

SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT CULTURAL COALITION

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Art in the Airport Program Sparks Diverse Exhibits in New Space

NORWICH, CT - The Cultural Coalition and Connecticut Airport Authority (CAA) announce the 2018 schedule for the newly inaugurated Art in the Airport program at [Groton – New London Airport](#) featuring four diverse exhibitions, including historically recognized local figures, African-American history and contemporary art by individuals with disabilities. The new program's purpose is to showcase the region's uniqueness, history, industry, culture and geography through visual arts in the airport's main terminal located at [155 Tower Avenue](#) in Groton.

Opened in December, *Costen Cultural Exhibit* will be on view through February 24, 2018. From March 1 to May 25, Slater Memorial Museum in Norwich will present *John Meyer of Norwich: An American Original*. From June 1 to August 25, an exhibit by individuals supported at United Cerebral Palsy of Eastern CT will be on view. Finally, from September 1 to November 25, Slater Memorial Museum will present a second exhibit, *Bela Lyon Pratt: Sculptor of Monument*.

Late last year, the Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition and the Connecticut Airport Authority put out a call for arts or community organizations with a desire and ability to take advantage of an off-site exhibit space that engage new audiences, and who voluntarily partner in this endeavor.

Cultural Coalition Executive Director Wendy Bury said, "Arts in the Airport programs have been around for some time and exist in nearly every major airport worldwide. Our regional airport has a significant amount of foot traffic in the terminal from local residents to visitors from all over the U.S. This new program provides visibility for local artists and host organizations and it enriches the travel experience." Bury continued, "It is exciting for the Cultural Coalition to help activate and transform a public transportation space with art."

Bill Costen, born William Hollis Costen is a commercial hot air balloon pilot, business owner, photojournalist, professional photographer, black memorabilia collector, curator, archivist and exhibitor. Being an avid archivist and collector, he created "*The Costen Cultural Exhibition*," a unique collection of rare photographs, ephemera, memorabilia, fine art and collectibles. The collection shows the contributions and accomplishments of Americans with an emphasis on African Americans throughout history. It includes exhibitions on the history of "African American Golf," "The Tuskegee Airmen," "The Pullman Porters" and a photographic history of "The Freedom Schooner Amistad." The exhibit has been displayed at fundraising events, schools, colleges, universities, museums, historical societies, churches, community organizations and corporations.

In the spring, the Slater Memorial Museum of Norwich Free Academy will present "*John Meyer of Norwich: An American Original*." Throughout Connecticut and beyond, women fondly remember the fashion designs of John Meyer (1923-1974). Now considered classics of 20th Century design and function, his line of clothing featured everything from "Bermuda" shorts to preppy A-line skirts, Argyle to Fair Isle sweaters. John Meyer of Norwich was an innovator in fashion for an emerging demographic of career women and college girls. Working with other technological innovators,

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he revolutionized the garment manufacturing process, introducing cutting-edge methods still used today. In addition, John Meyer's factory and design business provided employment to dozens of Norwichians. The exhibited panels reveal the person and the company.

United Cerebral Palsy of Eastern Connecticut's (UCP) art program has been in place for several years. Individuals supported at UCP, along with staff members, work together annually to create at least one piece of artwork to display in a local art exhibit. This summer, the exhibit will be at the airport. Some notable pieces Individuals and staff have created demonstrate the creative nature of the program. All artwork is a collaboration between the people making the piece, from its initial conception to completion. People participate in any way they can, whether its through staff assistance, making a choice using an eye gaze or hand over hand technique. The art program at UCP enables each person to express his or her unique talents.

The Slater Memorial Museum of Norwich Free Academy will close out 2018 with "*Bela Lyon Pratt: Sculptor of Monument.*" Bela Lyon Pratt (1867-1917) was born and raised in Norwich. His grandfather and great uncles started the first American piano making company and the first music school, for women, in the country, both in Salem, Connecticut. Bela studied art at Norwich Free Academy, Yale University's School of Art, and in Paris. He worked in the studio of renowned American sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens and, in 1892, created two large sculptural groups representing *The Genius of Navigation* for the World's Fair in Chicago.

Bela became an influential teacher of sculpting at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston and received numerous commissions for monumental public work around New England, including the figures representing *Art* and *Science* for the Boston Public Library; *Literature, Science* and *Art* for the Thomas Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress; the *Andersonville Boy* on the grounds of the State Capitol, Hartford, Connecticut; *Nathaniel Hawthorne* in Salem Massachusetts; *Captain Nathan Hale* for Yale University and placement at other sites, as well as *Governor John Winthrop* in New London and *Captain James Avery* in Groton, Connecticut. The exhibition panels reveal his work and life, including the influence of his wife Helen Lugarda Pray Pratt, also a sculptor.

For more information about the Arts in the Airport program, visit [www.CultureSECT.org](http://culturesect.org) (<http://culturesect.org/art-at-the-airport/>) .

The Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition, a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization, contributes to the cultural identity, economy and quality of life of Southeastern Connecticut by advocating and supporting arts, heritage, cultural and business activities and organizations.