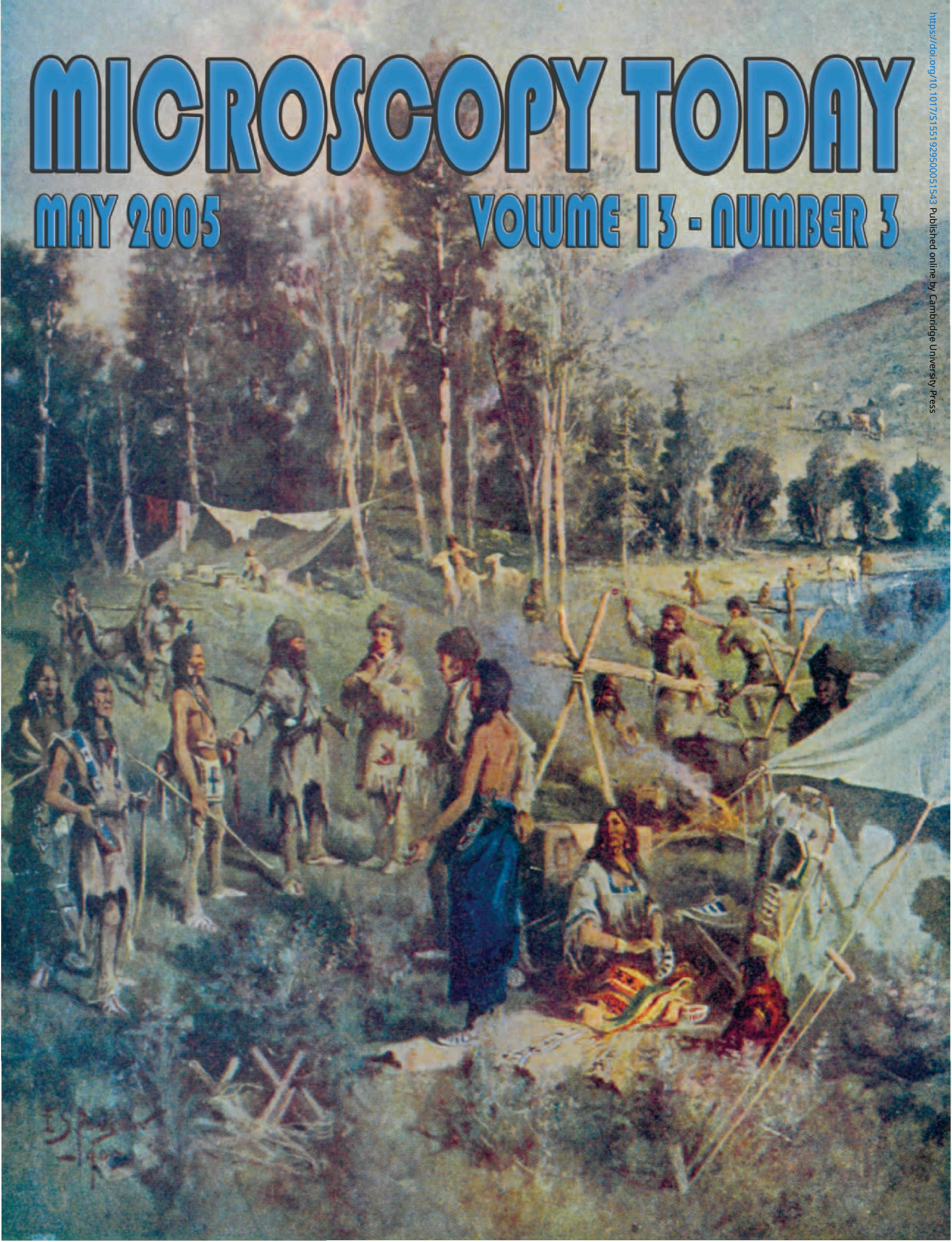


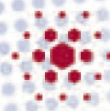
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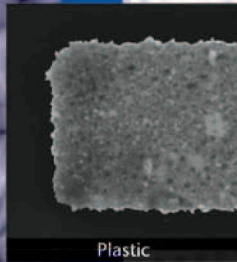
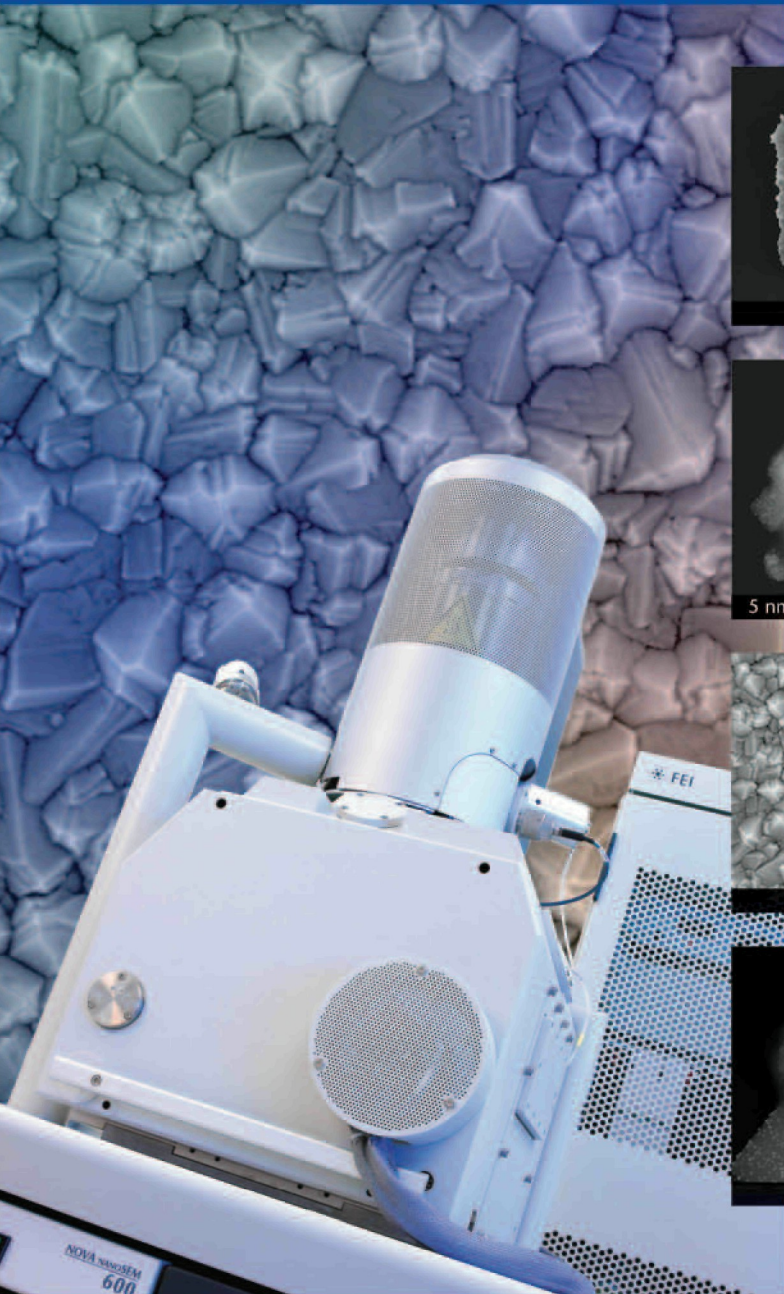
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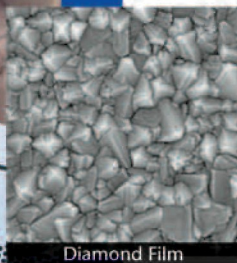
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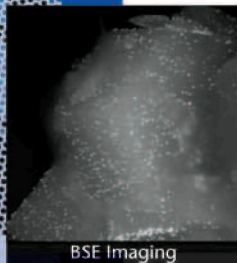
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Visualizing Gene Expression in Real-Time

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Gene expression has been visualized for a few decades, but in static forms such as blots and gene chips. Susan Janicki, Toshiro Tsukamoto, Simone Salghetti, William Tansey, Ravi Sachidanandam, Kannanganattu Prasanth, Thomas Ried, Yaron Shav-Tal, Edouard Bertrand, Robert Singer, and David Spector have recently designed a cell line in which gene expression can be observed with stunningly accurate spatial and temporal resolution.² Gene expression is a cascade of events beginning with transcription of RNA from the DNA template and ending with translation into a protein sequence. Janicki *et al.* were able to visualize the entire process at the levels of DNA, RNA, and proteins in living cells!

As pointed out by the authors, several specific steps in the gene expression paradigm have been discovered and extensively studied *in vitro*. However, the dynamics of mRNA synthesis at a single specific transcription site has not been revealed. They developed a cell line that allows the investigation of how events of gene expression are coordinated spatially and temporally *in vivo*. They began by constructing a plasmid, containing a transcription unit, and stably integrating it into a human cancer cell line. With the addition of other plasmids, they had a cell line that produced a series of detectable markers at specific events

during gene expression. Transfected cells were maintained in a physiologic chamber on an inverted microscope and time-lapse imaging was acquired. Stacks of several images 0.5 μm apart were taken to assure that at least one image was focused on the structure of interest for each time point. Different wavelengths were used to excite the different reporter fluorochromes.

After extensive analysis, the interconnectedness of chromatin remodeling, transcription, mRNA processing, and messenger ribonucleoprotein (mRNP) export became apparent. Janicki *et al.* developed a cell system that allows the visualization of an inducible array of transcription units and their RNA and protein products in living cells. This allows the evaluation of dynamic changes in chromatin structure, RNA synthesis, and factor dissociation/association during the induction of transcription. The movie can be seen at <http://spectorlab.cshl.edu>. This study provided significant insight into the dynamic spatial and temporal changes that occur as chromatin transitions from a heterochromatic to a euchromatic state. This system has considerable potential to address a broad range of questions relating to gene expression, DNA replication, and chromatin stability! ■

References

1. The author gratefully acknowledges Dr. David Spector for reviewing this article.
2. Janicki, S.M., T. Tsukamoto, S.E. Salghetti, W.P. Tansey, R. Sachidanandam, K.V. Prasanth, T. Ried, Y. Sharon Shav-Tal, E. Bertrand, R.H. Singer, and D.L. Spector, From silencing to gene expression: Real-time analysis in single genes, *Cell* 116:683-698, 2004.

INDEX OF ARTICLES

Visualizing Gene Expression in Real-Time 3

Stephen W. Carmichael, Mayo Clinic

“Objects Worthy of Notice” Microscopical Anatomy of Selected Plants Collected by The Lewis & Clark Expedition 8

Harry A. Alden and Roland H. Cunningham, Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education; Kevin Ryan and Paul T. Jantzen Media Cybernetics, Inc.; and David R. Dobbins, Millersville University

A Novel GEMINI® STEM Detector System 18

Jack Vermeulen and Heiner Jaksch, Carl Zeiss SMT, Germany

Phase Measurement in Electron Microscopy Using the Transport of Intensity Equation 22

Kazuo Ishizuka, HREM Research Inc. and Brendan Allman, LATIA Ltd.

High Resolution Light Microscopy of Live Cells 26

Vitaly Vodyanoy, Auburn University

Nondestructive, High-Resolution Materials Characterization with the Confocal Raman-AFM 30

U. Schmidt, A. Jauss, W. Ibach, K. Weishaupt, and O. Hollricher WITec GmbH, Ulm, Germany

Making Anaglyphs in Photoshop 36

Jerry Sedgewick, University of Minnesota

Ultra High Resolution SEM on Insulators and Contaminating Samples 40

Trisha Rice, Hillsboro, OR and Ralph Knowles FEI Eindhoven, The Netherlands

Influence of Illumination Conditions on Temperature in Sample Cell and the Output of a Quadrant Detector in an Optical Tweezers System 44

Yuqiang Jiang,^{1,2,3} H. Guo,² C. Liu,² Z. Li,² B. Cheng,² D. Zhang,² and S. Jia;¹ ¹Shanxi University, Taiyuan, P. R. China

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³Shanxi Datong University, Datong, P. R. China

Microwave Protocols for Plant and Animal Paraffin Microtechnique 50

Denise Schichmes, Jeffrey A. Nemson, and Steven E. Ruzin, The University of California at Berkeley

Raman Microscopy as an Aid in Failure Analysis – Examples From the Lab 54

W. John Wolfgang, Raytheon, McKinney, TX

Virtual Electron Microscopy for Undergraduate/Graduate Classes 58

Elaine Humphrey, University of British Columbia, Canada

New and Interesting PITTCON 2005 60

Industry News 61

NetNotes..... 64

Index of Advertisers..... 70



ABOUT THE COVER

Lewis and Clark in Camp on Traveler's Rest,
 (Lolo) Creek, Montana
 September 10, 1805

by Edgar Paxson

This watercolor (1903, 5-1/2" by 7"), the frontispiece for Volume 1 of Wheeler's *The Trail of Lewis and Clark* (1904), became the prototype for one of the murals Paxson painted for the Missoula County Courthouse in 1914. From *Discovering Lewis & Clark*, <http://www.lewis-clark.org>

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