

Art and Science Intersect at the NUPOC Gallery

R. J. Garrick and Stephanie Fox



Lenin Delsol is showing seven of his paintings in the NUPOC Gallery.

A unique art gallery exists at the Northwestern University Prosthetics-Orthotics Center (NUPOC) in the midst of prosthetic limbs, thermoformed plastic and the echo of hammers on plaster. During 2018, the NUPOC Gallery presents six exhibits and currently features the oil and watercolor paintings of artist [Lenin Delsol](#).

“Art and medicine are frequently related,” says Delsol, an artist for more than 40 years. *“They seem absolutely right together.”* About the work conducted at NUPOC, the eminent and longest extant training program for prosthetics and orthotics in the nation, Delsol says, *“I can see the art in prosthetics.”*

The artistry required to fabricate prosthetics and orthotics resonated with Delsol, who saw NUPOC’s 20-foot pocket gallery as an ideal location to show his work. The gallery’s curator R. J. Garrick, PhD, agreed. *“I think Mr. Delsol’s ability to capture the human form is magnificent,”* says Garrick, project director for Education and Information Services at NUPOC, and liaison for artists who wish to show their work in the NUPOC Gallery.

Garrick selected seven paintings from Delsol’s extensive portfolio, each one depicting a strong, expressive woman. One of the women wears a partially hidden Superman costume; another—the central image—shows a nude woman reclining modestly on draped sheets. Similar to the human anatomy, structure and personality that Delsol skillfully depicts in his paintings, the 48 NUPOC Master of Prosthetics-Orthotics graduate students also must accurately and scientifically capture the human form as they fit and fabricate custom-made prostheses and orthoses for their patients.

“NUPOC is where science, technology and art intersect,” Garrick says, reprising a phrase promoted by sculptor, prosthetist and recently-retired NUPOC researcher, Yeongchi Wu, MD. In 2010 NUPOC unified P&O research and education by moving into a custom-designed suite at 680 North Lake Shore Drive. Efficient and flexible use of space is a hallmark throughout the NUPOC suite, including the 20-foot long gallery alcove prominently situated in the



Educational examples of modern and historical prostheses are on display throughout the NUPOC suite.

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foyer. This dedicated space is highly visible to the Feinberg School of Medicine faculty, students and research collaborators who frequent NUPOC.

For several years the alcove featured student-fabricated prostheses and orthoses or historical and modern prosthetic limbs and orthotic devices. The transition to a formal gallery occurred in 2016 when Wu emphasized similarities in the processes of creating sculptures and prostheses. Garrick invited Wu to exhibit some of his sculptures and since then the space has been officially designated the NUPOC Gallery. The exhibits change frequently and feature wide-ranging works by amateurs and professionals. Exhibits have included representational and abstract paintings, photographs, sculptures, textiles and wood works.

The juxtaposition of artwork with P&O encourages viewers to recognize the sculpture-like quality of prosthetic limbs and orthotic devices. The dual goal of the gallery is to show the beauty and craftsmanship in both P&O and art, while demonstrating the relationship between the technical skills used by artists and prosthetist-orthotists.

“NUPOC faculty emphasize that head, hands and heart are three areas that a prosthetist-orthotist must develop,” Garrick says. Artists also require these skills. Both artists and prosthetists use their cognitive ability to understand, analyze and conceptualize. They use their hands to create a physical product, whether a sculpture or a prosthetic leg. They use their hearts to empathize with their patients and to engage with the human condition. People, whether prosthetists, painters, subjects or patients, are at the core of both art and P&O.



NUPOC students achieve a hands-on education by fitting and fabricating P&O devices while working one-on-one with volunteer patients.

Speaking of the NUPOC Gallery, Garrick says, *“I encourage talented amateur and professional artists alike to contact me about showing their work here. We welcome a broad spectrum of artistic themes and media. I believe that showing diversity in artistic expression can accentuate the valuable intersection between art and science.”*

The Delsol paintings will be on view at the NUPOC Gallery until September 3, 2018. Visit the NUPOC website for more information about the [NUPOC Gallery](#) and other scheduled exhibits.