HUMAN REMAINS: OBJECTS TO STUDY OR ANCESTORS TO BURY?
Friday 2 May 2003, 7.30pm

MORBID FASCINATION: THE BODY AND DEATH IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE
Friday 16 May 2003, 7.30pm

Tickets and information: £7 (£5 concessions) for each debate from 020 7269 9220

Venue:
Dorchester Library, The Royal College of Physicians
11 St Andrews Place, Regent’s Park, London NW1

Tour:
The Royal College of Physicians was founded by King Henry VIII in 1518. Before the debates a 20 minute tour will be available of its collections, which range from portraits of Fellows and physicians to Symon’s Collection of medical instruments. Highlights include William Harvey’s demonstration rod, the college’s silver-gilt mace and six 17th century anatomical tables.
Please book by emailing info@rcplondon.ac.uk

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Speakers: Jane Hubert co-editor, The Dead and their Possessions: repatriation in principle, policy and practice
Robert Foley director of the Leverhulme Centre for Human Evolutionary Studies, Cambridge
Sebastian Payne Chief Scientist, English Heritage
Tristram Besterman director, Manchester Museum
Chair: Tiffany Jenkins Institute of Ideas

Museums have always contained collections of human remains, from ancient mummies to shrunk heads, but now ethical battles rage about ‘who owns the bones’. A DCMS committee looks set to suggest they are sent back to source communities. Are these bones really the property of long distant relatives, or the scholarly responsibility of curators and scientists? Will sending the skeletons back bring healing to abused and spiritually broken peoples? Or are museums and scientific institutions surrendering invaluable artefacts and sacrificing greater knowledge of humanity that we have a responsibility to honour?

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Speakers: Michael Fitzpatrick GP, author The Tyranny of Health
Jane Wildgoose artist and designer
Piers Benn lecturer in medical ethics, Imperial College London
Ken Arnold Head of Exhibitions, The Wellcome Trust
Chair: Tiffany Jenkins Institute of Ideas

Contemporary art seems enraptured with the visceral effect of the physical matter of the body. Gunther Von Hagen’s Body Worlds exhibition attracted millions to view plastinated flesh, and many have volunteered to be part of future exhibitions. While art wallows in flesh, the media debate whether images of the war dead are offensive. At the same time the outcry over retained body parts at Alder Hey shows the public is unhappy about the medical use of their loved ones’ bodies, and there is a slow decline in the donation of body parts to science. It seems while the artistic embrace of the body is welcomed, the scientific gaze causes problems. Why are there such different interpretations of what it means to respect the dead body medically and culturally?