

Collaboration is always front and center in the Iowa Neuroscience Institute, with our faculty representing seven colleges and 30 different departments. It's common for psychiatrists, psychologists, biologists, and neurologists to forge connections and build projects together, and here at Iowa we are uniquely positioned to bridge science and humanities.

We saw a fantastic example of that earlier in the month with "[Memory through a wide lens](#)," which brought six scholar-artists together to reflect on memory from varying disciplinary perspectives.

It was the second in the new "Wide Lens" series, a joint initiative of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies, the Office of the Vice President for Research, and the Stanley Museum of Art. Recognizing how much we all missed the company of our colleagues during two years of pandemic-related separation, the series aims to re-inspire and reconnect us.

As a neuroscientist focused on molecular mechanisms of memory storage since the 1990s, I was excited to hear that this event was in the works. Ultimately, I was not able to attend, but **Isabel Muzzio** was one of the panelists and **Kumar Narayanan** served as the moderator. Here are some of the highlights they shared:



Kumar: The topic was memory, which we absolutely consider the domain of neuroscientists. This gave us an opportunity to expand our views to include different representations of memory. For example, **Cory Gundlach** from the Stanley Museum shared a memory board from Congo, which is a three-dimensional object with all of a society's memories etched on it, providing cues for stories that one person can tell. This is so different from our Western tradition and scientific approach to considering memory as

an individual record—stimulating neurons that can be reactivated later to recall the event. Here was memory on display as art.

This is the value of coming together in a Big Ten university with people willing to talk, but more importantly, to listen. An event like this won't produce a grant or a paper, but opening our minds to consider different avenues of discovery can only strengthen our own disciplinary approaches.

The format was also a good reminder of the importance of communicating our work in a way the public can receive and understand. The [pecha kucha](#) format, with each person presenting 20 slides with 20 seconds per slide, certainly is challenging, but it provided a structure that kept the presentations moving at a fast pace and at a level that people from many different backgrounds could follow.



Isabel: All my life I have focused on the topic of memory from a neuroscience perspective. This was a wonderful opportunity to interact with colleagues from different departments providing their experiences on memory ranging from cinematic arts to museum curation to the study of historical artifacts. It really expanded my understanding of the implications my work and the field of memory can have.

My focus always has been how the brain encodes information, retains information in the long term, and how memories become permanent. Hearing from colleagues who look at the importance of objects for preserving memories was really intriguing. It made me think about the relevance of the cues we use to allow animals to remember. Due to the interactions I had during the Wide Lens event, I have a broader perspective and am in a position to ask better questions after learning about their work. I am looking forward to continuing the conversations we started at this event.

There are so many ways we can seek to understand how the brain works. Art is a powerful way of understanding what people in a society think is really critical, what they remember and how they interpret behavior and events.

Isabel is exactly right to suggest that art can provide an entry point for people who don't consider themselves scientists to think about how science impacts their lives. The INI seeks to foster these connections between science and art, as with our Science on Screen collaboration with FilmScene this spring. Coming up this fall, we will welcome Fredrik Ullén, world-renowned Swedish concert pianist with a specialty in avant-garde 20th century music, and also a neuroscientist and Director of the Department of Cognitive Neuropsychology at the Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. He will give a scientific talk Sept. 5, 4 p.m. in 1110 MERF and a recital and public talk on Sept. 6, 7:30 p.m. in the recital hall of the Voxman Music Building. I hope you will mark your calendars and plan to join us for both events, highlighting the collaborative energy in the INI.

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