MEDICINE AND ART: IMAGINING A FUTURE FOR LIFE AND LOVE
—LEONARDO DA VINCI, OKYO, DAMIEN HIRST

28 NOVEMBER (SAT), 2009 – 28 FEBRUARY (SUN), 2010  MORI ART MUSEUM

Since time immemorial, people have sought to understand the mechanisms of the human body. On the basis of their discoveries in medicine and science, people have attempted to counter the effects of disease and injury and to resist death, seeking ultimately the secret of longevity. The history of medicine is the sum of all such scientific explorations into the nature of the human body. Likewise, attempts to create depictions of beauty have also been repeated in history. The human body, in fact, has always been held up as a place to embody the ideal form of beauty, and people have never tired of its depiction.

In this way, the body can be seen as the meeting point, or the point of departure for journeys into the two very different worlds of medicine and art. The scientists/artist who obviously stood most prominently at this intersection was Leonardo da Vinci. He left us not only stunningly accurate anatomical drawings, but also the Mona Lisa. Developments in science and technology have been essential to the advancement of medicine in the past, and these days too, medicine is advancing with developments in molecular biology. We are now able to explain the mechanism of DNA and shed new light on the question of what a living organism is.

This exhibition brings together roughly 150 important medical artifacts from the Wellcome Collection (http://www.wellcomecollection.org) in London, historical art works as well as about 30 works of contemporary art. It is a unique attempt to reconsider the fundamental question of the meaning of life and death from the parallel, yet rarely compared perspectives of medicine and art, or science and beauty. Also, three anatomical drawings by Leonardo da Vinci from The Royal Collection will be on display for the first time in Japan.

The Wellcome Trust
The Wellcome Trust was founded in the U.K. in 1936 in accordance with the wishes of the late Sir Henry Wellcome, a successful pharmaceutical entrepreneur, and is now the largest charity in the UK. Its goals are to support and promote research to improve the health of humans and animals. The Trust endeavors to support excellent medicine and research in life sciences and undertakes activities that inform the world of the importance of these areas of study through art and other methods of expression that are approachable to ordinary people. Henry Wellcome’s original museum numbered well over a million items dating from antiquity to the early 20th century, dealing with, as he himself put, ‘all things concerning humans and medicine’. Today, Wellcome Collection presents a mixture of objects from his museum alongside modern exhibits as well as live events in order to explore medicine, art and the human condition.

Organizers: Mori Art Museum, Wellcome Trust, The Yomiuri Shimbun
In Association with: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, RIKEN, Japan Surgical Society, The Japanese Society of Internal Medicine, Japan Medical Association, British Council
Grants from: U.S. Embassy, Tokyo, The Tokyo Club
Support: Japan Airlines, Champagne Nicolas Feuillatte, BOMBAY SAPPHIRE
Cooperation: Science Museum, The Japan Association for Cultural Exchange
Curated by: Nanjo Fumio (Director, Mori Art Museum), Ken Arnold (Head of Public Programmes, Welcome Trust)

Press Images: Images are available on our website.

PRESS RELEASE

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Part 1 Discovering the Inner World of the Body
How did people around the world first acquire understanding of the mechanisms of the human body and the vast world it contains? The first section of the exhibition answers that question by tracing various scientific developments through a vast array of artifacts. Exhibited works include anatomical drawings by Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, anatomical diagrams and models from around the world. There are also works of contemporary art by Andy Warhol, Magnus Wallin, and Bai Yilao, as well as traditional Japanese works of art by the likes of Maruyama Ōkyo and Kawanabe Kyosai.

Part 2 Fighting Against Death and Disease
This section looks at how people perceive death and disease and how they have tried to fight against it. In addition to presenting the history of medicine, pharmaceuticals, life sciences and scientific technology, this section poses philosophical questions about the nature of life and death. Exhibited works include Japanese anatomical texts as well as medical journals and historical medical instruments from around the world. There are also paintings on the theme of medicine and works of contemporary art made by Damien Hirst, Marc Quinn and Yanagi Miwa.

Part 3 Toward Eternal Life and Love
In light of the latest developments in biotechnology, cybernetics and neuroscience, and with reference to medical materials and works of art, the third part of the exhibition poses the following questions: Considering reproduction is simply the endless repetition of the life-death cycle, what really motivates humans to reproduce? Is it possible to pinpoint the real objective of human life and its likely future? What is life? Exhibited works include drawings by René Descartes, illustrations by Francis Crick of the double-helix structure of DNA, and contemporary artworks by Francis Bacon, Jan Fabre, Matsu Fuyuko and others.

REFERENCE IMAGES

Magnus Wallin
Video installation
(Installation with double backprojection, 3-D animated video)
Variable dimension 2.48 min.
Courtesy: Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin, Germany

Damien Hirst
Surgical Procedure (Maia)
2007 oil on canvas 182.9 x 243.8 cm
Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd
Courtesy: White Cube, © Damien Hirst, DACS, 2009

Walter Schels
Life before Death - Elmira Sang Bastian
2004-2005 oil on canvas 100 x 100 cm

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Maruyama Okyo  
Skeleton Performing Zazen on Waves  
c.1787  ink, paper  
132.6 × 59 cm  
Daijoji temple, Hyogo, Japan

Leonardo da Vinci  
Two Studies of a Cranium  
1489  pen and ink, over traces of black chalk  
18.8 × 13.4 cm  
ROYAL COLLECTION ©2009 HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Pohl Omniskop X-ray apparatus  
ca. 1910, Germany  
Science Museum, London

Press Images: Images are available on our website.
PUBLIC PROGRAM

Artists’ Talk

*Japanese-English consecutive interpretation available

Along with a general introduction to the Wellcome Collection and the exhibition, participating artists discuss their work.

Speakers: Ken Arnold (Head of Public Programmes, Wellcome Trust), Gilles Barbier (artist), Oron Catts (artist, Tissue Culture & Art Project), Rona Pondick (artist), Walter Schels (artist).

Moderator: Hirose Mami (Project Manager, Mori Art Museum)

Date: 14:00–16:30 Saturday, 28 November, 2009

Venue: Mori Art Museum

Capacity: 40 (bookings not required)

Admission: Free (exhibition ticket required)

Talk Sessions

No.1 “What is Life? New Medicine and the Future of Life”

*Japanese-English simultaneous interpretation available

While surveying the latest in biotechnology and medical science, we ask the biggest question of all, “What is life?” Panelists discuss life, death, human existence and bioethics from the perspectives of art and science.

Speakers: Sir John E. Sulston (biologist, 2002 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine Laureate), Oron Catts (artist, Tissue Culture & Art Project), Hayashizaki Yoshifide (molecular genetics researcher, Director, Omics Science Center, RIKEN Yokohama Institute).

Moderator: Nanjo Fumio (Director, Mori Art Museum)

Date: 18:00–21:00 Monday, 7 December, 2009

Venue: Tower Hall, Academy Hills 49, Mori Tower 49F

Capacity: 320 (bookings required)

Admission: Adult ¥1,000 Students & MAMC Members ¥500

Organizers: Mori Art Museum, RIKEN, Academy Hills

Grant from: The Tokyo Club

Corporate Sponsor: TOYOTA MOTOR CORPORATION

Booking: Bookings can be made from the Mori Art Museum website from Wednesday, 28 October

No.2 “When Art and Science Meet”

*Japanese-English simultaneous interpretation available

Leonardo da Vinci’s anatomical drawings are investigated in relation to the idea of the body being the “meeting place of medicine and art.” Discussion extends to the relationship between art and science, including their similarities and mutual influence, as well as the potential of each in the future.

Speakers: Martin Kemp (Emeritus Professor of the History of Art, University of Oxford), Yoro Takeshi (anatomist, Professor Emeritus, Tokyo University, President, Science Visualization Society of Japan), Nishikawa Shinichi (stem cell biologist, Deputy Director, Center for Developmental Biology, RIKEN Kobe Institute), Matsui Fuyuko (artist).

Moderator: Nanjo Fumio (Director, Mori Art Museum)

Date: 14:00–17:00 Monday, 11 January, 2010

Venue: Tower Hall, Academy Hills 49, Mori Tower 49F

Capacity: 320 (bookings required)

Admission: Adult ¥1,000 Students & MAMC Members ¥500

Organizers: Mori Art Museum, RIKEN, Academy Hills

Grant from: The Tokyo Club

Corporate Sponsor: TOYOTA MOTOR CORPORATION

In Association with: Science Visualization Society of Japan

Booking: Bookings can be made from the Mori Art Museum website from Wednesday, 28 October

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