Glass, silver, wine, porcelain, pewter, fur, feathers, scales, rind, petals, pollen and wood. What possible connection could these substances have? They are often portrayed in still life paintings. A slight anatomical inaccuracy can be attributed to a desire to flatter the sitter in portraiture; mist can mask the lack of draftsmanship in landscape painting, but the still life is unforgiving.

Yet thousands of artists over millennia have assayed the still life. Its origins are early, documented in Egyptian tomb paintings and Greek pottery and mosaic. By the 14th century, frescoes included homely objects from daily life along with figures representing religious characters and themes. As the Renaissance took hold, depictions of the stuff of daily life became ubiquitous in paintings and soon were imbued with allegorical meaning. Still Life is eminently accessible.

(Continued on page 3)
A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Season of rebirth and refreshment - the long needed change of season, regardless of the ferocity of winter, is upon us. It’s been a very busy winter indeed, with project planning and new acquisitions installed or under conservation. I urge our faithful members to schedule a visit soon to see newly acquired works installed in favorite long term exhibition. Read further to learn more about them! We have also been engaged in planning several new temporary exhibitions which we will bring to you later this year and next. Stay tuned for more details about these. Be sure also to read about a diverse array of upcoming events sure to please young and young at heart!

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS, PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Sunday, April 2
10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Atrium

PEN TURNING WITH THE CENTRAL
CT WOODTURNERS: Make your own pen choosing from a variety of wood, including that of NFA's iconic beech tree that fell in 2012. Free event - great for families!

Friday, May 5
5:00 - 7:00 PM
Slater Auditorium

A LOT OF EXCITEMENT: Behind the scenes at one of New England's most highly respected auction firms with Owner and Auctioneer Linda Stamm. Program of the Friends of Slater Museum annual meeting. Free - open to the public.

Wednesday, May 24
5:00 - 7:00 PM
Slater Auditorium

THE INVENTION OF THE AMERICAN
ART MUSEUM: This groundbreaking work recounts the fascinating story of the origins of the modern American art museum, in which the Slater played a role. Discussion and booksigning with author Kathleen Curran, professor of fine arts at Trinity College, Hartford.

Sunday, June 11
1:00 - 3:00 PM
Converse Art Gallery

OPENING RECEPTION: Local Color: Sto-

eries of Our Members. A dual exhibition presented by SAQA members from Connecticut and the Nevada / Northern California region.
The artist needs no model, plaster cast collection or rolling countryside and could control to an infinitesimal degree, the placement of shapes and colors.

Even the most mundane objects combined and rendered on canvas can become poetry. But the still life artist must be a master. And the artist who succeeds at still life captures our imagination. Such is the case with John Denison Crocker’s (1822-1907) painting (21 inches high by 33 inches wide with frame, featured on front page) depicting a European style scene of plenty on a clothed groaning board. The painting was recently acquired by the Slater Museum from an individual with ties to Norwich and now hangs on the mezzanine in the exhibition Crocker's Norwich: Art and Industry in 19th Century Norwich.

As early as the 15th century in Europe, still life often appeared as components of religious paintings. Objects represented meaning and symbolism in a visual language known to artists, religious leaders and the educated. The 17th century Dutch went so far as to give a name to a sub genre, *pronkstilleven,* or ostentatious still life, celebrating abundance by depicting a diversity of objects, fruits, flowers and dead game. Vanitas paintings flourished during this era as well. These included the trappings of sumptuous surroundings and dress. Gold jewelry, glassware and crystal, coinage, medals and silver, even musical and scientific instruments were depicted. Timepieces, deteriorating fruits and vegetables and burning candles symbolized time passing and life’s immutable end.
In Crocker’s portraiture, elements of still life are also sometimes included. His keen eye for metals in jewelry is most notable in portraits of women. Numerous brooches, earrings, pins and watches gleam from the canvas. But the Slater Museum has never, before now, owned a painting that could be strictly defined as still life.

Increased interest in still life painting in the major cities of the Netherlands in the 17th century was developed at least partly because of growing wealth through trade and industry. Homes became replete with objects of both function and beauty. Such was also the case in the middle of the 19th century in the U.S. Americans, in particular, New Englanders, were gaining wealth through manufacturing growth in the burgeoning industrial revolution and were exposed to objects made in foreign lands through the shipping trades, which, coupled with surrounding agriculture, contributed mightily to Norwich’s early success.

Like the 17th century Dutch, 19th century Americans were particularly fond of floral still lifes. An interest in herbaria, or specimen books of plant materials collected for medicinal and fragrance purposes, as well as for their beauty, grew and was translated into herbal illustration and painting. In the 1600’s, the Dutch also liked to document their healthy and tasty diets with kitchen still lifes that included ham, cheese, oysters, bread and game. Glasses of wine or beer on wooden tabletops contained in glass and metal were appetite stimulants. Large “market” still lifes often including figures, were first popularized during the mid-1500’s in Antwerp.

Venetian glassware, and gilded silver cups and trays were usually rendered in candle light with droplets of condensation. Crocker’s still life strives to attain a Dutch Renaissance quality. The diversity of materials and surfaces is truly staggering; cloth, silver, bronze, crockery. The painting includes exotic tropical fruits like oranges and pineapple; surely luxuries in the 19th century.

Among American artists, some of the most respected of the still life genre include James and Raphaelle Peale, members of a family of gifted American artists. Three members of the family were female artists, a rare thing in the 18th and 19th centuries. Patriarch Charles
Willson Peale (1741-1827) was a celebrated portrait artist who taught all of his children to paint and named them for famous artists, mostly of the Renaissance. Raphaello Peale (1774 – 1825), America’s first professional still-life painter, focused on still life beginning around 1810. He exhibited often at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Sadly, he was dependent upon his father most of his short life, very possibly partly because of his alcoholism. He died at the age of 50.

William Michael Harnett (1848 - 1892) was an Irish-born American painter. His still life paintings were extremely popular with the public and often depicted musical instruments, game and firearms. Based upon the Slater Museum’s recent acquisition, it seems Crocker chose not to include dead beasts in his depiction of gustatory delights … a welcome relief!

In addition to landscape, John Denison Crocker devoted his efforts to portraiture. From members of his family to founders and leaders of the Norwich Free Academy, Crocker recorded the residents of Norwich in a professional studio on Shetucket Street in the city. Crocker’s portraits were marvels of documentation. He married Harriet Elizabeth Dillaby at age 27 in 1849 and they had eight children. Family members provided grist for his artistic mill and possibly examples used to promote his skills as a portrait painter for paying clients. His Celeste Lydia Kenyon Beckwith, c. 1876, seen at the center of the Crocker’s Norwich exhibition, depicts brooches, lace, earrings, rings, a buckled watch strap and a gold watch-tie with nearly photographic accuracy. The portrait of his daughter Harriet Elizabeth (Daughter of the Artist), on the far south wall, as a young girl has her encircled with an oval frame and necklace of leaves of both representational and fantastical qualities.

A near contemporary of John Denison Crocker and a Norwich native, Alexander Hamilton Emmons (1814-1884), was essentially a portraitist who maintained a studio on Shetucket Street, which was both

*Images: (above) detail from Floral Still Life by Alexander Hamilton Emmons, o/c, 1876; (at right) Celeste Lydia Kenyon Beckwith by John Denison Crocker, o/c, ca. 1876.*
CROCKER’S SEASCAPES

Recently, the Slater Museum was fortunate to acquire a small painting by John Dension Crocker (1822-1907), ca. 1875 and characterized as a seascape by the seller. It is now on display in *Crocker’s Norwich: Art and Industry in Nineteenth century Norwich*.

Marine art or maritime art, depicting the sea, ships and boats is most often associated with 17th through 19th century art. However, bodies of water, ships and boats have been depicted in art from the earliest times, documented from 12,000 BCE, in petroglyphs in what today is Azerbaijan on the Caspian Sea. Barges are depicted in Ancient Egyptian art with people and deities on board. Landscape art began to emerge during the Renaissance, but pure seascapes were rare until later. As with still life, marine painting was a major genre within the Dutch Golden Age of Painting. Reflecting the importance of overseas trade and naval power to the Dutch Republic, many Dutch artists focused exclusively on marine work. In the Middle Ages, depictions of water were included as narrative elements, but generally not as principal subjects.

In the 15th century, hints of sea depictions emerge, often on maps and in illuminated manuscripts, but by the 17th century, Dutch beach scenes began to become a common theme. In Venice, scenes of water were not uncommon by the 15th century as well. Battles at sea generated a demand for paintings depicting them in late 16th century Italy and the Netherlands.

Even the artist considered to be the father of Western Landscape painting, Claude Lorrain (1600-1682), began to paint harbor scenes in the 17th century. By the 18th century, Western Marine painting became a dominant style when English, Dutch and Italian sea captains insisted on accurate depictions of battles at
sea and of their ships. These were paintings of the water, but also ship portraits. Venice became a center for art depicting water and boats. Canaletto [Giovanni Antonio Canal] (1697-1768) is probably best known as a painter of the canals, gondolas and other small craft and lagoons of Venice and river boats in England.

By the 19th century, English painter J.M.W. [Joseph Mallard William] Turner (1775-1851) became the most renowned marine painter in Europe. The Romantic period encouraged depictions of the sea in all its moods. Danish and Russian artists at this time also began to excel in Marine paintings.

The ship portrait genre came to America in the early 19th century, brought by English artist. Luminist painter Fitz Henry Lane (1804–1865) is considered the earliest of several artists who developed both the American landscape and seascape. One of his works depicts Norwich Harbor. Martin Johnson Heade (1819-1894) was a member of the Hudson River School and painted tranquil scenes, but also threatening storms of alarming blackness. The well-known Winslow Homer (1836-1910) increasingly specialized in marine scenes with small boats later in the 19th century, often showing them in heavy swells on the open sea.

The museum had already owned more than half a dozen Crockers with maritime or marine themes, but the recent acquisition makes a great addition to the collection. Though characterized by the seller as a painting of “long Island Sound,” more than likely it is another view of either of Norwich Harbor, Trading Cove, or Poquetannuck Cove. The hillock of land with the water in the distance suggests the Thames River more so than the Sound.
the financial district of the city at the time and the arts district. A number of artists, including Crocker, kept studios on Shetucket Street. Charles and Frank Johnson, founders of the Norwich Savings Bank, included a studio for Emmons in their new bank building overlooking Norwich Harbor in exchange for painting portraits of “Norwich Worthies.” Much of Emmons’ work includes portraits of children and represents families who lived and worked in the area during the 18th and 19th centuries. His portraits open a window into the world of wealth and influence fueled by industry that find a lasting legacy in the Norwich Free Academy. Somewhat less successfully, he assayed stilllife, including a small glass planter of flowers on display in Crocker’s Norwich. The plant may be an African Violet.

A number of Emmons’ portraits were donated to the Slater Museum by alumnus and former NFA teacher Raymond Bailey “Chief” Case. Mr. Case’s mother, Ada, is depicted at a young age in a portrait in the gallery also by Emmons. The child was, by family legend, kept occupied and still for the sitting by a basket of peppermints, which one could argue forms a still life vignette within the portrait. The child appears to have been about three years old at the sitting.

Emmons includes elements of still life in his portrait of the Norton Girls, the four daughters of Henry Barnard and Emeline Frisbie Norton, also portrayed and on display in the gallery. The Norton Girls features the trappings of a privileged life, which comprise elements of still life within the portrait.
For example a cobalt glass vase, with silver overlay on a marble base rests atop a table clothed in pink damask. Satin drapes frame the scene and flowers are contained in the vase and a basket held by the youngest sister. In other portraits, Emmons adds elements of still life to enliven the scene and tell the viewer about the sitter. Most notable among these is the monumental portrait of Russell Hubbard (1857).

Russell Hubbard was wealthy and influential. When approached by John Putnam Gulliver with a grand idea, Russell Hubbard was the first contributor of the ten men who were to be solicited each to give $7,500 ($188,820.75 in today’s money) toward the establishment of the Free Academy (now Norwich Free Academy or NFA). Hubbard also raised additional funds and served as a clerk of the works for the construction of the original NFA Main Building. He was the first president of the NFA board, established the Hubbard Rhetorical Society, and purchased the books and shelving for a library in the new school building. Elements of still life abound in this painting, mostly books on Mr. Hubbard’s shelves and table. Most notable is Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa Being A Journal of An Expedition by Henry Barth, PH.D., D.C.L.; New York, NY, Harper and Brothers, 1857, which helped to date the painting and identify the sitter. A satin covered footrest is seen on the patterned carpet at the sitter’s feet. He is seated in a red tapestry upholstered gentleman’s chair with a wood frame polished to a high sheen. A marble topped empire style table is at his

Images: (clockwise from left) The Norton Girls by Alexander Hamilton Emmons, o/c, ca. 1850; detail from The Bill Boys by Alexander Hamilton Emmons, o/c, n.d; Roses by John Denison Crocker, o/c, n.d.
proper left, piled with books and in his left hand are a pair of gold rimmed eye glasses. Drapery frames the window over the sitter's shoulder.

Although Crocker's portraits also include images of objects that may be described as small still life vignettes, a “portrait” of roses, in the museum’s collection for many decades has most closely fit the description of still life until the acquisition of the new piece. The lush flowers, quickly, yet confidently rendered, appear like many painted by Charles Ethan Porter (1847-1923), a renowned African American painter of Rockville and Hartford, Connecticut. Porter was much younger than Crocker, but their careers overlapped by about 40 years, so it is entirely possible that Crocker saw Porter’s work and was inspired. In the Crocker's Norwich exhibition, hangs a small still life by Alexander Hamilton Emmons. It depicts a ribbed glass container holding what appears to be a living plant. When placed near and compared to Crocker's roses, it simply pales.

Crocker, though essentially an autodidact, benefited from and prospered along with his city. In addition to his participation in the city's economic growth as an inventor, Crocker supplied its proud residents with images of their families, farms and the growing city around them. It is clear from his landscapes, and perhaps, especially from this still life, that he was studying everything available to him, possibly through excursions to the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, the U.S.'s oldest art museum. The Atheneum would have had on display Renaissance European still lifes for Crocker to examine and emulate. Now Crocker's artwork is represented in the collections of the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Smithsonian, the New Britain Museum of American Art and the Brooklyn Museum.
Woodturning is the craft of using a lathe with hand-held tools to cut a symmetrical form. The wood lathe is a simple mechanism which can be used by the craftsman to create a variety of forms. Examples of objects made on the lathe include tool handles, candlesticks, knobs, rolling pins, bodkins, knitting needles, needle cases, thimbles, pens, chessmen, spinning tops; legs, spindles and pegs for furniture; balusters and newel posts for architecture; hollow forms such as bowls, platters, and even chair seats.

A skilled turner can produce a wide variety of objects with a few simple tools. The tools can be reshaped easily for the task at hand. In many parts of the World, the lathe has been a portable tool that goes to the source of the wood, or adapts to temporary workspaces, which will be the case on April 2, 2017 in the Atrium.

For thousands of years, the wood lathe was used to create objects of beauty and function. The museum’s collection includes magnificent chairs made by Ebenezer Tracey and his shop with many boldly turned legs, back supports and stretchers. When industrial production became ubiquitous, the turner’s skill was often lost.

As participants will learn, the nature of the wood defines woodturning techniques. The orientation of the wood grain, relative hardness and moisture content affects both the ease of cutting wood and the final shape of the work when it dries. In the 19th and early 20th century, woodturners in England worked in Turning Shops, usually within the master-apprentice system. In Germany and Russia, woodturning was concentrated in villages which had a specialty, such as turning toys. Woodturning skills were used by patternmakers in the making of prototypes and shapes for casting molds used in foundries during the 19th and 20th century.
THE 123rd SATURDAY MORNING ART CLASS EXHIBITION

March 26 - April 15, 2017
Opening Reception: March 26, 1 - 3 p.m.

THE 127th NORWICH ART SCHOOL STUDENT EXHIBITION

April 28 - May 25, 2017
Opening Reception: April 28, 7 - 9 p.m.

Two successive exhibitions will feature art work by NFA and elementary students who participated in the various art courses offered during the academic year. Paintings, drawings, prints and mixed media pieces, photography and graphic designs, sculpture, clay objects, metal and jewelry creations, and wood working projects will be displayed.

Save the date for the opening of our Summer exhibition, Local Color, coming June 11, 2017!