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## 2010-04-29: At the nexus of art and science

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## At the nexus of art and science



Botond Részegh's illustrations based on project by Professor Barabasi is now on display at International Village. Photo by Mary Knox Merrill.

**April 29, 2010**

A chance encounter in Budapest, Hungary, led to the meeting of **Albert-László Barabási**, a renowned network scientist at Northeastern and author of the new book, "**Bursts: The Hidden Pattern Behind Everything We Do**," and Transylvanian-born artist Botond Részegh.

During the conversation, Barabási shared the idea behind his new book with Részegh and asked the artist if he would do the illustrations.

Részegh, whose creations have been shown around the world and are held in private collections, including that of Albert II, the prince

of Monaco, was enthusiastic to sign on. The two spent the next three years discussing the project via Internet video chat. It wasn't always easy, according to Részegh.

"At first it was very difficult," said Részegh. "I am not a scientist; László is. Our first conversations were about pure physics—can you imagine? My head grew like a melon. We met often so that I could learn more about physics and science."

Published today, "Bursts" explores human predictability through examples from present and past human history. Részegh's original work in the book will be featured in an exhibit at Northeastern's International Village that, coinciding with the book's appearance, opens today.

The exhibit — Részegh's first in the United States — titled "Mundus Imaginalis" — also includes some of his earlier, mixed-technique works in which he explores other human interaction using a combination of inks, acrylics, etchings and drawings.

"It was a true pleasure to bridge the gulf between art, writing and science with Botond during our three-year collaboration," said Barabási, distinguished professor of physics and the founding director of Northeastern's **Center for Complex Network Research**. "The rewards of moving out of our comfort zone and working with individuals who speak a different professional language can be huge, and that was certainly the case in this situation."

Upon learning of the collaboration between the artist and the physicist, Isabel Meirelles, associate professor in Northeastern's Department of Art + Design, extended an invitation to Részegh to join the university as a visiting artist, participate in classes and exhibit his work.

Meirelles was particularly enthused about Barabási's interest in mixing disciplines through creative projects, observing that, "Barabási has a beautiful mind that works in ways that are innately interdisciplinary.

"It is also beautiful how art can be connected to science and history. When he told me about the book and the works by Részegh, I wanted to bring (the artist) to Northeastern."

Részegh noted that his collaboration with Barabási has had a lasting effect. "His book and research have changed my work and the way I think about art," he said.

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