

# CONFERENCIA DE CLAUSURA

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## Rembrandt and tuberculosis - how TB influenced fine arts

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In past centuries, tuberculosis was omnipresent and part of daily life and death. Many artists were influenced by the disease, either by getting infected and ill themselves or by observing tuberculosis in their direct environment. The "White Death" hit without warning, without calculable scheme or identifiable causes. Thus, people in their times and especially artists perceived tuberculosis as threatening, but also mystic disease. Writers, painters, musicians and others took the topic of tuberculosis

disease in their oeuvres. To illustrate the influence of tuberculosis, some examples of fine arts like the works of Sandro Botticelli and Rembrandt van Rijn are presented and discussed in their particular historical context. With the golden age of bacteriology when Robert Koch described *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* as the etiologic agent of tuberculosis, the disease lost its threat and also its mystic aura.