

The Brass City

Industrial Inspired Artwork

Introduction

Audette was a distinguished teacher and artist whose paintings of industrial ruins and obsolete machinery chronicled the decline of American industry. She was born in NYC in 1938. She studied drawing and printmaking at Smith College, and received her MFA from the Yale School of Art. After graduating she started her lifelong profession teaching at Southern Connecticut State Univ. Her own technique evolved from printmaking to painting around 1980 and early works show her formative interest in structure—a signature element that would define her style and imagery throughout her career. Interest in discarded and obsolete machinery compelled her lifelong exploration of junkyards and industrial ruins.



Figure 1 Anna Held Audette (1938-2013), "Mingo Junction", 21st Century, Oil on canvas, 52 x 44 inches, Gift of the Artist's Estate 2014.22

"The relics remind us that, in our rapidly changing world, the triumphs of technology are just a moment away from obsolescence . . . transfigured by time and light, which render the ordinary extraordinary, they form a visual requiem for the industrial age." – Anna Held Audette ¹

Also intimately connected to the often-abandoned complexes in once thriving industrial hubs are the neighborhoods and homes constructed to support industry at the turn of the 20th century. Local artist, Peter Poskas, has documented familiar scenes of Waterbury that “convey a strong sense of familiarity on a very personal level for area residents.”² As a realist painter, Poskas emphasizes elements of actual places, carefully balancing abstract forms. His work “focuses on the effects of light in quiet solitude.”³

¹ <http://www.mattatuckcollections.org/artist-maker/info/1934>

² <http://www.mattatuckcollections.org/artist-maker/info/361>

³ Ibid.

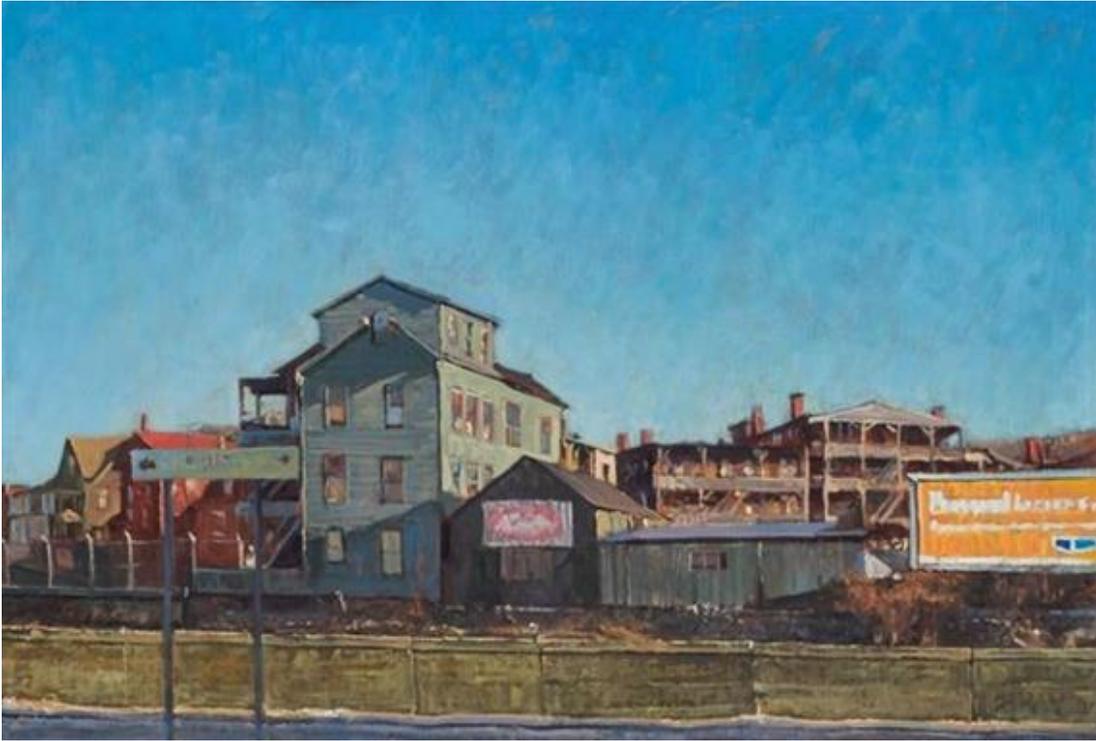


Figure 2 Peter Poskas (b. 1939), "Mill Street", 20th Century, Oil on canvas, 19 ½ x 28 7/8th inches, Museum Purchase 2014.32



Figure 3 Peter Poskas (b. 1939), "Pine Hill", 20th Century, Oil on canvas, 42 x 57 inches, Museum Purchase, 78.13



Figure 4 Peter Poskas (b. 1939), "Clearing: Crossroads of Washington and Wilson", 20th Century, Oil on canvas, 24 x 48 inches, Gift of Janet Tanner Poskas 93.19



Photographers, such as, Emery Roth II, who *published Brass Valley: The Death of an American Industry*, which documents decrepit industrial complexes and even the final days of the Ansonia Foundry, at the time, one of the last living legacy of the Naugatuck Valley's industrial past. Roth weaves together photos and poetry that evokes an emotional response and documents an American way of life that has largely come to pass.

Roth's work can be viewed on his personal blog: [Today's Photo](#)

Today factories, physical monuments of industrial heritage, are being demoed or saved, and in many places, creatively reused as apartment complexes, breweries or to house a variety of businesses and organizations. No matter the case, these places contain layers of history and represent an important facet of Connecticut's and New England's past.

Consider: What space do these places occupy in your life? How are they situated in your community's identity? Do you ever give these looming buildings a second thought? And can you see them in a new light after viewing artistic renderings?

Activity

Your Challenge: grab your iPhone and a comfy pair of walking shoes and head outside! Take a closer look at your everyday surroundings and find artistic inspiration. Be sure to share what you capture in the comment section of the Facebook post or with rachel@mattmuseum.org



Figure 5 Photo by Rachel Lima