In 2019, the CNIO Cancer Research Centre was transformed into a venue for mutually beneficial encounters between the worlds of science and art. Its walls were given over to multimedia works curated by visual artist Amparo Garrido, who also serves as Coordinator of Institutional Image and Outreach to Society at the CNIO. Prominent among the participants was Ignacio Cirac, who heads the Max Planck Institute of Quantum Optics in Garching (Germany). He was paired off with Chema Madoz, winner of Spain’s National Prize for Photography and the sparks given off materialised in an edition of 30 signed, limited copies of a print by Madoz, the proceeds of which were earmarked for projects funded by the ‘CNIO Friends’ philanthropic initiative.

It was the CNIO’s turn to host some of the big players in the philosophy and ethics on occasion of the Centre’s annual Symposium on Science and Philosophy. The scientists involved included Maria A. Blasco, Director of the Centre, Lluís Montoliú, Head of the Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology at the Biotech Center (CNB-CNIC) in Barcelona, and Alfonso Valencia, Head of the Bioinformatics and Life Sciences programme at the Barcelona Supercomputing Center. A formidable array of thinkers was mustered to keep the arguments lively, including Antonio Diéguez, distinguished Professor of Logic and Philosophy of Science at the University of Murcia. Finally there was Michel Hauskeller, Head of the Philosophy Department of Oslo (Norway); and Maria Cerezo, Professor of Logic and Philosophy of Science at the University of the Basque Country.

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The initiative continued to pick up momentum throughout the spring of 2019. In April of that year, CNIO teamed up with ‘la Caixa’ Foundation for a panel discussion centred on Mary Shelley’s novel Frankenstein. Was Victor Frankenstein the prototype of the heroic scientist? Or just a mad one? Sharply different opinions were advanced, defended and discussed by Maria A. Blasco, Director of the CNIO, along with novelist/essayist Lorenzo Luengo, and Cristina Higueras, novelist, actress, and theatrical producer. The controversial clash between confluence of science and philosophy was at the core of the follow-up discussion moderated by writer Fernando Marías.

“CNIO Arte allows scientists and artists to explore the common ground on which the act of creation takes place. That’s where you’ll find the true sources of inspiration.”

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