

ART & SCIENCE

*Works from the Collection of the
Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga*



Champalimaud
Foundation

MN&A

Franco Maria Ricci



Forward

At first sight, this book may come as a surprise to its readers. Yet it is only the first result of a collaboration that the Champalimaud Foundation proposed to the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, and which the latter immediately accepted. Essentially, this collaboration will take the form of a series of joint activities to promote the Museum's collection, viewed from a perspective of scientific knowledge. And such a bold venture merits a brief explanatory foreword.

Why should two of Portugal's leading institutions join forces in this way – one dedicated to science and the other to art, one public and the other private, one that exhibits works made by others and the other that itself produces what it offers? There is no denying that the two institutions are quite different, not only in their objectives, but also in their very natures and in the ways that they operate. But they both share the great desire to reveal and explain the country that we are, to interpret it and to tell its story, clearly using different languages and different approaches in order to do so, but with each of them, in their own way, sharing the same passion for knowledge and for art. And each of them represents the best of what the country produces and offers in their respective fields of action.

This shared passion has, in itself, led to the building of a bridge between the two institutions that merely needed to be crossed, and, in this way, it fully justifies this present collaboration and joint exploration of moments and capacities that will help in obtaining ever better results, since this is, after all, essentially what motivates the two parties.

Knowledge, science and health, on the one hand; and art, history and culture, on the other? In truth, this crossover between two such different areas of

human activity as science and art can only enrich, and infinitely so, the way in which we look at things, systematically informing our perception of reality and, at the same time, serving as a source of delight, study and, frequently, a passionate attention to detail. How many of us have not already hesitated over the need to choose a main path, in lives that require a much clearer definition of frontiers than the one that we would normally wish to make? In a world where areas of knowledge are becoming more and more specialised, and at such breakneck speed, it is vitally important that we should build bridges that stimulate methodical transdisciplinarity: because reality is, in itself, transdisciplinary.

The mission of the Champalimaud Foundation is to support scientific research in the area of Medicine; the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga is the most important Portuguese museum, endowed with a most valuable collection of artistic treasures, which is essential for understanding our own projection over time: like a History of Portugal told through its heritage. In turn, there are many factors that bear witness to the important role that art plays in the life of the Champalimaud Foundation, even as a subject of scientific research, in the same way that the MNAA cultivates a scientific approach (one that is increasingly specialised and technically more complex) in the treatment and study of its precious collections.

The Champalimaud Foundation is housed in a physical structure that oozes art and beauty; in a rare and harmonious fusion with the River Tagus, which seems to welcome it with open arms. Here, we find researchers who not only study the mechanisms of human creativity; but who are themselves also involved in areas of artistic creation, engaging in common explorations, through

crossovers of knowledge and experiences. From the very beginning of its existence, the Foundation has published works that interconnect science, history and art, as well as our current state of knowledge and its possible evolution, making abundant use of images that illustrate artistic creations and are themselves produced by artists. And the Museum, which also overlooks the river from the magnificent terrace that it inherited with the former Palácio Alvor where it first began its activity, forms, with the Saint Albert Chapel and the new additions that have been made to the original palace, an architectural complex that shapes the city's landscape.

The MNAA and the Champalimaud Centre are situated in areas of the city of Lisbon that are steeped in history, and the two institutions are impregnated with an inner need to emulate their shared past. Multiple initiatives and activities, on both sides, express this sense of belonging and the need to anchor themselves to it in their relationship with an increasingly open and plural world. They have joined together now to speak to you jointly about knowledge and art – and also, necessarily; about History.

Finally, in their respective pasts, both institutions have enjoyed a special relationship with the prestigious publishing house of Franco Maria Ricci. Everything therefore recommended the building, here too, of a new and seductive bridge that would provide access to the undeniable added value of Massimo Listri's original and unique photographs, knowing that these would enhance even further the quality of the book that is now being published. These are photographs that promote a fascinating dialogue with the texts, filled with the great sensitivity and erudition of Professor Paulo Pereira.

After providing us with a stimulating introduction to the relationship between science and art and making the difficult selection of the works that he deals with in this book, he then takes us on a guided reading through the museum's treasures. And, with these works, we embark upon a transdisciplinary journey made possible precisely by the rich variety of the collections, in which he illuminates the perpetual relationship that these establish with our knowledge of the Earth and of the human body; with the use of materials; with the beliefs and realities that are instilled within them; with what was known and with what was imagined; with the way in which certain techniques were used; with what is revealed to us about the artists, whether known or anonymous, and about the world in which they lived. In short, about what they sought to transmit (or to hide), and which would indeed remain hidden from our hurried glance, were it not for this guided reading, simultaneously erudite and seductive.

This book is the first to be born of this association between the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, the Champalimaud Foundation and the publishing house of Franco Maria Ricci, making an invaluable contribution to our knowledge by bringing together all these different ways of looking at the common heritage of the country to which these two institutions of ours belong.

Leonor Beleza
*President of the Board of Directors of the
Champalimaud Foundation*

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Text

Paulo Pereira

Photography

Massimo Listri

Franco Maria Ricci



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José de Almeida
Santo Onofre, detail

Page 6
Charles Correa (1930-2015)
Champalimaud Foundation, Lisbon

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