

SARAH SLIFER SWIFT BELLEROCHÉ & SARGENT HISTORIC ARTISTS' HOMES JAPANESE PRINTS

art

# New England

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Art Seen

(14) Sarah Slifer Swift, dancer, teacher, choreographer, and founder of MAGMA, teaching ballet. Photo: Eoin Vincent. (18) Image from the HAHS photography exhibit installed at James Castle House, 2025. Courtesy of the Boise City Department of Arts & History. Photo: Wytiske van Keulen. (20) Patrick Martinez, *Cost of Living*, 2025, featured work as part of The Boston Public Art Triennial. Photo: Faith Ninivaggi. (28) Albert de Beller Roche, *Madame Rosenthal*, 1908, Lithograph, 19¼ x 17¾". Courtesy of the North Shore Family's Private Collection. (32) The New Bedford City Hall installation of DATMA's *Being Seen: Celebrating SouthCoast Pride*. Photo: Richard Gormley. (50) Sara Cwynar, *Encyclopedia Grid (Weather)*, 2024. UV print on Red Hot car paint mounted on Dibond in metal artist's frame 42¾ x 34¾ x 1". Edition of 3; 2 APs. © Sara Cwynar. Courtesy the artist and 52 Walker, New York. Photo: Kerry McFate.

# Artists' Homes and Studios Offer Sanctuary and Inspiration

The romantic vision of the artist's studio and home, the environment in which an artist creates, has reached mythic status. Many books have been written on the subject. A brief list of a few recent ones includes the Rizzoli-published coffee table book, *Inside the Homes of Artists: For Art's Sake*. While we may only get a peak at an artist's home or studio after they've passed, these authors take us on an intimate photo tour of the private homes of more than twenty internationally acclaimed living artists. *The Artist's Studio, A Cultural History* was thoroughly researched by James Hall and published by Thames and Hudson, providing an academic, textbook approach to the subject.

A stunningly illustrated book was published by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA) in 2017 to accompany the exhibition *Matisse in the Studio*, which also points to another trend among museums to include elements of the artist's workplace within the context of exhi-

bitions of those artists' works. One of the most successful curatorial efforts in this regard was the spectacular exhibition *O'Keeffe and Moore: Giants of Modern Art* that this writer viewed at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts before it ended its tour at the MFA in January 2025. The show artfully included recreations of both Moore's and O'Keeffe's studios with the actual objects the artists collected for inspiration.

Some artists' homes reach cult status, becoming tourist destinations like Casa Azul, the home and studio in Mexico City of the much-loved painter Frida Kahlo (1907–1954). For those who find the allure of visiting a site that fostered an artists' creativity hard to resist, Historic Artists' Homes & Studios (HAHS), a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, offers a wealth of guidance. This national network of sixty-one sites across the United States recently announced the addition of nineteen affiliate members, bringing their

total membership to eighty, the largest expansion of the organization since its founding in 2000, making their 25th anniversary in 2025 something to celebrate. *Art New England* spoke to HAHS director, Valerie Balint, earlier this year in conjunction with the announcement of the new HAHS affiliate members.

Balint's enthusiasm for her job grew out of her life experience. "I come from a creative family and when I was young, I took a trip to Chesterwood, the home of sculptor Daniel Chester French (1850–1931). It made a deep impression... I went on to study law, but it wasn't satisfying. I got an internship at Chesterwood. That experience was so immersive, something about being in the midst of it, where all that amazing work happened, I found my passion." Located in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, Chesterwood provides a convenient opportunity for New Englanders who share Balint's interest in the process of artmaking to start a summer road trip exploring the sites profiled in the HAHS portfolio.

Balint went on to spend seventeen years working at Olana, the Hudson, NY, home of American landscape painter Frederic Edwin Church (1826–1900). Church played a central role in defining the Hudson River School of luminist landscape painters. He was also instrumental in the design and construction of the Orientalist-style mansion that sits atop a hill surrounded by 250 beautifully landscaped acres. Balint was struck by the "exotic opulence" of Olana. It is a member of HAHS along with seventeen other sites in New York alone. These include the Arthur Dove/Helen Torr Cottage in Centerport, the



Edward Hopper House Museum & Study Center in Nyack, and the Pollack-Krasner House and Study Center in East Hampton, among others. Included in the new list of affiliate members, and for this writer the most exciting additions, are the Carolee Schneemann (1939–2019) Foundation in New Paltz, NY, and the home of Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010) in Chelsea, NY. These two giants of feminist art have inspired many young artists today.

In discussing the significance for artists being able to visit the place where great art was made, Balint said, "these sites act as an historical bridge, but they are living sites, they have the DNA of the artist who lived and worked there. It allows for igniting a spark in yourself when you go to someone's home as an artist." Balint also acknowledges that, "Everybody understands the concept of 'home'. Ordinary people can access that. It helps to overcome placing the artist as 'other'. There's a commonality in 'being there'. When you go to a museum you see the output and when you go to an artist's home or studio you see the messiness of life—the input."

In 2020, Balint stewarded the publication of the first *Guide to Historic Artists' Homes & Studios*. Although the book does not include the most recent affiliate members, it still provides a beautifully illustrated resource to enable the planning of a cross-country inspirational trip. Even if we limit ourselves to New England the variety of sites is enough to keep you busy all summer. Also available is a convenient folded brochure listing the sites geographically starting with the northeast region.

To demonstrate the wide variety of experiences throughout our area within easy reach by car, try choosing one site to visit in each New England state. They might include the late-Georgian style Florence Griswold Museum built in 1817 in Old Lyme, Connecticut. It became the center for American Impressionism in the early 19th century. Winslow Homer's (1836–1920) intimate studio sits on the edge of a peninsula in Prouts Neck, Maine. It is maintained by the Port-



Above, from left: Frederic Church's Olana. Photo: Peter Aaron/OTTO, courtesy Olana State Historic Site. The Casting Room in the Daniel Chester French's Studio at Chesterwood. Photo: Jason Baker, courtesy Chesterwood. Left: Edward Hopper's bedroom-studio. Photo: Will Ellis, courtesy Edward Hopper House Museum and Study Center.

This independence has spurred the inclusion of affiliate sites that recognize the importance of the legacy of women artists, the contributions of Asian-American artists, along with Native and Indigenous artists in the northwest and plains regions, and self-taught Black artists in western New York and Mississippi.

*Where Art Begins: The People and Places of the Historic Artists' Homes and Studios Program* is on view through November 8, 2025, at the James Castle (1899–1977) House in Boise, Idaho. Featuring over sixty striking photographs of artists in their creative habitat from Georgia O'Keeffe in her New Mexico compound and Norman Rockwell in his Massachusetts studio to James Castle at home in Idaho, these images offer a powerful argument about the importance of preserving artist's spaces, acting as inspiration and a reminder of the importance of real-life, physical encounters in our increasingly virtually lived lives.

Cynthia Close is contributing editor for Documentary Magazine and writes regularly for Art New England and several other publications.

artistshomes.org



Above: The property of Dog Mountain/Home of Stephen Huneck Gallery. Courtesy of Friends of Dog Mountain, Inc.