



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Hartford Public Library Receives Roberts Foundation “Creation of New Work” Award**

***Image attached – Drawing of Marilyn Parkinson Thrall’s proposed sculpture for Hartford Public Library.***

**(Hartford, CT: Dec. 15, 2020)** – Hartford Public Library was awarded \$20,000 by the Edward C. and Ann T. Roberts Foundation through its “Creation of New Work” program to support the development of a sculpted piece by artist Marilyn Parkinson Thrall. When completed in late 2021, the sculpture will be on permanent display in the Library’s Hartford History Center (HHC).

The Edward C. and Ann T. Roberts Foundation is a private, special purpose foundation founded in 1964 by Ned and Sunny Roberts. The foundation is dedicated to supporting and encouraging excellence in the arts throughout the Capital Region.

"The Roberts Foundation established the Creation of New Work grant in 2003 to encourage excellence in the arts by fostering collaborations between artists and arts organizations in the Greater Hartford area," said Lisa Curran, Executive Director. "For 2020, we wanted to celebrate the Year of the Woman and the 100th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment by showcasing the work of a local female artist. Hartford Public Library's exceptional proposal gave us the opportunity to support Marilyn Parkinson Thrall's incomparable talent as well as fund an art piece that will embody a pivotal episode in Hartford's history."

Thrall will create a three-dimensional dress depicting the popular design of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century suffragette era. The base of the dress will be encircled with period hats - symbolic of the women who ran for office in 1920, figuratively throwing their hats into the political arena. The sash will be marked with the City of Hartford crest and the skirt will be made of fabric, with fabric printed voter registration cards stitched together to form a cascade of local names. The Greater Hartford artist will work closely with Hartford History Center staff in selecting and digitizing the cards and in authenticating the elements within the sculpture.

"I have always been interested in visual perceptions and how they relate and connect us in a society. As an artist, I often use the dress as a metaphor with the idea that it is used as a symbol for something

else... Clothing has the ability to reflect a sense of self and an image to present to the world. In researching the history of suffragettes and their struggle to gain the right to vote, I found a direct correlation to the idea of the dress metaphor. They realized the power of change through perception.”

The proposed artwork will give voice to the many Hartford women who, despite barriers, registered to vote in this city in October 1920. Through Hartford’s Voter Registration Records, the public is introduced to a diverse contingent of civic-minded women - whether single, married or widowed; Jewish or Christian; black or white; housewives, stenographers, undertakers; native born or foreign-born - who took advantage of this long-fought opportunity to register to vote.

The HHC houses a remarkable record of Hartford’s public history including the Town and City Clerk Archives dating from 1639 through 1970, the records of the Hartford City Parks Commission from the 1850s through the present, and Hartford’s voter registration records from the 1840s through the 2000s. Taken together these three huge collections contain a wealth of information about Hartford and its citizens, reflecting the city’s rapid growth and its increasing diversity.

“It is our contention that all history is local and all stories relevant. This artwork hones that point. With a sculpture that draws on the intimacy of apparel adorned by the names of women seldom recorded, it personalizes the struggle to pass the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment and emphasizes the critical role we all play in our democratic process,” said Brenda Miller, HPL’s Executive Director, Culture and Communications.

“The opportunity to explore and talk about art and history in a free and familiar public environment is essential and at the heart of the Library’s mission,” said HPL CEO Bridget Quinn-Carey. “The Library is uniquely positioned as a gathering place for people of all cultures and backgrounds and has substantial experience in providing programs and opportunities that will allow people to experience a range of new cultural experiences.”

For more information about the Hartford History Center, visit [https://hplct.ent.sirsi.net/client/en\\_US/history/](https://hplct.ent.sirsi.net/client/en_US/history/)?

For more information about Hartford Public Library, visit [hplct.org](http://hplct.org).

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### **About Hartford Public Library**

Now celebrating its 126th year, Hartford Public Library remains at the forefront of redefining the urban library experience in the 21st Century. With seven locations throughout the city, the library provides education, intellectual enrichment and cultural development for thousands of children, youth and adults every year. Hartford Public Library has also gained local and national recognition for its wide range of new initiatives and partnerships designed to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic city and region, including immigration services, employment assistance and youth leadership training. [www.hplct.org](http://www.hplct.org).