National College of Art and Design.

Death and The Inner Body:
A theme explored from ancient times to post-modernism.

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Preface

> 'The quality of "humanity" incidentally has nothing to do with happiness; we are, here, very far from any idea of charity: the most horrifying experiences and the cruellest of pleasures are entirely valuable if they contribute to the development of a real understanding of what it is to be human. Only a puritan would disagree, seeing in the body only gross matter and a despicable magma of viscera, rather than a mysterious theatre which provides a stage for all exchange- whether of matter, mind or the senses - between inner and outer worlds.' [1]

This Thesis was inspired by the fascinating drawings and sculptures created by artists and anatomists from Renaissance times to today. Death and the inner body seem to be recurrent themes underlying the work of these artists and it is this fact that has become the basis of research for this thesis. The inner body has been constantly used as a metaphor for investigating and dealing with death and hence the aim of this thesis is to examine the works of a selection of artists from the past and from today and to examine the social attitudes which have informed and directed these invasions into our inner bodies.

[1] Michel Leris, *Le corps enjeu*, Musee d'Ethnographie, Neuchatel, 1983, (Originally published in Documents 1930)

Chapter 1

Death and the Body as a central theme through the ages.

> 'Might it be perhaps, that the body can only be thought of as a reality in terms of categories which negate life.....that it's nature is only "thinkable" through death dealing structures of reason ?'
>
> Paul Jerome - *Le Anatomies Fantastiques*[1]

Artists through the ages have been fascinated by the human body, both inside and out. This is not suprising as it cannot be denied that it is the richest imaginable resource that we have. We experience everything through our bodies. It is a universal theme. Through body exploration any social group can find meanings that are immediately relevant to them. As Ludmilla Jordanova states in the catalogue *The Quick and the Dead:* 'the body is simultaneously abstract and concrete, symbolic and intimate, familiar and dangerous, ordinary and mysterious, material and sacred.'[2]

Our identity is derived from our outer facade; our exterior qualities such as our skin colour, our hair and our eyes tell us who we are. These traits give us a sense of individuality and identity, but what we cannot see is often a more fascinating subject and it is this theme that is of central concern to this thesis. If our outer shell is not sustained by blood, veins, arteries, organs and the skeleton we could not exist. Examination of the interior of our bodies points out to us our inherited flaws. Our body allows us to live but it also takes this right away, destroying us by disease, illness or indeed the ageing process. Hence artists who deal with the world inside us often do so as a metaphor for dealing with and understanding death.

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[1]Paul Jerome, *Le Anatomies Fantastique,* Geneva, Editions 1983, p3.
[2]Ludmilla Petherbridge, Quote by Ludmilla Jordanova, *The Quick and the Dead,* The South Bank Centre 1997, p100.

Their work often bears clear testimony of a personal struggle to cope with the reality of our mortality.

Death has been represented in art consistently throughout history. Artists have dealt with it as a theme long before the invention of writing and it has been a continuing subject thereafter. There has been much written discourse on death since the existence of writing, but visual images related to the body and to death seem to be much more powerful. Visual images not only reflect the prevailing social attitudes of a time in history, but they also encourage the viewer to examine his or her persistent concerns about death. Images of death and the body often seem to 'retain repressed meanings that the text filters out'. They can have the power to affect us much more deeply. In Barbara Stafford's book *Imaging the Unseen in Englightenment Art and Medicine,* she contrasts the use of visual with verbal evidence, arguing that when historians invoke pictorial evidence they do so largely to illustate a point rather than to argue through the material. She claims that this is partly because the word has been fetishized throughout Western culture, and the image largely viewed with suspicion.[3]

Leonardo Da Vinci has may times argued in favour of the image instead of the word when dealing with issues such as death and the body. In his notebooks he states

> 'I recommend you not to cumber yourself with words, unless you are speaking to the blind..... How in words can you describe this heart without filling a whole book?, Yet the more detail you write concerning it the more you will confuse the mind of the hearer.'[4]

Through the centuries, refinements in printing techniques have kept pace with scientific discoveries. John Gutenberg invented and developed printing movable type in 1440 which fulfilled the need for a cheaper and faster way of printing text than hand-written manuscripts. This invention made books more accessible to the general public but it was still a near impossible task to reproduce a visual image. In the sixteenth century the primitive woodcut gave way to the far more subtle techniques of engraving, etching and drypoint.

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[3] Barbara Stafford, *Imaging the Unseen in Englightenment Art and Medicine,* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991

[4] Irma. A, Richter, Quote from Leonardo Da Vinci, *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci,* The Artists Course of Study, Oxford University Press, 1952, p159.

Mezzotint which was invented in the following century allowed even finer renditions of textures and tonal values. In the eighteenth century the invention of aquatint reproduced washlike tones such as watercolour. Later in eighteenth century the invention of lithography displaced traditional methods of printing because in was quick and cheap to reproduce an image. These innovations in the printing of visual images of the body meant that for the first time the general public could view images of the inner body and of death and it gave artists and anatomists a chance to have their work viewed by thousands of people. The popularity of anatomy texts meant that artists felt obliged to engage the readers interest and the began to think of more and more interesting ways to display the inside of a dead body.

Different cultures deal with death in different ways. Western cultures have tended to fear it whilst other societies celebrate and revel in its shadow. For example the *Aghori;* a sect of the Hindu religion from India, believe that God imbues everything: the best and the worst, they believe that nothing is profane and that death is as beautiful as life. They actively break taboos of what is considered unclean and dangerous by living on the site of cremation grounds and bathing daily in the ashes of the dead. They believe that fire returns the body to the elements from which it is made. Whatever way we view it, death is a constant theme, as it is in our nature to question and try to reconcile our greatest fears by investigation and enquiry. Traditionally, artists have needed to study anatomy to represent the body in a truer fashion: dissecting the dead in order to depict the living, but their work often has underlying questions relating to the unanswerable: to the mysteries of life.

Taboos in Society.

Ethics has always been an issue when one considers human dissections throughout the ages. Human dissection was first practised at the periphery of the ancient classical world around 300BC. There have even been accusations that dissections of live human beings took place in Alexandria but there is insufficient evidence to support this.

> ' Tradition holds thatkings themselves, taking counsel for the
> public safety, have accepted criminals from prison and dissected

> them alive in order that while breath remained they might search out the secrets of nature.....'[5]

Many incorrect observations were made by the ancients when judged by later scientific enquiry. However, as many principles were known by the end of Cleopatras reign (around 30BC) as were to be discovered during the next 1,000 years. Shortly after Cleopatra's death, Alexandria became a Roman city and one of the main centres of the Christian church. Its leaders then began to discourage dissections. Leaders in other parts of the world, except Arabia, also denounced them. Almost all the work on dissection from Ancient times has been lost to us today.

Claudius Galen (AD 131-200) was a notable physician who, despite moral restrictions of the time, strove to advance anatomical understanding. Galen's text and images which were executed circa 150AD were derived from Alexandrian sources and his dissections were confined to oxen, dogs, swine, and apes because of religious prejudice and superstition. Actual human dissection, however,was not in vogue as people at the time viewed it as a disgusting and morally incorrect form of human investigation. They believed that to defile the body would destroy the soul. In the early part of the 13th century Galen's works were translated into Latin. Despite some very important contributions to experimental medicine, Galen delayed anatomical progress, he perpetuated many false beliefs established by his predecessors and his contemporaries. His beliefs on body spirits and the soul suited the leaders of the church and state, hence his views were not proved wrong until the 17th century. Meanwhile any investigator who wanted to enquire further was forced by government and the church to accept Galen's fallacious presentation.

Human dissection then re-emerged in the early 14th century. From Medieval times onwards anatomists and artists dealing with the body had certain moral constraints imposed on their studies and in the way they chose to represent the body. These constraints were constantly reviewed throughout the centuries. Certain ways of looking at the body which

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[5] Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned, Dissection and The Human Body in Renaissance Culture*, Routledge, London/New York, 1995.

before might have been seen as perfectly legitimate scientific endeavours, were later categorised as perverse examples of morbid eroticism. The regulation of the sciences in the later half of the 17th century meant that many of the images and objects created prior to that time have until now been stored away in museums and libraries. Censors believed that many works created from anatomical investigation were too disturbing and too explicit for the general public. Because the body was central to our moral ideas it could easily be used subversively. Images of an unfamiliar view of the body or parts of the body which were normally concealed, or a sexualised pose, or indeed an exploration of decay and death, all came under attack from the censor. This halted certain aspects of research for artists though some carried on working in secret. Detailed exploration of the body makes us uneasy. Unease was and is felt because our bodies are central to our being and no culture likes to be reminded of our inherent flaws. These images hit us too close to home.

Representations of the Inner Body

Death has been represented in many ways by artists and anatomists. Artists throughout the centuries have used the skeleton as a central motif for death. Figures that are half skeleton and half flesh tend to evoke the passage from life to death. The prospect of death is very frightening and images relating to this became morally charged. From medieval times there were many examples of this type of artwork which attempted to connect our mortality to our actions. Prior to the new science of the late 16th century it was impossible to separate the body from the soul. The body was only believed to be a vessel of containment for the more important soul. It was believed that the body was constantly at war with what it found residing in itself. This view was upheld by the work of the aforementioned Galen whose work *On the use of the parts of the Human Body,* served as the standard medical textbook for 1,400 years.

Death lays his icy hands on kings (fig.1) is a ghoulish image from a fourteenth century manuscript. It was painted after an outbreak of the Black Death and shows us that in

the fourteeenth century self-belief had been replaced by fear, doubt and despair. The painting is a moral lesson, illuminating the belief that degradation of a man's body leads to degradation of his soul. Mankind at this time was in a state of crisis and instead of trying to understand death through science and anatomy they believed that pestilence was a God-sent punishment for sin.

Hogarths' *Four Stages of Cruelty* (see fig. 2*)* is a further example of this type of moral lesson This series of woodcuts shows the gradual demise of a man who is guilty of torturing animals and killing his pregnant lover. He is ironically himself tortured, hanged and then dissected by surgeons. The penetration of his body, showing and defiling its contents, are deemed as appropriate punishment for the his crimes.

During the Renaissance the universities and academies became ever more preoccupied with anatomy and the discovery of the human form by dissection. Scholars and artists began regularly dissecting human bodies and making diagrams. In the late fifteenth century religious and scientific institutions raised a moral challenge to dissection that was to last centuries. The war became more fierce as an interest in science and anatomy peaked in the later half of the sixteenth century. There was a sense of loss of control as they realised faith in God could not control our bodies. It was discovered that the body operates according to its own laws of hydraulic motion. Anatomists lost themselves in the amazing interior architecture of the body. It was an architecture that concealed a system of dizzying complexity.

> 'Gazing into the body, with an eye skilled in measurement, the body appears at first to be finite in it's capacity in comparison to the mind's insatiability, but deeper investigating leads to doubt, from being a safely measurable interior, it re-emerges as a reservoir of immense size and capacity.'[6]

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[6] Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned,* p18.

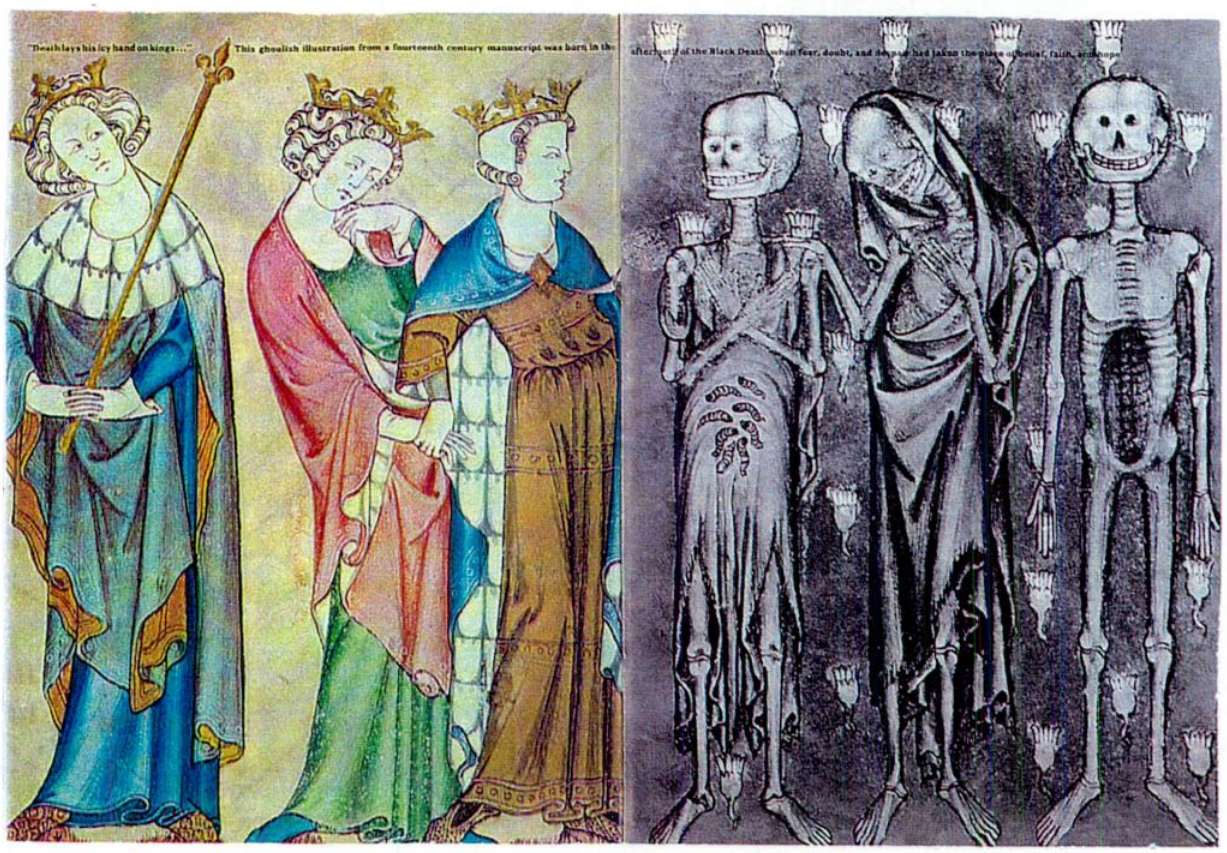

Fig 1: Artist unknown: Death Lays his Icy Hands on Kings, c1500

Fig 2: John Bell / After William Hogarth: *The Reward of Cruelty* from *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, 1750-51

When Renaissance science became established artists and anatomists increased rapidly as it became easier to circumvent authoritarian restrictions. Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564) was the most important of those who ushered in the modern era of anatomy. He did not accept the incorrect views of Galen and through straightforward scientific examination, not metaphysics, he accurately depicted the inner structure of the human body. His contemporaries and his successors added to Vesalius' fundamental studies leading to a much better understanding of the workings of the human body. The plates in Vesalius', *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543) were so designed as to enable the reader to follow the dissection procedure step by step, with each of the plates revealing a deeper level right down to the skeleton.

The title page of Vesalius' *Fabrica* (fig. 3) illustrates his views on life and death and the structure of the body. Anatomization engendered conflicting emotions of desire and horror among the people of early modern culture and this title page helps to illustrate this. Earlier depictions of the anatomy theatre are much less animated. People of this time embraced anatomization. You could draw a crowd of thousands to see a dissection and the more bizarre the subject the bigger the crowd. Vesalius in this title page invites us to step into this 16th century world, to join with the crowd in their wonder and appreciation of the crossover between the living and the dead. At the centre of the image is the dissected female cadaver: the surface tissue of her abdomen is peeled back, hinting to us revelations to come in future pages of the book. In Jonathan Sawday's *The Body Emblazoned,* the author makes some very interesting points concerning the title page of *Fabrica*. He tells us that on the title page alone Vesalius attempts to demonstrate the structure of the whole universe. Vesalius believes that the central ingredient of the universe is life and this is concealed within the womb. The anatomical theatre doubles up as a tomb, it is his magnificent temple. His anatomical universe seems to revolve around the connections between the womb and the tomb. The world to Vesalius was 'unterocentric'. We originate from the womb so the womb is the central image. He makes an ironic comment though about our imperfect nature by

Fig 3: Andreas Vesalius: Title page of 'De Humani Corporis Fabrica', 1543

depicting a skeleton rising out of the womb. Here Vesilius plays out a drama of life and death., 'We are born to die / Nascentes Morimur' [7]

The body in Renaissance science was likened to a machine, a view that Leonardo's notebooks convey quite clearly. He looked on the body with the eye of a mechanic. In order to understand the body he dissected corpses and examined bones, joints and muscles in isolation and in relation to one another. He made drawings from many points of view and studied the manner in which actions and movements were performed. Many of the most famous images from Leonardo's vast portfolio of work are his anatomical drawings of the body. *Vitruvian Man* is one of his best known and most reproduced images in Western Art. It has become ' an expression of a belief in the perfect human form that art enacts.'[8] In this drawing the male figure is represented twice, once in standing position and the other with it's legs extended. The proportion of this 'ideal' are derived from the circle and the square two perfect forms. Man however will never quite reach this perfection and it is this struggle to understand and master nature and our bodily structures, that has for centuries spurred many artists to explore our imperfect bodies.

Since Leonardo's time artists have endeavoured to present us with accurate renderings of the workings of the human body. Many of the more common drawings are known as 'animated anatomical drawings'. Backgrounds, techniques of emphasising certain body parts in pictorial representation are all important factors in our reading of what these artists were attempting to achieve with their work. Many figures in these drawings are placed against a background of the landscape. These skeletons and flayed corpses are living anatomies, The have a sense of movement but they cannot be alive. They are life drawings of a dead subject and they serve to remind us of death and our own mortality.

In the following centuries the inner terrain of the body was mapped and charted, year after year revealing finer and finer structures contained within the body. It recent times photography has been vital in mapping the contours of the inner body. Artists' obsession with

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[7] Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned,* p71.
[8] Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Bodyscape*, Routledge, London/New York, 1995, p19

peeling back the layers of skin and successive layers of the flesh has through the centuries broken traditions and taboos but has also created new ones in this post-modern era . Social beliefs both obstruct and encourage artistic endeavours and each era in time is accompanied by its own moral constrictions.

Chapter 2

Imaging the Unseen in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.

The work of three artists whose work investigated the inner body are particularly relevant when exemplifying the issues already mentioned. Their work illustrates the kind of themes which were dealt with by artists dealing with death and the inner body in the 17th and 18th century before the invention of the camera. Analysis of their work allow us to compare social reasoning of that time to that of our post modern society.

Gaetana Giuilio Zumbo

The first of these to be is Gaetana Giuilio Zumbo (1656-1701), a Sicilian monk born in Naples in the early 17th century. He was work was praised by society in his own day as he was the first person faithfully to recreate in three dimensions the human body in all 'it's glory and its gore.'[1] Zumbo was the first person to make anatomical models. He emerged from a Sicilian society which trivialised dissection. To the mass populace it was entertainment; often dissections would take place with a full orchestra and vocal ensemble. He also grew up observing the so called 'graveyard art', a style of artwork which was typical of this part of southern Italy. Graveyard art was created by the nuns of this region, they made tiny wax models showing the effect sin has on the body. They showed these effects in graphic detail, they served as a reminder of the corruptibility of flesh and were found in a prominent place in most homes of the time.

[1] Lara Hannay, *Raiders of the Human Body: Flesh & Wax* ,BBC, 1998 (Episode 1).

Votive offerings were also a common sight at the time of Zumbo's life (fig 4). These offerings consisted of wax body parts which were brought to the church in the hope of a cure for some illness or deformity. These votive anatomies didn't aim for realism, they were just schematic versions of the human body. If you were poor you had just some parts of the body made but for the more prosperous it was common to have your whole body modelled in wax. By leaving these items behind in sacred places the people of Naples left an impressive and weighty witness to their vows. It would not have been uncommon then for Zumbo as a child to observe baskets of arms, legs and other organs modelled in wax. This probably inspired some of his wax masterpieces.

Zumbo lived at a time when diseases such as leprosy and syphilis were commonplace. Religious organisations had a very powerful place in society and they perpetuated the belief that corruption was believed to be continually passing between the body and the surroundings, 'from the exterior world to his soul and from his soul to his body'[2] . The cult of the saints had reached its zenith in Naples at this time and religious relics in the form of body parts were venerated in most regions.

> ' the saints would lacerate their bodies with purulent sores until
> on their death bed a marvellous odour (the sweet smell of sanctity)
> would reveal them for what they are...'[3]

Images of corpses, bones and the deceased, were everywhere in Italian society of the time. Zumbo began his artistic work by creating wax tableaux, his first was entitled *Plague*(c.1687). He attempted realism, but also created a symbolic sculpture. Dead and dying bodies lay together combined with a seething of blood, sores and rotting flesh. These wax theatres became known as Zumbo's *Theatres of Bodily Corruption. Plague* and some of his other works such as *Syphilis*(1691)(fig 5.) were deemed as educational by the church. Syphilis was one of the most virulent diseases of the time; it was a disease which devastated the whole organism and so images of it's terrible attack on the body were used to frighten the

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[2] Lara Hannay,
[3] Lara Hannay ,

Fig 4: Artist unknown: Votive Church Offerings, c1650

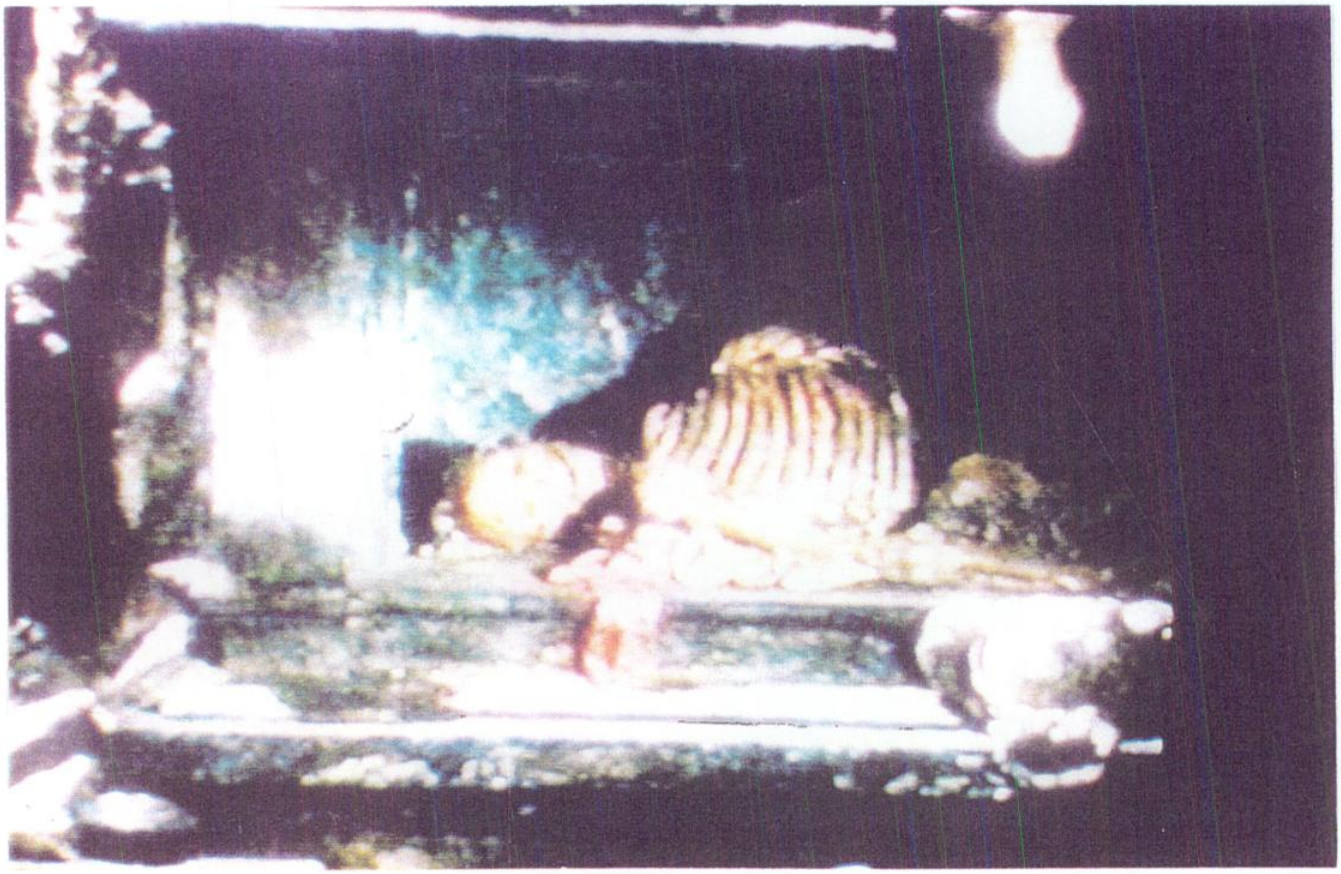

Fig 5: Gaetana Zumbo : Section of *Syphilis,* 1691

public and to stimulate holier feelings in them. The church used these wax theatres to educate the simple people, the ignorant and the uneducated as to them an artistic vision was much more powerful than text. These theatres had a social function. They were believed to stimulate the repentance and conversion of sinners.

In order to achieve reality in his work Zumbo came to the conclusion that he would have to observe real dissections for himself. How could he realistically expect to depict a body dying from a disease such as syphilis if he had not observed the real behaviour of a real body suffering this torture. He met up with a surgeon who was famous for his exotic dissections and who was living in Italy in exile after been banished from Paris for performing illegal dissections. His most famous dissection was that of a pregnant Woman who had died in childbirth. He and Zumbo attempted to recreate her characteristics in wax but today virtually nothing is left of their collaboration.

Today we have a stunning example of Zumbo's wax modelling to examine. It is a *severed head of an old man dissected on one side* (fig 6), it was the first model of its kind and was celebrated by Parisian medical circles. Its power is summed up when one reads the minutes of the university meeting when they were first presented with the head in 1701.

> 'What more could one wish for in science and the fine arts than to discover the secrets of imitating the works of the creator by showing the anatomy of the body in 3 dimensions without being struck with the horror that one usually feels at seeing corpses.' [4]

The secret of the perfection of this head is that Zumbo used a human skull as a base to apply his wax flesh. Zumbos work was the inspiration for many artists who created series' of wax anatomical models in a similar manner.

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[4] Lara Hannay.

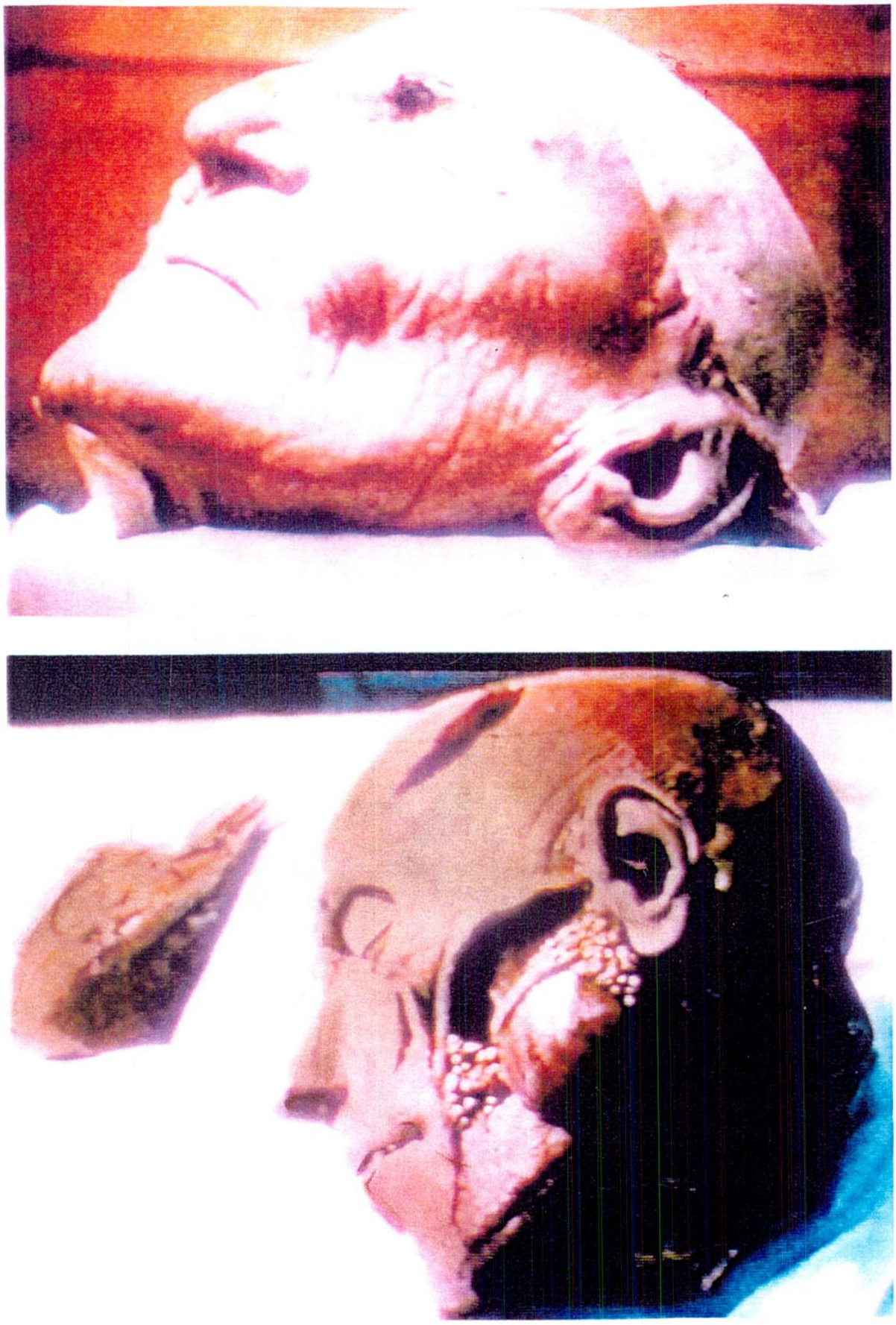


Fig. 6: Gaetana Zumbo: Two views of

A Severed Head of an Old Man Dissected on One Side, 1701

When Zumbo died in 1701, Denon, the doctor who had taught him the art of dissection recieved a royal patent allowing him the right to create wax anatomical models in the style of Zumbo. His work attracted the interest of the censor and in 1712 a law was passed stating that

> 'despite their usefulness these models are open to abuse, hence forthwith women will not be allowed to view them and the genital parts of either sex must be covered at all times, however the said parts may be displayed soley in favour of those who study medicine, pharmacy and surgery and for their instruction only.'[5]

An example of the type of work that the censor found offensive is the anatomical wax models of Clemente Susine and Guiseppe Ferrini. These body doubles are laid out as if dead. The artists have modelled their bodies in a state of decay, Their features are beautifully modelled with real human hair cascading down their shoulders. In the work *Venuses* (1782) the heads of the models are tilted back in almost ecstasy. Like the work of Jacquez-Fabien Gautier whose work is discussed in the next section their is a parallelism of female sexuality and death. These models are placed in glass coffins, their abdomens are flayed showing their insides and their breasts are inverted. The way the models are positioned makes the body appear very vulnerable in death.

Jacquez-Fabien Gautier

The work of artist Jacquez-Fabien Gautier (1717-1785) was revolutionary for its method of production but also for its very risky themes. He was an artist who dealt with life, death and sexuality with an openness that brought upon his work censorship from the public gaze and ridicule from the medical profession. As mentioned in the previous chapter the invention of the printing press was a central factor in the popularisation of anatomical works. In 1741 Jaques Christophe Le Blon developed, a three colour process of printing which tried to reproduce the delicacies that oil painting contained but it was his pupil Gautier who

[5] Lara Hannay.

perfected it. Gautier systematically applied and modified this process of colour mezzotint to suit the needs of scientific and medical works.

His master Le Blon only used a triad of red yellow and blue in his prints but Gautier added black which gave an added depth to the prints. He also added a varnish which made the prints more lustrous. He created large works in an attempt to recreate nature itself but he was still disappointed with the results of his toil as his final prints did not have the clarity or transparency he wished for. Instead his work gained a strange quality through the use of colour and varnish. It became quite surreal and dreamy, large flayed corpses and dismembered figures floated in the muted olive background. The seemed to take on a life of their own.

Originally Gautier as an artist worked with the help of anatomists but he became so obsessed with his investigations of the body that he eventually began to perform his own dissections. stating that ' I am the demonstrator, the painter, and the engraver rolled into one' He was an experimental artist, his work went beyond anatomy and science as he used his anatomical investigations to create his own life and death dramas. His use of the female body had been widely criticised, but this angle is not one which is a central theme to this thesis, instead it is his use of the anatomised body to portray life / death that is the main concern.

Gautier's *Anatomical virgin and child / partially dissected females and foetus* (1773)(fig7) is a disturbing work. It depicts a new born child lying next to it's mother and both have been partly dissected. The woman sits with the contents of her stomach displayed like a flower in full bloom, her flayed skin surrounds her and the baby like a cloak or stole; the baby too has been sullied by the surgeons knife but it seems content to sleep amid the chaos of the dissected organs which lie around the feet of the mother. The baby is still connected to the mother by its umbilical cord. In the background lies another partially dissected female in a clearly sexualised pose, her body is flayed and she is disimpowered without her legs or arms. This work displays all the themes which were deemed as taboo subjects when dealing with the body i.e. the views of the body are unfamiliar containing

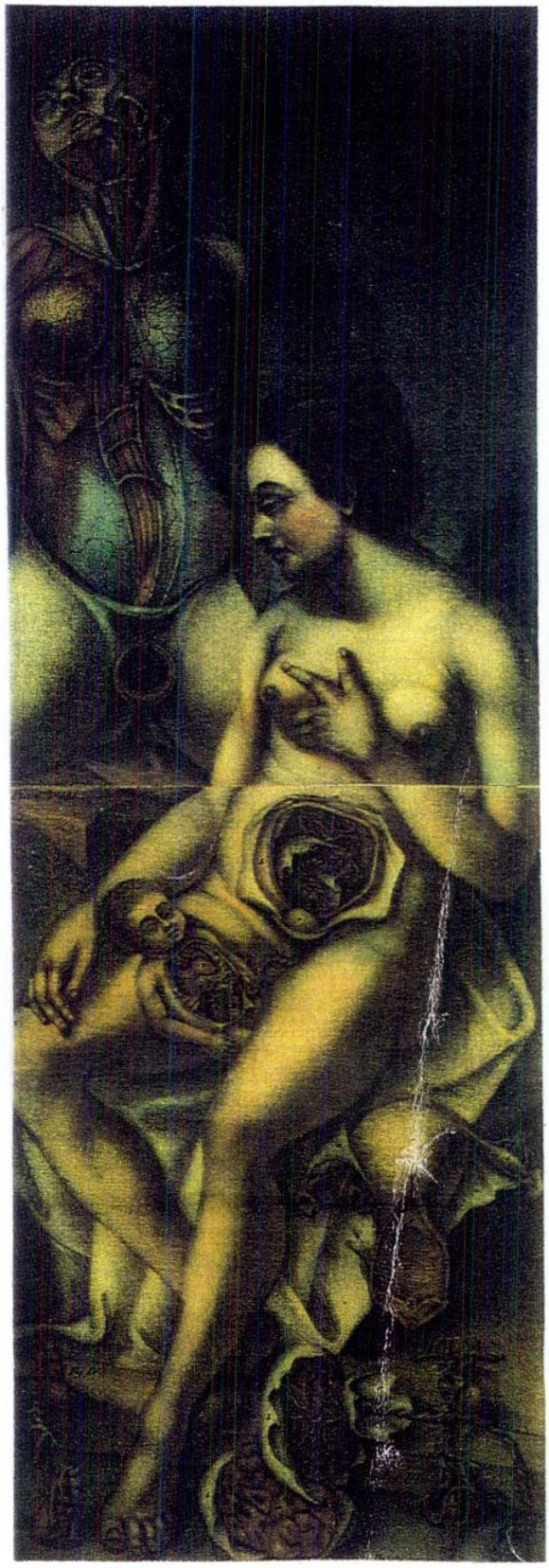


Fig.7: Jacquez-Fabien Gautier: *Anatomical Virgin and Child (Partially Dissected Females and Fetus)* 1773

sexualised poses and it is an exploration of death and decay. As mentioned in chapter one figures that are half skeleton and half flesh tend to evoke the passage from life to death. This work by Gautier is the ultimate evocation of this ideal. The mother, the source of life, is giving birth; her baby is a sign of life, but she is half-body half-skeleton and a representation of death. She seems to be a living anatomy; she has a sense of movement and is placed against a landscaped background; she gives life yet she cannot be alive.

In other works Gautier transformed the muscles of a female cadaver, seen from the back into great fluted dorsal wings, The use of half flesh and half skeleton a metaphor for the passage from life to death; angel's wings has a metaphor relating to dying too.

Honore Fragonard

Honore Fragonard (1732-1799) was an artist who used actual dissected corpses to create extraordinary sculptural pieces. All of his works were once alive, they all had families, they all had a first name and a last name, but today all there details have been lost leaving us with strange icons dressed with ribbons of flesh. Fragonard produced these works by dissecting a body, postioning it in the desired pose and preserving it using a solution of spirits and carmine. These sculptures are undoubtably dead but Fragonard has posed and positioned each piece in an animated position. He seems to give his dead a sense of dignity and importance. These corpses have a more important role in society than their owners did when alive.

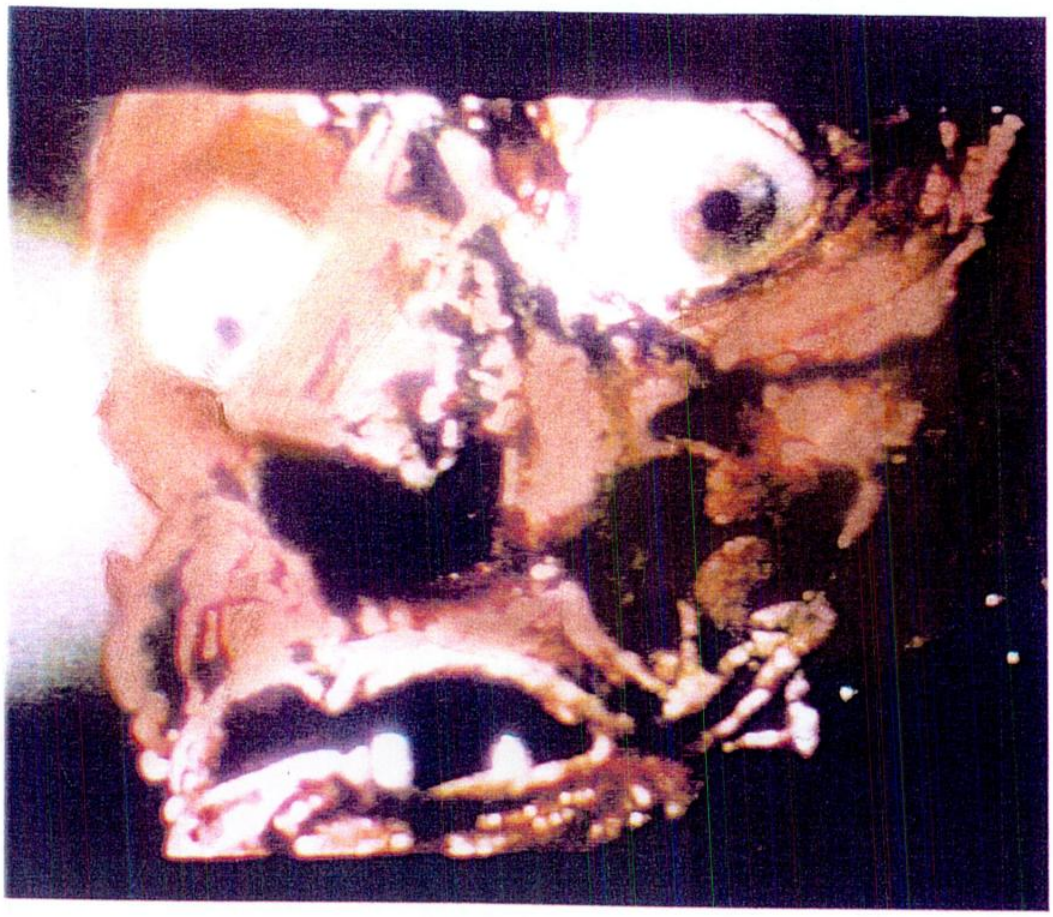
Fragonard was born into a family of artists in Provence in 1732, his cousin was the famous painter Jean Honore Fragonard who was famous for his skill at painting human flesh. From his father Fragonard learnt the delicate art of skinning animals and it is believed that his interest in dissection stemed from his father's influence. Fragonard was sent to Paris, where he studied anatomy, at this time (c1750) the people of Paris found anatomy violently distasteful and classed anatomists with the knackers who slaughtered and quartered old horses. Dead bodies of paupers were just thrown into the street which lead to the

underground trafficking of bodies; criminals were also used as eighteenth century society believed that the criminal was of more use to society stretched out in the anatomy theatre than hanging from the gallows. Slowly anatomical dissections became more acceptable to the upperclasses and a grand tour of Europe would not be complete without visiting an anatomy theatre and marvelling at the inner workings of the body for yourself.

The work of Fragonard was unusual because normally dissection was done on just one limb but Fragonard did whole bodies. Fragonard became famous for his work because he used actual corpses to create his masterpieces. He first dissected the cadaver, then soaked it several times in alcohol and arranged it in a natural position, putting the figure in a frame with cards to keep the figure in it's pose. When it was dry carmine was added to a varnish and then painted on to control the colour of the systems of the body.

These works are fascinating because they are made from real people; their identity has been lost through time, we cannot tell whether they were criminal or pauper but it is almost certain that they have much more significance and importance know than they ever had in life. In death, Fragonard's corpses recieve more substantial (rather than merely superficial) attention to their physical self than they ever had in life, he gave his bodies a beauty and permanency that today is still astounding. These are not morbid sculptures, but the do feel as if Fragonard was attempting to look into the soul of his subjects.

Fragonard's *Horseman* (c 1766) and his *Samson (The Man with the Jawbone of an Ass)* (c 1766) (figs 8 & 9) are among the most impressive of his many preserved dissections. Today, the identity of these cadevars in no longer important. These works represent a time when the public thought dissection and death was acceptable an a part of everyday life. It is interesting to compare the attitudes of Fragonard's contempories to that of society today. If an artist today used the bodies of actual human beings to create scuptural works there would be uproar in most areas of society. Even photographing dead bodies is taboo in our post-modern culture. In Chapter Three reference is made to Andres Serrano whose photographs of dead bodies was condemned by the U.S Congress.



Above: Fig. 8: Honore Fragonard: Section of *The Man with a Jawbone of an Ass (Samson)*, c1766.

Below: Fig. 9: Honore Fragonard: Section of *Horseman*, c 1766.

Cultural changes that have affected the views of contemporary society regarding death and the body.

It is important to the central idea of this thesis to compare the social reasoning of artists such as Zumbo, Gautier and Fragonard to that of the artists of our post-modern society. Images of the skull and the cadaver were familiar to most people living in Renaissance times. Death and disease were everywhere and people dealt daily with the reality of mortality. Communities had small graveyards adjacent to them and the frequency of death meant that often the gravedigger would turn up the remains of a family member or a neighbour whilst burying a new corpse. Until the early 20th century most people died in their own homes at less than 50 years of age following a brief illness. The family usually gathered in the home around the death bed. In the past death was regarded as something expected and familiar. Great importance was placed on the public ritual of preparation for death.

Emphasis on death for the first time began to change in the later half of the 20th century. In industrialised areas death became a private affair and a topic which was seldom discussed. Modern medical techniques prolonged the process of dying as well as prolonging life, and death usually now occurs in lingering stages in hospitals.

In the modern age we go to great lengths to postpone death. We distance the realities of it from our lives. Postponement of death has many consequences in society today. We push away and ignore everything that reminds us of death, the dead body, the decrepit body, illness and disease. However it is hard to ignore these images. Because of a better lifestyle the average person living in the developed world lives to around 70. As Chris Townsend says in the book *Vile Bodies,* 'The elderly are everywhere in our world they proliferate death as death once proliferated'[6] . Everyday images that society produces however tend to deny that the

[6] Chris Townsend,*Vile Bodies,(Growing old disgracefully),* Prestel in association with Channel 4 Television, 1998, p97.

elderly exist. The media shows us living in a world of tall, lithe, beautiful young people. We see no evidence of ageing in these images shown on TV and in Magazines. The models used are a symbol of 'bodily perfection' they must remain eternally young or else disappear from society.

> 'If the dead body can be shuffled off to the margins of visibility, dismissed to the atmosphere as so much gas and ash, its meaning returns in a displaced form as the still living, but also the soon to be dead - as the decrepit, the aged the crone, our crisis of looking cannot be so easily escaped.[7]

Disease and illness are hidden by contemporary society. Before the twentieth century, drawn-out diseases were often masked by premature death from infectious diseases that have since been eradicated with the development of vaccinations and antibiotics. These diseases often killed their victims quickly and easily; conquering them resulted in prolonging human life. Western medicine seemed for a while to be on the verge of eradicating all disease but instead we are left with the slower silent killers eroding our trust in modern society's 'shiny achievements in medicine' [8] .It has been estimated that the average dying person spends about 80 days during the last years of life in a hospital or nursing home[9]

Cancer and AIDS are the most frightening of these diseases and we hate to be reminded of their presence so we try to deny and hide their existence but are constantly forced to face our fears by they way our bodies are constantly monitored and investigated. Society forces us to check our bodily fluids for contamination; we measure our blood sugar levels and the media never lets us forget about the dangers of high cholesterol levels. AIDS has made us especially aware of the world within us forcing us to think of our bodies in terms of T. cells and CD4 clusters. As Nicholas Mirozoeff puts it in his book *Bodyscape*: ' Now we are all too conscious of our body as a defence mechanism against the outside world, afraid the worm may already be in the bud, and newly struck by the notion that a person is the sum of their experience'.[10] As a result of this interest in our own health and well being we are now

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[7] Chris Townsend, *Vile Bodies*,p97.
[8] Nicholas Mirozoeff, *Bodyscape,Art Modernity and the ideal figure*.Routledge, London/New York 1995 p11.
[9] Aaron D Freedman, 'Death and dying',_*The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia CD Rom,* 1993.
[10] Nicholas Mirozoeff, *Bodyscape,* p12.

constantly monitoring and trying to control our bodies, but we find that they have lives of their own 'sagging and bulging, contaminating themselves with disease from within, decaying and expiring.'[11]

The concerns one has when one views the inner body have changed dramatically throughout history. In Renaissance times the inner body was a source of wonder, artists and anatomists alike were entranced by the mechanics of life contained under our skin. Today images of the inner body point out to us the fatal flaw of the human subject. Our inner body reveals our weaknesses. 'The site of our life- our success, is also the site of our failure, - deterioration and death.'[12]

[11] Chris Townsend, *Vile Bodies*,p7
[12] Chris Townsend, *Vile Bodies*,p7

Chapter 3

Still Life: The Impact of Photography on the Depiction of Death and the Inner Body

The emergence of the camera.

The invention of the camera circa 1840 resulted in considerable changes in the art and science world. Photography was the first process which could mirrror nature exactly. Drawing is executed by the hand which is guided by the mind and so it is a medium which is prone to human error. Photography was a form of mechanical reproduction so there was no human involvement in the process of making the image except the operation of the camera itself, hence the image recorded was generally not altered or creatively enhanced by the photographer. Because of this belief that photography was scientific fact, it was rapidly deployed in the nineteeth century as an instrument of record and categorisation. It became the chief medium for illustrating the body.

This view of photography did not provide for the myriad of factors which condition the view of what you see as a spectator. The photograph does not provide the audience with a ready made interpretation of what the image is meant to convey. We are unknowingly constantly influenced by our personal views and that of a surrounding society. Text accompanying a photograph often allows us to lose sight of what an image alone coveys. Taking a photograph of an image out of context or creating a false reality and photographing it confuses the spectator as we tend to view a photograph as fact. Photography's apparent truthfulness does not take into account man's tendancy to subvert truth.

The invention of the microscope combined with the photograph allowed us to view our inner body in more detail than ever before. 'Allied with chemistry and the microscope, photography seems destined to give us what we might almost style as a new sense, certainly a second sense'[1] Today medical illustration is inextricably linked to photography, computer-generated images and a plethora of new electronic medical imaging techniques. Now there is no need for the subject to be dead to see it's interior from all points of view. Magnetic resonance imaging eliminates the need for the scalpel and we now have the luxury of viewing our own bodies from within, whereas before it would only be possible for someone to see our insides if we were dead.

Victorian Post Mortem Portraits.

It was common in early modern society for the wealty to commision paintings and sculptures of their dead, 'commerating the deceased in a symbolic reconstruction of their living form'.[2] After the invention of photography this phenomenon became more widespread. Now representations of death were no longer confined to the bourgeois, aristocratic and religious communities. The poor had access to the services of photographers and hence we have much evidence today of the widespread fascination the people of this time had with mortality. The Victorian post mortem portrait was a way of mourning for the people of it's time. These images made the death of a family member a reality. Death is explicitly observed, and works as a effective way of accepting and coming to terms with loss. 'These photographs stood for 'memories that had not been recorded, and for memories that would never happen, potential erased'[3]. These portraits were taken specifically to assist mourning and would have been only seen by relatives a few close family friends. They helped sustain memory of a person asssuring that as long as the image survived the individual would survive in the memories of his/her community.

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[1] William A. Ewing, Quote from Londons Evening Standard, Jan 1865, *Inside Information, Imaging the Human Body*,p8
[2] Chris Townsend, *Vile Bodies*, p130
[3]Chris Townsend, *Vile Bodies*, p10.

It was common to photograph the deceased as if still alive, leading to the image recording the fact of death but also simultaneously denying it. This practise of photographing the dead has died out today. Death seems only to be represented in cinematic violence and forensic photography. We seem to only see death represented in exceptional and exotic circumstances. In contrast death in Victorian culture was an everyday occurrence and was accepted as such. People in the 1800s had little expectancy of good health. Epidemics, disease and death still held sway. Doctors were faced with hordes of water, air and bug borne fevers and medicine. They had little power to cure the sick or save the dying. In contrast we in contemporary society seem to be rather naive when faced with images of death. We tend to hide behind modern societies shiny new achievements in medicine.

The work of Sue Fox and Andres Serrano.

In every culture death is probably the most certain thing about life. It is life's most powerful and ultimate experience but today's post-modern culture is at great pains to deny its presence. Our media world seems to be trying to cultivate a cult of immortality. The body beautiful or the body macabre is the subject of much artistic discourse in film and photography but their seems to be no middle ground. The body is either displayed as young, lithe, and good-looking or old, ugly and dying. It is hence little wonder that as a society we are constantly trying to cheat ageing and death. We are told in the book *Vile Bodies* that 'Death is no longer another stage of a process that ends with a union of God, it is an ending of everything that our culture celebrates, an unbearable full stop. To admit the fact of death is to admit that we have lost control. We cannot manage the individual body forever.'[4]

Whilst earlier traditions commemorated the deceased in a symbolic reconstruction of their living form, today images of death are confined to forensic photography and violent acts on television and in film. We seem to see death only in extreme circumstances not as a normal everyday occurrence. It is strange that it is now more peculiar for us to view photographs of the dead at peace than it is to photograph the living at war, in poverty or

[4] Chris Townsend, *Vile Bodies, Death*, p.130

suffering disease. We can digest these images more easily because we are safe in the knowledge that we are not being affected directly. Death is however indiscriminate, It is fact for all of us.

The body has always been seen as a mirror of society itself. It is a subject which is as old as art itself; its image through the centuries and different societies has constantly been changing. This is true if we compare the popularity of the anatomy theatre in Rennaisance times to the disgust and outrage of contempory society towards Andres Serranos and other such radical artists dealing with the body. (The work of Serrano which is discussed later was publically vilified in the U.S Congress).

Sue Fox is a photographer who along with artists such Andres Serrano has come under criticism for her work on corpses in a morgue in England. She has rejected the taboos of the modern Western World regarding death. Over a period of three years she has chosen to photograph over 1000 dead bodies in an attempt to explore and alleviate her fears of mortality.(see fig 10, *Untitled 1996*)

Fox's work describes the physical facts of death. She explores the characteristics of a lifeless body; her work answers questions such as what does dead skin look like?, what happens to blood and other bodily fluids when death occurs? and what do our organs look like when they stop working?, things most of us would rather not know. Her work questions the finality of death through examination of the inner and outer body. Fox's religious background effects the way she views death. She is a Buddhist and believes in reincarnation. To her 'the body is merely a shell which contains an indomitable spirit'. This traditional view of the body has also been shared by artists from medieval times who, as discussed in chapter one, believed that the body was only a vessel for containment of the soul. Fox states 'that death is not just an ending , but a stage in human existence'[5].

[5] Val Williams, quote by Sue Fox, 'Still Life', *British Journal of Photography,* no 7129, June 1997, p20-21

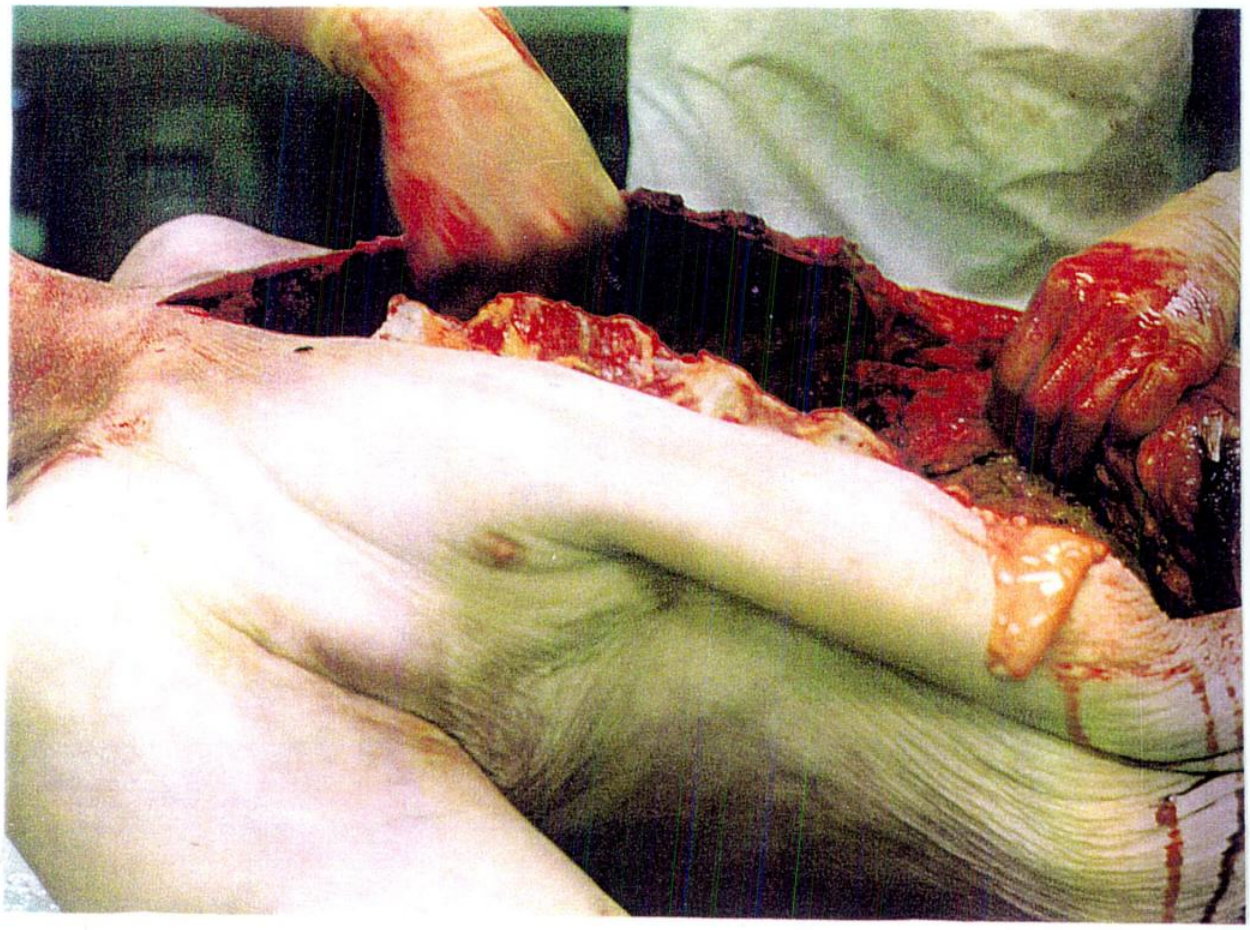

Fig. 10: Sue Fox, *Untitled 1996*

In response to criticism of her work Fox states that

> 'some people see it as a morbid preoccupation with something that's best left behind closed doors, it makes people think about their experiences with death and how they relate to it. To some people, it seems very pessimistic, seeing death in a very nihilistic way. I think that this is their fear, and they are reacting to it.[6]'

In this article in the *British Photographic Journal* Fox tells us that although she found spending time in a mortuary uncomfortable and emotionally disturbing, it was a learning process about anatomy and medicine. She learned about the fragility of the body , how it works and how it can stop working. She tells us that she has been forced to admit just how fragile the human body is, 'because our body has evolved over aeons there is so much that can go wrong with it, how amazing that it works!'. She tells us that her studies have caused her to rethink her treatment of her own body; she exercises and eats healthily now in an attempt to postpone the inevitable.

Andres Serrano also photographed the dead. In his work intitled *The Morgue* (1992) (Burnt to Death, Fig.11) he shows us extremely close up fragmentary views of the corpses of people who have died from such grim ends as drowning, rat poison, gunshots and AIDS. He, unlike Fox, infuses his photographs with a luminosity that evoke images of Renaissance paintings. Serrano says about this series: 'I called them my models, my subjects. I was interested in the way they still had a human presence, that something of their soul was still intact'[7]. Yet again we are shown that artists dealing with death and the body almost always turn to the spiritual world for an answer to lifes most complex questions. There seems to be an inseparability of body and soul, a longing for something else not just life and death.

For both these artists the chosen medium of photography contributes a greater complexity to their work. As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, photography was in its early life incorporated into the realm of science. Today it is the use of the photograph in creating media fantasies in our consumerist society that comes to the fore. The contradictions

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[6] Val Williams, quote by Sue Fox, *Still Life*, p20-21
[7] Eleanor Heartney, 'Postmodern Heretics', *Art in America*.p35

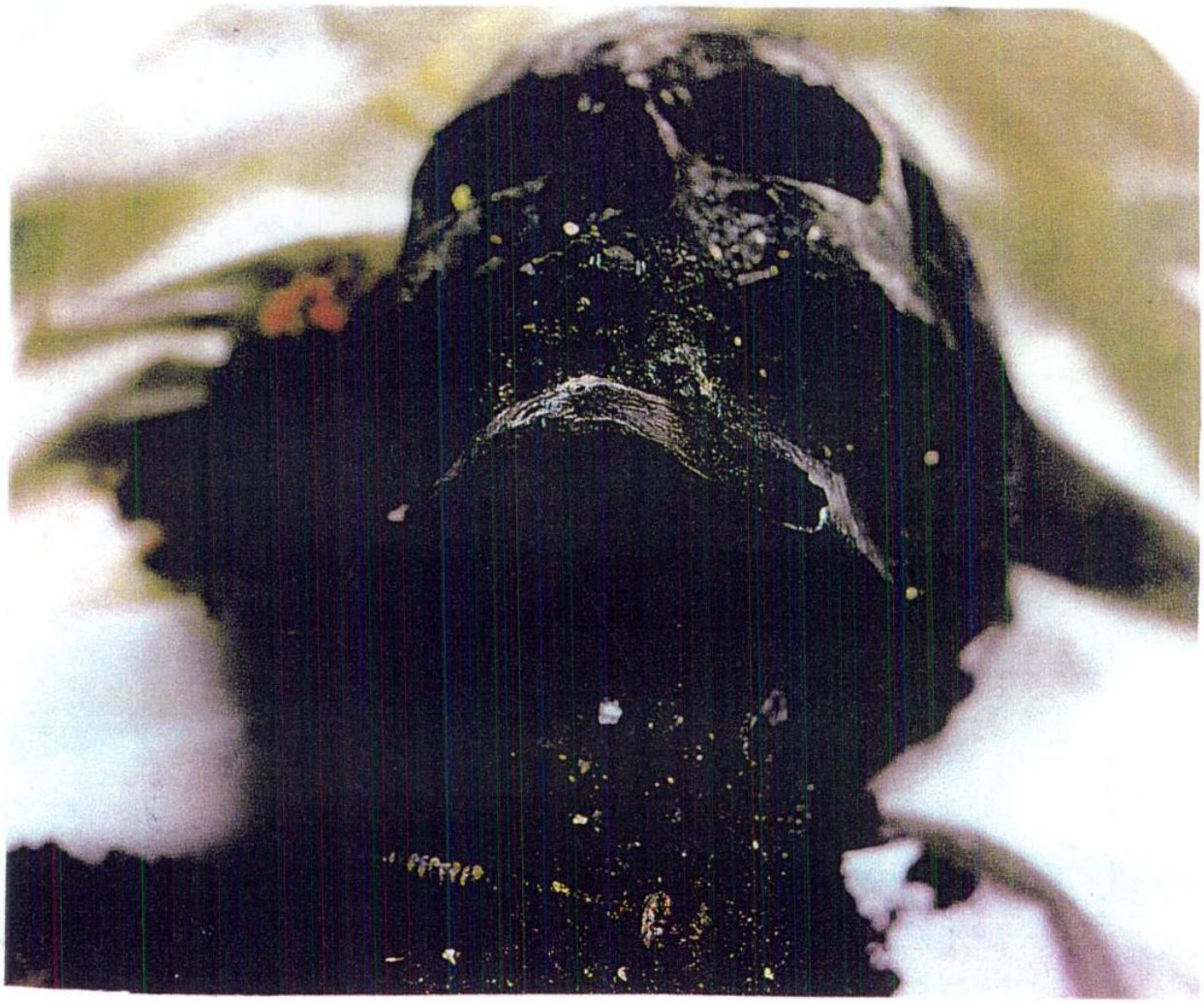

Fig. 11: Andres Serrano: Image from the *Morgue Series, (Burnt to Death)*, 1992

in the use of photography (to create scientific reality or media fantasy) make the work of these artists quite ambiguous. The photograph is a smooth glossy image and this slickness is contrasted against the anxiety caused by viewing the 'uncanny' body interior.

When mentioning the use of the photograph in reference to the inner body, it is important to mention the work of artist Cindy Sherman. Shermans work often contrasts the exterior body with the interior. She often shows us a perfect exterior body bursting open to reveal a disturbing interior. In *Untitled 1987-91*, Sherman reconstructs her body as a monstrous anatomy made up of prosthetic parts and she fills this vessel with substances such as bodily fluids or decaying food. In Fig. 12, *#168(1987)* She combines these body images with pair of sun glasses to display a mirror image of her face, this is a fragment of self identity which reinforces the horror at seeing a disintegration of self. The dissolution of the interior/exterior boundaries of our bodies, when we can see for ourselves what is rarely available for inspection, points to our own imperfections and to the fatal flaw of the human subject.' We do not want to see ourselves - for to see that is to erase our self'[8]

[8] Chris Townsend, *Vile Bodies, Inside Out,* p 67

Fig. 12: Cindy Sherman: *#164,* 1987

Chapter 4

Visible Surface and Invisible Depth:
The Work of Artists Kiki Smith and Roberta M. Graham.

> 'It has been established that the body is as much the subject as the object of its own perspective, We are forced to percieve, imagine, think ourselves, by ourselves and through ourselves, Yet only the fact that consciousness and body do the work as two albeit, in tandem causing a distancing of the pscychological system from the organic processes from the cycle, We are (in) our body!'. [1]

The work of contemporary artists Kiki Smith and Roberta M. Graham is particularly relevant when we begin to investigate the theme of the inner body as a metaphor for dealing with death and decay. Both of these artists use the internal body to explore the fragility and imperfections of the body. The body is the primary battleground of today: sexually, politically and scientifically. Smith and Graham stand back from these arguments. They try to solve the complexities of the post-modern body, not just by rendering its anonymous interior and biological processes but, by rendering it as a sight of abjection. They ask us who owns our bodies and who holds the controls to our destiny. The do so in an era where the various organs of social control are fighting over the future of our bodies

Kiki Smith

We are told in a article in *Art Forum* that Kiki Smiths 'approach to the body has very ancient roots; her representations of internal organs, skin and bones, may remind us of the

[1] Hans Michael Herzog, *The Body, Contempory Canadian Art,* Klichberg/Zurich/Switzerland., Edition Stemmle, 1994

earliest anatomical models, such as the livers the Babylonians baked in clay squares and studded with prophetic inscriptions.' [2]

Smith believed that to understand the human body properly she would need to start with the basics. She obtained a copy of *Grays Anatomy* which is the standard textbook of medical students on the structure of the human body. From this she made drawings of cellular tissue, blood cells, nerve fibres and other microscopic structures which are found in the body. From this she slowly moved onto organs and to systems. These initial drawings have acted as an excellent back up for her sculptural work. To gain a practical knowledge of the body Smith spent three months of study and training as an emergency medical technician. This knowledge of the inner and outer body has allowed Smith to move back and forward through the skin, not only does she concentrate on illustrating the internal but she makes combinations of internal and external.

Critics have compared her work to that of Vesalius, 'for whom the body was a fabric, a piece of workmanship by the great craftsman, a living anatomy'. Smith is an artist and her work shows this fact clearly. She does not have the mind of a technician, or a scientist and hence her work has the feeling and passion of someone who is not just dealing with scientific enquiry but more of a spiritual/psychological nature. The modern anatomist is concerned just with parts, their description and origin. Smith blurs the boundaries which today we see as given. In the Renaissance period, art and science were both still connected; they were both forms of enquiry; Smith merges the sciences with art again for to her 'they are unified by the spirit with originates in the human being and which is communicated to the human being'[3] (i.e. while art and science are very different activities, scientific creation and artistic creation are both inspired by the unconscious and so have much in common).

As a child Smith had a persistent idea that she had been born stillborn, and after her father's death she began to investigate dying and death. Since then her work has been a vehicle for exploring various aspects of death, and these reflections have evolved into

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[2] Christopher Lyon, 'Kiki Smith, Body and Soul', *Art Forum*, vol 28, Feb 1990 p102
[3] L.Alcopley, 'Art Science and The Human Being,' *Leonardo,* vol 27, No.3, p183

meditations on procreation pregnancy and birth. She tells us that 'we are subject to the body's exigencies and to the cycle of life. Of neither sickness or death, are we masters'[4]

In an interview Smith has stated that her aim is to release the body from its prisons of religion, medicine and government. Several critics have however linked Kiki Smiths fragments of the body with traditions of the Catholic Church. In chapter two reference was made to Gaetana Giuilio Zumbo who was a monk in seventeenth century Naples. Mention was made to the votive offerings which were brought to the church in the hope of a cure for some form of illness or deformity. Today these offerings can still be seen in some Italian Catholic churches. Instead of being fashioned out of clay as they were in the seventeenth century they are now fabricated of cheap metal. Many of Smith's body parts are remnants of this type of relic worship. This is especially true of a 1990 work *Identical Twins* (fig 13), which consists of two pairs of hands cast in aluminium, suspended from cords tied round nails in the wall. The are similar to relics by virtue of the material and the way in which they are suspended.

Smith's work does not gain its power only from what she borrowed from art history and from her Catholic background but also from her belief like Fox and Serranno that the body is a vessel for the soul. Throughout her career she has created works based on internal organs, and created paper structures which resemble flayed parts of the human body. Her works have a clinical tone although their humanity and delicacy give Smith work an allure of sympathy and understanding.Kiki Smith works with a theme that is universal to mankind, the body. Her work uses the body to attempt to explain life. Her sculptures are not just about AIDS or any other political or social issues of the day. ' They show the disintegration that is integral to life- even harmonious with it.'[5]

Ribs (1987), (fig.14) is a sculpture which illustrates the sensitivity that Kiki Smith demonstrates when dealing with the body. This structure based on the rib cage is sculpted in a fragile terra-cotta clay and coloured with a wash of white ink . It is a formless/spineless

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[4] Back to the Physical/Return to the Flesh, p16
[5] Claudia Gould, *Notes on Kiki Smith and Marguerite Yourcenar,* p14

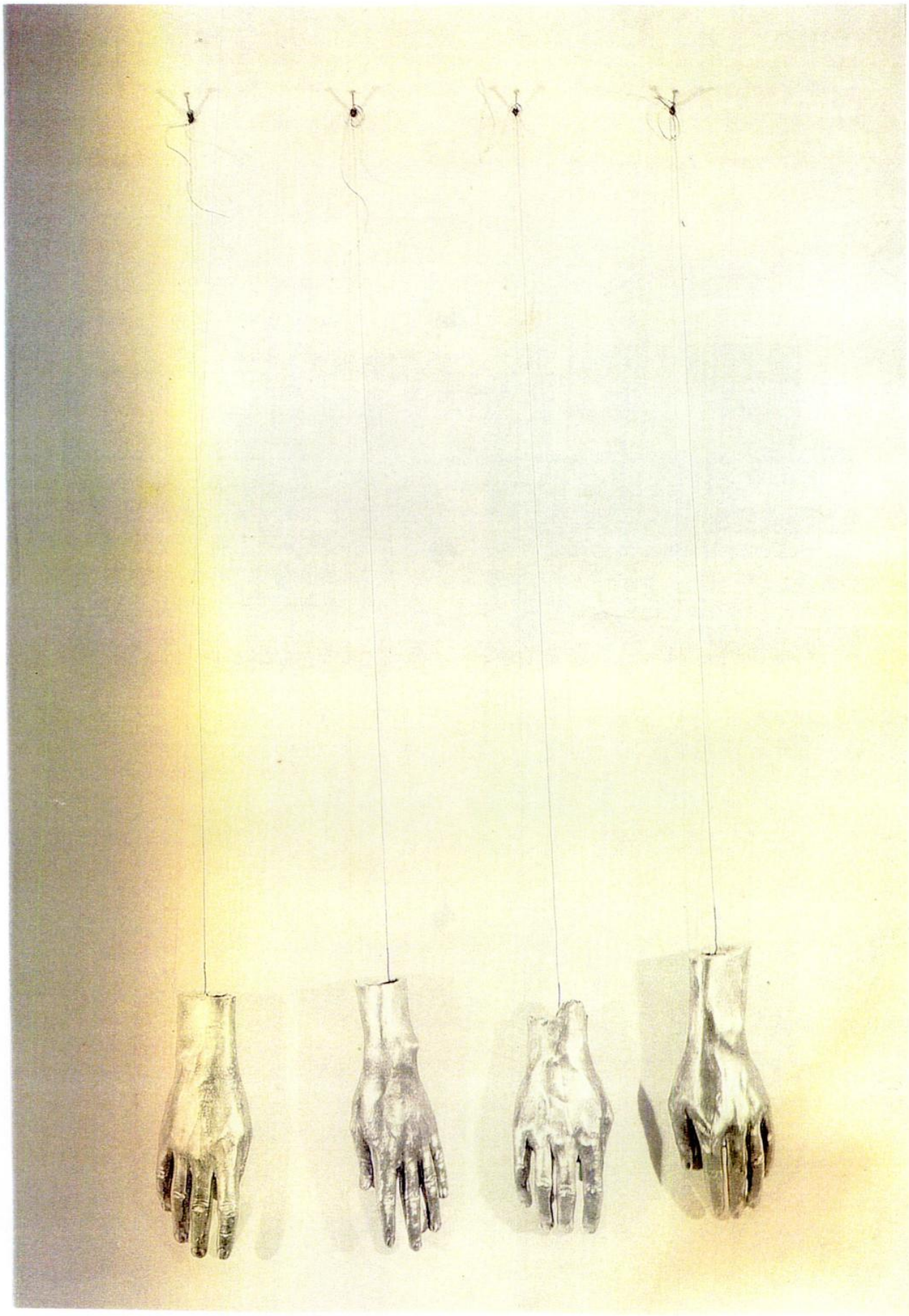

Fig. 13: Kiki Smith: *Identical Twins,* 1990.

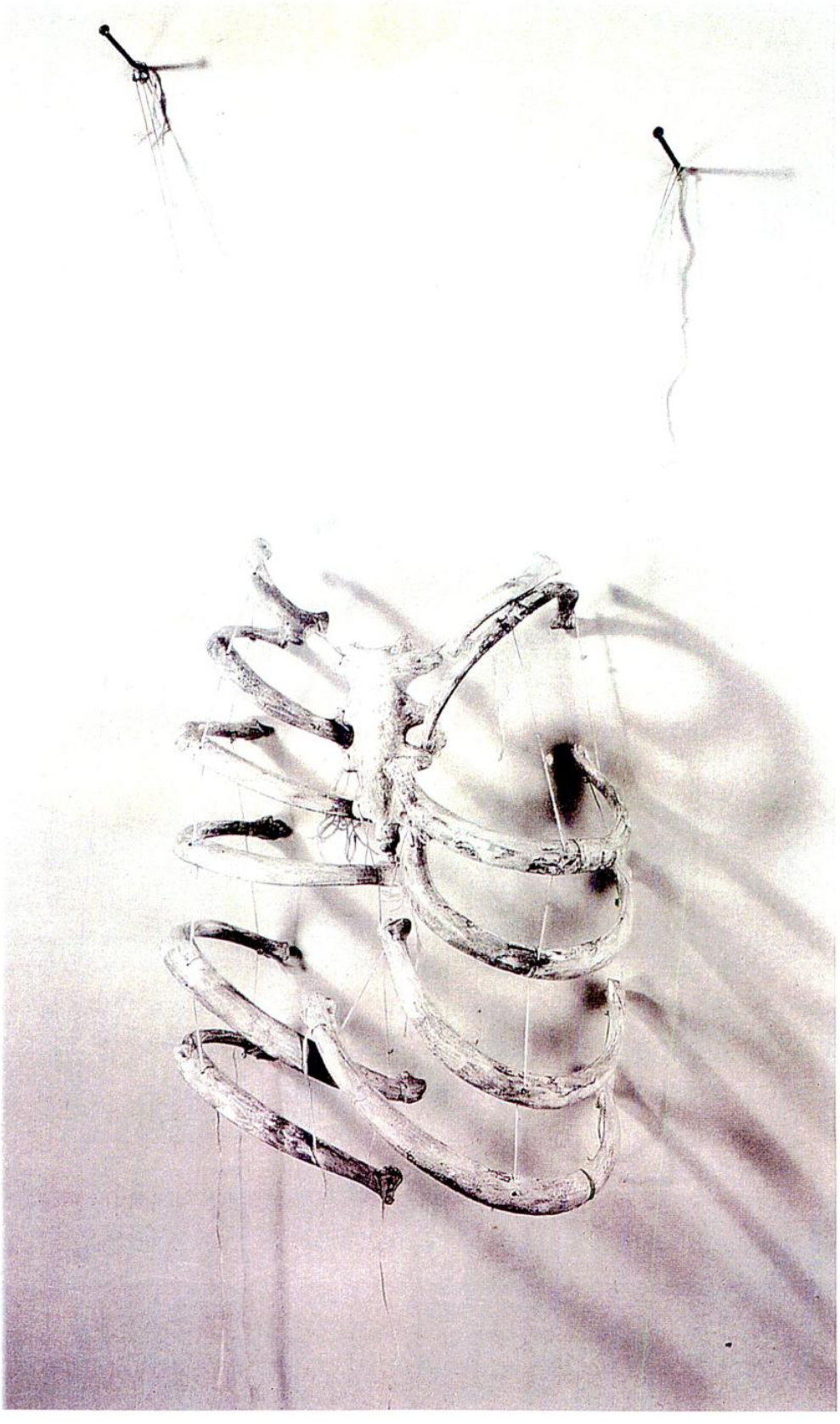

Fig. 14: Kiki Smith, *Ribs*, 1987

object, 'the ribs collapse into a rickety ladder of bones,' as it has no thoracic vertebra . It is hung like the remains of a carcass on the a wall. If one was to attribute a biblical idea to it, it suggests womans creation from Adam's rib. Its seems it is hard for Kiki to escape from her religious background.

Roberta M. Graham

Artist Roberta M. Graham is another artist who uses the exposure of internal organs as a metaphor for exploring disease and death. Derry-born artist Graham moved to England when she was seven and since 1977 has produced a large body of work exploring the boundaries of life and death and the body and identity. Her best known work has been slide/ tape artworks but she has made a substantial collection of related work which consists of photography, installations and light box sculptures.

Much has been written about her slide/ tape works which she has edited to combine long sequences of projected images with a pre-recorded soundtrack and a live performance but it is her sculptural works which are more relevant to the subject of this thesis. These are mostly light box sculptures. They contain collections of images, some collaged and some transparent and lit from behind. Generally they are contained in solid black boxes. The subject matter of these works seems to be influenced by many different social eras from contemporary concerns right back to the times of the first dissections in medieval Europe.

In her work Graham attempts to deal with death, mortality, immortality, fear of disease as well as feminist issues. She uses her own body as the vessel in which she explores these issues, hence her work revolves around images of her own body. Graham tells us that she views the x-ray as the most intimate form of photography and this is why she uses it continuously in her work. She is constantly combining this medium with transparencies and collage. We are told by Graham that she is using her work as a vehicle to react to what she feels is society's denial of the fragility and imperfection of the body. Through her work

Graham is attempting to explore the body both psychologically and physically. Her work is preoccupied with images of death in conflict with immortality. Her photographic dissections are an enquiry into the make up of the body but also seem to relate the body to the external influences that surround it.

Graham always uses images of herself in her work. She tells us that 'inflicting those kind of injuries or subjecting others to that type of mutilation, would not seem right somehow, it had to be me, They're expressions of a personal nature'.[6] The fact that Graham is dissecting herself, looking at herself as flesh and blood and skeleton makes her work much more powerful. She is exposing herself to us completely, She is revealing herself both psychologically and physically. We can see her physical being, but she also lays bare her emotional fears and beliefs. We are drawn into her own private world. Her work exposes her vulnerability.

It is obvious from her work that she is also interested in dealing with issues of the inner body and identity. In her work she has dealt with the female body in relation to nature and the male body in relation to war. But it is her work *Whether the Storm* (fig.15) that is most interesting. This work is a light box installation which shows Graham naked and peeling back her skin and tissues to reveal her interior organs. Her interior is drawn in the manner of an anatomical drawing from the seventeenth century. In chapter one mention was made to the practice of the public dissection of criminals in the early modern culture. Criminals and paupers in general were the only cadavers it was deemed appropriate to dissect. These bodies were labelled 'deviant' and so were believed to be different to those who were morally unblemished. By depicting her figure in the style of an anatomical drawing Graham is making an analogy to this time when the organs of the female could only be observed if a surgeon obtained the body of a female suicide or a murderess.

Separate from this image is a depiction of the landscape. In the sky there are signs of lightening which mimics the veins that supply blood to the systems of our body. Graham has

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[6] Andre Stitt, quote by Roberta Graham, *Circa,* Art Magazine, No 28, May/June 1986, p16.

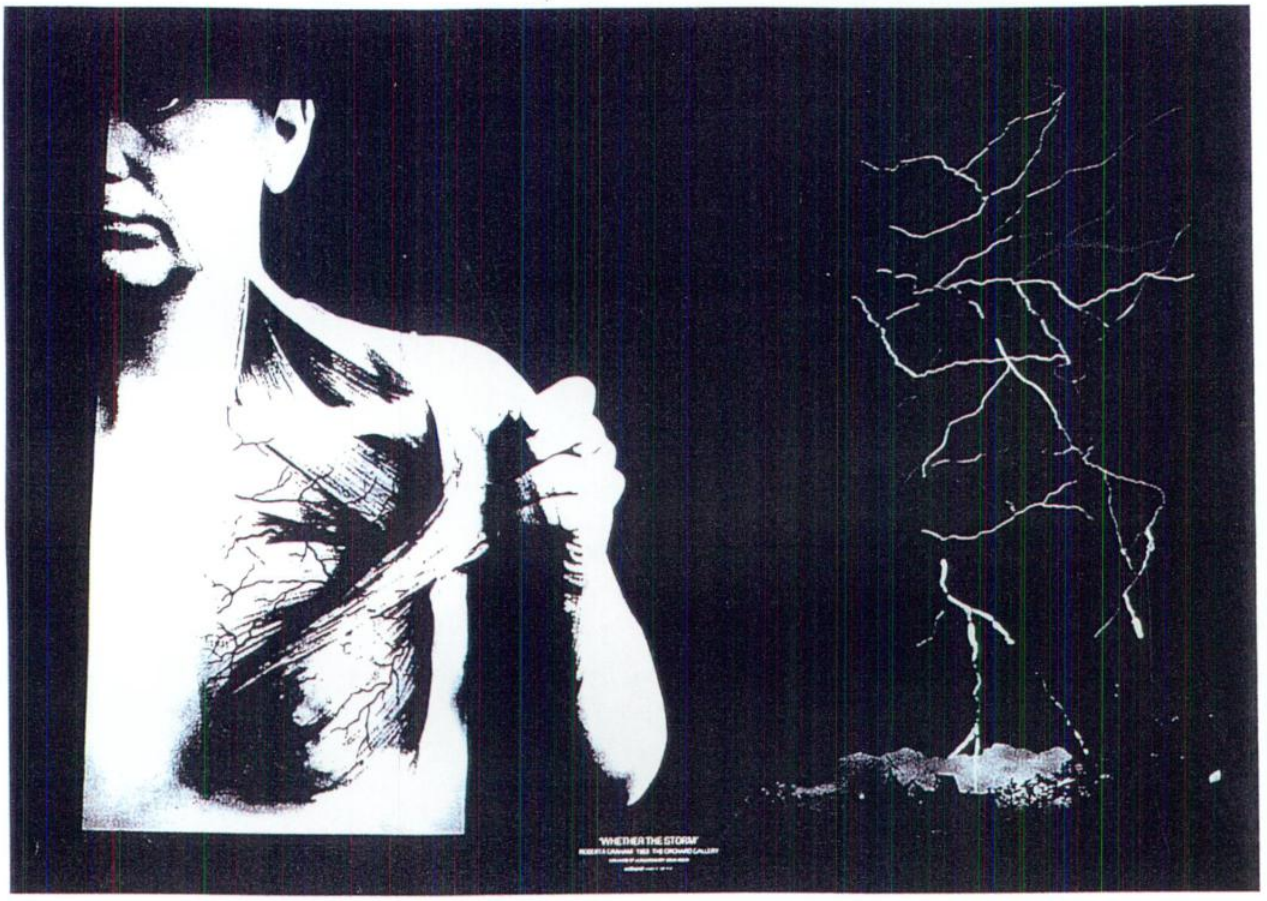

Fig. 15: Roberta M. Graham: Whether the Storm, 1982.

many times in her work made reference to the masterpiece by Mary Shelly, *Frankenstein* and we see here yet another reference, 'The image of landscape is fertilised by nature, in the form of lightening,....here the perfect body of science is of course one of diverse parts obtained illicitly from the remains of the criminal and deviant.'[7]

Graham's work also clearly contains religious connotations. Her piece *The First Cut* (fig 16) is clearly referring to the image of the sacred heart of Jesus, which is one of the most popular images in the Catholic church. The heart has traditionally been the physical and emotional centre of the body and in this images Graham illustrates this view by bearing her heart not just on her sleeve but on her breast. She is opening out her soul for us to view, 'the bared heart as a metaphor for both emotional and visceral vulnerability.' [8]

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[7] Chris Townsend , *Vile Bodies, Inside Out,* p70.
[8] Ibid

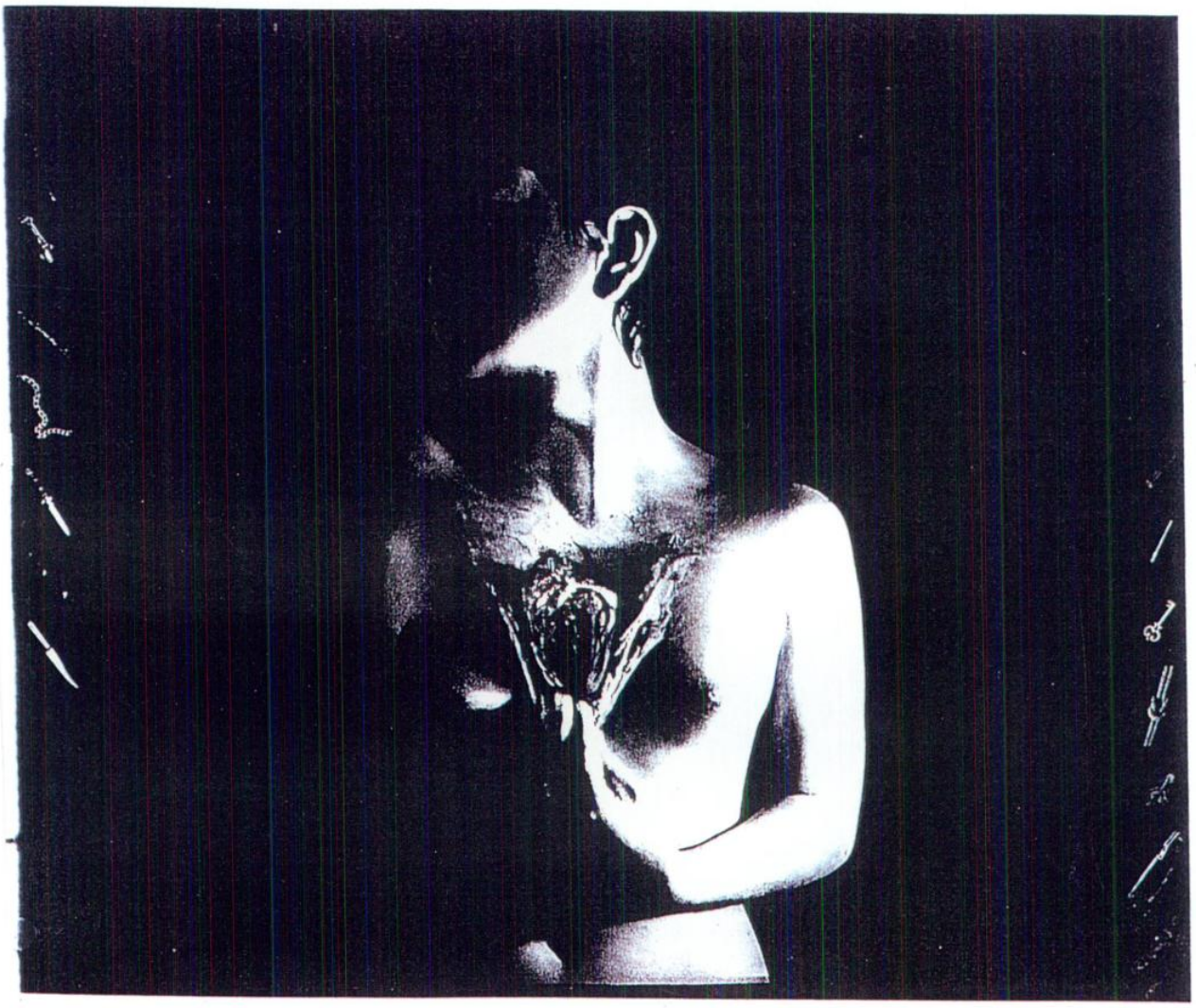

Fig. 16, Roberta M Graham: The First Cut, 1982

Conclusion.

The body, has been mapped (and revised) for over 4000 years. We have evidence of exploration of the inner body from as far back as 2500BC; from images of the brain on papyrus, to Galen and his animal comparisons (circa 2AD), to sixteenth century public dissections of the criminal accompanied by candlelight and orchestral music, to today's manufactured computerised cadaver.

We experience ourselves through the body both sensual and ethereal. As a result, since the time of the ancients we have been fascinated with scientifically analysing and making diagrams of the inner body, in the belief that when we understand the body, we can be more in control of it's dysfunction. The body is the vessel through which we experience everything in life and hence investigation of it becomes self reflexive. There is a tendency to infuse the soul with the corporeal body. We cannot prove that the soul exists, yet we cannot also prove that it doesn't; we have not yet solved the mysteries of life.

Cultural conditions and beliefs through history have constrained and directed exploration and assessment of our bodies: science, religion, philosophy, fact and taboos have guided our journeys through the body. Science and Art are two activities that are fundamentally alike; both are modes of enquiry and prior to the Renaissance this relationship would not have been denied. Indeed the conjunction remained until the beginnings of Modernism. The goal of science is an 'understanding and representation of our total being, of our experience and knowledge of ourselves and of the world'[1] . This is also the only valid goal of art. Artists through time have used anatomical discoveries to make visible the invisible aspects of the world. They have used the inner body as a metaphor for dealing with death. Like the scientist, artists have made independent studies of the human life cycle, from birth to

[1] Jonathan Benthal, Science and Technology in Art Today, Thames and Hudson, London, 1972, p151.

death, but unlike science, the outcome of artistic enquiry has both conceptual and factual results.

Today, we live in a time when life itself is yielding its basic secrets. Discovery by discovery, the mystical aspects of life are being replaced by a more concrete vision. But this vision has flaws; although we can connect all aspects of our personal lives such as eating, sleeping, running, walking, to the actions of our molecules and cells, there is still no answers to the more complex questions of life: 'Where Do We Come From? What are we? Where are we going?'[2]

Many artists in today's society are attempting to answer the above questions, many are doing this through body exploration and it cannot be a coincidence that the majority of artists dealing with the theme of death and the body are have had some sort of religious upbringing. Catholicism and Buddhism seem to be the most common. Both religions put a great emphasis on the physical body and the existence of a soul. This is especially true of Catholicism where a stress on the physical body has always been a key element in the religion. The Crucifixion, Resurrection and the Assumption undoubtedly emphasise the role of the human body as a vessel of divine spirit.

In analysing the statements of artists such as Kiki Smith, Roberta M. Graham, Sue Fox etc.' it is easy to find one recurring view, that the body is only a shell which contains the more important spirit. Through our bodies we articulate our experiences and live our lives, It is not surprising that the illustrating the inner body is becoming an ever more popular way of attempting to deal with the reality of our mortality.

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[2] Paul Gaugain: title of painting, 1897, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

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