

Charles Badland explores intersection of art, science

By Randi Atwood

Special to the Democrat

Charles Badland works in FSU's neuroscience program, which studies the brain and nervous system function and boasts faculty from the departments of biology, psychology and mathematics and the College of Medicine. But Badland isn't a scientist, mathematician or physician — he's an artist.

Badland works as the department's digital art specialist and photographer, producing original artwork, photographs and schematic diagrams illustrating scientific methodology, apparatus and procedures. His work is used for research publications, seminars, grant proposals, displays and the program's website.



COUNCIL ON CULTURE & ARTS
FOR TALLAHASSEE/LEON COUNTY

"I work with really creative, interesting people and I get to help them visualize things," he says. "I do digital illustrations, mostly based on things I scan. For instance, I help try to show that a certain cell is active, or a certain blood vessel is working — to demonstrate a point of the science."

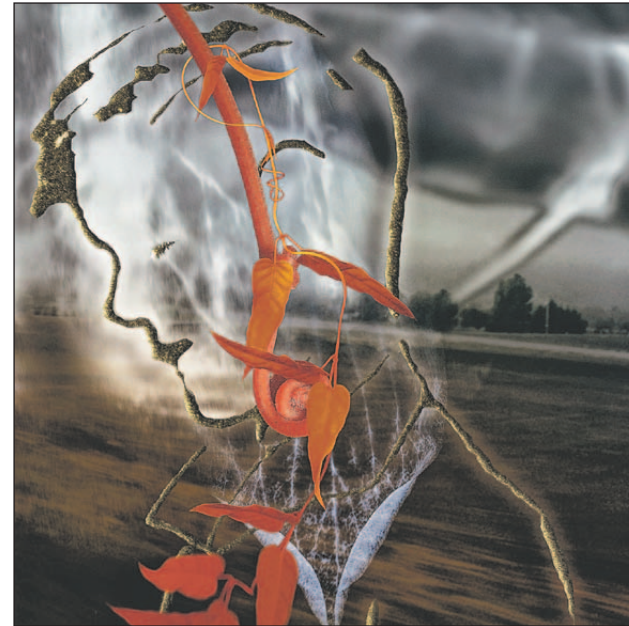
Originally from California, Badland has knowledge of both biology and art, having studied first at Cal State Fullerton and then at Florida State.

"After I got my MFA in Visual Arts, someone told me that they had seen an ad in the paper for a position at FSU in the psycho-

biology field, which is what it was called back then," he explains. "I don't know how many people had the background in both art and science, but I went for an interview and 25 years later, I'm still in Tallahassee at that job."

Badland also teaches digital photography at LeMoyne Center for the Visual Arts and one class each semester in the FSU Art Department.

"The class is called Digital Color Foundations, and it's a nuts-and-bolts course. We talk about the rods and cones in your eye and how a computer monitor and your eye work the same way," says Badland. "We talk about how to make sure the colors you see are going to print in a predictable way. A painter can put blue paint on the can-



This work by Charles Badland is included in the "Digital Diversity" show at City Hall Art Gallery.

vas and hang it up and it's still the same blue paint. If you're a digital photographer, you have to send out instructions with your computer, so you've got to know how to make sure that you get what you intended."

Badland always has been interested in the scientific basis for his art. He says that early on, he fell in love with the "chemical nature" of photography.

"As a freshman in high school, I went into the darkroom and processed a picture, and it was like magic," he remembers. "It's a blank piece of paper and you expose it and suddenly an image appears. I

was quite taken by it."

He also used to try out whatever creative techniques he could imagine in order to alter his images.

"I would combine negatives, and scratch on them, and manipulate things," he says. "So when Photoshop came out, I was like 'Oh, are you kidding me?' I'm thrilled that I'm able to do these things on a computer now."

"I do miss the red light of the darkroom sometimes," he adds. "You'd turn the music on, have the amber light going ... now I'm constantly craning my neck looking at a monitor."

Badland is thrilled to be working at a job that

IF YOU GO

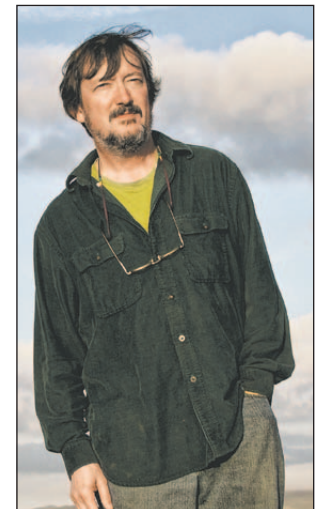
What: "Digital Diversity," presented by the Council on Culture & Arts, part of the City of Tallahassee's Arts in Public Places Program.

When: Through March 13; there will be a public reception from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Feb. 3

Where: City Hall Art Gallery

Admission: Free; gallery hours are 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday

Contact: Call 224-2500



Charles Badland works in FSU's neuroscience program.

combines his interests in science and art, and is fascinated by the research being done in the department.

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Badland

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“When I first started this job, we were investigating how people perceive things. Where in your brain do you hear certain noises? How do you take images into your eye and incorporate that into your life?” he explains. “Now research has evolved into which neurotransmitter does this, and what protein shape does that, and it has gotten a lot more specific.”

Badland also still does personal photography and artwork, and is part of the current “Digital Diversity” exhibit at City Hall. The exhibit features 11 local artists from the Digital Artists’ Guild, all of whom push the boundaries of

photography using digital tools and techniques.

“My own artwork is more cathartic, and more like what you do instead of going to therapy,” explains Badland. “It tends to be about personal stories. I have a 10-year-old son, and my artwork often deals with things I went through at his age and things he is going through, and will go through.”

Though much of his work is autobiographical, Badland wants the stories it tells to be open-ended.

“When you look at it, I want your reaction to be informed by your past,” he explains. “They are narrative, but I want each viewer to interpret them differently, to bring something of their own to flesh to the story.”