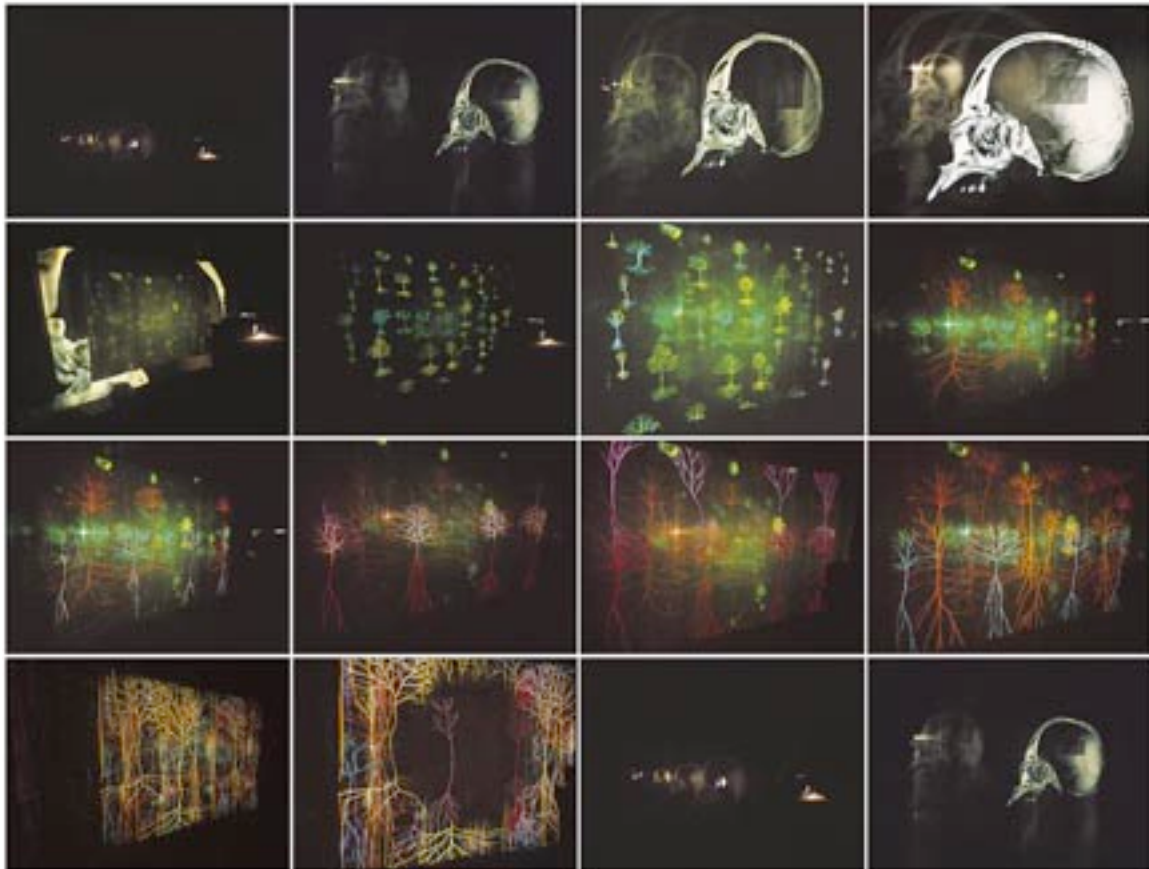


Magic Forest

April 1st, 2010



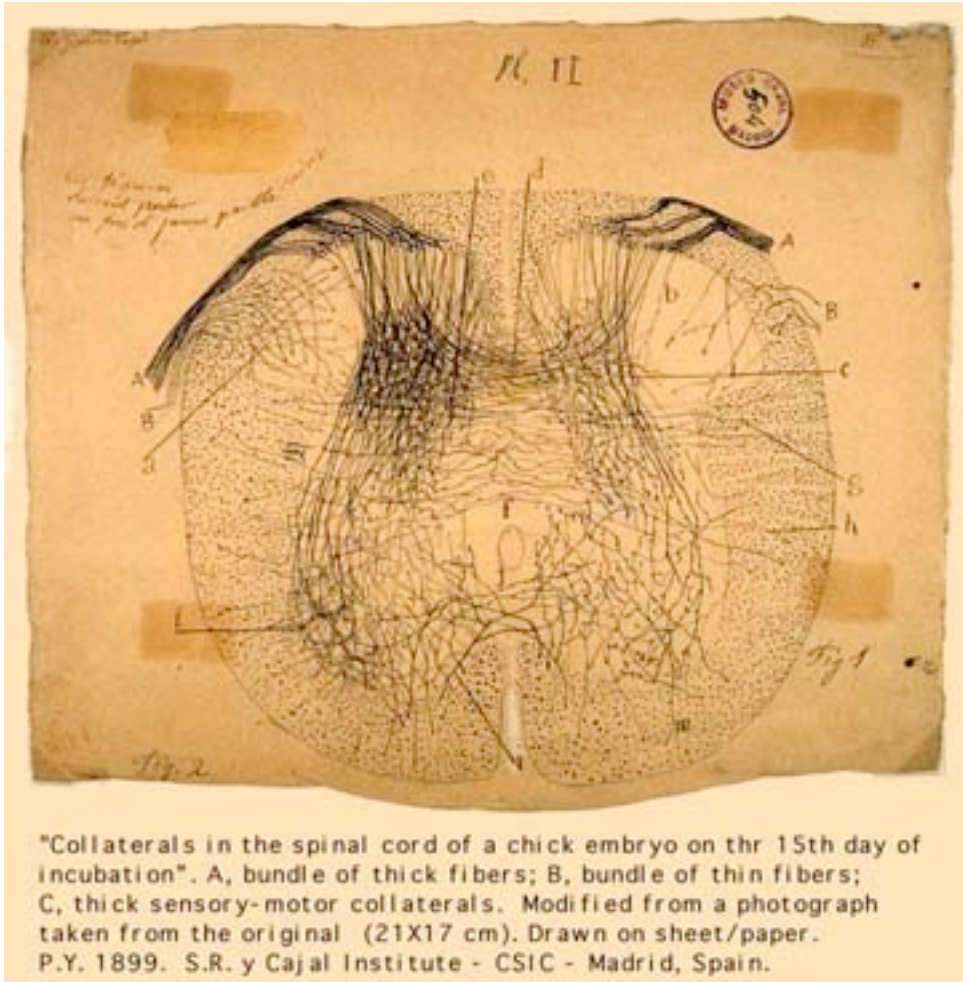
The Symposium for *Landscapes of the Mind* has just taken place; unfortunately logistics and money meant I couldn't be there! I hope it went well. Since I couldn't be there I thought I would jot down some bits about *Magic Forest* (2002) that might be pertinent.

First thing is maybe to set it, in place and time and send a few images of the protagonists. By a bit of a contorted journey I eventually met Richard Wingate, my science associate at King's College London, working in the Medical Research Council Developmental Neurology Department in New Hunt House.

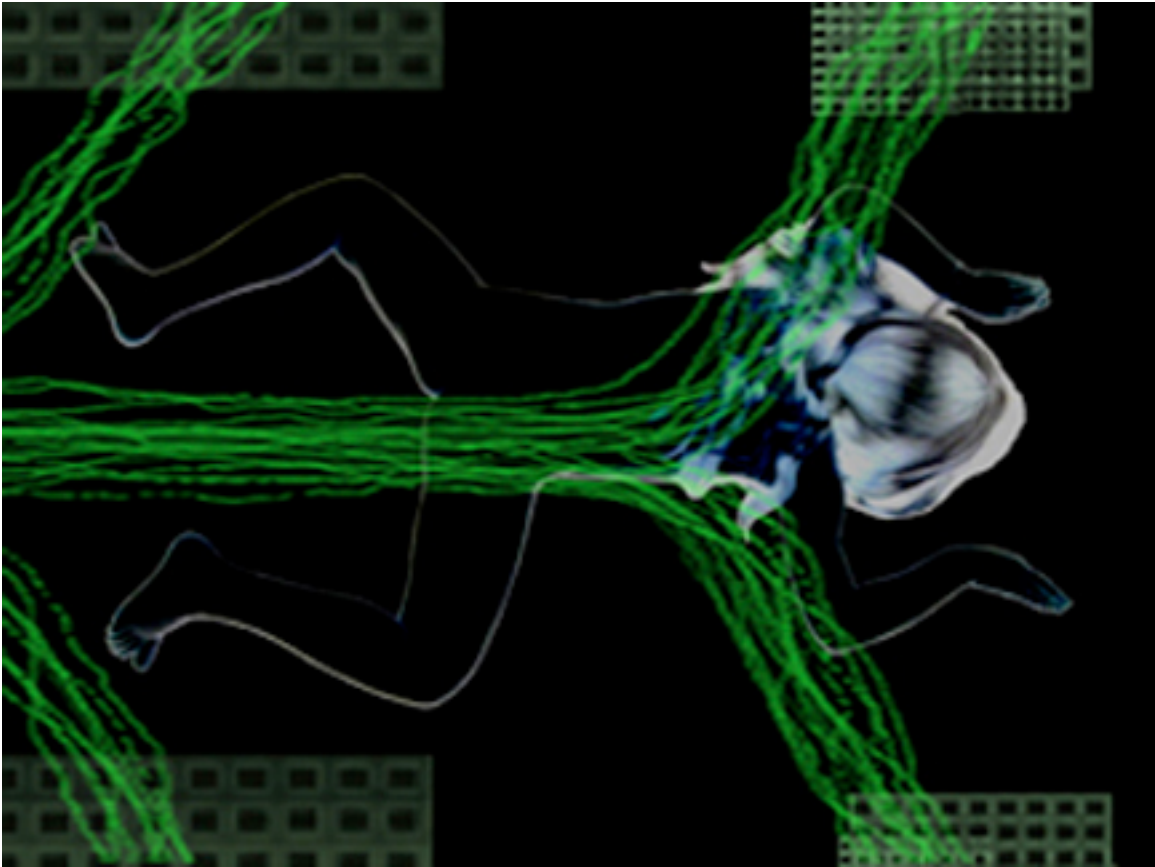
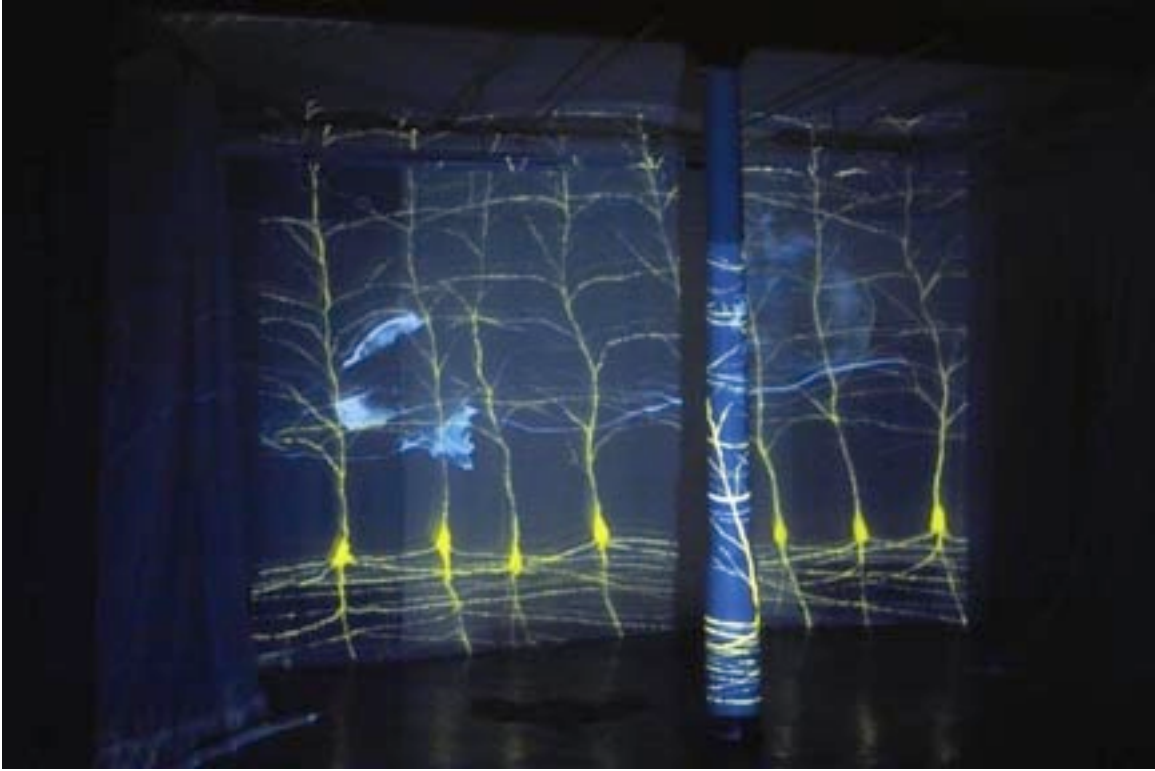




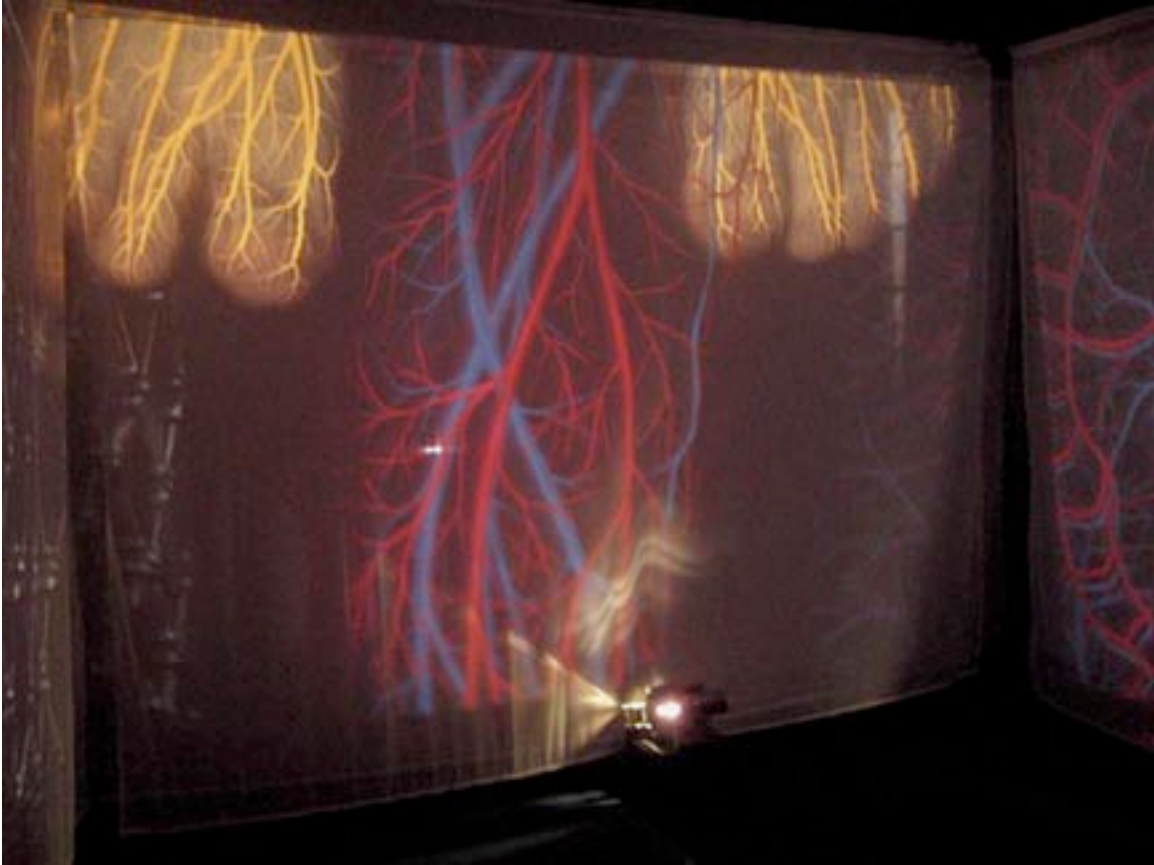
Richard and I often had long discussions in his office near his lab. The conversations were often wide ranging and touched on other interests which were sometimes relevant and sometimes not. Stuff on bikes is not, but a joint interest in early cinema was, especially around early systems of recording movement and projecting it. Eadweard Muybridge (1830 – 1904) and chronphotography was important. Muybridge's work has echoes of Richard's stacks of images of his in-vitro growing neurons in the chick brain played as QuickTime Movies. Muybridge was in a sense the father of the motion picture, with the development of the Zoöpraxiscope, and the father of the use of photography to disclose hidden aspects of biological life to. Richard and I also found we had an interest in the work of Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852 – 1934), a Spanish histologist, physician, pathologist, and Nobel laureate. As a pathologist Cajal was the explorer of the morphology of the brain and as an interested 'artist' his drawings of the brain are compulsive viewing for both Richard and myself. The drawings have a real sensitivity and quality of line.

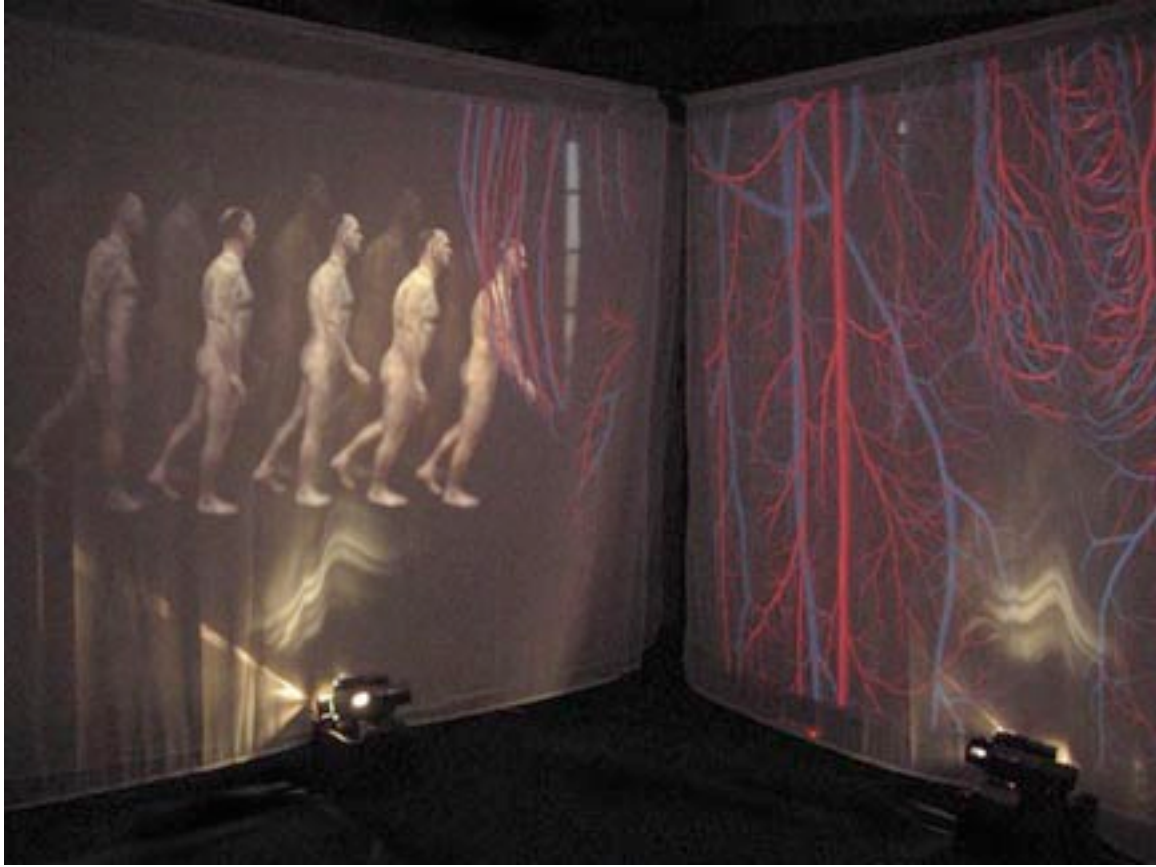


Though it is still quite a few years on since *Magic Forest* was made we still work together though and have regular contact, but haven't made a 'work' together since we made *Complex Brain: Spreading Arbour* (2004) a couple of years after *Magic Forest*. We have tried but our grant applications seem to get turned down!



I have made a number of works since *Magic Forest*. Lots of these works have been science related and I have become increasingly interested in the incorporation of science and science imagery into our sense of 'self' and who we are. Works like *Slice* (2004) and *We Are Where We Are* (2006) have developed these issues.





Above images: Andrew Carnie, *Magic Forest*, 2002, Courtesy the artist; Andrew Carnie and Richard Wingate; Richard Wingate at the confocal microscope; New Hunt House, King's College, London; Cajal drawing; *Complex Brain: Spreading Arbour* (2004); *We Are Where We Are* (2006).
Tags: [Andrew Carnie](#), [art](#), [Landscapes of the Mind](#), [Magic Forest](#), [neuroscience](#)
Posted in [Exhibitions](#), [Landscapes of the Mind](#) | [1 Comment »](#)

Magic Forest – Part 2

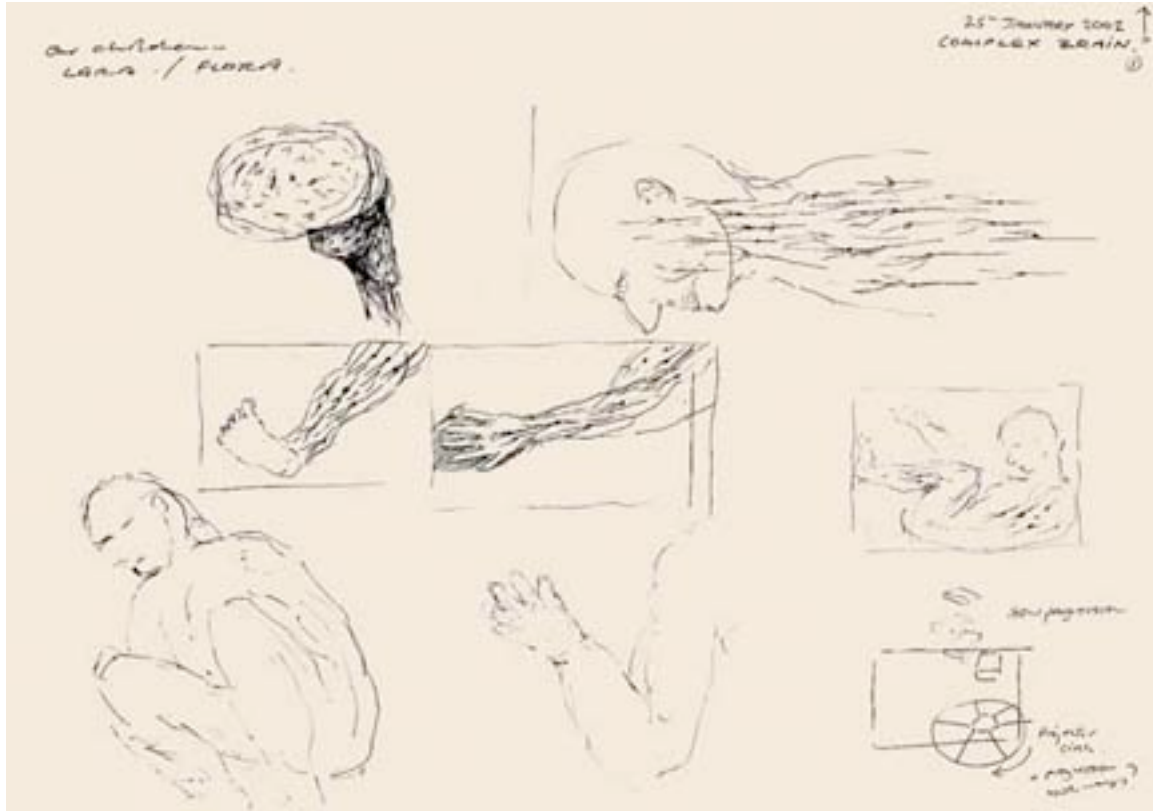
April 8th, 2010



Beyond *Magic Forest*

Our discussions were helpful in aiding Richard Wingate in developing teaching strategies for his students and as well as developing his interest in science and art projects. Since we met, he has served on the selection panel for the Wellcome Trust's art science grants panel and he has become more interested in teaching pedagogies as we have developed our links. Lots of time in Richard's office was spent with him making explanatory drawings of the work he was undertaking and specifically sitting it within the physical landscape of the brain.





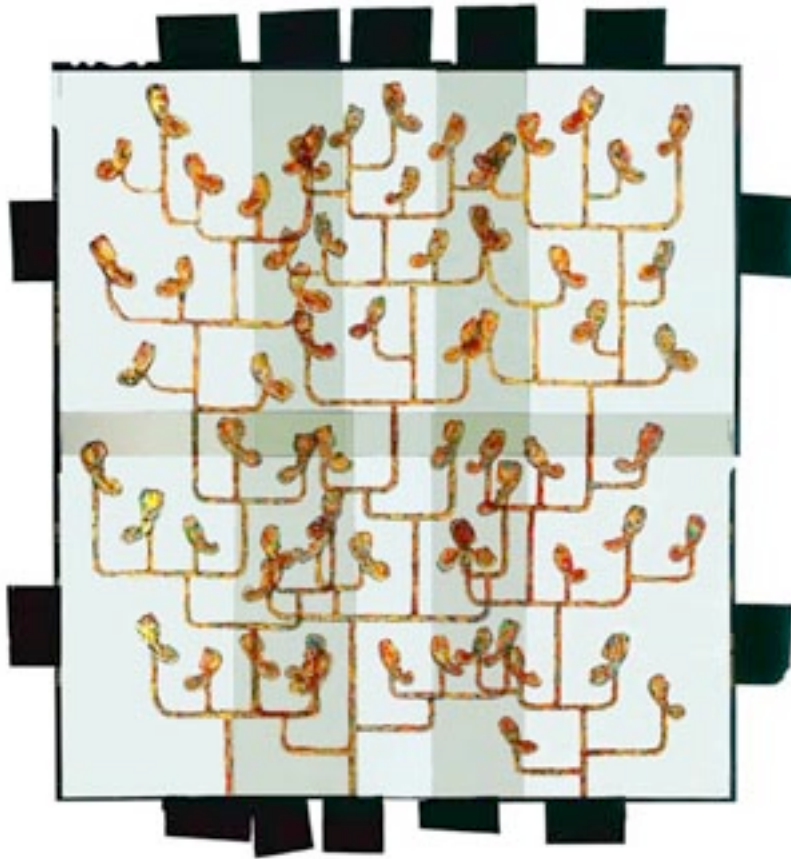
All the images I produced for *Magic Forest* except for the skull in the starting part of the work are hand drawn. The skull was photographed in the human anatomy rooms of King's College, London. The animated drawings were all done in Photoshop. I tried to use Richard's QuickTime movies but they didn't give the scope to explore the range of effects I needed nor could they be used to give the slow dissolve effect utilized in the final successful manifestation of *Magic Forest*. I was fortunate in that as I developed ideas for *Magic Forest*, 35mm slide projection was being taken over by PowerPoint and data projectors in the world of presentation and I could pick up cheap equipment to experiment very easily and cheaply. I bought voile screens and tested how I could project onto it and in some way replicate the thin slices viewed under the confocal microscope.

The basic concept of *Magic Forest* followed what I researched — thorough scientific papers and what I saw in the lab; the brain not as a solid fixed piece of hardware that processed our thoughts, but a dynamic changing organ on the move from birth to death. Most importantly this is what I saw in Richard's lab, but I also saw all this change in the MRC Centre for Synaptic Plasticity in Bristol and in visits to the UCL Centre for Neurology at Queens Square, London.

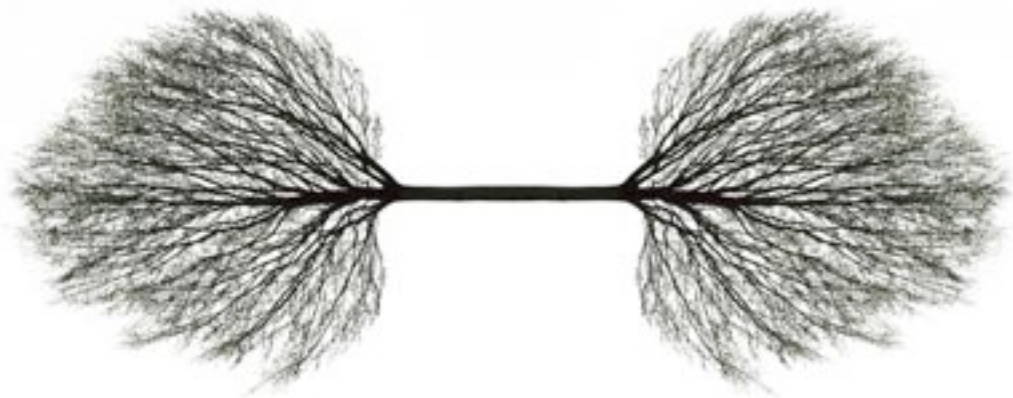
Before *Magic Forest*

Before working on *Magic Forest* I had been making a sequence of photographic works around science issues and scientific samples. Some were taken from life and manipulated others were taken back lit on light boxes. Some of the 'pseudo' specimens were painted with gouache before being photographed.





I particularly liked the photographs using bacon from the supermarket like in 'Twins' a large dura-transparency, but had to avoid shop security as I rifled through the fridges for the right looking bacon.





The end of *Magic Forest*

Magic Forest is, I hope, a work of art and not simply science illustration; it is more than this so as with many works of art there is an underlying biographical tone that lies at its center. There is a sense of a cycle in the work, a starting, a process of growth, its fulfilment and its end to then start around again; it moves from blackness to blackness. The work ends for me as a catastrophic seizure, the death of many brain cells. In the year before I finally made *Magic Forest* and before it had been shown at the Science Museum London my mother died of a stroke. I have always thought of the work as part homage to her. Her life was full of the botanical world, gardens, trees, forest walks and the outdoors; this had been her preserve. She was trained as a horticulturalist and always enjoyed growing plants. I would sometimes return home and she and my father would be gardening well after the sun had set.





So *Magic Forest* would very much be a world that she would have enjoyed. Interestingly, too, my father was a geographer, so landscape was something in the air at all times in my childhood; understanding how the terrain was created was an ever present part of growing up. No wonder landscape, transformation, biology, and neuroscience have been part of my life, when I studied science at university, and have crept into my artistic practice when I changed disciplines.

Andrew Carnie

<http://scienceandart-andrew-carnie.blogspot.com/>
<http://scienceandart--andrew-carnie.blogspot.com/carnie.blogspot.com/>
www.andrewcarnie.co.uk

Above images: Andrew Carnie, *Magic Forest*, 2002, Courtesy the artist; one of Richard Wingate's explanatory devices; Andrew Carnie drawings towards *Complex Brain*; *Tree 1 Lung*; *Candelabra*; Early pieces *10 to the 15* and *Twins*; Towards the end of *Magic Forest*, and towards the beginning of *Magic Forest*.