

The Art of Phage

Effectively explaining science can be a monumental task, especially educating those outside the discipline. And let's face it—microbiologists have an especially hard job since it's difficult to describe something that most people have never seen. Everyone loves whales and rainforests, but how many people love *Salmonella*? When was the last time you saw a painting of a happy bacteriophage family on the side of a building as you flew into town?

A recent exhibition combined art with microbiology to produce stunning results. *The Art of Phage: An Exhibition* was organized by Forest Rohwer and Anca Segall of San Diego State University and Neilan Kuntz of Polymerlinks. Sponsored by the NSF Biocomplexity Program, the phage art show was displayed at the 105th ASM General Meeting Atlanta, Ga., in June 2005 and at the 16th Evergreen International Phage Biology Meeting in Evergreen, Wash. in August 2005.

An international collection of artists used a diverse range of art forms in their interpretation of phage. The pieces included a 7-foot-tall phage sculpture, tile mosaics, paintings, intricate copper wire sculptures, metal coins, and beadwork. Collectively, there were over 40 impressive pieces.

The Art of Phage exhibit was presented to microbiologists who inherently appreciate art on a subject that they are well versed in, but the potential use of such projects for education is far reaching. Art can bridge the gap between the scientific community and the general public. As one scientist remarked, "it's difficult enough to have people think about bacteria, let alone phage." To view the image gallery and learn more about the contributing artists, visit Forest Rohwer's website (<http://phage.sdsu.edu/imagery>).

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