



## ***The Chestnut Grove***

### **Sarah Stewart**

New Haven Lawn Club, 193 Whitney Ave, New Haven, CT    Public Viewing: June 1st to August 27th, Daily 9-5

*The light falls nicely in the chestnut grove.*

Hamden artist Sarah Stewart will be showing 20 recent paintings, all completed at The Chestnut Grove, a Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station plot in Hamden, CT.

“When I was introduced to the grove, I immediately found a tree with strange, angled and broken branches with a great wing span. It is large compared to the other trees, and light falls beautifully on it and around it. Its branches structured my composition in an interesting way and I kept on going back to paint it. I’ve painted it in different seasons and branched out to other spots around the grove as well.” Stewart continued, “It helps that the underbrush gets mowed and there are rarely any other people there.”

The paintings in the show span all four seasons, with shifting light, chromatic changes, and full canopy to empty exposed “stick figures”. Each painting describes a fleeting moment. One can tell there is urgency in capturing these moments because rarely do two paintings in the show

track the same light or atmosphere. Stewart must work quickly, trusting her hand to jot down the information that becomes the whole. The situation can dissolve at any moment with the shifting light and changing weather. About the work, Stewart states, "Each painting builds on the last: what to look at, what to include or exclude, how to position the trees within the rectangle. I work on them so quickly due to the shifting light that I am feverishly reacting to my surroundings. Decisions are being made with the help of my past paintings. I also trust what my eye is drawn to and what I see."

The more time Stewart spent painting in the grove, the more interested she became in its history. The land now known as The Chestnut Grove, was used by Arthur Graves starting in 1930 to cross blight-susceptible American Chestnuts with blight-resistant Japanese Chestnuts. Graves donated the plot, with many hybrids and species, to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) where the work has continued in the longest running program of its kind in the U.S. "I realized there was a wider history at the grove when I first noticed a tag on the tree I like so much." Stewart continued, "It read: 1930-Japanese, and it sparked my interest."

Sarah Stewart has exhibited her work at Dallas Public Library, Dallas TX; First Street Gallery, NYC; Silvermine Arts Center, New Canaan, CT; URSA Gallery, Bridgeport, CT; The McKinney Avenue Contemporary, Dallas, TX; Blue Mountain Gallery, NYC. She has been included in the upcoming exhibition: *Field Visions*, at Boston University Art Galleries. Sarah is an Adjunct Professor of Painting at Gateway Community College. Her work is included in several private collections.

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*Top image: Summer Chestnut, 2021, acrylic on board, 20 x 16 in.*