

# CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

## PHRENOLOGY SKULL

Human osteological

19th century

MAH2015.508

By the end of the 17th century, a time of progressive enlightenment, about the mismatches of the mind – placed between normality and madness – it came out the first definitions and theories of the technical assistance. Using different approaches, metaphysical and physical, several doctrines have been elaborated, self-classified as *scientific* to a lesser or greater extent. However, since the origins and causes of mental alienation were still unknown, some of those theories, like the phrenological, searched for the links between intellectual, affective and instinctive faculties and the skull morphology.

Elaborated by Franz Joseph Gall, a German doctor and anatomist, the phrenology doctrine, envisaging the skull as the emotions *locus*, embodied in the skull surface – through the analysis of its protuberances and protrusions, named as *organs* – the mental faculties. Therefore, this cartography made possible the identification of, for example, *physical love, places, people, conscience, words, cruelty, beautiful spirit* or *theosophy*. Acting as a base for the physiologic systems behind the emerging criminal anthropology, the phrenology was soon spread through western Europe and north-American mainland; since 1853, it was possible to find a phrenology department at the Escola Médico-Cirúrgica de Lisboa, where, under the goal of identifying specific morphological traces in the skull configuration, attempts took place to acknowledge any criminal stains.

This area, of *criminal anthropology, alienist pathology and morbid psychology*, awakened the interest of Manuel António Ferreira Deusdado, who, before teaching History and Geography in Angra do Heroísmo, had participated, in 1890, in the *IV Congresso Penitenciário Internacional* and, in 1892, in the *III Congresso de Antropologia Criminal*. Among other works about this subject, he published in 1889, the *Estudos sobre Criminalidade e Educação (Philosophia e Anthropagogia)*. It was he, most probably, who brought this skull to the old Liceu de Angra do Heroísmo.