Volume 19 Number 1 February 2013
Microscopy AND Microanalysis

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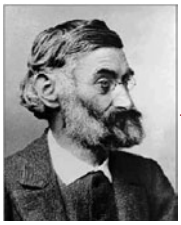

Dear Abbe

Dear Abbe,

We need to be able to block stray light from our inverted microscope with two-photon capability. I know people drape cloth over their microscopes, but I'm not sure what kind of cloth. Is there a special material? Will it really keep stray light from reaching my scope?
In the Dark in Dallas

Dear Dark,

You raise an interesting dilemma! All this fuss over light getting to the scope. There is a more pressing problem that your query has dredged from the depths of my psyche, which I spent years trying to suppress. Aesthetics has never been a strong suit of most microscope designers. Why, I've had microscopes that were so unattractive that I was forced to cover them with a heavy cloth, or some opaque covering, just to use them without mental trauma. One microscopist suggested cutting and taping a black garbage bag on the microscope. I have personally seen microscopes so hideous that they were referred to as "Two Baggers"—one bag on the scope and one on the head of the operator in the event the first bag fell off. It's a problem on two levels—how to save yourself from trauma and still operate the blasted scope without the benefit of sight. I remember one dissecting scope from a North Korean manufacturer that was so repulsive it could only be described as "Coyote Ugly." If you had to touch the adjustable zoom control for any length of time, you'd rather chew your own arm off rather than fiddle with the fine focus knob. It's a problem that many manufacturers are loath to address or even admit. A tragedy, really.

Don't you be in the dark. Bring your enlightening questions to Herr Abbe for whom no problem is too straightforward and no answer is too obscure. He receives his mail via his faithful assistant at jpshield@uga.edu.

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doi:10.1017/S1551929512001095