

Tom Gargiulo: Connecticut Modernist

May 27 — June 23, 2025

Foreword

When Kate Moss, a senior majoring in Art at Eastern and one of our gallery associates, first mentioned that her grandfather was a painter, I had no idea I was about to discover one of Connecticut's most innovative and generous modernist painters. Within two months, this exhibition was born.

Tom Gargiulo (1934–2023), a Bridgeport native, earned the title of Connecticut Modernist for his bold style, innovative use of color and texture, and deep roots in the state's artistic tradition. His work is a vibrant fusion of influences. From the Impressionists, he drew lively brushwork and radiant hues that bring his landscapes to life, capturing moments as fleeting as light on water or wind on trees. Influenced by the Post-Impressionists of the 1940s, his introspective self-portraits and studio interiors are charged with personal symbolism and the emotional tension born from his artistic dilemmas. From American conceptual artists of the 60s and 70s, he inherited a spirit of fearless experimentation — using shaped canvases and “tools of the trade”, such as tubes of paint, brushes, and palettes fixed to the canvas, to push the boundaries of form and meaning.

Like his paintings, which reveal their stories over time, it has been a joy to witness Kate Moss's own artistic journey unfold. What began as a general interest in art has grown into a deep curiosity about curating exhibitions and art management. We hope that this exhibition “Gargiulo: Connecticut Modernist” honors her grandfather's legacy and inspires her to pursue a future in museum studies. Known affectionately as “the art father,” Gargiulo devoted his life to mentoring young artists and sharing his artistic passion with his family. It's fitting that his work now helps guide his granddaughter's path.

Kate is not alone in this journey. The Gallery takes great pride in supporting our students as they explore and develop their passions. We are committed to helping them uncover the best within themselves and to nurturing the next generation of artists, curators, and cultural leaders. Much like Gargiulo, whose career exemplified a succession of exhibitions and curatorial ventures — I am eager to embrace the opportunities and collaborations that this exhibition may inspire.

Julia Wintner

Coordinator of Art Gallery and Museum Services, 2025

Tom Gargiulo: The Art Father and Connecticut Modernist showcases 41 mixed media and oil paintings created by Tom Gargiulo. As an abstract painter, he worked with other media, making prints and collage pieces. His prolific work spans the decades from 1960 to 2022, with over 200 pieces in his collection. Before his works found their way into public parks, galleries, and hearts across the community, Gargiulo began creating art in the most familiar and personal of spaces—his Connecticut home basement and his garage that he turned into a studio in Florida. These humble, makeshift studios became places of quiet devotion, where ideas were shaped in solitude and materials came alive through his hands. Whether in a garage or a gallery, his work carries the same spirit: expressive, modernistic, and reflective of the times. When visiting my grandfather, Tom Gargiulo, I would see glimpses of rooms in his house, covered in artwork. His house was alive with color and texture, its walls covered in layers of canvases, sketches, tools, and unfinished ideas waiting to take shape. Growing up, I was drawn to his use of vibrant colors, and I viewed these works through a childlike lens. His collection includes deeply personal aspects, including a series of boat prints and scenes of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, paintings, prints of humanity in masks during COVID-19, and pieces reflecting the late 1970s teacher protest in the Bridgeport school system.

Tom Gargiulo (1938-2022) was a native of Bridgeport, Connecticut. His art journey began when he attended the University of Bridgeport for four years, studying the arts. He earned his masters in Fine Art Education and went on to win national awards in both art and art education. After graduating from college, he was a part of over 150 art shows that took place around New England, as well as New York City, Florida, and Europe. Beyond his life as an artist, Tom was a devoted educator and an advocate of the arts. He generously gifted his personal artworks to Housatonic Community College, Fairfield University, and several Daytona Community Colleges. He started his career as an art professor, teaching in the Bridgeport public school system, and taught adult night classes at Fairfield and Sacred Heart Universities. After retiring from teaching in 1994, Tom and his wife, Arlene Volpe, moved to Palm Coast, Florida, and another chapter of their art-filled lives began. Tom and his wife started their own art foundation, Gargiulo Art Foundation (GAF). His foundation helped local artists display and sell their work, creating a space for artists to be recognized. When they hosted exhibitions, they high-

lighted the work of local artists by choosing an artist of the year each year, helping these artists to create an audience for themselves. Gargiulo commissioned local and regional artists, which would allow public installations all around the City of Palm Coast and other local areas of Florida.

One of Gargiulo's biggest installations was the Palm Coast Sculpture Garden, located in Central Park. Gargiulo applied for grants from the city and used these grants, along with member donations and his personal funding, to buy the commissioned sculptures with grants known as Art in Public Spaces, so these pieces can be displayed around the city for all to enjoy. One of the biggest awarded grants was \$100,000 to begin the Sculpture Garden installation. Unveiling the first sculpture in 2019, this collaboration of the Gargiulo Art Foundation and the city of Palm Coast allowed this garden to grow, housing 5 sculptures to date. These pieces are strategically placed around the park's lake, enhancing the natural beauty and providing visitors with a unique artistic experience.

Kate Moss
May 15, 2025

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It has been an honor to carry on Tom Gargiulo's legacy as an artist. He had an enduring passion for the arts and an unwavering commitment to community, which has left a lasting impact in Palm Coast and beyond. As an artist, his creative vision has brought public art to life, transforming spaces into living galleries that inspire locals, visitors, and other artists.

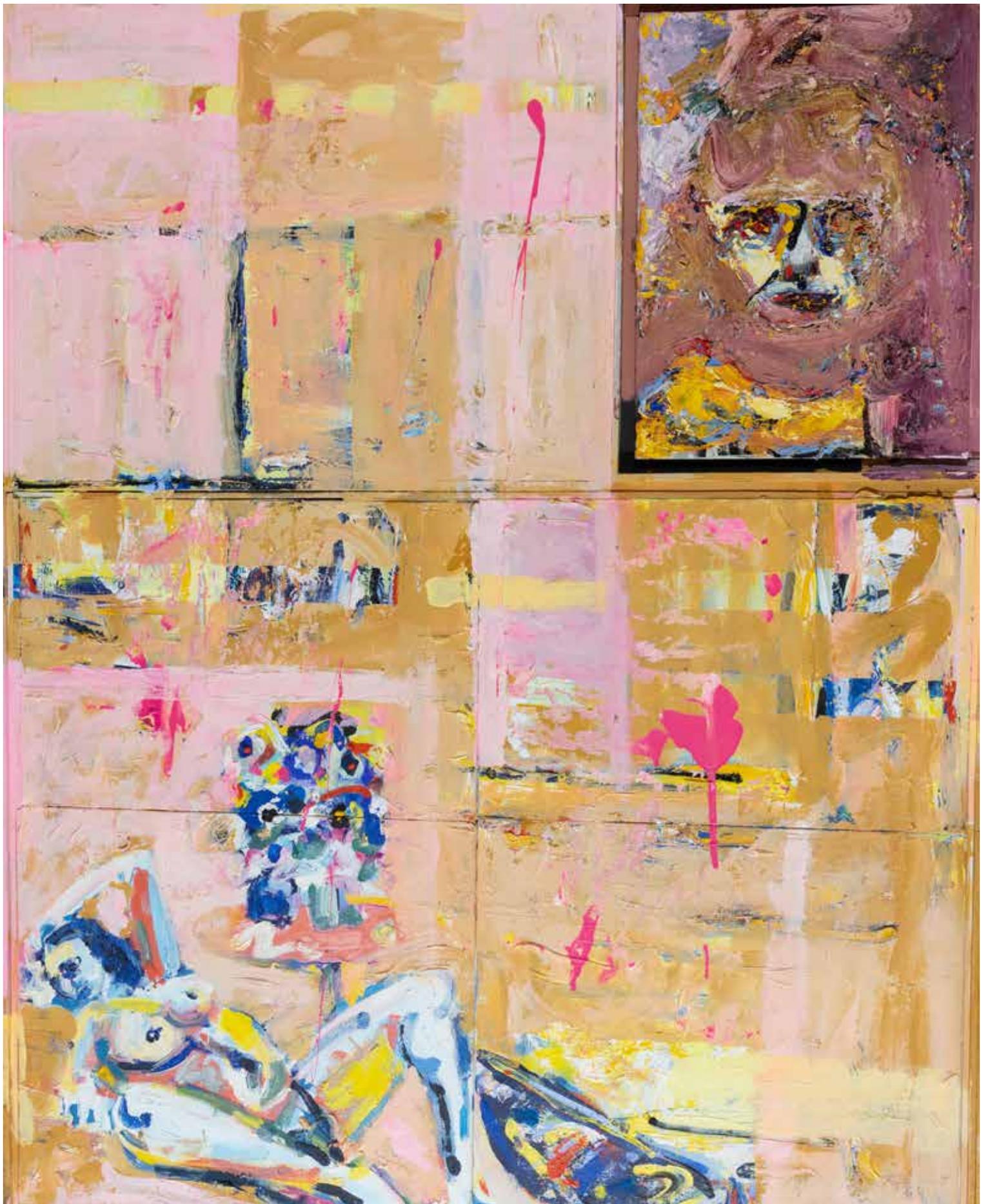
Equally, I honor Tom not just for his artistic achievements, but for the love and wisdom he has given as a grandfather. As an artist and his granddaughter, I admire his creativity and the impact he made on my family and his community, and it inspires me to continue my artwork as well. Curating this exhibition of his work has been both a professional privilege and a deeply personal journey. In studying his paintings and creative process, I have come to understand the depth of his artistic inquiry, the integrity of his craftsmanship, and the quiet persistence with which he brought to my family and his community. Please enjoy this exhibition, and we hope that his works offer a glimpse into the artistic mind of Tom Gargiulo. Thank you for joining us in honoring his legacy.





















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