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Dabbs Earns Horace T. Morse Award

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The award honors excellence in undergraduate education across the University of Minnesota.

Associate Professor of Art [Julia Dabbs](#) has earned the Horace T. Morse - University of Minnesota Alumni Association Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education. The award honors excellence in undergraduate education across the University of Minnesota.

“Julia is clearly an extraordinary asset to our campus and to the University of Minnesota, with an impressive and creative range of support for undergraduate education,” writes Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Dean Janet Schrunk Ericksen. “She has demonstrated well that art history is a vital, active field of study with much to offer students and the larger community.”

An art historian with an interest in public art and the work of women artists, Dabbs writes that she “teaches *through* art” how to understand the world and how it’s visually rendered from artist to artist. Her field, she says, is an essential one to study, although often overlooked.

“Art history is not always considered ‘essential’ in our culture today, but to my mind, it is essential, and the skills our students gain can be intertwined with studies in the sciences, social sciences, education, and other humanities fields,” writes Dabbs. “We analyze and examine life, as expressed in visual objects;; we interpret those findings, and then we communicate meaning to help others learn, assess, empathize, and ideally, gain inspiration.”

As she enters her “third decade as a teacher-adviser-researcher,” Dabbs reflects on her contributions to undergraduate education at the University. She’s helped hundreds of students from a variety of majors through her courses and [community-engaged learning projects](#). She’s proud to have involved them in her research and to have taught them to appreciate what we see around us.

“It has been so rewarding to get students excited about art history, which is a subject they've usually not encountered before,” she writes. “When they tell me, ‘I’m going to go to museums more often now, or ‘art history is what got me through an emotionally challenging semester,’ I feel like I’ve done my job.”

About Dabbs

Dabbs holds a PhD and MA from the University of Maryland, College Park as well as an AMLS and BA from the University of Michigan. Her expertise includes women artists of the early modern period (1500–1800) and 17th century French sculpture and art theory. In recent years, she has also conducted research projects on the 19th-century American artist May Alcott Nieriker, and biofiction concerning visual artists.

About the Morse Alumni Award

Each year since 1965, the Horace T. Morse - University of Minnesota Alumni Association Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education (Morse-Alumni Award) has been given to a select group of teachers who reflect the University's emphasis on the importance of high quality undergraduate education. Learn more at scholarswalk.umn.edu