

ARTS CORNER

Loquere ut te cognoscan*

A Guerra

“Those who only have knowledge of Medicine, do not even know Medicine.”

JOSÉ DE LETAMENDI

I do not want to create confusion with the inevitable antithesis suggested by the two-word title of this new section: “art,” or something which is, in itself, the expression of expansive beauty, juxtaposed with “corner” or “rincon” in Spanish, that is, a small space, something of little importance. Two opposed concepts in terms of size which, nevertheless, fit neatly alongside each other in this context.

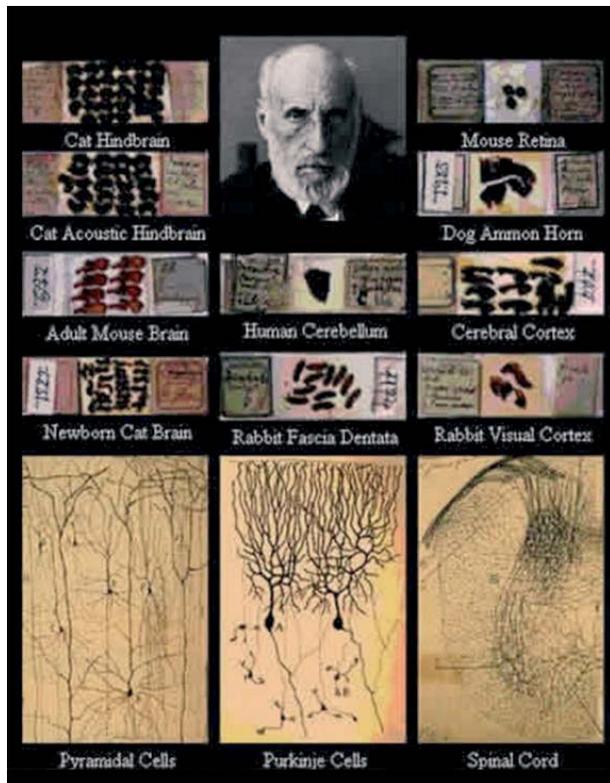
Allow me to explain. The term “corner” in *Actas Dermosifiliográficas*—the journal for all members of the Spanish Academy of Dermatology (Academia Española de Dermatología)—adheres to another usage of the term

listed in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española (Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy of Language)* which defines “rincon” as: “a portion of land with natural or artificial boundaries, used for certain purposes within the estate.”

And, following the same logic, this new corner of *Actas* will be devoted to the arts, defined as: “those products of human activity which express a personal vision of beauty.”

But this will not be the historically applauded, encumbered and cataloged art, or the erudite, classic and avant-garde, or even the well-known or about to be discovered. But then again, maybe it will? Really, the only important issue in this section is that the artists covered must be dermatologists themselves, and it will not be difficult to find such people.

Throughout the history of medicine many leading figures have spent their spare time in artistic pursuits. Santiago Ramón y Cajal provides a good example of this, embarking



Santiago Ramón y Cajal in a self portrait of around 1870. Art photography was one of his great passions.



Santiago Ramón y Cajal, one of the many archetypal examples of the doctor–artist.

*Speak up and be recognized.

upon a literary career under the pseudonym of “Doctor Bacteria,” with the publication of a science fiction novel where cells and microorganisms confronted each other in impossible adventures. This was followed by moral tales such as *A secreto agravio secreta venganza* (*For a Secret Offense, Secret Revenge*); anecdotal compositions like the *Cuentos de vacaciones* (*Vacation Stories*), and *Charlas de café* (*Coffee Chatters*); and autobiographical works including *Mi infancia y juventud* (*My Childhood and Youth*), and *La vida a los ochenta años: impresiones de un arteriosclerótico* (*The World Seen at the Age of 80: Impressions of an Arteriosclerotic*). His creativity was boundless, branching out into drawing and photography, which was the subject of his book *La fotografía de los colores* (*The Photography of Colors*) compiled with the dignity and mastery of a celebrated artist.

Juan Antonio Vallejo Nágera—a distinguished psychiatrist and great communicator—wrote many books, winning the Planeta publishing house prize with his historical novel *Yo el rey* (*I the King*). His naive paintings also achieved great success in exhibitions of the time. And then there were figures such as Pío Baroja, Gregorio Marañón, Mikhail Bulgakov, Louis Ferdinand Céline, Anton Chekhov, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Carlo Levi, Axel Munthe, Moacyr Scliar, Jaime Salom, and so many more that it is impossible to list them in full.

The tradition of the humanist doctor is still alive today amongst skin specialists. As soon as you scratch the surface

names spring up of colleagues who write, paint, sculpt, take photographs, play instruments, sing, make films, etc.

Why the medical profession should so frequently display this multiplicity of vocations has been the subject of many theses and conferences, but has always remained difficult to explain. Perhaps help can be found in the Mario Benedetti poem:

*“After all there are men I have not been
and nonetheless wanted to be
if not for a lifetime, at least for a while,
for the blink of an eye.”*

And here is our chance. The new section we are initiating today will provide an opening for artist dermatologists to express themselves. We can experience their work, enjoy it, acclaim it, or criticize it, but we readers will always emerge more cultured, richer, rounded people.

And for anyone who is wary of exposing their inner self—art always provides a portrait of the artist in some way—just think of the words of Golda Meier:

“Don’t be so humble. You’re not that great!”

We are waiting for you.