



FONDAZIONE PRADA PRESENTS “PRESERVING THE BRAIN: A CALL TO ACTION” IN MILAN: A CONFERENCE (16 – 17 OCTOBER 2024), AN EXHIBITION AND A SERIES OF MEETINGS (16 OCTOBER 2024 – 7 APRIL 2025) ON THE PREVENTION OF NEURODEGENERATIVE DISEASES

Milan, 1 August 2024 – The new edition of “Preserving the Brain,” part of the “Human Brains” project dedicated since 2018 to neurosciences, will focus on the prevention of neurodegenerative diseases. Organized in partnership with fifteen renowned neuroscience institutes from world-class universities and five Italian patient organizations and associations, “Preserving the Brain: A Call to Action” consists in a scientific conference (16 – 17 October 2024) and an exhibition which will be accompanied by a series of meetings (16 October 2024 – 7 April 2025) to be held at Fondazione Prada in Milan.

“Human Brains” is the result of an in-depth research process undertaken by Fondazione Prada and driven by a deep interest in understanding the human brain, the complexity of its functions and its centrality in human history. Developed by a scientific committee chaired by neurologist Giancarlo Comi, since 2020 the program resulted in a series of exhibitions, scientific conferences, public talks, and online and editorial activities.

Following the first two stages of the “Preserving the Brain” forum on neurodegenerative diseases, held in Milan and Shanghai in 2022 and 2023, this new edition aims to focus on the importance of prevention and early treatment of widespread and still incurable diseases, such as Alzheimer’s, Huntington’s, Parkinson’s, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, and Multiple Sclerosis. Neurodegenerative diseases are characterized by a series of modifiable risk factors, the correction of which would have major consequences on an individual and collective level. To protect ourselves from the increasing prevalence of these diseases, it is crucial to act on modifiable risk factors, take care of the environment, promote healthy lifestyles, implement educational activities, and engage all actors of society and political institutions. The impressive recent development of genetic and biological markers for all these diseases also allows to identify individuals who are at risk for a specific disease, and the activation of secondary prevention strategies that could include the implementation of specific therapies.

For this reason, “Preserving the Brain: A Call to Action” will see the participation of leading research centers, academics, patient associations, and organizations that operate in the field of brain health, as well as representatives of institutions. The main goal is a productive exchange among different stakeholders to promote specific actions related to modifiable factors on neurodegenerative diseases, leading up to a “call to action” addressed to a wide population, especially younger generations.

As Miuccia Prada, President and Director of Fondazione Prada, states, “This new edition of ‘Preserving the Brain’ shows how necessary it is to create an even stronger dialogue



between the scientific world and the public of a cultural institution like Fondazione Prada. The themes of prevention and the active role of culture in this field concern everyone and specifically younger generations. It is therefore crucial to accompany scientific research and dissemination with awareness-raising activities and a program of concrete actions capable of influencing our behaviors, involving those who deal with neurodegenerative diseases on a daily basis, not only from a strictly medical perspective. We are pleased that this international forum has become, as we had hoped during the first edition, a recurring appointment that helps to connect research centers with each other and with a wider and more heterogeneous community.”

As Giancarlo Comi, Honorary Professor of Neurology at the Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele in Milan and President of the scientific committee of “Preserving the Brain”, underlines, “The brain, and therefore neural functions, represent the defining and distinguishing element of human beings. Neurodegenerative diseases, with the sensory, motor, and cognitive impairment they may provoke, pose a serious threat to full participation in various aspects of life. These diseases are rooted in a far distant time which we have only recently begun to uncover. Almost always, it is a combination of various roots, nourished by genetic and environmental factors, that generates the pathology. Prevention, which means identifying these roots, can help block their consequences. Some of these roots we plant ourselves, therefore individuals must play a direct role in the prevention process. This implies an active role of the individual not only at the time of the disease, but also in preventing it. The scientific exhibition, organized in a way that makes its content accessible to the public, and the meetings, organized in collaboration with patient organizations and associations, aim at involving the entire community and all its facets in the fight against neurodegenerative diseases.”

The fifteen international institutions involved in the “Preserving the Brain: A Call to Action” project are: Harvard Medical School, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Ann Romney Center for Neurological Diseases, Boston, United States; Hôpital de la Pitié-Salpêtrière, Sorbonne University AP-HP, Neurology department and Paris Brain Institute, Paris, France; UniSR – Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele, Milan, Italy; Juntendo University Hospital, Neurology Department, Tokyo, Japan; Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden; German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE) within the Helmholtz Association, Bonn, Germany; Max Planck Institute of Neurobiology, Munich, Germany; Montreal Neurological Institute-Hospital, McGill University, Canada; Multiple Sclerosis Centre of Catalonia, Vall d’Hebron University Hospital, Barcelona, Spain; Tianjin Medical University General Hospital, Neurology Department, Tianjin, China; UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences, University of California San Francisco, San Francisco, United States; University College London, United Kingdom; University Medical Centers, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot, Israel; Yale School of Medicine, New Haven, United States.



The meetings connected to the exhibition and focused on five neurodegenerative diseases will be promoted by organizations, patient associations and institutions devoted to supporting scientific research such as: AIMA Associazione Italiana Malattia di Alzheimer, AISM Associazione Italiana Sclerosi Multipla, AISLA – Associazione Italiana Sclerosi Laterale Amiotrofica and AriSLA – Fondazione Italiana di ricerca per la Sclerosi Laterale Amiotrofica, Confederazione Parkinson Italia, and Fondazione LIRH Lega Italiana Ricerca Huntington.

Conference | 16 – 17 October 2024

The conference “Prevention on Neurodegenerative Diseases” will take place on 16 and 17 October at Fondazione Prada’s Cinema Godard in Milan. Under the scientific direction of Giancarlo Comi, the program has been conceived in dialogue with the fifteen research institutes involved in the project. The conference is aimed at researchers, students, and institutional figures in the medical and healthcare sectors. Access is by reservation on the website humanbrains.fondazioneprada.org. The conference is also streamed and visible to all on the same online platform.

Each day is divided into four thematic sessions, each one featuring three lectures and an open discussion between the scientists and researchers. Each session will address a specific topic, such as epidemiology, pollution, diet, sleep, protective factors, genes and other environmental factors, brain plasticity, and secondary prevention.

The first day will conclude with a keynote on the role of artificial intelligence in preventing neurodegenerative diseases. The second day will be completed by two additional keynotes dedicated to the impact of climate change on these diseases and the role of biomolecular markers in risk stratification. A roundtable with representatives from patient organizations and associations, health authorities and academics, pharmaceutical companies, and service providers will address priorities, actions, and future challenges in prevention of neurodegenerative diseases.

Exhibition and meetings | 16 October 2024 – 7 April 2025

The exhibition will take place from 16 October 2024 to 7 April 2025 (press preview on 15 October 2024) in the Nord gallery of Fondazione Prada’s Milan premises. The project will investigate the main themes addressed during the conference through scientific data and visual materials conceived by international researchers and designed by the New York 2x4 studio. The exhibition will be articulated in eight sections and a space for exchange that will host mediation activities for visitors.



The show will first explore the field of primary prevention, targeting healthy individuals without pathologies, by analyzing the environmental factors that influence the onset of neurodegenerative diseases as well as the behaviors and lifestyles that could be modified by the healthy population for preventive purposes. Moreover, secondary prevention—relative to early diagnosis and aimed at slowing down the course of the disease and reducing symptoms—will be analyzed in depth.

A series of eight meetings, developed with the patient organizations and associations involved in the project, will accompany the exhibition from November 2024 to April 2025. The meetings will be conceived with Michele Porcu and Mary Zurigo of Z.E.A. Zone di Esplorazione Artistica, a group of critical research and experimental design that investigates the various boundaries between art, design, architecture and other forms and languages of the contemporary, working particularly on fragility, supporting museum accessibility, social inclusion and artistic mediation, in projects such as “alzharte.” The meetings will include guided tours of the exhibition and the other projects of Fondazione Prada for patients and caregivers, moments of dialogue with young people and students, panels, roundtables, theatrical performances, workshops, and film screenings.

Human Brains

“Human Brains,” Fondazione Prada’s project dedicated to neurosciences, employs a multidisciplinary approach that brings together neurobiology, philosophy, psychology, neurochemistry, linguistics, and artificial intelligence. The project’s plural title was chosen to emphasize the brain’s intrinsic complexity and each individual’s irreducible uniqueness.

The first chapter of the project was the online conference “Culture and Consciousness.” Held in November 2020, it focused on the study of consciousness, the brain’s highest and most complex function. The second stage, titled “Conversations,” was based on a series of online talks given by international scientists, philosophers, and researchers between September 2021 and April 2022. The third phase, the exhibition “It Begins with an Idea,” on the history of brain studies, characterized by rigor, innovation, and discoveries, but also by mistakes and uncertainties, took place in the Venice premises of Fondazione Prada from April to November 2022. The fourth part, “Preserving the Brain,” developed in Milan from September to October 2022 and in Shanghai from March to May 2023. “Preserving the Brain” saw the participation of researchers, patient organizations and associations, representatives of healthcare institutions and pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries to discuss the state of knowledge of neurodegenerative diseases and the tools currently used to combat them and identify possible therapies. A book, published by Fondazione Prada and designed by 2x4, documents extensively the first four phases of the project.



Press contact

Fondazione Prada

T +39 02 56 66 26 34

press@fondazioneprada.org

humanbrains.fondazioneprada.org