

# The 22nd Leonardo Challenge

IMAGINATION IN FOCUS

4.28.16

## The Lens

The arc of a raindrop on a leaf magnifies its veins and our understanding of seeing.

Egyptian artisans mimicked the curve of eyes in glass to give their statues uncanny spirit. Assyrians in Nimrud may have used a rock crystal to concentrate the sun's rays into a spot of fire. In the Middle Ages, the polymath Abas ibn Firnas crafted reading stones of glass. Refined lenses awakened the sciences, explorations and arts of the Renaissance.

You may have explored the ancient wonders of lenses amongst your grandmother's treasures: a magic lantern, a stereoscope, opera glasses or a slide projector. Now there are Apps for those. We take and manipulate more pictures each day through the tiny lenses of phones than the entire pre-digital century captured. We alter the focus of eyes with surgery and their hues with contacts in designer colors. We may not now see the lenses through which we see everything.

## The Challenge

As an artist, as a scientist, as a philosopher, Leonardo revered the authority of the disciplined eye. Nature was Leonardo's subject. He aspired to be a lens without distortions. As an anatomist, he disassembled eyes to examine their mechanics. He drew disconcertingly modern lens polishing machines. He proposed lenses to shape the light of lanterns. He constructed a rudimentary telescope. Leonardo's eye is a lens through which we see genius at work.

**The Lens shapes perception. The Challenge: shape the perception of the Lens. You may find your lens abandoned in a desk drawer or in an obsolete projector or watch. Or start with a clear marble or a water filled sphere as the Romans did. Consider a less familiar refractor.**

**Or: consider the Lens's perception: light or image bent by accident or intention to inform, tease or deceive our eyes.**

**Celebrate the lens as an object, as an instrument, for its transmissions, or for its symbolic voice or perspective. Experiment with an unfamiliar setting, use, or meaning of the Lens. Lenses can capture or project light. They can clarify or distort. They can reveal the invisible or misdirect attention.**

*Choose your focus.*

We ask that sculptural works rest on a 12" x 12" footprint. In past Challenges, some of the works have been constructed for wall display; some suspended; a few used electricity; the others were free standing and 3-dimensional. We expect variations in scale and presentation. Please include your display requirements or instructions and include any unique display elements. Please, if this is a wall piece which belongs in a frame, *please bring it already framed, or bring the frame and we'll install it for you.*

- We would appreciate receiving entries by **April 25th latest.**
- For your entry fee you get 2 tickets for the April 28th event and a t-shirt. These will be held for you at the Museum until the night of the event.

**There is a page below with FAQs and a Call for Entries.**

**Other questions, please call Sally Hill 203.777.1833 or email: [sh@eliwhitney.org](mailto:sh@eliwhitney.org)**

## Entry Form

*Please enclose this with your finished entry.*

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please check one:*

- I wish to donate the work to the EWM.
- I wish to have the work returned to me.

*(Donated works will be auctioned off by silent bid the night of the opening to benefit the Museum scholarship fund.)*

The Eli Whitney Museum  
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e-mail: [sh@eliwhitney.org](mailto:sh@eliwhitney.org)  
[www.eliwhitney.org](http://www.eliwhitney.org)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who can participate?

Adult artists, artisans, and designers contribute to the Challenge. Others with many different day jobs contribute.

There is a \$60 entry fee (though underwriting is available.) Please contact Sally Hill (sh@eliwhitney.org) to let us know you will enter. You receive 2 tickets to the benefit, a tee shirt, a gift certificate to Miya's, and the Museum's gratitude.

### Does the Museum supply lenses?

We have found you are more likely to find a lens to suit your vision on your own. We do have some simple plastic hand lenses, many clear marbles, and a few abandoned cameras.

### What is a lens?

"Transparent material with curved sides that concentrate or disperse light." Could be crystal, glass, plastic or other materials. We count Fresnel (fre ´ nel) lenses as well. Some may explore the pinhole effect. A lens may be present or implied (as an effect that gives a photograph its character.) The Challenge is that question: *What is a lens?*

### What kinds of work is submitted?

Wall pieces, hanging pieces, free standing and pedestal pieces, jewelry, artist books. Some that require electricity. We are not sure we will be able to accommodate lens constructions that require darkened spaces.

### Are all submissions contributed for sale?

Almost all are. But some are not and are returned after May 18th. You can also set an opening bid. Your piece will be returned if the bids do not reach that level.

### Are there size and display guidelines?

We expect variations in scale and presentation. Our pedestals best accommodate pieces that fit within a 12" x 12" footprint. Let us know early if your work will require a large space or special handling. Our space limits the number of large submissions we can accept. Wall pieces should be mounted or framed. Display guidelines are helpful.

### What is the deadline for submissions?

April 25th, 10pm. We may be able to accommodate later work if you send a picture and dimensions.



Please fill out your name, address, email and phone number below. Enclose a \$60 entry fee (patron underwriting is available) and mail to the Eli Whitney Museum, 915 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT, 06517 in the enclosed envelope.

We will send you, via email, Entry Guidelines and a display form to bring in with your entry. We anticipate that most everyone will have access to some kind of lens, but we do have a supply of hand lenses like the one in the invitation should you need that. Just give us a call.

Please deliver the finished piece to the Museum by Monday, April 25th. Your tee shirt and the tickets to the April 28th event for you and your guest will be held at the door that evening. Please call Sally Hill at 777.1833 or email [sh@eliwhitney.org](mailto:sh@eliwhitney.org) for more information or questions.

name: \_\_\_\_\_

address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

phone: \_\_\_\_\_ cell: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose a check for \_\_\_\_\_.

Please charge to my Visa, Master Charge or Discover Card.

# \_\_\_\_\_

Exp date: \_\_\_\_\_ CVC code \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to request underwriting. \_\_\_\_\_.