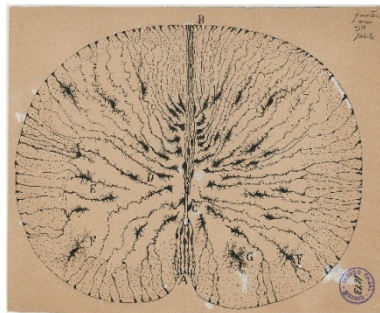




## Art Meets Science in “The Beautiful Brain”

*“One of the most unusual, ravishing exhibitions of the season.”— The New York Times*



### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chapel Hill, N.C. — Jan. 4, 2019

The Ackland Art Museum at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill presents the new exhibition **“The Beautiful Brain: The Drawings of Santiago Ramón y Cajal,”** on view from **Friday, Jan. 25 through Sunday, April 7, 2019.**

Santiago Ramón y Cajal’s drawings of the brain are both aesthetically astonishing and scientifically significant, and “The Beautiful Brain” is the first museum exhibition to present these extraordinary works in their historical context. Cajal, (1852-1934), was an artist from rural Spain who became the Nobel Prize-winning father of modern neuroscience. He made the pathbreaking discovery that the brain is composed of individual neurons that communicate across minute gaps, or synapses. Cajal saw the brain with an artist’s eye; his drawings of the microanatomy of the brain have never been equaled in clarity or beauty, and they continue to be used as teaching tools to this day.

As important to neurology as Einstein is to the study of physics, Cajal upends the prevalent cultural assumption that art and science are always and entirely separate. Katie Ziglar, director of the Ackland, said of “The Beautiful Brain,” “This exhibition is an exceptional opportunity for cross-disciplinary collaboration between the Ackland Art Museum and the [UNC Neuroscience Center](#). The Ackland will exhibit images made by UNC-Chapel Hill neuroscientists alongside Cajal’s iconic drawings, and we’ll host an ongoing dialogue between Museum curators and UNC-Chapel Hill scientists. ‘The Beautiful Brain’ will

give our entire community a chance to take a new look at the striking complementarity of art and science.”

“The Beautiful Brain” has gathered critical acclaim across North America; most of the drawings of Santiago Ramón y Cajal in the exhibit have never before been on view outside of Spain. “Looking like complex crisscrossings, fracturing thicket and lines, [Cajal’s drawings] can resemble animal architecture, nests, hives, canal or root systems, weather patterns, contour drawings, wind vectors, seed structures, riverbeds, ravines, and galaxies,” declared Jerry Saltz of *Vulture*. Cajal “drew with such delicacy and vivacity that his drawings stand on their own as wonders of graphic expression, both mysterious and familiar,” proclaimed Roberta Smith of *The New York Times*. “Together they describe a fantastic netherworld of floating forms, linear networks, bristling nodes, and torrential energies.”

Eighty of the more than 3,000 drawings Cajal made in his lifetime will be exhibited at the Ackland—the show’s only venue in the South—together with historical anatomy books illustrating the brain, including a treasure from UNC’s Wilson Library, the rare first edition of Andreas Vesalius’ foundational publication “On the fabric of the human body” (1543); contemporary images of the brain, several created by UNC-Chapel Hill neuroscientists; and two of Cajal’s own microscope slides lent by the family of Professor Edward Perl, the visionary founder of neuroscience at UNC. Cajal’s drawings continue to cast new light on the connections between art and science in ways that surprise and delight.

For a full range of public programs presented in connection with *The Beautiful Brain*, please visit [ackland.org](http://ackland.org)

***The Beautiful Brain: The Drawings of Santiago Ramon y Cajal* was developed by the Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota with the Instituto Cajal.**

**The Ackland presentation of this exhibition has been made possible in part by generous support from Betsy Blackwell & John Watson and the UNC Neuroscience Center at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s School of Medicine.**



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**About the Ackland Art Museum:** Featuring a year-round calendar of special exhibitions and dynamic public programs, the Ackland Art Museum on UNC-Chapel Hill’s historic campus is a local museum with a global outlook that bridges campus and community. Admission to the Ackland is free and accessible to all. The Ackland’s holdings include more than 18,000 works of art. The collection spans all cultures and time periods, showcasing the breadth of human creativity. A vital teaching resource, the museum’s mission is the art of understanding. Visitors can connect with the complexity and beauty of the wider world by getting close to art—the familiar, the unexpected, the challenging. The Ackland Art Museum is located at 101 South Columbia St. on the UNC Chapel Hill campus. Museum hours are Wednesday through Saturday 10 AM - 5 PM, and Sundays 1 PM - 5 PM. The museum is open until 9 PM for Chapel Hill-Carrboro’s monthly 2nd Friday ArtWalk. More information is available at [ackland.org](http://ackland.org).

*Image credit:* Santiago Ramón y Cajal, *Glial cells of the mouse spinal cord*, 1899, ink and pencil on paper, 6 x 7 in. Courtesy of Instituto Cajal (CSIC).