

Roll up, roll up! Britain's most thrilling fairground rides open at the Science Museum's Dana Centre to explore the science of thrill, excitement and fear.

This October, the **Science Museum's Dana Centre** is offering visitors the unique opportunity to ride Britain's most thrilling fairground rides, whilst learning about the physical and mental effects on the body.

The fairground is being installed in the Dana Centre - the Science Museum's adults-only bar and café for exploring contemporary science, medicine and technology – for three weeks only as it explores the science of thrill.

Lucky volunteers will be hooked up to video and audio transmitters coupled with heart rate monitors, as their live physiological data is broadcast directly into the Dana Centre.

The data will be analysed by international commentators, including the UK's only space flight surgeon who will look at the effects of rides on the body, as well as psychologists, ride creators and scientists.

Launching on **Tuesday 17 October**, each event will focus on a unique aspect of thrill - pleasure, frisson and visceral delight - through the ***Miami Trip***, ***Ghost Train*** and ***Booster*** rides, as the Dana Centre transforms itself into a fairground ride observatory and thrill laboratory.

The series promises to be an eclectic mix of psychological and sociological experimentation, cultural and historical observations, art and design, archive film, lively presentations, commentary and discussion.

*Fairground: Thrill Laboratory is being curated by Brendan Walker – thrill aficionado, designer, and author of *The Taxonomy of Thrill*.*

Fairground: Thrill Laboratory

- Tuesday 17 October - Wednesday 1 November, 18.30-22.30
- The Science Museum's Dana Centre, 165 Queens Gate, London, SW7 5HD
- Ticket price tbc. To book your tickets please register on: 020 7942 4040 or tickets@danacentre.org.uk. Open to anyone over the age of 18
- Check out the website for full listings www.danacentre.org.uk.
- Images available

Fairground: Thrill Laboratory – Pleasure

- **Tuesday 17 October and Wednesday 18 October, 19.00-10.30**

The *Thrill Laboratory* inaugural week opens with the *Miami Trip* ride and an exploration of fairground pleasure with the themes of carnival and 1980's rave culture. The *Miami Trip* was the first ride which turned seats to face spectators, creating an exhibitionist's dream. Dan Howland, Editor, *Journal of Ride Theory*, USA, will contribute to the event with a look at the history of the fairground, from pleasure related disasters, to rides that didn't quite make it off the drawing board. Social criminologist, Dr Mike Presdee, will also lead a discussion on whether it's just the rides that make us excited, or that the fairground itself is a more complex carnival of other often illicit influences.

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Fairground: Thrill Laboratory – Frisson

• **Tuesday 24 October and Wednesday 25 October, 19.00-10.30**

The second week of *Thrill Laboratory* will capture film noir-style suspense with the Ghost Train. The history of ghost trains can be traced back to the spectacular 19th century travelling menageries, horrific freak-shows and fearsome Victorian ghost shows. Speakers will include Richard Cadell, the UK's most admired Ghost Train creator (who previously found fame as Sooty and Sweep presenter) and Professor Michael Apter, Danger Psychologist from Georgetown University in Washington DC.

Fairground: Thrill Laboratory – Excitement

• **Tuesday 31 October and Wednesday 1 November, 19.00-10.30**

The final week of *Thrill Laboratory* harks back to the 1950's space race with the *Booster* ride, which evolved from the rash of post war dive-bomber rides originally developed from aircraft-pilot training apparatus. The UK's only space flight surgeon, Dr Kevin Fong from University College London will lead the discussion alongside a ride manufacturer and astronomical engineer.

Each evening will open with an introduction from curator, Brendan Walker, who will elaborate on three basic dimensions of thrill: pleasure, arousal and timing. He will explain how thrill is experienced when there is a sudden, rapid and large increase in arousal and/or pleasure. His introduction will be followed by explorations and short talks from invited guests and artists.

At each event, Alex Taylor, ethnographer from Microsoft Research, Cambridge, will take a ride and provide a live video diary of his experience, laying bare the different emotions a rider might experience on each fairground ride.

The talks will give way to experimentation where select members of the audience will be invited to ride the *Miami Trip*, *Ghost Train* or *Booster* and have their physiological reactions dissected by the experts.

Kat Nilsson, Event Manager at the Dana Centre and Science Museum said: "Fairground: Thrill Laboratory at the Dana Centre really sums up our mission to look at how science is embedded in our culture, and to untangle the two in innovative and exciting new ways."

Further information, interviews and images are available from Lauren Gildersleve:

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Brendan Walker is available to comment on the science behind thrill; the history of fairgrounds and thrill; the experiments taking place at the Centre and the technology used to conduct the experiments

Kat Nilsson is available to comment on the Dana Centre's mission to make science relevant and exciting to everybody

Notes to Editors:

- 1 The Dana Centre is a collaboration between the Science Museum, the BA (British Association for the Advancement of Science) and The European Dana Alliance for the Brain (EDAB) making it unrivalled in its expertise and depth of knowledge of scientific and technological fields. The Centre is housed in the Wellcome Wolfson Building alongside the headquarters of the BA, EDAB and Science Museum offices.
- 2 The £9.8 million building has been provided by four major benefactors – the Wellcome Trust, the Wolfson Foundation, The Dana Foundation and the Garfield Weston Foundation.
- 3 The Science Museum exists to promote the public understanding of the history and contemporary practice of science, medicine, technology and industry. It aims to inspire, educate and involve visitors. It achieves this by building, researching and caring for the national collections; and by interpreting these collections and engaging the public in the contemporary issues they raise.
- 4 The BA is the UK's nationwide, open membership organisation dedicated to connecting science with people, so that science and its applications become accessible to all. The BA aims to promote openness about science in society and to engage and inspire people directly with science and technology and their implications.
- 5 The goal of EDAB is to inform the general public and decision makers about the importance of brain research. EDAB aims to advance knowledge about the personal and public benefits of

neuroscience and to disseminate information on the brain, in health and disease, in an accessible and relevant way.

- 6 Nearest tube: Gloucester Road. There is no parking at the Dana Centre (except for disabled drivers). Residents' parking restrictions apply until 10:00pm.
- 7 Brendan Walker runs Aerial, a design consultancy specialising in the research and development of thrilling encounters - www.aerial.fm. He recently ran the research project *Chromo11 – engineering the thrill*, funded by the AHRC; and the Sciart project *Punters: auto-portraits of fairground thrill*. He is currently developing *Airphoria* – a series of installations in Epping Forest inspired by local air disasters.
- 8 Irvin Leisure is one of Britain's leading suppliers of fairground equipment for corporate events and private parties and in addition stage major public festivals. They were key organisers of the London's Fair in Hyde Park last Christmas. George Irvin, head of the company, is a 5th generation Showman, carrying on a line from the Victorian Era, and it is his imaginative approach that led fairground rides first to be introduced to corporate events, and now to scientific experiment. www.irvinleisure.co.uk.
- 9 The Rides

The Miami Trip: For the first time riders' seats were turned to face spectators, creating an exhibitionist's dream. The rides are kept up-to-date through music and artwork.

The Ghost Train: The history of ghost trains can be traced back to the spectacular 19th century travelling menageries, horrific freak-shows and fearsome Victorian ghost shows.

The Booster: Derived from the rash of post war dive-bomber rides originally developed from aircraft-pilot training apparatus.
- 10 The technical system for collecting and presenting rider data will be developed in collaboration with Equator. Equator is a six-year Interdisciplinary Research Collaboration supported by EPSRC that focuses on the integration of physical and digital interaction. www.equator.ac.uk.