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The Osteology Lesson of Sebastiaen Egbertszn (1619) is a group portrait of the governors of the Amsterdam Guild of Surgeons. It represents one of a series of nine anatomy lessons commissioned in the 17th and 18th centuries. Sebastiaen Egbertszn, who was the praelector anatomiae (lecturer in anatomy) at that time, is depicted demonstrating human bone anatomy using the skeleton of an executed pirate. Egbertszn died during a plague epidemic only 2 years after the painting was delivered and the identity of the artist remains contentious to this day. It is exhibited in the Amsterdam Museum in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Read more about the stories behind this masterpiece in an essay online.

The art of surgery in BJS

In this issue of BJS, we publish a vignette connecting surgery and art. An essay is available online, free to download.

It is a pleasure to ponder the individualism required to perform surgery in this era of standardization, protocols, and team approach. As doctors, we learned about biological systems and their seemingly endless interconnections. To be a surgeon we had to learn to practise a craft that, despite the science and heritage passed down by innumerable generations, had unpredictable results as reliant on the patient as the operator. The intimacy of the dynamic interplay between patient and individual surgeon is as tangible yet indefinable as between artist and the medium in which the masterpiece unfolds. Both require dedication, training, and precision in addition to dexterity, vision, and indomitable spirit. A degree of creative optimism, manifest in the attention to detail driven by an insatiable need to do better, is apparent in all who master either art or surgery. BJS seeks to explore the artistic side of surgeons in this new section. We welcome submissions of images or articles connecting art and surgery (from historical perspectives to modern works). For an informal presubmission discussion please contact BJS Managing Editor, Alison Cherrie (alcherri@wiley.com).

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