

Molecules leap from lab to museum

Ten of the 20th century's most profoundly significant organic molecules will star in an unusual and innovative new Tang exhibition called *Molecules That Matter* (Sept. 8–April 13, 2008). "The exhibition's overarching story is how we have changed as a result of the 20th century's remarkable molecular evolution," says Ray Giguere, the Skidmore chemistry professor who initiated the show and who serves as its co-curator, with Tang director John Weber.

Members of the general public and the Skidmore community are invited to an opening reception celebrating the Tang's fall exhibitions with refreshments and live music at 6 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 8. Earlier that afternoon, at 4 p.m., a Dunkerley Dialogue titled "Molecules That Matter: Reactions and Reflections" will tap the multiple perspectives of science, art, and American studies for a discussion among panelists Robert Hargrove, a Mercer University professor of chemistry and environmental science; Mary C. Lynn, Skidmore College professor of American studies; and *Molecules That Matter* exhibiting artists Melissa Gwyn and Michael Oatman.

The exhibition's top 10 molecules—selected with the help of a distinguished scientific advisory board—include aspirin; isooctane (the petroleum-derived fuel additive whose anti-knock properties helped usher in the high-performance internal-combustion engine); penicillin; polyethylene (the breakthrough industrial plastic and one of the "big six" plastics); nylon; DNA; the birth-control pill, progesterin; DDT; the antidepressant Prozac; and buckminsterfullerene (carbon 60), which, along with its close relative, the carbon nanotube, is fueling the nanotechnology boom of the 21st century.

Each molecule is associated with a decade of the 20th century and illustrated with a cluster of artworks and artifacts that serve as time capsules of science and history. For example, the presentation for aspirin (1900s) includes a painted tin sign advertising that Bayer Aspirin "Does not depress the heart" as well as Fred Tomaselli's elegant black painting striped with hundreds of aspirin tablets. Each molecule will also be represented by a giant-sized, scientifically accurate model of its chemical structure.

Additional public events include a noon curator's tour (Oct. 10), a film series (*Gattaca* at 7 p.m. Sept. 18; *American Experience: The Pill* at 7 p.m. Oct. 2; and *American Experience: Rachel Carson's Silent Spring*, 7 p.m. Oct. 16); and a Nov. 14 Dunkerley Dialogue on chemistry's connections to the arts, presented at 8 p.m. by Nobel laureate and Cornell professor Roald Hoffmann. All events are free and open to the public.

Created in partnership with the Philadelphia-based Chemical Heritage Foundation (whose collections provided a number of rare and revealing historical artifacts and documents), *Molecules That Matter* will travel to four additional venues after closing at the Tang.

For more information, call 518-580-8080 or go to www.skidmore.edu/tang.