

Brian Marriott

PhD

Department of Neuroscience,
Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry

Image created at the University of
Alberta

*Images of Research Competition
University of Alberta*

Brain Games

Third Place (2021)

Slice to D4. One after the other, the wells of the plate in front of me are methodically filled with brain slices, precisely cut by a vibrating blade. Each one thinner than a human hair, I delicately transfer each slice as they are cut to a collecting dish with a paintbrush. This self portrait peers through the dish as I collect the exact region of the brain my research revolves around: the claustrum. My research has shown that the claustrum connects to other parts of the brain in an organized manner, contrary to some previous literature. However, this is only one piece of a much larger game. With each move the field makes to advance our understanding of the claustrum, the claustrum offers perplexing countermoves that defy our expectations. We are in a chess game against the brain. The brains counterstrikes against our inquiries do not come out of malice, but simply due to biological complexity! Each step we propose is an assumption based on prior knowledge, of which we stand at the frontier of. And yet, for every setback or strange result that invalidates our assumptions, we push forward into the great unknown, ever wiser. The machine whirs as a new slice is cut. Slice to D5.