News Release

Medical Illustrators' 61st Meeting Offers Rich Access For the Public, Professionals to Fruits of Medical Art

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Lawrence, Kan. July 21, 2006---A unique opportunity for the general public to view the striking work of medical artists and for those professionals to further develop their skills will be presented when the Association of Medical Illustrators (AMI) kicks off its 61st annual conference in the Boston area on Aug. 2.

"Prepare yourself for a truly memorable extravaganza that will stimulate your mind and your senses," counseled Mark Lefkowitz, a medical illustrator and Meeting Coordinator for the 2006 Boston conference. "This conference promises to be a creative explosion of innovative teaching techniques and medical visualization," said Kip Carter, AMI President. "We'll witness digital technology pushed to the limit, as the best medical illustrators and scientists join together to present an amazing exploration of the human body."

The AMI, the oldest and largest international organization of science visualization professionals, is returning to Boston for the first time since the group met there in 1949.

The theme of the five-day conference, to be held adjacent to the MIT campus at the Boston Marriott Cambridge hotel, is "reDiscover," alluding not only to the Boston locale but to the thread of the old and the new that runs through medical art. Illustrators and the public alike can "rediscover the excitement, energy and promise" of medical art that was felt at the fourth annual meeting, in 1949, said Lefkowitz.

The centerpiece of the meeting is the annual AMI Salon, an exhibition of the world's finest medical and biological art, used by surgeons and other medical and scientific professionals as a critical tool for applying their skills. This year the Salon, a juried exhibition, will feature over 300 examples of cutting-edge artwork entered by 210 participants, all to be judged, and eligible for one of the Awards of Excellence or Certificates of Merit to be presented in 12 professional and eight student categories.

One of the many modern-day DaVincis whose work will be exhibited in the Salon is Andrew Swift, a professional illustrator and Assistant Professor of medical illustration at the Medical College of Georgia. His image for Scientific American, titled Chlamydia's Stealthy Attack, which depicts how the chronic venereal disease can mask its identity while scarring a woman's fallopian tubes, blocking the flow of eggs and impeding fertilization, won last year's Ralph Sweet Best of Show award in the Salon.

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Chlamydia's Stealthy Attack, Artwork © 2005 Andrew Swift
Two-dimensional artwork -- drawn, painted and/or computer-generated -- will be hung in the lobby of the Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research at 100 Technology Square, a block from the Marriott hotel. Animation, multimedia, fine art, books and manuals will be displayed a block away in the lobby of The Broad Institute of Harvard and MIT at 7 Cambridge Center. "This is probably the most accessible way for the public to see what is being produced by top illustrators in the country, if not the world," said Lefkowitz. Lefkowitz, who has two pieces in this year's Salon, won a Certificate of Merit last year in the category of marketing/promotional illustration for the piece titled *Serotonin Receptor Agonist MOAs* (the first of four images in this piece is shown below.)

Many of the entries can also be viewed in the 2006 AMI Salon catalog, available free of charge to Salon visitors and anyone else who is interested.

The genius of medical illustration is that it can portray and explain anatomical and surgical functions in a way that nothing else can. Swift notes, for example, that one illustrator has shown the intricate medical problem faced by surgeons seeking to separate conjoined twins, and some of the surgical procedures used, with the graphic traveling the middle ground between a stark, not very informative photograph and the complicated, confusing group of images that a scan would produce.

The Boston conference will be invaluable not only for the interested public, but also for professional illustrators. The Salon exhibits will show many of the latest kinds of images that are being produced, and some new methods for doing so. As Gary Schnitz, a former AMI president, has put it, "The medical illustrator has evolved from delineating the palpable to conceptualizing the unseen."

A raft of workshops and lectures will describe new techniques for everything from Flash animation to the use of multimedia technology for courtroom presentations involving injuries or other anatomical issues to illustrating fetal development. Notables such as molecular sculptor Dr. Byron Rubin and Ben Fry of the Human Genome Project at the Broad Institute will discuss their novel visualization technologies. Dr. Michael Yaremchuk, Director of Cranofacial Surgery at Massachusetts General, will discuss craniofacial and cosmetic surgery. Dr. Michael Parker, of the Harvard Medical School, will describe the award-winning interactive elements created for the textbook, "Respiratory Physiology: A Clinical Approach."

All this will help medical artists keep up with new developments in their field. "In the span of a year, the landscape can change quite a bit," illustrator Swift remarked.

More information about the Boston AMI conference can be obtained on the meeting's website, www.ami.org/2006.