



«The human species – mirrored in the genes»

Special exhibition at the Swiss National Museum, Zurich

July 9, 2004 to January 2, 2005

A project of Life Science Zurich

MEDIA RELEASE July 2004

COMPARING MAN AND YEAST

Natural science deeply influences society. The exhibition «The human species – mirrored in the genes» focuses on the cultural value of science, especially of biological research. It encourages a sensual approach to science and looks for forms of expression appealing to a large audience – e.g. by comparing research patterns applied to yeast to those applied to man. This project of Life Science Zurich (a cooperative effort of the University of Zurich and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich ETH) was developed in collaboration with the Swiss National Museum, Zurich.

Deciphering man's genetic make-up at the beginning of the 21st century was one of the outstanding milestones in the history of science. It enables us to answer the old questions of mankind: the eternal «What am I?» is put into a new perspective. The astonishing results of modern biology completely change our perception of man. Thus, scientists realized that the genetic make-up of humans, animals, plants and microorganisms show astonishing similarities.

In spite of such popular key words as cloning, age of biotechnology or genetic engineering, biology – the science that made it all possible – strives for more: it wants to discover the origin of life and the rules that dictate its development.

Research scientists study vital processes of animals and plants to learn more about mankind – that is: themselves.

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 the exhibition «The human species – mirrored in the genes» launches visitors on an exciting journey through the land of research and turns them into discoverers. Numerous objects, film features and pictures illustrate the researchers' everyday life and demonstrate how scientific questions and their answers vitally influence our actual surroundings. A central installation confronts visitors with research patterns applied to flies, worms, yeast or fish, making them realize how the study of flies can contribute to cancer research.

In videotaped interviews research scientists explain their work and deliberate on their successes and failures. A laboratory offers visitors the opportunity to study nature's phenomena through the microscope. The adjacent reading room invites them to satisfy their curiosity by studying articles in scientific reviews or books, browsing through the web or discussing their impressions with fellow visitors.

Open discussion

Round-table discussions, commented film features and lectures are presented throughout the showing of «The human species». They focus on central topics such as the social consequences of genetic research or the image of man formed by modern science. The discussions, featuring guests from numerous institutes, are under the patronage of the foundation «Science et Cité».

Together with Life Science Zurich and the University of Applied Sciences Zurich, School of Education, the Swiss National Museum has prepared didactic programs for all school levels. These consist of a folder containing more detailed information, a guided tour through the exhibition and practical studies in the lab which are assisted by students of both the University and the Institute of Technology. Guided tours for secondary schools as well as family tours are offered. On Sundays and in the holidays (autumn (Oct 4th – 15th) and Christmas) students will answer questions at the exhibition (2 to 5 pm).

For texts, pictures and additional information on the exhibition and on public events please consult our website www.dergespiegeltemensch.ch.

For special questions please contact:

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