THE ARTS

The following profiles of remarkable Hudson Valley women in the arts are part of a larger publication.

Women in the Hudson Valley: A Teaching Resource introduces more than 50 extraordinary women with ties to our region -- artists and athletes, lawyers and legislators, mapmakers and mathematicians. Whether you’re a teacher or a site educator, you’ll find a story to help students you work with see women.

Our aim is to stir interest, not to tell the women’s full stories or portray the complexity of their lives. We hope these mini-bios prompt you to dig more deeply. You can learn more about the other sections or download them here.

THE ARTS

Women of the Hudson River School
Candace Wheeler
Charlotte Perkins Gilman
Anna Mary Robertson ("Grandma") Moses
Eva Watson-Schütze
Edna St. Vincent Millay
Peggy Bacon
Doris Emrick Lee
Marion Greenwood
Ella Fitzgerald
Raquel Rabinovich
Lorraine Hansberry
Julia Santos Solomon

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Image on previous page: Marion Greenwood, 1940, Sam Shalat, Federal Art Project, Photographic Division, Archives of American Art.
1835-1913
Julie Hart Beers

After the death of her husband, Julia Hart Beers moved in with her brother William, a successful landscape artist. Determined to support herself and her two daughters, she devoted herself to art. Beers sold her paintings and also earned money escorting young women on sketching trips in the Adirondacks and Vermont.

1819-1883
Mary Josephine Walters

Walters is said to have been the only woman to study with Asher Durand, a leading Hudson River School painter. A full-time professional artist, Mary Josephine Walters's work was exhibited at the National Academy of Design, the San Francisco Art Association, and other important venues of her time.

1805-1857
Sarah Cole

Sister of Hudson River School founder Thomas Cole, Sarah Cole was a talented painter in her own right. She studied with Thomas, spent time at his Catskill home, and often took sketching trips with him. As a result, their subjects and style are sometimes similar. Sarah's daughter, Emily, was also a noted painter.

1819-1897
Eliza Pratt Greatorex

Known for etchings, pen-and-ink drawings, and landscape paintings, Eliza Pratt Greatorex was one of the first women elected to the National Academy of Design. When her husband died in 1858, she became a full-time artist, and supported herself and her children with her work.

Sometimes called the mother of interior design, Candace Wheeler was one of America's first female interior and textile designers.

Wheeler founded the Society of Decorative Arts and managed large projects, such as the interior of the women's building at the 1893 world's fair.

Wheeler was born in Delhi, NY, just outside the Hudson Valley. She spent much of her adult life in New York City, but in 1887 she started an artists' colony in Greene County with her husband and brother.

They named the colony Onteora Park, and in 2003 it was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Candace Wheeler was a teacher, writer, and role model for women who demanded space in field that up to that time was dominated by men.
Charlotte Perkins Gilman is best known today as the author of "The Yellow Wallpaper," a short story still widely read. Informed by her own experiences with an unsatisfying marriage and postpartum depression, the story suggests a connection between mental health and women's ability to control their own lives.

A prominent feminist, sociologist, and suffragist, Gilman was a popular speaker. Her topics included women's need for economic independence and changes to the division of labor within the family. She explored the history of traditional marriage and motherhood in "Women and Economics" (1898); during her lifetime it was her most influential book and was translated into seven languages.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman was not a New Yorker, but she often visited the Byrdcliffe Colony in Woodstock to write, socialize with other artists, and find peace and quiet. In addition to short stories and non-fiction, she wrote poetry, plays, novels, magazine articles, memoirs, and "The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography."
Anna Mary Robertson Moses was a self-taught artist whose work is known for vivid colors and scenes of rural America. She was in her seventies when her work came to public attention. In 1938, a New York City art collector saw her work in a drugstore window and told her he would make her famous; she and her daughters were amused.

The following year, three of Moses’s paintings were included in a members-only show at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). In 1940, she had her first solo show, “What a Farm Wife Painted,” at Galerie St. Etienne in New York. From then on Moses’s reputation grew. She won prizes and exhibited throughout the U.S. and eventually worldwide.

Born near Saratoga, Moses moved to Rensselaer County in 1905 and remained there the rest of her life. Anna Mary Robertson Moses's paintings, however, remain popular and are part of many museum collections today.

Eva Watson-Schütze was known for romantic, powerfully composed photographic portraits. Born in New Jersey she, like many late-19th-century photographers, had planned to be a painter.

Eva opened a portrait studio in Philadelphia in 1897 and quickly developed a significant reputation. She exhibited in the U.S. and Europe and frequently wrote for photography magazines.

In 1901, Eva married a lawyer and opened a new studio in Chicago. They spent their summers in Woodstock.

In 1902, Eva was elected to an important group that promoted photography as an art as well as a form of documentation. The next year she helped found Photo-Secession, which also promoted photography as fine art.

For the rest of her life, Eva Watson-Schütze promoted photography as art and exhibited her work in influential galleries around the world.
Edna St. Vincent Millay
Dutchess & Columbia Counties

Millay was one of the most popular poets of her time, and in 1923 won a Pulitzer Prize for "The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver."

Born in Maine, Millay and her sisters were raised by a feisty single mother who exposed them to the arts.

Millay had no money for college, but the YWCA National Training School's director recognized her potential and helped her attend Vassar College.

After graduating, Millay lived in New York City, but found its distractions made writing difficult. In 1925, she and her husband bought a 700-acre estate in Columbia County.

Steepletop, as they called it, became Edna St. Vincent Millay's primary home. Her work and life has become emblematic of female liberation and the Jazz Age.

First Fig
My candle burns at both ends; It will not last the night; But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends- It gives a lovely light!

Second Fig
Safe upon the solid rock the ugly houses stand: Come and see my shining place built upon the sand!
Margaret Frances "Peggy" Bacon was a writer, portrait artist, caricaturist, and illustrator. She contributed to "The New Yorker," "Vanity Fair," and other publications.

Born in Maine, Bacon studied at the Art Students League in New York City and with Andrew Dasburg, a Woodstock-based painter.

In 1920, Bacon married another painter, and moved to London. When they returned to the U.S. the following year, they divided their time between Woodstock and New York City.

Bacon illustrated more than 60 books, 19 of which she wrote. In 1952, one of her mysteries, "The Inward Eye," was nominated for an Edgar Allan Poe Award.
Doris Emrick Lee, a painter and book illustrator, was first known for relatively simple depictions of rural people and landscapes. Beginning in the 1950s, while her subjects stayed the same, her style became increasingly abstract.

Born in Illinois, she established a studio in New York City in the 1930s, but soon settled in Woodstock. Lee first received acclaim for "Thanksgiving," which won a prestigious prize at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1935.

She was soon hired to paint two murals for the General Post Office in Washington, D.C. (Now a federal office building.) During the late 1940s and 1950s, she produced work for "Life" magazine.

"A painting is a thing in itself, like a musical composition," she said, "It has a life of its own."
Marion Greenwood was an American social realist painter whose work was popular in the U.S. and Mexico in the 1920s.

She is best known for her murals, but she also created easel paintings, prints, and frescoes.

Greenwood was one of two women artist/correspondents during World War II. Her paintings of wounded soldiers and their occupational therapy are in the National Archives.

As a teenager, Greenwood made multiple visits to Yaddo in Saratoga Springs. Late in life she made her home in Woodstock.

Greenwood is shown here painting a mural for the WPA at the Red Hook Housing Project, Brooklyn.

Image: 1940, Sam Shalat, Federal Art Project, Photographic Division, Archives of American Art
Known as the First Lady of Song and the Queen of Jazz, Ella Fitzgerald was a musical genius. In the early 1920s, her family moved from Virginia to Yonkers (Westchester). She was a good student and studied dance and music at an early age. When Fitzgerald was 15, her mother died leaving her in the care of a stepfather and an aunt. The situation was not a nurturing one; she began skipping school, and her grades suffered. Legal trouble landed her in an orphanage and then the New York Training School for Girls in Hudson (Columbia). When she escaped, she was homeless for a time.

In 1934, Fitzgerald debuted at one of the Apollo Theater’s first amateur nights and won first prize -- $25. The next year she began playing with a well-known jazz orchestra. By 1938, she was topping the charts with songs like, "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," some of which she co-wrote. Fitzgerald continued with the band, singing, recording, and writing, until she began a solo career in 1942. In the 1950s and '60s she was well known for her collaborations with trumpeter Louis Armstrong.

Ella Fitzgerald was the first African American woman to receive a Grammy Award and went on to win 13 Grammys, including a Lifetime Achievement Award in 1967. She also earned a National Medal of Arts, a Presidential Medal of Freedom, the University of Southern California’s Magnum Opus Award, an honorary doctorate in music from Harvard University, and many other honors.
Raquel Rabinovich uses a variety of materials and her wide ranging work that includes drawings, collages, paintings, sculptures, and installations. She often works in series—a slow process of unfolding that requires viewers to experience her creations slowly. One example is a string of large, stone, installations along the Hudson River. Rabinovich calls these “Emergences,” and one is pictured above. The stones disappear from view at high tide and gradually reemerge when the tide ebbs.

Rabinovich was born in Argentina and studied art in Buenos Aires, Paris, and Edinburgh. She has lived and worked in Rhinebeck (Dutchess County) since 1967. Raquel Rabinovich has received numerous grants and awards including a Lee Krasner Award for Lifetime Achievement from The Pollock-Krasner Foundation. She also is included in the oral history program of the Smithsonian Institution Archives of American Art.
In 1959, Lorraine Hansberry became the first African American writer to have a play produced on Broadway: "A Raisin in the Sun," a groundbreaking exploration of racial segregation. At 29, she also became the youngest playwright, first black author, and fifth woman to win a New York Drama Critic's Circle Award.

In her short life, Hansberry published 10 plays and stories. She also wrote a screenplay for "A Raisin in the Sun," which was released in 1961 starring Ruby Dee and Sidney Poitier. The film was remade in 2008 with Sean Combs and Phylicia Rashad.

Born in Chicago, Hansberry graduated from public schools and then entered the University of Wisconsin where she began a lifetime of activism. In 1950, she left for New York to pursue a writing career and attend The New School. Hansberry worked on Henry Wallace's 1948 presidential campaign, fought evictions in Harlem, worked with W. E. B. Du Bois, wrote for newspapers, and joined the civil rights movement.

Lorraine Hansberry spent the last few years of her life in Croton-on-Hudson where it is said she loved to walk in the woods surrounding her home. After her death, her ex-husband, who had remained a friend, published “To Be Young, Gifted and Black,” a play and best-selling book based on her life and unpublished writing.

Julia Santos Solomon is a Dominican-American multi-media artist. Her work includes drawings, paintings, sculpture, fashion, and illustration.

She lives and works in Woodstock (Ulster County), exhibits regularly throughout the Hudson Valley, and is archived by the Smithsonian.

Santos Solomon’s art reflects her experience as a woman with roots in both the Caribbean and the U.S. She consults with students and provides professional development programs for teachers.
LISTEN OR WATCH

Alice Morgan Wright: She Inspires, WMHT, Aug. 2017, 1-minute video. This modernist sculptor (b. 1881, Albany) also campaigned for women’s rights. The Smithsonian American Art Museum website has a short bio and samples of her work. (Wright is not profiled in this guide.)

Edna St. Vincent Millay: She Inspires, WMHT, Nov. 2017, 1-minute video. Or, visit the Edna St. Vincent Millay Society’s website and listen as she reads her poems.


Lorraine Hansberry: Sighted Eyes/Feeling Heart, PBS, American Masters Series, first aired January 2018, 1 hour, 54 minutes. Website features a trailer, biography, timeline, and more. Available on DVD and to stream via California Newsreel.


READ

Candace Wheeler, 7 pp, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC. Background material and full-color samples of her work prepared for a 2001 exhibit.


Remember the Ladies: Women of the Hudson River School, Nancy Siegel and Jennifer Krieger, 36 pp with many reproductions, Thomas Cole National Historic Site, 2010. This collection of essays was written to accompany a special exhibit.


Six Female Artists of the Hudson River School, Alexandra Kiely, 8 pp, DailyArtMagazine.com, 2017. This is a blog post including reproductions of several paintings plus a bibliography.


A Studio Visit with Julia Santos Solomon, Ann Hutton, 2 pp, Hudson Valley News, December 8, 2016. This is a short, interesting interview with the artist.

**VISIT**

Beatrix Farrand Garden, at Bellefield on the grounds of the FDR Home and Presidential Library, Hyde Park, Dutchess County. The Beatrix Farrand Garden Association offers 45-minute guided tours, by arrangement. There are also occasional special events and a 15-minute, free, audio tour.

Edna St. Vincent Millay Society at Steepletop, Austerlitz, Columbia County. Tours are about two hours and can be tailored to meet the interests and needs of your group. In spring 2018, the Society launched a fundraising campaign to keep the site open.

Hudson River Valley Heritage, online exhibits, e.g., Women of the Hudson Valley in Art (including some artists profiled here), Best Threads, and A Notion to Sew.

Julia Santos Solomon, Smithsonian Archived Artist. Bio and samples of her work.

Maple Grove Cemetery, Hoosick Falls, Rensselaer. Grandma Moses’ burial site.

Raquel Rabinovich: Smithsonian American Art Museum website and her site.
Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, SUNY New Paltz, Ulster County. The museum’s collection includes works by women of the Hudson River School and other artists with ties to the region. School groups are welcome. Ask the educator to highlight Hudson Valley women. An online exhibit, American Scenery: Different Views in Hudson River School Painting includes work by women.

Thomas Cole National Historic Site, Catskill, Greene County, welcomes students. With advance notice, site educators will prepare programs and tours focused on Sarah Cole who studied with her brother, Thomas, and often visited Catskill.

Woodstock Artists Association and Museum, Woodstock, Ulster County. WAAM is eager to engage youth in the arts. It offers museum visits and in-school programs on art making, critical thinking, visual literacy, and problem solving.

Woodstock Byrdcliffe Guild, Woodstock, Ulster County. Walking tours by appointment to see the founders' home, ceramics studio, and historic theater. Also: exhibits, performances, classes, and workshops. Permanent collection includes Arts and Crafts furniture, decorative arts, and two-dimensional works online at Hudson Valley Visual Art Collections Consortium.

MORE HUDSON VALLEY MUSEUMS WITH ART COLLECTIONS

Museum educators and curators are often eager to tailor programs or tours to your interests. So, go ahead, ask about art made by Hudson Valley women.

Albany Institute of History & Art, Albany
Art OMI, Columbia
Dia Beacon, Dutchess
Empire State Plaza Art Collection, Albany
Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Dutchess
Hudson River Museum, Westchester
Katonah Museum of Art, Westchester
Neuberger Museum of Art, Westchester
New York State Museum, Albany
Storm King Art Center, Orange
LESSON PLANS AND OTHER TEACHER RESOURCES

**Art Portfolio Advantage.** Professional development for teachers and advice for students from Julia Santos Solomon.

**Edith Wharton’s Lily Bart - How Authors Can Impact a Region** and **Landscape Design and Archaeology-Staatsburg and Hyde Park**, high school lesson plans, Hudson River Valley Artists & Writers, Hudson River Valley Institute, Marist College. **Millay Colony for the Arts**, Austerlitz, Columbia County: ask about their teacher professional development opportunities.

**Woodstock Artists Association and Museum**, Woodstock, Ulster County. WAAM is eager to provide professional development for teachers on art making, critical thinking, visual literacy, and problem solving.

BACKGROUND READING


Edna St. Vincent Millay: *The Academy of American Poets* has a short biography and 60 of Millay’s poems. *The Poetry Foundation* has poems, podcasts (including readings), and scholarly articles.

**Edith Wharton and the Hudson Valley**, The Hudson River Valley Review, Vol. 23, No. 1, Autumn 2006, Hudson River Valley Institute, Marist College. Four articles explore Wharton’s relationship to our region and its artists.

