EXHIBITION TEXTS

Anatomy of Fragility – Body Images in Art and Science
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Anatomy of Fragility – An introduction
by Franziska Nori, Director Frankfurter Kunstverein

From 2nd October 2025 to 1st March 2026, the Frankfurter Kunstverein presents the exhibition *Anatomy of Fragility – Body Images in Art and Science*.

The ways in which we look at, perceive and represent the body are in constant flux. Art and science have always used images of the body to tell stories about the human condition, and with each passing epoch new images and interpretations of the body have emerged. And so, the exhibition weaves together objects from different fields and periods: from the idealised depictions of the body in Archaic Greek art, through religious votive offerings as prayers for healing, to spectacular anatomical wax figures of the 18th century and on to the latest images from medical research, in which we travel virtually through a beating heart. The exhibition juxtaposes these with works by contemporary artists who express a new sense of physicality, its reinterpretation and the call for a new idea of humanity.

But why reflect on the body today? Do we not already know enough about it? We all have bodies. More than that: we are all bodies. The body can be observed from the outside and examined from within, measured and quantified. It can be pathologised and objectified, healed and cared for. Bodies are vulnerable entities. The vulnerability of the body is an existential condition of being human, and yet, nothing frightens us quite as much as this vulnerability. Illness, ageing and death render our biological being fragile, and so we do everything we can to optimise and bring under control the fact that bodies are finite. And at the same time, bodies are political. They bear characteristics that, when read culturally and politically, result in belonging or exclusion. The body has never been a neutral entity, but always an expression of its era and a mirror of its time.

Today, the body has become a central flashpoint of conflicting views of what it means to be human and of ideological battles. The body is not solely a private matter; it is the site upon which world views, value systems and thus politics are played out. Vulnerability is unevenly distributed within society. It has always been that way: those who control bodies wield power. And so, today, ideological battles are raging over our bodies—not always visible, but all the more bitterly fought.

While for humanists the physical body is central to human identity and experience, transhumanists regard it as a temporary biological limitation to be overcome.

Fragility is a fundamental condition of being human. We are born fragile and dependent upon others, and fragile and dependent upon others we remain in the face of our own mortality. Our bodies rely on countless necessities: food, sleep, the air we breathe, love and care. In society, the fear of shrinking economic growth is spreading, exacerbated by dwindling resources. At present, we stand paralysed, witnessing how quickly social peace can collapse. The resurgence of fantasies of international expansionism, armed conflicts and the longing for authoritarian rulers make us forget that, above all, the preservation of the planet and the functioning of ecological systems are cross-species prerequisites for survival.

We are vulnerable, yet who wishes to be vulnerable? Human beings have devised countless strategies of coping and avoidance to keep vulnerability at bay. And in times of digital mirroring and optimisation, the body has become a commodity—malleable and alterable—a status symbol of health, strength, discipline and success.

Vulnerability as Controversy – the Dispute over Vulnerability

Under the notion of social and political vulnerability, the fragility of individuals and groups is discussed—those who must endure fundamental experiences of dependency, subjugation and violence, namely people living under systems of state violence, people in poverty, people who are ill or people with disabilities, people affected by racism and discrimination, but also people in regions of severe environmental degradation, people whose bodies are read as non-binary and, time and again, and despite everything, women's bodies. For this reason, human beings have always fought for rights, for access to care, for work, protection and participation.

The philosopher Michel Foucault had already interpreted the body as a field upon which power relations are exercised. His analysis showed how bodies are shaped and interpreted not only physically, but also through images, concepts and behaviours marked by power and knowledge.

The internationally influential legal scholar and ethicist Martha Nussbaum, at the University of Chicago, argues in debates on international law that inequalities—particularly with regard to disability, ageing and dependency—should be regarded as universal human characteristics rather than private failings. She is an advocate of an active politics of care and of a feminist conception of justice that goes beyond categories and even beyond species boundaries.

The philosopher and social theorist Judith Butler, who teaches at the University of California, Berkeley, believes that vulnerability is the central human characteristic that shapes the relationship between power and individuals. She explores the web of social relations and dependencies, asking who has access to the basic conditions of existence and who does not, who is recognised and included by the state and its structures and who is not. She calls for solidarity through collective acts of resistance and for the practice of political demonstration, in which vulnerable bodies defiantly confront power.

The philosophers Michael Hauskeller (University of Liverpool) and Rainer Mühlhoff (Osnabrück University) critically examine the notion of vulnerability in times of artificial intelligence, all-determining technological systems and their concentration in the hands of a few. Both focus on the phenomenon of the alliance between Big Tech and politics in the United States. They analyse and expose the current fusion of anti-democratic activity, a propensity for violence and the use of technology as an instrument of power by an all-powerful elite. What unites them is a world view and an image of humanity in which bodies are seen as an obstacle to be disposed of: the bodies of political dissidents, of migrants, of all those whose bodies are not heteronormative and male and above all of those who are not part of an exclusive elite.

What seems to unite the Big Tech Five and the MAGA movement in their visions of the future is the concentration of absolute power in the hands of a few, together with an interpretation of transhumanist ideologies. Here, technology is seen as an expanding instrument for shaping human evolution and for overcoming limitations such as ageing, illness and vulnerability itself. In this view of humanity, bodies are burdensome precisely because they are vulnerable. And so the mind is to be uploaded—eternally, immortally—into the cloud, which, on closer inspection, would mainly be available to a small, affluent elite. But what does this mean for the bodies that remain? What happens to them? Who are they?

Body Images in Science

Neuroscience, behavioural science and psychology have significantly deepened our understanding of our 'self' and sharpened our self-awareness. The body is the central medium through which a 'self' can first experience itself as part of reality. It arises in the interplay between the external world and the inner bodily, biological processes. What ever more precise imaging techniques reveal to us from within the organism is breathtaking. Whether by magnetic resonance imaging, ultrasound or computed tomography, the sight of our pulsating organs in real time has once again transformed our relationship to our bodies.

In the exhibition, the anatomical gaze and medical knowledge take centre stage. For it is through our bodily constitution that we experience the world around us—we see, hear, touch and taste it. We encounter it through our sense of pain, our sense of proprioception and bodily awareness, our sense of time and space, and our sense of belonging to a community and even to a greater whole. We inhabit this body and feel identical with it—or not.

From antiquity to contemporary phenomenology, human beings have reflected on the relationship between self and body. Antonio Damasio, professor at the University of Southern California and internationally renowned neuroscientist, examines the interweaving of body, feelings and emotions. He defines feelings as 'mental experiences of body states' and emotions as the body's physical reactions to external and internal stimuli. These are interpreted by the brain and thereby generate our feelings. Together, they regulate the whole of life, consciousness and decision-making. Who, then, am I, if it is my body that first creates my idea of the self and the world?

Body Images in Art

The vocation of the arts is to explore and to speak of this. They probe, search and continually find new forms for the experience of being alive. Through engaging with emotions, experiences and the world, art can convey a deeper understanding of the human condition. Artists and thinkers do not fear vulnerability. They recognise vulnerability as a *conditio humana* and draw from it. Art is a mode of inquiry into the human condition that leads to self-discovery and to a deeper understanding of one's own existence.

Imaginal thinking—that is, thinking primarily in images—plays a central role in creative power. Our experience can arise both in reality and in imagination. Images are interpretations of reality or emerge from what is seen. We have afterimages, memories, mental pictures and dream images with which our consciousness constructs a reality. Linguistic processes also work with these images. Our brain understands and processes information particularly strongly in the form of images, symbols and metaphors. Images address the limbic system, which is responsible for emotions. Stories, music and images can awaken memories and evoke moods. Above all, images exert an enormous power over us.

The exhibition *Anatomy of Fragility* emerged under the influence of strong positioning in contemporary art. Agnes Questionmark, Chiara Enzo, Yein Lee, The Alternative Limb Project and Marshmallow Laser Feast each, in their own way, address the question of our bodies and their vulnerability through images grounded in shifting perspectives and beliefs. What positions do these artists take? And what do they reveal about contemporary views and about the changing ways of seeing the world in our time? How bodies are represented is more important today than ever.

As exhibition makers, we think in images and through works. We do this in our own way, by setting contemporary artworks in dialogue with objects and perspectives from the sciences and with works from other epochs. The history of art is closely bound up with the history of anatomy. Knowledge of bodily structure has always been fundamental to representing the body, and this knowledge has arisen, since antiquity, through dissection, the breaking down and mapping of its parts, and the description of their form and position. For millennia, this was done in the form of drawings, and then later in the form of sculptures.

Anatomy of Fragility creates an interwoven parcours in which the increasingly scientific gaze into the interior of our bodies continually shifts and redefines the question of who we are.

The exhibition reflects the programmatic direction of the Frankfurter Kunstverein, in which contemporary art and the sciences are examined as equal forms of expression of humanity's quest for knowledge and meaning.

Part of our way of curating exhibitions is the extended intellectual collaboration with numerous experts. Our heartfelt thanks go to **Angel Moya Garcia**, who enriched our curatorial team from Italy. We extend our deepest gratitude to all the participating artists—**Agnes Questionmark**, **Chiara Enzo**,

Yein Lee, **Sophie de Oliveira Barata** (founder of **The Alternative Limb Project**) and artists' collective **Marshmallow Laser Feast** as well as the filmmaker **Iris Fegerl**—with whom we developed and selected new productions and exhibition pieces.

Our thanks also go to our many institutional partners and lenders. **Dr Matthias Recke**, Custodian of the Collection of Classical Antiquities and Sculpture Hall, and **Prof. Dr Anja Klöckner**, Professor of Classical Archaeology at the Goethe University Frankfurt, who made the loan of the monumental statue of *Kroisos Kouros* from their collection possible, which marks the starting point of the exhibition parcours at the Frankfurter Kunstverein.

Special thanks are owed to **Prof. Dr Bastian Schilling**, Director of the Department of Dermatology, Venereology and Allergology, University Hospital at the Goethe University Frankfurt, as well as to **Prof. Dr Falk Ochsendorf**, **Thomas Koculak** and **Andrea Steininger-Rusch**, who introduced us to their scientific moulage collection and generously supported us with loans. **Dr Judith Blume**, Coordinator of the Collections at the Goethe University Frankfurt, created the framework for these collaborations.

At Justus Liebig University Giessen we were able to rely on the expertise and support of **Dr Michaela Stark**, Custodian of the Collection of Antiquities of the Chair of Classical Archaeology, who loaned the exhibition Etruscan votive offerings from the 3rd century BC.

We also extend heartfelt thanks to the President of the University Museum Network of the Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna, **Prof. Dr Giuliana Benvenuti**, as well as **Prof. Dr Stefano Ratti**, scientific adviser of the "Luigi Cattaneo" Anatomical Wax Collection, and **Prof. Dr Lucia Corrain**, scientific adviser of the Museum of Palazzo Poggi, for realising this international cooperation with us. Special thanks are due to our colleagues of the University Museum Network **Dr Annalisa Managlia**, Technical Coordinator, and **Dr Cristina Nisi**, Loans and Legal Affairs, as well as to **Daniele Angellotto**, restorer at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence, whose extraordinary personal commitment made the fragile loans possible and their first presentation in Frankfurt.

Of great importance was our exchange with the research team at the **Fraunhofer Institute for Digital Medicine MEVIS**, whose Head of Science Communication, **Bianka Hofmann**, offered us unique insights into the institute's work.

We thank the artist **Benedikt Hipp** for his collaboration on the loan of works from the private collection of **Hans and Benedikt Hipp** from Pfaffenhofen. These unique and moving wax votive offerings and their wooden model are essential to the exhibition.

We also thank **Paolo Zani**, **Matteo Larice**, **Mariolina Bassetti**, **Mauro de Iorio** and **Stefano Menconi** for the loans from their private collections. **Galleria Zero** in Milan supported Chiara Enzo, while the gallery **Airas Wang de Lafée** in Girona supported Agnes Questionmark. The **Zabludowicz Collection** provided additional financial support for the production of nine new works by Agnes Questionmark, commissioned by the Frankfurter Kunstverein. We would like to thank our colleagues at ***Netzwerk Nachhaltige Kultur*** for generously providing numerous display cases. This network is a voluntary

association of Frankfurt museums and representatives from the independent scene who have joined forces to promote reuse and circular economy in the exhibition sector.

Without the patronage of the **Italian Consulate General in Frankfurt**, and the personal commitment of Consul General **Dr Massimo Darchini** and the Head of the Cultural Office **Michele Santoriello**, this exhibition as a German-Italian collaboration would have been unthinkable.

When people work together, it creates strength, joy and confidence—through which almost anything becomes possible.

Franziska Nori
Director Frankfurter Kunstverein

Collection of Classical Antiquities and Sculpture Hall of the Goethe University Frankfurt

Kroisos-Kouros (Copy of the *Kroisos Kouros*, original dated to around 530 BC.)
Plaster, painted, with integral base
56 x 60 x 210 cm
Courtesy Collection of Classical Antiquities and Sculpture Hall of the Goethe University Frankfurt

The kouros represents the archetype of an artistic form, a type of statue in which the human body becomes an expression of cosmic order, social identity and shared values. This form of free-standing sculpture emerged between the 7th and 5th centuries BC and was displayed in public spaces during the Archaic period of Greece. In Ancient Greek, 'kouros' means 'youth' or 'young man'. Its female counterpart is the 'kore'.

In the exhibition *Anatomy of Fragility*, the Kroisos Kouros statue marks the beginning of a journey into the world of the human body's image. It is a plaster replica from the Collection of Classical Antiquities and Sculpture Hall of the Goethe University Frankfurt. This specific representation is also known as *Kouros of Anavyssos*, and the original is housed in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens. Slightly differing variants of this basic type were found throughout Greece and rediscovered in later periods.

We see an upright male figure, welcoming visitors as they enter the foyer of the Frankfurter Kunstverein. The left foot is set slightly forwards, and the legs are firmly planted, yet suggest movement, as if the body were about to take a step. The long hair is braided, and the arms hang calmly at the sides, but the clenched fists convey a sense of energy and readiness for action. The body is youthful, symmetrical and powerful, with muscles clearly defined.

And yet, it is not a naturalistic depiction. The sculpture reflects, on the one hand, the attempt to depict the human body with anatomical accuracy through close observation, and on the other hand, it adheres to strict stylistic conventions such as proportional grids, axes of symmetry and

abstracted forms. The figure embodies an ideal type. It represents less an individual body than a culturally codified and regulated idea of a 'beautiful body'. The image becomes a sign and a symbol in which a society mirrors itself. In Greek society, the free, adult man was the measure of all things. He embodied *kaloi kagathoi*—the beautiful and the good—as noted by cultural historian Mireille M. Lee.
Accordingly, the male body was regarded as the standard and ideal figure, as bearer and expression of a collective self-image.

The term 'kouros' (plural: kouroi) defines a fixed visual schema, a representation that developed from Egyptian models of monumental sculpture. In the kouros, one can see how the depiction of the body changed in comparison with its Egyptian predecessors. The uneven distribution of weight, the emphasis on the joints and the knees convey movement, dynamism, vitality and physical presence. The kouros thus became an expression of a new engagement with anatomy, proportion, bodily tension and statics in Archaic Greek sculpture.

More than 600 of these marble figures have survived, including numerous female statues, the so-called 'korai' (singular: kore). The male and female body images reflect the ideals of Archaic elite society—a time when the polis emerged as the dominant form of community and warfare shaped social life. For the patrons of these figures, who belonged to the social elite, the ideal archetype of the human being lay in the unity of physical beauty and moral virtue. They sought idealised statues of young men and women that would express both external appearance and inner greatness.

A central feature of all kouroi and korai is the so-called 'Archaic smile'. It expresses self-control, dignity, decency and inner order—values that shaped the conduct and bearing of the Greek elites in the Archaic period. Among the kouroi and korai that have been found, stylistic deviations can be observed. The archaeologist Francis Prost explained these variations as conscious choices in representation, and that they expressed what distinguished a particular polis.

According to Prost, the style of the kouroi was a system of signs, a visual vocabulary through which the elite of one polis distinguished itself from that of another. The kouroi thus served as instruments of cultural self-definition. The depictions of the body corresponded, on the one hand, to ideal aesthetic conceptions; beyond this, they embodied the values and the political identity of an entire society.

The Alternative Limb Project, founded by Sophie de Oliveira Barata (*1982 London, UK)

Materialise, 2015
Arm prosthesis
3D printing, CNC routing, hand carved and sculpted, using steel, rock, earth, wood, moss, oil, cork, wool, bronze, rhodium, gold and magnets
50 x 13 x 13 cm

VINE 2.0, 2022
Arm prosthesis
Resin, electronics, metal components and gold plated metal
70 x 14 x 14 cm

Photo and video installation with photos by Rosie Williams, Ewelina Stechnij, Louie Banks, Lukasz Suchorab, Omkaar Kotedia, Rosemary Williams, Simon Clemenger, Andrew Perris

Courtesy The Alternative Limb Project

Sophie de Oliveira Barata is a designer, artist and prosthetist. She works with people who, through artistic and artificial enhancement, create and wear a self-empowering form of their body. The word 'prosthesis' derives from the Greek 'to add'. In the medical sense it refers to an artificial body part that replaces a missing limb. Yet in the context of The Alternative Limb Project, addition means more. It isn't simply about supplementing the body or replacing a lost limb. Her 'alternative limbs' are an empowerment of personality. They are an expression of a body that, through our own narratives, assumes a self-selected, extended form.

The absence of a limb—whether from birth, through accident or due to medical necessity—has long been associated with social stigmatisation. The idea of a body that doesn't conform to the norm is often a factor in the exclusion and shame experienced by those affected. Prostheses can partly compensate for the body's missing functions, and with advancing technology, this can now be done in such a way that the distinction between the body and the artificial part is largely unobtrusive and invisible.

Sophie de Oliveira Barata, however, represents a practice that not only provides wearers with a functional prosthesis, but develops with them a concept of proud otherness. It is about the empowerment of their being and the wearing of an ornament that extends their bodies and embodies the uniqueness of the wearer. For this reason, de Oliveira Barata, deliberately, doesn't call her objects prostheses, instead, provocatively, she calls them 'alternative limbs' where the 'alternative' stands for expansion and inimitability.

De Oliveira Barata's work brings together science, technology, medicine and art. Behind each of her projects and objects stands an individual person, with their own story and psychology. Today, de Oliveira Barata collaborates with a wide range of trades and specialists, including electronics engineers, mechanical engineers, prosthetic technicians, traditional craftspeople (such as woodcarvers), metalworkers and jewellery designers. In addition to extensive handcraft, she also employs techniques such as 3D printing and computer-assisted milling.

After studying art, de Oliveira Barata began her career in film, in special effects. She then moved into the medical field, where she spent eight years working in a rehabilitation centre with people who had undergone amputations. Following this, she decided to move beyond simply producing hyperrealistic replicas and instead work with those affected to develop prostheses as forms of artistic and personal expression. Where initially the aim had been realism—to give prostheses an appearance as close to natural limbs as possible and to achieve visual continuity with the body—

she broadened her ambition by creating artefacts that tell the story of the individual. Bodies change in their vitality and variability: skin tone shifts with circulation or exposure to the sun and body shape alters with the time of day, weight fluctuation or ageing. And the static nature of the prosthesis remains in contrast to this.

The creation of hyperrealistic limbs begins with a foam mould that replicates the missing body part. A silicone cast is then produced, tailored precisely to the body. Skin surfaces are built up from silicone, tinted with pigments and applied in many layers until the natural skin tone is achieved. To reproduce the translucency of real skin, the material is stretched and threaded with fine fibres. The details then follow—moles, scars, freckles, wrinkles or tattoos—and all can be added individually. Nails, too, are adjusted in shape, colour and length, with nail polish available on request. Clients are involved throughout the entire process and decide which details matter most to them. The result is a piece so lifelike that it blends seamlessly into the wearer's life.

When the aim is not deception but expression, de Oliveira Barata works with greater freedom. The prosthesis becomes a sculpture, an accessory or a work of art. Here, too, everything begins with dialogue: what does the wearer wish to reveal, what story should the object tell? The team brings together a wide range of handcraft techniques to create a unique piece.

De Oliveira Barata recognised early on that people longed for more than the mere replacement of a missing limb and its function. What they sought was healing. She set out in search of individuals who would join her in developing a new approach to artificial limbs. The first was Viktoria Modesta, a British singer and model, and soon others followed—Paralympic athletes, musicians, artists, former soldiers—all realising their dream of a functional extension to their bodies. They wear their 'alternative limbs' with pride; they stand as expressions of their personality and identity.

What is different—and in a majority society may still be regarded as abnormal—is here transformed into adornment, into an affirmative gesture not of concealment but of celebration. Playful, bold, humorous and beautiful, rather than a posture of victimhood that invites pity. This completely alters relationships and self-image.
De Oliveira Barata's prostheses don't hide physical differences, they reveal them. They transform them into something special and endow them with their own power. "I like making these pieces", she emphasises, "because the conversations change, from pity to wonder." The 'alternative limbs' open up a dialogue about the idea of the human body and differences in body images, and they celebrate them.

"When people wear their alternative prostheses, their posture often changes", says Sophie de Oliveira Barata. "That is because they have been involved in the process of creation—and because the pieces attract attention. Instead of pity, they encounter curiosity, sometimes even admiration. That gives them strength. Some wear their prostheses on special occasions, slipping into a kind of alter ego. Others make them a permanent part of their identity."

The exhibition *Anatomy of Fragility* at the Frankfurter Kunstverein presents two works from the series of The Alternative Limb Project. One was created as a functional prosthesis, the other as an object in which aesthetic concerns take precedence.

Materialise is an alternative arm created for activist and model Kelly Knox. It's divided lengthwise into two halves, one side consists of silicone skin, the other of a multitude of materials: steel, stone, earth, wood, moss, oil, cork, wool, bronze, rhodium and gold. Depending on her mood and state of mind, the wearer can interchange the elements. This alters not only the texture but also the weight of the arm. Kelly Knox decides for herself how she wishes to wear it.

The arm was produced using 3D-printing and CNC-milling techniques, alongside extensive handcraft and artisanal work. The skin side is a realistic reproduction of the wearer's right arm in a silicone-like material, representing Kelly Knox's physical self. The choice of materials embodies the individual, emotional and spiritual dimensions of her personality.

Another model, *VINE 2.0*, was also created for Kelly Knox. This 'alternative limb' distances itself even more decisively from the idea and aesthetics of realistic-looking limbs. The arm becomes a tentacle-like structure made up of 26 vertebral segments. The wearer controls the arm's movements using pressure sensors in the shoe and artificial tendons contract or loosen, producing fluid motions. Through an electromagnet, the prosthesis connects to a metal fixture on the body via a clip-on system. Circuits, batteries and sensors now transmit the organism's impulses via Bluetooth to the alternative body part.

VINE 2.0 seems to pay tribute to the thinker Donna Haraway. Under the concept of 'tentacular thinking', she questions a world view in which humans, with their specific corporeality and needs, elevate themselves to the centre of creation. Haraway advocates overcoming the typically Western mode of thinking in dualisms: human–animal, nature–technology and body–mind. The future of identity and the body arises beyond these. In *A Cyborg Manifesto*, Haraway chooses the figure of a hybrid being—part biological organism, part machine—as a metaphor for emancipatory purposes and for overcoming patriarchal structures.

For *Anatomy of Fragility*, the Frankfurter Kunstverein has assembled a comprehensive selection of documentary films, photographs and technical drawings in collaboration with Sophie de Oliveira Barata. As the numerous objects belong to their wearers, it is they who bear witness to this unique body of work.

Looking into the Body: Anatomical Wax Models of the Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna | University Museum Network | Museum of Palazzo Poggi and Anatomical Wax Collection "Luigi Cattaneo"

For the exhibition *Anatomy of Fragility*, selected works from the Museum of Palazzo Poggi and the "Luigi Cattaneo" Anatomical Wax Collection at the University of Bologna have been brought together. Both collections hold several thousand objects, including one of the most significant holdings of anatomical wax models in Europe. The exhibition presents exemplary pieces from different periods and by various artists. From the 18th century onwards, the University of Bologna

employed art and wax as a means of vividly exploring the human body, thereby becoming a pioneer in medicine.

Founded in 1088, the Alma Mater Studiorum is the oldest University on the European continent. It dates back to 1088, and among its many distinguished alumni are Petrarch, Dante Alighieri and Copernicus, as well as Pier Paolo Pasolini and Umberto Eco. The exemplary role of the University of Bologna contributed to the founding of numerous other universities across Europe and to the spread of the modern university model. From early on, anatomical research in Bologna was closely linked with artistic representation. Support from the Catholic Church played a decisive role in this process, granting artists an official function in the depiction and imparting of anatomical knowledge.

The science of anatomy began in ancient Alexandria in the 3rd century BC with the first scientific dissections of the human body, although knowledge of the human body was for a long time acquired mainly through the dissection of animals. For centuries, from antiquity to the Renaissance, the view into the interior of the human body remained strictly regulated. Religious, moral and social prescriptions determined what was permitted, and anatomical dissections were often allowed only under exceptional circumstances. At universities such as Bologna, the teaching of the body was initially based on ancient writings, without verifying this knowledge on the human body itself.

In the Renaissance, these prohibitions began to loosen. Artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo sought to depict the human body with the greatest possible precision. Their work contributed to the Catholic Church's recognition of the scientific value of anatomy. Anatomical studies were no longer regarded as a contradiction to faith, but as a complementary path towards understanding the human body as the pinnacle of God's perfection.

As early as the late 16th century, the first anatomical theatre was established in Bologna. Here, dissections of corpses could be carried out before students and interested spectators. At the same time, the first collections of prepared body parts and organs were created, yet the use of real corpses was limited: they decayed quickly, were available only in small numbers and for hygienic reasons could not be employed indefinitely for teaching and research.

So to give students and researchers a precise view of the human body despite these limitations, art and science entered into close collaboration with a particularly pragmatic solution: wax. Malleable, durable and capable of being coloured with realistic tones, this material made it possible to create lasting and lifelike reproductions of the human body. No other medium appears so true to life. The wax figures from Bologna reveal muscles, organs and nerve pathways—a glimpse beneath the skin. They allowed students and researchers to study the body in detail without having to rely on fragile corpses.

The history of anatomical wax figures for didactic purposes began in Bologna. In 1742, Pope Benedict XIV, the 'Enlightenment Pope', supported the establishment of the Anatomical Cabinet in the Palazzo Poggi. There, the Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture were brought together under one roof. Artists and scientists worked side by side to

reproduce the human body in wax with lifelike accuracy. Commissioned by the Pope, the artist Ercole Lelli created the first life-sized wax figures, which revealed muscles, organs and the skeleton layer by layer. This marked the beginning of modern anatomical wax modelling in Bologna—a tradition that lasted for more than 150 years.

The first wax models were created for teaching and training purposes. Later, doctors also used them for research and for the diagnosis of pathological conditions. These works eventually gave rise to collections that systematically documented human anatomy.

Today, visitors to the University of Bologna can discover two important collections. Firstly, that of the Museum of Palazzo Poggi, which preserves the reconstructed collections and laboratories—such as the Anatomical Cabinet—of the former Istituto delle Scienze e delle Arti. And it illustrates how science, art and medical history converged here. Secondly, this collection is complemented by the "Luigi Cattaneo" Anatomical Wax Collection, which demonstrates both normal and pathological anatomy. Wax models, bones and dry specimens form an illustrative didactic ensemble, showing how the University of Bologna became a European centre of excellence in medical research between the 18th and 19th centuries.

The Lady Anatomist Anna Morandi Manzolini (* 1714 Bologna, IT; † 1774 Bologna, IT)

Muscoli estrinseci dell'occhio (Extrinsic ocular muscles), 18th c. (1755–1769)
Anatomical model made of painted wax, wood, fabric
35 x 35 x 7 cm
Courtesy Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna | University Museum Network | Museum of Palazzo Poggi

The sense of sight has always held a unique significance for human beings. It is a vital faculty of the body, enabling it to engage with the outside world. Vision shapes the perception of reality and, in turn, generates words and images through which the world is grasped. The word 'theory' derives from the ancient Greek verb *theorein*, meaning 'to look at' or 'to observe'. The history of vision is closely intertwined with the history of science, philosophy and art. In antiquity, it was believed that the eye emitted visual rays, or alternatively, that objects released images which the eye received. It was only Leonardo da Vinci who, through his anatomical dissections, recognised the structure and functioning of the eye.

And therefore, the anatomical model of the ocular muscles, from the Museum of Palazzo Poggi's collection in Bologna, occupies a significant place in the history of knowledge concerning the human apparatus of perception. Its creator was Anna Morandi Manzolini (1714–1774), both an anatomist and artist, who worked in Bologna together with her husband, Giovanni Manzolini (1700–1755). After his death, Anna Morandi Manzolini continued the work on her own. Trained as a painter and sculptor, she wove art and anatomy into a single practice. At a time when women were scarcely visible in either discipline, she was a striking exception.

Unlike what was customary at the time, the Morandi Manzolini couple did not represent whole bodies in wax. Instead, they developed their own method, focusing on individual organ systems. These were removed, dissected and then modelled in wax. The result was highly detailed models of single organs, created for the training of medical practitioners and anatomists. In doing so, they dispensed with any iconographic or allegorical embellishments.

Anna Morandi Manzolini's meticulous autopsy of thousands of bodies led to numerous new insights and the correction of several long-standing misconceptions. To each of her models she added a precise description of the structures and their functions. She always began with exact observation, followed by dissection. The manual process was then accompanied by the written word—a description of what the hand had explored. This method continues to be applied in medical training today. After the written word came the image, shaped in wax.

Sight and touch were her most important tools of knowledge. It may be no coincidence that she devoted her greatest interest precisely to the sensory organs, observes art historian Prof. Lucia Corrain of the Museum of Palazzo Poggi. The University of Bologna holds a 250-page manuscript by Anna Morandi Manzolini containing instructions, notes and descriptions.
An example of her masterful wax modelling is the series of blue, octagonal wooden panels on which Anna Morandi Manzolini depicted an eye in different stages of anatomical separation of tissue layers. On the model *Muscoli estrinseci dell'occhio* (Extrinsic ocular muscles), the vitreous body of an eye is shown at the centre, exposed together with its various muscles, and their attachments spread out like the arms of a starfish. Surrounding it, six eyes demonstrate the different movements enabled by these muscles, and to the right, another eye is displayed, opened to reveal the optic nerve.

The workshop for wax modelling in Bologna was the first of its kind. From here, this innovative craft, serving both scientific inquiry and visualisation, spread first to Florence and then across Europe. Pope Benedict XIV endowed the anatomical cabinet in which the Morandi Manzolini couple worked until they established their own laboratory. Anna Morandi Manzolini's works in particular attracted the attention of princely courts, academies and learned societies throughout Europe. Yet she remained in Bologna.

As an honorary professor at the Istituto delle Scienze, she was regarded as the most important wax modeller of her time. Yet she was not spared the gender inequalities of her age. She received less pay than her male colleagues and, as her biographer Rebecca Messbarger emphasises, was often depicted in later sources merely as her husband's assistant.

Her self-portrait in wax can also be seen at the Museum of Palazzo Poggi and stands alongside the portrait of her husband. Unlike the usual representations of women in anatomical wax figures—as a dead body, a shamed Eve, or a sexualised Venus—Anna Morandi Manzolini depicts herself in aristocratic dress, guiding a scalpel across a human brain. In doing so, she deliberately presents herself on an equal footing with her husband, who, in the companion piece, is shown dissecting a heart.

Iris Fegerl

The Lady Anatomist, 2018
Documentary film
55 Min
Sponsored by maecenia Foundation for Women in Science and the Arts
Courtesy Iris Fegerl

Iris Fegerl's film powerfully tells the story of Anna Morandi Manzolini, the first woman to gain admission to the exclusively male domain of the university in the 18th century. She was the first woman to be employed as a preparator and to teach anatomy to male students at a time when such a role for a woman was unthinkable. The film offers insights into society and the intellectual climate of the Enlightenment, as well as the University of Bologna's academic environment.

In Europe, Bologna was regarded as the centre of anatomical science. However, only men were allowed to teach and study in its anatomical theatre; women were present solely as cadavers laid bare on the dissecting table, their bodies cut open and reduced to parts by the presiding anatomist.

Anna Morandi Manzolini became the first woman to overturn this prescribed role. She dissected hundreds of bodies and translated the knowledge she gained into meticulously crafted scientific models. These works presented the human body in a new way, distinct from the traditional, pathos-laden depictions of her time.

And yet, over the centuries Morandi Manzolini fell into obscurity—not least because her works were attributed to others and she was dismissed as illiterate. She was the first female scientist to focus, through her plastic representations, on the relationship between physical constitution and sensory perception—laying a foundation for what would later become the neurosciences.

The anatomical Venus by Clemente Michelangelo Susini (* 1754 Florence, IT; † 1814 Florence, IT) and the workshop for wax sculpture in Florence

Venerina (Reclining female figure with detachable anatomical parts), 18th c. (ca. 1782)
Anatomical model in painted wax, hair, wood, fabric and pearls
Body 138 x 57 x 26 cm; with frame 165,5 x 75 x 47 cm
Courtesy Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna | University Museum Network | Museum of Palazzo Poggi

This sculpture, an anatomical figure created in 1782, belongs to the spectacular collection of the Museum of Palazzo Poggi at the University of Bologna. It is a wax model of a female figure, shown lying on a bed, her head tilted back, her body slightly twisted and wearing a pearl necklace around her neck. Long real hair frames her face and covers her pubic area. From the collarbones to the pubis, her body is opened, the internal organs exposed. One sees the heart within the chest, the liver, kidneys, bones, nerves and veins, as well as the uterus containing an unborn child. The abdominal wall, trunk muscles, intestines and further organs are arranged around the body. And

the figure lies open as if on a medical dissection table, yet staged as a sleeping beauty in the moment between life and death.

The so-called *Venerina* (little Venus) was modelled on the body of a young woman who had recently died. Unlike many other wax figures, which were composed from parts of several corpses, its interior derives from a single, intact body. Today it can be recognised that the woman died of a congenital heart condition. She was five months pregnant. The enlarged heart, the dilated blood vessels and the small foetus reveal the cause of her early death.

Only eighteen such life-sized anatomical female figures exist worldwide. They are known as 'anatomical Venuses' and trace their origin to a first figure created by Clemente Michelangelo Susini (1754–1814), who, on commission from the House of Habsburg-Lorraine, fashioned it out of beeswax for the Florentine court. Each is unique in its composition. Reproduced with the utmost precision, the figures reveal the inner organs, whose functions were often still unknown at the time.

The Florentine wax workshop in which Clemente Susini worked had its origins in that of the University of Bologna. While in Bologna lifelike wax models were produced primarily for purposes of research and teaching, the figures in Florence were intended as demonstration models for a broader public. As the workshop's leading master and artist, Susini worked closely with anatomists, and for the newly founded natural history museum La Specola, they created the anatomical models: they would dissect the bodies and prepare the specimens for the workshop. Susini carved structures from blocks of wax, modelled and heated wax masses, or cast organs directly from the original specimens. In addition, he employed plaster negative moulds to permanently capture the form of the organs. These moulds could be reused, and this technique made rapid and precise reproduction possible upon first use.

Susini's distinctive hallmark and artistic innovation was a novel synthesis of scientific precision and artistic interpretation. He was shaped by the artistic currents of his time: the drama of the Baroque and the Neoclassical ideal of the human body. This ideal was informed by notions of harmony, balanced proportions and timeless beauty, as known from ancient art.

The Florentine wax workshop still enjoys an international reputation today. At the time, it produced a great number of wax models, which were sent to museums and universities across Europe. The figures were always the result of collaboration between craftsmen from the arts and scholars from medicine and anatomy.

The Florentine Specola was the first museum of its kind in the Western world. Even then, it was open to all, yet with strictly segregated visiting hours according to social class: on the one hand, for 'neatly dressed' visitors from the lower classes, and on the other, for the 'educated' members of the upper classes. The collection comprised nineteen complete male and female anatomical figures—only a few of them constructed to be dismantled in layers—and more than 1,400 wax models of individual organs and body parts, as well as specimens of comparative anatomy and zoological objects.

The founding of the museum in 1775 coincided with a time of upheaval, as the rule of the Medici in Florence came to an end. The new rulers from the House of Habsburg-Lorraine promoted science and education with the aim of systematically recording knowledge of nature and applying it for the benefit of society. This Enlightenment climate also shaped Clemente Susini's work.

For us today, the anatomical Venus is more than a mere teaching aid. She makes clear that science always reflects the intellectual, cultural, aesthetic and emotional conceptions of its time and conveys its cultural context. In her, it becomes evident that medical knowledge is never purely objective, but is instead permeated by artistic and aesthetic principles.

The anatomical Venus presents a notion of femininity inseparably linked with motherhood. This is evident both in her depiction as a pregnant woman and in the medical focus on the female reproductive organ—as if the primary function of the female body and the role of women in society were reduced to reproduction. Her passive, devoted pose renders her at once an object of scientific scrutiny and of erotic desire. Today, this image can also be read as an expression of the male gaze.

The seductive posture of the anatomical Venus arises from an artistic decision. Anatomy is conveyed not only by displaying structures, but by placing the body's capacity to feel, to desire and to suffer at the centre. The pose of the anatomical Venus illustrates the notion of fragility and the suffering inherent in corporeal existence.

This reflects a central paradigm shift of the 18th century: previously, conceptions of the body had been shaped by ecclesiastical and religious ideas. With the Enlightenment, the body began to be studied empirically, and it was recognised that it responds to stimuli through a complex system from which sensations arise.

Testa, tronco e arto destro con dimostrazione della circolazione sanguigna e linfatica (Head, torso and right arm with a demonstration of the blood and lymphatic circulation), 1810
Anatomical model in painted wax using mixed technique
115 x 70 x 26 cm

Apparato visivo con dimostrazione delle sue varie parti (Visual apparatus with a demonstration of its various parts), 18th c. (1790)
Anatomical model in painted wax, wood, fabric
51,5 x 38 x 11,5 cm

Vene e nervi superficiali della superficie palmare dell'arto superiore destro (Superficial veins and nerves of the palmar surface of the right upper limb)
Vene e nervi superficiali della superficie dorsale dell'arto superiore destro (Superficial veins and nerves of the dorsal surface of the right upper limb)
Vene superficiali dell'arto superiore preparato dopo l'asportazione della fascia superficiale (Superficial veins of the upper limb, prepared after removal of the superficial fascia), 18th–19th c.
Anatomical wax models, painted, mixed media, wood
95 x 39,5 x 24,5 cm; 95 x 39,5 x 24,5 cm; 95 x 39,5 x 22,5 cm

Courtesy Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna | University Museum Network | “Luigi Cattaneo” Anatomical Wax Collection

Alongside the *Venerina*, the exhibition *Anatomy of Fragility* also presents later works by Clemente Susini from the “Luigi Cattaneo” Anatomical Wax Collection in Bologna. Produced in the early 19th century as teaching material for medical training, they stand in sharp contrast to the gracefully staged *Venerina*: here, sober accuracy and scientific precision prevail. This shift in style reflects a change in patronage—from the museum-going public to the university of Bologna.

One model depicts the upper body of a woman without the left arm, and on the neck, head and right arm, the skin has been removed to reveal the arteries, veins and lymphatic system. The lymph nodes in the armpit, the side of the neck and the nape of the neck are especially prominent. The front wall of the chest and abdomen is also open, exposing the dense vascular and lymphatic structures near the inferior vena cava and the aorta. And the small intestine has been removed in order to uncover the vessels lying behind it.

That the lymphatic system is represented with such precision points to Susini’s close collaboration with the anatomist Paolo Mascagni. Together, they created models that gave visual form to Mascagni’s groundbreaking discoveries. Susini’s work was based on meticulous studies: around 300 dissections and the use of mercury to fill the vessels. Remarkably, he even depicted lymphatic vessels in the brain—a structure only confirmed in 2014 through modern imaging techniques. In contrast to the Bolognese wax models, which are built around real human bones, this work is made entirely of wax, with metal supports providing stability—typical of Susini’s Florentine production.

Another wax model is devoted to the human visual apparatus in all its parts. From the opened skull to the layers of the eyelid and the eyeball itself, the structures are laid bare. Visitors can explore the outer form of the eye, the muscles, the lens and the interior of the eyeball in individually crafted, carefully executed modules. Every detail is precisely modelled, allowing the complexity of vision to be experienced in a vivid and tangible way.

Three further models depict human arms in different layers. One arm, stripped of skin and superficial fascia, reveals the superficial veins; another shows the palm of a right arm with veins and nerves; the third displays the back of the hand with the same structures. Susini reproduced even the finest courses of vessels and nerves with lifelike accuracy.

However, many models were produced after his original prototypes by pupils and collaborators, making it difficult to distinguish originals from workshop pieces. These three arms may have been created shortly before or after Susini’s death—executed with precision according to his designs, but not necessarily by his own hand.

The Legacy of Bolognese Wax Art: Giuseppe Astorri (*1785; † 1852) and Cesare Bettini (*1801; † 1855)

Giuseppe Astorri
Testa e tronco di donna con dimostrazione del circolo arterioso e del sistema simpatico (Head and torso of a woman with a demonstration of the arterial circulation and the sympathetic nervous system), 18th–19th c.
Anatomical model in wax painted using mixed media
With frame 57,5 x 39 x 20 cm

Cesare Bettini
Sezione frontale del cranio con gli emisferi cerebrali sezionati e del tronco encefalico visti posteriormente (Frontal section of the skull with the cerebral hemispheres dissected and the brainstem seen from behind)
Modello di sezione sagittale del cranio mostrante le parti dell'encefalo (Model of a sagittal section of the skull showing the parts of the brain), 19th c.
Two Anatomical models made of painted wax, wood, fabric
With frames 88 x 72 x 34 cm; 101 x 85 x 26 cm

Courtesy Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna | University Museum Network | "Luigi Cattaneo" Anatomical Wax Collection

From the "Luigi Cattaneo" Collection of the University of Bologna come three wax models by Giuseppe Astorri (1785-1852) and his pupil Cesare Bettini (1801-1855). Bettini began his career as a lithographer and draughtsman. Drawing and modelling have always been closely connected, both serving to make knowledge in the medical field tangible—to create and disseminate anatomical images. The two artists were the last representatives and modellers of the University of Bologna's anatomical cabinet.

The wax model by Giuseppe Astorri depicts the head and torso of a woman, with this representation highlighting the arterial circulation and the sympathetic nervous system. The bony and muscular walls of the torso have been omitted, making the arterial blood circulation clearly visible. And several nerve trunks, in particular the lumbar plexus, are shown in detail.

The other two are large-scale brain models at a scale of 3:1. They are among Cesare Bettini's most important works, the so-called 'master work of cerebral anatomy'. The models display cross sections of the brain, with the individual structures rendered in different colours to provide students with a particularly vivid representation.

The panel *Modello di sezione sagittale del cranio mostrante le parti dell'encefalo* (Model of a sagittal section of the skull showing the parts of the brain) makes the structures clearly visible: the cerebrum with its distinctive convolutions, the cerebellum—rendered in colour as the 'control centre' of movement—and the brainstem, continuing into the spinal cord. Particularly striking is the cerebellum, whose branching formations resemble the limbs of a tree—the so-called arbor vitae,

the ‘tree of life’. All structures are depicted as clearly separated, making it immediately apparent which parts of the brain are responsible for which functions.

The second panel presents a frontal cross section of the brain, with parts of the posterior skull having been removed, allowing the brainstem to be seen along with its connections to the spinal cord. The panel is completed by the nasal septum and the nasal part of the pharynx.

The “Luigi Cattaneo” Collection comprises hundreds of wax models and wet specimens. Giuseppe Astorri and Cesare Bettini worked not only from dissected bodies but also from living patients. Astorri, for example, created wax models of skin diseases such as smallpox, shingles (herpes zoster), antimony poisoning, and pellagra. At the university, these models served as diagnostic and didactic instruments.

The clinical wax models of the Bolognese school from the 19th century—later known as moulages—soon spread throughout Italy and Europe. The works of Astorri and Bettini thus mark the beginning of visualisation and realistic representation in the didactic use of anatomical wax models for clinical purposes.

Marshmallow Laser Feast (London, UK)

Evolver: Journey of Breath, 2022
Stitched projection (2 projectors), spatial audio
15 Min

Evolver: Deep Listening Meditation, 2022
Triggered headphone piece (binaural composition); Language: English
10 Min

Evolver: VR, 2022
Virtual reality, headphones; Language: English
24 Min

Courtesy Marshmallow Laser Feast

Please note: Participation in the interactive part of the installation requires prior registration. Sessions are offered every Thursday from 5 to 9 p.m., every Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., as well as on public holidays. Each virtual journey lasts 45 minutes. Time slots can be reserved on site at the ticket desk or online here: calendly.com/frankfurterkunstverein.

Only a limited number of places are available per day.

Marshmallow Laser Feast (MLF) is a London-based artists' collective whose multimedia works are created in close collaboration with scientific institutions. In their installations, they interweave immersive technologies, elaborate visualisations and complex soundscapes into poetic experiences that expand human perception of the world. Following the public success of Treehugger: Wawona, an immersive journey into the metabolism of a sequoia tree presented during the exhibition The Intelligence of Plants (2021), and Distortions in Spacetime, a glimpse into the birth of a black hole shown in the exhibition The Presence of Absence (2024), the Frankfurter Kunstverein has invited MLF to present their expedition into the human body in Frankfurt.

Evolver consists of multiple parts: a 10-minute deep meditation, a 24-minute audiovisual 360° virtual reality experience and a video projection. The overall installation takes viewers on an intense journey through the human body.

The listening experience begins with breathing. This is then followed by a specially composed soundscape and Cate Blanchett's voice guiding participants into a meditative awareness of the breath as it flows into our lungs—the organ where oxygen and blood meet. Breath is the life-giving bridge between our bodies and the world. And air connects us with everything around us: with the plants that produce oxygen and with the gases and particles contained within the thin, 2-kilometre layer of breathable air (the troposphere). This part of the installation is intended to encourage visitors to withdraw from outside distractions, to turn attention inwards and to foster a conscious, calm awareness of body and breath.

In the second part of the installation, visitors are invited to journey inside the human body using a VR headset. Like a molecule of air, we flood into the lungs, carried by oxygen through the flowing bloodstream to the beating heart. At the end of this voyage, viewers arrive at a breathing cell—the smallest visible stage of life, where oxygen and sugar release the sun's energy that sustains all life on Earth. The VR environment presents these interwoven physiological processes as flowing, organic landscapes of the body's interior: vascular systems branch like river networks, capillaries form dense meshes and the body's inner world unfolds before the viewer like a forest.

The unique insights into the inner workings of the human organism were made possible through MLF's collaboration with its scientific partner, the Fraunhofer-Institut für Digitale Medizin MEVIS (Fraunhofer Institute for Digital Medicine MEVIS) in Bremen. The institute provided the collective with data sets and body scanning techniques: whole-body MRI scans and MRA examinations of a volunteer, as well as blood flow data and guidance on CT imaging. The Fraunhofer-Institut für Digitale Medizin MEVIS thus shaped every aspect of the project and was of vital importance for the development of *Evolver*.

State-of-the-art data sets from MR imaging techniques were central for flow visualisation. These allow the speed and direction of blood flow through the four chambers of the heart and the aorta to be reconstructed in detail. The techniques can be used to calculate how blood pressure and shear force on the vessel walls change in patients with heart valve defects. These new possibilities are incorporated into software assistants for physicians. They make it possible to assess how blood flow changes in possible heart diseases without the need for invasive diagnostic

examinations using catheters. Additional patient-specific simulations make it possible to weigh up the benefits of a new heart valve before surgery.

Marshmallow Laser Feast created a complete digital model of the cardiovascular system and carried out particle simulations on it. These were then extended to the entire human body. In addition to collaborating with MEVIS, the Allen Institute for Cell Science and the Buck Institute for Research on Aging were also partners in the creation of this art project.

The MLF collective is known for its close collaboration with scientists and has always aimed to make complex scientific information sensually tangible through modern immersive technologies. Both science and art are, after all, fundamental methods of the same human need: to understand and to describe the world.

With *Evolver*, the artists explore the idea of shifting perspective in order to evoke a sense of awe and wonder at the miracle of our bodies. They ask whether our perception and awareness of the body might change when we shift our gaze on the fragile ecosystem of our own organism from the outside to the inside. What happens when we transform abstract knowledge into something that can be seen and experienced?

What characterises the work of the MLF collective is the widening of perspective. They never remain at the level of scientific visualisation or the mere transfer of information; instead, they use the freedom of art to pose overarching questions and to expand our gaze. In *Evolver*, breath forms the central narrative thread, along which MLF transforms human anatomy—its fragility and its beauty—into a sensuous experience. Like the breath that, in spiritual traditions and in the history of painting (Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel), represents the beginning of human life: the divinely inspired soul that breathes matter into life.

EVOLVER: An Immersive Journey Of Life And Breath
Directed by: Marshmallow Laser Feast
Narrated by: Cate Blanchett
Featuring music by: Jonny Greenwood, Meredith Monk, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Howard Skempton and Jon Hopkins.
Executive producers: Edward R. Pressman and Terrence Malick, supported by Nicole Shanahan & Bia-Echo Foundation.
An Atlas V, Pressman Film, Dirty Films, Marshmallow Laser Feast and Orange production. In association with Artizen.
Producers: Antoine Cayrol and Sam Pressman.
Executive producers: Nicole Shanahan, Cate Blanchett, Coco Francini, Andrew Upton, Nell Whitley, Mike Jones, Paula Paizes, René Pinnell, Arnaud Colinart, Pierre Zandrowicz und Fred Volhuer.
Co-producers: Guillaume Brunet and Morgan Bouchet.
Line producers: Martin Jowers and Emma Hamilton.

Moulage Collection of the Department of Dermatology, Venereology and Allergology; University Hospital, Goethe University Frankfurt

21 Moulages, 19th-20th c.
Painted wax, fabric, wood
Dimensions variable
Courtesy Department of Dermatology, Venereology and Allergology; University Hospital, Goethe University Frankfurt

Moulages are three-dimensional, lifelike reproductions of body parts made from wax. They depict diseases and injuries and were created for use in medical training.

For the exhibition *Anatomy of Fragility*, the Frankfurter Kunstverein collaborated with the Goethe University Frankfurt to present a selection of objects from the collection of the Department of Dermatology, Venereology and Allergology at the University Hospital Frankfurt to an interested public. They are still used today as teaching aids in medical education and illustrate the manifestations of pathologies such as cutaneous tuberculosis, syphilis, cancer, shingles, psoriasis and fungal infections. Some of these conditions are now curable, others remain dangerous.

The Frankfurt moulage collection was established in 1894, at the same time as the founding of the Department of Dermatology. Today the collection comprises more than 300 moulages, the oldest dating from 1904—the year to which the only dated specimen also belongs. The wax models belong to a time when sight was one of the most important tools of diagnosis. Physicians observed the signs of disease with precision, described them and compared them with other cases. It was during this period that the skin was first recognised as an organ in its own right. From the late 19th to the early 20th century, these meticulously detailed models were the most important visual media of dermatology.

The term moulage derives from the French *mouler*—to mould, to cast. It refers to a technical process that has long been a standard method in sculpture. To produce moulages, diseased areas of patients' skin were moulded directly in plaster, creating a negative form. Liquid wax mixtures were then poured into the negative, and the positive cast was tinted with pigments to achieve the desired base tone. Colouring took place in the presence of the patients, with skin tones and pathological features reproduced as faithfully as possible. Scars, crusts or blisters were additionally modelled from wax, resin or other materials. Details such as eyes, hair or disease-specific alterations were sculpted or applied.

The moulages bear two paper labels on their front: one with a handwritten diagnosis, the other with a number that presumably belonged to a now lost system of order. Inscriptions or signatures are inconsistent. On some of the Frankfurt moulages the artists' signatures can still be seen. Ernst Winkler (1877–1907) was likely the first wax modeller permanently employed at the clinic. After him, a woman took over the position—yet in the records her name appears only as '1 Moulageuse'.

Among the signatures in the Frankfurt collection, the name of the internationally renowned Jules Baretta stands out. Baretta (1834–1923) was a moulageur at the Hôpital Saint-Louis in Paris.

Knowledge of the techniques, materials and artistic procedures of moulage-making was for a long time passed on only within a small circle. Baretta influenced the development of dermatology and the art of moulage throughout Europe. At the First International Congress of Dermatology, held in Paris in 1889, Baretta's moulages were met with great admiration. This led to the rapid spread of the technique to other clinics across Europe. On view in the exhibition is model no. 76 by Jules Baretta, *Tinea faciei*, a fungal disease of the skin of the face.

The idea of documenting diseases with lifelike wax models first emerged in the 17th century in Bologna and Florence. Felice Fontana, then director of the natural history museum La Specola in Florence, was convinced that pathological anatomy in the form of wax models could help to better understand the causes of disease. His proposal to establish a dedicated collection as a museum, however, was rejected by the authorities. Such models were deemed appropriate only in hospitals, not in museums, which were considered places for the edifying and the beautiful. Thus the first collections of pathological anatomy were created in hospitals, where they were initially used for research and cataloguing, and later also for the training of physicians.

With the introduction of colour photography and the possibility of producing and disseminating images more quickly in medical documentation, moulages lost their importance from the mid-20th century onwards. Having fallen into obscurity, the collection of the University Hospital in Frankfurt was only rediscovered in 2012. Since then, on the initiative of Prof. Dr Falk Ochsendorf and under the current head of the Department of Dermatology, Venereology and Allergology, Prof. Dr. Bastian Schilling, it has once again been used for teaching purposes.

Studies have shown that students who work with dermatological wax models are more likely to develop empathy for patients than those who learn only from photographic images and medical texts. The lifelike, corporeal form can create a sensory experience that may foster the capacity for compassion with another human being who is ill.

Moulage 0002, labelled *P.A. Lippe*, shows a so-called primary lesion of syphilis on the lip. Since the early 2000s, syphilis—after having almost disappeared in Germany—has been on the rise again. The cast was taken directly from an affected person, and on close inspection one can discern the imprints of the fingers that held the lip in place during the moulding process.

Moulage 22, labelled *Palmarsyphilid*, shows a syphilitic rash on the palm of the hand. In addition to the lifelike depiction of the skin lesion, the detail of a wedding ring stands out. For a fleeting moment, the medical object becomes a personal testimony, a trace of the life and story of the person whose body was cast. Moulages 29 and 6 show further manifestations of the infection.

Moulages are fascinating phenomena. They are meticulously crafted three-dimensional representations of bodies, whose makers often remained anonymous and did not associate their skill with the idea of artistic creation. And yet the objects had an impact on society. Once they eventually became part of public museum collections, they served as instruments of warning and deterrence. Numerous diseases—particularly sexually transmitted ones—were incurable. Those who contracted them were additionally subject to social stigmatisation.

Syphilis has had a profound influence on both art and literature. Albrecht Dürer's woodcut *Syphilitic Man* depicts the disease as divine punishment. The painter Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, himself afflicted with syphilis, portrayed figures from the Parisian nightlife of the Moulin Rouge, where the disease was widespread. The writer Guy de Maupassant, also affected, described syphilis as 'the revenge of prostitutes'. Charles Baudelaire, Heinrich Heine, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Oscar Wilde, Ludwig van Beethoven and Robert Schumann—whose final years were marked by delusions as a late consequence of syphilis—were likewise afflicted. The disease only became curable around 1945, with the discovery of penicillin.

Other moulages show symptoms of acrodermatitis chronica atrophicans, a late manifestation of Lyme disease that was only identified in the 20th century. Fungal infections of the face were historically not regarded as pathology but, in superstition, as divine punishment. The same applied to pigment disorders following inflammation or to internal diseases that manifested on the skin—such as the leukaemic infiltrates of cancer, made visible on the surface. *Lupus erythematosus*, an autoimmune disease in which the immune system turns against the body itself. Boeck's sarcoid, which affects both the skin and the internal organs.

Other moulages speak of the impact of the environment and industrialisation on the body: inflammations of the hair follicles or eczemas that break out and worsen as a result of work, climate or living conditions. For example, chloracne, caused by industrial chemicals such as dioxins.

Anyone viewing a moulage today sees not only a teaching model of a disease with its visible, bodily effects, but also a preserved exact likeness of a real, individual person—unlike the anatomical wax models of the Italian tradition, which depicted idealised and anonymous bodies. They are thus the image of a bodily fragment that bears the traces of a real human being and their unique history of suffering.

The striking impact of moulages lies in their lifelike quality and their material. Wax can be shaped, coloured and used to reproduce the living body with deceptive realism. At the same time, it carries a symbolic dimension. The art historian Georges Didi-Huberman describes beeswax as an 'extremely sensitive, indeed unstable natural material' that, almost of its own accord, conveys the fragility and transience of the body. Its plasticity, instability and sensitivity to warmth allow it to 'become flesh' and to impart a sense of living corporeality.

This fragility is also reflected in the objects on display. Many moulages, which lay unnoticed in a cellar for decades, now bear cracks and traces of time—caused either by the ageing of the material or by their earlier use in teaching. They speak not only of the fragility of the bodies depicted, but also of the inherent vulnerability of the medium of wax itself—a material that can also be found in other works and objects in the exhibition *Anatomy of Fragility*.

The following moulages are shown in the exhibition: Lupus, autoimmune disease with skin changes (*69 Erythematodes acutus disseminatus*); Fungal infection (*76 Tinea faciei*); Late manifestation of Lyme disease on the skin (*157 Acrodermatitis chronica atrophicans Herxheimer*); First visible signs of syphilis (*002 P.A. (primary lesion) lip*); Lupus with exacerbation (*Erythematodes c. exacerbatione acuta*); Warty tuberculosis (*56 Tuberculosis cutis verrucosa (hand)*); Toxic acne caused by

environmental toxins (*115 Chloracne*); Chronic progressive inflammation of the skin (*159 Acrodermatitis chronica atrophicans Herxheimer*); Lupus, inflammatory autoimmune disease (*99 Erythematodes acutus*); Skin lightening after inflammation (*119a Postinflammatory hypopigmentation*); White spots in the neck area (*20 Leukoderma nuchae*); Spotty leprosy with sensory disturbance (*132 Lepra maculo-anaesthetica*); Skin changes in leukemia (*197 Leukemic specific infiltrates*); Signs of syphilis in an advanced stage (*6 Micropapular (lichenous) syphilid*); Malignant course of secondary syphilis (*29 Syphilis maligna*); Syphilitic rash on the palms (*22 Palmar syphilid*); Inflammatory change of the sebaceous glands (*181 Seborrheic eczema Unna's dermatosis*); Skin lightening after inflammation (*118 Vitiligo*); Chronic inflammatory disease with nodule formation (*49 Boeck's sarcoid (Lupus pernio)*); Inflammatory skin disease with keratinization of the hair follicles (*102 Dermatitis follicularis hyperkeratotica*); Psoriasis (*22a Psoriasis (back of the hand)*).

Yein Lee (* 1988 Incheon, South Korea)

System of In-between State, 2024
Three sculptures
Steel, polymer gypsum, epoxy putty, branches, dry grape stalk, broken vacuum cleaner, electrical cables, fibreglass, acrylic ink, lacquer
125 x 110 x 186 cm; 100 x 110 x 175 cm; 84 x 88 x 174 cm
Commissioned by the 15th Gwangju Biennale and sponsored by the Austrian Ministry of the Arts, Culture, the Civil service and Sport

in other's shoes – maybe no need for shoes, 2022
Sculpture
Epoxy putty, motorbike parts, electrical wires, fake flower, Polymer gypsum, steel, plaster
79 x 65 x 110 cm

Interlock Vertebra Devices, 2021
Sculpture
3D print, epoxy putty, wire, computer parts, spray, earring, cables, cable ties, motorbike part, PET sheet, hardware, tube
45 x 68 x 160 cm

Courtesy the artist

Yein Lee challenges the notion of the body as flawless, intact and always functional. Her sculptures take the form of anthropomorphic, life-sized figures that, stripped of their outer shells, reveal their inner structures. Lee constructs her works from electrical cables, steel pipes, computer parts, but also from branches, twigs and found everyday objects. Her material is at once synthetic and natural. It comes from industrial production, from the remnants of our digitally networked society and from nature.

Lee's sculptures embody the contradictions of their origins—between handcraft and short-lived disposable objects, destined for material decay. Rather than resolving these oppositions, Lee makes them visible. Her works exist in an in-between state—oscillating between human and machine, the living and inert matter, organic growth and decay.

Born and raised in South Korea, Yein Lee has lived and worked in Vienna for several years. Her work draws on influences from classical sculpture, science fiction and cyberculture. She is fascinated by Medardo Rosso's fragile wax figures and by the Baroque sculptures of Gian Lorenzo Bernini, who created the illusion of living bodies in marble. Lee is also drawn to figures from myth and literature that embody the idea of transformation as hybrid beings: Daphne's metamorphosis, in Greek mythology, as she escapes Apollo's assault by turning her female body into a tree; or the boy Namu Doryeong from the Korean founding myth, son of a celestial fairy and an earthly tree, who survives the great flood and from whom humankind descends.

Yein Lee explores the similarities of internal structures across organisms: from the network of human blood vessels, nerves, muscles and tendons to the branches and roots of plants. Her figures are made of permeable fibres that merge and break apart, grow in rhizome-like patterns and send out extensions in search of support in space. Lee conceives of the body not as a closed form. From these clusters she gives her figures multiple faces, cast from herself and from people close to her.

They reflect a world in which the boundaries between human and machine, nature and technology, self and other are increasingly dissolving. In this in-between realm, the body no longer appears as a stable centre but as an unstable interface, in a state of constant transformation.

At the centre of her reflections lies the impossibility of conceiving the body as a static entity. The body is transformation, extension and reconstruction, and at the same time, it is fragile. Yein Lee shares this experience from her own medical history: implants were anchored in her body, which healed and now support her. Her body has grown together with the metal of the screws—like a tree whose bark encloses an object that stood in its way. The body as an amalgam of the organic and the artificial, as a new normality—that is life.

Yein Lee's work is permeated by the ideas of cyberpunk aesthetics: bodies appear extended, damaged, fragmented, shot through with cables and apparatuses. Lee presents fragile, precarious existences that linger in an in-between state. Transformation, metamorphosis and openness are not transitions but conditions, in which her sculptural beings continually reassemble themselves anew.

In the work *Interlock Vertebra Devices*, speculative implants for body enhancement appear packaged in plastic like fast-moving consumer goods. The desire for improvement, youth and functionality comes to the fore: the human being as driven by the pursuit of a better physical self.

Her works are pleas for a new corporeality: vulnerable, processual and beyond normative attributions. At a time when optimisation has become a trend, and technology a prosthesis and an

extension of the body, Lee's sculptures open up a field of possibilities: for other bodies, other futures, other forms of being.

Anatomical votives from the Ludwig Stieda Collection, held by the Collection of Antiquities at the Chair of Classical Archaeology, Justus Liebig University Giessen

23 Anatomical votives (presented in the following order): Votive head; fragment of a viscera plate; votive head, fragment of a hand with offering (pastry); fragment of a votive figure of a man in a cloak with opened abdominal cavity; votive head; outstretched left hand; foot; votive eyes; votive ears; female breast; votive of a uterus; viscera plate; male genital; human bladder; viscera plate; votive figure of a swaddled infant; human heart; votive heart; halved votive head (left side of the face); female torso with opened abdominal cavity.

3rd–2nd c.
Terracotta
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the Collection of Antiquities, Justus Liebig University Giessen

A foot, a hand, an ear—shaped from clay and entrusted to a deity more than two thousand years ago. These small, silent objects tell the stories of people who transformed their vulnerability into images. They speak of illness and of hope, of the desire for healing and of gratitude when recovery comes.

Thanks to a loan from the Collection of Antiquities of the Chair of Classical Archaeology at Justus Liebig University Giessen, the exhibition *Anatomy of Fragility* presents twenty-three Etruscan terracotta votives. They come from the collection of the anatomist Ludwig Stieda, who acquired them in 1899 in what is now Isola Farnese, built over the ruins of the ancient city of Veii, and who donated them in 1913 to the university's Collection of Antiquities. Veii was an important city of Etruscan high culture, located some fifteen kilometres northwest of Rome, and was conquered by the Romans in 396 BC.

The body-part votives of the Giessen Collection of Antiquities come from the sanctuary and repository of the Pendici di Piazza d'Armi and date mainly from the late 3rd to the mid-2nd century BC. They are among the earliest surviving testimonies of a religious practice that continued across cultures for millennia. Since this custom was so widespread, sanctuaries quickly filled up. So to make room for new offerings, repositories in the form of pits were created at the sanctuaries, in which the votives were collected.

The anatomical votives include heads, hands, feet, sexual organs and internal organs. Most of the votives were made of fired clay, a readily available and inexpensive material that was easy to work with. With the help of negative moulds, these smaller votives could be produced in series.

More elaborate were the torsos with open body cavities, some of which were individually finished by hand. By contrast, the flat viscera plates were a simplified and less costly version of the same motif.

In the exhibition *Anatomy of Fragility*, the Etruscan votives enter into a spatial dialogue with objects from Hans and Benedikt Hipp's collection from Pfaffenhofen in Bavaria, whose holdings of votive offerings and associated wooden models range from the Baroque period to the post-war era.

Despite the surprisingly consistent visual representation of body parts, the uterus is an exception: in the Bavarian votives of the Hipp Collection it appears in the form of a toad, a symbolic shape that goes back to ancient ideas. The Etruscan uterus votives, by contrast, follow the actual anatomical form of the female organ. However, with one striking peculiarity: X-ray examinations of an Etruscan uterus revealed the presence of a body inside, invisible from the outside, which with high probability represents an embryo.

Hands, feet, eyes, ears and internal organs can be recognised in both collections in simplified, clear forms. The depictions of internal organs, typical for the Etruscans, were often derived from anatomical knowledge gained through the dissection of slaughtered animals. Yet the sometimes astonishing accuracy of the Etruscan votives raises the question of whether this knowledge was based solely on animal observation, or also on experiences with human bodies, for example those killed on the battlefield, or even on early operations or dissections.

Anatomical votives from the Hans and Benedikt Hipp Collection

21 wax casts. Mid to late 20th c.
Six Wooden moulds, 1730–1800

Presented in the following order: wooden mould with torso votive; torso and back votives and lung votive with heart; wooden mould with leg votives; female votive figure; lung votive with throat; eye votive with wooden mould and er votives; arm votives with wooden mould; torso votives; tooth and knife votive; leg votives with wooden mould; toad votives (uteruses).

Photographic reproduction of a miracle book from Scheyern Abbey
Photo: Anton Brandl

Dimensions variable
Courtesy Hans and Benedikt Hipp Collection

Votives are offerings that people present to higher powers in times of need. They are prayers made tangible—petitions for healing, for protection in moments of suffering or thanks for miraculous rescue and aid. For thousands of years, this form of invoking divine power and intercession has remained almost unchanged. Even the forms of the votive gifts have changed little: they represent

diseased body parts, organs or figurative situations. Votives may be paintings or three-dimensional objects. The latter are made of clay, wax, wood or metal, produced either as unique pieces or as serial objects. To this day, pilgrimage sites, sanctuaries and churches are adorned with them. And bound to each individual votive is the life story of a person, whose plea is told through the gift in the form of the votive.

The *Lebzelterei* (a traditional workshop producing gingerbread and devotional wax objects) on the main square in Pfaffenhofen has existed since the early 17th century. Since 1897 it has been run by the Hipp family—today in its fourth generation. Hans Hipp is one of the last wax modellers and gingerbread makers (*Lebzelter*) still active in Germany. He has conducted in-depth research into the history of the craft, of customs and of votives, written books on the subject and established a *Lebzelter* and Wax Museum for his extensive collection. Thanks to his generous loans, the exhibition *Anatomy of Fragility* offers unique insights into the collection—and thus into the history of human experience of physical vulnerability.

In southern Germany, votive offerings were made primarily of wax from the Baroque period onwards. In Christianity, beeswax was regarded as a sacred material: pure, incorruptible and closely linked with the symbolism of the bee, which stood for purity and innocence and embodied devout Christians. At the same time, beeswax possesses a special materiality: soft, malleable and adaptable, yet also fragile. These qualities are directly connected to the fleshly nature and vulnerability of the human body, making wax the ideal material for votive offerings.

Their production was the responsibility of the *Lebzelter*—a guild that, according to its statutes, was at that time the only one permitted to work with bee products. The profession of the *Lebzelter* included not only the baking of gingerbread and honey cakes, but also candle making and the casting of votive offerings. The artful carving of three-dimensional wooden moulds, used both for pastries and for votive objects, was then an important part of the *Lebzelter*'s training. Moulds are negative forms into which wax or dough is pressed to produce a raised image.

From yellow, bleached or red-dyed wax, the *Lebzelter* cast limbs, organs or symbolic forms. Anatomical accuracy played only a minor role, yet the shapes were familiar to people—like a visual vocabulary in times when few could write.

For internal organs, slaughtered animals often served as models, while other anatomical forms were deliberately simplified or represented symbolically. One example is a votive in the form of a toad, intended to illustrate the uterus. Popular belief at the time held that a toad sat in a woman's belly, biting her and thereby causing menstrual pain and bleeding. This notion goes back to ancient ideas. In Greek medicine, the uterus was sometimes described as a freely moving, independent being that wandered through the body. At the same time, the toad has been regarded in many cultures as a symbol of fertility.

Most of the votive figures in the Hipp Collection were destined for the pilgrimage church of Niederscheyern (*Unsere Liebe Frau, U.L.Fr.*), only two kilometres away. They were laid down together with monetary offerings (the so-called *Opfer in Stock*) and a vow to have a mass

celebrated. Ten so-called miracle books (*Mirakelbücher*) have been preserved in the archives of the Benedictine monastery of Scheyern, and one of them is displayed in the exhibition as a photographic reproduction. Between the late 17th century and 1803, more than 20,000 'vows' were recorded. Clergymen collected oral reports from the faithful about their miraculous healings and set them down in writing. Through these records, it is possible to trace the connections between the votive offerings of the Hipp Collection and the corresponding illnesses, as well as the stories and destinies of those affected.

These records are like windows into the everyday lives of ordinary people: they tell of their faith, their worries and hopes, their ways of dealing with illness and recovery. They document a world view in which medical help often failed and healing was sought through faith. At the same time, they serve as a medical-historical compendium, providing insight into anatomical knowledge, concepts of disease, healing practices and body images of past centuries.

In the Middle Ages, medical care in rural areas was provided mainly by monasteries. Nuns and monk-physicians maintained pharmacies and herb gardens. With the Renaissance, monastic medicine lost its importance. Secular doctors—the so-called *medici*—were now trained at newly founded universities. At that time, however, they treated only wealthy patients, and medical care for 'ordinary people' was left to lay healers known as *Bader*. Their knowledge was not based on academic training, but on practical craft. After just two to four years of apprenticeship, one could practise this profession, while further experience had to be gained through success or failure with patients. In addition to local *Bader*, there were also itinerant healers who offered their services in marketplaces. They were often accompanied by fire breathers and sword swallowers who drew attention to them, while drummers, pipers and criers attempted to drown out the cries of pain from their patients.

With secularisation in 1803, the continuation of the miracle books was prohibited by the state, as they were regarded as a promotion of 'error and superstition'.

Behind every piece of wax, however small, lies a personal destiny. Even if many figures were cast from the same mould and appear identical in form, each carries within it an individual story, a wish or an urgent hope. They are an expression of faith and trust, and at the same time, of having no other recourse to heal their pain.

Miracle books:
The miracle books of Scheyern reveal that petitioners often turned to God for help only after several unsuccessful treatments by the *Bader*. They purchased a votive offering from a nearby *Lebzelter*, endowed it with their plea, and laid it down in a pilgrimage church together with a vow to have a mass celebrated and a monetary donation (*Opfer in Stock*).

Helena Pfabin from Schacha had a thorn in her foot for three and a half years and could no longer walk. She also sought help from various Bader, but they were unable to remove the thorn. So she made a vow to the Holy Cross, offering a wax foot and an Opfer in Stock. Thereupon the thorn sprang out of the afflicted foot by itself, to the greatest astonishment of the suffering woman.

Book of Good Deeds, Scheyern Abbey, 1743, No. 5

Supplicant (Votive Female Figure):
Some believers had their portrait or even their entire body modelled or cast in wax. The closer the figure matched the supplicant in size and weight, the greater the symbolic—and at the same time the material—value of the votive offering. It represented the dedication of the whole person, often in the context of a comprehensive plea for healing or protection.

Anna Gräslin of Scheyern lay gravely ill, so much so that no one believed she could recover. In this most desperate danger she made a vow here, with a wax effigy and an Opfer in Stock. Thereupon her condition gradually improved, and in fact she recovered.

Miracle Book of the Niederscheyern Pilgrimage Site, Vol. 5, 1749, No. 81

Toad:
The votive in the form of a toad symbolises the uterus. In popular belief it was thought that a toad dwelt in a woman's womb, causing pain and bleeding. By offering such a gift, women sought healing from abdominal ailments or relief from unfulfilled desire for children.

Walburga Heiflin of Unterschönbach had suffered for fourteen days from severe pains in her womb, as if bitten. She therefore made a vow with a waxen womb and carried it on her bare knees around the altar. After this vow, the illness ceased at once, without doubt through the intercession of the helper in need, St Leonard.

Miracle Book of Inchenhofen, 1592

Eyes:
Eye votives were offered in cases of injuries and diseases of the eyes, often also out of fear of blindness.

Walburg Kneißlin of Reisgang suffered from a dangerous condition of the eyes and feared she might go blind. Yet as soon as she made a vow here in offering a wax eyeball, she felt relief and regained her sight.

Miracle Book of the Niederscheyern Pilgrimage Site, Vol. 4, 1726, No. 109

Teeth:
Tooth votives and dentures were offered in cases of toothache and oral diseases. They were often intended to bring relief or to protect against further suffering.

Maria Renkhl suffered from severe toothache for a full 24 days. She made a vow here with a holy rosary and a wax set of teeth, whereupon the pain soon subsided.

Miracle Book of the Niederscheyern Pilgrimage Site, Vol. 5, 1747, No. 28

Ears:
Ear votives were offered in cases of earache, hearing loss or deafness. They were intended to bring healing and the return of hearing.

Rosina Kiefflin, unmarried, from Pfaffenhofen, suffered from a severe defect of hearing, so that for five weeks she could hear neither speech nor bells. She sought help from Our Lady here, vowing to pray three rosaries and to make an offering. She immediately perceived an improvement.

Miracle Book of the Niederscheyern Pilgrimage Site, Vol. 2, 1706, No. 101

Arms, Legs and Hands:
Moulds for casting arms, hands and legs belonged to the standard repertoire of every Lebzelter. Hardly any pilgrimage church could do without these votive offerings: they were given in cases of injury, paralysis or serious illness and were often laid down in large numbers together with crutches and bandages—as petitions for healing or as thanks for recovery.

A child from Pfaffenhofen had such a severe condition of the finger that a Bader treated it for three-quarters of a year, but to no avail. It was even thought that the child's finger would have to be amputated. In this distress the parents finally placed their only hope, next to God, in the image of grace here, and vowed the child with a holy mass and an Opfer in Stock. Immediately all danger disappeared, and the finger was healed.

Miracle Book of the Niederscheyern Pilgrimage Site, Vol. 2, 1705, No. 53

Wolfgang Krebs, a soldier, was severely wounded in the right hand and lay bleeding for four hours, unable to help himself, and with no one else coming to his aid. As a result, his injured hand became completely paralysed, so much so that for five months he could not move it or hold the slightest thing. But when, after these five months, he passed by this house of God as a discharged soldier and heard many people speak of this image of grace, he made a vow with a wax hand and a Kreuzer (a small coin) in the Opfer in Stock. Thereupon he was immediately able to move his hand again and use it at will.

Miracle Book of the Niederscheyern Pilgrimage Site, Vol. 2, 1702, No. 13

Torsos:
A wax torso was usually offered in cases of pain in the chest or abdominal area, or in diseases of the internal organs. Since self-diagnosis was often difficult with the wide variety of pains in the upper body and abdomen, it was easier for the sick to symbolically locate all their complaints in this region and to express them in the form of a wax torso.

A certain person was in great fear because of a swelling on the chest, worrying it might turn to cancer. To avert such misfortune, they vowed a holy mass and a wax offering, and were thereby freed from further harm with great consolation.

Miracle Book of the Niederscheyern Pilgrimage Site, Vol. 4, 1726, No. 223

Knives, stabbing pains:
All stabbing pains, especially those in the chest and abdominal area, were indicated by a wax stabbing knife. Pains of the heart, lungs or side were among the most frequent reasons for such votive offerings.

Maria Winderin of Eidenbach was suddenly seized at night by a painful stabbing in the heart, so that she could neither move nor bend. In this pain she made a vow here with a wax stabbing knife, a Saturday devotion, and an Opfer in Stock. Upon this prayer the stabbing pain in her side ceased immediately.

Miracle Book of the Niederscheyern Pilgrimage Site, Vol. 5, 1748, No. 32

Lungs:
Lung votives were offered for diseases of the respiratory tract and neighbouring organs, often also for tuberculosis, which at that time was called ‘consumption’ or ‘lung disease’.

Catharina Kneißlin of Pfaffenhofen was so severely afflicted with coughing that she spat blood. But as soon as her mother made a vow that the daughter should come here on three consecutive Saturdays, and also offer a wax figure, she immediately began to recover.

Miracle Book of the Niederscheyern Pilgrimage Site, Vol. 2, 1703, No. 21

Throat:
Votives in the form of a throat or gullet were offered for illnesses in the throat area, such as inflammations, ulcers or breathing difficulties.

Magdalena Moserin of Sätzlhof suffered from a dangerous condition of the throat. There was no doctor experienced enough to help her. She declared that Our Lady of Niederscheyern alone was her best helper and physician.

Miracle Book of the Niederscheyern Pilgrimage Site, Vol. 4, 1725, No. 83

Chiara Enzo (* 1989 Venice, IT)

A me stessa (To myself), 2019
Tempera-Gouache, pastel, coloured pencils on cardboard, mounted on a wooden panel
16,8 x 24 cm, with frame 17,5 x 24,7 x 3,1 cm
Courtesy Private collection, Italy

Senza titolo (pelle) (Untitled, skin), 2019
Tempera-Gouache, pastel, coloured pencils on cardboard, mounted on a wooden panel
15 x 17,7 cm, with frame 15,8 x 18,6 x 3,1 cm
Courtesy MA COLLECTION Singapore

Visceri III (Addome operato) (Viscera III, operated abdomen), 2022
Watercolour, pastel, coloured pencils on cardboard, mounted on a wooden panel
24,3 x 15 cm, with frame 25 x 15,7 x 3,1 cm
Courtesy Collezione De Iorio, Italy

Senza titolo (doccia) (Untitled, shower), 2019
Tempera-Gouache, pastel, coloured pencils on cardboard, mounted on a wooden panel
17,7 x 15 cm, with frame 18,4 x 15,6 x 3,1 cm
Courtesy Private collection, Italy

Visceri IV (Gambe) (Viscera IV, legs), 2023
Watercolour, pastel, coloured pencils on cardboard, mounted on a wooden panel
22 x 15 cm, with frame 22,7 x 15,8 x 3,1 cm
Courtesy Private collection, Italy

Chiara Enzo's work revolves around the notion of the boundaries between the self and the other. Where does the 'I' end and the 'you' begin? Do we merely have a body, or are we a body? Or perhaps both: are we the very body we possess? She poses questions about the universal experiences of being human—intimacy, vulnerability, fragility, illness—and how we construct an idea of reality out of perception.

Her central subject is the human body, the organism—in Greek *organon*, instrument—understood as a living tool of inquiry and as the site of perception. For her, the body becomes the interface of our being in the world—the mediating element through which our self relates to the world. Body, emotions and feelings are bound together in an inseparable interplay. Through the body we experience emotions. They generate biological and psychological responses, feelings through which we make sense of reality. We don't *have* a body; we *are* our body, in the uniqueness of its constitution.

Chiara Enzo explains that her paintings arise from a sense of fragmentation. She experiences it as the impossibility to grasp the world in its entirety. Instead, she turns to the smallest units, to minimal, detailed experiences. Her paintings always show excerpts and partial views. She focuses on traces left by bodies, on absences or fragments of bodies that, in extreme close-up, appear disconcertingly private and intimate. This fragmentation reflects not only her own experience but also a contemporary condition: the perception of a world that reaches us in fragments through images and media. Her motifs are drawn from various visual contexts—from magazines, social media and personal photographs—out of which the artist has created an extensive archive.

In their fragmentary nature, her motifs don't tell a grand, closed narrative but reveal the traces, the gaps, the unfinished. Many of her works revolve around images of intimate moments that are at the same time disseminated in the digital realm—social media as a private archive of intimacy. This ambivalent origin shifts perception: what appears personal and vulnerable is at once public and widely accessible. Even in an era of technologically supported medicine, the existential experience of human fragility remains fundamental and unalterable.

Chiara Enzo works rigorously and consistently in small formats, a practice that demands extreme precision and slowness. Yet it is not only the intimacy of the creative process—between the artist and the work—that interests her, but also the intimacy between the work and the viewer. The small scale and density of detail draw the viewer into physical proximity with the image. The gaze falls on the surfaces of the body, which are never intact or unscathed, bearing traces of injury, intervention, epidermal reactions or marks.

Enzo seeks an experience of connection between the subject, the work and the viewer. She paints surfaces that can be experienced not only visually but almost tactilely—as if the gaze itself were to become touch and the eyes could take on the function of hands. Within this field of tension, her work searches for a form of contact between image, body and perception.

Enzo's artistic practice emerges from the act of drawing. She begins with coloured pencils and then moves into a process of painting in countless layers. She describes this practice as an attempt to reconstruct reality through the gesture of drawing. Through her gaze she feels her way into reality—probing it with her sense of sight—creating a relationship between the self and the other. Through the painting, the depiction of a body—in close proximity, laid bare—a feeling arises. Closeness is physical. Closeness is also an emotion, and it implies risk and vulnerability.

Since time immemorial, the act of drawing has been a visual process of thought. Through it, thoughts and emotions take shape in images, and decisions about how to depict a motif—form, framing, line, perspective and colour—create a reality of their own through art. For Chiara Enzo, seeing, observing and drawing are therefore not merely techniques, but a form of knowledge: a method of feeling one's way into the world, of grasping it and forging a connection with it. For Enzo, drawing is a tool for giving meaning to reality—an approach to the real that we explore through our bodies.

Her working method is characterised by great slowness and persistence. The creation of a single image often requires months of work. Thus the works accompany the artist over a long period of time. With gouache, watercolour, chalk pastel and coloured pencils, she patiently draws lines on cardboard that, over time, condense into a richly detailed image. The dry, powdery quality of her materials allows her to deliberately extend the process.

In the exhibition *Anatomy of Fragility*, Chiara Enzo's delicate works are suspended individually among the votive offerings of the Hans and Benedikt Hipp Collection and the Etruscan ex-votos of Justus Liebig University Giessen. Together, they testify to the primordial human experience of vulnerability and the desire for healing. Yet the manner in which this unfolds, and the significance

attributed to the image of the body, differ profoundly. Votive offerings are imbued with a magical mode of thought in which a symbolic image, a surrogate fragment, is entrusted by a community with the power to perform a miracle on the corresponding part of the living body, in the immediacy of the present. By contrast, Chiara Enzo's paintings address the question of what images of the body and its stagings express in an age of digital technologies and imaging techniques. Her works challenge the viewer's ability to project an empathic imagination into her photorealistic depictions of the body in order to decode them, and to break with the heightened forms of self-representation.

A me stessa (To myself) shows a female portrait depicting the neck and neckline below the chin. The title reveals that it's a self-portrait. Traditionally, self-portraiture in art has been a space of self-knowledge and self-presentation. Artists have not only recorded their outward appearance, but also used it as a means of questioning themselves. It is less concerned with resemblance than with an attempt to look beyond the mirror and to probe the depths of one's own existence.

The face, and above all the gaze, have always been the primary bearers of identity—a projection screen of interiority and a means of making the self visible. Chiara Enzo breaks with this tradition by deliberately withholding her face. She shifts attention to the body, to those parts that usually stand at the margins of the image: chin, tips of hair, neck, a section of the sternum, etc. And she places these at the centre, marked by scratch-like traces, by skin reddened and rendered vulnerable. They speak of sensitivity, of bodily experience, without a specific event being named. The face remains hidden, identity anonymised. And yet her personal experience emerges.

With this, Enzo formulates a different understanding of the self-portrait: it is not the recognition of the individual that stands at the forefront, but the sensing of a bodily truth. The self is not told through the face, but through the trace, through the skin, through the marks of vulnerability.

Senza titolo (pelle) (Untitled, skin) shows a close-up of skin. The hair follicles are pronounced and the hairs stand upright—goosebumps. What is depicted here is an emotion, a bodily reaction—one that foregrounds the skin as an organ. A moment frozen in the image, in which the fleeting nature of sensation is transformed into an enduring imprint.

For Enzo, skin plays a central role in her understanding of being-in-the-world. It is both a boundary organ and contact surface—powerful and extremely sensitive. At once the site of pleasure and of pain. Through it we experience touch, vitality and connection to the world, and it is the threshold to the outside. At the same time, it is the most intimate organ one can reveal of oneself. Its imperfections make it particularly compelling: it ages, it scars, it bears traces. In it, the history of a person can be read; it preserves the marks of a lived life and speaks of a person's past and transience.

In *Visceri III* (Viscera III), Chiara Enzo shows an operated abdomen. The detail focuses on the navel, where the imprint of a freshly removed plaster can be seen. Around it are the stitches and threads of surgery. Enzo directs the gaze to injured areas of skin—to traces, redness, scratches, scars. These are bodies stripped of any form of idealisation. So too in *Visceri IV (Gambe)* (Viscera IV, legs):

instead of a flawless body, of immaculate skin, she opens an unfiltered view of the imperfection of the corporeal and of a deviation from the ideal as the very substance of art.

There are also pictorial spaces in Chiara Enzo's work in which the body is absent, yet still palpable as a presence: depictions of surfaces and spaces that show no bodies, and yet are permeated by corporeality. The work *Senza titolo (doccia)* (Untitled, shower) presents an isolated view of a shower hose—both image and memory, atmospherically dense within the emptiness of a hospital washroom.

Agnes Questionmark (* 1995 Rome, IT)

Incertae sedis I (Birth at Sea), 2025
Resin, clear resin and iron
135 x 202 x 90 cm

Incertae sedis II (Turn Male to Mate), 2025
Resin, clear resin and iron
162 x 135 x 242 cm

Incertea sedis III (Female Adulthood), 2025
Resin, clear resin and iron
215 x 158 x 76 cm

Multivisceral abdominal resection with BiClamp® knife 220, 2025
Silicone
245 x 440 cm

Partial liver resection using BiClamp® knife 220, 2025
Silicone
410 x 225 cm

Heart Transplant Surgery: 'No Room for Anything Less Than Perfection', 2025
Silicone
205 x 377 cm

is like living in two different planets, 2025
Wax
180 x 230 cm

i have an empty sit next to me, 2025
Wax
170 x 180 cm

my heart is pounding the idea of u coming, 2025
Wax
155 x 185 cm

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Courtesy Agnes Questionmark

Agnes Questionmark lives and works in Rome and New York. Her reflections revolve around the questions of how bodies are read when they differ from social norms, and what it means for the individual when their body becomes the object of medical interventions and of biopolitical or legal regulation. Agnes Questionmark points to the power of a purely medical gaze, which fixes subjects, assigns genders and pathologises difference. By appropriating and transforming clinical imagery, her art becomes an act of self-empowerment—beyond binary categories of male and female, healthy and ill, human and non-human, fragile and resilient.

Agnes Questionmark's art takes shape in performances, sculptures, installations and video works, and the starting point of her practice is her own body. Early experiences led the artist to question social expectations and notions/judgements of body and identity. As a child she was under constant medical observation and pharmaceutical treatment. Her body, as Questionmark states, did not fit into any category or into a societal norm of what a body should be. It did not function as it was expected to. And so the artist, at first within a male-assigned identity, began to explore other forms and categories through which to think and represent her own body. The question of the labelling of health and pathology, between self-perception and external perception, became the vanishing point of her reflections and inquiry.

She asked what reality is, searching for concepts with which it might be represented and described. Theories on photography by Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes and Walter Benjamin provided an essential foundation. Over the years, the artist developed her alter ego. In her performance *TRANSGENESIS*, in which she embodied an oversized octopus for 8 hours a day over 23 days, she celebrated her own transformation and rebirth as Agnes Questionmark.

Octopuses are a guiding figure in Questionmark's work. They stand for motherhood, as these intelligent sea creatures die in order to nourish their offspring with their own bodies. And they possess not just a single brain, but neural centres in each of their tentacles, enabling them to experience the world around them simultaneously.

For Questionmark, it is about transformation—about bodies that are not dualistic and socially constructed, but embody an in-between state, thereby empowered to assume a new identity and to transcend the old self. The question mark in her name symbolises this very conviction: that the self is not a fixed state, but a continuous flow of shifting perceptions, thoughts and emotions in dialogue with the world.

For the exhibition *Anatomy of Fragility*, the artist has created a large-scale installation: three life-sized sculptures and six wall objects. The starting material is imagery of open-heart, liver, and

stomach surgery, with the surgeons' hands reaching deep into the inner body. Questionmark distorts these images both digitally and manually, overlaying them with silicone or pouring wax across them like a thick skin. Pigments fuse with the material to form organic landscapes that evoke the appearance of sliced body tissue, and the tactile presence of silicone and wax recalls flesh and inner bodily spaces. In this way, visceral images emerge that grant an intimate view of the body's vulnerability. In addition, the room is immersed in a soundscape: muffled heartbeats, the rush of blood, the sound of flowing and pumping, beating against the body's surface from deep within.

At the centre of the space stand three life-sized sculptures: hybrid beings, somewhere between aliens, mythological water figures and fish. Their blue exterior appears cool, their surface wet, as if they had just emerged from the water or had only just been born. For Agnes Questionmark, water is the primal site of transformation, the place of becoming and passing away—the oceans as the origin of all life, or the amniotic fluid of the womb. Her sculptures and installations embody hybrid figures that resist clear categorisation, oscillating between human and animal. Or like a seahorse, this extraordinary delicate water creature where it is the males who carry their young. What is strange, what is other, what society often regards as monstrous, becomes in Questionmark's work an image of openness and possibility.

The hybrid creatures of Agnes Questionmark cannot be assigned to any species or territory. Underwater or on land, organic or artificial, born or unborn, they embody states of in-betweenness. In this suspension, they point towards a posthuman idea of existence: a world in which bodies are no longer defined by hierarchy, identity or fixedness, but through entanglement, multiplicity and mutual dependency.

Questionmark's experiences and sensibilities resonate with Donna Haraway's philosophical notion of 'tentacular thinking', with Rosi Braidotti's idea of the "nomadic subject" and with posthumanist thought. Posthumanism rejects a fixed concept of the human and broadens the focus beyond the human species, considering animals, technologies and the environment as significant agents that shape the world. At its core lies the question of relationships between humans and the many non-human beings, in ever-new constellations, free from hierarchy.

Questionmark makes use of the aesthetics of surgical interventions and biotechnological procedures. In her works the body is opened, made permeable and transformed. Yet while medicine and technology often serve, for the artist, as instruments of standardisation and control, she employs the very same aesthetic means to render these power structures visible. The gaze upon the body itself becomes a political act: who is permitted to shape it, who is being shaped?

For Questionmark, fragility and pain are the preconditions for transformation. Her hybrid beings unite pain with hope, monstrosity with care, disgust with beauty. She and her figures create images of a future in which humanity does not appear as a rigid norm, but as an open process—shaped by individual desires and longings. Agnes Questionmark invites us to rethink the body—as process, as possibility, as fragility that becomes strength.

For further information, please visit our website www.fkv.de/en/presse.
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