

The personal stories and striking portraits
behind genetic testing

Genetopia

Documentary photographer,
Chrystal Ding (SE 2009)
studied English at Selwyn
College before going on
to study a Master's degree
in Photojournalism and
Documentary Photography.

The idea for *Genetopia* came to her because there seemed to be a gap between genetics as a field, and how it relates to individual issues of identity and self-perception. At the same time, the prominence of genetic research in the consumer market was rapidly rising.

In 2017, the number of people doing consumer DNA tests doubled, and the market is forecast to almost double again in the next three years. Our collective interest in DNA testing shows no signs of stopping.

But what are the personal stories underpinning those large-scale changes? How and why are people so interested in exploring their DNA? And how do the results affect them?

Over the course of a year, Chrystal interviewed and photographed 23 individuals about these experiences. They shared medical records, family photographs and other personal documents to illustrate their stories, which she compiled into a book: *Genetopia*. Their stories present a complex landscape of unexpected discoveries, life-threatening genetic mutations, and deep commitment to finding out about their personal and ancestral heritage.

Genetopia was made with the support of the Wellcome Genome Campus Society and Ethics Research team and is on public display at the WGC Conference Centre, Hinxton, south east of Cambridge.



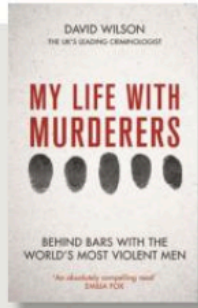
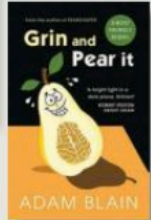
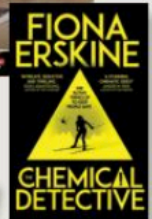
Above:
Self portrait by
Chrystal Ding.

Far left:
Lucas.

Left:
Becky-Dee.



Creative Selwyn



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We have widened our series of alumni achievements to include a broader range of media. Authors and writers still feature quite strongly, but also reflect the crossover between professions – from chemical engineer and criminologist, to jazz pianist and photo journalist.

Tom Taplin¹
(SE 2014)
Actor, currently performing in a two-hander play, *Shackleton and his Stowaway*, about the Antarctic expedition of Ernest Shackleton and his growing platonic relationship with (his character) the stowaway, Percy Black-borow, who snuck on to the expedition having not been initially accepted to work on it. Recently performing at the Cervantes Theatre in London.

Zack McCune²
(SE 2010)
Global marketing manager at the Wikimedia Foundation; increasing Wikipedia awareness in fast growing internet cultures. Last year he launched a short web video about Wikipedia in Nigeria that went viral and reached more than 17 million people. And it won an African Excellence Award. The secret? A witty seven-year-old comedian and YouTube star who loves Wikipedia.

Miranda Howard-Williams
(SE 2005)
A TV drama writer and director. Was selected for the BBC New Directors Scheme in 2018 and has been directing for the BBC daytime medical drama *Doctors*. Has a portfolio of award winning short films.

Oliver Wedgwood⁴
(SE 1993)
Jazz pianist, singer and composer Olly Wedgwood

James Swanton³
(SE 2009)
An actor and writer. He has been described by Simon Callow as 'a fearless actor' and 'a remarkable performer'. Achievements to date include four one-man plays, three horror films, and dropping his trousers (once) in front of Sir Ian McKellen.

has recently published a series of piano books: *JukeBox Collections*. "The whole idea behind the *JukeBox* series is to inspire pianists of all ages by offering a variety of popular piano styles with exciting backing tracks that bring the music to life."

Adam Blain⁵
(SE 1989)
Grin & Pear It. Around two years ago we publicised writer Adam's first book, *Pear Shaped*. Adam has recently had his follow up book published: a funny and moving look at the challenges of life after cancer treatment.

Jackie Smith
(SE 1987)
A literary translator with a particular interest in fiction and non-fiction book translation. In 2015 was awarded a place on the New

Books in German 'Emerging Translators Programme' for aspiring literary translators.

Prof. David Wilson⁶
(SE 1980)
My Life with Murderers, on the subject of murder and serial murderers in Britain. David is an academic criminologist who used to work in the prison service.

Fiona Macleod⁷
(SE 1979)
Fiona worked in the chemical industry for over 35 years with experience of managing highly hazardous chemical sites. She also writes under the name of Fiona Erskine. *The Chemical Detective*, a crime thriller with a chemical engineering protagonist – an explosives expert – uncovers a secret chemical weapons factory in the Chernobyl exclusion zone.

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