BIO

Joan Fernandez is an award-winning author and former senior marketing executive whose storytelling uplifts the overlooked voices of women in history. Her debut historical novel, *Saving Vincent* (April 2025), is an Amazon bestseller (#22 in Biographical Historical Fiction). It brings to life Jo van Gogh-Bonger, Theo van Gogh's widow and the woman responsible for the world's recognition of Vincent van Gogh's genius.

With 36 years in marketing and market research, including 22 at Edward Jones, **Joan** brings a rare depth of insight to both storytelling and public speaking. She divides her time between St. Louis and Sedona, Arizona.

Available upon request: An editable news release template you can use to publicize your event. The Word document can be easily customized with your event's specific details.

CONTACT & BOOKINGS

For event inquiries, interviews, or media appearances, please contact:

joanferndz@gmail.com | www.JoanFernandezAuthor.com | 314-913-3383

An Interview with
Joan Fernandez

In an interview, Joan Fernandez can discuss:

- How she discovered Jo van Gogh and what her story means to her
- How she approached blending fact and fiction in "*Saving Vincent*"
- The extensive research process that went into writing the book
- Why this story of one woman's strength and resilience at the turn of the 20th century still matters today

1. Why did you want to write about Jo van Gogh, and how did you discover her story?

I discovered Jo in 2016 when, on a girlfriend trip to Amsterdam, we visited the Van Gogh Museum. I spied Jo's black-and-white photo on a small display about the Van Gogh family. When I read an accompanying note about her being the one to sell Vincent's paintings, I remember staring into her eyes and thinking, "If not for you, none of this would be here." It felt wrong that she'd been lost behind Vincent's giant shadow. I felt she should be acknowledged.

2. What was the writing process like for this book? How long did it take to write?

Truthfully, I wrote two manuscripts! In the first one I reimagined Jo's life, filling in the gaps I couldn't find with research. My manuscript was completely done and ready to begin pitching to agents when a new biography was released about Jo by the Van Gogh Museum. I'd just spent two years learning writing craft, hiring book coaches and editors, and now had to decide whether to go ahead to publish this first version or to toss it and start over. I chose to begin again. When my book was finally published, it had taken seven years.

3. What is the most surprising thing you learned from this story?

Van Gogh is beloved worldwide, so we all know that Jo was ultimately successful. Yet, I am still awestruck by her conviction that Vincent's artwork was worthy of greatness when so many told her she was wrong. Her conviction gave her the resilience to reach her true potential, which in turn drove the paintings' value from worthless to priceless.

CONTACT & BOOKINGS

For event inquiries, interviews, or media appearances, please contact:

joanferndz@gmail.com | www.JoanFernandezAuthor.com | 314-913-3383

An Interview with
Joan Fernandez

(Continued)

4. Tell us about Georges Raulf. Is he a real historical figure? How did you write his character and why?

In real life Jo did not have a singular enemy, but rather lots of pushback from a number of forces. It was fun to create Georges Raulf as a composite of this headwind and also reflect the time's political crosswinds and shaky, gradual acceptance of modern art. He reflects a patriarchal worldview, offended by Jo's meddling in a man's art-dealing world, but I also fleshed him out so that he's not simply a caricature but has a human story behind his awfulness.

5. What are the ethics of writing about historical figures? Can you write about the past without doing harm?

Start with research, events and people in your subject's life, and read your character's diaries or journals, if possible. I read the 101-letter correspondence between Jo and her husband Theo, and 902 letters from and to Vincent. I believe you should write without the intent to harm, but rather to understand. If writing about heinous and violent historical events, avoid egregious details and show at least a few characters' faces, reactions and thoughts that they're repulsed. Even this small signal of empathy goes a long way toward ensuring you don't injure today's reader.

6. Why do you call this book a historical fiction parable?

Parables are stories that illustrate a larger universal truth. My rendition of Jo's story comes to life in fictional conversations and thoughts; yet, I feel that her example of how to overcome the societal norms that stand in the way of living up to one's true potential reflects universal truth. Both Jo and Vincent van Gogh's lives are enormously inspiring by their examples of resilience and staying true to their gifts despite opposition from the status quo.

7. What do you hope readers will take away from Jo's story?

I hope they remember and know Jo's name! She has been lost in history for far too long. She deserves the credit for Vincent being a beloved artist worldwide. I hope readers will feel empowered by her example of what can be accomplished with determination and perseverance and so pursue striving to realize their full potential.

CONTACT & BOOKINGS

For event inquiries, interviews, or media appearances, please contact:
joanferndz@gmail.com | www.JoanFernandezAuthor.com | 314-913-3383

Talks by Joan Fernandez

Jo van Gogh-Bonger: The Woman Who Would Not Let Van Gogh Die Twice

SIGNATURE TALK | **Ideal for libraries, museums, book clubs, and art centers**

Step into the story of Jo van Gogh-Bonger—the widow, mother, and unsung force behind Vincent van Gogh's global legacy. In this inspiring talk, **Joan Fernandez** uncovers how one woman's quiet courage and marketing intuition transformed obscurity into icon status. Audiences will explore powerful themes of grief, persistence, and feminine brilliance too often left out of the historical record. Perfect for Women's History Month, art-focused programs, and groups drawn to stories that spark reflection, connection, and hope.

SIGNATURE TALK TESTIMONIALS:

"I couldn't be more pleased with the results of the book signing event we recently hosted with **Joan Fernandez** inside the museum store. Our Van Gogh-loving audience filled the shop, not only **buying every copy** of *Saving Vincent, A Novel of Jo Van Gogh* we had in stock but also purchasing a significant amount of additional museum merchandise, all while engaging with the author. **Joan Fernandez** is an excellent collaborator, and working with her was incredibly smooth and enjoyable. She captivated our visitors with such an **entertaining and impactful presentation** that I have heard numerous requests for additional book-signing events. As soon as Joan completes her next project, I hope our museum will be the first stop on her next book tour. **We can't wait to welcome her back!**"

—Amanda Boehm-Garcia, Head of Museum Experiences, **Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art**

"**Joan Fernandez** shared a wonderful. . . presentation about Jo Van Gogh with our bookstore audience and told more fascinating details about her novel during the q and a. **Joan** is **a great storyteller. Period.** *Saving Vincent* is a **superb book** and **Joan** brought us a great book signing event!"

—Robert Eckman, Proprietor, **Belleville Books**

"**Joan Fernandez's** talk on Jo van Gogh at my recent private client event was **thought provoking and inspiring**. Her ability to captivate my guests was remarkable; they were **fully engaged** and had so many insightful questions! It was clear how much research and passion Joan poured into her presentation. I've received **overwhelmingly positive feedback** from my clients."

—Julie Holt, **eXp Realty**, Sedona

"It was an absolute delight to hear **Joan Fernandez** present on her book, *Saving Vincent: A Novel of Jo Van Gogh*. Her **engaging storytelling** brought to life the remarkable efforts of Jo Van Gogh Bonger, whose dedication ensured Vincent Van Gogh's legacy would endure. **Joan's** passion and insight made the presentation both **inspiring and unforgettable**. I would highly recommend this presentation to other libraries!"

—Constance Dee, Daniel Boone Branch, **St. Louis County Library** Manager

"**Brava!** That was an **outstanding presentation**, **Joan**! You **truly captivated** the audience, they were engaged to the last minute (great job with the timing by the way). I don't know if you saw all the 'love' and 'applause' emoji's from participants. Thank you so much for taking the time to prepare the visuals and sharing your knowledge and genuine enthusiasm with us."

—Sylvia Edwards Davis, Culture Editor, **France Media**

"I **highly recommend** author **Joan Fernandez'** presentation "**Jo van Gogh: The Woman Who Would Not Let Van Gogh Die Twice**". Her extensive research and knowledge, combined with her actual presentation and delivery, made for a **most enjoyable hour**! I, myself, have always had an insatiable interest in Art History, but this is so much more. A **truly memorable** presentation from such a gifted individual! Don't miss this one! And, by all means, BUY THE BOOK!!"

–Mary Saputo, Community Outreach Coordinator, **St. Louis Oasis**

CONTACT & BOOKINGS

For event inquiries, interviews, or media appearances, please contact:

joanferndz@gmail.com | www.JoanFernandezAuthor.com | 314-913-3383

Talks by Joan Fernandez

The Van Gogh Entrepreneur: Building a Billion-dollar Legacy from Nothing

MARKETING MASTERCLASS | **Ideal for women's conferences, marketing forums, entrepreneur groups**

Jo van Gogh's extraordinary story is a testament to entrepreneurial genius. After inheriting hundreds of "worthless" paintings from her brother-in-law, Vincent, Jo defied social and economic pressures to build a market for his art. This talk will explore the 12 specific strategies she used to overcome challenges familiar to modern entrepreneurs, such as volatile markets, intense competition, and burnout. Ultimately, Jo's journey offers a practical blueprint for anyone looking to build a brand, find their niche, and turn their ideas into a lasting legacy.

MARKETING MASTERCLASS TESTIMONIALS:

"Joan Fernandez brought a **fresh and deeply moving perspective** for our Entrepreneur's Week at the Wedge Innovation Center with her presentation, 'The Van Gogh Entrepreneur.' She has a remarkable ability to connect creativity, resilience, and vision in a way that feels both **meaningful and practical for entrepreneurs**. Her message resonated deeply with our audience, leaving people inspired and thinking differently about what they're building."

—J. Scot Heathman, Chief Executive Officer, **The Wedge Innovation Center**

"Joan delivered a **fascinating presentation** that somehow covered art history, marketing concepts, entrepreneurial tools, economic principles, and women's studies all in one sitting, wrapped in a motivational talk. Her content was engaging and left the audience with **new academic insights**."

—Tracey Bosman, Visiting Faculty, Marketing, **Principia College**

"Joan - you are a **dynamo**. I loved hearing your talk to the Marketing Class... You brilliantly tied every Marketing skill and contemporary technique to Jo's intuitive style, bucking all the obstacles and more to create a phenomenal success and a legacy of wealth. **Your presentation style is riveting.**"

—Penelope Schmidt, Founder of Moon Beam Initiatives, LLC and **Schmidt Bingham Gallery**

"Joan was amazing! Her **powerful presentation and sharp content** provided invaluable education for our members. As investors dedicated to backing women-owned businesses, we found her delivery both **inspiring and deeply relevant**. Thank you, Joan!"

—Asma Usmani, Co-founder, **St. Louis Female Investor Group**

CONTACT & BOOKINGS

For event inquiries, interviews, or media appearances, please contact:

joanferndz@gmail.com | www.JoanFernandezAuthor.com | 314-913-3383

Talks by Joan Fernandez

Jumpstart Your Art: Reignite Your Creative Dreams

MOTIVATIONAL SESSION | **Ideal for creative retreats, writing groups, and arts nonprofits**

Have a dream that's been waiting in the wings? Whether it's writing a novel, painting again, or picking up a creative project you've long set aside, this uplifting talk will help you find your way back to it. **Joan Fernandez** shares her journey from senior executive to novelist, offering practical tools and heartfelt encouragement to help you reconnect with your creative self. Ideal for anyone navigating second acts or craving permission to begin again. Expect laughter, insight, and a fresh spark of momentum.

MOTIVATIONAL SESSION TESTIMONIAL:

"**Joan Fernandez** . . . created a **fantastic step-by-step guide** for authors to create engaging and supportive communities."

—Jenny Quinlan, Conference Chair, **Historical Novel Society North America**

CONTACT & BOOKINGS

For event inquiries, interviews, or media appearances, please contact:

joanferndz@gmail.com | www.JoanFernandezAuthor.com | 314-913-3383

Talks by Joan Fernandez

The Trap of Presentism: Writing and Teaching the Past Truthfully

ETHICS WORKSHOP | **Ideal for writers, educators, historians, and reading groups**

Behind every compelling historical narrative is a responsibility to tell the truth with care. In this interactive, thought-provoking session, **Joan Fernandez** shares strategies to write and teach history authentically—without reinforcing outdated tropes or silencing marginalized voices. Whether you're a writer researching outside your lived experience or an educator curating inclusive curriculum, this session offers tools to help you engage with the past ethically and with integrity. A thoughtful choice for writers conferences, history departments, DEI committees, and book clubs discussing complex historical fiction. Can also be presented as an author panel with other historical fiction writers.

ETHICS WORKSHOP TESTIMONIALS:

"**Joan Fernandez** delivered an **engaging** talk. . . She highlighted the importance of historical accuracy and thorough research in writing. Her insights on how to represent different cultures accurately and respectfully was of **great value**, offering practical advice for writers aiming to create authentic and responsible historical fiction. Her talk was both **informative and thought-provoking**, providing me with useful strategies for my own historical fiction."

—Kim Taylor Blakemore, Author of *After Alice Fell, The Companion, and The Deception*

"**Joan Fernandez** reminds us that writing with integrity means honoring the truth about a character, even when the facts are spotty or missing. It is letting a character's "innate superpowers" help guide our understanding of what drives or defines them and staying focused on the historical context in which they lived."

—Suzanne Uttaro Samuels, Author, *Seeds of the Pomegranate*

CONTACT & BOOKINGS

For event inquiries, interviews, or media appearances, please contact:
joanferndz@gmail.com | www.JoanFernandezAuthor.com | 314-913-3383

Joan Fernandez Contact Information

joanferndz@gmail.com | 314-913-3383 | www.joanfernandezauthor.com

Newsletter: joanfernandez.substack.com

Socials:
www.youtube.com/@joan.fernandez.author.speaker
www.instagram.com/joanfernandezauthor
www.facebook.com/joanferndzauthor
www.linkedin.com/in/joan-fernandez
www.goodreads.com/author/show/50734925.Joan_Fernandez
www.bookbub.com/profile/joan-fernandez

Book information:
Saving Vincent: A Novel of Jo van Gogh

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-64742-870-9 | **Ebook ISBN:** 978-1-64742-871-6
Audiobook ISBN: 979-8-9959655-0-3

Publisher: She Writes Press, 1569 Solano Ave #546, Berkeley, CA 94707 (distributed to the trade through Simon & Schuster)

Wholesale: Simon & Schuster, Ingram, and wherever books are sold (standard trade discounts, returnable)

Publish Date: April 15, 2025

Availability: Paperback and ebook at Bookshop.org, Barnes & Noble, Target, Amazon, and independent bookstores; ebook also on Kobo; audiobook on Spotify. Libraries: ebook and audiobook on Libby/OverDrive, Hoopla, and Bibliotheca. Signed copies at joanfernandezauthor.com.

Description: In 1891, Jo van Gogh-Bonger, a timid woman, was left widowed and with a legacy of Vincent van Gogh's unsold paintings. Defying societal expectations, she opens a boarding house to support her son and embarks on a mission to promote Vincent's art so that her son will have an inheritance. Her determination clashes with a rival art dealer who seeks to bury Vincent's legacy. Based on a true story, Jo's fight for recognition and justice becomes a poignantly captivating tale of love, loss, and the courage to follow your heart.

Bookseller order link: shewritespress.com/ordering

CONTACT & BOOKINGS

For event inquiries, interviews, or media appearances, please contact:
joanferndz@gmail.com | www.JoanFernandezAuthor.com | 314-913-3383