

The Game of the Diseases Hidden in the Canvas

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BACKGROUND

Observation and investigative methodology are both considered strong skills in Clinical Sciences. In addition, the Medical Humanities should become a solid background for building the motivation and the ethics of the next generation of Clinicians. To understand this we evaluated the value of a course of Art and Medicine.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Art and Medicine teaching consists of observing around thirty famous paintings, under the guidance of the teacher, learning to observe the details revealing possible diagnosis, to give maximum emphasis to the inspection phase of physical medicine. The latter is corroborated by comparing the colors especially of the skin, lips and eyes with paintings by the same artist in the same historical moment; or with paintings depicting the same person but realized before or after the suspect one. The anamnesis in the game is obtained from the research of historical documents referring to the personages who are portrayed, which allow students to draw correlations that can be confirmatory or dissuasive about the hypothesis formulated in the inspection phase. Some esemplificative paintings used for the so-called “Game of the diseases hidden in the canvas” are presented, including Rembrandt's *Bathsheba* (Fig.1) and Caravaggio's *Sick Little Bacchus* (Fig.2) (1-2).

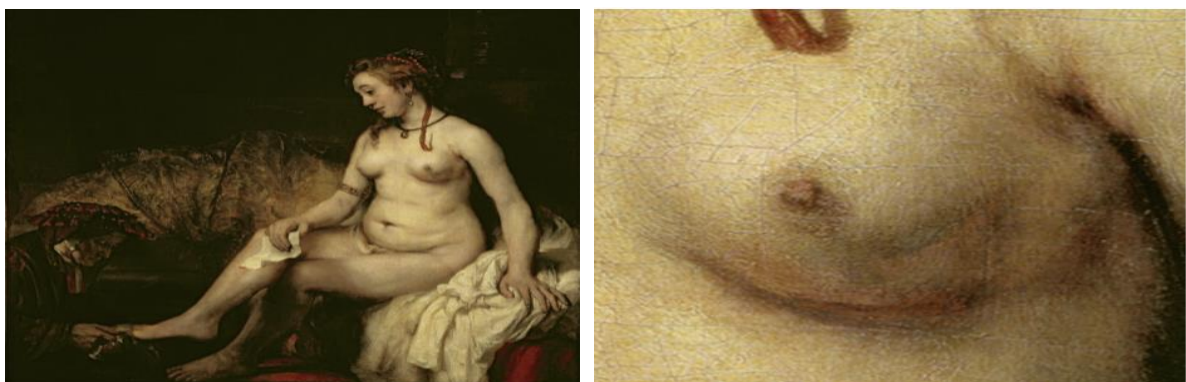


Figure 1 Left: *Bathsheba and the letter of King David*. Rembrandt 1654, Louvre Museum, Paris. Right: Particular of the medical enigma of the breast pigmentation.



Figure 2 Caravaggio 1593 Left: The lips of Little Bacchus compared either with those of the Boy with the basket of fruit, top panel, or with those of Bacchus, bottom panel Right: Particular of the eye of Little Bacchus, bottom, as compared to that of the Boy with the basket of fruit, top

RESULTS

Almost 90% of medical students applied for the optional course “Art and Medicine” (icon-diagnostics), and, of these, three-quarters belonged to the first 3 years. It is noteworthy that the highest marks were obtained by 82% of the students, and that 95% of the students of the first three years obtained the best marks despite having less pathophysiological and clinical knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The teaching of icon-diagnostics conducted through the methodology of the “game of the diseases hidden in the canvas” has met with considerable success among medical students, especially among those enrolled in the first three years of Medical Degree. The subsequent evaluation also demonstrated that the latter had managed to acquire notions of clinical methodology and semiotics which could be further refined along the subsequent years.

REFERENCES

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