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NBMAA History

The New Britain Museum of American Art's founding in 1903 entitles the institution to be designated the first museum of strictly American art in the country. That year, a \$20,000 gift of gold bonds to the museum's former parent, the New Britain Institute, from industrialist John Butler Talcott, created funds to purchase "modern oil paintings." Subsequent purchases, with advice from New York museums and galleries, further defined "modern" to mean American works of art, now numbering more than 10,236. With particular strengths in colonial portraiture, the Hudson River School, American Impressionism, and the Ash Can School, not to mention the important mural series *The Arts of Life in America* by Thomas Hart Benton, the museum relies heavily on its permanent collection for exhibitions and programming, yet also displays a significant number of borrowed shows and work by emerging artists. The singular focus on American art and its panoramic view of American artistic achievement make the New Britain Museum of American Art a significant teaching resource available to the local, regional, and national public.

MISSION STATEMENT

"Erected By the People for the Use of the People," the New Britain Museum of American Art is dedicated to serving all people by pursuing excellence in art through collections, exhibitions, and education.

- Dedication to serving all people: To be one of the nation's most welcoming art museums by ensuring that the Museum's facilities, collections, exhibitions, and education programs create optimal conditions for first-hand experiences with art; by broadening and deepening the Museum's audience through outreach, education, and marketing; and by establishing the NBMAA as a vital force in the cultural and educational life of central Connecticut.
- Collection: To be one of the nation's most distinguished art museums by forming, conserving, and researching an encyclopedic collection of the best works in all artistic media by American artists.
- Exhibitions: To be one of the nation's most dynamic art museums by exhibiting the permanent collection and special exhibitions on widely diverse subjects in ways that combine the highest aesthetic standards with engaging and intellectually accessible presentations.
- Education: To be one of the nation's most effective centers for learning about art by creating an optimal learning environment for the Museum's diverse audiences, and by understanding that education is at the center of its

public service role.

The New Britain Museum of American Art will be known as one of America's most welcoming, distinguished, dynamic, and educationally ambitious art museums.