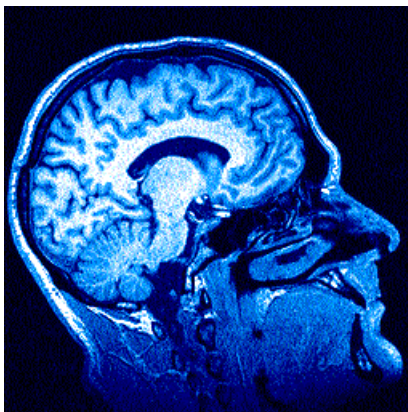


Mapping perception through a sci-art collaboration

Dr Mark Lythgoe of the Radiology and Physics Unit has just been awarded £43,900 as part of the sci-art award scheme co-ordinated by the Wellcome Trust. Mark and his collaborator, artist and film-maker Andrew Kötting, will use the funding to develop an 'immersive environment' called *Mapping Perception*. This interactive experience, partly created using MRI and other forms of imaging, will allow people to think about the five senses and how these are impaired – or enhanced – by disability. The artwork should debut at next year's Edinburgh International Film Festival.



MRI scan of Andrew's brain

The project has been inspired by Andrew's 12-year-old daughter Eden, who suffers from Joubert's syndrome. This rare condition, which affects the development of the vermis in the cerebellum, leaves Eden with speech, motor co-ordination, eye-movement and breathing problems. It did not, however, prevent her from starring in Andrew's successful 1996 film *Gallivant*, a British road movie that also starred Andrew's 85-year-old mother Gladys.

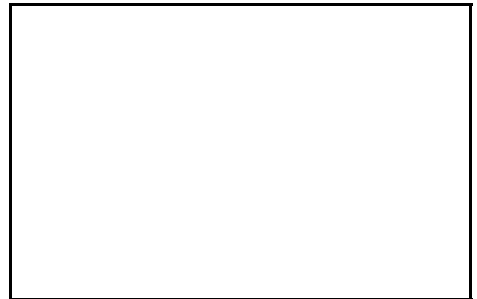
Says Mark "It is one thing to know about Joubert's syndrome from the medical point of view but quite another to understand what it is to live with it. We hope that the fusion of art, film and science will give us a new insight into Eden's world." In creating the environment, Mark and Andrew will explore what is normal

and what is abnormal by comparing sophisticated magnetic resonance images of Andrew's and Eden's brains. These images will be orchestrated with film footage of Eden's daily life at different ages and sound recordings to form an experience through which visitors can walk, engaging and disengaging all five senses. "The environment should leave the visitor with an idea of what it feels like to have a disability – and hopefully challenge preconceptions about the associated limitations" says Mark.

Although Mark has been involved in sci-art initiatives before – his 1999 exhibition at the ICH with artist Jayne Gouge was a great success – he feels this project is a genuine two-way collaboration. He has had to learn the languages of art and film-making while Andrew has attended seminars at the ICH to enhance his understanding of scientific methods. The collaboration is now a genuine attempt for science and art to work together, rather than an artist using scientific technologies or a scientist using attractive images from their work. "The real difference for me", comments Mark, "has been learning to work in an open-ended way rather than the hypothesis-driven way I am used to." The level of communication between Mark and Andrew was particularly commended by the panel judging the sci-art awards.

Another benefit from the project has been the interest shown by colleagues at ICH/GOS, several of whom are contributing to its development. Eden was diagnosed here at the age of two and is currently cared for by Dr Robert Surtees (Neurology). Dr Melissa Lees (Clinical Genetics) is contributing to the understanding of the genetics of Joubert's syndrome. Prof David Gadian is involved in the imaging, and Prof Faraneh Vargha-Khadem plans to apply sophisticated neuropsychological testing to uncover Eden's strengths and weaknesses.

The sci-art awards are funded by a consortium comprising the Arts Council of England, the British Council, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Scottish Arts Council and the Wellcome Trust, sponsored by the National



Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts. This year 11 awards totalling £200,000 were made, with Mark and Andrew's one of the two production awards. The award ceremony was held at the Science Museum last month in the presence of Arts Minister Alan Howarth. The project already has funding from the London Production Fund, and its development is being co-ordinated by Giles Lane at Proboscis.



Dr Mark Lythgoe

For further information on *Mapping Perception*, visit their web site at www.mappingperception.org.uk The Wellcome Trust website at www.wellcome.ac.uk has more information on the sci-art scheme.

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