

INAUGURAL MERSON LECTURE

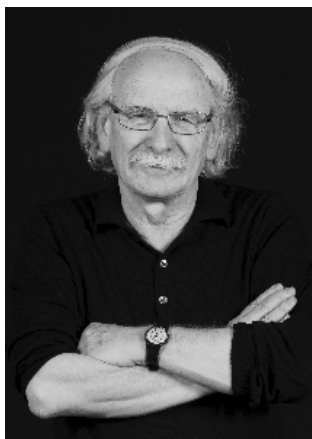
The mirror mechanism: a neural mechanism to understand others

By Professor Giacomo Rizzolatti

Professor of Human Physiology, Faculty of Medicine
University of Parma, Italy

Join us on 5 November when the distinguished international scientist, Professor Giacomo Rizzolatti, presents the inaugural Merson Lecture.

The lecture is named in honour of Mr David Merson, Chairman of the QBI Development Board, whose philanthropic sponsorship of this lecture is indicative of a growing community interest in neuroscience and the cutting-edge research that is being done in the area of neurological and mental diseases.



Giacomo Rizzolatti is Professor of Human Physiology at the University of Parma where he is the Director of the Department of Neurosciences. Formerly President of the European Brain and Behaviour Society and the Italian Society for Neuroscience, as well as a member of the European Medical Research Council, Professor Rizzolatti has, for several years, directed the European Training Program in Brain and Behaviour Research sponsored by the European Science Foundation. Among Professor Rizzolatti's major awards are the Golgi Prize for Physiology, the George Miller Award of the Cognitive Neuroscience Society, the Feltrinelli Prize for Medicine, the Herlitzka Prize for Physiology and the Grawemeyer Prize for Psychology.

Since the early eighties, Professor Rizzolatti has been recording the activity of brain nerve cells specialised for the control of hand actions such as grabbing objects or picking items up. In 1996, this resulted in the discovery of "mirror neurons" – neurons which fire or become active, both when one performs such hand actions, as well as when one observes them in another. Some scientists consider "mirror neurons" as one of the most important findings in the last decade. Their potential importance lies with the fact that, in a world of objects, sounds and movements, they may be the means by which we are able to understand the intentions of others, acquire language and share feelings. There is growing evidence that this capacity is largely based on a mechanism that directly transforms visual information on motor acts into a motor representation of the same acts. Professor Rizzolatti will outline the properties of the mirror mechanism and its implications for cognition, before discussing the relationship between the impairment of mirror mechanism and autism.



Mr David Merson, who was the founder of Mincom Ltd (from which he retired in 2002), has become director of a number of Australian software companies, research institutes and charitable bodies. His achievements have been recognised with an Honorary Doctorate from UQ, a Centenary Medal from the Australian Government, the Export Hero Award from the Australian Institute of Export, the inaugural Gold Award of the Australian Information Technology Association and the inaugural CSIRO iAward for individual achievement in the IT industry.

When: Thursday 5 November 2009;
5.00pm – 6.00pm

Where: Auditorium, Level 7,
Queensland Brain Institute,
Building 79, Upland Road,
The University of Queensland,
St Lucia campus

RSVP: A cocktail party will take place after the lecture. Please reply by calling 07-3346 6300 or e-mailing events@qbi.uq.edu.au