

Introduction by Dr. Dean Edell:

Science and art have always been major themes in my life. This duality has not always been comfortable and often created conflict and confusion within me. I entered medical school reluctantly. I secretly wanted to be an artist. I sold a total of one painting from a New York gallery in which my mother was a part owner. I delivered it personally and was instructed by the buyer to hang it in the bathroom...the maids bathroom yet. Stick to medicine my mother said. I did take art courses in college and even when medical school loomed in my direct future I studied medical illustration thinking that this could be a career that would resolve this divide in me. That wasn't in the stars.

But medicine made the interior of the body a familiar landscape and consequently did feed my aesthetic side in strange ways. I found myself making drawings and paintings of organs and innards. Their designs fascinated me. A whole new visual world was opened. Indeed, I saw beauty everywhere I looked. Here was a visual repertoire being missed by the art world or so I thought. For my sister's wedding present I made an ink drawing of a neck dissection. She returned it. I felt alone in these visions.

The rigors of my ongoing medical education immersed me in hard science. The chasm deepened. It was a conversation in the late 60's with visionary American artist Leonard Baskin that kept the flame alive. "Dead things can be as beautiful as living things," he said. His art certainly reflected this bold revelation. His personal library included many classic anatomy atlases and he is the only 20th century artist to produce his own anatomy atlas purely for arts sake. His belief was that as the information in old medical books got out of date they were thrown away, but old anatomy atlases survived through the years because of the wonderful art they contained.

I eventually dropped out of medicine and left my surgical practice in the early 70's and tried the art thing again, this time as a silversmith. I loved the 20th century Italian sculptor, Arnaldo Pomodoro and his smooth bronze orbs that split apart to reveal their insides. I see flesh in them. So I launched into making sculptures of incisions in silver, with the skin spread open to reveal the abstract anatomical mysteries hidden beneath. It didn't pay the bills.

Serendipity smiled upon me and my career in radio and television happened out of the blue in 1979. There was a local medical library in San Francisco that was de-accessioning books and offering them for free to anyone who would cart them off. I haunted the place and found myself grabbing any old medical book with pictures. I have always been a collector of something from Chinese art to old master graphics. The latter prepared me for the epiphany. When I became aware of old anatomy atlases with their astounding woodcuts, engravings,

and lithographs, I was instantly awestruck. Here was some of the most beautiful art I had ever seen. While many of these books were revered because the author had discovered some new duct or gland, I was after the luscious and rich artworks. I became whole again. I found my unifying passion. How and why have these wonderful volumes stayed hidden for so long. The story begins more than 500 years ago.

The year 1543 saw the publication of two of the most important books ever printed, Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus* and Vesalius' *Fabrica*. In the former, man began an objective and scientific journey to discover his outer world. Scientists, geographers, explorers and cartographers mapped the heavens and the earth. Every school child learns about this voyage. The other path was not as immediately available. It was an inward journey as man was now attempting to understand himself. The visual evidence of this journey was usually hidden between the covers of anatomy atlases. Although great artists participated in the arduous production of these books, their work was often not appreciated as it was a rare privilege to gaze upon these pages. Even doctors were often excluded from viewing this art, as these sometimes massive volumes were frequently too expensive and impractical. The magnificent Albinus atlas cost 24,000 florins, while Albinus's house, which he shared with the artist Jan Wandelaar during the decades it took to produce the book, cost 15,000 florins

This was a different kind of art. Yes, the most revered image in the history of art is the human body but that art always stopped at the skin. A few millimeters beneath and we enter a different realm. Our deeply ambivalent attitudes about our flesh and bones have prevented us from appreciating this treasure trove of artistic accomplishment.

But times have changed. Hollywood has perfected the genre of gore, many television shows realistically depict surgery or crime scene investigations and people all over the world, including those in most major cities in America, have lined up at science museums and other emporia in droves to see plastinated, dissected human bodies. We are now at last interested in our bodies and how they function.

By accepting this inner reality, we can see the beauty that artists have found beneath our skins. Judging from the number of high profile museum and library shows and books on the subject, the art world is finally accepting these remarkable works for what they are and we can now view these masterpieces for their artistic (as well as anatomical) value. Even the great hand colored and chromolithographed pathological and dermatology atlases of the 19th century offer astoundingly beautiful images with shapes, textures and colors evoking great abstract art.

It has been my privilege and pleasure to follow the history of man's inward journey to explore himself by collecting this library on the history of anatomical art. By returning the collection to the market I hope to encourage others to take the same rewarding historical and aesthetic journey that I so enjoyed.

Preface by Jeremy M. Norman:

The Dean Edell collection—the first auction catalogue entirely devoted to the history of anatomical art—documents ways that artists and physicians have shared the challenge of exploring the human body both above and below the skin. To portray the body accurately artists needed to understand correct proportions of the surface of the body. To understand the workings of the bones and muscles that drive the body they had to explore beneath the skin. To model emotional expression accurately artists needed to look beyond the surface to understand the physiology of facial expression. This anatomical knowledge artists usually gained by taking courses on anatomy taught by physicians or by reading books on anatomy for artists that might have been written by physicians. For physicians all parts of the body and their anatomical and physiological interrelationships in health and disease have been subjects of research. Where the work of physicians and artists intersected was in the depiction of anatomical and medical information. Books and art works in the Edell collection were done by artists, by physicians, by artists employed by physicians, by physicians who were trained as artists, and by artists who later became physicians.

To reference just a few examples in the Edell collection, artists such as Albrecht Dürer and Leonardo da Vinci conducted their anatomical projects for the most part independently of physicians. The brothers John and Charles Bell were trained as artists before they became surgeons. The anatomist Jules Cloquet was trained as an artist before he became a physician. The obstetrician, anatomist and book and art collector William Hunter taught anatomy to artists. Works on anatomy intended for physicians were often collaborations between artists and physicians, as were works on anatomy intended for artists. Or artists like Gamelin or Gautier d'Agoty produced anatomical works so distinctive that the anatomical content was secondary to artistic expression. Some physicians like James Hope or Robert Carswell were such capable artists that not only did they produce thousands of paintings of their pathological specimens, but they drew the artworks on stone for their lithographic reproductions.

In spite of the intricate web of relationships between artists and physicians the history of anatomical art, or other art related to medicine, was, until comparatively recently, pursued mainly by medical historians rather than art historians. The defining work on the history of anatomical art was *Geschichte and Bibliographie der anatomischen Abbildung* (1852) by the great medical bibliographer, medical historian, and physician Ludwig Choulant (1791-1861). This pioneering work organized and presented a great deal of bibliographical and art historical information on the history of anatomical illustration for the first time. When Choulant undertook his study the field was as much out of scope to art historians as it was to anatomists. As Choulant wrote, "there is certainly very little good information to be found in general works on the literature and history of fine arts as regards the subjects treated in this book, because these subjects are quite out of the range of the average littérateur and art connoisseur. In anatomic and medical works just as little is usually given, since the historic-literary and artistic points of view are quite as foreign to their readers." This quotation comes from p. xi of the English translation, revision, and expansion of Choulant's work by the ophthalmologist Mortimer Frank that was published in 1920 with the assistance of medical historian, bibliographer and librarian Dr. Fielding H. Garrison. This and a slightly more expanded edition of 1945 are the editions of Choulant most commonly used.

To limit the scope of his book Choulant excluded works on comparative anatomy, works on the anatomy of single organs, works on pathology, and most works on anatomy for surgeons. In Frank's 1920 edition, which increased the length of Choulant's book from 202 to over 400 pages, the scholarly and bibliographical references were updated throughout. A pioneering article by Choulant on the history of Chinese anatomy was included as an appendix, along with an appendix on "Sculpture and Painting as Modes of Anatomical Illustration" by Fielding Garrison and Edward Streeter, and a brief appendix by Garrison bringing Choulant's categories of "Illustrated Treatises on General Anatomy," "Artistic Anatomy," and books on the "History of Anatomical Illustration" up to date. Garrison included a special section on the history of "Cross-Section Anatomy (including Frozen Sections)"—methods that evolved after Choulant.

Choulant defined his approach to his subject as two-pronged: "1. The aid rendered to anatomic science by the graphic arts; 2. The aid rendered to the graphic arts by anatomic science" (p. 24). The key word in both prongs is "science." Choulant approached anatomical art primarily for its value in teaching anatomical science. He viewed anatomical illustration as a way to represent information, valuing accuracy of representation primarily, and artistic interpretation secondarily. He saw artistic

interpretation mainly as a dramatic way of representing accurate or ideal anatomical information. Emotional or social subtexts that artists might bring to anatomical studies he excluded from consideration. Nevertheless as a scholar he reported carefully and non judgmentally on topics like traditional Chinese anatomy which bore no relationship to accurate representation. Choulant's approach to the history of anatomical art remained predominate on these subjects for at least a hundred years, and though his overall approach eventually became dated, his selection of works and his scholarship remain of permanent value. We have referenced the Frank edition as "Choulant-Frank" throughout this catalogue.

From the bibliographical, anatomical, and art historical point of view the next major landmark in the evolution of this subject was *The Fabric of the Human Body: European Traditions of Anatomical Illustration* (1992), by the medical historian K. B. Roberts, and the anatomist J. D.W. Tomlinson. This massive work of 638 pages with hundreds of illustrations reviewed for the first time much of the territory originally covered by Choulant, but with a wider perspective, and a fresh viewpoint incorporating new biographical and art historical information. Roberts and Tomlinson also included anatomical works that Choulant and Frank excluded, such as works on pathology and surgical anatomy, while referencing much of the scholarship that had accumulated on individual authors or works in the nearly 150 years since Choulant's original publication.

It would be misleading to suggest that no significant works were published on the history of anatomical art between Choulant and Roberts & Tomlinson. One significant work that contained a great deal of information on French and Italian books, drawings, and sculpture relating to anatomy was *Histoire de l'Anatomie Plastique: Les Maîtres, les Livres, et les Ecorchés* (1898) by Mathias Duval and Edouard Cuyer. Both authors were widely published physicians with great interest in the history of anatomical art. Duval was also the author of a best-selling book on anatomy for artists, and this work, which included information not available to Choulant, emphasized the history of anatomy for artists. Unfortunately it was printed in relatively small format and on paper of poor quality.

As an outgrowth of Roberts and Tomlinson's work, in 1996 K. B. Roberts and art historians Mimi Cazort and Monique Kornell mounted a very influential show at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa entitled *The Ingenious Machine of Nature: Four Centuries of Art and Anatomy*. The fine catalogue, elegantly designed and printed, is a further development of the art historical approach to these subjects. Since then scholarship has advanced, especially from the art historical point of

view, but more noticeably, popular appreciation of anatomical art has increased through wildly successful exhibitions of plastinated anatomical preparations, and through websites and popular publications like Michael Sappol's *Dream Anatomy* (2006), referenced in this catalogue. More than 150 years after Choulant it may no longer be accuracy of representation, but the stories behind the creation of these works, the insight they shed on social and art history, and the emotional impact of their imagery that excite us most about works of anatomical art. These themes we have attempted to bring out in the chronological arrangement of the catalogue, in the writing of the annotations, and in the selection of images.