

# CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

## VIBRATING MASSAGER

Metal and cork

H. 7 x L. 38,5 x W. 20 cm

1900-1915, London, England

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If, after the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the western societies industrialization gave impulse – among vapors, electricity, mechanisms and different gear – to the development, technology and progress, at the same time, with origin in the idleness spreading through the upper classes, it favored the diffusion of a myriad of little miseries, infirmities and other annoyances that became urgent to heal. Therefore, some very diverse health regimens arose, together with a wide amount of self-assistance devices, with a special regard to massage, considered, at the time, as an efficient practice in fighting almost every known disease, by diagnostic.

The vibrating massager now in exhibition, integrated in the Angra do Heroísmo Museum Science and Technology Unit, is an example, of those first mechanic therapeutic devices, whose existence was advertised in magazines and newspapers. Its utilization by prominent society members and even by several European royal families, the Portuguese one included, was advertised in brochures and leaflets, stating its healing capacities as, for example, for anemia, cramps, fatigue, sciatica, headaches, migraines, flatulence, gout, neurasthenia, obesity, paralysis, hepatic, renal and nervous problems, rheumatism, deafness, and tumors. The feminine hysteria was not excluded from this list – this diagnostic that comprised all the complains and symptoms that under any other light would remain inexplicable – believed to be caused by the uterus since Hippocrates who viewed the hysteria as erratic, *taking an account the fact that it wandered everywhere in the body, blocking the outflow of the respiratory tract, and impeding the breath.* In these cases, the medical usual method consisted in the application of pelvic massages and clitoris stimulation; the success of the treatment resulted in manifestations of blush and relief from the patients, as a sign of having achieved the hysterical paroxysm, a term used by the medicine in those days to describe the orgasm, exempted of any sexual connotation.

These vibrating massage devices, having received the name of Veedee – seen as a word game with the Latin expression *Veni, vidi, vici* – claimed to be the panacea because they *came, saw, and won*, the same that naming it as the cure for all the health problems.