

## Artist explores how research is fighting malaria in a new digital artwork (w/ Video)

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Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute artist in residence, Deborah Robinson is displaying her malaria-inspired digital artwork at the Anglia Ruskin Gallery. Her exhibition, which runs from 26 June-18 July, explores the cutting-edge research the Institute's Malaria Programme is carrying out to understand and combat the global killer.

The work, titled 'Parasite', was inspired by Deborah's close collaboration with researchers Dr Julian Rayner and Dr Oliver Billker and their teams. The work uses segments of archival film relating to [malaria eradication](#) campaigns which draw from the Wellcome Collection. The archival film is subtly eroded using computer software developed by David Strang and based on data gathered from malaria patients. Layered over the film is a soundtrack generated from recordings of mosquitoes in the insectary at the Sanger Institute.

"I wanted to create a strange and compelling experience for the viewer, ideally to provoke thought," says Deborah Robinson, Sanger Institute artist in residence from the University of Plymouth. "Malaria is a particularly interesting disease, being inherently connected to issues of economic disparity, global politics, as well scientific issues of drug resistance and vaccine development.

"Similarly, this work draws on a complex set of interactions between art, science and historical fragments to use data from the parasite itself to bleach and destroy archival footage".

The exhibition focuses on the actions of the [malaria parasite](#), a single-celled organism invisible to the naked eye. It is relentless in its mission to replicate and procreate, migrating across biological and geographical boundaries - mosquitoes, humans, countries and continents. This invisible relentlessness is encapsulated by the blood stage of the parasite's life cycle. There it remains hidden within human [red blood cells](#) for two days, digesting the cell from the inside and multiplying until the red blood cell literally explodes, releasing new parasites.

"Malaria is a disease that humanity has been struggling with for millennia, probably for as long as we have been humans," says Dr Julian Rayner, malaria researcher from the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute. "Given the complexities of both the field in general and the science in particular, we deliberately took a very open approach in collaborating with Deborah, and aimed simply to expose her to as many strands of the overall puzzle as we could, in order to find those that resonated most with her.

"As scientists we look at problems through a very distinct lens, and are aware that the things that get us tremendously excited can seem opaque to the non-specialist. By collaborating with experts with a completely different viewpoint, we see our subject through a different lens. It helps us re-evaluate our own motivations and interactions, and refreshes our interest for the core subject - eradicating one of the major scourges of humanity."

The Sanger Institute Public Engagement team has supported Deborah's work during the residency - providing discussion, guidance and supporting information. They have mediated discussions between Deborah and Institute researchers, a key step in the creative process and development of the digital artwork.

"We are thrilled with the outcome from this collaboration between

Deborah and our researchers," says Dr Julia Willingale-Theune, Public Engagement Manager from the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute. "The arts have the power to highlight the novel issues about genetics research and encourage debate amongst new audiences.

"Our science is inspiring artists and scientists to work together on interesting projects and arousing people's interest in genomics."

On the evening of the Private View, 27th June, Deborah will discuss the work with Dr Julian Rayner of the Sanger Institute, introduced by Dr Peter Brown of the Life Sciences Department at Anglia Ruskin University.

Provided by Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute

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