



Obra Social "la Caixa"

Press Release

Exhibition presented with support from "la Caixa" Banking Foundation in the framework of its cooperation with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The MIT Museum in Boston presents the exhibition *The Beauty of the Brain: The Drawings of Santiago Ramón y Cajal*

The travelling exhibition ***The Beauty of the Brain: The Drawings of Santiago Ramón y Cajal*** has been presented at the MIT Museum in Boston, where it will be open to the public until December 31. The show was developed by the Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota and CSIC's Cajal Institute in Madrid with support from "la Caixa" Banking Foundation, the Ramón Areces Foundation and the Rafael del Pino Foundation.

The Beauty of the Brain is the first major presentation of the **pioneering drawings made by the Spanish neuroscientist Santiago Ramón y Cajal** of the brain and its neurons. The exhibition also includes contemporary visualisations that show the continuing impact of Cajal's early work on neuroscience today.

As mentioned, then, the historical works, some eighty original drawings by Cajal, will be complemented by contemporary visualisations, many from MIT laboratories, bringing to view new understandings of the brain enabled by developing technologies in the field of brain and cognitive science. These technologies include expansion microscopy, optogenetics, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). Moreover, in a dedicated observation and drawing workstation, visitors will have the opportunity to sketch the brain and nervous system, enabling them to form an even a deeper appreciation of Cajal's works.

Through his astonishing observations and illustrations, **Cajal helped to create the modern field of neuroscience**. Eighty of Cajal's rarely seen original drawings will be on view, selected by a curatorial team of University of Minnesota neuroscientists and an art historian from the Weisman Art Museum, based on both scientific importance and aesthetic value.

"We are excited to host *The Beautiful Brain* at the MIT Museum. Cajal's exquisite drawings laid the foundations of modern neuroscience by confirming that the brain is composed of discrete cells, or neurons," said John Durant, The Mark R.



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Epstein (Class of 1963) Director of the MIT Museum. "We look forward to placing Cajal's historic work alongside some of the latest brain images produced by MIT neuroscientists during the exhibition's stop in Cambridge."

About Santiago Ramón y Cajal

Considered the founder of modern neuroscience, Cajal (1852-1934) attended an art academy in his early years and was an accomplished artist. He combined scientific and artistic skills to produce exceedingly detailed drawings to prove his theory that the brain is composed of individual cells rather than a single tangled web, which is the basis of neuroscience today. His theory was vindicated many years later, in the 1950s, with the help of electron microscopy.

Cajal was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1906, together with the Italian scientist Camillo Golgi, "in recognition of their work on the structure of the nervous system". He developed his ideas mainly by examining thin slices of the brain under a light microscope. Today, his drawings are still in use for educational and training purposes.

Cooperation between "la Caixa" Banking Foundation and the MIT

This exhibition is further fruit of the alliance between "la Caixa" Banking Foundation and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a pioneering university whose mission is to advance knowledge and promote ground-breaking research to meet the great challenges of the twenty-first century. The cooperation between the two institutions goes back to 1982, when "la Caixa" first launched its programme of study grants. Since then, the alliance has been further strengthened by other projects, including, last year, the latest MIT-Spain "la Caixa" Foundation Seed Fund call for research projects. This call for proposals culminated in the selection of twelve cutting-edge research projects.

The Beauty of the Brain: The Drawings of Santiago Ramón y Cajal

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