

Press Information

January 26, 2009

“HEALTH TOUCHES PEOPLE” PHOTO EXHIBITION

*because

health touches
all of our lives.



*The mission

How does healthcare affect people all over the world? How does it touch you? These questions in mind and with a desire to understand, Philips commissioned a trusted photographer to travel the world and examine real life healthcare situations that explicate people's health, sickness, vanity and sanity in all of its forms – touching all of our lives.

*The journey

Travelling the world, photographer Ruud Taal spent nine months to find out what matters to people most when it comes to their own or someone else's well-being. The journey took him to places all over the world – from Aizu-wakamatsu to Gura Kebele and from Puttershoek to Shanghai. Places where the contrast between countries became apparent: from developing countries, where the cry for help is loudest and the aid workers do their best to care for those in the abominable circumstances, and places where people take their cure for granted and expect to feel even better than they did before the illness. These were the realities captured with the cameras – revealing the blatant inequalities in healthcare provision and welfare around the world.

* The locations



Gura Kebele, Ethiopia: The African Medical and Research Foundation, AMREF, operates in this isolated part of Ethiopia and is rolling out ambitious health projects here. The initial results are striking and based on surprisingly simple solutions: babies are given medication and purified water to prevent dehydration, which keeps them alive.



Amsterdam, The Netherlands: The New Beauty Fair attracts thousands of visitors. The fair seems to have been specially designed for people who are looking for something 'extra' for their body or simply have enough money to follow the latest trend in the field of body corrections. "When I saw the 'gold-leaf' facial treatment I couldn't help but think of the people in the Ethiopian tribes who cover their bodies in cow dung to impress others", recalls Ruud Taal.



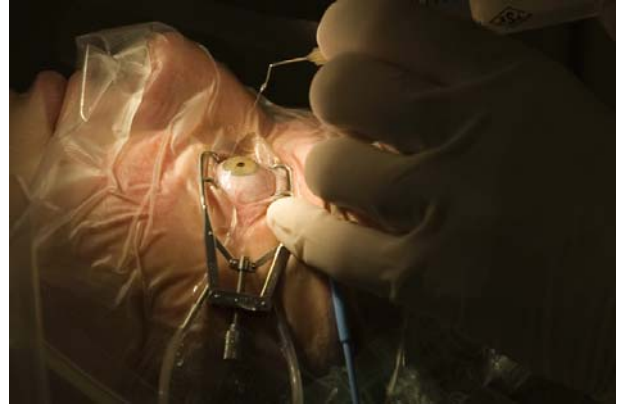
El Fuerte airstrip, Mexico: LIGA International ('Flying Doctors of Mercy') dozens of doctors, nurses and other volunteers from California and Arizona pay out of their own pockets to come here and perform their charity work. It is with pleasure that they cart the medicines, bandages and surgical materials gathered together from their own clinics to the makeshift clinic in El Fuerte. This all came about thanks to a couple of Californian doctors who came here on a hiking trip in 1934 and decided to do something about the living conditions of the rural population.



Bangkok, Thailand: In addition to the picture-perfect tourist highlights, Thailand also has a thriving health industry that has managed to convince the Western world of the local skills of medical and cosmetic surgery. Without waiting lists, here you can have parts of your body 'modified' according to the latest trends. In one and the same hospital, an open heart surgery catches the photographers attention, while operations in the room next door can be described as a 'conveyor belt' of women and (former) men with corrected eyes and noses.



Amazon river, Brazil: In the Brazilian rainforest, on the banks of the river Amazon, the medical care is accompanied by the teachings of the Bible. This healing mission is carried out by volunteer doctors and nurses from the Sociedad Bíblica de Brasil. Their work heals many wounds here.



Istanbul, Turkey: Specialist eye hospitals advertise trips 'for your eyes only'. Eyes freshly treated by laser are immediately put to the ultimate test on a trip around the country's top beauty spots. Seeing well, is believing!



Shanghai, China: In her battle for a better life for her son with learning difficulties, Chinese Gao Yali set up the Bo Ai Children's Rehabilitation Centre (1992), which provides care, education and rehabilitation for children with brain damage. At the time of our visit, the center housed 40 patients aged between 3 and 14 years, half of them living in the center on a permanent basis. The center is run by volunteer (para)medics, nurses, teachers and ancillary personnel. The equipment and accommodation is poor, but the devotion shown to these children is immense.



Nashville, Tennessee: Helicopters are busy landing and taking off from the roof of the Vanderbilt Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee; every minute counts in a "health factory running at full tilt". In the cancer care center people volunteered to have their picture taken, with the hope that any media coverage for their disease might help find a cure. In the hospital's burns unit, the photographer's mission was nothing but easy. Immobile victims of flames and heat were on the mercy of the professional caregivers. Unrecognisable, dependent on the skilled nurses and technology, a young woman fought for her life...a life that would never be the same.

* The impressions

Healthy body, healthy mind? “If you ask me, a healthy body and a healthy mind do not always go together”, Ruud Taal concludes. Healthy people shed millions of droplets of sweat in an effort to lose a bit of weight. Facelifts and weightlifting are both very popular. Parks and streets all around the globe are full of people jogging. Long-distance runners travel considerable distances to run even more extreme marathons in the most exotic locations, one being the Great Wall near Beijing, a race through the 42.195 kilometres of bumpy terrain – with untold enthusiasm!



Purpose defeats the means? In Sao Paulo, Brazil ‘local’ homeless people prove that you do not need advanced equipment to keep your body in shape. Using their bare hands, they have converted a rubbish tip under a traffic viaduct into a sports center. They used old tyres and car parts and above all a massive amount of creativity and willpower to implement their plans. The ‘gym’ is now used by more than 6,000 ‘social cases’, who have recently also been given access to primary healthcare and a job market.



Young minds, in elderly bodies? A stark contrast of Western well-being was spotted in Sun City, Arizona, where 40,000 healthy senior citizens are harmoniously taking their time over the years they have left to live. With average age of 72.3 years, the residents in this retirement town seek to extend their lives through bowling and going to the fitness center or the jogging pool. Once a week they put on their best clothes for the ‘Singles Dance Event’. Men are very much in the minority and barely get a minute’s rest. New relationships are formed – youthful minds in elderly bodies.



Faint smile counts for joy? Regardless of your location in the world, old age tends to come with its problems. Once dementia starts to set in, the past fades and the future extends no further than the here and now. Sometimes the only solution is to move to a care home. The care in these homes is intensive but sparse, the sight of people wasting away can be heartbreaking. Isolation and loneliness are never far away. Faria Clowns, a variation on the hospital clowns for children, try to use music and games to put the elderly in touch with the part of themselves that is still working normally. Sometimes a raised eyelid or a faint smile is the only sign that they are getting through.



This "Health touches People" photo exhibition provides a glimpse of what healthcare means to people everywhere. Another step for us to deepen our understanding.

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About Royal Philips Electronics

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