

MFA Thesis Exhibition 2021

# Four



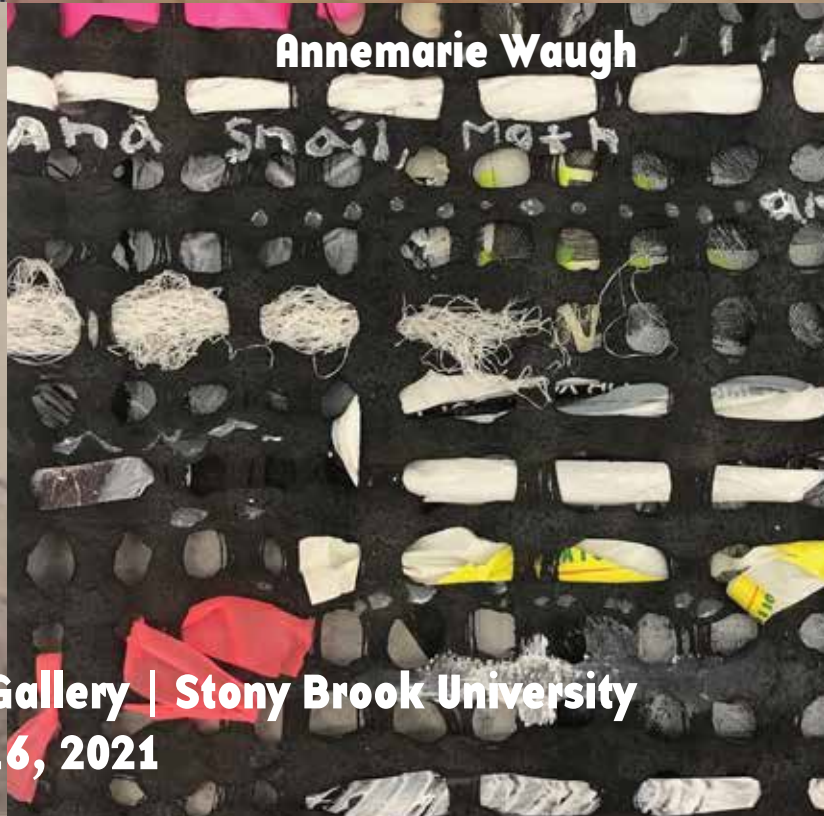
**Stuart Balius**



**Marta Baumiller**



**Yifei Cheng**



**Annemarie Waugh**

**Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery | Stony Brook University**  
**March 22 - April 16, 2021**



This exhibition is one of the final requirements of our three-year Master of Fine Arts degree program at Stony Brook. The artists have gone through a rigorous proposal process and have spent the past ten months researching, creating, and installing their work for this show. Through close interaction with faculty, they have honed their artistic techniques and developed the means to express their personal vision in words as well as in art.

MFA candidates are encouraged to increase their breadth of knowledge by engaging with faculty in Art History, Philosophy, Theatre Arts, Music, History, and Women's Studies, among others. They also have transdisciplinary access through the Department's affiliation with the Humanities Institute and the Simons Center for Geometry and Physics. In addition, they have the advantage of being part of a large, world-class research university with resources that include the historic Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center. Finally, Stony Brook's proximity to New York City has enabled us to expand the influences on these exciting young artists.

Our students have also benefited from meeting and listening to incredible visiting artists who have come to Stony Brook: Toni Blackman, Ackroyd & Harvey, Dread Scott and Jenny Polak, Young Min Moon, Ha Na Lee, Basim Magdi, Sara Greenberger Rafferty, Christine Kim and Jenny E. Sabin, to name a few. We especially appreciate the artists who have taken the time to do studio visits with our students, giving them valuable critiques as they create new work. Our students focus on their own work in individual studios on campus, and have access to our excellent technical facilities which include state of the art computer studios, a metal foundry, ceramic kilns, photography darkrooms, and lithography presses.

The art department wishes to thank Karen Levitov, Director of the Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery, for making this exhibition possible under extenuating circumstances. She is a force for good in the department, the university and the wider world of art. Beyond her powerful curatorial eye, she is meticulous in her communications and anticipates problems before they arise. She truly cares about the art and the artists and our students and the larger community benefit from the shows she brings to campus. I have been able to see the shows in person over the past year and I am grateful that she has been able to keep the space open for everyone to enjoy art while socially distancing.

I now turn the introduction of the show itself to our newest faculty member, The Charles C. Bergman Visiting Professor of Studio Art, Shimon Attie. Professor Attie has been working with the students through the pandemic to ensure that their work is of the highest quality and I am pleased to have him as a colleague.

Dr. Margaret Schedel  
Chair, Department of Art



It has been a delight and a privilege for me to come to know and personally work with each of these four students, graduating with their Master of Fine Arts Degree: Stuart Balius, Marta Baumiller, Yifei Cheng and Annemarie Waugh. Each have had their own powerful journey during these past 3 years, defining their artistic voice and concerns and in developing their craft.

Stuart Balius's mixed-media paintings combine tremendous skill and visual and tactile complexity, with concerns related to ecological destruction and ruin. His choice of materials, some damaging to the environment, simultaneously entrance the viewer while referencing the dangers that threaten us all. The result is a visual push-and-pull with no easy escape or resolution.

Marta Baumiller's exuberant textile/sculptural hybrids are a feast for the eyes and senses, while also engaging with larger issues of community and social engagement. Her works offer immense visual pleasure, while leading the viewer back into their own body and sense of community and space.

Yifei Cheng's photographic works use contemporary communication and imaging technology to collapse physical distance and geography during the time of the pandemic. Her artworks reflect on the loss of direct intimate contact with family and loved ones during this time. Her works are personal, yet visually rich and culturally layered, suspended somewhere between place, time, and loving human contact.

Annemarie Waugh's mixed media works playfully combine elements gathered from nature, consumer products and language, to create artworks that delight while at the same time point to some of the dangers confronting our environment and world today. Through whimsy and invention, her works also point to identity, and to the urgency of social care and exchange.

All four of these artists should feel proud at what they have accomplished. I look forward to welcoming them as professional colleagues and friends in the world of art making that we all share.

Shimon Attie, MFA  
Charles C. Bergman Visiting Professor of Studio Art



# Stuart Balius

Through my art I am exploring the ecological tragedies of the postindustrial Rust Belt. I have examined the environmental issues that served as a backdrop to my life and how they have affected the way I feel and experience the world. To express this, I experimented with abstraction, texture and depth to connect the work to the burdens that many communities are facing because of the industrial nature of their past.

My thesis project is composed of a video documenting multiple, neglected industrial sites projected onto a textured screen and a series of collagraphs and paintings. The theme of the work is centered around American throwaway culture as well as the glass, steel and coal industries that loom so large in my former home of Southwestern Pennsylvania. Through these works I am showing others my experience and thoughts on these toxic monuments to the past.



## Marta Baumiller

My work combines and examines the functional object, which we all recognize, and our political experiences, which are constantly changing. I am interested in how physical spaces can form community and expand possibilities for shared involvement and invention. I construct a range of objects and immersive landscapes for the audience to experience. I am drawn to labor intensive techniques like sewing or weaving. Repurposing ordinary materials such as plastic, paper and fabric, I use their substance to speak about hierarchies, the undervalued, under utilized and the sustainable. Working with vibrant color and texture, my work engages our senses, memory and emotion to then playfully approach meaning.

For my installation *Breathing Room/Soul Bath*, I reference our surreal pandemic existence to explore ideas of care and nurturing. Shaping a flowing shelter of light and color, I invite the viewer into a saturated, tactile, surround in order to transform anxieties, and bring some joy to our global reality. Can we find hope in objects, shelters or sanctuaries, even if only momentarily? By highlighting the imaginative, I want to create a space that is inclusive, and culminates in an experience of positive connectivity for all.



2021年的春节和姥姥视频，本来我上个暑假回老家看姥姥的，但是因为疫情没办法回去。姥爷去年因为心脏病去世，姥姥身体不好没办法自己住小楼也搬进去照顾姥姥了。



姥姥帮我们视频，因为姥姥身体不太好，看，所以一直戴着口罩在姥姥家。



## Yifei Cheng

Hands overdried by sanitizer;  
Untouchable friends;  
Visiting family through the screen.

*The Wall* is a series of photographs depicting lifestyle changes brought on by the pandemic of 2020. There is an “invisible wall” between people. Before the pandemic, human contact, time spent with loved ones was the norm. Now we chat virtually and barely see each other without the aid of a camera. Meeting friends and colleagues has become an extravagant thing. We hear each other more than we see each other. A simple hug is a fantasy.

How will we breach the wall to feel each other’s presence again?





# Annemarie Waugh

The forest holds my lost time  
The forest lives in the moment  
The woods are trembling  
The developer is a sneaky devil  
My midnight is moonlight and taking chances

I bring attention to environmental and social concerns using text, humor, and material exploration. Working primarily in painting, installation, and poetry, my art often playfully literalizes my concepts. I begin with research. From there, I chose a title, which acts as a conceptual framework for my work.

For the Zuccaire Gallery I will present *The Developer's Midnight Fantasy*, a series of paintings, about the forest, that weave nature and construction materials together. Alongside will be a video I have created about the loss of the forest. In these strange times I find myself wanting to escape and the woods have been a place of escape.



The MFA Thesis Exhibition 2021 is the culminating embodiment of the intensive three-year MFA program at Stony Brook University. I would like to thank the artists for the process of creating and presenting their compelling and beautiful work.

My gratitude to Dr. Margaret Schedel, Chair of the Department of Art, Shimon Attie, the inaugural Bergman Visiting Professor of Studio Art, and Associate Professor Isak Berbic, MFA Graduate Program Director, for their contributions to this exhibition and catalog. I also want to express my appreciation to the staff of the Staller Center for the Arts, especially Director Alan Inkles, Gallery Coordinator Georgia LaMair, Production Manager Liz Silver and her crew, as well as our student gallery assistants.

The 2020-2021 Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery exhibition schedule is made possible by a generous grant from the Paul W. Zuccaire Foundation. Additional funding has been provided by the Friends of Staller Center. We are extremely grateful for their support.

Karen Levitov  
Director, Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery

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