Warren Wilson College Announces New Sponsored Exhibit at the Center for Craft

“Mirror/Mentor”
Featuring Lara Nguyen, Professor of Art at Warren Wilson College and her former students, Steven Horton Jr. (class of 2017), Sather Robinson-Waters (class of 2018) and Jess Self (class of 2014)
January 20 – March 12, 2021
Location: Center for Craft, 67 Broadway Street, Asheville, NC 28801
Open to the public Monday - Friday, 12-6pm and virtually
For more information on visiting hours and registration go to centerforcraft.org/visit

ASHEVILLE, N.C. – Warren Wilson College has organized a new exhibit, “Mirror/Mentor,” now on view at the Center for Craft’s John Cram Partner Gallery.

“Mirror/Mentor” brings together work by Warren Wilson College art professor Lara Nguyen and three of her former students, artist/alumni Steven Horton Jr. (class of 2017), Sather Robinson-Waters (class of 2018) and Jess Self (class of 2014). The exhibit is available via virtual tour or in-person.

The diversity of media, styles and themes in the exhibit’s artwork reflects Nguyen’s philosophy of teaching and mentoring. Nguyen said the idea of being a mentor who is a mirror does not mean producing students whose work mimics her own. Instead she follows the advice of her mother, who told her to set an example for her four younger siblings — mirror for them how to live fully in this world.

As she worked, and sometimes struggled, to integrate the different layers of her own very full life, Nguyen said she discovered her students were as curious about this art of living as they were about artistic techniques and different media.

“Walking around this exhibition I get to look up to my students and be a witness to their lives and what they are making of it,” Nguyen said. “I am moved by their activism, advocacy, discipline, and courage in what they choose to share and champion.”

The terms of Nguyen’s life changed when she was diagnosed with uterine leiomyosarcoma cancer (uLMS) in 2018. Her works in this exhibition hold up a mirror to teach us her new reality: stage 4 cancer, incurable and terminal. The photo series “Un-Broken” pictures the scars from her own surgeries and the healed wounds of family and friends embellished in gold as a means of adornment and repair in the vein of the Japanese art of kintsugi. In “Brushes with Death,” the artist creates new tools from her own hair lost due to chemotherapy. The mixed media sculpture “Forbidden Grapefruit” is a new iteration of a poem written about her mother’s journey, which became a series of performances and installations.
The body as vessel, trauma, a daily artistic practice, making as a means of social justice, and repurposing and repairing with the hopes of reemergence, are among the overlapping themes that connect the works of these four artists--teacher and students.

“As visual artists, sharing our stories, from the day to day to the day you’ll never forget... revealing the personal can create meaningful connection, making it harder for prejudice to settle in,” Nguyen said. “For me, the endgame is to encourage more empathy in our world through proximity.”

The exhibit will be on display through Friday, March 12, 2021.

“Mentorship plays an important role in the lives of artists. It is also a key element of the work we do to foster emerging artists in the field of craft,” said Center for Craft Executive Director, Stephanie Moore. “We are pleased Warren Wilson College has chosen to exhibit the profound work of professor Nguyen and her students to highlight this often underappreciated element of the creative life.”

Visitors can see the exhibition virtually or in-person with restrictions in place for COVID-19. A virtual tour is taking place on February 11, from 6-7 p.m. For more information, visit www.centerforcraft.org/exhibition/mirror-mentor.

Warren Wilson College is a vibrant, independent college with an innovative curriculum that purposefully integrates the liberal arts with community engagement and work experiences to prepare students for not only professional success, but also a life of meaning. Visit www.warren-wilson.edu.

Founded in 1996, the Center for Craft is the leading organization in the United States identifying and convening craft makers, curators, and researchers, and matching them with resources, tools, and networks to advance their careers. Over the years, the Center has become a vital community resource, serving thousands of visitors annually. As a national 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the field of craft, the Center administers more than $300,000 in grants to those working in the craft field. www.centerforcraft.org

Photo Credit: Lara Nguyen, Connective Contours (Lara, Steven, Sather, Jess), Digital illustration. Image courtesy of the artist.

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