

Contact: Scott McDowell
Executive Director
Regional Strategic Communications
New York
semcdowe@syr.edu
Phone: 212-826-1449

Wynn Newhouse Awards Exhibition now open at Palitz Gallery

Awards highlight the achievements of artists of excellence who happen to have disabilities

New York, NY – The Palitz Gallery proudly presents the tenth annual Wynn Newhouse Awards Exhibition open now through June 1. Palitz Gallery is located in Syracuse University’s Lubin House at 11 E. 61st St., New York City. The Wynn Newhouse Awards Exhibition draws attention to the achievements of artists of excellence who happen to have disabilities. Exhibition hours are Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; closed Memorial Day weekend. It is free and open to the public. Contact 212-826-0320 or lubin@syr.edu for more information.

Each of the award winners receives a portion of a \$60,000 per year allotment from the Samuel I. Newhouse Foundation. This year, 21 works are on display, including pen and ink drawings, textile art, tempera on paper and mixed media. Grant winners are Monica Chulewicz, Laura Craig McNellis, Jason DeSilva, Dustin Grella, E. Jane, Katya Tepper, Melvin Way and Cathy Weis.

A selection committee reviewed the nominees, determined the winner, and decided how the grant money would be dispersed among the artists. This year’s selection committee members were Emily Dittman, exhibitions and collections manager, Syracuse University Art Galleries; Carolyn Lazard, artist; Barbara London, curator; and Frank Maresca, partner, Ricco/Maresca Gallery.

About the Artists

[Monica Chulewicz](#)

Monica Chulewicz primarily uses prints to express collected memories from a past that is unknown to the artist. “I use vintage photographs to create dialogues between history, memory and time that address themes of existence, fragility and mortality, as well as the theme of loss of life and memory and disability,” she says. “My work can

often be translated as self-portraits, with other women standing in place of me. They tell my story when I cannot.”

[Laura Craig McNellis](#)

The youngest of four girls, Laura Craig McNellis has painted prolifically since childhood. The creations that emerged from McNellis’ dexterous hands were vibrant. The paintings revealed a strong connection to the world around her and conveyed a need to explore the depth and breadth of the environment with which she had so little communication. The early works detailed important aspects of the trappings of her daily life and documented her surroundings at home, in the neighborhood and, eventually, beyond.

McNellis uses water-based paint on paper to chronicle treasured objects, people and places. Her works on paper are the foundation of a lifelong process of exploration. The artist visually describes her surroundings and important objects, expressing and satisfying her relationship with them. Periodically, she creates colorful, textural works in clay.

[Jason DaSilva](#)

An artist and filmmaker for 10 years, Jason DaSilva was diagnosed with primary progressive multiple sclerosis, an incurable and untreatable form of the disease, in 2005. He then decided to turn the camera on himself to tell his story. After eight years of filming and going from a cane to a walker to a wheel chair, he completed his first feature film called “When I Walk.” Premiering at the Sundance Film Festival last year, “When I Walk” was broadcast by PBS/POV and won an Emmy Award for Long-Form Documentary.

“Having made the transition from able-bodied to disabled, I know first-hand that many people do not think about the experience of disabled people in society,” says DaSilva. “This gives me inspiration and fuel to keep going and tell my story so that others can join in the challenge to have our voices be heard.”

[Dustin Grella](#)

Much of Dustin Grella’s work engages with time, whether by speeding up, slowing down, or inspecting the passage of time. The artist becomes engrossed in processes that allow him to organize time in meticulous ways. These processes often grow out of a core compulsion—an action or idea repeated aggressively until some resolution is

found. The rhythm and constraint of this repetition in turn mimics the measured passage of time, so that time becomes part of the medium of his work, as well as its subject.

“A majority of my work involves animation, which by its very nature compresses time to create the illusion of a new reality,” says Grella. “I have developed a practice in which I set up a camera on a timer, recording each frame after one minute. Within this minute, I allow myself to draw and explore the direction of the work.”

[E. Jane](#)

To E. Jane, self-portraits always feel performative. “I think a lot about the people for whom the western world and the ideologies it claims as its foundation were not made, specifically Black Americans and people of the African diaspora,” says Jane. “Who among us that has found ourselves colonized (and want a way out) get the right to build our own universes or selves?”

As Jane explains, for some bodies self-definition comes at a price. “Sometimes, they are even asked to pay with their lives,” says Jane. “For some, there is too much work piled on to ever have the time to dig a way out and reach self-definition or examine creativity, because of how western society generally defines labor, work and art, and determines who should be allowed leisure.

“I feel that we are entering an age where many Utopian demands should and will be met (in and outside of the field of art) soon or demanded with such vigor that the plates of certain foundations may shift.”

[Katya Tepper](#)

In her work, Katya Tepper starts with the familiar form of the ceramic bowl as a template for sculptural manipulation. As a cultural symbol, the bowl calls to mind the biological need to eat and digest. As an object, it mirrors the protruding belly and/or the empty stomach. By hanging the bowl sculptures on the wall at eye level, metaphorical “gut feelings” are elevated to “head-on” assertions in physical space.

The ceramic sculptures are grouped and painted in large-scale murals that address the room as a container for the body, complicating the intimate scale of the bowl as container. The installations exist as residual performances, a catalog of actions hewn with scatological references and domestic themes. Bowls are stabbed and penetrated with clay logs, while dripping paint marks the walls. The reverberation between the

sculptures and the murals mimics the fuzzy vibration between tactile and psychological perception.

“My work seeks to bridge the gap between intellectual thoughts and visceral feelings, positing an alternative to language where language has proven inadequate,” says Tepper. “Out of necessity, I embrace the temporal, the abject. Reducing my language to simplified forms and material gestures.”

Melvin Way

Born in Ruffin, South Carolina, Melvin Way often mixes chemical equations and prophecies.

“All my works have to go through emissions, baptisms and transmigrations before I release them into the stratosphere,” says Way. “I carry 500 drawings at a time in my raincoat, and they go thru rain sleet and snow, sometimes staying in my pocket for six months at a time.”

Way is “a mystic visionary genius, one of the greatest living American artists,” says art critic Jerry Saltz. “Melvin Way makes knotted diagrams of numbers, letters, lines and arrows that look like alchemical equations.”

Cathy Weis

After the initial shock of being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, Cathy Weis turned to dance and video, which became her lifelines.

“By combining them, a new way of working emerged that allowed me to continue in the dance world even though the kinesthetic joy of dancing that had initially been my passion had changed,” says Weis. “I developed a number of unique arrangements that combine performers with live video cameras, projectors and prerecorded images. This technology allows me to expand the limitations of my own body.”

About the Awards

Wynn Newhouse was a prominent and avid art collector who lost functional use of one hand in an industrial accident as a young man. By midlife, he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Newhouse envisioned The Wynn Newhouse Awards in 2005. The program provides grants to talented fine artists with disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Newhouse was joined by top artists, curators and critics who shared his belief that many disabled people have unique insights and skills

that can enhance their ability to create exciting art. He hoped that these exhibitions would enable the arts public to see the many creative ideas contained in their works. He passed away in 2010.