

Contact: Jackie Karneth
jackie@booksforward.com

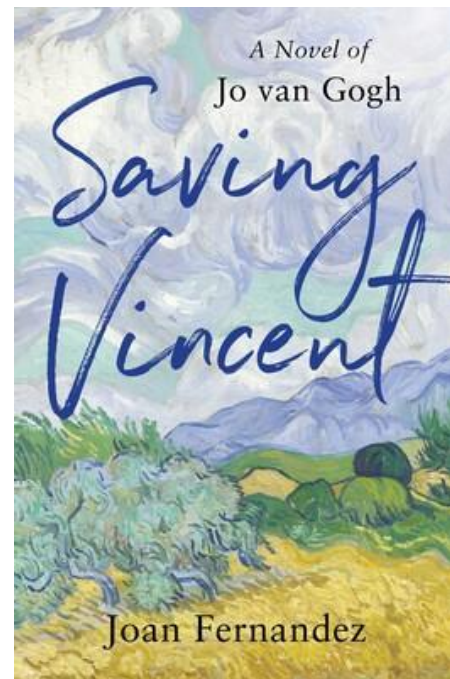
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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

St. Louis, MO—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?



“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



Praise for the book...

“An intriguing art- and history-filled tribute to an oft-overlooked dynamic woman.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“‘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”*

“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”*

“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*

“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, 5-star review*



About the author...



Joan Fernandez is a novelist who brings to light courageous women’s brilliant deeds in history. She is a former senior marketing executive and general partner of the financial powerhouse Edward Jones. In 2018, she retired from a 30+ year career to be a full-time writer. Since leaving the corporate world, she’s become a member of the Historical Novel Society, the Author’s Guild, and the Women’s Fiction Writers Association (WFWA). In April 2020, she founded a Historical Fiction affinity group within WFWA that grew from a handful of people to nearly two hundred authors. Her short story, “A Parisian Daughter,” was published in the American Writing Award-winning anthology, “Feisty Deeds: Historical Fictions of Daring Women.” Joan’s debut novel, “Saving Vincent” (She Writes Press), was also recognized by the American Writing Awards, winning their 2024 art award.

Joan is a sought-after public speaker, recently presenting “Top 10 Secrets for Forming a Vibrant, Lasting Author Community” at the Historical Novel Society UK Conference in May 2024. She also presented “How to Portray the Past Truthfully without Harm” at the Tenth Anniversary Conference for WFWA in September 2023.

Additional memberships include the Missouri Writers Guild, Unite Against Book Bans, Right to Read Coalition and PEN America.

Joan calls both St. Louis, Missouri and Sedona, Arizona, home, where she enjoys foodie meals with her Cuban husband and antics with grandkids. Learn more about her life and work at: www.joanfernandezauthor.com

Follow Joan Fernandez on social media:

Facebook: [@joanferndzauthor](https://www.facebook.com/joanferndzauthor) | Instagram: [@joanfernandezauthor](https://www.instagram.com/joanfernandezauthor)



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

An Interview with Joan Fernandez

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 is published, it will be 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.



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 character's 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.