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The Prospect of Immortality

Murray Ballard

10 June to 17 September 2011

Over the past five years, Murray Ballard has gained unprecedented access into the world of cryonics: the process of freezing a person after death in the hope that scientific advances may one day be able to bring them back to life.

The Prospect of Immortality takes us on a journey through the tiny yet dedicated international cryonics community: from the retirement town of Peacehaven, England; to high-tech laboratories in Arizona, United States; through to more rudimentary facilities of Kriorus on the outskirts of Moscow, Russia. Approximately two hundred people worldwide are currently suspended in liquid nitrogen, with a further thousand signed up for the process after they die.

Images of the technical processes involved are presented alongside portraits of the people engaged in the quest to overcome the 'problem' of death.

Continues overleaf

Often ridiculed for their views, Ballard's work aims to present an objective investigation that allows us to reflect on the ethics of cryonics, and consider whether this is a fantasy world of science fiction, or genuine scientific innovation.

To find out more, use our smartphone-activated QR tags to listen directly to the people involved, or download short texts that may challenge or confirm your assumptions about cryonics.

You can also browse the reading table or come along to Murray Ballard's artist talk on Saturday 16 July 2011 at 2pm. The event is FREE but places are limited and booking is highly recommended.

Display Cabinet

Robert Ettinger (born 1918) is regarded as the 'father' of cryonics. As a boy he avidly read sci-fi comic books, such as *Amazing Stories*. As a twelve year old he was taken by *The Jameson Satellite*, a short story by Neil R Jones. Published in the July 1931 issue, the story tells the tale of a dead man 'surviving' in zero gravity in the earth's orbit.

In 1947, whilst in hospital recuperating from injuries sustained during World War II, Ettinger came across the work by French biologist Jean Rostand and scientific research into cryogenics.

The following year Ettinger published *The Penultimate Trump* in *Startling Stories* in which he set out the basics of cryonics. In 1960, disappointed by the lack of interest in his cryonic's idea Ettinger sent a letter to a couple of hundred people listed in America's *Who's Who*. Prompted by the 'great and the good's lack of response, he went on to write *The Prospect of Immortality*, a book length thesis about cryonics. This was self-published in 1962 and more or less gave birth to the cryonics movement as it is today.

Murray Ballard (born 1983) graduated from Brighton University in 2007 with a first-class degree in Editorial Photography and was selected for *Fresh Faced and Wild Eyed 08*, the annual showcase of work by the most promising graduates at The Photographers' Gallery, London. In 2009 he was a winner of Flash Forward, the award for new emerging photographers at The Magenta Foundation, Canada; and in 2010 he received a Kodak film grant for this project. Premiering at Impressions Gallery, this is Murray Ballard's first major show.

The Prospect of Immortality is an Impressions Gallery Touring Exhibition curated by Anne McNeill. Funded by Impressions Gallery, Arts Council England, Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Kodak, Spectrum, and National Lottery through Arts Council England.