

# The Hawthorne School of Art

## 108 YEARS

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### CALLING ALL “ART ANGELS”

The historic Charles Hawthorne School of Art in Provincetown is for sale. Her owners face a pressing dilemma. The recent death of artist Peter Gee, the school’s principal benefactor, teacher, and co-director, is the precipitating factor in the sale, explains Olga Opsahl, his widow and co-director. The family cannot continue to maintain the property and run the school. Yet, the idea of selling the school — a place that has inspired, housed, and nurtured generations of artists, and the source of what has become the largest and most vital art colony in America— to developers, who will turn it into condos is terrible to contemplate. All who are connected to the magical history of the school and its stunning dune setting are crossing their fingers and hoping another art angel will buy it with the intention of preserving the creative traditions that have survived there for 108 years.

Opsahl recently appeared on ABC’s “Chronicle” and spoke of her dream for the property. She relayed the magnificent history of the Hawthorne School of Art (originally the Cape Cod School of Art), retained since the studio-barn was first built by Charles Hawthorne in 1899. The original milk-paint ceiling is still intact, the student lockers continue to store artists’ brushes and paints; easels are stored away for the next painting class, and the model stand awaits the next nude body to pose on its old wooden boards. “We are hoping to pass these creative traditions and the physical beauty of the property on to the next artist or historic preservationist,” Opsahl says. She is seeking an art angel to take over the school and hopefully, preserve its beauty and continue to use it for the arts. “We hope the creative spirit of those who have worked here will continue to thrive.”

The original Hawthorne studio barn, listed on the National Historic Register, sits atop one of the highest points in Provincetown and is surrounded by over 3 acres of unspoiled vegetation and sand dunes. The landscape is scented with bayberry and blueberry bushes every summer, and the numerous gardens offer unparalleled sites for artists to paint from nature. The school has with amazing luck been passed down from one generation to the next without much change to its old Cape Cod feel, historic structures, and natural landscape. After Hawthorne’s death, renowned teacher Hans Hofmann continued the legacy and in 1935 began offering classes in the summer. Hofmann’s profound understanding of modernism and energetic, spontaneous painting initiated the American Expressionist movement. Many young artists, who would become the country’s foremost painters, came to Provincetown to study with Hofmann. Morris Davidson bought the property in the late 1940’s and ran the Davidson School of Art into the 1970’s. Gee and Opsahl opened the Hawthorne School in 1994 after a memorable chat on the front porch with Joe Hawthorne, Charles Hawthorne’s son. Joe simply said, “Why don’t you open the school again!” Students were inspired by Gee’s classes which were based on his experimental color theory.

The family is open to selling the entire school property or part of it, and is willing to consider other options. In a recent piece in the ABC show “Chronicle” and an article in the Provincetown Banner Opsahl passionately expressed her love and commitment to the place. “This is the place where the entire Provincetown art movement began, in this barn. It is old Cape Cod at its best.”