Hill-Stead

Bringing Art to Life
We have been gifted with a phenomenal and irreplaceable treasure. We are Hill-Stead’s stewards, responsible for assuring that others will continue to be able to enjoy the Hill-Stead Museum’s unique offering. How can we not respond to securing its future?

— NINA MAYHALL HAYES

Bringing Art to Life invites you to be part of Hill-Stead Museum’s extraordinary legacy. Join us and explore how your gift will help build a dynamic and sustainable future for this renowned cultural institution and its vibrant community. Learn why this campaign is worthy of your support as it begins a transformative new chapter.
Our trailblazing founder, Theodate Pope Riddle (1867–1946), accomplished what most only dream of: she created something extraordinary.

At a time when women were not permitted to be architects, she designed a magnificent residence for her family. There, they built a home of exceptional beauty filled with artistic masterpieces—by Manet, Monet, Degas, and Cassatt—and within a glorious landscape, complete with a working farm. In this invigorating and harmonious setting, they strove to achieve wellbeing through the cultivation of the mind and a direct relationship with nature, inviting all who visited to share in the experience.

Extraordinary as well was Theodate’s charitable and forward-thinking act: upon her death, Hill-Stead, in its entirety, would be transformed into a museum intended exclusively “for the education and benefit of the [local] citizens and the general public.”

Since then, many individuals have worked diligently to honor Theodate’s legacy and generosity by preserving her unique vision and incredible gift.

Hill-Stead has always been a special place for us, and now for our family. From our earliest date nights spent enjoying the world-renowned poetry festival at dusk in the garden to family hikes around the extensive grounds with our children in tow, Hill-Stead Museum offers unique experiences for all ages. The great works of art by Monet, Degas, and Manet, together with decorative pieces such as the intricate chess pieces carved by hand, are all part of a trove of treasures to be cherished.

— TRICIA MELLY AND JEFF DUTKO
Our Vision for the Future

The current wave of this collective effort began in 2015 when the Museum’s Board of Directors and leadership embarked upon a strategic plan to become a preeminent and vibrant cultural destination worthy of its historical importance.

The backbone of this plan is a renovation of existing structures adjacent to the historic house, honoring Theodate’s remarkable architectural design to the utmost and never altering its current footprint. The new spaces will provide opportunities to engage visitors in meaningful ways and to modernize amenities, making for greater accessibility to all.

Funding for the expanded and educational programming that will occur in these new spaces is another crucial element of the plan. The Museum will grow its endowment to generate revenue through prudent investment strategies.
Planned renovations: a Key

This bird’s-eye architectural plan, keyed to thumbnail renderings, provides an overview of the renovations to be completed at Hill-Stead. Pages 8–17 present these renovations in greater detail.
Planned renovations include...

... modifying the former breezeway to create a more attractive and effective **Museum Entrance** (1a, 1b).
allowing seamless access from the renovated Museum Entrance into a newly imagined Gift Shop (2).

making minor but crucial modifications to the Makeshift Theater (3). These include the installation of direct ramp access from the main entrance to increase visitor accessibility, and the creation of a storage area—via a cleverly installed media screen—for a user-friendly classroom to be used by learners of all ages. This space will accommodate class meetings and lectures as well as hands-on art making activities.

making the Historic Stable Terrace—the outdoor area between Hill-Stead’s house and barn—a more enjoyable space for outdoor programming and gatherings (4).
transforming the “Drive Shed” into an experiential New Media Space (5). A variety of technologically advanced and interactive exhibits in this room will allow visitors to discover Hill-Stead’s remarkable history according to their own interests and at their own pace.
remaking the “Historic Carriage Barn” into a vibrant new Exhibition Gallery of nearly 1,400 square feet (6). This space will be capable of hosting exhibitions that have originated at Hill-Stead or have traveled from other venues. It will be easily adaptable for hosting lectures or special programming.
For the Exhibition Gallery and other prominent spaces within the renovation, Bringing Art to Life offers the opportunity to create a named legacy.
The Exhibition Gallery is the heart of this project, which will carry its vibrancy into the future. In it, the Museum will present in compelling visual fashion many of the stories of Hill-Stead and its time, such as the influence of Japanese printmaking on French Impressionists; Mary Cassatt’s overlooked roles as a suffragist and an art advisor to the country’s most influential collectors; the Pope family’s complete collection, bringing home the paintings that left before the Museum opened. It will also feature the decorative arts, amplifying the lively dialogue between the costume design of Theodate’s time and now. And it will not be limited to the historical, but will also explore and present contemporary art in all mediums.

These rotating exhibitions will be only the cornerstone of a wide variety of new programming aimed at engaging visitors from all walks of life and of all ages. For students, from kindergarten through university, the Museum will use the artworks on view in the renovated spaces to teach multidisciplinary lessons. Particular emphasis will be placed on acquiring and improving critical thinking and communication skills (both verbal and written) needed to succeed in any field or endeavor. For those no longer in school, the renovated spaces will become their classrooms for hands-on learning initiatives, lectures, and symposiums, all created in conjunction with the rotating exhibition(s) on view.

I have heard of so many people—relatives, students from Miss Porter’s, Avon Old Farms and Westover, and others with connections to Hill-Stead—who have said they first learned to love art and first decided to have art be part of their lives after experiencing Hill-Stead. I wish so much that we can find ways to bring Hill-Stead’s beauty into the lives of Hartford-area residents.

— Cary Edwards
Our $6.9 Million Campaign Goals

$4.3 MILLION TO FUND RENOVATION OF EXISTING SPACES

The rotating exhibitions and expanded educational programming held in these renovated spaces will:

Encourage increased visitation to Hill-Stead, as well as tourism activity in the Farmington Valley and Greater Hartford area.

Enhance regional and national awareness for Hill-Stead and its extraordinary collections, impressive architecture, and expansive 152-acre estate.

Support long-term institutional sustainability through greater revenue from membership and new and repeat attendance.

Strengthen our ability to collaborate with historical and cultural institutions, both those nearby and farther afield, to develop and offer more interdisciplinary events and programming.

$2.6 MILLION TO ENHANCE HILL-STEAD’S ENDOWMENT

Growing the Museum’s endowment will provide critical investment to fund operations and programming in the renovated space into the future.

Our Commitment and Your Support

The quiet phase of Bringing Art to Life began in the fall of 2017. Early support from the State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, in the form of a $1.75 million grant, will be used to cover a portion of the construction costs.

The Museum’s Capital Campaign Committee has since reached out to Hill-Stead’s leadership, long-term supporters and friends to secure advance gifts and pledges. Every board member has made a gift, and donors have enthusiastically endorsed the campaign goals. The amount raised from these efforts thus far exceeds $1.9 million.

Together, these funds total $3.65 million in support, more than halfway to our $6.9 million goal.

"Why do we continue to support Hill-Stead Museum after so many years? It’s not just the elegant house on the hill with the magnificent impressionist art—it’s about all the Museum’s many offerings. We especially enjoy the Musicale concerts, the Sunken Garden Poetry Festival, or a lovely stroll around the property. There’s always something exciting going on at the Hill-Stead Museum! 2022 marks the 75th Anniversary of the Hill-Stead Museum, and we would encourage you to join us in the celebration by donating to the Capital Campaign.

— BARBARA AND JERRY HESS

*as of September 17, 2020
Theodate was a pioneer and visionary of great accomplishment, ahead of her time and remarkable for countless reasons, including her unconventional decision not to hire others to create for her, but rather to use her financial resources to fund her own creations.

While not her only—Avon Old Farms and Westover Schools are also among her designs—Hill-Stead was her breakthrough masterpiece, and it surely bolstered confidence in herself and her abilities to create in a predominantly male world.

Through Bringing Art to Life, Hill-Stead Museum aspires to actively sustain Theodate’s creation of a cultural and educational center for visitors from near and far. We believe wholeheartedly that this aspiration will benefit her beloved Hill-Stead home—declared a National Historic Monument in 1991—and respectfully serve her legacy now and into the future.

We would be honored to have you join us and play a role in our success.

“Hill-Stead is an extraordinary place. The masterpieces in the collection would not look out of place on 40-foot high banners outside any of the great museums of the world. Yet sitting on a rocking chair outside Mr. Pope’s study, looking across the valley on a summer evening, it’s like the rest of the world doesn’t exist. The combination of the Impressionist dynamos who turned art upside down and the privacy of the family that gathered the paintings fresh from the studio to enjoy in their daily lives is astonishing and invigorating.”

— WILLIAM O’REILLY
Bringing Art to Life

Theodate’s plan for the future of Hill-Stead was as magnificent as her creation of it: long after her death, it should live on, serving and educating the public.

You can join us in realizing her dream.
To learn more visit www.hillstead.org/campaign

No other house museum in our part of the world equals the setting, grounds, gardens, and collections of the Hill-Stead. Paintings, objets d’art, furniture, and architecture never cease to delight and educate. For us residents of Farmington, the property is a sanctuary. Intellectual and aesthetic refreshment are always on offer, or an idyllic amble through its splendid acres. This blessing, we must never lose.

— CHARBRA AND LOFTUS JESTIN