



# Artists & Creatives We Lost in 2019

December 28, 2019

by Pat Rogers

In 2019, the world lost a number of talented artists and people who contributed to the creative fields. All made their mark on the Hamptons community or played a part in its long history of art making.

## **Steve Poleskie, Painter & Aerial Sky Drawing Performer**

Died December 27, 2019. He was 81. Known for his aerial sky drawing performances, Poleskie first made his name in the 1950s as part of the Tenth Street School in New York. Friends with contemporaries who included Willem and Elaine de Kooning, Frank O'Hara and others, he rejected Abstract Expressionism and studied figurative painting with Social Realist Raphael Soyer. In 1963, Poleskie opened Chiron Press, the first fine art screen printing shop in New York and printed works of notable artists of the times including Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Motherwell, Helen Frankenthaler and others. Poleskie was born in 1938 in Pringle, PA. Click [here](#) to read about his life and his art.

## **Woody Vasulka, Video Art Pioneer & Founder of The Kitchen**

Died on December 20, 2019. He was 82. Born in Brno, Czechoslovakia in 1937, Woody Vasulka was a pioneer in video art and was invited to exhibit at The Whitney. In the early seventies, he and his wife, Steina Vasulka, founded [The Kitchen](#), a non-profit based in New York where experimental artists and composers could collaborate. Through The Kitchen, he helped foster early careers of numerous artists including Laurie Anderson, Robert Longo, Kiki Smith and others. Woody Vasulka also taught in Buffalo, NY and later moved to Sante Fe, NM where he and Steina Vasulka helped to launch the city's Art and Science Laboratory. Click [here](#) to read about his life and his art.

## **Steven M. Jacobson, Playwright, Art Collector & Guild Hall Trustee**

Died December 8, 2019 in New York. He was 87. A playwright, art collector, attorney and dedicated supporter of the arts, Steven M. Jacobson divided his time between New York City, Miami and East Hampton, NY. Born in Brooklyn on January 16, 1932, he was also trustee of Guild Hall. Click [here](#) to read about his life.

## **Creighton Berry, Artist & Illustrator**

Died on December 7, 2019 in Westhampton, NY. He was 96. The Long Island artist and [author](#) was born in 1923 in New York City and had lived the latter part of his life in Quogue, NY. A World War II veteran and graduate of Pratt Institute, Creighton Berry began his career as a commercial illustrator and was the first African American Executive Art Director of Gimbel's, a New York department store. He was a free lance illustrator from 1969 until retiring in 1989. A funeral service will be held in January 2020. Click [here](#) to read more about his life. Click [here](#) to view a Newsday video interview with the artist in 2017.

## **Michael Hinkemeyer, Author**

Died on November 28, 2019. He was 79. An author of suspense, mystery and historical romance novels had 21 published books to his credit. The long-time resident of East Hampton, NY was born in St. Cloud, MN on October 18, 1940. He was a docent at the Pollock-Krasner House & Study Center for over 10 years. Click [here](#) to read about his life.

## **Gahan Wilson, Cartoonist Commentator**

Died on November 21, 2019 in Scottsdale, AZ. He was 89. A cartoonist with a black humor bent, his work appeared in The New Yorker, National Lampoon, Playboy and other magazines. A documentary on his life and work, "[Born Dead, Still Weird](#)" was released in 2013. Born in Evanston, IL on February 18, 1930, Wilson [was a long-time Sag Harbor resident](#). Click [here](#) to read more about his life and work.

## **Owain Hughes, Author, Art Assistant & Entrepreneur**

Died on November 19, 2019. He was 75. An author and entrepreneur, Owain Hughes was born in Bath, England in November 1943. Graduating with a Masters Degree from Oxford University, he moved to The Hamptons in the seventies and was an art assistant to Jack Youngerman in Bridgehampton, NY, building his own home nearby. Later on, Hughes owned an art gallery and founded a retail shop in New York City. He is survived by his wife, the artist and art dealer Kimberly Goff, as well as a son and daughter. Click [here](#) to read more about his life.

## **Duncan McClellan Haile, Art Foundation Founder**

Died on November 4, 2019. He was 76. While not an artist himself, Duncan Haile devoted his life to ensuring the art of his younger brother, Chris Haile, and mother, Lucia Haile, had a life beyond theirs. The long-time Sag Harbor resident founded the Haile Art Foundation in 2007 to further their respective bodies of work and was an active part of the Hamptons art community. Click [here](#) to read about his life.



Duncan Haile at Sagg Main Beach.

## **John Giorno, Poet & Performance Artist**

Died on October 11, 2019 in New York after a heart attack. He was 82. Muse to Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg and Ugo Rondinone, his husband, Giorno was a poet and known for instigating the movement of poetry into everyday life through the founding of the non-profit promotion company, [Giorno Poetry System](#), and the creation of the [Dial-A-Poem](#), which brought spoken poetry to the masses via telephone calls. Born on December 4, 1936, John Giorno grew up in Brooklyn and Roslyn Heights, Long Island. He was married to the Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone and lived on the North Fork and New York. Click [here](#) to read more about his life and his art.

## **Mary Lee Abbott, Ab-Ex Artist**

Died on August 23, 2019 in Southampton, NY. She was 98. An Abstract Expressionism painter, Mary Abbott's work is frequently bold, colorful and inspired by nature or music. She was compatriots with Jackson Pollock, Robert Motherwell, Franz Kline and Willem de Kooning, who she was romantically involved with for a time. Abbott was a rare female member of the Artist's Club. In the early fifties, her art was exhibited at the Stable Gallery, Tibor de Nagy, Kootz and Tanager.

Born on July 27, 1921 in New York, Mary Abbott began life as a debutante as her mother was part of the socially prominent Grinnell family, [according to the New York Times](#). Her ties to Southampton and The Hamptons began early and would continue, at times, throughout her life. In the forties, she began studying art with George Grosz at the Art Students League and remained an active artist throughout her life. She was represented by the McCormick Gallery of Chicago. Click [here](#) to read more about her life and her art at the gallery's website. Click [here](#) to read an obituary from the New York Times.

## **Carolee Schneeman, Feminist Artist**

Died on March 6, 2019 of breast cancer in New Paltz, NY. She was 79. Carolee Schneeman was a groundbreaking performance artist whose work continues to influence artists today. Known as a feminist artist, Schneeman integrated her own body into her art to explore the relationship between power and bodies in bold and innovative ways. In 1964, in both Paris and New York, she gained notoriety with her kinetic performance piece "[Meat Joy](#)," which featured eight performers writhing in paint, paint brushes and paper while playing with meat, poultry and raw fish. Click [here](#) to read more about her art.

Born on October 12, 1939 in Fox Chase, PA., her art did not receive critical or gallery attention for many years. In 1996, an exhibition of her work was presented at the New Museum. In 2015, a traveling retrospective was organized by the Museum der Moderne Salzburg in Austria and was shown at MoMA's PS 1. Her work is part of MoMA's permanent collection. In 2017, Schneeman was awarded the Venice Biennale's Golden Lion for lifetime achievement.

Lesser known is the fact that Schneeman performed at Ashawagh Hall in East Hampton, NY. Scheeman presented *Interior Scroll* on August 29, 1975 at the invitation of exhibition organizers and artists [Joan Semmel](#) and [Joyce Kozloff](#). *Interior Scroll* featured the artist extracting a paper scroll from her vagina and reading the text aloud while standing nearly nude atop a table. Her piece at Ashawagh Hall was captured by photographer Fred W. McDarrah. Click [here](#) to see. Artists with work in the exhibition, "Women Here and Now," included Miriam Schapiro, Audrey Flack, Jane Freilicher, Jane Wilson, Perle Fine, Hedda Sterne and Elaine de Kooning.

Click [here](#) to read more about Carolee Schneeman's life.



"Eye Body: 36 Transformative Actions for Camera" by Carolee Schneemann, 1963/2005. Eighteen gelatin silver prints. 24 x 20" each (61 x 50.8 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the artist. © 2017 Carolee Schneemann. Courtesy MoMA PS1.

## **Gary Bartoloni, Photographer & Photography Gallery Owner**

Died on February 28, 2019 of a heart attack in Florida. He was 64. Bartoloni was a photographer who owned the art gallery The Light Registry in Greenport, NY on the North Fork. He formerly lived in Bridgehampton and Sag Harbor before relocating to FL. His work was exhibited across the East End as well as in Florida. Click [here](#) to read about his life and work.

## **Ruth Jacobsen, Artist & Memoirist**

Died on February 19, 2019 in Southampton, NY. She was 86. Ruth Jacobsen survived the Holocaust as a child—living in Germany before the family fled to Holland—and emigrated to the United States after the death of her family. Born on April 8, 1932 in Frankenburg, Germany, Ruth Jacobsen was a textile artist after settling into her new life in America. As a fine artist, she is known for her collage. One of her large work is installed at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Fork in Bridgehampton, NY.

Her major body of work was inspired by family photographs that were given to her but not opened for 40 years. Jacobsen ripped the images and made art with them and wrote accounts of the memories that rose with each photograph. This work was featured in the book "[Rescued Images: Memories of a Childhood in Hiding](#)." Click [here](#) to read more about her life and art.

## **Denis Patrick Sheahan, Publisher**

Died on January 2, 2019 after a short illness. He was 88. Sheahan was the founder and publisher of

Sheahan Publications of Westhampton, NY, which published magazines including HOUSE, Business Journal, Builder & Remodeler, The Nassau Lawyer, The Suffolk Lawyer and others. He also created and produced HOUSE/TV. Born August 20, 1930, he was a veteran of the Korean war whose love of the newspaper business began early: first as a delivery boy and later as a copy boy for The World Telegraph, a reporter for The Hudson Dispatch and a news editor for The World Telegram. He founded Sheahan Publication with his wife, Christine Sheahan, in the late seventies and unveiled their first publication, HOUSE, in 1981. Click [here](#) to read more about his life and work.

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