Scientific Illustration: Learning and sharing at the dawn of an AI revolution — this is the theme of the 31st congress (Paris, 2025) of the European Association of Medical and Scientific Illustrators (AEIMS). This international association brings together scientists, artists, illustrators, and sculptors working in medical education and the life sciences.

Founded in Strasbourg in 1986, AEIMS organizes its annual congress in different European cities, often in collaboration with local training institutes. Host of the 2025 edition is École Estienne, a Parisian college that offers a two-year full-time program in scientific illustration. A similar curriculum exists in Maastricht.



Prof. Dr. Ann Van De Velde. © Koen Mortelmans

“AEIMS encourages the creation of training opportunities and the recruitment of young talent in the field of medical and scientific illustration and communication. We promote the profession through exhibitions, publicity, and sponsorship, and we aim to endorse diplomas from scientific illustration programs across Europe,” explains AEIMS president Professor Dr. Ann Van de Velde (University of Antwerp).

Bridging medicine and the arts

Since 2022, Van de Velde has led AEIMS with a clear mission: to strengthen the role of visual communication within European medical and scientific communities. In addition to her position as hematologist at Antwerp University Hospital (UZA), she is also active in the field of art and she teaches the history of healthcare at the University of Antwerp’s Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.



Bringing together medicine, art and humanities. © Guy Kleinblatt

Unique opportunity

“The congresses offer both students and professionals a unique opportunity to explore the evolving field of scientific illustration,” says Ann Van de Velde. “Across two days, keynote speakers from both scientific and artistic disciplines share their expertise, sparking discussion about professional practice and teaching in Europe — especially in a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence.”

Why AI?

“The choice of AI as a core theme is obvious,” says Professor Van de Velde. “AI is already essential in medical imaging, and we will apply it extensively in the Vesalius Continuum Project — an international initiative led by the University of Antwerp. There, a virtual Andreas Vesalius (1514–1564), the founder of modern anatomy, will guide learners through anatomy and its history.”

BIOMAB

Van de Velde emphasizes that collaboration between scientists, physicians, and artists is gaining ground. At the University of Antwerp, this interdisciplinary vision takes form in Biological and Medical Art Belgium (BIOMAB), a research group and member of AEIMS where art and science intersect to create new approaches to knowledge in medicine and education.

Metrodora

Van de Velde advocates for the integration of the humanities into medical training. Her own course, history of healthcare, reflects this vision. As an active member of Metrodora, the University of Antwerp’s interdisciplinary centre for the health humanities, she is closely involved in several projects that combine art and care.

“Metrodora focuses on education, research, and services,” Van de Velde explains. “Health humanities look at today’s questions about mental and physical health from many points of view. They explore how people experience health, illness, disability, and care, and how these are shown in culture and everyday life — always connecting ideas with real practice.”



Strengthening the role of visual communication in medical and scientific communities. © Guy Kleinblatt

AIEMS

BIOMAB

Faculteit Geneeskunde en Gezondheidswetenschappen

Universiteit Antwerpen

Campus Drie Eiken, Gebouw S

Universiteitsplein 1

B-2610 Wilrijk

E: ann.vandevelde2@uantwerpen.be

W: AEIMS

W: BIOMAB