

PRESS RELEASE

Me, Myself and MRI -Getting A-Head in Art

**Exhibition opening 24 Feb
For immediate release**

An arresting new interactive exhibition exploring of the boundaries between art and science opens on Tuesday 24th February at the National Science Learning Centre, York. **Me, Myself and MRI** uses **photography, video, sound** and **Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) data** to create complete portraits of a series of individuals. By interacting with the exhibition you can explore many of the facets of the individuals portrayed. This exciting multi-media exhibition has been created by York-based arts partnership Geodesic Arts, working in unique collaboration with Archbishop Holgate's School York and York Neuroimaging Centre, and is funded by the Wellcome Trust and Arts Council England. It will tour to regional venues in 2009.

The culmination of a year long project, this exhibition uses photography, sound and video as well as contemporary neuroimaging technology. The subjects were chosen by Year 9 pupils from Archbishop Holgate's School who decided to concentrate on capturing a comprehensive look at some of the very different people who make up society.

The final six subjects were a nurse, a chaplain, a playwright, a kick-boxing champion, a TV journalist and a scientist. They sat for photographic portraits and took part in video and audio interviews, as well as undertaking an MRI brain scan.

The resulting data and footage has been transformed into a series of digital portraits that provide a unique representation of each of the subjects, giving a

more detailed insight into what makes them all individual. MRI scans as well as being essential diagnostic tools also produce beautiful images and highlight features that are unique to each individual.

The project team has been working with Year 9 pupils from Archbishop Holgate's School since the beginning of last year. **James Evans, Head of Science, explains why the school got involved.** "It is an exciting, collaborative project that has engaged the pupils, teachers and outside agencies. It is an opportunity to celebrate the exciting developments in science, explore the ethical issues raised and marry them with the creativity and expression of art." He believes that the project has made a lasting impression on the pupils. "To experience the 'wow' factor of science with inspirational people, to make links with many facets of the curriculum, to be engaged by science and express through art, ICT and media is priceless."

As well as learning about creative digital technology, the pupils have been exploring the development of contemporary neuroimaging techniques such as MRI and MEG and the science behind them. **Staff at York Neuroimaging Centre have been acting as scientific advisors to the project,** explaining how modern-day techniques have developed, investigating ethical issues surrounding these techniques and carrying out MRI scans on the people selected to take part in the project. This is a chance to experience contemporary science firsthand, as Elliot Crowe, a Year 9 pupil points out. "I thought it would be something new and exciting to try. It's not very often you get an opportunity to do something like this."

The pupils have also found out about the development of portraiture as an art form and the links between science and the arts as they worked with an art historian to discover how art and science together can help us make sense of the world around us. As Francesca Smith, a pupil taking part in the work says, "I like this project – it's different because we're doing art and science together."

"This innovative project will enable young people to develop an understanding of the science behind MRI scans," **explains Clare Matterson, Wellcome Trust Director of Medicine, Society and History.** "By engaging in a creative and accessible way with science and technology, they will explore ideas about the individual and self from scientific and cultural perspectives."

Work on the project started in January 2008 and the final exhibition launched at the National Science Learning Centre on the 24th February before touring to Impressions Gallery, Bradford, in April 2009 and York Hospital in May 2009. The project forms part of the year-round community and education programme of SightSonic, York's International Festival of Digital Arts. Further information on the project can be found at www.memyselfandmri.org

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Notes for Editors

1. Project partners for *Me, Myself and MRI* include York Neuroimaging Centre, Archbishop Holgate's School and The National Science Learning Centre. The project is also supported by: York Hospital Trust, Impressions Gallery, York Museums Trust, SightSonic.
2. Geodesic Arts are a recently-established partnership of York-based digital artists and associated practitioners whose goal is to create new and engaging artworks and to deliver innovative projects across arts, science and education. For further information visit www.geodesicarts.org

The project team for *Me, Myself and MRI* consists of: Kirsty Halliday (project manager), Mark Hildred (Technical Producer), Damian Murphy (lead artist), John Oxley (video artist), Kippa Matthews (photographer), Griselda Goldsbrough (art historian).

3. The Wellcome Trust <<http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/>> is the largest charity in the UK. It funds innovative biomedical research, in the UK and internationally, spending around £500 million each year to support the brightest scientists with



the best ideas. The Wellcome Trust supports public debate about biomedical research and its impact on health and wellbeing.

4. Arts Council England, Yorkshire is the regional office of the national development agency for the arts. Arts Council England works to get more art to more people in more places. They develop and promote the arts across England, acting as an independent body at arm's length from government.

Arts Council England believe that the arts have the power to change lives and communities, and to create opportunities for people throughout the country. For 2006 to 2008 they have six priorities

- taking part in the arts
 - children and young people
 - the creative economy
 - vibrant communities
 - internationalism
 - celebrating diversity
5. SightSonic, York's International Festival of Digital Arts, was established in 2000 with the aim of presenting and promoting artforms that have digital technology at the heart of the creative process.

SightSonic is supported by partner organisations including: University of York, York St John University and Science City York.