



nature publishing group



► **COVER:** 'Boulevard of Broken Dreams I'  
A collaboration between Paul Liam Harrison and Laura Trinkle-Mulcahy as part of the 'Designs for Life' Project 2007. Acrylic screenprint on BFK rives paper. 110 x 75 cm. [www.designsforlifeproject.co.uk](http://www.designsforlifeproject.co.uk)



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**A**rt's fascination with science isn't new. In 2002, Dorothy Nelkin and Susan Anker wrote in *Nature Reviews Genetics* about the way in which contemporary visual artists have been inspired by genetics, genomics and bioengineering. 'Sci-art' has become an important trend in contemporary arts. Celebrated artists such as Helen Chadwick and Damien Hirst have used biological imagery in their work; examples include Chadwick's Viral Landscapes from the late 1980s and Hirst's recent works that appeared in his Beyond Belief exhibition in London, UK.

But in all of these cases the 'collaboration' has been unidirectional — science provides the inspiration and the imagery whereas art is created by the artist. A new initiative at the Visual Research Centre (VRC), University of Dundee, UK — [Designs for Life Project](#) — is fundamentally different in this respect. Its objective is to engage artists and scientists in the art-making process.

The project is led by Paul Harrison, an artist with an interest in print, printmaking and publishing. Interested researchers from the University of Dundee Biocentre take turns to work with the artists and other staff at the VRC to develop screen prints based on images and data from their laboratory research. This artistic activity is documented and, together with the works of art themselves (an example of which can be seen on this month's cover of *Nature Reviews Genetics*), will be exhibited at the VRC in Dundee from February 2008. An accompanying education programme and a series of public open days aim to introduce a new audience to the images themselves and also to communicate the science that inspired them. Given the current general fascination with modern art, might communicating science through this medium prove a refreshing and effective way forward?

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