

# GUILD HALL

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Press Inquiries:

631-324-0806

Nicole Delma, [ndelma@guildhall.org](mailto:ndelma@guildhall.org)

Samantha Rodriguez, [syoung@guildhall.org](mailto:syoung@guildhall.org)

For images 24/7 <http://press.guildhall.org>

Username: GHpress | Password: 4media

## GUILD HALL IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE LAUNCH OF THE MUSEUM'S DIGITIZED PERMANENT COLLECTION

### GUILD HALL PERMANENT COLLECTION

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#### ABOUT: Guild Hall's Permanent Collection

Guild Hall first opened to the public in the summer of 1931 as a gift of philanthropist Mrs. Lorenzo Woodhouse. This beloved institution provided East Hampton with an art gallery, a theater and meeting place — the cultural center in the center of culture. The East End of Long Island is a unique spot that has attracted many diversely talented artists who search for and find solace in the natural beauty of the landscape. At the time of Guild Hall's opening, The New York Times noted that Howard Russell Butler's portrait of Thomas Moran, on exhibit in the galleries, was not a loan, but an acquisition. "It marks the beginning of a permanent art collection which it proposed to build up in Guild Hall" the paper explained.

Guild Hall's holdings have grown significantly in size and scope over past 88 years. In the early 1960's the collection began to focus on the artists who have lived and worked in the region, highlighting the tradition of artists in residence on the East End dating back to the 1870's. Works by early occupants such as Thomas Moran and Childe Hassam are among Guild Hall's important acquisitions, as are some of the country's most celebrated painters, sculptors and photographers, such as Fairfield Porter, Willem de Kooning and Mary Heilmann.

In 1973 the museum received the distinction of being accredited by the American Association of Museums. Today, the holdings of 19th, 20th and 21st century art number some 2400 objects which include paintings, sculpture, prints, watercolors, photographs and drawings by internationally renowned artists. The museum continues to acquire works by donation and acquisition.

The digitization of Guild Hall's Permanent Collection has been made possible by a generous grant from **The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation** and **The Gerry Charitable Trust**. This project was headed by Jess Frost, Associate Curator/Registrar of the Permanent Collection.

**EAST HAMPTON, NY (March 20, 2019)** — Guild Hall is pleased to announce the launch of its digitized permanent collection, with works by **Donald Baechler, Ross Bleckner, Georges Braque, Alexander Calder, John Chamberlain, Willem de Kooning, Max Ernst, Eric Fischl, Jane Freilicher, April Gornik, Adolph Gottlieb, Grace Hartigan, Childe Hassam, Mary Heilmann, Winslow Homer, Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Lee Krasner, Roy Lichtenstein, Man Ray, Claes Oldenburg, Jackson Pollock, Fairfield Porter, Robert Rauschenberg, Cindy Sherman, Andy Warhol**, and many

others, all accessible online via [pc.guildhall.org](http://pc.guildhall.org). This unprecedented access to the Guild Hall Permanent Collection was made possible with generous lead support from The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, and an additional award from the Gerry Charitable Trust. Jess Frost, Associate Curator/Registrar of the Permanent Collection, oversaw this comprehensive one-year digitization project that involved the photography of nearly 2000 works in Guild Hall's Permanent Collection.

The collection houses artwork by artists associated with the region, from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, and is a testament to the significant legacy of the Hamptons as an artist colony. Executive Director, Andrea Grover states, "Thanks to our generous donors, this important chapter in the history of American art is now available to art historians, students, academic institutions, other museums, and the general public." The digitization is part of a larger initiative to regularly exhibit the permanent collection at Guild Hall, an effort which also received funding from the Robert Lehman Foundation. It is further intended to make the work available to other museums via institutional loans, as well as provide high resolution photography of the collection for scholarly publications.

"When I accepted the position of Associate Curator/Registrar of the Permanent Collection in 2015, many of my colleagues were unaware that Guild Hall even had a collection. The digitization grants from The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation and The Gerry Charitable Trust have allowed us to move beyond our gallery walls and extend the reach of this remarkable collection with the rest of the world. I'm very proud to have been a part of this undertaking and am thrilled that the public will benefit from our efforts," states Jess Frost.

The Permanent Collection began in 1931 with a donation from Guild Hall founder, Mrs. Lorenzo E. Woodhouse of a Howard Russell Butler portrait of artist Thomas Moran, and grew to thousands of works as the artist colony expanded. Many of the artworks in the collection were donated by major American artists in acknowledgment of Guild Hall's importance to the community. The collection now totals over 2,000 works in mediums including painting, sculpture, photography, works on paper, prints, and mixed media.

### **About the Digitization Process**

Project Lead Jess Frost built a new collection management system in 2016, and spent much of 2017 examining the original artworks in Guild Hall's art storage against the institution's records dating back to 1931. It was with substantial information from this initial research that Guild Hall was able to seek grant funding from The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, outlining the institution's need for an online catalogue that would be available for both the institution and public research.

"The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation's mission is to promote the advancement of regional history," said Kathryn M. Curran, the Foundation's Executive Director. "Making this Long Island collection available offers new insight into 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century art. The Guild Hall Collection is now a viable research resource."

The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, which primarily supports the study of New York State history, awarded Guild Hall \$50,000 in 2018 to initiate the digitization project. Frost worked with Guild Hall's Museum Director and Chief Curator, Christina Strassfield, to prioritize which objects were to be photographed first, based on the significance of the work to Long Island's history and the museum collection policy. Frost worked with Curatorial Associate Casey Dalene, and organized weekly photo sessions with the project's lead photographer, Gary Mamay and photography assistant, Charles Ly. With the help of practical recommendations from a Collections Assessment Report obtained through a 2017 Grant from The American Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, the team documented each object in high resolution photographs, capturing not only quality images for reproduction on the website, but also details of each work not available in previous documentation, such as signatures, dates and conservation issues. Once the photography was completed, Frost entered both images and updated findings into the collection management system, identifying records that required further research, which she continues to update from early handwritten card catalogues and hardcopy artist files for complete accuracy.

In the fall 2018, Frost guided the design of the collection website dedicated just to the works and made as a subdomain of [guildhall.org](http://guildhall.org). The website design prioritizes ease of use, and is directly linked to the collection database, so that new information surrounding each work, such as exhibition history, press, and new acquisitions can be updated in real time, ensuring the site will remain current and dynamic.

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**About Guild Hall**

Guild Hall, one of the first multidisciplinary centers in the country to combine a museum, theater, and education space under one roof, was established in 1931 as a gathering place for community where an appreciation for the arts would serve to encourage greater civic participation. For nearly nine decades, Guild Hall has embraced this open-minded vision and provided a welcoming environment for the public to engage with art exhibitions, performances, and educational offerings. Art and artists have long been the engine of Guild Hall's activities and the institution continues to find innovative ways to support creativity in everyone.