

PRESS RELEASE

MARCH 2018

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

New exhibition opens at the Great North Museum, Newcastle, bringing together art and medicine to help people reflect on the human heart



Images: Sofie Layton, *Rubik's Heart I*, 2018; Workshop at Great Ormond Street Hospital, *Under the Microscope*, 2015; Sofie Layton, *I feel like I am holding snow in my hands*, 2018. Photos: Stephen King

"I feel like I am holding snow in my hands"

Mother of a 3-month old baby on seeing her child's heart as a 3D model

March 2018: On Saturday 24 March 2018 a new exhibition bringing together art and medicine to reflect on the human heart will open in Newcastle's Great North Museum called *The Heart of the Matter*. Through artworks inspired by patients born with heart conditions, their families and clinicians, the exhibition invites the public to discover the extraordinary nature of this complex organ. The exhibition is a collaboration between British artist Sofie Layton, bioengineer Giovanni Biglino (Lecturer Cardiovascular Bioinformatics & Medical Statistics, Bristol Heart Institute) and health psychologist Jo Wray (Senior Research Fellow in the Cardiorespiratory Division and in the Centre for Outcomes and Experience Research in Children's Health, Illness and Disability at Great Ormond Street Hospital). The exhibition will launch at the Great North Museum in Newcastle on 24 March and run until 6 May 2018 before continuing its tour to Bristol across summer 2018 and finally to London in late 2018.

The Heart of The Matter was first conceived by Sofie Layton and Giovanni Biglino in 2015 and since then they brought together patients with heart conditions from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) in London, the Bristol Heart Institute, and the Adult Congenital & Paediatric Heart Unit of the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle, to explore the heart in workshops with scientists, artists, students, clinicians and nurses. Conversations and stories arising from these workshops in turn inspired artworks that offer insight into the heart's beauty, fragility and resilience, using scientific and artistic methods.

"The work with the artist allowed me to actually reflect on what my condition meant to me and how it impacted me growing up. This was a good way to mark the transition into being an adult patient." A patient who took part in the workshop process

The exhibition takes the viewer through three sections, as if walking through three chambers each with their own theme. The first, *Medical Models and Language*, represents heart and blood vessel anatomy and the medical language used to describe and treat congenital heart disorders. Through 3D printed models, printed textiles, and sound, these works depict how the heart can change in the presence of disease, the complexity of the medical terminology used to navigate heart conditions, and the interventions used in their treatment.

In the second section, *Technology Abstracted*, a large-scale animation reveals patients' narratives as they appear within blood flow scans captured by advanced medical imaging. Inside a curtained booth, an animated soldier - one patient's image of resilience - transforms and is contained within a medical heart model, completing the transition from medical to symbolic interpretations.

The third and final section of the exhibition, *Narrative and Symbol*, houses richly allegorical and immersive artworks, which move away from overt medical references. Installations, sculptural forms and 2D pieces reflect on concepts of (self-) protection and care, the sacredness of the surgical theatre, the complexity and constant movement of a defective heart, and how personal, unique and precious everybody's heart is to them.

Sofie Layton, lead artist says, "The Heart of the Matter has been the most extraordinary personal and artistic journey. Working with patients, parents, scientists and clinicians in a workshop setting, I have listened to people's metaphorical stories of their heart and in some circumstances, I have watched them discover what their own or their child's heart looks like."

"We gathered together the heart narratives of dozens of people, patients, parents, artists, clinicians and scientists," continues Sofie, "all of whom have participated in a series of day-long creative workshops which explored the medical and metaphorical heart. The images, ideas and stories that emerged from these workshops are extraordinary, beautiful and thought-provoking."

Giovanni Biglino, Lecturer Cardiovascular Bioinformatics & Medical Statistics, Bristol Heart Institute says, "Being able to take part in creative workshops and listening to other people's stories, meeting their families and creating something together, gives a complete different connotation to scientific research – it adds an absolutely necessary dimension of humanity."

"Technology and art can be absolutely complementary in representing the human body," Giovanni continues. "Today we can describe in exquisite detail the path of blood flow in an artery, but we can also start to unravel the stories that are carried within it, and listen to them."

The Heart of the Matter is produced by Susannah Hall (GOSH Arts), Nicky Petto and Anna Ledgard in association with Artsadmin, and is supported by the Wellcome Trust, the Blavatnik Family Foundation, Above & Beyond, Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity and public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England. With thanks to RapidformRCA and 3D Life Print.

"To literally hold your own heart model in your hands, to discover its form and size, is transformative." Artist Sofie Layton

www.insidetheheart.org

#heartofthematter

[View and download the images](#)

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ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

EXHIBITION DATES

24 March – 6 May 2018

[Great North Museum in Newcastle](#)

Admission free.

Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PT

14 July – 19 August 2018

[RWA](#) and [Centrespace Gallery in Bristol](#)

Queen's Road, Clifton, BS8 1PX

6 Leonard Lane, Bristol, BS1 1EA, UK

Winter 2018 Date TBC: [Science Gallery in London](#)

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME OF EVENTS AROUND THE EXHIBITION

[The Making Of...](#)

Saturday 24 March, 2-4pm, Great North Museum: Hancock

Meet with the patients, artists, producers and medical professionals involved in 'The Heart of the Matter', a two-year collaborative project that resulted in this unique exhibition.

<https://greatnorthmuseum.org.uk/whats-on/the-making-of-the-heart-of-the-matter>

More events to be announced shortly

Website: www.insidetheheart.org

Exhibition hash tag: #heartofthematter

ABOUT SOFIE LAYTON

Artist Sofie Layton's work explores the creative interface between patients and the scientific clinical landscape. Her past work includes site-specific performance, theatre, and installations. Projects include a Wellcome Trust-funded residency at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) (Under the Microscope) and an installation at Evelina Children Hospital (Bedside Manners). She was artist in residence with Historic Royal Palaces and created The Field of Flowers at Kensington Palace (2007) where 6000 people contributed to ten 3.5-meter metal dandelions to mark the 10th anniversary of the death of the Princess of Wales. Sofie regularly

collaborates with other artists, makers and musicians; collaborators include Mark Storor and Anna Ledgard, on projects such as The Barometer of My Heart (2015) and TMA Award winning For the Best (2009/10). She is an independently commissioned artist and has created work for the Blavatnik family's private collection. She is currently leading "The Heart of the Matter", a national project exploring the medical, experiential and metaphorical dimensions of the heart.

www.insidetheheart.org

www.sofielayton.co.uk

"Medical images at first appeared like kinetic abstract paintings to me. But as the eye and mind becomes focused these moving shadows transform into recognisable anatomical forms with rhythmical beats and pulses. The architecture of the body is revealed."

ABOUT GIOVANNI BIGLINO

Giovanni Biglino is a biomedical engineer. He studied at Imperial College London and obtained his PhD in cardiovascular mechanics from the Brunel Institute of Bioengineering. He has carried out research at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children and University College London, with the cardiac engineering team, focusing on congenital heart disease. Now he is a Lecturer in Cardiovascular Bioinformatics and Medical Statistics at the Bristol Heart Institute. He has studied biostatistics at Harvard Medical School and has started to enthusiastically explore the world of narrative medicine at Columbia University. His current research is very collaborative, involving cardiologists, surgeons, imagers, psychologists and artists.

"Research is dialogue and this project wouldn't exist without the deep collaboration between its team members, who come from different backgrounds, and many collaborators, patients, health professionals, artists... We must continue the conversation, even when sometimes it feels like speaking different languages, or perhaps just different dialects, because ultimately we meet, somewhere in between, and there something special begins to happen."

ABOUT JO WRAY

Jo Wray is a Health Psychologist in the Cardiorespiratory division and a Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for Nursing and Allied Health at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH). Jo leads on psychosocial research and patient reported outcomes and experiences. She is involved in multiple research projects both at GOSH and beyond. Key areas of research include quality of life, outcomes of congenital heart disease and surgery, children's health state preferences, transition and the use of qualitative methods to elicit child and family experiences of illness and treatment.

ABOUT THE GREAT NORTH MUSEUM

The Great North Museum is managed by Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums on behalf of Newcastle University. The Museum brings together the North East's premier collections of archaeology, natural history, geology and world cultures under one roof. It incorporates collections from the original Hancock Museum, and Newcastle University's former Museum of Antiquities and the Shefton Museum.

The Great North Museum is a partnership between Newcastle University, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, the Natural History Society of Northumbria (NHSN) and the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne (SANT).

greatnorthmuseum.org.uk

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ABOUT GOSH ARTS

GOSH Arts is the arts programme at Great Ormond Street Hospital. Its award-winning participatory programme, art commissions and temporary exhibitions inspire creativity, create welcoming environments, and offer meaningful cultural opportunities across a variety of art forms for patients, families and staff. GOSH Arts is funded by Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity.

www.gosh.nhs.uk/about-us/our-priorities/go-create-arts-programme

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ABOUT ARTSADMIN

Artsadmin is a producing organisation, which enables artists to create without boundaries, connecting bold interdisciplinary work with local, national and international audiences. The advisory service supports artists at every stage of their development with free advice and opportunities. In London's East End Artsadmin has established at its base Toynbee Studios, a centre for the creation, development and presentation of new work, where, in the rehearsal, performance and meeting spaces, new talent is constantly nurtured. Anna Ledgard is an Artsadmin associate producer.

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ABOUT WELLCOME

Wellcome exists to improve health for everyone by helping great ideas to thrive. We're a global charitable foundation, both politically and financially independent. We support scientists and researchers, take on big problems, fuel imaginations and spark debate.