

Western Connecticut State University
at Blue Mountain Gallery
2025 MFA Thesis Exhibition
June 17 – July 5, 2025

The Department of Art at Western Connecticut State University is pleased to announce the 2025 Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition at Blue Mountain Gallery, 547 West 27th Street, Suite 200, New York, NY.

An opening reception will be held on Thursday, June 19, from 5 to 8 p.m. The exhibition will run from June 17 through July 5, 2025. The gallery is open for viewing 11 am to 6 pm, Tuesdays through Saturdays.

The MFA Thesis Exhibition is the capstone experience of WCSU's Department of Art's Graduate Program. MFA degrees are available in Painting, Illustration, and Interdisciplinary Visual Art. The exhibition is supported by the Jason and Ellen Hancock Student Endowment Fund at WCSU. Six MFA graduates will present their work:

Tony DeZinno is a photographer and interdisciplinary artist from East Hampton, CT. He received his BA degree from Western Connecticut State University in 2023, with the Excellence in Photography Award from The Department of Art. He has been deeply involved in theater, lending to his passion for storytelling and the power of visual communication. During his studies, he has worked as a photographer with the WCSU Communications and Marketing Department. Additionally, he has worked at Darkslide Film Lab in film development. His artwork has been shown in exhibitions including the *Alumni Show* at the Gallery at the Visual and Performing Arts Center at WCSU, and most recently, *Iterations: A Dialogue of Scale* at The Knowlton in Bridgeport, CT.

In his artist statement, Tony writes, "My work explores identity, politics, and memory, particularly within the LGBTQ community and today's shifting social climate. My practice blends digital and film photography with tactile, handmade processes, drawing from both nostalgia and the discomfort of growing up in a politically charged environment. Through photography and sculpture, my work explores how memory and identity intersect, and how past experiences shape our current selves. In all my work, I seek to create a space for reflection—one that invites questions about belonging, family, and the ways in which we navigate the complexities of an ever-changing world."

Andrea McLaughlin is a painter and resident of Bethel CT. Captivated by the pristine beauty of the region, she paints exclusively from nature, exploring surfaces and techniques to better express the authenticity of the landscape. She received her BFA in Apparel Design from Rhode Island School of Design, followed by a 30 year career in the fashion industry. She also continued studies in painting at Silvermine Art Guild, Rowayton Art Center, and Ridgefield Art Guild. In summer of 2024, she was awarded an

artist residency in France. She has shown in many exhibitions, with works in private and corporate collections, including Fairfield Chemical Carriers and William Raveis Realty.

Andrea writes, “My current preferred medium is paper collage. My collages are entirely composed of my own paintings, sketches, and prints. Whereas a traditional painting captures a single moment in time, the collage captures multiple moments, allowing the viewer to journey through and around time. The resulting work reflects how our senses absorb the experience of a place, often through fragmented and layered elements. I extend an invitation to the observer to step into my very personal “sense of place.”

Jillian Mirabal is an artist from Putnam Valley, NY, pursuing her graduate studies in illustration, using various mediums: painting, photography, graphic design, and digital imagery. She earned her BA degree from Western Connecticut State University, with a major in graphic design and a minor in photography. From a young age, Jillian has been fascinated by horror and the mystical, which heavily influence her work. She is inspired by the Surrealist artists, including Renee Magritte, and illustrators Stephen Gammell and Tim Jacobus, whose books she grew up with. Currently, Jillian works in Communications & Marketing at WCSU as an illustrator, graphic designer and photographer.

Writing about her work, Jillian states, “I’ve always been drawn to the darker and more unusual aspects of life. Growing up, I was immersed in horror and Halloween-themed media—through my mother’s love for horror movies and my father’s mission to create the scariest haunted house in the neighborhood. These influences naturally find their way into my work. Through my art, I aim to shed light on the unspoken and unsettling—those captivating spectacles that people often try to ignore.”

Joseph Nolan is an artist from Waterbury, CT. He earned his BA degree in Studio Art / Painting from Western Connecticut State University in 2023. He is a Marine Corp Veteran of the Vietnam War, and is deeply involved with the veterans of Waterbury. During his graduate studies, he initiated a long-term project to paint the portraits of Waterbury veterans both living and deceased, as well as those missing in action, as a way to remember and honor them. Recently, his paintings have been exhibited in the Waterbury Hospital Art Corridor and the Library Art Gallery in Prospect, Connecticut.

Joseph writes in his artist statement, “Pope Francis has said that an artist is an apostle of beauty. That statement has become my mantra. If there is a way to bring beauty or to enhance beauty in this world, then I want to be part of that endeavor. My artwork revolves around my family and daily life. Some might think that my imagery is like opening a diary of my life. The story of Vincent Van Gogh who started painting later in life has been an inspiration. The late Jacob Lawrence is another artist who combined story telling and history in his paintings. He, also, has been a role model for me in my pursuit to create art.

Cristina Querrer, based in Mystic, CT, is a multidisciplinary artist, poet, and writer whose work bridges the realms of visual art, literature, and performance. Born and raised in the Philippines with a military family background, her experiences of displacement,

cultural hybridity, and resilience deeply inform her practice. Cristina holds an MFA in Creative Writing and a Master's in Library and Information Science. Her visual work is experimental, incorporating mixed media, found objects, collage, and organic materials to create deeply textured, layered compositions. Her process embraces the tactile and ephemeral, often blurring the lines between art, artifact, and storytelling.

In her artist statement, Cristina writes, "Memory is a tether—fragile, knotted, frayed. My work navigates the space between presence and absence, where remnants of time are bound together, reconstructed, or left unraveling. I assemble found materials, organic textures, and gestural marks into quiet rituals of remembering, evoking what lingers just beyond reach. Each piece is a passage, a vessel, a moment suspended between holding on and letting go. It is not about recreating what was, but about holding space for what remains—fragile, unresolved, and enduring.

Sluggo grew up in the small town of Chester, Connecticut, where they harbored a strong affinity with nature and a love for plants and animals. They received their BFA degree in Illustration from the University of New Haven, with previous studies at Lyme Academy of Fine Arts and the Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

Sluggo writes, "I predominantly grew up surrounded by the natural world, watching documentaries about Earth and exploring my rural landscape. My interest in taxidermy has propelled my work forward, as it was an avenue to explore and study the inner workings of living things. Another large inspiration to my work was growing up during a time where there were vast numbers of games for children online, which powered my interest in characters and aesthetics. I have been working digitally since 2010 when I started my artistic journey and have the unique experience of the digital medium being one of my first mediums to express myself artistically. I find that the aesthetics of children's media online influences my work a lot and tends to be the main catalyst when it comes to my creation of work, as well as my deep spiritual attachment to the world around us."

For more information, contact the WCSU Department of Art at (203) 837-8403.