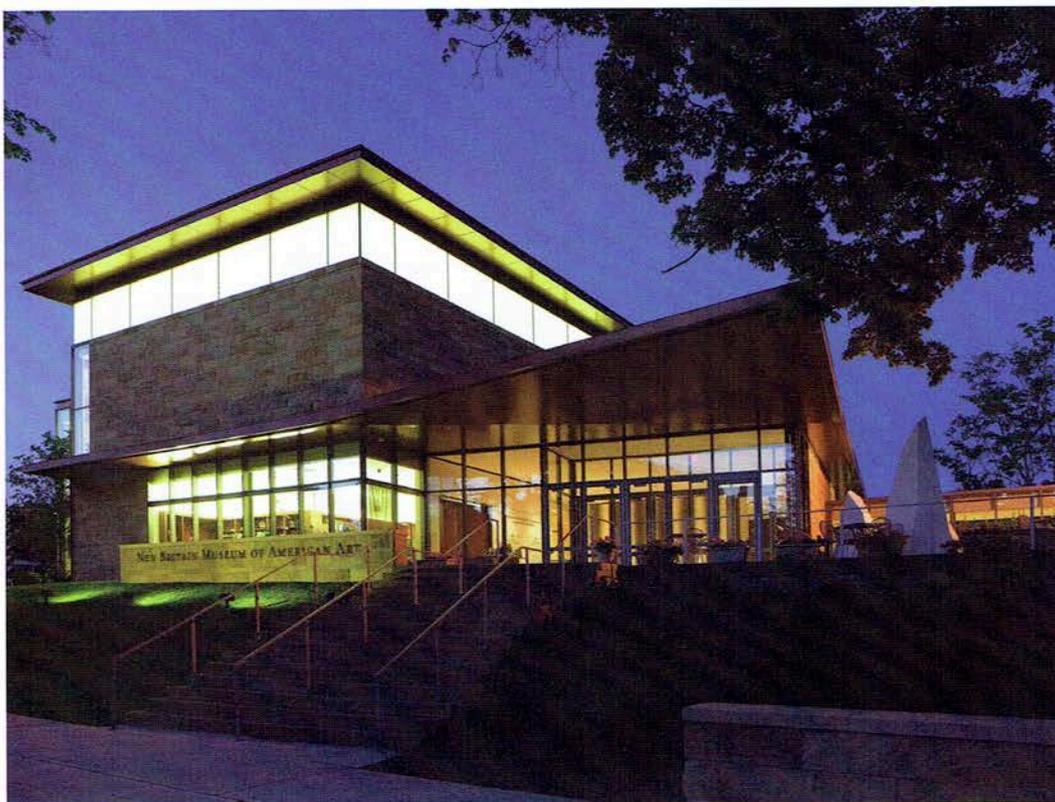


# COMINGS GOINGS & CHARTINGS



**H**ow do we gauge the impact of art? By the message it portrays? By how it moves or inspires us? By how it reflects our culture and values? Can one piece possess all those traits? You may think you've

seen paintings that do all that, but after you see *The Cycle of Terror and Tragedy: September 11, 2001*, by Graydon Parrish, you may need to reassess.

Displayed in **The New Britain Museum of American Art (NBMAA)**, *The Cycle* is a powerfully moving painting. Monumental both in scope and size (more than 6' x 17'), it portrays all the horror, pain, and confusion of the 9/11 attacks—the shattering of innocence, loss, courage, and the cycle of life. A tour-de-force of allegory, it is dominated by two tall blindfolded young men grimacing in anguish, representing the twin towers. The piece was

commissioned by NBMAA and includes a two-page handout describing its symbolism.

As epic as this work is, the NBMAA has much more that delights and inspires. Founded in 1903, it was the first museum dedicated solely

to American art. Boasting more than 10,000 works of Impressionism, Hudson River and Ash Can Schools, Realism, Abstraction, and more, it showcases a wide representation of America's best artists.

It has also become a showroom for cutting edge newcomers; a regular NEW/NOW exhibit showcases contemporary artists. Opening in the fall

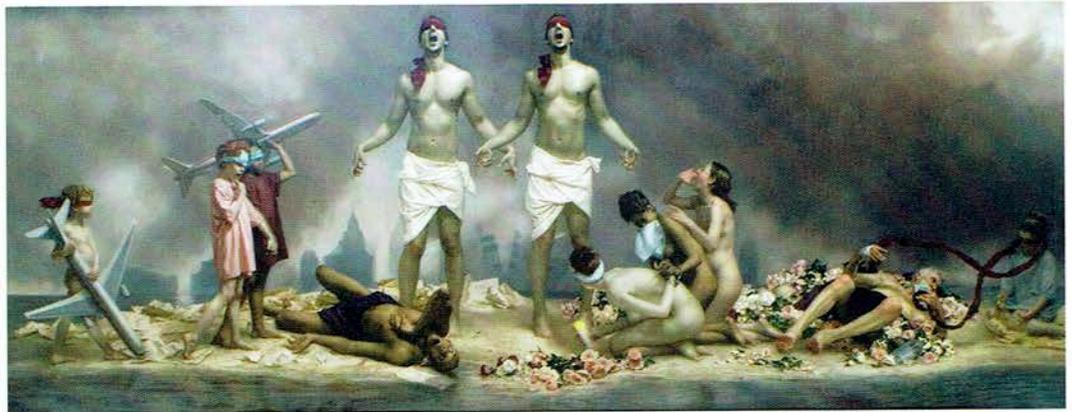
and running to Jan. 23, it will present Sanford Biggers, who created a large-scale floor design of colored sand resembling a prayer rug. Programs will encourage audiences to interact with the work through dance and meditation.

## American Art is the toast of New Britain

Stirring works highlight a stunning collection

BY TOM SOBOLESKI

# COMINGS & GOINGS & CHARTINGS FALL



*The Cycle of Terror and Tragedy: September 11, 2001*, painting by Graydon Parrish

Also due up this fall is an exhibit of works ranging from realism to abstraction by contemporary regional artists.



For traditionalists, there is no shortage of satisfying fare. stalwarts such as Frederic Church, Mary Cassatt, and Childe Hassam anchor the painting collection. A substantial collection of illustrations includes works by Norman Rockwell and lesser-known illustrators like Stevan Dohanos, George Hughes, and C.F. Payne. The mood of Connecticut during WWII is adroitly captured in *Smitty's Diner*, a watercolor by Warren Baumgartner. Local Westport residents posed as models for the waitress, cook and customers.

Stunning sculpture is liberally dispersed

throughout the galleries of NBMAA. A collection of bronze pieces on themes of the old West by Solon Borglum is notable for the energy and emotion depicted in horses, cowboys, and Native Americans. The rhythmic curvilinear glass chandeliers of Dale Chihuly fill windowed stairwells with ever-changing refractive light beams.

A second memorial to 9/11 accentuates the scale of lives lost. *3,000 Tears*, by Dalton Ghetti, contains 3,000 tiny teardrops representing the victims. Carved from the tips of pencils, the piece took 10 years to complete. A marvel of precision craftsmanship, it may rank as one of the most contemplative pieces ever done on this complex and emotional subject.

As diverse as it is, perhaps NBMAA's signature works are a set of monumental murals by Thomas Hart Benton. Benton exudes a unique knack for capturing the panorama of American life with scenes of its bawdy, tawdry underbelly. Rustlers, panhandlers, cabaret singers, poker players, boozers, and sharecroppers are all caricatured and exaggerated in their anatomy and features to underscore their yearnings, fears, and dreams.

When a respite is needed, this museum stands out for its numerous one-of-a-kind benches. Diverse in their materials and eye-catching in their imagination, they grace all the galleries and outdoor areas.

For those who didn't know about the world-class art collection on public display in New Britain, an enriching day awaits. The 9/11 work *Cycle of Terror and Tragedy* alone is worth the price of admission. Please visit [nbmaa.org](http://nbmaa.org) for more information. ●