

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 588**Are you a 501(c)3 organization in good standing with the IRS?**

Yes

According to your 501(c)3 letter, in what town is your official office located?

Farmington

Where will your project be performed or exhibited?

Farmington

Will this activity occur after May 1, 2026 ?

Yes

Are you a recent grantee?

Yes

Enter your Report Code

GRF-T3-2025

Organization Name

Hill Stead Museum

Organization's IRS Tax ID #

060646673

Principal Contact Name

Anna Swinbourne

Title

Executive Director and CEO

Emailswinbournea@hillstead.org**Phone**

(860) 677-4787

Address

35 Mountain Road
Farmington, Connecticut 06032
United States
[Map It](#)

Website<https://hillstead.org/>

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\$10,000.00

What is the organization's mission/vision statement?

Hill-Stead Museum (HSM), a National Historic Landmark, serves diverse audiences in Connecticut and beyond as a welcoming place for learning, reflection and enjoyment. The museum develops, preserves, documents, displays, and interprets its exceptional Impressionist paintings, 1901 historic house, collections, and 152-acre landscape for the benefit of present and future generations.

Provide a brief history of your organization and its activities.

HSM is the first architectural project of Theodate Pope Riddle (1867-1946), a pioneering female architect, proponent of historic preservation and caretaker of the family art collection, a stellar assemblage of French Impressionism. Her father was at the forefront of the late-19th-century collecting movement. The majority of Pope's contemporaries gifted and dispersed their collections to major art museums. In contrast, Hill-Stead stands alone creating the sense that a significant historical era has not been cleverly recreated, but rather carefully and creatively kept true and relevant. Established in 1946 as a cultural resource for the public in perpetuity, the museum is one of the nation's few remaining representations of early-20th century Country Place Estates.

Though an art museum of international renown, with works by Monet, Degas, Manet, Cassatt and Whistler, HSM is first and foremost a cherished community haven and educational hub. For 79 years, it has annually served thousands of students and visitors [state, national and international] through a vast array of public programs and superior educational opportunities. A legacy designated by a pioneering woman to be a cultural destination with an open door and a specific purpose, HSM holds tight to its unofficial mission: To reach those who hunger to experience, thirst to learn, and yearn to better understand with extraordinary cultural offerings and opportunities not readily available elsewhere.

HSM has remained relevant to modern audiences through engaging and memorable public programming. A commitment to cultural excellence anchors HSM as a vibrant place for artistic exploration and creative expression. Since 2019, HSM has witnessed a steady growth in visitation, programmatic participation and membership as a direct result of its arts- and humanities-focused offerings and commitment to creating and fostering community connections.

Describe the demographics of your audience/people served by your activities.

Annual attendance averages 63,000 with nearly two-thirds utilizing the grounds at no charge. While visitors have typically been over age 50 and white, recent years have seen an observational shift. Since 2019, HSM has welcomed more people of all ages and backgrounds. However, quantifying is challenging since POS software does not track age and ethnicity. Diversifying visitor growth in all realms is a priority, especially Millennials and Gen Z, and a broader ethnic swath of the population.

Describe your organization's governance.

HSM was established as an educational and charitable trust overseen by three Trustees. Persons other than Trustees are elected to serve as Governors by vote of the Board of Governors (BOG) at its annual meeting. While the BOG plays a big role in the control and management of HSM, all governance decisions lie with the Trustees. The BOG meets 6 times/year, with about 65% member participation (90% since meetings have gone virtual). Annually, 100% of BOG members make financial contributions to HSM.

Ethnicity/Race + %

84% Caucasian

Ethnicity/Race + %

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8% black

Ethnicity/Race + %

4% Hispanic

Ethnicity/Race + %

4% Indo-Caribbean, Asian, Pacific Islander

Ethnicity/Race + %

0

Ethnicity/Race + %

0

What percentage of your board makes personal financial contributions to your organization?

HSM is pleased to report that 100% of the organization's Trustees and Governors makes financial contributions to the organization. All those who participate in the governance of the museum have a keen understanding of the great, continuing need for funding, as HSM must raise at least 90-93% of its operating revenue every year. While not a requirement for BOG membership, such philanthropy speaks volumes about the hearty support HSM enjoys of its mission and vision.

Project Name

Ergo Sum: A Crow a Day

Is this project related to the Visual Arts?

Yes

Will the artists associated with this project be financially compensated?

Yes

Project Description

The exhibition detailed in this application will be Hill-Stead's first to consider the natural world, which is critical to the museum's operations and stewardship.

A Crow a Day is a loan show conceived by Karen Bondarchuk (b. 1964) while her mother was suffering the effects of Alzheimer's Disease. Dedicating herself to a yearlong undertaking, making an original artwork every day was a process, she reasoned, akin to the repetitious demands of motherhood – or caretaking writ large. The artist chose to use playful, intelligent, and enigmatic crows, depicted on small wood panels, in ways emblematic of the human condition. The birds embody myriad postures, movements, and emotions, in surrounds both familiar and estranged, as one with Alzheimer's or deepening dementia may encounter, moment to moment.

The installation at HSM will honor the mother-daughter relationship between Karen and her mother, and that is also central to our own story of Theodate Pope and her mother Ada Brooks Pope.

Total estimated project budget

\$26,150.00

Project start/opening

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09/17/2026

Project end/closing

01/07/2027

Project venue

Hill-Stead Museum

Project town

Farmington, CT

Admission fees, attendance, and activity details

All exhibitions are included in museum admission, regardless of the fee or day of week. We have been overjoyed that exhibitions to date, in the still-new gallery, have exceeded attendance expectations; in two instances 50% or more year-to-date. Average walk-in attendance for the time period of this exhibition will be on view is 1670 people with about 95% including the gallery in their visit; we anticipate about 5-7% COMP admission. There will be 80 total days on view.

How do you intend to promote/market this project?

Hill-Stead utilizes various marketing formats: social media (Facebook and Instagram), monthly eblasts consisting of Executive Director messages and “Three Things to Do” specifically related to programming, paper fliers placed at museum entry points and posted at various destinations around town, and ads in the popular quarterly Connecticut Explored magazine that highlight on-going or upcoming exhibitions.

How is your organization going to use Roberts funding?

Funding will be used for payment to the artist and her representative, Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, for borrowing and safely transporting these paintings to and from Hill-Stead.

How will Roberts support be recognized?

Recognition of Roberts Foundation support will be included on all promotional materials and platforms (e.g., website, e-blasts and social media channels), prominently referenced together with any additional funders on the wall text panels in exhibition gallery, and verbally credited in Hill-Stead Executive Director’s remarks at the exhibition opening and related programs.

What is your organization’s definition of artistic excellence?

HSM’s Executive Director & CEO, Dr. Anna Swinbourne, honed her definition of artistic excellence while at The Museum of Modern Art where she organized award-winning exhibitions. She now leads the temporary exhibitions program that has become part of HSM’s roster.

Dr. Swinbourne holds that artistic excellence is grounded in a wholehearted openness to the creative expression in question and is guiding HSM with this principle in the forefront. As the best artists often envision what most cannot yet “see,” their artwork must be approached in the most unbiased fashion possible. That approach, however, must also include a rigor of analysis, and the asking of sincere and meaningful questions in interpreting the artwork’s possible messages.

Excellence in presenting art is achieved through unwavering devotion to continuing cultural dialogue, and contributing to the scholarly record, at the highest and most ambitious levels, while always maintaining intellectual and creative integrity.

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How does this project align with that definition, and how does it advance your mission?

When visitors look closely and immerse themselves in the works in this show, they will notice the subtleties intended by the artist. The small panel portraits of the crows are at times whimsical, enigmatic, and evoke puns juxtaposed with those that are darker in subject and more contemplative of life's journey. In creating the crow portraits, Bondarchuk "appropriated stylistic conventions of established traditions" from cave art to religious iconography, from Impressionism to Pop art. The evolution of creative expression is woven through these works.

From the perspective of the natural world and Hill-Stead's expansive greenspace campus, this show will shine a light on Theodate Pope Riddle's vision to safeguard her family estate for the public so that all who visit may partake of the natural bounty it offers—the excellence she dreamed of that we are stewards of today.

How will your audience and the community benefit from this project?

As we learned from one of our lecturers for the current exhibition, The Great Wave: Japonisme at Hill-Stead, and the deeply spiritual Buddhist relics acquired by Theodate Pope Riddle and her husband, everything in life, and the world, is connected. Karen Bondarchuk recognizes this too. Her artist's statement about viewing the Crows panels in their entirety can offer "a [possibility of] moment-to-moment transcendence if we are open to it." She equates this with the Buddhist notion of 'ordinary magic.' "

The mother-daughter relationship that was central to Bondarchuk's impetus for this series also offers a segue to Hill-Stead's own mother-daughter relationship. Ada Brooks Pope is the least known of Hill-Stead's principal characters. Delving into Ada's personality and motivations and sharing them with the public during the run of this show will honor her in a new way.

How will this project be evaluated?

This exhibition is timed to coincide with the busy fall and holiday seasons, and close before severe winter weather sets in. Therefore, we predict the typical robust visitation that is common during the 4th quarter. Attendance statistics are one of our best indicators of success.

Because we will be embarking on research into Ada Brooks Pope, who until now has been less understood than her husband, Alfred, the art collector, or her daughter, Theodate, the architect, there will be opportunities for mother-daughter centric programming wherein we will have an opportunity to enlighten visitors on Hill-Stead's matriarch. New research always draws audiences, sparks conversations, and elicits anecdotal feedback also critical to understanding exhibition success and resonance.

Does your organization produce an annual report?

Yes

Has your organization adopted a strategic plan?

Yes

Does your organization have a formal policy or organizational commitment to ensure that visual artists are financially compensated?

Yes

Grant Report

- [Hill-Stead-Museum-Grantee-Reporting-Form.pdf](#)

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Realted to the 2025 Prior Year Operating Budget attachement,in their January 2026 meeting, the Finance and Audit Board Committee voted to direct \$100,000 of surplus funds to the overdue maintenance of the museum's aging HVAC system. Related to the Targetete Action Plan attached to illustrate strategic planning, Hill-Stead is in the process of creating a new strategic plan for 2026-2031.

Have you contacted the Executive Director by email or phone to discuss this proposal?

Yes

Is your cover letter signed by your senior executive? on your letterhead? with your official office address?

Yes