

# AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS

## A Complex Concentration:

*Senior Silver-Greenberg Brings Creativity to Computing*



Gallatin senior **Morgan Silver-Greenberg (BA '08)** recently won the 2007 Max Goldstein Prize in computer science, an award bestowed by NYU's Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences on an undergraduate student for "creativity in computing." Silver-Greenberg was nominated for this honor when NYU Professor Claudia Joskowitz became aware of the exciting work he was doing, not only in her digital art class, but in an emerging field of science.

Last fall in Joskowitz's class, in which students were assigned to create their own websites, Silver-Greenberg was developing a site for a research collective he had just founded, and he was also combining digital art with cellular automata. Cellular automata are mathematical models of spatial interactions designed to simulate complexities in nature and systems in the world. The most well known example of a cellular automaton is John Conway's "Game of Life." Developed in 1970, the model simulates the processes of life, death, and population dynamics.

Confused yet? Hang on. Because the work that Silver-Greenberg does is perhaps a bit puzzling to

the layperson. But it is also progressive, dynamic, and a fantastic example of interdisciplinary study. His Gallatin concentration is in an emerging field called complex systems. The New England Complex Systems Institute, one of the few establishments in the U.S. devoted to this area, defines complex systems as "a new field of science studying how parts of a system give rise to the collective behaviors of the system, and how the system interacts with its environment." To put it in his own terms, Silver-Greenberg's work is about "looking at the architecture, movement, and structure of systems that underlie anything that has life in the world," and trying to further an understanding of these abstract systems and their implications. For example, he can create models to analyze the engine behind a tree's growth, patterns of DNA in a human being, or how ideas and trends move through society. After exploring these information constructs, he then studies the applicable manifestations and effects of these systems in the real world. So, he might use a systems model of how ideas move through society to examine how genres of music are formed and how this relates to social contexts and communications.

Silver-Greenberg's work involves sociology, linguistics, culture and communications, philosophy, mathematics, computer science, architecture, and design. Thus, Gallatin is the perfect place for him to combine and pursue his interests. But his current studies are the result of a remarkable path of discovery.

In high school in Los Angeles, Silver-Greenberg continually tested high in math—but he couldn't stand the subject. Always intrigued by art, music, and the social sciences, he soon developed a strong interest in architecture. In 2002, he left the West Coast to attend Sarah Lawrence College, where he studied art, economics, and philosophy, but became frustrated with the direction his undergraduate education was taking. He took time off to figure out what he wanted to pursue, and was traveling, working in New York, and read-

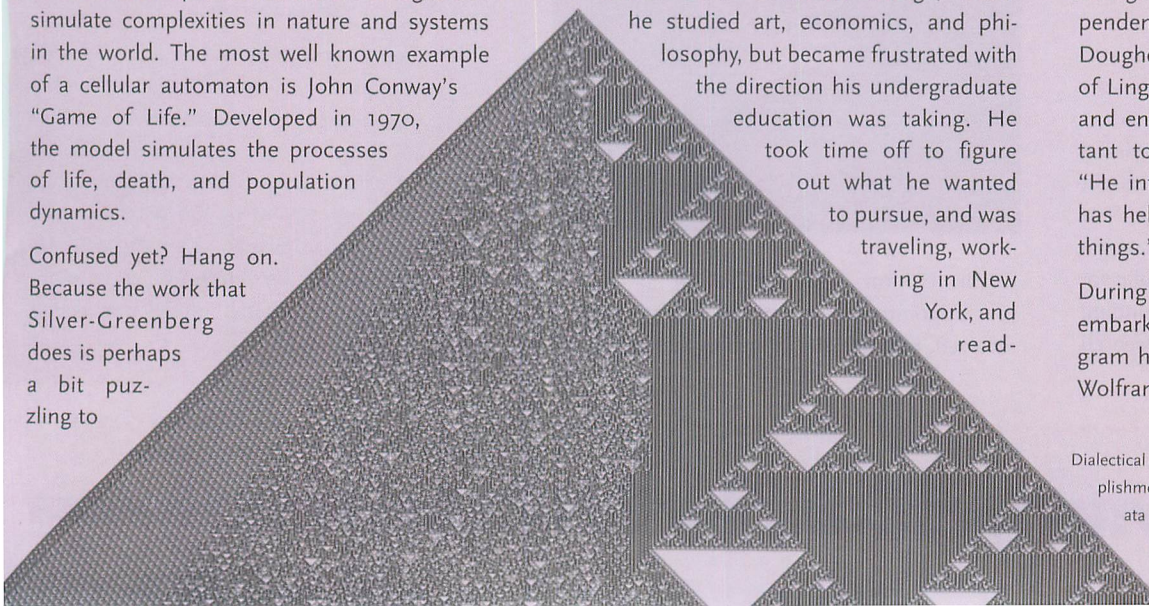
ing a lot, all the while thinking about architecture, the design and nature of space, economic systems, and their larger philosophical applications. He audited a class at The New School called Global Images of Metropolitan Futures, taught by architect Margarita Gutman. In searching for the right words for a class paper he was writing, he googled the term "complex systems" and stumbled upon a defined, up-and-coming field of study that embodied all of his interests.

The field of complex systems is so innovative that Silver-Greenberg couldn't find an undergraduate program in which to study it. At the same time, his twin brother, Luke Silver-Greenberg (BA '06), was completing a bachelor's degree at Gallatin (combining film production and real estate). Something clicked: Silver-Greenberg realized he needed to be at a school where he could create his own program of study, and Gallatin was that place. "NYU has so many resources," he states, "and since complex systems is so interdisciplinary in itself, that was important to me."

Since coming to campus in 2005, he has taken NYU courses (many on the graduate level) at the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences, in the Department of Linguistics at the Graduate School of Arts and Science, and in the Interactive Telecommunications Program at the Tisch School of the Arts, as well as courses in sociology, psychology, culture and communications, and art at the Steinhardt School. He's also fit in classes at the School of Architecture at Pratt Institute, and an internship with a creative agency called No Mas. At Gallatin, he particularly enjoyed a course entitled Nature and the Place, in which he wrote a paper on "what is natural and how it can be applied to new mathematical methodologies." A large part of his program has included independent study projects with his adviser, Ray Dougherty, a professor in NYU's Department of Linguistics who has a background in math and engineering. "Ray has been really important to my study," offers Silver-Greenberg. "He introduced me to cellular automata and has helped me to draw connections between things."

During the summer of 2006, Silver-Greenberg embarked on a fellowship in an elite program hosted by Brown University with Steven Wolfram, a scientist, author, and computer

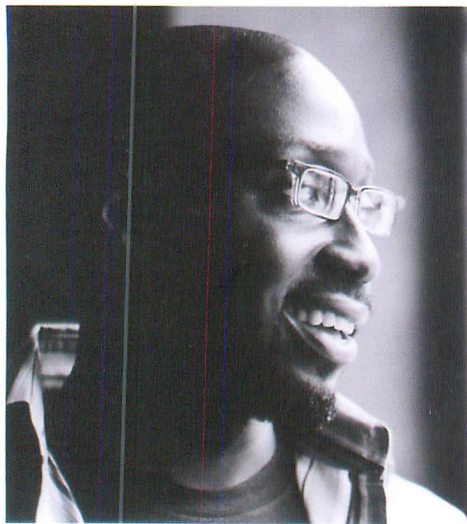
Dialectical cellular automata: one of the principle research accomplishments of Program Nature. The dialectical cellular automata is one of the first meaningful ways of modeling interaction and communication between complex systems.





## New Gallatin Faculty

Gallatin is pleased to announce three new appointments to its full-time faculty: **Millery Polyné**, assistant professor of American studies; **Alejandro Velasco**, assistant professor of Latin American studies; and **Kristin Horton**, instructor of theatre directing.



Millery Polyné, a historian by training who earned both his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, enjoys teaching and research interests in the history of African American and Afro-Caribbean/Afro-Latino cultural, political, and economic initiatives in the 19th and 20th centuries; U.S. empire building in the Americas; cultural studies; dance; jazz; film; and poetry. He is currently completing his first book, *Black Pan-Americanism: African Americans and Haiti within Inter-American Affairs, 1862-1964* (University Press of Florida) and directing the documentary series *blacks cropped\*crop blacks*. A 2003 recipient of the New York Foundation for the Arts Poetry Fellowship, he is also the author of the poetry book *Release: Race Love Jazz* (Gwo Nèg Press, 2004). Polyné is currently teaching a Gallatin course entitled Black Intellectual Thought in the Atlantic World.

Alejandro Velasco is a historian of modern Latin America whose research and teaching interests are in the areas of social movements, urban culture, and democratization. Before joining the Gallatin faculty, Professor Velasco taught at Hampshire College, where he was a Five College Fellow, and at Duke University, where he received both his M.A. and Ph.D. Professor Velasco's research has won major funding support from the Social Science Research



Council, the American Historical Association, and the Ford and Mellon Foundations, among others, and he has presented widely at both national and international conferences and symposia. He teaches two Gallatin courses this fall: (Re)Imagining Latin America, and a first-year seminar entitled Incivility in the Age of Civil Society.



Kristin Horton joins the School for a one-year appointment in the arts faculty. Horton received her M.F.A. from The University of

Iowa and has taught and directed at Fordham University, The University of Iowa, Cornell College, the Arena Stage, the Riverside Theatre, and the Kennedy Center, among others. She has received a National Endowment for the Arts grant for directors, has been a resident director at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and has received a directing fellowship at the Sundance Theatre Lab. This fall, Horton teaches two Gallatin arts workshops: Stage Direction for the 21st Century, and His Advice to the Players: Shakespeare in Performance. ☞

## COMPUTING

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program creator considered to be the most eminent complexities theorist in the world.

At the summer's end, Silver-Greenberg was invited to work in the special projects office of Wolfram Research at their Cambridge think-tank. But he instead opted to start his own research collective, Program Nature, along with senior Wolfram Research associate Kovas Boguta, his adviser from the summer program. Program Nature's mission is to advance new mathematical abstract systems that articulate the formation of complex behavior and, through programming and social analysis, to research the direct manifestation of these concepts as they occur in our natural world.

Silver-Greenberg again took part in Wolfram's summer program in 2007, and he intends to graduate from Gallatin in 2008 and continue his work with Boguta. He applied the funds from the Max Goldstein Prize towards publishing Program Nature's first zine. In 2007, he has delivered lectures on his research at such places as the Pratt Academic Initiatives Council, where he spoke on creation and the digital age, and the International Linguistics Association, where he talked about how complex systems can be applied to language processing.

Silver-Greenberg strongly feels that the research Program Nature is doing will have sound real-world applications. He is exploring the idea of starting a company, and applying for financial support from an entity called Y Combinator, which offers seed funding for startups. With all that he's accomplished, it's easy to forget that he's only 23 years old. But he could probably show you a systems model that would elucidate that. ☞

For more stories and photos of past Gallatin events, go to

[www.nyu.edu/gallatin/news](http://www.nyu.edu/gallatin/news)





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"Ruins in Sicily" by Lily Oswald (BA '09) appears in the 2007 *Gallatin Review*.





## Stacy Pies Receives Distinguished Teaching Award

It is with great pleasure that Gallatin celebrates its own Professor Stacy Pies, who was honored as one of five recipients of NYU's Distinguished Teaching Award in 2007. The award is presented annually to outstanding faculty members in recognition of high-quality instruction, commitment to students, and exceptional teaching. Distinguished Teaching Award winners are selected via an elaborate process that entails nominations from each of NYU's schools to a University-wide committee made up of faculty, students, alumni, and administrators.

Professor Pies is a master teacher at Gallatin, where she has taught for 10

years. Her courses explore the role of narrative and culture in texts and human relationships as well as poetry and poetics. Her teaching and research interests include poetry of all kinds, world literature, narrative theory, literary criticism, philosophy, psychoanalysis, and writing on cities and urbanism.

When Gallatin's selection committee sent out a call for nominations for the 2007 award, letters on Pies' behalf poured in from students, alumni, parents, faculty, and staff. "Inspiring," "amazing," "the best teacher I've ever had"—these are just a few of the expressions Gallatin community members continually use

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# GALLATIN *today*

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## New Gallatin Dean Takes Helm

### *Susanne Wofford Joins NYU to Lead School*

Each fall at NYU brings a set of beginnings, as first-year and transfer students navigate their surroundings, upperclassmen set forth on new academic paths, and faculty prepare to advise a group of fresh, eager faces. For the Gallatin community, this fall marks another kind of beginning: a new and exciting deanship at the School.

On July 1, 2007, Susanne Wofford officially took the reins as Gallatin's dean, following her appointment to this role in early April. A distinguished scholar of epic poetry and Renaissance and early modern literature who most recently served as director of the Center for the Humanities and Mark Eccles Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin

(Madison), Wofford emerged from a nationwide, 18-month search.

Diane Yu, NYU Chief of Staff and Deputy to the President, stated, "We are delighted to have Susanne Wofford as Gallatin's dean. She has a record of exceptional scholarship in early modern literature and is a recognized advocate of interdisciplinary work in the humanities and social sciences. Her highly successful leadership of the Center for the Humanities at Wisconsin was instrumental in expanding its scope, increasing its visibility, engaging the faculty, and building the Center's capacity to influence the greater academic community. She has developed an excellent reputation for consensus building, teamwork, public articulation, and creativity. Moreover, she won teach-



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