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Art and Science Converge with Dali Lecture Series

Story by Talia DeAngelo, Class of 2015

A series of lectures led by Deby Cassill, USFSP professor of biology, and Peter Tush, curator of education at the Dali Museum, merge concepts in art and science through discussions on selected pieces of Salvador Dali's work.

At the next lecture on Thursday, Oct. 13, Cassill and Tush will focus on Dali and Paranoia. Basing their talk on a selected piece from the Dali Museum collection, Tush will provide background on the art while Cassill will highlight biological or other science-related concepts illustrated within the work. The free lecture begins at 6 p.m. in the Dali Museum’s theater.

“It’s luck that something I love teaching about is so closely related to the art,” Cassill said. “Dali shows no boundaries on the topics he’s painted and proves that art is one safe spot to express such diverse behaviors.”

Past lectures the duo presented include, “Dali and Ants” and “Dali and DNA.” Tush focuses on the artistic nature of the selected piece from the collection, and Cassill uses videos and slides to explore the scientific elements.

“We began to discuss some different topics we could do that related Dalí’s art in both subjects,” Tush said. “Once possible topics were identified we just worked our way from there.”

When Cassill, known for her extensive research on animal behaviors and her studies on the behavioral characteristics of ants, stumbled upon ant imagery in a Dali painting she became intrigued and started thinking about what kind of programming could be done in relation to the work. Cassill spoke with Tush to see if he would like to create an art and science collaboration.

Beyond the upcoming lecture on Oct. 13, Cassill and Tush have future discussion topics planned for Nov. 10 and more dates to be announced for 2012.

Tush said the lectures have generated strong interest because many people can find a way to relate to Dali’s work.

“The dream imagery and objects depicted create a familiarity with the viewer,” he said. “The scientific focus provides a new avenue of exploration for those already familiar with Dalí.”

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