

# GUILD HALL

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## GUILD HALL TURNS 90 IN 2021, MILESTONE COMMEMORATED WITH ANNIVERSARY BOOK FUNDED BY THE ROBERT DAVID LION GARDINER FOUNDATION



**EAST HAMPTON, NY (February 18, 2020)** — To celebrate its 90<sup>th</sup> year in 2021, Guild Hall is publishing an Anniversary Book showcasing the people and events that helped shape creative culture on the East End and beyond since 1931. This will be the first time in 40 years that a book of this magnitude has been created. Guild Hall has received a generous \$25,000 grant from the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation to begin the important work of documenting its rich history.

As one of the first multidisciplinary institutions in the country to combine a theater, museum, and educational meeting place under one roof, Guild Hall has served as a town hall for the arts. With artists at the epicenter of all activities, Guild Hall has welcomed some of the most influential creators of our time, including Childe Hassam, Elaine and Willem de Kooning, Lee Krasner, Arthur Miller, Jackson Pollock, Thornton Wilder, and Tennessee Williams to name a few. Films first shown at Guild Hall would become classics, emerging artists, legends. Edited by the Director of the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center Helen Harrison, and with contributing essays from art historian Phyllis Braff, journalist Bess Rattray, Executive Director Emeritus, Ruth Appelhof, Executive Director Andrea Grover, and Chairman

of the Board, Marty Cohen, the book is expected to launch in the spring of 2021. Guild Hall opened its doors during the Great Depression, fueled by the vision and generosity of a single family and has been upheld by the community ever since. Oral histories, valuable artifacts, and archived photographs will help tell the story of an institution that continues to play a transformative role in American art history. As Samuel C. Hedges, President of the Historical Society, said on that very first opening day in 1931: "East Hampton is grateful."

"Guild Hall has always been a sandbox for artists. It was virtually run by the creative community for its first 50 years, when artists like Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner hung their work in the Members Exhibition, and Elaine and Willem de Kooning sold their paintings at the Clothesline Art Sale. In the 1940s, Thornton Wilder appeared in a production of his Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Our Town* at Guild Hall, while Edward Albee served as the John Drew Theater's co-Artistic Director in the 1970s." states Andrea Grover.

"This Anniversary Book will be an archetype for other organizations to create a compendium of their history. This is not only for a historic record but also as a fundraising and programming opportunity. If one thinks of a small historical society, their institutional community story could be told in programs delineated by decades or themes: Wars, Industry, Fashion, Customs, etc. A book chronicling those influences is a model for lectures and events," said Kathryn M. Curran, Executive Director of the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation.

Ms. Curran adds, "One of the little known facts about Guild Hall is that it is constantly offering its space to community organizations at a reduced rental rate or without charging a fee for use. Annually they host over 200 events, admission to the museum is free, and 95% of performances are free to all students. As the only multidisciplinary cultural center in East Hampton Town to house an accredited Museum, a theater and educational center, Guild Hall has an incredible heritage of art and educational community outreach."

**THE ROBERT DAVID LION GARDINER FOUNDATION**, established in 1987, primarily supports the study of New York State history. Robert David Lion Gardiner was, until his death in August 2004, the 16th Lord of the Manor of Gardiner's Island, NY. The Gardiner family and their descendants have owned Gardiner's Island since 1639, obtained as part of a royal grant from King Charles I of England. The Foundation is inspired by Robert David Lion Gardiner's personal passion for New York history.

Photo: Collage of images uncovered in the Guild Hall archives.

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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.