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SPRING 2018

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Students recreate the experience of cave painting; documentary director pushes for female entrepreneurs; math major completing a senior project in psychology.



Paleo Picassos

Some Rose-Hulman students spent a week this winter creating paintings and sculptures under basic physical conditions reasonably similar to the famous Lascaux Cave, which is located near the town of Montignac in southwestern France. Lascaux Cave was discovered in 1940, and it contains some of the most famous cave art in the world. The cave art in Lascaux Cave was created some 17,000 years ago.

Rose-Hulman alumnus Mr. Elmer A. Guerri (class of '65) proposed this project to Art Assistant Professor Souly Abas at the beginning of the winter quarter and then gave a guest lecture on cave art to the Art Appreciation class. Students in the Visual Arts in Civilization class, who learn about different art media and periods of art history, learned to make oil paint using raw pigments, linseed oil, muller and palette knives. The painting team worked inside the cave structure while other teams worked around the area. It took four days to complete this project, working 2-3 hours each day.

Students prepared for the project by first creating textured surfaces, priming panels and canvases, and making oil paint. Students then created charcoal sketches on tiles and transferred that onto the painting surface or created air-dry clay models of cave portable objects. Throughout the entire process students documented their work, taking pictures of every aspect of their work—600 pictures in total.



WATCH

Cave painting comes to life in Professor Abas's Visual Arts in Civilization course



Documentary Director Pushes for Female Entrepreneurs

As part of Rose-Hulman's Women's History Month celebration, there was a special screening of the documentary *She Started It*, which follows five women tech entrepreneurs on a global adventure over two years. Immediately after the one-hour movie presentation, co-director Nora Poggi answered questions from the audience. The film's goal is to share the stories of successful role models for young women who are aspiring tech entrepreneurs, according to Jessica Livingston, associate professor of English. Livingston is teaching a documentary film class this spring and its students attended the campus film screening to learn more about the creative and ethical choices Poggi faced while planning, shooting, and editing the film.

"The women of *She Started It* are smart, resourceful and relatable, offering viewers powerful examples of female entrepreneurship, while revealing the challenges faced by women-led companies," says Poggi, a French journalist/filmmaker who made her directing debut with the film. She has interviewed key players in Silicon Valley for various publications and is a popular speaker at TEDx programs.

Poggi points to a *Sources of Economic Hope* study, by the Kauffman Foundation, that revealed that women usually account for "less than 10 percent of founders" for high-growth tech firms, and only four percent of Fortune 500 companies are administered by women. Other studies show that in Silicon Valley, women earn only 49 cents to a man's

dollar and get less than 10 percent of all venture capital funding.

“It is also important for students to understand the structural inequalities that women still face in Silicon Valley and workplaces in general,” said Livingston, who has taught a Gender in the STEM Profession course at Rose-Hulman. “I’ve heard from some of Rose-Hulman’s brightest alumnae that they have experienced some harsh realities in their jobs for which they were not prepared. I want our students to be knowledgeable not just to make smart individual choices but, more importantly, so that they can be engaged in changing workplaces structurally.”

Poggi adds, “The numbers are changing, but not fast enough. For women to play such a minor role in an industry that has become so prevalent in our lives, it would seem we are losing out on a lot of potential. Women entrepreneurs tend to create businesses with a higher social impact and reinvest in their communities a lot more.”

The event, was free and open to the public, and sponsored by the Rose Innovative Student Entrepreneurs (RISE) and Women of Like Fields Passionate About Computing (WOLF PAC) student organizations and the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences’ Elsie B. Pawley Fund.



Friend or No.—Using Math to Infer Relationships

How do people infer whether a pair of people are friends, enemies, or strangers by

observing their behavior? And can this inference process be modeled mathematically? These are the questions that Anna Scott (Math, 2019) is exploring for her Senior Project this school year, under the supervision of Dr. Alan Jern, assistant professor of psychology.

It may seem unusual for a math major to be completing a Senior Project in psychology. But, in this case, it was a great match. According to Scott, "I knew I wanted a project where I could learn through application as opposed to doing theory-based research." And Jern's research focuses on developing computational models of thinking and behavior. In fact, Jern says one of the things that attracted him to Rose was the opportunity to work on research with talented technical students like Scott.

According to Scott, she has learned multiple new skills, such as designing behavioral experiments. And she has been able to apply her existing mathematical knowledge in new ways by developing computational models and comparing them to data. She says, "This project has really proved to me that math is just as versatile as I always thought!"

During the winter quarter, Scott received a grant from Rose's Independent Projects/Research Opportunities Program (IPROP) to fund her research. She also presented a poster with preliminary results at the end-of-quarter IPROP poster session.

Scott's experience is one example of how students and faculty at Rose are making connections across departments and across disciplines.

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~J. Irwin Miller

