

Review featured on the Gallery&Studio Website
**Making The Human Connection
at Blue Mountain Gallery**

The Master of Fine Arts exhibit of Western Connecticut State University at the Blue Mountain Gallery promises to present the variety and skills of its latest graduates.



Christine Arnold

Christine Arnold's piece, titled "I Wanted to Write to You," has the intimacy of a letter to a loved one or friend. It features a view from inside a room looking out a blue-curtained window to a body of water and mountains in the distance. On the sill of the window is a bouquet of stalks and grasses beautifully rendered. The bouquet in the glass vase is a visual bridge to both, the inside or the inner space of letter writing, and the outer natural world. One wants to be in that dream space, the coziness of the room, the muted light, the interior world. The vase is the connecting image to the landscape outside. There's one loose stalk wrapped around the vase, slightly falling to the side, like a postscript in this letter, or a coda in a poem. The sky brushstrokes are painted in a moodiness of blue and white that suggests the mutability of light

and how it affects us. The deep blue curtains enhance the play of dark and light. The mountains beyond—a silent monolith—act as either a destiny or simply a natural connection to something larger than ourselves. Arnold accomplishes the personal in this image as one would in a letter. This is an admirable work of poetic painting.



Ellie Nazari

Ellie Nazari's art, titled "Nightly Letter IV," is a direct contrast to Arnold's quiet work. Nazari wants to shake things up in her expressive, figural piece. Her gestural strokes and use of color are filled with emotion, bold, brave, unflinching. In this work a large figure fills the space, the lower half of the body in violet brushstrokes. Violet is the color of spirituality, in the crown chakra that connects sadness, cleansing, purifying.

On the upper part of the figure are dashes of yellow representing the third chakra, the solar plexus, which is optimistic, connecting with knowledge and wisdom. Nazari's marks appear to be done by palette knife; the two contrasting colors

suggest either conflict or a desire for conflict resolution. The figure is surrounded by a large swathe of black and lesser hits of white and a smear of red on the right of the painting. This is a mysterious work and a fearless approach to the use of media.



Janet Warner

Janet Warner's art work, "Clouds Passing Over," is a classic landscape painted from a broad, aerial view looking beyond to a city or town. The largest expanse from the bottom to two thirds of the way to the cityscape is mostly greenery with a few houses tucked in between. The thicket quality of the trees offers a sense of lushness and protection for the nestled houses. Once we enter the view of the city everything becomes geometry, hard edges, needle-like steeples. We are then presented with a stark contrast of soft—the leafy, painterly greens—and the rigid, rising towers of commerce and the city. When one views the sky there's a storm brewing, nickel colored clouds, swirling in patches. The sky alone would suffice as a skillfully painted abstraction. One can see connections; not just the usual land, city and sky, but also the way we live, soft, hard in contrast. The sky offers us something more ethereal. That ever changing mutable body of blue is where live imaginations are.



Joey Loos

Joey Loos' "Muddled Berries" is a bold, abstract mixed media piece that appeals with its contrasting elements. Two thirds of the work is covered in neutrals and whites and in the lower left side is a flurry of black paint that looks like calligraphic shapes hidden in black strokes, as if there was an intentional blocking of an image or message. There's a confidence in the brushstrokes throughout. That in itself determines whether an art piece works or not. One is fascinated by the choices that are made; leaving some brushstrokes alone to just drape on the surface like a fearless woman in a torn dress. There are other choices made by the artist where she buries some printed matter in two places. Amidst this activity is a pleasing sense of balance and composition. Two smears of cranberry red are thrown in the mix which may explain the title, "Muddled Berries." Yet, this art has nothing unclear or muddled about it.

Kirsten Koromila's work titled, "Gallows," is an exciting study using a gray scale palette. One senses that the artist is wrestling with herself by offering two points of view: the bold, raw black lines drawn with energy and motion and pointing



Kirsten Koromilas

us to duality with the watery, white smearing of some of the imagery, as if invading the piece with light; and then erasing some of the line work that appears scratchy, and smoothing it out. One can envision the arm and hand movements of this artist flying back and forth as if trying to weave lines and wires while also trying to calm the nerve endings of those lines with washy, dripping white. This is a striking piece, with a powerful, emotional message, using simple materials and gestures.



Sara Ruiz

Sara Ruiz's piece, "Carnavales," is just that: a celebration of paint, gesture, abandonment. It takes skill to know when to hold back as an artist and when to let go. Ruiz's piece is layered with a structured background of white, gray and a black line grid, like a trellis to anchor the wildness—a smart decision. Ruiz tells us she's not going to hold back, she'd rather sound the chimes of paint splashes in golden brown and varieties of gray. By using subdued

colors she shows us that neutrals can sing and play on canvas just like crimson red. We all celebrate with her in this art work.



Tricia Currie

One of the most outstanding works in the exhibition is Tricia Currie's "The Way They Leave You Tells You Everything." The title intrigues since "leaving" has so many meanings; when a mate leaves a relationship, when someone dies, when a child leaves home. Currie's piece is an intricate, puzzle like series of line and body shapes suggesting the complexities of our relationships, how intertwined we are by our emotions of love, anger, compassion, loss. This work is compelling for multiple reasons. The composition works beautifully, it reads both abstract and figural, almost blending the two, which is no easy task. One considers that the artist is blurring the lines of our connection to each other as she weaves the human shapes, arms and legs linked to each other. Some shapes are boxed in, while some larger figures on the edge of the piece appear more dominant, and aren't as tangled or enmeshed as the smaller figures. For all its complexity, one admires the integration and comingling of line in this innovative and skillful work that speaks volumes about our human connection.

—Christine Graf

WCSU, Master of Fine Arts
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