

Oscar Wilde's 'Blue' period at Miami Dade College



Jean-Georges Cornélius' untitled illustration for the 1927 French publication of "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" is on display for the new exhibit "A Patch of Blue" at Miami-Dade College's Freedom Tower. (The Wolfsonian-FIU / Courtesy)

By: [Phillip Valeys](#)

Miami Dade College's literary students revisit Oscar Wilde's political poem "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" for the exhibition "A Patch of Blue," which leans on the 1927 illustrations of French artist Jean-Georges Cornélius. The celebrated poem was the Irish author-playwright's final published work, written in exile while he was bankrupt and penniless. Convicted of "gross indecency" for his homosexuality and sentenced to hard labor at England's Reading Gaol in 1895, Wilde tackles the dehumanizing shame and brutality of his incarceration in the 109-stanza poem. (The poem was first published in 1898 under a pen name "c.3.3.," as a nod to his prison cell block number.) Cornélius' paintings are just as symbolic as the poem, making reference to current gay politics and capital punishment. The show is co-presented with the O, Miami Poetry Festival and Miami group Reading Queer.