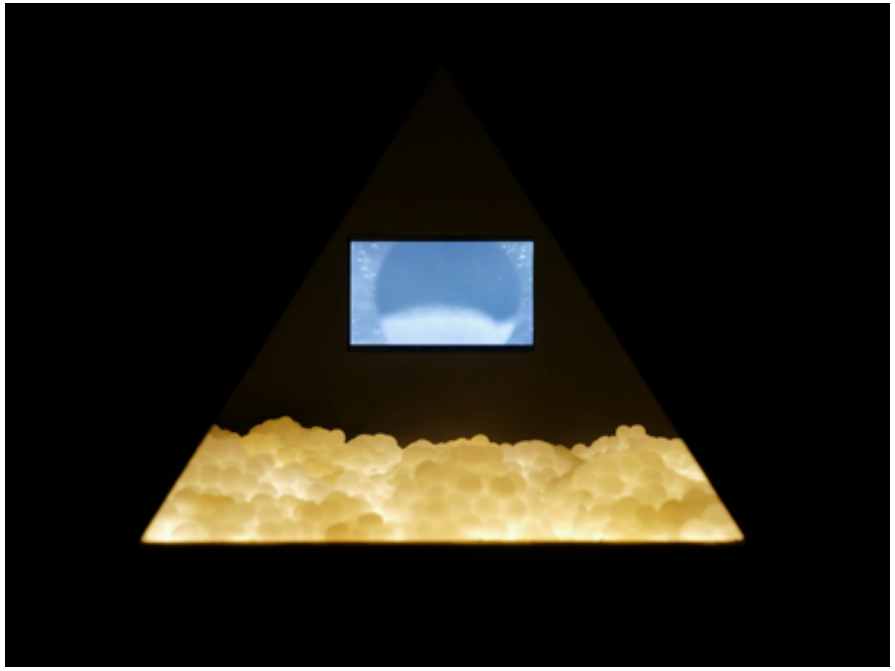
SIOBHAN MCGIBBON

BIOGRAPHY

Siobhan McGibbon is an Irish visual artist and researcher interested in trans disciplinary practice, particularly the intersections between art and medical science. She works conceptually with sculpture, installation, drawing, animation and biomaterials. McGibbon originally trained in sculpture in the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology where she completed her degree, receiving a first class honors and receiving the award of sculpture student of the year. In 2014 McGibbon was awarded a Limerick Capital of Culture scholarship to undertake a practice based research masters in the ACADEMY research center at Limerick School of Art and Design, where she explored the notion of "The Modern Prometheus" through a series of unusual investigations in the in the sectors of anatomy, medical and biological exploration and centers of scientific enquiry. McGibbon is currently a PHD student in the ACADEMY research center at Limerick School of Art and Design where she is exploring the contemporary quest for the fountain of youth.

McGibbon takes an active approach to her research. Instigating unique investigations in unusual places of inquiry. Throughout her career McGibbon has developed an authentic research strategy that has enabled her to understand the subject through observing, participating and direct inquiry, while simultaneously thinking about the process or subject in the context of her practice McGibbon is currently Artist in Residence in The Regenerative Medicine Institute, Galway (REMEDI, 2016). Other recent investigations include a residency in Centre for Research in Medical Devices, (CURUM, 2015). A fellowship in the Mutter Museum and the Historical Medical Library of the College of Physicians, Philadelphia (2014) and a residency in Galway University Hospital in the departments of in the histology, pathology and radiology (2014)



Future Relic one: The Xenopthorpian Mythos, Installation view
Medium: Monitor, wax, petroleum jelly, mdf.

THE XENOPTHORPIAN MYTHOS, 2015

In this project McGibbon unfolds a complex and theoretical narrative that offers an experimental hypothesis about the evolution of the human body and medical intervention. The work was created during a 6-month residency in CÚRAM, the center for research in medical devices.

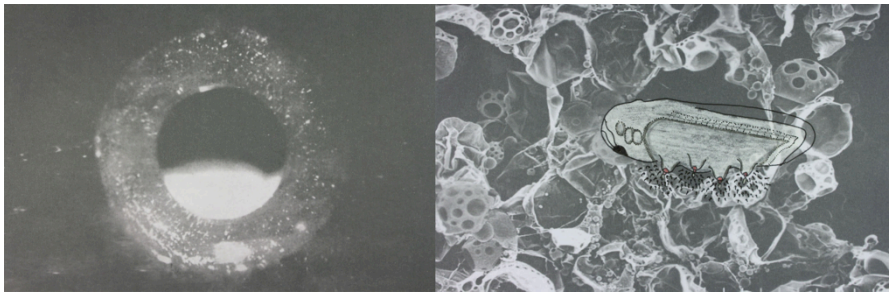
During the course of the residency McGibbon found that one of the most interesting aspects of medical science is the experimental and evolutionary approach to the discipline. A scientist makes observations about an illness or a treatment, devises a theory to fit those observations, tests the theory and if successful, the theory becomes widely accepted. At any point in the future, if conflicting evidence emerges, the theory is discarded. The notion that medical science will radically evolve in the future is core to this hypothesis.

This elaborate theory of the Xenothorpean race evolved from “an accidental piecing together of separated things”, combining historical and contemporary breakthroughs through unusual enquiries into medical science. This concept was influenced by current research in CURAM into the regenerative capacity of the Xenopus Laevis tadpole, the zebra fish and the fictional character “Radithor”, a goddess created as a means to advertise radium products in the 1920’s

Medium: Hand drawn animation
Duration: 3:42
Text commissioned by the artist and written by Dr Maeve O'Lynn

Link: http://www.siobhanmcgibbon.com/xenopthorpian-mythos.html

FUTURE RELIC ONE: THE XENOPTHORPIAN MYTHOS, 2015



McGibbon explores the use of narrative and the creation of a Para human (a hybrid that incorporates genetic elements from humans and animals) as a tool to discuss radical development's in bio-technology and its ramifications on us as a species. The artist wondered how a being that is partly human/tadpole/zebra fish would be designed, how would it function and how would the implementation of such a creature be received? In this project McGibbon unfolds a complex and theoretical narrative that offers an experimental hypothesis about the evolution of the human body and medical intervention. The work was created during a 6-month residency in CÚRAM, the center for research in medical devices.

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FUTURE RELIC TWO: THE XENOTHORPIAN HEART, 2015

This is an anatomical model of a Xenothorpian heart was created during a 6-month residency in CURAM- the center for research in medical devices. As an artist that primarily trained as a sculptor, it was McGibbon's ambition from the onset of the residency to explore the creative potential of biomaterials to create form.

The artist collaborated with material scientists Ghazal Tadyyon and Kyriakos Spanoudes to create this human/zebra fish structure. Technically the Xenothorpian heart is bio-compatible with the human body. The body of the heart is created using Tadyyon's polymer. A material created to conduct electrical currents in the body. The polymer is translucent mimicking the translucency of the zebra fish, a quality that makes the ideal specimens for medical research.

The stripes of the zebra heart are created with Spanoudes polymer fiber. A material created to grow tendons. The stripes are spun onto the heart using an electro spinner. The actual process of this creation references Mary Shelley's notion of the Modern Prometheus, explored in her novel Frankenstein, which features a being created by grafting body parts together and animating them with the use of electricity.

Medium: Bio-compatable polymers, Perspex, wood.
Image courtesy of Tom Flanagan

FUTURE RELIC THREE: XENOPTHORS CHALICE, 2015

"Xenopthor's Chalice" is the final component of the Future Relics Trilogy, created during a 6-month residency in The Centre for Research in Medical Devices, NUI, Galway (CURAM). The work explores the creative potential of bio-materials in the creation of art and conveying metaphor. The work consists of a large scientific funnel reimagined as Xenopthor's chalice. The chalice contains a vagina that is spawning frog-spawn. The spawn is created from agarose, a polymer material extracted from seaweed and stem cells.

The concept for this piece arose from an ongoing exploration of the critical and creative potentials of stem cell applications and a series of off-kilter interconnected threads of religious reflections. In choosing the venerable and heavily symbolic trope of the Chalice, the work is consciously connecting to controversy surrounding the use of embryonic stem cells and the notion of playing god.

Medium: Stem cells, Human Hair, wax, found Object.
Image courtesy of Tom Flanagan

The Xenothorpian Mythos: Animation still

The Xenothorpian Mythos, Audio Relics, 2015

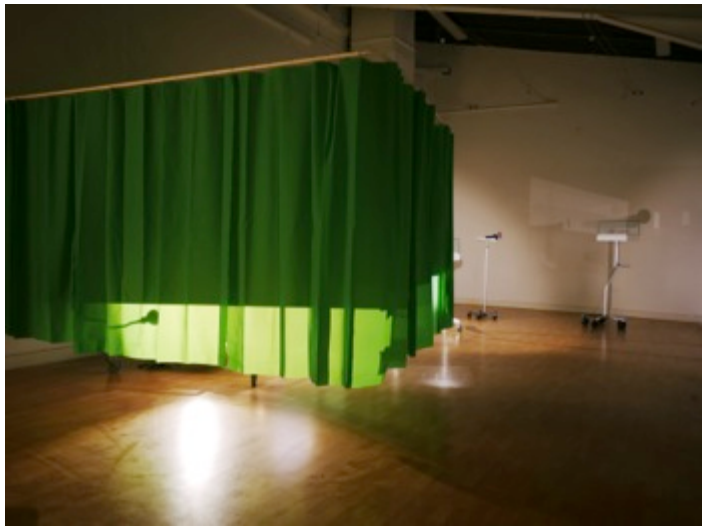
A collaboration between artist Siobhan Mcgibbon and Writer Maeve O'Lynn

Spheres: http://www.siobhanmcgibbon.com/spheres.html

A poisoned chalice: http://www.siobhanmcgibbon.com/a-poisoned-chalice.html

A less convenient truth: http://www.siobhanmcgibbon.com/a-less-convenient-truth.html

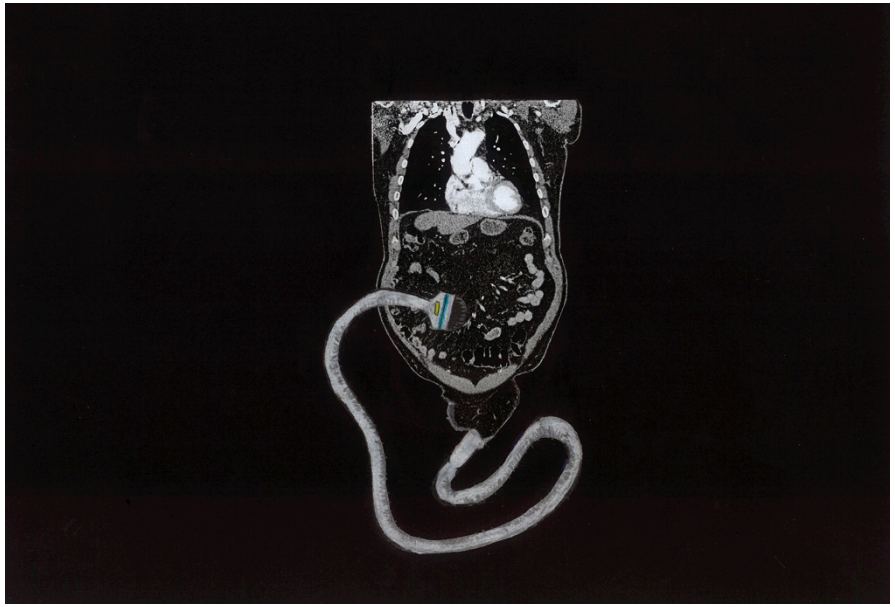
Mini Documentary from the residency:
http://www.siobhanmcgibbon.com/cuacuteram-residency.html



MEDICAL DREAMSCAPES: BIOTECHNICAL IMAGINARIES AND FABRICATIONS OF OTHERNESS, 2015

This work was created in response to a research residency in the radiology department in Galway University hospital in 2014 and an on going exploration into the implications of medical interventions on the future of the human.

In this installation the audience is invited to inhabit the position of the patient. Above the bed an animation entitled Internal Hybridnisation playing on a monitor.



Medium: Hand drawn, mixed media, cell animation.
Duration: 4 minutes

Link: http://www.siobhanmcgibbon.com/medical-dreamscapes-bio-technical-imaginaries-and-fabrications-of-otherness.html

INTERNAL HYBRIDNISATION, 2015

Internal Hybridnisation is an exploration of becoming and otherness in the medical context, where by the patient identifies as being ill. The work explores technologies that reveal the concealed glitches that reside within the body. And contemplates how diagnosis can often trigger a departure in the sense of self.

The animation moves through the body to the sound of the MRI machine. Stopping at various intervals in which parts of the body morph into medical apparatuses found in the radiology department, creating a cyborg of sorts. The penis extends into an ultra sound wand, the spin lengthens and morphs into surgical lights. What are we searching for? What have we become?

The work explores the how the transformation from human to cyborg is used in popular culture as a vehicle to discuss our hopes and aniexitys in relation to technology. Internal Hybridnisation is a comment on the reality that human life in supported, aided and amended by machines and the explores the notion that encounters with medical technology create a new normal for the patient. How will our altered states of biology affect our identities and how we relate to the world?

In June 2014 McGibbon began a three-month self-directed residency in the Galway University Hospital (GUH) in the departments of Radiology, Histology and Pathology.

The primary objective of the residency was to gain a comprehensive understanding of human anatomy, with a focus on the prevailing medical technologies that extend the lives of patients. However like many practiced led explorations, the project did not begin with a closed series of aims, rather it developed organically from conversations with the medical staff, observations of interactions and a keen interest in creating work from the bio-technologies in the laboratory.

Over the course of the residency McGibbon observed the interactions between patients and the technologies that revealed their concealed glitches. She speculated on the solitary experience of the patient and contemplated how often encounters within the hospital environment create a new narrative for the everyday life of the patients.

Establishing an interdisciplinary discourse with the medical staff was a key to the success of the project. McGibbon collaborated with the scientists and created work by adapting the medical technologies and processes ordinarily used to analyze the body. An example of this is “Close your eyes and imagine you’re somewhere else” created with collected data from magnetic resonance imaging data and “Dysplasia” created using the histological analysis system.

Following this immersive period of research McGibbon created a body of work entitled “Specimen”, an interactive laboratory of sorts, within which the audience becomes the analyst, scientist and artwork. The artist created interactive works that mimicked the experience of analysing the body and a large installation that simulated the solo experience of the patient. The works function as an assemblage of interconnected ideas explored during the course of my research.

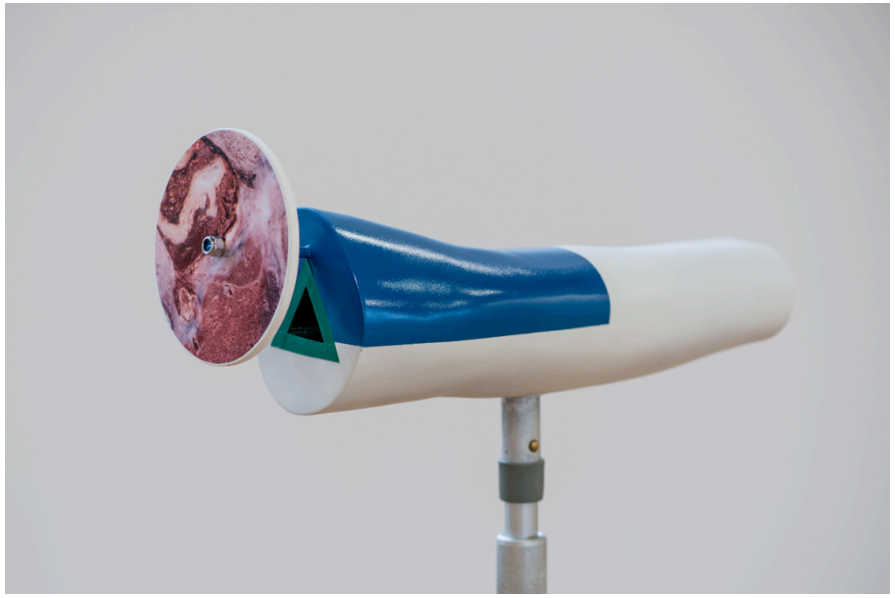
The outcome of this period of research in UHG culminated in a large body of work that was exhibited in two solo exhibitions in the Luan Gallery, Athlone and the Roscommon Arts Centre.

Medium: Wax, human hair, pigment, found object

ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE SHEET, 2014

"On the wrong side of the sheet" and its partnering work "On the right side of the sheet" engages with the notion of the medicalisation of the body and the solo patient experience. The work consist of two hybrids of sorts, medical apparatus draped in surgical sheets allowing the viewer to catch a glimpse of the human form that almost sprouts from beneath.

The work is a comment on the interactions McGibbon observed in the x-ray department. How the physical act of laying the sheet creates a psychological barrier, a detachment between the medical staff and patient and segregation between the person and the condition. During the residency McGibbon discussed these observations with the staff and after some thought, they agreed that the surgical sheet created a shift in atmosphere and explained the necessity of this to maintain professionalism. The work offers a glimpse of this unique medical landscape and asks the viewer to consider the position from either side of the sheet.



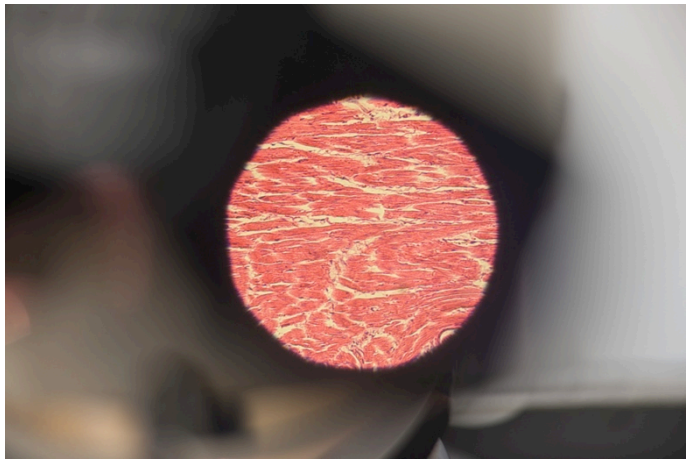
Medium: Fiberglass resin, enamel, found object

OBJECTS FOR PEERING WITHIN, 2014

Objects for peering within are two pathological kaleidoscopes, a hybridisation of human and medical apparatus, a cyborg of sorts. The audience is invited to peer inside the object, mimicking the act of the scientist looking through a microscope. The residency allowed McGibbon the opportunity to observe a world unlike my own. The artist wanted to create work that allowed the audience to inhabit a role that is otherwise inaccessible to them. The viewer must look through the arm and spin the disc.

Immediately the grotesque pathological image is transformed into a kaleidoscopic curiosity. Core to this is the notion of perception, the perception of the real and the imagined, whereby something can be simultaneously seductive and paradoxically repellent.

The work explores the ability of medical technologies to reveal the invisible. The work comments on the implication that these medical advancements have had on human anatomy, these technologies that create visualisations of internal abnormalities which in turn enable treatment, challenging the limitations of illness and essentially extending human life.



Medium: Medical microscopic slides, found objects

DYSPLASIA, 2014

Dysplasia is an exploration of the potentials of medical science technology in contemporary art practice. Developed in a creative partnership with the histology laboratory in GUH, the work involves the production of text created using the histological imaging process.

During this process the tissue is fixed through a chemical process, whereby the fluid in the cells are replaced with a wax. The wax is then finely sliced and put through a system that dyes the proteins in the cells. McGibbon was keen to make a piece of work that could only be created in the laboratory as opposed to a reflection of the procedures. As an artist that has used wax as a primary material throughout her career McGibbon was interested in the use of this material in the process of medical analysis.

The word dysplasia is a pathological terms for the abnormal multiplication of cells. The work references a number of threads of interest that are present throughout McGibbon's practice. Such as the notion of the invisible normal and her fascination with the complex structure of the body in illness and in health. The use of this scientific terminology is also a comment on her experience as a patient. The complex language used to describe parts of her body, disconcerting, mystifying, regarded with an unknown importance, memorialised in a pristine glass.

In an addition to this conceptual basis of this work the audience were able to view the slides under a microscope.