



By [Katarzyna Siewierska](#) Sunday, October 26, 2014

BLOOD

NOT FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED

As Halloween approaches, the new exhibition in Dublin's Science Gallery will really help get you into the mood. Entitled BLOOD – Not for the faint-hearted, it has involved a complete transformation of the Gallery space. The scarlet red carpet and black walls make the space appear like the inside of Dracula's castle, while a wide variety of fascinating exhibits approach the theme of blood in different ways. I visited the exhibition on its opening night and had the opportunity to speak to some of the participating artists.

The opening exhibit in the gallery is "May the Horse Live in Me!" by Marion Laval-Jeantet and Benoit Mangin. This piece documents the performance in which Marion injected horse plasma into her blood, her body becoming "hybridised" as a result. In the gallery, the pictures and a movie of the performance are on display. Marion wore special mechanical horse legs so that she could reach the same height as the horse and be able to walk like horse. This piece explores the idea that a horse's blood be compatible with human blood and have some positive effects and also the supposed priority of humans over other animals.

The piece close nearby is the "Black Market Pudding". This is black pudding made from pig's blood, taken from a living pig through a safe, healthy and humane procedure supervised by a vet. The pigs remained unharmed and alive, while the visitors at the opening night could enjoy the delicious black pudding. Since many people become vegetarians because they are against the killing and cruel treatment of animals in the slaughter houses, I wonder if products like this would be something they would consider eating.

Before moving on to the next floor, you must stop by and take a selfie with a period stain at the STAINS™ stand and upload it to the #periodpositive hash-tag on Twitter or Instagram. This is a spoof aspirational brand that created a line of bloodstain-themed fashions and accessories. On display in the gallery are the STAINS™ Permanent Stains Collections of jewellery. You can purchase these and all profits will go towards menstruation education resources at the Period Positive website.

I personally think this is a very important initiative. The quality of sexual education in Ireland as a whole is quite poor. Boys don't know, and aren't taught, much about the anatomy of the female body, and vice versa. Children as young as 7 should learn basic anatomy, so that in the following few years they can be aware of the difference between the male and female body and know about the changes their body will experience during puberty. Learning about masturbation and contraception, as well as sexually transmitted diseases, in first year of secondary school should be the norm.

Moving on from the STAINS™ stall, and heading upstairs, you are immediately struck by the large canvases, stitched with red Egyptian cotton, which portray a nude man with stitches across his belly. This piece is “Lover” by Franko B, which he created after his partner had a lifesaving organ transplant. Further on you will see more stitched drawing by Franko B that are a part of ongoing autobiographical work called “Woof Woof”.

On the far left of the upper floor, you’ll find a video of a stem cell transplant and a real human placenta! Stem cell transplantation (SCT) is the injection of healthy stem cells into the body to replace damaged cells. SCT is used to treat patients with various blood disorders such as leukaemia or sickle cell anaemia. The donor cells can come from the patient’s body, a donor or an identical twin. A particularly good source for stem cells is the blood in the umbilical vein of the placenta. Nearby is one of the more interactive aspects in this exhibition, a little lab where you can do a quick test to determine your blood group. Beside this, there is a video on what happens when you give blood, made by the Irish Blood Transfusion Service.

Next, you walk into a completely dark room where “Lumitrace” is located, a sculpture by Beatrice Haines. The sculpture is covered with cows blood and every few seconds a few drops of luminol fall onto it. In the presence of blood, luminol glows and over time it will unveil the sculpture from the darkness. Eerie but cool. Once you have had enough of the dark, you come out onto a large space with 6,437 images of fingerprints projected onto the walls. “Pulse Index”, by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, takes an image of your finger and records your pulse rate, then uploads the picture onto the wall where it slightly flashes at the rate of your heart beat. As time goes by your fingerprint moves across and becomes smaller as it is bumped down the queue by newer prints, until it disappears completely.

Arguably the most controversial piece in the exhibition is 138th Aktion, Leipzig (Germany) by Hermann Nitsch. This is a three-hour video of the performance and a relic from the performance. The performance includes people ripping an animal apart like wild animals, being completely covered in blood, drinking blood etc. The performance intends for us to descend into the perverse and the unappetising to bring about healing and awareness. It is also trying to cross barriers and break down taboos. However, as the signs recommend, those with a sensitive stomach are better off giving this particular piece a miss.

Overall the exhibition is very interesting and covers a wide variety of topics in art, literature and science, all focused on blood. Throughout the gallery, a team of amazing mediators can answer all of your questions and guide you on your tour. The information about each exhibit is very clearly displayed, so if you should have no problem touring the gallery by yourself. This exhibition runs until the 25th of January 2015 and admission is, as always, free.