

CT Trust Resource ID: 4156

HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORY – BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

State Historic Preservation Office, DECD, One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford, CT 06103

*Note: Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

Inventory form modified for the Creative Places - Arts & Letters Project

GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common): William Benton Museum of Art

Other Name(s) (Historic): William Benton Museum of Art/The Beanery

Street Address or Location: 245 Glenbrook Road, Mansfield

Town/City: Mansfield

Village: Storrs

County: Tolland

Designation(s): SRHD, NRHD

Owner(s): University of Connecticut

Public/Private: Public

Latitude: 41.8085 Longitude: -72.2527

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Education: school

Historic Use: Education: school

Accessibility to public: Yes Exterior visible from public road? Yes

Interior accessible? If yes, explain: public areas of the museum during open hours

Style of building: Collegiate Gothic revival Date of Construction: 1920

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate) Brick, Cut Stone

Structural Systems(s): Load bearing masonry

Roof (Type): Gable (Material): Slate

Number of Stories: 2 1/2 Approximate Dimensions: 40' x 120', 25' x 40'

Structural Condition: Excellent

Exterior Condition: Excellent

Locational Integrity: On original site Moved, When: NA

Alterations?: Yes If yes, explain: Conversion to art museum, major addition in 2004

Related outbuildings or landscape features: Campus buildings and grounds

Surrounding Environment: High building density

Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

The building is near the center of the University of Connecticut campus at Storrs, situated on the axis of the Great Lawn and Wilbur Cross administration building. It is one of the buildings of the early building campaign of the early 1920s, following the campus plan of Chalmers Lowrie. The building is a contributing resource in the University of Connecticut-Connecticut Agricultural School Historic District.

Other notable features of building or site:

The building is a red brick Collegiate Gothic-style building of 2 1/2 stories with a steeply-pitched slate roof. The main block is oriented NW-SE and contains a two-story hall (the original dining space). A perpendicular wing extends northeast and has two floors. Each end of the main block is three bays with full-height windows framed in stone trim and brick buttress piers between bays. The gable facades have stone parapet caps and terminate in buttress piers at the corners. There are entrances in all three gable facades - double doors at the ends of the main block with six-part windows above, and a single door with a projecting bay window above at the northeast wing.

The interior dining hall, now an exhibition space, has a suspended balcony around the perimeter at the second level. Wood roof trusses are exposed in the space. Doors in the northeast wall lead to offices in the northeast wing; these were art faculty studios in the 1960s.

Architect: Delbert Perry, Unklebach & Perry Builder/Maker: Unknown

Historical or Architectural importance:

The original building was constructed in 1920 and served as The Beanery, the campus's main dining hall, until the mid-1940s. The building was then used by the School of Fine Arts as studio and office space for the faculty. The Benton Museum of Art has occupied the building since 1967, with an addition and renovation in 2004.

The School of Fine Arts expanded in the post-World War II period, with the general expansion of educational opportunities. Several young artists including Paul Zelanski (1931-), Paul Gregoropoulos (1921 -2012), and Anthony Terenzio (1923-2000), began working as faculty in the School of Art, having offices in the building that is now the Benton Museum. These artists worked in painting and other media and

exhibited, bringing modernist and abstract art to Connecticut, in contrast with the older strong traditions of Impressionism and Regionalism. Zelanski, among others, spent summers along the shoreline in the Mystic area and was involved with the Mystic Arts Center (now Mystic Museum of Art), bringing modern art to the shoreline art colony. A 2014 exhibition at Mystic showed the work of the three artists, highlighting their contributions to bringing modern art to the Mystic area.

Paul Zelanski was born in Hartford. When he was 10, his sister gave him an oil paint set — the most memorable and important present of his life to that point, as a child during the Great Depression. He attended Hartford High School, and was the first resident of the city to be accepted to the Cooper Union School of Art in New York City. Zelanski studied with Josef Albers at Yale University and Bowling Green State University for a master's degree. Always planning to be an educator, he taught at North Texas State University from 1958–62, and then moved north to teach at the University of Connecticut (UConn), where he would remain until his retirement in 1995. Zelanski continues to make collages in his Connecticut studio.

John Gregoropoulos was born in Athens, Greece. His father had become an American citizen so John was legally a citizen of both countries. The family moved to Boston and then back to Greece in the 1930s. John spent World War II working for the British army and then returned to the U.S. After military service, he studied at UConn, and was soon hired onto the faculty, where he stayed while also creating his own art. The Greek landscape became the defining image of his life as an artist.

Anthony Terenzio was born in Italy and emigrated with his parents to the U.S. at age 12. After growing up in Stamford, he studied painting at Pratt Institute in New York. In 1943 Terenzio served in Europe, returning again to Pratt after the war and earning a Master's Degree at Columbia. Between the end of the War and the mid-1950s, Terenzio began to be known in the New York art world. In 1955, Terenzio married artist Stephanie Semak, and he accepted a teaching position at UConn. Tony taught painting until he retired in 1979 and continued to work in the studio. He showed his work in New York as well as in numerous regional galleries and museums in New England. Throughout the 1990s Tony worked full time in the studio.

Sources:

Benton, William, Museum of Art web site. About the museum. Accessed at <http://benton.uconn.edu/about/the-museum/>
 Cunningham, Jan. 1988. University of Connecticut National Register Historic District Nomination No. 88003202. National Park Service.
 MAAD Men of Mystic, exhibit. Fall 2014. Exhibition announcement accessed at <http://mysticarts.org/entry/maad-men-of-mystic/> .
 Gregoropoulos, John – obituary. Accessed at <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/hartfordcourant/obituary.aspx?pid=159937618> .
 Terenzio, Anthony – biography. Accessed at <http://benstonstudio.com/Terenzio%20print%20pages/FP-terenzio-bio.html> .
 Zelanski, Paul – artist's web site. Accessed at <http://www.paulzelanski.com/> .

Photographer: Charlotte Hitchcock Date: 4/17/2015

View: North view

Form completed by: Charlotte Hitchcock Printed On: April 26, 2016

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Threats: None known

Subsequent field evaluations:



Benton Museum of Art - southeast view

FOR OFFICE USE:

Town # _____ Site# _____ UTM _____
 District ☐ S ☐ NR If NR, specify: ☐ Actual ☐ Potential