

Kildee Hall

Balance of Life

work

artist

Ned Smyth

Location:
Kildee Hall Addition, west entrance atrium

Size:
30 feet high by 80 feet long

Materials:
Tile, stone and glass

Date:
1998

Made possible by:
Iowa Art in State Buildings Program*



Balance of Life: detail

About the Mural

The Balance of Life mural symbolizes the monumental role animal agriculture plays in economic prosperity, both now and in the future. The wall-length work layers images of swine, poultry, cattle, animal care, and microscopic chromosomes.

Smyth has created other large mosaics for public places in Florida and New York. In this mural, enlarged images associated with animal science stress their importance and give them an aura of magic and reverence. He intended this mosaic to document the work of animal science on the walls of the Animal Science Building in the same way that primitive man drew images of hunting and rituals on the cave walls.

The mural's left-hand side shows three people--a student, a faculty member and a breeder--weighing a calf at birth. Superimposed on them is a red and white crossbred hog. Located in the center is a rooster and a blue and white plate. The initials A.H. on the plate stand for animal husbandry and 1896 is the founding date for the Animal Science Department of Iowa State. The dinner plate represents the importance of animal science to the food production and the feeding of the world. Above the image are chromosomes in gold. To the right is a heifer's head and the proper birth position of a calf fetus in utero.

**University Museums/Art on Campus Program
Iowa State University**

Ames, Iowa