

[table of contents preview](#)
INTRODUCTION TO SPMICROS SPECIAL SECTION

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SPMICROS SPECIAL SECTION

The Liturgical Cope of D. Teotônio de Braganza: Material Characterization of a 16th Century *Pluviale*
Teresa Ferreira, Hugo Moreiras, Ana Manhita, Paula Tomaz, José Mirão, Cristina B. Dias, and Ana T. Caldeira

White Spots on Smoke Rings by Bruce Nauman: A Case Study On Contemporary Art Conservation Using Microanalytical Techniques

Ana Cardeira Mafalda, Rodrigo Bettencourt de Câmara, Patrick Strzelec, Nick Schiavon, José Mirão, António Candeias, Maria Luísa Carvalho, and Marta Manso

Microscopy and X-Ray Spectroscopy Analyses for Assessment of Gilding and Silvering Techniques of Portuguese Illuminated Manuscripts

Agnès Le Gac, Isabel D. Nogueira, Mauro Guerra, José Carlos Frade, Stéphane Longelin, Marta Manso, Sofia Pessanha, Ana Isabel M. Seruya, and Maria Luísa Carvalho

Micro-Analytical Study of a Rare Papier-Mâché Sculpture

Marta Manso, Ana Bidarra, Stéphane Longelin, Sofia Pessanha, Adriana Ferreira, Maura Guerra, João Coroado, and Luísa Carvalho

Characterizing Microbial Diversity and Damage in Mural Paintings

Tânia Rosado, José Mirão, António Candeias, and Ana Teresa Caldeira

Microanalysis Characterization of Bioactive Protein-Bound Polysaccharides Produced by *Amanita Ponderosa* Cultures

Cátia Salvador, M. Rosário Martins, and A. Teresa Caldeira

A Study on the Digestive Physiology of a Marine Polychaete (*Eulalia viridis*) through Microanatomical Changes of Epithelia During the Digestive Cycle

Ana P. Rodrigo, Maria H. Costa, António Pedro Alves de Matos, Francisco Carrapiço, and Pedro M. Costa

Cellulose Films: Designing Template-Free Nanoporous Cellulose Films on Semiconducting Surfaces

Ana P. Carapeto, Ana Maria Ferraria, Pedro Brogueira, Sami Boufi, and Ana Maria B. Do Rego

Room Temperature Synthesis of Cu₂O Nanospheres: Optical Properties and Thermal Behavior

Daniela Nunes, Lídia Santos, Paulo Duarte, Ana Pimentel, Joana V. Pinto, Pedro Barquinha, Patrícia A. Carvalho, Elvira Fortunato, and Rodrigo Martins

Microstructural Changes in Copper-Graphite-Alumina Nanocomposites Produced by Mechanical Alloying

Ivan Rodrigues, Mafalda Guedes, and Alberto C. Ferro

TEM and HRTEM Characterization of TiAl Diffusion Bonds Using Ni/Al Nanolayers

Sónia Simões, Filomena Viana, Ana S. Ramos, Maria T. Vieira, and Manuel F. Vieira

MATERIALS APPLICATIONS

In Situ TEM Imaging of Defect Dynamics under Electrical Bias in Resistive Switching Rutile-TiO₂

Ranga J. Kamaladasa, Abhishek A. Sharma, Yu-Ting Lai, Wenhao Chen, Paul A. Salvador, James A. Bain, Marek Skowronski, and Yoosuf N. Picard

Single- and Multi-Frequency Detection of Surface Displacements via Scanning Probe Microscopy

Konstantin Romanyuk, Sergey Yu. Luchkin, Maxim Ivanov, Arseny Kalinin, and Andrei L. Kholkin

Effects of Preheating and Cooling Durations on Roll-to-Roll Hot Embossing

Seyoung Kim, Youngsu Son, Heechang Park, Byungin Kim, and Dongwon Yun

Imaging Samples in Silica Aerogel Using an Experimental Point Spread Function

Amanda J. White and Denton S. Ebel

BIOLOGICAL AND BIOMATERIALS APPLICATIONS

Osseointegration of Ti-6Al-4V Alloy Implants with a Titanium Nitride Coating Produced by a PIRAC Nitriding Technique: A Long-Term Time Course Study in the Rat

Guy Sovak, Irena Gotman, and Anna Weiss

Micro-topography and Reactivity of Implant Surfaces: An In Vitro Study in Simulated Body Fluid (SBF)

Gandolfi M.G., Taddei P., Siboni F., Perrotti V., Jezzi G., Piattelli A., Prati C.

Morphological and Chemical Comparative Analysis of The Human and Bovine Dentin-Adhesive Layer

Luís Eduardo Silva Soares and Ana Maria do Espírito Santo

Bond Strength and Bioactivity of Zn-Doped Dental Adhesives Promoted by Load Cycling

Manuel Toledano, Fátima S. Aguilera, Estrella Osorio, Inmaculada Cabello, Manuel Toledano-Osorio, and Raquel Osorio

X-Ray Microscopy as an Approach to Increasing Accuracy and Efficiency of Serial Block-Face Imaging for Correlated Light and Electron Microscopy of Biological Specimens

Eric A. Bushong, Donald D. Johnson Jr., Keun-Young Kim, Masako Terada, Megumi Hatori, Steven T. Peltier, Satchidananda Panda, Arno Merkle, and Mark H. Ellisman

A Robust Generic Method for Grid Detection in White Light Microscopy Malassez Blade Images in the Context of Cell Counting

Ambroise Marin, Emmanuel Denimal, Stéphane Guyot, Ludovic Journaux, and Paul Molin

Validating Whole Slide Digital Morphometric Analysis as a Microscopy Tool

Robert B. Diller and Robert S. Kellar

Measuring Sperm Movement within the Female Reproductive Tract Using Fourier Analysis

Philip R. Nicovich, Erin L. Macartney, Renee M. Whan, and Angela J. Crean

Fish Erythrocytes as Biomarkers for the Toxicity of Sublethal Doses of an Azo Dye, Basic Violet-1 (CI: 42535)

Kirandeep Kaur and Arvinder Kaur

BOOK REVIEW

Ultrastructure Atlas of Human Tissues. Fred E. Hossler. Alois Lametschwandner



Dear Abbe

Dear Abbe,

A strange difficulty has arisen in our medical entomology lab. We need to cut sections of the larva of the South African minefly, *Musca subterranea adamantivora*. This is the vector of a viral infection of workers in our local diamond mines. The fly bites the miners and also bats infected from eating certain moths. The sectioning difficulty is due to the minefly larvae eating bat guano, which contains dust with microdiamonds stirred up by the mining. The largest of these diamonds is no bigger than a cell nucleus, but they concentrate in the tissue. These microdiamonds shred the sections and destroy our diamond knives. Even the hardest epoxy resins don't help. We have worn out more than 50 diamond knives trying to section these wretched little worms. Please make some suggestions. We have run out of ideas.

Baffled in Bloemfontein

Dear Baffled,

This is not a new problem. Many years ago in my impetuous youth (as opposed to my petuous old age), I was sent specimens of these very same minefly larvae. The senders didn't know why they couldn't section them. After some false starts, I discovered the source of woe and immediately requested several liters of larva and started harvesting tiny diamonds. Unlike some people who merely see a baffling conundrum, I saw sparkling opportunity! During an evening of notes on napkins and glasses of Liebfraumilch with Carl Fabergé, I conceived of invisibly small wires (it was not a difficult Ideegeburt) onto which I could mount the microdiamonds. Imagine the potential sales! Microscopic diamond rings, affordable to anyone. Immediately I saw the flaw: "affordable to anyone." At that time I was not the philanthropic misanthrope I am today, so I immediately burned my notes. If only I had kept the parts about making microscopic and submicroscopic wires!

Dear Abbe,

The provost of our institution makes us fill out a "Quarterly Federal Lobbying Disclosure Report," and I am not sure if I have interacted with a politician. Is there a way to tell if the people I work with or interact with daily are politicians?

Apolitical in Andover

Dear Apolitical,

Sometimes the difficult part of answering a question is not saying what I really think. So, my puzzled friend, we should refer to the famous lexicographer Herr Ambrose Bierce who noted that a politician is "an eel in the fundamental mud upon which the superstructure of organized society is reared. When he wriggles he mistakes the agitation of his tail for the trembling of the edifice. As compared with the statesman, he suffers the disadvantage of being alive." I couldn't have said better myself without using coarse language unsuitable for such a fine publication.

Lab mates bugging you? Need creative funding methods? Let Herr Abbe take a swat at those pesky problems for you. Send your queries to his minimally qualified assistant at jpshield@uga.edu.

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