



Marko Polo's Diary

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This time, the venue was the historical building of this august society, not the Institute for the History of Medicine.

We presented our book: Holubar K., Fatović-Ferenčić S., Plewig G: *Looking at Eyes and Faces. Ophthalmologic water-colours drawn largely by physician-artists Vienna late 18th and 19th century.*

Much like Carl von Rzehaczek, our hero from our last book (*Skin in Water Colours*) who demonstrated his own skill, first as a painter for Hebra, thereafter as professor of surgery and head of department at the University of Graz, Austria, Goerg Joseph Beer (1763-1821) is our hero in this book. He was an eminent eye surgeon, clinician, and painter. The gallery of pictures presented (drawings, gouaches, prints) is a random but close to complete selection, taken from the files of the Vienna Institute where the images are kept for decades as much as are the dermatological *objets d'art*.

The same three author-editors as in the last volume acted as presenters. No comparable comprehensive edition to this one has ever been undertaken.

Our intention simply was to present hand-made illustrations from up to 200 years ago, to which various medical celebrities, ophthalmologists in the first place, have given their personal impressions. In fact, this book represents a small experiment in which the paintings were our laboratory, while the impressions and conclusions of our contributors were our aim. The portfolio of eye diseases in this book covers problems ranging

from malignant melanoma to tapeworm infection, from cataracts to uveitis, and from hemangiomas to keratoconus. Each picture is accompanied by a clinical description and detailed differential diagnosis by a current authority. After the foreword by Walter Shelley, University of Ohio, himself a dermatologist but in close relation to ophthalmology, as his son is ophthalmologist, we have delineated the early history of the discipline in Vienna where the respective professorship exists since 1773. The first university department opened in Vienna in 1812, Helmholtz's invention of the ophthalmoscope in 1851 and Ed. Jaeger's modification, or von Graefe's operation for strabismus in 1857, all addressed here. And from the 7th generation descendant of J. G. Beer, himself an ophthalmologist, we secured a look into the family history. More followed in our volume, on the physiology and psychology of sight, the medialization of sensual perceptions, the ethics of illustration. A comprehensive perspective altogether to help making the reader a better diagnostician.

The presentation room was full and the book was well received. So, another project was finished, and the new ones are being envisaged. As it is in life.

This is my last Marko Polo Diary. Thank you, the readers of Acta, for travelling with me. Hope to meet you on some journey again.

The world is waiting, sretan vam put!
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