

UT San Antonio Today

January 29, 2026

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LIBERAL & FINE ARTS

UTSA Arts exhibit, 'Thorns & Living Systems,' opens Friday at Southwest Campus

📅 January 23, 2026

🕒 2 Minutes

👤 Nick Ward



UTSA Arts is presenting a new exhibit, "Thorns & Living Systems: Jayne Lawrence, Leigh Anne Lester, cactusBRA/cactusBARN."

In an exhibit celebrating the artists and legacy of one of San Antonio's oldest alternative, artist-run spaces, [UTSA Arts](#) is presenting a new exhibit, "Thorns & Living Systems: Jayne Lawrence, Leigh Anne Lester, cactusBRA/cactusBARN."

The exhibition will be on view from Jan. 23 through March 28 at the [Russell Hill Rogers Galleries](#) in the Santikos Building on the UT San Antonio Southwest Campus.

Curated by School of Art Professor **Scott A. Sherer** and **Lizzy Hayman**, a graduate student in art history, the exhibition brings together works from the individual creative careers of **Jayne Lawrence** and **Leigh Anne Lester**.

The exhibit includes a variety of materials that reference their collaborative endeavors in cactusBRA and cactusBARN, the influential galleries they founded in San Antonio.

Lester's works often have a foundation in considerations of the natural world while Lawrence's works often develop in consideration of challenges to narratives that influence subjectivity and social engagement. The exhibition features mixed-media, two- and three-dimensional works and installation.

Professor of Instruction **Jason Willome** describes Lawrence's "phenomenal technical facility" as her way to "to free her imagination rather than contain it."

"Her drawings and sculptures pull together insects, plant life, human figures and references to architecture into fluid, improbable hybrids that are both meticulously constructed and deeply playful," Willome said.

"This sense of play 'prop[s] open the narrative possibilities of her images — to destabilize familiar hierarchies, embolden the other,' and imagine worlds where difference is a strength and logic is pleasantly disturbed," he added.

Willome describes Lester's work — with its layered drafting film, cut paper, plexiglass and other materials — as a way to invent "intricate hybrid botanicals and cellular forms that hover in the space between drawing and sculpture," he said.

In her work, "shadows, translucency, and relief pull the work off the wall just enough that the viewer feels it edging into their realm out of the pictorial, like a living thing evolving in real time ... inviting us to consider how our own desires, anxieties, and technology are entangled with the natural world," Willome said.

UTSA Arts is UT San Antonio's hub for connection, creativity, and imagination. The center supports public arts programs, community collaborations, and research initiatives that create pathways for San Antonians to participate fully in the cultural and artistic life of our city.

Visit [UTSA Arts](#) for information on the exhibit and a full schedule of UTSA Arts events.

Exhibition Calendar

Opening Reception

Friday, Jan. 23

6-8 p.m.

Russell Hill Rogers Galleries, Santikos Building, UT San Antonio Southwest Campus.

Artist Talks and Meet the Artists

Saturday, Feb. 28

1-3 p.m.

Russell Hill Rogers Galleries, Santikos Building, UT San Antonio Southwest Campus

Exhibition Hours

Jan. 23-March 28

Thursday through Saturday

Noon – 5 p.m. or by appointment at art.events@utsa.edu.

Russell Hill Rogers Galleries, Santikos Building, UT San Antonio Southwest Campus

The exhibition and all events are free to attend.