

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Glucksman probes gut-brain link

Gut Instinct, the new art exhibition at The Glucksman, UCC, has employed ground-breaking research at the University's APC Microbiome Institute funded by Science Foundation Ireland into how our state of gut affects our state of mind.

"In Neuroscience and Medicine, we're conditioned to think of only what is happening above the neck in terms of the regulation of our emotions. This is changing. Ground-breaking research, including that being carried out in the APC Microbiome Institute in UCC, is literally turning this concept upside down," said John Cryan, Professor and Chair, Anatomy and Neuroscience, UCC.

"We're beginning to fully realise the importance that gut function and the food we eat have on our mental well-being. *Gut Instinct* is a very novel collaboration, which challenges us to think differently about how we respond emotionally at a sensory and visceral level and reminds us that our state of gut will affect our state of mind," Professor Cryan added.

According to Fiona Kearney, Director of The Glucksman, "the feelings we have about food – guilt, pleasure, disgust – are explored in startling ways" in the exhibition, which runs from today until March 19, 2017.

In Marina Abramovic's film *The Onion*, the artist eats a raw onion while her voice-over repeats a series of complaints, offering an unflinching portrayal of her discomfort and disgust.

Visitors will encounter a vast, painted field of densely-textured Nutella spread in Thomas Rentmeister's *Untitled*, the sheer amount of inedible sweetness both enticing and revolting.

"A painting made of Nutella might seem like strange thing to hang in an art gallery, but artists respond instinctively to the world around them and the exhibition *Gut Instinct* brings together artworks that give tasty, if unusual, form to the ground-breaking ideas of John Cryan and his colleagues at APC," Kearney commented.

Domestic Goddess' performative events introduce participants to strange – and often repulsive-sounding – new recipes, while their installation, which includes custom-made toothpastes and suppositories, explores notions of disgust and digestion.

Food serves not simply as a means of sustenance, but also to encourage conversation, communication and conviviality, and in Fiona Hallinan's installation, plate-like platforms are suspended by cords and pulleys to creative an interactive site that serves as both a sculptural arrangement and a space for public events.

The emotional attachments we have for particular brands and comfort foods is explored in Neil Shawcross' paintings, from tins of soup to bottles of ketchup.

The connection between the state of gut and the state of mind is captured in artworks that blur the distinctions between mind and body. In Siobhan McGibbon's sculptures, pristine white legs emerge from enlarged organs while her drawings – seen through medical-like viewing devices – depict microbes fusing with simplified human forms.

Curated by Chris Clarke, John Cryan and Fiona Kearney, *Gut Instinct* also features the artists Sonja Alhäuser, Elif Erkan, Fiona Hallinan and Abigail O'Brien. Professor Jane Foster from McMaster

University, Canada will deliver a public seminar on ‘Gut Feelings – How Our Gut Regulates Our Brain and Behaviour’ at the Glucksman next Wednesday, November 30, from 1-2pm, as part of the *Gut Instinct Science Series*.

“The Irish and international artists selected for the exhibition remind us of just how much how our emotions are linked to our gut, as our scientists are proving in the relationship between mind and microbiome,” Kearney added.

ENDS

The official opening of Gut Instinct by UCC's Writer-in-Residence Conal Creedon will take place this evening (November 24) at 5pm.

The Glucksman is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10:00-17:00 and Sundays from 14:00-17:00.

Further reading:

Gut Instinct: Microbiota as a key regulator of brain development, ageing and neurodegeneration

Timothy G.Dinan & John F. Cryan (2016)

The Journal of Physiology available free to download at:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1113/JP273106/full>