

Scientist completes residency at Institute of Electronic Arts

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Dr. Jeffery Miller, an artist-in-residence at the Institute of Electronic Arts at Alfred University is, by profession, a scientist and professor of rangeland resources at Oregon State University. He's spending five days working in the studios at the School of Art & Design at Alfred University, exploring ways of better capturing images in nature and printing them in large format. "Insects depicted in up-close portraits, and based on a background of black, is a style/technique I employ to lead the viewer into a perspective of undivided attention to the object at hand," said Miller. "This style of imaging provides a single focus on the natural beauty of color and pattern in small terrestrial organisms. While at the IEA Artist-in-Residence Program I am exploring the technology involved in the presentation of these up-close portraits as very large prints." Miller finds "Insects provide a seemingly endless array of subjects for scientific investigations on form and function as well as serving as the models for portraits of design in nature. Imaging has long been a vital component of taxonomic studies that are based on morphology and color patterns. Digital imaging technology currently provides a wonderful tool for observing details in the surface structure of insects." Using digital cameras has allowed him to "capture insects in the act of performing essential life-sustaining (molting, feeding, and mating, etc.) and life-ending (predation) behaviors," he said. A Ph.D. in Entomology in 1977 from the University of California at Davis and his current employment as a professor at Oregon State University provide the biological background he relies on as he experiments with photographic techniques and learns more about technological advancements in digital imaging. One of his goals is to produce photo-rich books on the natural history of various insect groups, focusing for the moment on caterpillars. Miller is the author of more than 80 scientific journal articles, and three books on caterpillars and moths of the Pacific Northwest through the US Forest Service. He and co-authors Dan Janzen and Winnie Hallwachs are now working on a two-book contract with Harvard Press on the caterpillars of Costa Rica. For the past four years, the Institute for Electronic Arts in the School of Art & Design at Alfred University has conducted a residency program that allows artists and scientists, working in an advanced technological environment, an opportunity to experiment with emerging technologies to create new expressions and processes of production. At the time the residency program was created, Joseph Scheer, professor of printmaking, noted, "The environment created within our multi-media electronic studios will support a fertile dialogue between the arts and sciences that we hope will lead to the creation of new work and new ideas." The Institute for Electronic Arts grew out of an initiative begun in 1989 by Jessie Shefrin, a former AU professor who is now a dean at the Rhode Island School of Design; Peer Bode, who is an associate professor of video art, and Scheer. Bode and Scheer are now co-directors for the Institute, which is dedicated to the integration of electronic media within fine arts disciplines through a focus on art-making, research and education. As a result, the IEA partners with individuals in the arts and sciences, as well as industry.