

The Cambridge Betterment Society (/)

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Cambridge Betterment Society is a fictional group developed by artist Harold Offeh, who was commissioned to respond to the work of world leading Cambridge medical researchers. In turn, Offeh has invited three artists: Frederica Agbah, and artist collaborators Jack Scott and Louis-Jack Horton-Stephens, to contribute to the themes within the project. The artists have been working with researchers at the University of Cambridge's new building on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus near Addenbrooke's Hospital, as part of the public art programme for the project led by Commission Projects. The Jeffrey Cheah Biomedical Centre (previously known as Project Capella) will be a centre of excellence for research into new medical treatments, bringing together three research centres: Wellcome-MRC Cambridge Stem Cell Institute, Cambridge Institute of Therapeutic Immunology and Infectious Disease (CITIID), and the Milner Therapeutics Institute.

About the Biomedical Campus

In 1999 Addenbrooke's NHS Trust (now part of the Cambridge University NHS Foundation Trust) in partnership with the University of Cambridge and the Medical Research Council, set out a vision for transforming the Addenbrooke's Hospital Site into the Cambridge Biomedical Campus combining world-class biomedical research, patient care and education on a single site – Vision 2020.

The 70 acre site is currently undergoing a major expansion that will result in a campus of international stature which will be an exemplar for integrated hospital facilities, biomedical research and healthcare education. The Strategic Masterplan for the Campus sets out a structure of streets, pedestrian routes, squares and gardens, entrance courtyards, semi-private spaces and functional areas with sustainability at its core.

The aim is that the Jeffrey Cheah Biomedical Centre will provide high level facilities for leaders in their fields of research which will benefit collaboration, stimulate the exchange of new ideas and help develop new alliances. This approach to collaboration and ideas exchange has informed the Public Art Strategy.





“ The project seeks to draw out points of connection and dialogue between the scientific aspirations and the artists’ own approaches, values and ideals,” explains Offeh. “We want to find out how the ideas of ‘betterment’ and ‘care’ inform the research methods, thinking and aspirations. Each artist has responded to the scientists’

research aims and goals and looked at some of the values and ideals that underpin their research methodologies.”

The ideas of betterment and care came from the Victorian desire for social improvement. “It’s something we now see as high minded and misjudged, but betterment speaks to a notion of change and improvement and a desire

to advance ideals and practices,” says Offeh. “We also want to look at what care means with respect to research, in day-to-day tasks or just in regard to mindset.”

The Jeffrey Cheah Biomedical Centre (Project Capella) site is located on the north side of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, adjacent to the Cancer Research Institute. The site will include 'Corpus', a permanent art commission by artists Dalziel + Scullion, which will feature a series of standing stones of human scale that people can interact with through sitting, lying, reclining or standing, with the aim of experiencing different perspectives and physical sensations .

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