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Art, Science, (R)Evolution

Part of the journal section “Forum: Arts and Sciences, Transcending Boundaries”

Elizabeth Sutton, “Arts, Science, (R)Evolution”

Art and science traditionally have been separated in the post-Enlightenment academy. However, the divide that occurred in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries artificially separates the continued interrelation of these two domains. The Art Department’s spring 2011 symposium “Arts and Sciences” provided a venue in which the UNI community was invited to consider the relationships between the arts and the sciences. We saw the merging of the two former colleges of Humanities and Fine Arts and Natural Sciences as an opportunity to highlight the permeable boundaries between disciplines. Moreover, we wanted to highlight the achievements of our students and the high quality of the scholarship they conduct here at UNI.

After professional presentations by students selected by their peers ([see Dr. Charles Adelman’s comments](#)), our keynote speaker, Dr. Rob Bork, Associate Professor and Head of Art History at The University of Iowa, gave a stimulating lecture on [“Gothic Architecture, Geometry, and the Aesthetics of Transcendence.”](#) Bork’s lecture shows us that the architects of medieval northern Europe used complex geometry to create monumental, awesome buildings. Bork argues that Gothic architecture, which has had something of a bad reputation in art history, is in many ways more progressive than the architecture based on human proportions that is associated with the Italian Renaissance.

Floris Bannister, a senior art history major at UNI, discussed how artists grappled with new theories in physics and geometry at the beginning of the twentieth century. In her paper, [“Revolutions in Time, Space, and Art: Russian Constructivism,”](#) Bannister demonstrates that while the early twentieth-century investigations into the fourth-dimension and non-Euclidean geometry were intellectually inspirational to Russian Constructivist artists, the visual manifestations of those complex ideas were as much an appropriation of the idea of revolution as attempts to visually articulate spatial and temporal relativity in form.

Indeed, it is our hope that the works here inspire others to reconsider stale notions of linear progress and the fallacy of disciplinary separation and to spark new ideas for the manifold insights that can be derived from open communication.

Related to this opening of boundaries, the Art Department's symposium this year is themed, "Defining Boundaries." We welcome all to attend the student papers and the keynote, which is this year to be given by Dr. Kate Elliott of Luther College on April 13, 2012.

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