Medical Illustration
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Accuracy and Aesthetics
Form follows Function

History and Practitioners
Available Techniques of Viewing the Body
Relationship between Scientist and Artist
Available Artistic Skills

Past: Galen, Mondino de Luzzi
Berengario, Estienne, Eustachio,
Dryander, Fabrici, Giovanni Baptista
Canano, Leonardo da Vinci, Vesalius,
Albinus.

Present: Max Brodel, Gerald Hodge,
Levent Efe

Collaborative / Freelance

Purpose and Process
Specialist / Layman

Presentation Format
Books (instructional / story)
Textbooks / Journals
Catalogues (products / exhibition)
Magazines / Newspapers
Brochures (health promotion / services)
Posters (conferences / billboards / museums)
Websites / CD Roms / TV (3D, interactive)

Client
Educational - Primary / Secondary / Tertiary
Health Departments and Organisations
Publishing Companies
Health Product Companies

Techniques
• Carbon Dust & Dry Brush (Brodel)
• Pen & Ink
• Scratch Board
• Coquille Board
• Pencil
• Paint - Watercolour / Gouache / Acrylic / Oil
• Airbrush
• Computer generated or manipulated

Vesalius, “Fabrica”, 1543 AD

Associations
Illustrators Australia 03 5956 9587
www.illustratorsaustralia.com/
Centre for Research and Education in
the Arts - www.crea.uts.edu.au/

Association for Educational
Communications and Technology
http://www.aect.org/

Canadian Society of Children’s Authors,
Illustrators and Performers
http://www.canscaip.org

Communication Arts
http://www.commarts.com/CA/

Illustrators Partnership of America
http://illustratorspartnership.org/

International Visual Literacy Association
www.ivla.org/

Society of Children's Book Writers and
Illustrators – www.scbwi.org/

The Association of Illustrators (UK)
www.theaoi.com/

The Association of Medical Illustrators
(USA)  - www.ami.org/

The Society of Illustrators (USA)
www.societyillustrators.org/
What is Medical Illustration?


“A medical or surgical illustration that literally copies a visual fact would be no more useful than a decent photograph. A good medical illustration is neither a photorealist exercise nor an oversimplified diagram. Ironically, the skill is more often in knowing what to leave out than what to put in. The spectacular visual impact of highly rendered anatomical artwork belies the true nature of most medical illustration which is to communicate effectively the client's message, using the most appropriate style and media, be it elegantly concise or elaborately complex.”


“Medical illustration is art as applied to medicine, a graphic and visual interpretation of biomedical material. It is used effectively in all major markets, including advertising, editorial, institutional and instructional. Biomedical images can be highly realistic and anatomically accurate, or abstract and wildly conceptual in their approach.”

“Medical illustration is a form of communication. A good communicator is someone who possesses a clear idea of what to say and how to say it. Similarly, a good medical artist must be a good communicator: versatile in a variety of digital and traditional techniques, and be creative & imaginative.”

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“Our philosophy is to make medical information understandable by the audience in the best and quickest way possible. Aesthetically pleasing images are indeed highly regarded, but in an era when consumers of medical art may not have more than a few seconds to view an image, there is no room for distraction from the main topic. At the same time we strive to maintain anatomical accuracy.”

Further Reading


“The structure and function of the body in health and disease has always been a collection of fascinating puzzles. It was Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) who said that it was impossible to describe the complexities of the human body without the aid of drawings. “The more thoroughly you describe, the more thoroughly you will confuse.” Five hundred years later, that statement is perhaps even more true. As science reveals more answers, the puzzles become more intriguing and, for the teacher and illustrator alike, their elucidation becomes a more complex task.”

“There are some 60 qualified medical illustrators in this country (USA) who have braved the lengthy postgraduate training and are practising in hospitals, medical schools or in a freelance capacity. Their work encompasses an enormous range of activities from traditional anatomical illustration and the pictorial description of surgical operations, to the design of health education material for public and patients. Every communication medium is utilized from print to interactive videodisc technology. Every artistic skill and technique is involved from graphic design and typography to the very highest quality of watercolour painting. It is this great variety, together with the intellectual challenge involved, that makes the job so attractive and stimulating.”

“A medical illustrator may, for example, be required to create a three-dimensional representation of the intimate structure of a virus from microscopic evidence, devise a sympathetic but honest explanation of cancer treatment for afflicted patients or illustrate the stages in a complex operation of the brain, all of which require a considerable scientific knowledge and highly developed visual imagination and great attention to detail.”

“Hours of drawing in the operating theatre or autopsy room, strict adherence to the laws and disciplines of science and the modest financial returns are not for everyone, but for some this is a profession full of interest and its own special rewards.”
An medical illustration by surgeon Frank H. Netter the "Normal Rockwell of Medical Illustration." Netter's work is particularly noteworthy for adding the human element in character's. Art that cuts to the bone: Frank Netter exhibit at the Morris Museum.