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**East End Arts presents *Finding Qi*
Solo Exhibition of Works by Robert Oxnam**

April 5 - May 10, 2025

East End Arts' Arts District Galleries:

*Andy Tarshis Fine Art Gallery, 133 E. Main St., Riverhead, NY
11 West Gallery, 11 W. Main St., Riverhead, NY*

Opening Reception: Saturday, April 5th 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.



Robert Oxnam in his Greenport, NY studio, 2022

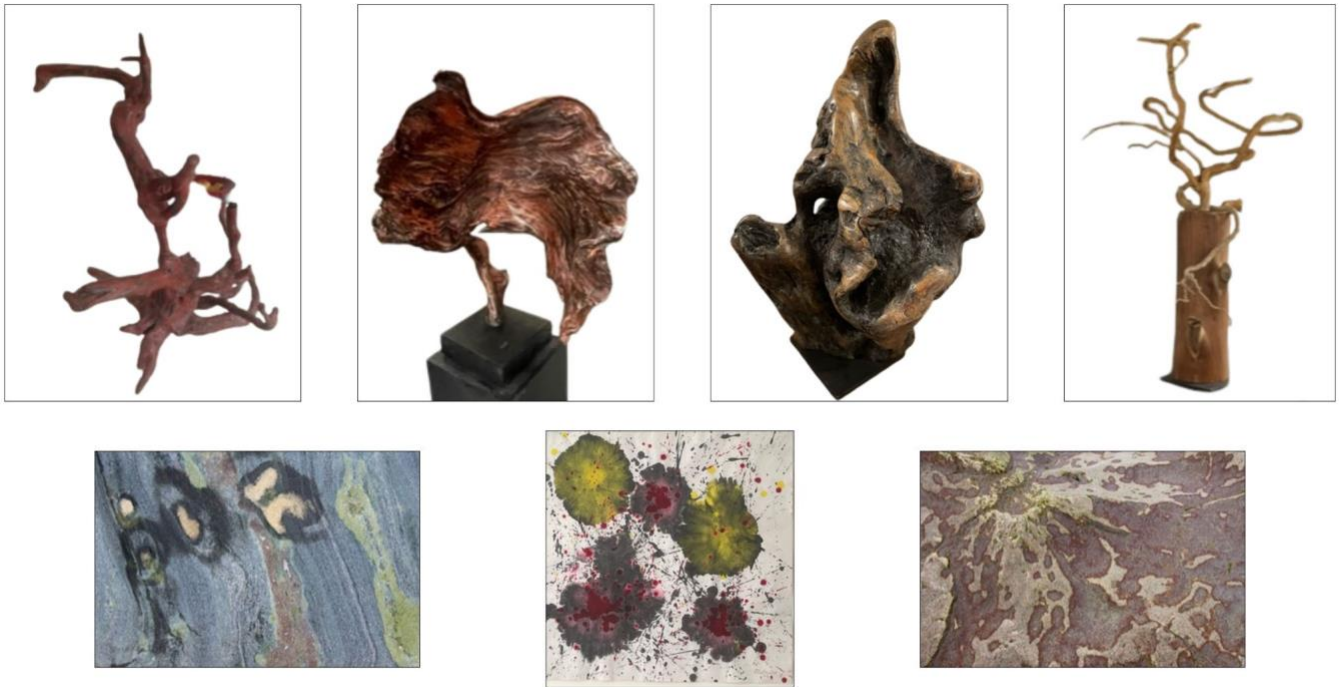
Riverhead, NY — East End Arts & Humanities Council, Inc. (EEA) presents *Finding Qi*, a gallery exhibition of artwork by internationally acclaimed Chinese scholar, long-time president of The Asia Society President and North Fork resident Robert Oxnam. The exhibition is co-curated by Vishakha Desai a noted scholar of Asian art, also President of the Asia Society and wife of the artist, and award-winning writer and filmmaker and longtime friend of the artist, Amei Wallach. The show runs across two gallery spaces in Downtown Riverhead from April 5 through May 10, 2025. The opening reception is on Saturday, April 5 from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Visitor information, including gallery hours and exhibition programs can be found at www.eastendarts.org.

Finding Qi (pronounced chee) showcases Oxnam's sculpture, paintings, and photography, inspired by Chinese scholar stones and cultural concepts. "In

Chinese tradition, the term Qi has many meanings, but for me, it means an invisible but palpable source of creative energy, both artistically and psychologically," Oxnam once explained.

As an artist, in the later decades of his life, Oxnam took inspiration from the thousand-year tradition of transforming ancient, weathered stones into Chinese Scholar's rocks, creating a contemporary take on the roots and tree trunks found on North Fork beaches. He emphasized the infinite variety of these sea-tossed shapes with sandpaper and milk paint, reshuffling place and time. He aimed to release what he called their "inner dynamism," an approach he took from the Chinese concept of Qi. His photographs are close-up macro lens meditations on the glacial rocks at Rocky Point, and his paintings are modernized versions of Chinese splash ink paintings, but with added acrylic paints on Chinese rice paper. The exhibition is complemented with programming, including two panel discussions regarding Chinese art and dissociative brain disorders, respectively, as they relate to Oxnam's work.

“No matter the medium, no matter how various the results, what Robert Oxnam did with his art was to merge cultures and experiences into the creation of something that is both rooted and new,” notes Amei Wallach. Oxnam died at his Greenport home in April, 2024. *Finding Qi* honors his legacy.



Robert Oxnam spent his career as a distinguished Chinese scholar, acting as a resource for business leaders and policy-makers in the 1980s and 1990s as the U.S. developed its relationship with China. He briefed and accompanied Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, and former President George H.W. Bush and Barbara Bush on their trips to China.

As president of the Asia Society from 1981-92, he was instrumental in expanding the organization’s focus from acquainting Americans with Asian history, culture, arts, business, and policy to its current mission of promoting mutual understanding in collaboration with 30 Asian nations. He dramatically increased the number of Asians on Asia Society’s board and staff, opening the Society’s first office in Asia, a center in Hong Kong.

As a professor he taught at Trinity College, Columbia University, Williams College, and, in Chinese, at Beijing University in China. As an author, his books ranged from novels and an autobiography to several non-fiction explorations of Chinese history and U.S.-China relations. He hosted a nine-part series on China for the *PBS MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour*.

Oxnam began his art practice in 2005 when he moved to the North Fork with his wife, Vishakha Desai. Exhibitions have included 53rd Street New York Public Library, Chambers Fine Art Gallery, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Triple Candie Gallery, Interchurch Center, William Ris Gallery, Brecknock Hall, Full Moon Arts Center, and Art Sites Gallery. He was a member of East End Arts and had a highlighted piece in the 2023 Elizabeth Richards Memorial Show, *Horizon*.

About the Curators:

Amei Wallach - Amei Wallach’s latest documentary, *Taking Venice*, debuted in New York and Los Angeles in May, 2024, and at the North Fork Arts Center and, as a collaboration between The Church and Sag Harbor Cinema last summer. The film uncovers the story behind rumors that the U.S. Government and a team of high-

placed insiders rigged the 1964 Venice Biennale, so their chosen artist Robert Rauschenberg could win the Grand Prize.

She was Chief Art Critic for *Newsday* from 1984-1995 and an on-air arts essayist for what is now known as *PBS NewsHour* during much of that time. As an art critic, Wallach's articles have appeared in publications such as *The New York Times*, *New York Times Magazine*, *The Nation*, *Smithsonian*, *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, *Art in America*, *ARTnews*, *Aperture*, *Parkett*, and *The Brooklyn Rail*. Wallach has interviewed and profiled artists Salvador Dalí, Jeff Koons, Willem de Kooning.

As a filmmaker, Wallach co-directed and co-produced the documentary portrait *Louise Bourgeois: The Spider, the Mistress, and the Tangerine* with Marion Cajori in 2008 and directed *Ilya and Emilia Kabakov: Enter Here*, exploring the history of the artists, born in Ukraine under Joseph Stalin, who made the North Fork home for the last 30 years.

Vishakha Desai - A noted scholar of Asian art and the life partner of Robert Oxnam, Vishakha N. Desai has been a senior advisor for Global Affairs to the President and Chair of Committee on Global Thought at Columbia University for more than a decade. Prior to joining Columbia, Dr. Desai was at the Asia Society for twenty two years, initially as the director of its museum and as Vice President for Arts and Culture programs, and then as President of the global organization from 2004 through 2012. She is known for introducing American audiences to the contemporary arts of Asia through such landmark exhibitions as *Traditions/Tensions: Contemporary Arts from Asia*, *Inside Out: Contemporary Chinese Art*, and *Edge of Desire: Recent Art from India*.

As President of the Asia Society, Dr. Desai was the first woman and person of Asian origin to lead the legendary organization encompassing arts, culture, policy, and education. She expanded the Society's scope by establishing Asia21, a program for emerging leaders from Asia and the U.S. and a center on U.S.-China relations, opening offices in India and Korea, and inaugurating new buildings in Hong Kong and Houston in addition to New York.

Prior to joining Asia Society, Desai was a curator at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in charge of Indian, Southeast Asian and Islamic arts as well as head of academic and public programs. She began her museum career as a twenty-one year-old educator at the Cleveland Museum of Art and served as a head of family programs at the Brooklyn Museum before going to graduate school. In recognition of her distinguished museum career, President Barak Obama appointed her to the board of Institute of Libraries and Museums.

Recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, Dr. Desai received her doctorate in Asian Art from University of Michigan and holds five honorary degrees. Her books include, *Life at Court: Art for India's Rulers* (1985), *Gods, Guardians, and Lovers: Temple Structures from North India, 700-1200 AD* (1994), *Asian Art in the 21st Century* (ed. 2006), and an award winning memoir, *World as Family: A Journey of Multi-rooted Belongings* (2021). Her new edited volume, *Politics of Visual Arts in a Changing World* will be published in late 2025 by Columbia University Press.

Visitor information

Finding Qi is on display April 5th through May 10th across EEA's two galleries, a five-minute walk apart, in the Arts District of downtown Riverhead. The galleries are free and open to the public. The *EEA Andy Tarshis Fine Art Gallery* is located at 133 E. Main St., Riverhead. The *11 West Gallery* is located at 11 W. Main St., Peconic Crossing, Riverhead. Gallery hours are:

Thursdays 12 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Fridays 12 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Saturdays 12 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Sundays 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Private tours with the curators can be arranged by emailing gallery@eastendarts.org.

Saturday, April 5 Opening Reception: Join the curators from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, April 19 Program: *Chinese Roots, Contemporary Sensitivity* with Chinese art expert Susan Beningson in conversations with Viskakha Desai

Sunday, May 4 Program: *Creativity, Artmaking, and Brain Science* with dissociative disorder and brain function expert Dr. Millissa Kaufman in conversation with Amei Wallach and Vishakha Desai

Visit EEA's website www.eastendarts.org for more details on the exhibition, artist, curators, events, and guest speakers.

About East End Arts

East End Arts & Humanities Council is a 501[c][3] nonprofit organization with the mission to unlock creativity and build community, uniting of the two forks. Since its inception in 1972, East End Arts has become a year-round hub for art and music enrichment and a showcase for artists who live, work, and visit the area with its school, gallery, and community development. The EEA Art Gallery's exhibitions act as the catalyst for art collectors and enthusiasts to visit the growing Arts District of Riverhead to view relevant programs from established and emerging artists alike. The EEA Art & Music School provides private lessons and group classes for music, art, writing, performance, printmaking, All Abilities, and more. The EEA Recording Studio produces 'Matter of Spark: The East End Arts Podcast' and services musicians, writers, and both emerging and commercial creators. For more information, email info@eastendarts.org, call 631.727.0900, or visit eastendarts.org.

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