## Photographic romance of GMO breeding

The genetic modification of foods is not the sort of topic that inspires ambivalence. When photographer **Murray Ballard** first visited the **John Innes Centre** in Norfolk, England—Europe's "largest independent research facility for the study of plant science and microbiology"—he thought he'd already picked a side.

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said. Image not found or type unknown

Initially, the work <u>Ballard</u> was making was "more playful and a slightly more abstract interpretation of the facility as a whole." That changed, however, when he selected three experiments at the facility to focus on: the first, an effort to increase the nutritional content in tomatoes, the second, an attempt to eradicate blight in potatoes, and the third, a project to engineer drought-resistant barley.

At that point, his work became more concerned with education than pure aesthetics. "The whole idea of me getting involved with genetic modification was to understand it better and then communicate that to the public. There became a responsibility to communicate this to a broad audience, people not from a scientific background," he said.

Dr. Simon Foster checking the GE potato trial.

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Eventually, Ballard's opinion about

genetic modification changed.

"I walked into the place sort of suspicious of it, but once I understood some of the science behind it, it made a lot more sense and it wasn't the sinister science I imagined," he said.

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In addition to visual clarity, Ballard strove for representation of the human element in the scientific process, one that is rarely seen or imagined in conversation about genetic modification. Photographs of genetically modified tomatoes on a scientist's messy desk, for instance, make them appear less foreign and more commonplace.

Read full, original post: How to Genetically Modify a Tomato and Other Things We Eat