

Frightening Fragments – The Representation of the Corpse in Baroque Sculpture

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While the decay of the human corpse was represented in form of the so-called transi tomb of the Late Middle Ages, this topic thereafter was removed from the context of tomb sculpture and adapted in a smaller scale for objects of private contemplation. Other painted and sculpted examples may be found in Baroque allegories of vanity or in the main topic of the memento mori. Especially the medium of waxworks was predestined as well for the artistic as for the scientific use because of the deceptive qualities of the material which appears in horrifying dioramas – performing illness, death and decay – or in visual aids for medical education in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Primarily the dimensions and the fragmentary representation of the human body reveal the determination of these works of art and thus their position between objects for private devotion or the Kunstkammer; between tomb sculpture and anatomical models and in conclusion between the ages of Baroque and Enlightenment.

In his book on the peculiarities of Naples published in 1914, the Italian poet Salvatore Di Giacomo describes his visit to the oratorio of the Confraternity of the Bianchi located in the *Ospedale degli Incurabili* in the city centre. According to his account, he was invited by the *custode* to enter a small, gloomy hall with three waxworks in glass cases along one of the walls. Approaching one of the cabinets, the

writer observed within a life-sized wax bust of a dead woman (ca. 1700, Fig 1)¹ who had, to quote Di Giacomo, ‘a horrible face, contracted by a paroxysm of suffering, the mouth widened in a scream, [...]’ After this frightening discovery, the elderly canon introduced the bust to him with the following words: ‘This is the *Donna Scandalosa*, kept here so that all women who lead a dissolute life will know that when they die, mice, cockroaches and worms eat those who have been bad examples in their lifetime... I have seen many women who have wept to see her, and were converted.’²

It is no wonder that Salvatore di Giacomo or any other visitor to the oratorio was taken aback by the sight of what actually appears to be a partially decayed corpse attacked by mice, insects, a lizard, and with tangled worms on its face and breast. The realistic impression is moreover enhanced by the veil and the drapery encasing the lower border, both made of real cloth, and by the coloured wax medium of the bust, which seems to emerge from out of a shallow grave in the earth.

In spite of the appalling signs of decomposition, enough is left of the body to reveal the regular features of the face, and thus the former beauty of the young woman represented. Although the encasement serves to protect the delicate waxwork inside, at first sight the bust still creates the impression of a macabre relic enclosed in its shrine, but in opposition to the paragon of virtue which is present in the person

1 This essay grows from earlier research, published in *La Scandalosa in Naples: A Veristic Waxwork as Memento Mori and Ethical Challenge*. In: ‘Oxford Art Journal’ 36, no 1 (2013), 75–91, and is based also on new studies I made on the occasion of my lecture at the Conference of the European Network for Baroque Cultural heritage (ENBaCH) at Rome (2014) and thereafter. I would like to thank Julia Triolo for her careful revision of the English text.

2 Salvatore Di Giacomo, *Luci ed ombre napoletane*. (Naples: Perrella, 1914), 235-36: ‘...*Un mezzo busto femminile – una orribile faccia contratta nelle smorfie della sofferenza, una bocca spalancata come in urlo, un cranio giallastro sul quale la finzione paurosa dell’artefice aveva radunato ciocche copiose di spioventi capelli neri... Il vecchietto s’alzò pian piano e mi si appressò. – Questo è la donna scandalosa; e si tiene qui perchè tutte le femmine che fanno la cattiva vita sappiano che i sorci, gli scarafaggi e i vermi, dopo ch’è morta una di queste che dà il cattivo esempio, se la mangiano quelli animali...Ho visto tante che di faccia a quella lì hanno pianto - soggiunse il vecchio - e si sono convertite.*’

and the relics of a saint, the *Donna Scandalosa* appeals to sinners and believers for contemplation because of the impressive depiction of her putrefaction.

This vivid reminder of the inevitable end of life follows a long tradition in the visual arts initiated in the late Middle Age with the phenomenon of the *transi* in tomb sculpture, representing the human corpse in a more or less advanced state of decomposition. In terms of a concentrated visualisation of mortality, the subject of the *memento mori* was established in a variety of forms for the purpose of personal retreat and prayer, well known for instance in miniature coffins, sculpted heads that show one half of the face as that of a living person and the other half as a death's head, and in the genre of the vanitas still life.

As a result of the Counter-Reformation we find extremely stirring pictures and objects for the purpose of contemplation and in consequence perhaps also for conversion, as for example in the still life paintings by Jacopo Ligozzi, who united the genres of the double faced *memento mori* head and the vanitas still life in two counterparts, showing a man and a woman alive and dead, and even in an already advanced condition of decay.³ Ligozzi apparently enjoyed depicting all manifestations of the process of decomposition, exemplified by the traditional subject of the death's head, in the same accurate manner he used for the nature studies and macabre drawings he carried out at the Medici court in Florence.⁴

Thus, increasingly during the 17th and 18th centuries the three

3 There are two counterparts conserved in the collection Aberconway, Bodnant (Wales) which are painted *recto* and *verso* as alive and dead. These paintings were last presented in the occasion of an exhibition on Ligozzi in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence. See Alessandro Cecchi, Lucilla Conigliello and Marzia Faietti, eds., *Jacopo Ligozzi. 'Pittore universalissimo'*. (Livorno: Sillabe s.r.l., 2014), 218–221, no.s 78 and 79. – There are further similar examples in the Franco Maria Ricci Collection, published in: Laura Casalis and Giovanni Godi, eds. *La Collezione d'arte di Franco Maria Ricci. Editore e bibliofilo*. (Parma: Grafiche Step Editrice, 2004, cat. no. 24, 96; also in: *FMR. A coleção Franco Maria Ricci* (Lissabon: Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, 2014), cat. No. 28, 118; cat. No 38, 124.

4 For macabre representations in Ligozzi's œuvre see Lucilla Conigliello, *Vanità delle cose del mondo*. In: *Jacopo Ligozzi*, 186–191.

dimensional sculptural arts were employed to convincingly demonstrate the post-mortem states of the human corpse: *vanitas* still lives obviously influenced the creation of objects for personal meditation such as the wooden *Memento mori* by the German sculptor Paul Egell (Fig. 2), who focuses on only a few symbols of mortality. Analogously to the earlier *vanitas* still lives by Ligozzi, Egell shows a life-sized decomposing head on a cushion, arranged together with toads and a snake – the creatures associated with the soil as well as with sin, and already well-known from representations in late medieval tomb sculpture. In recent scholarship, the placement on the cushion has been compared with the presentation of royal insignia for illustrating the power of death.⁵ The organization of the objects in Egell's sculpture is nonetheless also reminiscent of skull relics which are sometimes also presented on cushions, a connotation that is all the more painfully subverted by the process of decomposition and its associated sinfulness. Indeed, the detailed representation of decay calls to mind death and decomposition as punishment for the Original Sin, the consequence of which is famously expressed in the passage in Genesis: 'For dust you are, and to dust you will return.'⁶ Evidently by means of this veristic object that simultaneously shocks and fascinates, one is intended to remember one's own fallibility in facing death. The image of the death's head as an abbreviation for death itself tracks the subject of gazing at the face of the skull as a form of meditation, which is often shown in connection with penitent hermits or with the message '*et in arcadia ego*', all meant to stimulate silent reflection.⁷ Egell in turn limited the topic of the *memento mori* to the representation of a single decomposing skull in other instances as well, but always in the accepted contexts of tomb sculpture or traditional *vanitas* symbolism, such as in the *Wolckenstein Monument* (c. 1729,

5 Frank Matthias Kammel, *Memento Mori*. In: *Spiegel der Seligkeit. Privates Bild und Frömmigkeit im Spätmittelalter*. (Nuremberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 2000), 421–425, here 422.

6 Genesis 3, 19.

7 See Kammel, *Memento mori*, 425, with regard to the topic of the contemplation of death in the face of a human skull.

St. Pankratius, Schwetzingen, Germany)⁸ and the splendid wooden frame in Munich (1720/1725, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum).⁹ The latter example was perhaps filled with a religious or allegorical painting or relief, or possibly with a mirror.¹⁰ In the latter case, instead of the well-known subjects of *Death*, *Vanity*, and *The Age of the Maiden*, the observer would have effectively found himself or herself in the girl's position, confronted with an image before and after death.

The Saxonian sculptor Johann Christian Ludwig von Lücke also focused his attention on the death's head, which he modelled in the shape of a bust, though without the inclusion of symbolic animals, as in the former case. The bust, in stoneware (Fig. 3, Kunstgewerbemuseum Berlin), represents what is probably a preliminary stage of a work of art intended for execution in a more precious material, perhaps in ivory like the bust that was once part of the royal collections in the castle in Berlin.¹¹ The concentration on the physical effects of decay is surely the most progressive aspect of this piece, although the figurative means (e.g., the skin peeling off the skull, and the tearing, or rather already liquefied eye) are common to other precursors.¹²

8 Klaus Lankheit, *Der kurpfälzische Hofbildhauer Paul Egell (1691–1752)*. 2 Vol. (Munich: Hirmer, 1998), Vol. 2, 289, no 30, fig. 108.

9 Inv. No. 82/266; Height: 43 cm, width 33,0 cm, pear wood. For further details see also the database of the museum (URL: <http://www.bayerisches-nationalmuseum.de>).

10 Peter Volk, *Zwei kleinplastische Arbeiten von Paul Egell*. In: *Bruckamns Pantheon* 41, 1983, 104-108, here 106.

11 The stoneware bust was documented in the depository of the former castle in Berlin around 1930. Regarding this provenance see Max Sauerlandt, *Einige neue Arbeiten von Joh. Christoph Lüdewig Lücke*. In: *Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von E.W. Braun. Anzeiger des Landesmuseums Troppau 2* (1930), (Augsburg: Dr. Benno Filser Verlag, 1931), 158 – 162, here 160.

12 The format and the material of the bust might be inspired by earlier examples which the well travelled artist could have known from the Netherlands or from England, as for instance a bust of woman in stoneware (c. 1700) in the Museum for Applied Arts in Hamburg (Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, Inv.no 1906.224). See Christian Theuerkauff and Lise Lotte Möller, *Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg: Die Bildwerke des 18. Jahrhunderts*. (Brunswick: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1977), cat. no. 149, 249–250; Christian Theuerkauff, *Einige Bildnisse, Allegorien und Kuriositäten von Johann Christoph Ludwig Lücke (um 1703–1780)*. Part 1. In: *Alte und Moderne Kunst* 26, no 174/175 (1981), 27–39, here 29.

The transformation of the head divided into two parts, or the juxtaposition of a death's head with the bust portrait of an apparently living person, itself may have been influenced by the series of the Last Things after death. The sequence of the four stages at the end of life – death, Last Judgment, Hell and Purgatory, and finally salvation in Heaven – was already fixed by the fifteenth century in the theological literature.¹³ But while the stages of the afterlife had previously been illustrated using narrative scenes, during the Counter-Reformation a strong focus developed on individual personifications of the *Four Last Things*, in the person of the Grim Reaper, and the souls in Purgatory, Heaven, or Hell. As a consequence, the full range of strong emotions, from agony in hell, to remorse in purgatory, and ecstasy in heaven, could be expressed.¹⁴

Let us now return to Lücke's shocking bust, the mouth of which seems opened in mocking laughter, similar to the scornful personification of Death introduced in Raphael Sadeler's famous and widely circulated series of copper engravings showing the *Four Last Things* (c. 1600). It seems reasonable to connect the head in Berlin with the series of the *Last Things*, particularly as Lücke has referred to this iconography before in another ivory carving, a relief that shows the Damned Soul in Hell (1736).¹⁵ Although the ceramic piece seems to

13 Regarding the mainly fifteenth-century theological and literary sources for the *Last Things*, see Lutz Malke, *Zur Ikonographie der 'Vier letzten Dinge' vom ausgehenden Mittelalter bis zum Rokoko*. In: 'Zeitschrift des deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft' 30, 1976, 44–67; Irving Lavin, *Bernini's Portrait of No-Body*. In: Augusto Gentili, Philippe Morel and Claudia Cieri Via, eds., *Il ritratto e la memoria* (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1993), 161–94; Christine Göttler, *Die Kunst des Fegefeuers nach der Reformation* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1996), 257.

14 On the iconography of the *Last Things* and its development, see Lavin, *Bernini's Portrait*; Göttler, *Die Kunst des Fegefeuers*, 257–74; Christine Göttler, 'Seelen in Wachs'. *Material Mimesis und Memoria in der religiösen Kunst um 1600*. In: *Ebenbilder. Kopien von Körpern – Modelle des Menschen*. Exhibition catalogue Ruhrlandmuseum, Essen (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 83–96; Christine Göttler, *Last Things: Art and the Religious Imagination in the Age of Reform* (Tournhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010), 217–272.

15 See Karin-Anette Möller, *Elfenbein. Kunstwerke des Barock* (Schwerin: Staatliches Museum, 2000), 73, regarding this ivory relief, which is kept in a private collection.

be rooted in this specific iconographic tradition, the lack of additional symbols stresses the interest in the anatomy and reveals an individual approach to an ostensibly realistic representation of a corpse. The particularly macabre interpretation of the subject may be explained by Lücke's morose character, which found expression in his special liking for heads with extraordinary grimaces or features.¹⁶ Furthermore, the death's head was obviously executed as an individual item, and not as half of a pair of companion pieces of the kind often found in Lücke's oeuvre, or of the well-known paired opposites, the *anima beata* and *anima damnata*. The *bozzetto* in stoneware, as well as the final version probably carved in ivory can both be imagined not only as objects for personal piety, but even more likely in a cabinet of curiosities.¹⁷

Due to the high artistic standard of the two objects just described, attention must again be drawn to masterpieces of wax modelling and their naturalistic qualities, which may well have influenced the aforementioned northern sculptors.¹⁸ In this context we need to return our gaze to southern Italy where Gaetano Giulio Zumbo had begun his career at the end of the seventeenth century. A Sicilian cleric and sculptor, Zumbo was active, or at least recorded as present in many of Italy's major cities including Florence, Bologna, Genoa, Naples, and finally, also in Paris. During his lifetime he was best known, as he still is today, for his wax tableaux with vivid depictions of themes treating illness, vanity and death, of which the most prominent were produced at the Florentine court of the Medici. In Zumbo's waxworks,

16 For the rare references to Lücke's life and his difficult character see Christian Theuerkauff, *Die Bildwerke in Elfenbein des 16. bis 19. Jahrhunderts. Die Bildwerke der Skulpturengalerie Berlin*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Mann, 1986), 193–194.

17 Gerhard Dettmann, Article concerning the family *Lücke*. In: Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, eds., *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler: Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, 37 vols., vol 23, (Leipzig: Seemann, 1929), 445–447. The author points to some anatomical 'curiosities', carved in ivory, for instance a similar head in the Museum of the castle in Berlin. The date (1732) and location, later also mentioned by Sauerlandt, *Neue Arbeiten* 160, suggest that Dettmann has been misled by a wrong information. For this reason I also propose the possibility that this work might be the aforementioned head in stoneware. According to the information of the museum the head is signed and dated 1737.

18 See Kammel, *Memento mori*, 424.

moral admonishment apparently intersects scientific inquiry, and his compelling portrayal of the decaying human body has already been connected in the scholarship to the influence of Francesco Redi (1626-1697),¹⁹ a natural scientist and medical doctor active at the courts of the Grand Dukes Cosimo II and Cosimo III of Tuscany. One of Redi's scientific interests lay in the area of abiogenesis,²⁰ and as part of his research he conducted experiments with rotting meat, observing its progressive infestation with flies, and the growth of maggots.²¹ It is possible that Zumbo's own anatomical studies were also influential, studies he may have carried out during his period in Florence as was claimed by the Italian architect and author Giuseppe Antonio Bianchi in 1759.²²

Nonetheless, although the modelling in multicoloured wax deceives and horrifies the observer, the miniature format of the figures decreases the impression that we observe real corpses, and the artist uses the ruins surrounding his figures to allude to transitoriness and to increase the artistic character of these dioramas.²³ Corresponding to

19 See Maria Luisa Azzaroli Puccetti, *Gaetano Giulio Zumbo. La vita e le opere*. In *Gaetano Giulio Zumbo*. Exhibition catalogue Museo Nazionale di Palazzo Bellomo, Syracuse 1988/1989 (Milan: Fabbri. 1988), 20.

20 For the discussion about abiogenesis, the spontaneous generation of life from lifeless matter, in the Early Modern Period see John Farley, *The Spontaneous Generation Controversy from Descartes to Oparin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1977).

21 Redi revealed the results of his research in a paper entitled *Esperienze intorno alla generazione degl'insetti*, first published in Florence in 1668; published online by the Museo Galileo (Istituto e Museo di Storia della Scienza at Florence, URL: <http://www.museogalileo.it/en/explore/libraries/digitallibrary.html>).

22 Azzaroli Puccetti, Zumbo, 19. Valentina Conticelli, *La Peste di Conversano e la corruzione dei corpi: note sulle cere di Zumbo agli Uffizi nel Settecento*. In: *Valori tattili*, 3 / 4 (2014), 53–63, here 60.

23 See Mario Praz, *Le figure di cera in letteratura*. In: *La ceroplastica nella scienza e nell'arte*. Atti del 1o congresso internazionale 1975, 2 vol. (Florence: Olschki Editore 1977), vol. 2, 549–567, here 554. Irmela M. Krüger-Fürhoff, *Der versehrte Körper. Revisionen des klassizistischen Schönheitsideals*. (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2001), 81. On the other hand Anja Wolkenhauer, *'Grausenhaft wahr ist diese wächserne Geschichte': Die Wachsfiguren von Don Gaetano Zumbo zwischen Kunst und medizinischer Anatomie*. In: Gabriele Dürbeck, ed., *Wahrnehmung der Natur, Natur der Wahrnehmung: Studien zur Geschichte visueller Kultur um*

their small-scale dimensions, the four showcases in Florence, which presented the allegories of Time and Vanity as well as the diseases Syphilis and plague, were probably displayed in one of the Medici family's private *studioli*, and in the early 18th century they were in the Uffizi and thus also in the environment of an art collection. During the reign of the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty the showcases were transferred to the Museum of Natural History and incorporated into the newly established collection of anatomical waxworks where to this day these precocious examples introduce the visitor to the human figure reproduced in the wax modelling medium.²⁴ Another object present in this collection and also carried out by the same artist seems to indicate a step away from the aforementioned *memento mori* typology towards the anatomical wax model, also represented by various exemplars in the Museo della Specola, in the affiliated Josephinum in Vienna and also in the famous collections of Bologna and Cagliari. At first sight, Zumbo's head of a man (Fig. 4; Museo della Specola, Florence)²⁵, with its closed eyed and partly removed greyish skin, resembles a death's head and recalls the terrifying skulls divided in two halves – one animated, the other dead –, known symbols of vanity and mortality in baroque painting and sculpture.²⁶ Only the opened calvarium and flayed left half of the face upon closer inspection reveal the intact structure of muscles and tendons still unaffected by decomposition.

When we now return to take a closer look at the above-mentioned Neapolitan *Donna Scandalosa*, this frightening bust reveals

1800. (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 2001), 71–85, here 81, who points out that the frightening effect – according to early descriptions – seems to compensate the miniature format of these sceneries.

24 See Wolkenhauer, *Wachsfiguren Zumbo*, 77-82, for the history of the display of the dioramas.

25 Especially the recent studies point out Zumbo's cooperation with the surgeon Guillaume Desnoues (c. 1650–1735) whose own experience in anatomical wax modelling probably exerted a strong influence on the Sicilian sculptor and this anatomical head. See for example Conticelli, *La peste di Conversano*, 53; Joanna Ebenstein, *The Birth of Venus*. In: Joanna Ebenstein and Colin Dickey, eds., *The Morbid Anatomy Anthology*. (New York: The Morbid Anatomy Press, 2015), 66–85, here 80.

26 See Wolkenhauer, *Wachsfiguren Zumbo*, 6.

features shared by Zumbo's anatomical head: both waxworks are of life-size dimensions; furthermore, the corroded nose and left cheek of the *Donna Scandalosa* offer a glimpse under the skin of her face. Additionally, there is the remarkable similarity of the white drapery and veil bordering the figure with the white cloth borders framing both Zumbo's waxwork and many wax models in eighteenth and nineteenth-century European anatomical galleries.²⁷ Until the origins of the *Donna Scandalosa* are completely disclosed, it is left to us to hypothesize that in all likelihood the Neapolitan bust was created in one of the city's convents, perhaps as a moral appeal initially directed especially at women and thus at the nuns there, and later also at the clerics of the local confraternity, the *Confraternità dei Bianchi*, who received the bust perhaps as a donation at some point in the 18th century. Other explanations for the individual features that anticipate professional anatomical wax modelling are the high standards of medical education in the nearby Ospedale degli Incurabili, as well as the frightening experiences with epidemic diseases common during this period. In this context and in conclusion it should be noted that the detailed quality of the injuries – especially the openings of the women's skin at the neck and the breast – could have been influenced by the horrible impression left by the bubonic plague that had proliferated in Naples in 1656.²⁸

Can the common features of both waxworks – Zumbo's

27 For the manufacturing of anatomical waxworks and the technique of *moulage* that was especially widespread in the nineteenth century, see Thomas Schnalke, 'Vom Modell zur Moulage. Der neue Blick auf den menschlichen Körper am Beispiel des medizinischen Wachsbildes'. In: Dürbeck (ed.), *Wahrnehmung der Natur, Natur der Wahrnehmung*, 55–69, especially 63–64. The use of cloth 'frames' for anatomical wax models seems, however, to have already been common by the eighteenth century, as may be seen in the case of the waxworks from this period in the Museo della Specola at Florence.

28 For everyday confrontation with disease and death on the occasion of the plague, see Rose Marie San Juan, *Contaminating Bodies: Print and the 1656 Plague in Naples*. In: Melissa Calaresu and Helen Hills, eds., *New Approaches to Naples c. 1500–c. 1800. The Power of Place*. (Farnham. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 63–78, here 63–64. For the (artistic) impact of the epidemic in Naples see Conticelli, *La peste di Conversano*, 57; Joanna Ebenstein, *The Anatomical Venus* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2016), 88–89.

Anatomical head and the *Donna Scandalosa* – thus be considered as symptomatic of the development of anatomical wax modelling? Even this scientific branch of sculpture was not guided by a merely analytic perspective on the human body that is suggested by the huge number of 18th and 19th-century wax models which copy limbs and inner organs. The public dissections in anatomical theatres beginning in the 16th century that preceded the production of artificial wax models, were rather already considered as an intrusion on the integrity of the human body which is predestined, according to the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15, 35–44)²⁹, to rise from the dead on the Day of Resurrection.³⁰ Thus it was usually criminals, who had forfeited their chance of redemption, whose executed bodies were used for the dissections.³¹ Interestingly enough, the dissection, like the process of decomposition, could be understood as a punishment for the sins committed in a lifetime and indeed, despite their scientific veneer, anatomical theatres of the Early Modern Age displayed a sort of public *memento mori*, considering also that they revealed the first symptoms of the bodies' physical decay.³²

In the famous collections of anatomical waxworks such as those in Florence and Bologna, even the individual wax models always refer back to the complete human figure: on the one hand, the wax figures in the form of Adam or Eve illustrate the perfection of the divine creation,

29 See Joseph Ratzinger, *Auferstehungleib*. In: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 10 vol.s. (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder 1957–1965), vol. 1 (1957), col. 1052–1053. See also F. L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Second edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 1178–1179 (*Resurrection of the Dead*).

30 Thomas Schnalke, *Geteilte Glieder – ganzer Körper. Von anatomischen Wachsmodellen und medizinischen Moulagen*. In: *Ebenbilder*, 97–106, here 97.

31 Lena Bader, Judith Berganski, Eva Dolezel, Felix Jäger: *Zergliederungskunst*. In: *Von mehr als einer Welt, Die Künste der Aufklärung*. Exhibition Catalogue Berlin (Petersberg: Micheal Imhof Verlag, 2012), 59–73, here 63.

32 See Schnalke, *Geteilte Glieder – ganzer Körper*, 97. Stefanie Stockhorst, *Unterweisung und Ostentation auf dem anatomischen Theater der Frühen Neuzeit. Die öffentliche Leichensektion als Modellfall des theatrum mundi*. In: *Zeitsprünge* 9, nos 1–2, 2005, 271–290, here 286, points out, that anatomical theatres made an issue out of the human mortality and that in this scientific context the frightfulness was thereby taken out of this macabre experience.

while on the other, in the full-figure wax models the dissecting view of anatomy and the integral idea of sculpture intersect.³³ This artistic standard may be regarded as one reason for the reference to famous works of art, but also the studies of the correct, intact physical structures necessarily required showing the wax figures as apparently alive, or sleeping, human beings. Keeping in mind the history of the wax models, one should not neglect to remember the similar development of the *ecorché*, whose origins are found in sepulchral or religious contexts. It thus comes as no surprise that some of the early examples – such as the famous ‘Skeleton’ by Ligier Richier, representing the resurrected nobleman René de Chalon (1544/1557, St.-Etienne de Bar-le-Duc, Lorraine)³⁴ – are still more reminiscent of the medieval *transi* tombs than of the completely flayed, and both idealized and scientifically correct, anatomical models from the Age of Enlightenment such as that by Jean-Antoine Houdon.³⁵

A certain degree of artistic creativity can still be tracked in the anatomical waxworks and *moulages* of the 18th and 19th centuries, when thanks to the new casting technology that replaced wax modelling, imitations of independent healthy and diseased organs and parts of the body were produced as visual aids in the medical centres of Central and Western Europe, such as those of Paris, Berlin or London. In

33 Johannes Endres, *Anatomia plastica. Goethe und die Büste*. In: *Kopf – Bild. Die Büste in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2007), 305–323, here 314, about the poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and the advantage of wax models in his opinion.

34 The famous *transi* was assigned to the monument of René de Chalon’s heart and shows the prince standing with his heart in his hand, and not as a *gisant*. Thus this figure seems to anticipate early modern anatomical models, although the artist probably intended to show the hope for the vision of god after death according to the book of Job 19, 25–27. See for that Michèle Beaulieu, *Ligier Richier (vers 1500–1567). Chronologie et attributions*. In: ‘*Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire de l’Art français*’ 112 (1986), 7–23, here 18. For the history of the monument see Claudie Picard, *Ligier Richier*. (Haroué: Louis, 2013), 66–69.

35 Regarding the various specimens of Houdon’s *Ecorché*, the earlier one (1767) at the Académie de France, Rome, inv. 319, and the later one (1790) at the École supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris. inv. MU11974, see: Anne L. Poulet, ed., *Jean-Antoine Houdon. Sculptor of Enlightenment*. Exhibition catalogue Washington/Los Angeles 2003/2004. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 62–71.

particular, the theatricality of the slumped poses that are well known from previous examples, including our *Donna Scandalosa* and Zumbo's miniature theatres, we now recognize in anatomical heads whose posture is intended to demonstrate the inner structures of the neck, the throat and the cheek and is thus charged with a scientific purpose.³⁶

At this point I would like to briefly summarize some of the most striking characteristics of the dead human figure in Early Modern sculpture. The small format and presence in private collections or galleries can be regarded as symptoms of a growing artistic and scientific interest in the subject beyond the cathartic effects of the *memento mori*. The extreme accentuation of horrifying features in the Baroque *memento mori* reaches a climax at the turn of the eighteenth century, when for the first time the material of wax was also adapted for visual aids used in anatomical studies. Notably, the distinction in these artistic representations between skull, muscle tissue, and skin may be the result of the attendance at anatomical dissections, or the advanced study of teaching aids like Vesalius's landmark studies of anatomy, or early anatomical waxworks like Zumbo's head in Florence.

In particular, Zumbo's theatres of death and disease put the secular analysis of these subjects in a special light in part because of their display among other works of art, including ancient sculpture, and also because they attract the beholder's discerning eye for their illusionistic qualities.³⁷ Besides the descriptions by well-known travellers, the novel *Juliette* by the Marquis de Sade reflects his own fascination and at the same time disgust in face of the Florentine showcases, which he describes in their former locations among the works of art in the Uffizi:

36 See Schnalke, *Geteilte Glieder – ganzer Körper*, 101, regarding similar forerunners in the anatomical collection of La Specola. Furthermore: Hélène Pinet, *Anatomische Wachsplastiken*. In: *Das Fragment. Der Körper in Stücken*. Exhibition Catalogue Frankfurt am Main 1990 (French Exhibition with the title *Le corps en morceaux* in Paris, Musée d'Orsay 1990). (Bern: Bentelli Verlag 1990), 51–56.

37 Krüger-Fürhoff, *Der versehrte Körper*, 77.

‘In the next room, known as the Chamber of the Idols,³⁸ [...] we saw something very curious indeed: a sepulchre overflowing with cadavers severally exhibiting all the various stages of decay, from the moment of death’s advent to the total material decomposition of the individual. This somber work is executed in wax coloured so subtly and modelled so cunningly the thing itself could be neither more expressive of Nature nor more authentic.’³⁹

Sade defines the aggregation of shocking elements as bizarre, and in this way also reveals a rational distancing from the moral appeal that is verifiable for example in the case of the *Donna Scandalosa*, whose effect was to overwhelm and convert those who looked at her.

Particularly because of its insistent representation of temporality in the form of decay, the *memento mori* is distinct from the scientific illustration. As a consequence of the Enlightenment, the subject of the *memento mori* had to be eclipsed at last by the illustration of life.

38 Today the room is used as a Cabinet of Miniatures (Gabinetto delle miniature, Room 24) on the second floor of the Uffizi. Zumbo’s theatres themselves are now kept in the Museo della Specola in Florence.

39 Donatien-Alphonse-François de Sade, *La nouvelle Justine ou Les malheurs de la vertu, suivi de l’histoire de Juliette, sa sœur: Histoire de Juliette, ou les Prospérités du Vice*, vol 8 (En Hollande, 1797), 20–21: ‘Nous vîmes dans la pièce suivante, nommée la chambre des idoles, [...]. Une idée bizarre est exécutée dans cette salle. On y voit un sépulcre rempli de cadavres, sur lesquels peuvent s’observer tous les différents degrés de la dissolution, depuis l’instant de la mort, jusqu’à la destruction totale de l’individu. Cette sombre exécution est de cire, colorée si naturellement, que la nature ne saurait être ni plus expressive, ni plus vraie.’ See English translation in: Marquis de Sade, *Juliette or Vice Amply Rewarded*. (London: Gold Star Publications, 1966), 238–239.



Figure 1. Unknown artist, *La Scandalosa*, end of seventeenth/beginning of eighteenth century (?), wax and cloth, 63 x 40 x 30 cm. *Oratorio* of the *Compagnia dei Bianchi della Giustizia*, Naples. (Photo: Author).



Figure 2. Paul Egell, *Memento Mori*, c. 1720/1725, pear wood, height 13,5 cm; width and depth 24,8 cm, inv. No Pl.O.3211, *Germanisches Nationalmuseum*, Nuremberg (Photo: *Germanisches Nationalmuseum*, Nuremberg)



Figure 3. Johann Christian Ludwig von Lücke, Death's Head, 1732 (or 1737), Height 11,5 cm, Kunstgewerbemuseum Berlin (Photo: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kunstgewerbemuseum; Dr. Fabian Fröhlich).



Figure 4. Gaetano Giulio Zumbo, Anatomical head, 1695/1700, wax, Museo della Specola, Florence (Photo: Polomuscale Firenze – Galleria degli Uffizi, Gabinetto Fotografico).