CROSSING OVER

Exchanges in Art & Biotechnologies

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Royal Institution of Great Britain
21 Albemarle Street, London, W1S 4BS

2 October - 21 November 2008
Admission free
See **www.rigb.org** for opening times and further details

Crossing Over is an exhibition of contemporary art at the Royal Institution of Great Britain that addresses the highly topical subject of genetic manipulation and bioengineering. Bringing together art, design and science, the artworks by twelve artists and designers investigate the metaphors, potentialities and anxieties of this much debated area.

The different approaches and subjects tackled by the artists reflect the breath and complexity of the biosciences. From an animation that interlaces past and present speculations of cloning, to interactive brain cells, topiary lambs that reference transgenic research and bioluminescent portraits.

Crossing Over engages with the transfer of art, design and biotechnologies, addressing questions on the shifting boundaries between biological and biotechnological, human and non-human, subject and object. The exhibition stands as a benchmark in the bioscience debate, reflecting this time of intense speculation and fear, parliamentary legislation and rapid advancement. *Crossing Over* is about this moment in the history of bioscience, which will sustain progressions even during the exhibitions own duration. *Crossing Over* does not attempt to resolve the complexities that arise out of biotechnologies, but rather, through contemporary art and design, highlights some of the concerns as well as possibilities they engender.

The multi-disciplinary works, all developed specifically for the exhibition, are displayed throughout the Royal Institution's newly refurbished building. Steeped in a long history of scientific discovery, the Royal Institution provides a congruent backdrop to the exhibition, with works punctuating and intercepting the building's public spaces. Nestled within the library bookshelves, adorning the opulent grand entrance, shown in amongst the institution's historical collections, and screened across the airy atrium, the situating of works creates a journey of discovery for the visitor.

Curators: Dr Caterina Albano (Artakt, Central Saint Martins College) and Rowan Drury.

Scientific advisers: Prof. Richard Ashcroft (Queen Mary College); Dr Chris Mason (Advanced Centre for Biomedical Engineering, UCL) and Prof. Sarah Franklin (Bios Centre, London School of Economics).

Supported by: The Wellcome Trust, the Arts Council of England and Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design.

The Royal Institution
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List of works

Film director **Phoebe von Held** takes as her starting point Denis Diderot's eighteenth century text, D'Alembert's Dream. The resulting animation interlaces later-day speculations of cloning made in the texts with today's scientific insight, and uncovers the uncanny similarities between fears of the past and present.

Material Beliefs, a collective of designers (Elio Caccavale, Tobie Kerridge, James Auger, Jimmy Loizeau, Aleksandar Zivanovic, David Muth and Susanne Soares) who collaborate with scientists, have created a display of biotechnological products and devices to deal with potential situations made possible by progressions in bioscience: An interface for a user to interact with a culture of brain cells cared for in a distant laboratory; a group of carnivorous robots; a system that uses live monitoring technology for surveying a child's orientation and condition.

Eggebert and Gould have cultivated a pair of, at once curious and grotesque, topiary lambs. With reference the ancient Scythian myth (of a lamb growing from a plant) the work contemplates transgenic research and notions of manipulating life forms.

Alex Bunn's sculpture, Quaibrid, explores the possibilities of reshaping and manipulating body image. The bust is formed using multiple high-resolution medical scan topography of different tissues of the body that are fused with architectural components to create a unique hybrid portrait.

The myth of the fountain of eternal youth is used by **Carl Stevenson** to explore anxieties around genetic enhancement and regenerative biotechnologies. His hypnotic film composes and decomposes plaster body parts. The camera's lens lingers on intimate creases and lines in the skin before a fountain's shower slowly dissolves them.

Intensively bred Zebra fish are the protagonists of **Kathleen Rogers**'s multi-layered digital installation. Video microscopy of the artificially mutated fish embryos, spliced between different screens, reflects upon the evolutionary interconnections that link zebra fish to humans.

Anne Brodie's Exploring the Invisible, uses bioluminescence, a bacteria used for medical research, including the non-invasive analyses of cancerous cells, to create a series of haunting photographic portraits. Bacteria is used as the only light source to light sitters in a photo booth. The resulting portraits, projected in the Royal Institutions famous lecture theatre, are enveloped in the translucent hue emitted by the bacteria suggesting the process of intercellular communication that is the origin of luminescence.

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