



NEW JERSEY

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QuickTakes!

William Paterson University Galleries to Receive \$20,000 Grant from National Endowment for the Arts

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The William Paterson University Galleries has been approved to receive a \$20,000 Art Works grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to support a site-specific installation and exhibition by artist Marion Wilson that will connect watershed research with the visual arts and provide STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) education for underserved populations.

“We are excited to be one of 13 organizations in New Jersey to receive NEA funding and we are honored for the opportunity to collaborate with artist Marion Wilson, who uses the lens of ecology to work non-hierarchically with diverse community members,” said Kristen Evangelista, director of the William Paterson University Galleries. “Art will serve as a catalytic tool to address environmental concerns and increase the public knowledge of and connection to their surroundings.”

The year-long project by Ms. Wilson, which begins this spring, will be informed by research on water sustainability and hydrology and integrate art and science. Ms. Wilson will collaborate with Nicole Davi, a William Paterson associate professor of environmental science, and undergraduate students, along with community partners, to examine the ecology of watersheds, and the connection to surrounding land-use, at a local study site.

“Our students are very excited about integrating science and art, and it is pushing them to think creatively,” says Dr. Davi. “They are learning how the arts can raise environmental awareness and even support community buy-in for sustainable initiatives – critical elements for success and recurring themes in my class.” Students will conduct stream studies, which include measuring stream flow, testing water, and drawing stream visualizations. The types of insects, invertebrates, and plant life that are collected reveal significant information about water quality and the need for conservation. This scientific data is also highly visual and lends itself to artistic interpretation.

The exhibit, which will be on view in spring 2020, will feature paintings inspired by the natural world and engage gallery visitors with hands-on scientific research (e.g., viewing

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macro-invertebrates through a microscope). Through multi-part community outreach, students and teachers will participate in STEAM learning, which uses science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics to facilitate inquiry, dialogue, creativity, and critical thinking.

“I’m interested in looking closely and paying attention to what is small and omnipresent and overlooked, while drawing parallels between the natural world and the most fundamental aspects of human presence,” said Ms. Wilson.

As both a painter and socially engaged artist, Ms. Wilson raises awareness of the often overlooked and this project will focus on the underappreciated landscape of northern New Jersey, particularly the role of water and the Passaic River in shaping the industrial past and present of the neighboring city of Paterson. Ms. Wilson’s paintings of various species of micro invertebrates (e.g., crayfish, mayfly larva) that are present in streams will serve as indicators of pollution and have macro importance. Through interactive components (e.g., viewing macro-invertebrates through a microscope), the exhibit will foster dialogue about environmental issues of local, regional, national, and global significance, and will also demonstrate how people in developing countries, or in regions with few resources, can accurately determine their water quality.

Marion Wilson, who is based in New Jersey, has exhibited widely and is the recipient of many awards and residences. In addition to her studio practice, she has developed numerous socially engaged projects in urban neighborhoods. While serving as an associate professor at Syracuse University from 2007 to 2017, she studied with botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer of the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry and then renovated an RV to create a mobile field station for examining moss, which functions as an environmental bio-indicator even in the densest urban areas. She is currently creating eco-art interventions in collaboration with Mural Arts in Philadelphia, PA. She has also been an artist in residence at the McColl Center for Art & Innovation in Charlotte, NC. Ms. Wilson received her BA in studio art from Wesleyan University, an MA in urban pedagogy from Columbia University, and an MFA from the University of Cincinnati.

For more information on this National Endowment for the Arts grant announcement, visit [arts.gov/news](https://www.arts.gov/news).