Art imitates farm life at this New Bedford exhibition

“agriCultural: A Biennial Exhibition” runs through the end of November.

By Ann Trieger Kurland Globe Correspondent, Updated September 22, 2026, 5:30 a.m.



Shared Architecture by Susan Medyn, which is included in agriCultural: A Biennial Exhibition at the New Bedford Art Museum. NEW BEDFORD ART MUSEUM

A cow gazing with dreamy eyes painted in monochromatic tones. A mixed-media sculpture fashioned with the help of honey bees. A single rake draped in white linen, evoking the spirit of Regionalist painter Grant Wood's "American Gothic."

These are just a few of the treasures on display at agriCultural: A Biennial Exhibition, now on view at the New Bedford Art Museum until Nov. 29. Organized by the Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership, this juried show brings together voices from artists who farm, farmers who are also artists, and artists who take inspiration from agriculture.

“Instead of just publishing where to buy local food, we wanted to use arts and culture to tell a story so people will look at agriculture in a deeper way,” says museum executive director Suzanne de Vegh.

The South Coast of Massachusetts has deep roots in both agriculture and art. Wampanoag farmers cultivated the land for thousands of years, passing their know-how to Colonial settlers, while money from the whaling industry later helped fuel a thriving art scene.

For the exhibit, SEMAP and the art museum put out a call to artists to submit their work, says Brad Fesmire, SEMAP’s community engagement and program director. More than two dozen works were selected that in some way relayed a complex or untold story, including Susan Medyn’s sculpture, “Shared Architecture.” The Rhode Island–based watercolorist and master beekeeper incorporates caning and embroidery materials into her hives, allowing the bees to transform them and reveal their own ingenuity.

Dartmouth artist JP Powell's "Panic Grasses" creates the illusion of marsh grasses moving in the breeze. And in "Rake 1," sculptor and photographer Stephen Althouse, who grew up on a Pennsylvania farm, turned his lens on the familiar farm tool, inviting many interpretations.

"More often than not, this farmer who also makes art has a lot more to say about farming and the world than just growing a tomato," says Fesmire. "Not that there's anything wrong with only growing tomatoes,"

New Bedford Art Museum, 608 Pleasant St., New Bedford, 508- 961-3072. Open Thu.-Sun., 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

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