

investigation: when you touch an everyday object, what germs are there? and if there are, then what do these germs look like? and more importantly are these germs harmful?

digging deeper: to reveal as far as possible, the identity of bacteria that was found from 18 commonly touched areas, and to give visual access and revelation to this invisible and complex world

lastly: this book ultimately strives to make people aware of just how serious these invisible invaders are and how best to avoid the dangers through good understanding, respect and knowledge toward hygiene

It's fascinating to think about how we have a Universe, a Galaxy, a Solar System, a planet, a country, a city, a house and then a human body, but then only to realise that it does not end here. There *is* another world that exists; only *this* world is invisible to you or I.

As this book continues you will be taken into this invisible world of bacteria, in the hope that more understanding and knowledge will encourage you to take your general, and specifically your hand hygiene more seriously.

Interest in this investigation first began by contemplating the likelihood of obtaining a disease from non-living objects. Objects that you would come into contact with everyday, such as the numbers you touch on a bank machine, a lift button or a door handle.

You read about diseases being transmitted through living beings, such as humans and animals (eg the mosquito spreading Malaria, or Tuberculosis spreading through the coughing and sneezing of humans) but we do not really know for ourselves about the dangers of *touching* non-living objects throughout our everyday environment.

An idea arose to take bacteria samples from commonly touched objects in a busy and highly populated perimeter of London.

Subsequently I became in contact with Peter Wilson, (Consultant Microbiologist, University College London Hospitals UCLH), who agreed to supply me with the help and equipment I needed, on the condition that if he was to assist in this investigation then I would, as a return favour, assist him. He requested that I devise some form of visual aid to help combat hospital infection (*something which will continue later this year*).

At this point it felt like I was in the middle of a crime scene investigation. Suddenly I was in a world surrounded by microbiologists, infection control nurses, scientists, bacteria, microscopes and all kinds of medical/scientific apparatus.

The main excitement was my complete naivety to all that was happening, and so my reactions, thoughts and visual ignitions were almost childlike.

18 agar plate (*explained on page 15*) samples were taken across various sectors within zone 1 of London. Sectors included: retail, transport, education, and public miscellaneous.

These samples of unseen bacteria were then incubated at a medical centre, where after 48 hours the bacteria is fully visible.

Agar plates used for taking a sample have an expiry date, which meant in this investigation that all 18 samples had to be done within the duration of a single day.

To have had the privilege of working with professionals in their everyday line of work has been a truly fantastic experience throughout this book. It has meant that the entirety of the content has been developed through communicating and working together with completely different minded people, which I feel has ensured that quality of substance has been met with integrity, responsibility and honesty.

RK PORTER
MA Communication Design, Central Saint Martins