

Florence Griswold Museum

A Case Study on the Impact of CT Humanities' Investment



Since CT Humanities' founding 50 years ago, we have worked with cultural organizations and partners across the state to **share our rich history and culture, educate the public, and strengthen cultural tourism**. Connecticut's investment in the CT Humanities Fund has generated thousands of exhibits, programs, and events that have benefited millions of residents of and visitors to our state. This case study shows the **impact of long-term investment** in local organizations that have become our community anchors.

Built in 1871, Old Lyme's Florence Griswold Museum embodies the artistic spirit of its legacy as the home of the Lyme Art Colony and home of American impressionism. The 12-acre site, which includes the home, the Krieble Gallery, and artist trails, highlights the intersection between art, history, and culture.

CTH has provided 23 grants to Florence Griswold Museum totaling \$988,166

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF THE FLORENCE GRISWOLD MUSEUM: A 2023 SNAPSHOT



Tax Revenue Generated | **STATE: \$242,847**
LOCAL: \$151,108

Source: 2023 Arts & Economic Prosperity 6: The Economic and Social Impact Study of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations and Their Audiences in the State of Connecticut

Their Challenges:

In 1976, the organization had few funding sources, only one staff member, and just 850 annual visitors.

Our Investment:

CT Humanities support and funding helped the Museum:

- Turn their vision into statewide sustainable strategies
- Conduct audience research
- Create art exhibitions with humanities themes
- Enhance education through online learning for elementary school teachers
- Become a tourism driver by increasing annual visitors to 30,000 (as of 2023)

Investment from CT Humanities helped the Museum leverage additional funding from other sources, including the National Endowment for the Humanities corporate funders, and donors.

CASE STUDY: FLORENCE GRISWOLD MUSEUM

It was the American Bicentennial, 1976, when Jeff Andersen started working in Old Lyme at the Florence Griswold House, a boardinghouse for artists run by Florence Griswold (1850-1937).

“It was a small, local historic house and historical society,” Andersen said. “But it was a time of great rediscovery, especially in American art and material culture. The Bicentennial had galvanized the country and particularly museums.”

Andersen was the institution’s only staff member, and he shared a vision with his board of trustees for what the Museum could one day become.

“We knew we had compelling stories to tell about the life work of Florence Griswold and the artists that lived in her home, this experiment in communal living,” he said. “And we were ambitious.”

Those kinds of aspirations required partners, and Andersen found one in another fledgling organization, CT Humanities, which had just been established two years earlier.

“Very early on, I saw how CT Humanities could be an important partner in reaching our goals,” he said. “We had intellectual conversations about programming that were deeply contextual, about art and society, relevance, all grounded in humanities scholarship and discipline. How motivating that was, to have a team of professionals to collaborate with.”

CT Humanities staff and funding helped the Museum develop statewide strategies, conduct audience research, and create art exhibitions in conversation with humanities themes.

“What we loved is that we could work with the CT Humanities staff,” he said. “The process was informative, elucidating, improving the concepts of what we were formulating.”

Support from CT Humanities led to further partnerships, including the National Endowment for the Humanities, donors, and businesses.

“Beyond direct funding, it helped us when we went for corporate support,” Andersen said. “They wanted to see the broader vision, and having the endorsement of CT Humanities and NEH is an enormous stamp of approval.”

Starting in the 1980s, the Museum worked to reacquire land that had belonged to the Griswold family, and with that, Andersen said it was no longer just a house and former art colony – it was an archaeological and cultural site. A dig unearthed the foundations of a barn and artist’s studio. This led to expanded programming relating to farms and ecology.

“Our programming was grounded in scholarship, and it became more innovative as the Museum grew and gained confidence,” Andersen said.

That innovation extended to the Museum embracing the digital age. It hosts online learning for educators, virtual walkthroughs in exhibits, and their website is full of educational resources, allowing them to reach people across the world.



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– Jeff Andersen, who served as executive director of the Florence Griswold Museum for 41 years

Over the years, CT Humanities has awarded over \$988,000 to the Museum through 23 grants for initiatives and projects including scholarly lectures, audience research, exhibits on interdisciplinary alternative voices, the Schumann Artists’ Trail, and the Museum’s beloved Wee Faerie Village programs.

The first year Andersen was there, just 850 visitors came through. Now, over 30,000 people visit the Museum annually, which houses the renowned Kriebble Gallery and its extensive collection of American art.

“There’s been so much growth over time, and with CT Humanities, there is still the personal, grassroots, community feeling of the organization,” said Andersen, who retired in 2018 after 41 years and now serves as director emeritus. “It believes in marshaling its resources to the best and highest purpose.”