

Conversation with your subconscious

What is it to be a human? How do we choose to relate? Are our engagements deeply meaningful? Can we heal ourselves – soul, spirit, mind, brain and body – our past, present and future. If so, how? Can trauma – deeply embedded within – be cured through engagements with arts? What is this notion of healing and what codes are embedded in our genes? *Chromosomes* uncover the mystery of the dance of nature and nurture.

This exhibition brings together works from four discrete series: *Healing Chromosomes*, *Bleached Genes*, *Full Moon*, and *Courage*. Each of these series has explored issues around nature versus nurture, whether we really do have the ability to change the complex characteristics that define us as individuals, or if we even should.

Healing Chromosomes begins in a space where many of us are feeling the intense pressure created by constant connection to work, social media, and world affairs, with little time to slow down and just be. The simple notion of being present is a luxury, and it seems that we now need to make an effort to achieve it. Given that it should be our natural instinct, it is rather ridiculous, but it seems we have lost this innate ability as face to face, personal and intimate engagement, has been taken over by our connection to technology.

These works were inspired by the tangle of cables and devices that have become an integral part of daily life, and questions around what this kind of connectivity is doing to us as human beings. *Healing Chromosomes* asks what might happen if we disentangle ourselves from this constant onslaught of connectivity, and reconnect with each other on a human level. But it seems that, in spite of so many efforts, no amount of well-intentioned nurturing can overtake nature. In reality, the expectations around being able to rewire our brains, and to create a better version of ourselves, only seems to add an additional layer of pressure.

Bleached Genes explores a wish to face embedded trauma, cleaning away its stains from our genes, painting over it with white. Surfaces are stripped back and scrubbed clean in a metaphorical act of emotional, physical, and genetic bleaching in an attempt to break free from the past, and to alter the very substance of being. Soft white light gently illuminates white bleached and painted Genes. This act is a fervent wish to finally become free from fear.

Consultant Psychiatrist Dr. Patricia Jungfer reflected on the process of bleaching: “When we remove colour from objects, they look white and they become ‘bleached’. Is this a process that stops reflection of light or something else? To bleach an object involves the disruption of chromophores in organic molecules. Either by a process of oxidation or reduction, the structure of the chromophore changes by this process so that it can no longer absorb light. Bleaching can be good or bad, depending on the context in which the bleaching action has taken place...”

Sombre white sculptures are gently bathed in subdued light, reflected in mirrors tinted with colours from the healing palette. Then the starkness of *Bleached Genes* gives way to *Full Moon*, which was inspired by the unexpected gifts of those whose differences often mean that they are perceived as ‘less than’.

When I set out to make the work, I was working on a piece that I envisaged as two chromosomes dancing. But the choreography wasn’t working – the two pieces of neon did not quite interact. Then I thought about a friend’s child who has Trisomy 21, or Down syndrome. With her effortless joy, she lights up the world of everyone around her. When I added the third chromosome, the work was illuminated and began to dance. Inspired by the empathy and joy that I have seen in people who have disabilities, and the strengths that they bring with them, *Full Moon* is a celebration of how both neuro and biodiversity create a richer world for all of us.

My hope is to provoke thought around how we engage with ourselves and one another: whether it is the tangled mess and stress that inspired *Healing Chromosomes*, the stark calmness of *Bleached Genes*, or the celebratory gaze of *Full Moon*. Is it possible that those who we have long thought of as “disabled” might in a way be less vulnerable to the extra stressors that we bring upon ourselves, and more capable of being present? *Chromosomes* poses these questions, but each viewer brings their own perspective to these inter-related series, creating an individual journey.