

The SUNDAY
Journal Star

A COPLEY NEWSPAPER SERVING CENTRAL ILLINOIS SINCE 1855

www.pjstar.com

When art meets politics

WIU exhibit a look at anti-terrorism measures, FBI investigation of Josephine Baker

STORY AND
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
JODI POSPESCHIL
OF THE JOURNAL STAR

Two politically based art exhibits lining the walls — and in one case the floor — of the Western Illinois University Art Gallery challenge visitors to examine issues past and present.

On the gallery's ground floor, "The Immigration Project" showcases the work of artist Anni Holm of Denmark in reaction to tracking programs put in place after Sept. 11, 2001. The exhibit, on display through Thursday, consists of 13 mug-shot-type digital photographs such as those used in a passport.

But each 57-inch by 43-inch image is made up of about 4,000 life-size thumbprints, which are those of the person shown in each work.

Each photograph changes form, depending on the distance the viewer is standing from it. Close up, the fingerprints are visible, but standing back about 10 feet, the portrait comes more into focus.

WIU Art Gallery Curator John Graham said each thumbprint is being

shown in various ranges from light to dark. Holm completed the work in response to the anti-terrorism screening measures taken in response to the Sept. 11 attacks. She said the international students depicted in her work chose to be involved because they also question the collection of personal documentation for tracking international visitors to make the country more secure.

"After Sept. 11, international students were looked upon as a threat to American security and freedom," Holm said.

Graham said Holm was in Macomb on Jan. 24 for a reception to open the exhibit. At that time she talked with WIU students about the motivation behind her work and how she completed the project.

On the second floor of the WIU gallery is St. Louis artist Paul Guzzardo's work, "Iterations of Interface — Secret: The Josephine Baker FBI File."

The work outlines the FBI's investigation of entertainer Josephine Baker in the 1950s and the pages of documentation that accompanied it.

The mostly visual exhibit is made up of numerous video screens that project images related to the investigation and its major players: Baker, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and media personality Walter Winchell.

Three strips of seven video screens each flash images from the file and of Baker, Hoover and Winchell. A larger "totem" of screens then slowly pans over close-up images of the three.

More video screens flash questions in one corner of the room, which is dark during the exhibit.

Graham said Guzzardo's work concerning the FBI file has taken on many artistic forms, including being project-



Paul Guzzardo's "Iterations of Interface" multi-media project is shown entirely in the dark on the gallery's second floor and is made up of video screens and images projected on the gallery walls.

WIU exhibits

► **What:** "The Immigration Project" by Danish artist Anni Holm, on display through Thursday, and "Iterations of Interface — Secret: The Josephine Baker FBI File" by Paul Guzzardo, on display through March 9.

► **Where:** Western Illinois University Art Gallery, Macomb.

► **Gallery hours:** 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays and 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesdays.

► **Related events:** Guzzardo will be at the gallery at noon Wednesday to talk about his project. A 6 p.m. Thursday performance featuring VJ Z Cosic and DJ Leon Lamont will blend music with the exhibit in a nightclub atmosphere.

► **Admission:** Free. Call 298-1587.



Paul Guzzardo's "Iterations of Interface" exhibit at the WIU Art Gallery is based on a 1950s FBI investigation of Josephine Baker. The exhibit continues through March 9 and includes an appearance by Guzzardo on Wednesday at the gallery and a performance Thursday when the exhibit will be set to music.

ed on the walls of the Pulitzer Building in St. Louis and being acted out in a St. Louis play.

Graham said the exhibit, which coincides with the 100th anniversary of Baker's birth, is different than most that appear at the gallery.

"It's good for us to stretch a little bit," he said. Guzzardo is a graduate of the former Western High School in Macomb and Western Illinois University.

Jodi Pospeschil can be reached at 686-3041 or state@pjstar.com.