

PRESS RELEASE

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MATTATUCK MUSEUM

Adventures in Art & History

144 West Main St. Waterbury, CT 06702

mattmuseum.org

Mattatuck Museum Presents 250 Years of American Portraits

WATERBURY, CT –In celebration of the United States’ semiquincentennial, the Mattatuck Museum presents *About Face: 250 Years of American Portraits*, on view April 26 through August 16, 2026. The exhibition explores American history through the images and experiences of Americans spanning the past 250 years.

About Face: 250 Years of American Portraits considers portraiture as more than a record of appearance. The works in the exhibition show how artists have used portraiture to assert identity, navigate ideas of citizenship, and express belonging. From carefully constructed personas rooted in social status and power to contemporary portrayals of authenticity and visibility, these works capture and complicate the spirit of their era. The exhibition encourages audiences to see themselves in the story of America and to better understand how their history matters.

Drawing from the Mattatuck Museum’s collection as well as loans from other institutions, *About Face: 250 Years of American Portraits* examines the demographic and cultural transformations that have shaped the nation over 250 years. The exhibition also emphasizes the growing representation of women and marginalized groups in art, highlighting the ways portraiture has reflected and sometimes challenged social change. Through paintings, drawings, sculpture, and photography, the exhibition brings historic and modern works into conversation. From early American portraits shaped by European traditions to later works that challenge conventions around race, gender, and power, *About Face: 250 Years of American Portraits* highlights how ideas of representation have shifted over time.

About Face: 250 Years of American Portraits features works by artists including Romare Bearden, Thomas Hart Benton, Dawoud Bey, Louise Bourgeois, George Catlin, Ralph Earl, Walker Evans, Lois Mailou Jones, Marisol, Reginald Marsh, Ammi Phillips, Robert Rauschenberg, Fritz Scholder, Andy Warhol, James Van Der Zee, and N.C. Wyeth, alongside works by regional artists and makers connected to Connecticut and the Naugatuck Valley.

By placing works from different periods side by side, *About Face: 250 Years of American Portraits* invites visitors to consider whose stories have been preserved, whose have been left out, and how portraiture continues to shape our understanding of the American experience. The exhibition underscores the lasting importance of portraiture as both an artistic practice and a way of seeing ourselves and one another.

Visitors are invited to engage with a participatory portrait selfie station and community talk-back wall featured within *About Face: 250 Years of American Portraits*. Utilizing a photobooth acquired through an Art Bridges initiative, the interactive installation encourages visitors to reflect on identity,

representation, and self-expression while contributing their own perspectives to the exhibition experience.

For more information or to register for programs, visit www.mattmuseum.org.

ABOUT THE MATTATUCK MUSEUM

Located in the heart of downtown Waterbury's architectural district, the Mattatuck Museum is a vibrant destination, known locally and regionally as a community-centered institution of American art and history. The collections at The MATT span the history of American art from the colonial era to the present day with special strengths in Naugatuck Valley history and Connecticut artists, as well as artists from around the world representing the diversity of our community. The collection includes more than 8,000 objects including paintings, unique works on paper, photography and sculpture. In February 2021, The Mattatuck reopened after a \$9 million renovation project to reimagine the Museum while continuing to be a welcoming, inclusive, stimulating, and enriching community anchor. The "new" Mattatuck Museum, designed by Ann Beha Architects, includes an extensive 14,000 square foot renovation to the existing space and an addition of almost 7,000 square feet to enhance public access, educational programming, collections storage, and exhibitions.

The Museum is operated with support from the Connecticut Department of Economic & Community Development/CT Office of the Arts, which also receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. The Museum is a founding member of the Consortium of Connecticut Art Museums and is a member of the Connecticut Art Trail, a group of 30 world-class museums and historic sites (ctarttrail.org).

The Mattatuck Museum is located on the Green in Waterbury, CT at 144 West Main Street. The Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. The Museum offers free, convenient off-street parking directly behind the Museum and in additional lots on Park Place. The Mattatuck Museum website (mattmuseum.org) outlines the Museum's updated guidelines for visitors, including what to expect on your visit, cleaning and safety protocols, and frequently asked questions. Face masks are currently not required indoors. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for more updates and content.

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