Euthanasia Coaster by Julijonas Urbonas imagines a thrilling way out should we become bored of artificially extended lifespans: crushing death by roller coaster.

ART

Body work

Genetics and artificial intelligence figure prominently in an unsettling Dublin exhibition, discovers **Anthony King**.

We all wonder about tomorrow. The *Human+* exhibition at Dublin's Science Gallery speculates on how science and technology might enhance our bodies and well-being and transform what it means to be human. Genetics and artificial intelligence figure prominently among its themes of augmented abilities, authoring evolution, extended ecologies, life at the edges and non-human encounters.

The exhibition, supported by the Wellcome Trust, was developed with the Trinity Long Room Hub, the university's new centre for humanities, and Trinity College Dublin's School of Medicine, which is celebrating its tercentenary.

People traditionally viewed as disabled are often early adopters of new enhancement technologies, says Michael John Gorman, director of the Science Gallery. The photographic portraits of Aimee Mullins challenge our notions of beauty and athleticism. As a child, both her legs were amputated below her knee, so she learned to walk on prosthetic legs and later set world records running on carbon-fibre prostheses.

Others choose to make radical upgrades to their body. Nina Sellars's *Oblique* displays photographs of the performance artist Stelarc under the surgeon's knife as he begins the process of implanting an ear on his arm. Stelarc's *Prosthetic Head*, a giant on-screen avatar whom visitors can interrogate through a keyboard, has been a major draw. The head, occupying a room of its own, displays real-time lip synching, speech synthesis and facial expressions — and attitude. Abuse is met with threats: "I will remember you said that when robots take over the world."

Human+ focuses more on human–robot interactions than cyborg mechanics or gadgetry. A wall of robotic eyes tracks you eerily through *Area V5* by Louis-Philippe Demers. The sense of unease grows with the seemingly more human *My Robot Companion*, a freakish white plastic visage that mimics the facial features of those around it. Scattered

Detail from *Area V5*: moving eyes trigger unease.

electronic parts in Yves Gellie's photographs of robotics labs suggest the imminent creation of life. But it is unclear whether the nano-sized machines boring holes into the human body in the film *Aphasia Mechanica* are busy repairing or destroying their host.

Looming above the gallery staircase is the wax colossus *If Not Now Then When*. The hooded and bloated figure, in a classical pose, forces us to confront the effects of our over-consumption, waste and pollution. As in Oscar Wilde's 1890 novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in which the painting ages and absorbs the evil deeds of its sitter, the wax figure can be seen as a kind of sponge, says its creator, John Isaacs.

Taking a still darker turn is the sculpture *Euthanasia Coaster*. Should medical wonders allow us extended lifetimes, boredom may bedevil us. Julijonas Urbonas imagines a humane and thrilling exit: death by roller coaster in the form of an exhilarating 500-metre drop followed by a series of loops, the *G*-forces of which would kill passengers in a state of intense euphoria.

Science students from the university are on hand to discuss each work. "The conversation with the public can get quite deep," says geneticist Aoife McLysaght. And visitors can participate: DNA samples taken from around 200 visitors each week will be tested for the dopamine D4 receptor gene, a variant of which has been linked to high-risk behaviour.

Human+ is not all fizzes and bangs: its thoughtful works provoke visitors into deeper engagement with important societal issues. ∎

Human+: The Future of Our Species
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Anthony King *is a writer based in Dublin.*
e-mail: anthonyjking@gmail.com