We use cookies to ensure that we deliver the best user experience of our website. If you would like to, you can change your cookie settings at any time. Continue

University of Birmingham Arts and Science Festival: a matter of life and death

Posted on Friday 7th March 2014

Artistic portrayals of anatomy, sound-based works of art and the experience of living – and dying – in back-to-back housing are examined in a multi-media festival at the University of Birmingham.

The University's second Arts & Science Festival, from March 16-23, explores the theme of "Life & Death" from a wide range of perspectives through a series of free exhibitions, performances, talks, concerts, workshops and screenings.

Spread over more than 40 events, the festival aims look at the interplay between arts and science in cultural life – including media portrayals of auto-erotic death.

Festival highlights include a lecture by music impresario and artist Bill Drummond, of KLF fame, on the "'Life and Death of an Artist." Drummond will also give a performance in Chancellor's Court which may involve "giving away bunches of daffodils."

Clinical anatomist Professor Alice Roberts, Professor of Public Engagement in Science, will select works from the University's Special Collections for The Art of Anatomy, an exhibition looking at depiction of the dissected human body in anatomical literature from the 16th century. Prof Roberts will also give an accompanying lecture.

At the heart of the programme is Conversation Pieces, an inter-disciplinary series of talks that brings together leading academics, artists and scientists. Turner Prize winner Susan Phillipsz will talk about her sound-based works, which cross the boundaries between art and science.

Professor Lisa Downing, the University's Professor of French Discourses of Sexuality, will give an illustrated talk, "Dying for Sex," exploring how auto-erotic death has been represented in narratives including literary fiction and internet humour. Prof Downing's talk features a section on celebrity auto-erotic deaths, including rock star Michael Hutchence, and the way such deaths have been reported in the press.

Professor Carl Chinn, Professor of Birmingham Community History, will speak about life and death in back-street Birmingham between 1880 and 1960.

Professor Ian Grosvenor, Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor for Cultural Engagement, said: "The ambition of the festival is to keep the conversation between the arts and science alive. It is our belief that the debate is most lively not in the separation of arts and science, but in the spaces in between."

The Arts & Science Festival features a partnership with leading arts organisations, launching with "Mozart's Requiem" at Birmingham Town Hall and closing with a UK premiere of Phono-Cinema-Theatre presented by Flatpack Festival at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts. There will be exciting collaborations with Eastside Projects, Ikon Gallery, Newman Brothers Coffin Works and Writing West Midlands.

Booking is advisable for some of the events.

Ends

Note to editors

- You can find full details and festival listings for the Arts and Science Festival on our **events pages (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/events/index.aspx#artsandsciencefestival)**
- For more information or interviews please contact **Faye Jackson (mailto:f.e.a.jackson@bham.ac.uk)** in the University of Birmingham Press Office on +44 (0)121 414 6029. For out of hour enquiries please call +44 (0)7789 921 165

© University of Birmingham 2014