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EMBO honours triple talents of UK scientist, author, broadcaster



Armand Marie Leroi

2006 winner of the EMBO Award for Communication in the Life Sciences

UK scientist, author and broadcaster **Armand Marie Leroi** is the 2006 winner of the EMBO Award for Communication in the Life Sciences. The multi-talented developmental geneticist from Imperial College London receives the award in recognition of his remarkable contribution to science communication. Author of an acclaimed popular science book, Leroi has also written and presented scientific documentaries for TV.

Why are most of us born with one nose, two legs, ten fingers and twenty-four ribs – and some of us not? This fundamental question forms the basis for much of Armand Leroi's communication work. It is also the topic of his book *Mutants*, which tells the fascinating and often misunderstood story of human development – and how genetic mutations can provide the key to who we are.

Both book and author have received wide acclaim. UK daily *The Independent* summed up the comments of many reviewers: "The discovery of a distinguished scientist who can write with such flair and style is cause for rejoicing." In 2004, *Mutants* won the Guardian First Book Prize and was shortlisted for the Aventis Prize for Science Books.

Leroi has also brought this vast, uncharted area of biology to the screen. In 2004 he scripted and presented a powerful TV documentary series *Human Mutants* for the UK's Channel 4. The programme was a great success and a similar series *What Makes Us Human* was aired in August 2006. Print journalism has also become familiar territory for the scientist, who is a regular contributor to newspapers like *The Times*, *The Independent* and the *New York Times*.

Incredibly Leroi's achievements in science communication are more of a hobby than a day job. His "real job" is research scientist and lecturer at Imperial College London, where he leads a group investigating growth genetics and evolutionary developmental biology in the worm *C. elegans* – one of the most important species in modern biology. The EMBO Award for Communication recognises scientists like Leroi for exactly this kind of dual commitment and their exceptional efforts to bring science to the public while remaining active in research.

The EMBO selection panel's praise for Armand Leroi:

"Leroi masters the worlds of science writing and broadcasting with the skill and versatility of a seasoned media professional, all the time remaining grounded in the science behind the story. This flair for communication combined with his attention to scientific detail brings a unique voice to the public communication of science."

On hearing the news of his selection, Leroi said: "I am honoured to receive this award from EMBO, one of the most important organisations in European science. And it is deeply gratifying to know that it encourages scientists to tell the public about their work."

A prize of 5,000 euro and a handcrafted medal will be presented to Armand Leroi on 3 November 2006 at the EMBL/EMBO Science & Society Conference in Heidelberg, Germany.

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