'(Re)Imagining Science' exhibition turns collaboration into art

IU artists, research scientists team up visualize scientific principles and foster new ways of understanding.

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What happens when we look at science differently?

Artists and research scientists at Indiana University Bloomington have teamed up in more than a dozen creative partnerships to visualize scientific principles and foster new ways of understanding.

Rosamond Purcell's "Field Collector's Box of Murre Eggs" appears in "(Re)Imagining Science."

The results of their collaborations will be on display in the exhibition "(Re)Imagining Science" Oct. 14 to Nov. 16 at the Grunwald Gallery.

Opening night began with a lecture by visiting photographer Rosamond Purcell, whose exquisite still life images breathe life into the lifeless and uncover beauty in the discarded.

"Purcell is a scientist, an artist and a poet: the comprehensiveness of her vision reminds us of the time when disciplines had not yet separated into supposedly different modes of understanding the world," said Christoph Irmscher, Provost Professor of English and director of the Wells Scholars Program.

In the exhibition, 18 of her photographs will accompany the projects made by the IU faculty teams.

Bright ideas

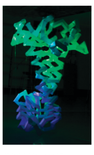
Like Purcell's images, the faculty projects draw their methods and visual language from both art and science.

"Light Harvest" was created by Jiangmei Wu, an assistant professor in the School of Art and Design; Susanne Ressl, an assistant research scientist in molecular and cellular biochemistry; and Kyle Overton, a Ph.D. candidate studying human-computer interaction design.

The glowing sculpture is a giant representation of the protein in a light-harvesting complex, a structure that turns sunlight and water into sugar and oxygen in the process known as photosynthesis.

The sculpture was hand-assembled from more than 600 pieces of reinforced kozo, or mulberry paper, which was laser cut and etched. The patterns were computer-generated, yet the folded forms and Japanese paper evoke the traditions of origami.

A continuation



"Light Harvest" illustrates the structure of a protein.

"(Re)Imagining Science" builds upon the 2013 Grunwald Gallery exhibition "Imag(in)ing Science," which featured six pairings of artists and scientists.

Returning from the first show are collaborative partners Margaret Dolinsky, an associate professor of digital art, and Roger Hangarter, Distinguished Professor and Chancellor's Professor of Biology. In their work, line drawings emerge from leaves through the manipulation of chloroplasts. Actual plant leaves are framed for display.

The exhibition also includes photography, sculpture, digital art and projects that combine aspects of each.

"Salamanders in Lily Pad" is an example from the collaboration between Margaret Dolinsky and Roger Hangarter.

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Studio art associate professors Martha MacLeish and Malcolm Mobutu Smith teamed up with Mathias Weber, a professor of mathematics.

"I loved the collaborative process," MacLeish said. "Mathias knew a lot more about art than I did about math."

Their plan was to bring abstract mathematical ideas about shape into the physical world.

"The most exciting things happened when we stopped waiting for an idea and started making stuff," she said.

As it turned out, stuff does not always follow theory. Stuff sometimes has a mind of its own.

Smith constructed a 3-D clay printer, which is shown in the exhibition. It built interesting ceramic forms one thread at a time, but unlike theoretical shapes, they were not pristine or perfect.

In a sense, a gallery is a space where ideas and physical reality collide. And sometimes the unplanned outcomes and imperfections are where the artists among us find beauty.

Other upcoming events

- **"Art, Science and the Archive" lecture, 5:30 p.m. Oct. 20** — Catherine Wagner has explored visual aspects of science in several bodies of photographic work, including "Morphology," "Cross Sections" and "Art and Science: Investigating Matter." She will speak in Woodburn Hall, Room 120.
- **Friday talks, noon Oct. 21, 28 and Nov. 4** — Selected "(Re)Imagining Science" exhibitors will speak about their projects at the Grunwald Gallery.

The Grunwald Gallery is located in the Fine Arts Building, 1201 E. Seventh St. It is open noon to 4 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday.

The "(Re)Imagining Science" exhibition and events are sponsored by Indiana University's New Frontiers in the Arts and Humanities Program. Further assistance comes from the College of Arts and Sciences and the Center for Integrative Photographic Studies, with additional support from the Grunwald Gallery and the Studio Art Department in the School of Art and Design, all at Indiana University.

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