



## Medical students examine patients' journeys

**PICK OF THE WEEK** When Science Meets Art Saturday, June 1 and Sunday, June 2, Spielman Centre, Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bath Rd, Bristol, 10am-4pm. 0117 971 1117 / [www.arnosvale.org.uk](http://www.arnosvale.org.uk).

**T**his intriguing exhibition within Arnos Vale Cemetery examines the fascinating borderland between science and art – in particular where the rigorously scientific field of medicine comes up against the “softer” zones of art, literature and the life of the emotions.

When Science Meets Art features artworks and literary pieces by 12 medical students from Bristol University. These students have taken an extra year during their medicine degree to study medical humanities, examining some of the fascinating overlaps between medicine and the arts and humanities – including the history and philosophy of medicine, and even its depiction within English literature.

The students have engaged in creative work inspired by these subjects, which is displayed in When Science Meets Art, housed in the Cemetery's Spielman Centre. The pieces span a wide range of media from painting, photography and the written

word to jewellery, cartoons and interactive pieces.

Among the thought-provoking pieces is Katie Hyde's mixed media piece *Behind the X-Ray*, inspired by her grandmother's recent diagnosis with terminal cancer and the care she received.

“The x-ray on the outside reflects the medical vision of the body and my gran's diagnosis, and partially obscures the person behind it,” Katie explains. “This illustrates how, in medicine, we can get so absorbed in x-rays, scans, tests, and results that we forget the impact of diagnosis on patients.”

Lifting the x-ray reveals a sketch of Katie's grandmother on a patchwork background, with different aspects of her life sewn around the outline.

Katie explains: “In gran's case, after putting her through various x-rays and scans, and running a battery of tests, she was informed by letter that there was nothing that could be done for her. In this case the doctors did not consider the person behind the scans; the devastating news was there in black and white.”

Elsewhere, Rich Brown's *Journey in the Woods* (pictured) is a series of photographs of woodland scenes at night, exploring the journeys that sufferers make during illness.

“Serious illness can cause an individual's familiar world to

suddenly transform into something deeply unfamiliar, confusing and frightening, just as the woods can quickly change from a pleasant to an extremely frightening place after sunset,” Rich explains.

His foreboding nocturnal scenes also, tellingly, feature a solitary light shining through the darkness. “The light represents the value of support – be it friendship, healthcare staff, pain relief, a patient support group or an alternative therapy – in providing relief from the bewildering experiences of illness. Whatever helps the patient cope with the process should be recognised and valued.

“Ironically, creating the photos involved spending a night in the woods which actually was even scarier than I thought it would be!”

Somewhat more light-hearted (on the surface, at least) is Andrew Demetri's *The Gold Standard*, a cartoon featuring Jesus performing a miracle (allowing a man to rise from his wheelchair and walk) while a lab-coated envoy from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) reminds him about the strict guidelines for getting a treatment into practice, and a distinctly unimpressed doctor looks on.

“The latter represents the attitude of many doctors – a

contempt for treatment tests which have not adhered to trial protocol,” Andrew explains.

Lucia Stevenson's illustration *Passions and Emotions of the Mind*, meanwhile, examines the effect of opium on dreams.

“The poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge believed that the ‘passions and emotions of the mind’ were transmuted by the imagination into ‘expressive dream images’, and my illustration of a dream and a nightmare – both visions experienced by Coleridge during his opium addiction – represents the emotions and feelings experienced at different points during addiction.”

The dream scene depicts the Hindu god Vishnu floating downstream on a lotus flower, while the nightmare shows a number of unfinished staircases which stop abruptly, leading nowhere – an allegory for Coleridge's feelings of entrapment within his addiction.

“Thomas De Quincey, the English essayist and opium addict, wrote that opium both gives and takes away. Coleridge's and De Quincey's cases demonstrate how mental and physiological health can affect creative art, just as medical humanities aim to combine medicine and the arts.” A fitting summary to this fascinating, genre-straddling exhibition.