

# MADE IN CONNECTICUT

## 22 MEMBER ART TRAIL CELEBRATED AT THE WADSWORTH



### COMMUNITY

#### MADE IN CONNECTICUT

**WADSWORTH ATHENEUM**  
600 MAIN STREET  
HARTFORD,  
CONNECTICUT

THROUGH  
FEBRUARY 7, 2021

[THEWADSWORTH.ORG](http://THEWADSWORTH.ORG)

[CONNECTICUT ART WALK](http://CONNECTICUTARTWALK.ORG)  
[CTARTTRAIL.ORG](http://CTARTTRAIL.ORG)

Connecticut has been celebrated for its cultural heritage for generations, yet in some ways, nonetheless, it has remained in the shadow of big cities along the I-95 corridor. Even today, people who dip into its august museums and historical societies are astonished by the depth and breadth of their holdings.

But perhaps it took like-minded visionaries to propose ways to build support for these special places under the banner of cultural tourism. Early efforts ultimately led to the creation of The Connecticut Arts Trail, a constellation of 22 museums and historic sites. A \$25 annual Passport has further encouraged people to travel throughout the state and dip into its vast cultural well.

Passport holders have fashioned their own customized day trips: they may have explored Connecticut's natural history, for instance, or examined its role in United States manufacturing. They may have visited the bucolic towns and villages where artists have been

drawn to paint en plein air, or settled to work year-round in their studios. Now, as The Connecticut Art Trail marks its 25th anniversary, "Made in Connecticut" offers a broad-brush overview of this wide-ranging subject. The exhibition, running through February 7 at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, promises to be family favorite.

"When the founding museums first gathered, over two decades ago, I'm not sure that anyone imagined that this trail would not only continue to thrive but grow in reach and reputation, across the country," Carey Weber, volunteer President of the Connecticut Art Trail and Executive Director of the Fairfield University Art Museum, said. But in this commemorative year, she added, the time seemed right to bring together works "from all of our member museums, hosted by a member."

It's a show that should make Connecticut residents bask with pride in the state's heritage, as they revisit Connecticut inventions and creations. And curator

Thomas Cole, *View of Monte Video, the Seat of Daniel Wadsworth, Esq., 1828*, oil on wood. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Bequest of Daniel Wadsworth.





James Prosek would have us start this story from the known beginning, with the state's early inhabitants, and the region's geology and natural resources.

As I drove from Western Connecticut to Hartford recently to see the show on its opening day, the fall colors were at their peak. Encountering Thomas Cole's famous oil painting, 'View of Monte Video, the Seat of Daniel Wadsworth, Esq.," when I entered the gallery just a few minutes later, seemed to reinforce the pleasure I'd taken from the astonishing views that had punctuated my travel route.

The curator for the show is the prodigiously talented James Prosek, who was reared in Easton, and still lives just minutes from his childhood home. Prosek said recently that he had been introduced to many of Connecticut's special institutions by his father, a Brazilian immigrant, who taught high school science and fostered in his bright and curious child a passion for knowledge of the natural world.

Today he is an acclaimed artist, naturalist and writer, currently working as Yale University Art Gallery's artist-in-residence.

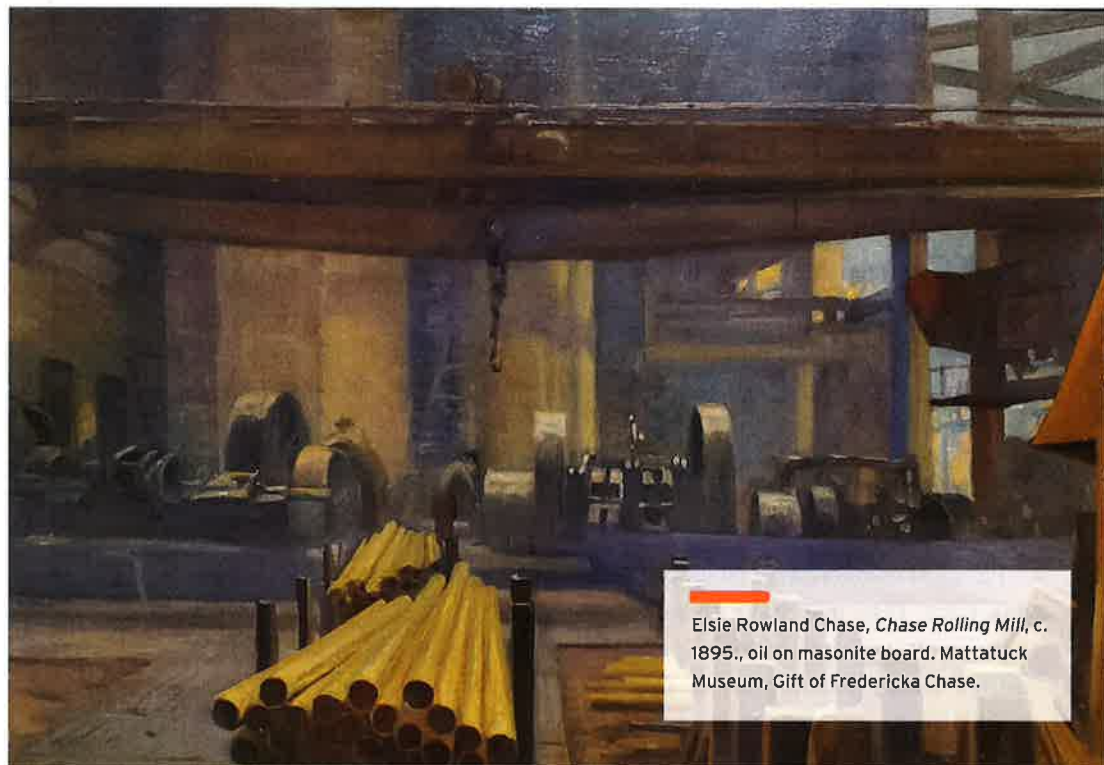
The 90 or so paintings, objects and artifacts selected for the exhibition take us from fossils and hand carved wooden bowls to prints and paintings, sculpture and industrial products. There are paintings that will be familiar to people who frequent a number of Connecticut's significant museums, alongside utilitarian objects that in their heyday were wildly popular, but have passed into obsolescence.

Considerable attention has been paid to those seats of American Impressionisms in Cos Cob, Old Lyme and Branchville. In paintings by Childe Hassam, J. Alden Weir and Frank DuMond, among others, we experience both the light and bucolic beauty that drew artists to

TOP LEFT: Frank Vincent Dumond, *Grassy Hill*, 1920, oil on canvas. Florence Griswold Museum, Gift of Elisabeth DuMond Perry.

TOP RIGHT: John Speed, engraved by F. Lamb, *A Map of New England and New York*, 1676, hand colored engraving. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

BOTTOM LEFT: Garrett Price, *Cover for the New Yorker*, *Mystic River Draw Bridge*, 1954. Lyman Allyn Museum.



Elsie Rowland Chase, *Chase Rolling Mill*, c. 1895., oil on masonite board. Mattatuck Museum, Gift of Fredericka Chase.



summer colonies. In a series of jaunty covers for The New Yorker by Garrett Price, we see how the image of a privileged life was promulgated.

20th Century luminaries Sol LeWitt, Helen Frankenthaler, Louise Bourgeois, Milton Avery and Josef Albers and Alexander Calder make guest appearances, alongside contemporary works by Mark Dion, Kristin Emilyyta, Barkley Hendricks and Prosek himself.

But Connecticut also has an incredible industrial story to tell, whether we all know what its various cities became famous for, with successive waves of immigrants shaping life in its cities. I found myself drawn to items that were selected from the Mattatuck Museum – the fabulous curio case from the United States Button Company, which showcases some of Waterbury’s (“the Brass City”) creations. Buttons, incidentally, are still being produced there for the military and the nation’s police and fire departments. Then, too, there is Charles Goodyear’s vulcanized rubber desk, designed to promote the potential applications of rubber. The desk with its gilt, leather and cabriole legs would be at home in the study of an elegant country estate, but discovering it was fashioned from rubber is akin to discovering that what one had identified as a sculpted bronze had been cast in chocolate.

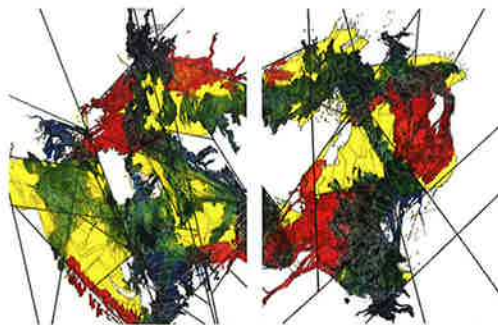
There is the Colt Experimental Rifle as well as the “Blick” portable typewriter from heydays in those industries, as well as the prototype for the 1966 Fitch Phoenix, a jazzy race car that conjures Paul Newman in his jumpsuit. Sadly, John Fitch’s (of Lime Rock Park) dream car would remain just that.

As the state’s natural beauty and proximity to New York City has drawn artists for centuries, its academic institutions were fertile hotbeds for inquiry and experimentation. It was in Connecticut as well that artist Katherine Dreier, along with Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray, founded the Société Anonyme in 1920, which would fuel exhibitions in modern art throughout the country.

Made in Connecticut proffers a story with a roster of star-studded characters that should whet the appetite of museum-starved visitors. But the chances are good that the curious will be hitting the trail in 2021 – to dig deeper.

Timed tickets for limited capacity viewing are available at [my.thewadsworth.org](http://my.thewadsworth.org). Check the website for further information on safety protocols and requirements for admission. For more Connecticut Art Trail information and updates, visit [ctarttrail.org](http://ctarttrail.org).

**Kristin Nord**



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