

VISUAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN SCULPTURE AND MEDICINE: THE INTERSECTION OF AESTHETICS AND SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

The intersection of medicine and art, often explored in numerous articles, delves into detailed depictions of diseases or concepts within the medical field. These depictions aim to speculate on disease effects and patterns of interaction, sometimes reaching scientific conclusions. However, artistic representations may pose scientific, conceptual, and methodological challenges, defining the complex boundary between medicine and art. This article broadens the perspective by examining the relationship between medicine and sculpture, focusing on how these fields can be classified in relation to each other. Rather than concentrating on individual works, the study categorizes the language, methods, and approaches used in works resulting from the intersection of art and medicine. The historical continuum is explored to understand the scope and connections between sculpture and medicine from the past to the present. Using search terms like "art," "sculpture," and "medicine" on platforms such as PubMed, Scopus, and Taylor & Francis Online, the research aims to convey how medicine is reflected in artistic practices. The article highlights the potential for collaboration and mutual enrichment between medicine and art, emphasizing the diverse use of art, particularly sculpture, in various contexts related to medical themes.

Keywords: Sculpture, Medicine, Art and Medicine, Integration, Disease .

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1. INTRODUCTION

The foundations of works produced in all branches of visual arts are rooted in the ability to reflect and convey the world. Therefore, the plastic arts strive to recreate real-life scenes as realistically as possible to represent and interpret all living beings in nature, particularly humans and objects. In the modernist era and beyond, artists began to eschew direct representation, opting instead to reinterpret objects and figures through abstract forms, diverse perspectives, and emotional expressions. The art movements that emerged during this period asserted that art transcends mere replication of nature; it serves as a profound medium for conveying the artist's inner world, emotions, and experiences. Movements such as modernism, cubism, expressionism, and surrealism highlighted the subjective and multifaceted nature of art, breaking away from traditional boundaries. In this context, technological advancements have provided artists with new tools and modes of expression, further expanding the horizons of art. Digital technologies, in particular, have enabled artists to engage in innovative and experimental practices beyond traditional craftsmanship. This evolution has demonstrated that art need not be confined to the faithful representation of nature, offering broader conceptual frameworks and creative possibilities. These developments underscore art's capacity to transcend direct observation and depiction, revealing its creative and innovative potential and redefining its boundaries.

For artists, the world and their knowledge and perception of it are fundamental. Generally, artists have tried to provide all the details of their images on the themes they have chosen. The object that emerges as a work is based on the artist's witnessing of the world. The works presented to the viewer's appreciation show how well the artist has executed the chosen theme and applications, demonstrating their ability to observe and provide details.

The human sciences combine artistic, ethical, moral, philosophical, medical, sociological, political, and psychological aspects of life and humanity. This also strengthens the dependence of art and life sciences on one another. Medicine and art focus on 'humanity' and both progress through principled methods specific to their disciplines. While the subject is ultimately humanity, these fields approach situations related to humans and humanity subjectively, objectively, scientifically, and artistically. While medicine strives to heal humans, artists reflect these scientific efforts in their artworks in a way that they perceive them. In this context, artists intentionally or unintentionally depict the appearance, shape, and health-related conditions of the human body as models in their works. Many artists have reflected on human, disease, and related topics in their works using a wide range of visual techniques and symbols, depicting the achievements of scientists in different methods and styles of narration throughout history.

As a form of artistic narrative, sculpture serves as a language through which selected subjects are transformed into three-dimensional art objects through the manipulation of various

materials such as stone, metal, wood, clay, plaster, or pre-existing objects. Examining its evolution from inception to the present day reveals that the term "sculpture" is not rigidly confined to a specific category of objects or a particular group of activities. Instead, sculpture is an art form that evolves from conceptualization to tangible form, undergoing changes, continually expanding its scope, and generating novel types of objects. Diverse sculptural forms can be traced across almost every culture, spanning from the Göbekli Tepe temple to Stonehenge. While sculpture was traditionally perceived as a representational art until the 20th century, the onset of the 20th century witnessed an increasing acceptance and exhibition of non-representational works in galleries and museums.

Throughout history, numerous sculptors have explored medical themes in their artworks, presenting varied representations. Nonetheless, a limited group of artists has delved extensively into medical subjects, integrating them into their creations metaphorically to highlight social and political issues. Art, medicine, and academia have always been an inseparable whole with organic bonds. In this regard, the first recorded relationship can be considered as Homer's Iliad. The Iliad mentions Asklepios, the father of two doctors named Podalirius and Machaon, as a flawless doctor from Thessaly. In Greek mythology, Asklepios is known as the god of medicine and healing (Pataci, 2016, p. 156). This relationship, which is the subject of mythological stories, has been the subject of master artists' works since then and has also been reflected in contemporary works. The examples of this relationship have gradually increased throughout history.

Moreover, sculpture serves as a means to commemorate the legacy of individuals, events, or situations. Throughout history, artists have discovered numerous reasons to express and celebrate their appreciation for advancements in medical science. In this pursuit, numerous portraits and monumental sculptures have been crafted to pay homage to doctors and scientists whose unwavering dedication and expertise significantly improved the lives of those around them. Societies seeking to honor the accomplishments of renowned figures from the past often positioned these sculptures in public squares, serving as a tangible reminder of their heroes and idols. Each sculpture finding its place narrates a silent story, seamlessly becoming part of the urban landscape and, in some instances, evolving into significant landmarks.

When looking at the relationship between medical science and sculpture, it is also notable that there are figurative sculptures made to honor doctors, healthcare workers, and scientists related to the field, as well as to highlight the personal and social effects of epidemics and pandemics. In this study, figurative human sculptures that deal with the topic of health are analyzed from the perspectives of sculpture art and medical science. An examination is also made of the concept of social-plastic sculpture, in terms of its association with medicine in the normalization of social life and the healing of people.

2. MEDICAL THEMES IN SCULPTURE

At the intersection of art and medicine, sculpture possesses a rich and complex history in expressing human health, anatomy, and medical advancements. Like other visual arts, sculpture serves as a powerful tool in addressing scientific developments and human experiences. This art form provides profound expressions that capture not only aesthetic representations but also the essence of the human condition, the fragility of life, and the relentless pursuit of scientific discoveries.

The relationship between sculpture and medicine spans a wide array of subjects through medical-themed sculptures, including the human body, health issues, medical interventions, pandemics, epidemics, and honoring healthcare workers and scientists. These sculptures serve not only scientific and educational purposes but also convey social and cultural messages. By depicting the impacts of health-related issues on human life, heroic stories, and societal solidarity, these works offer viewers an opportunity to understand the depth of events and the challenges humanity faces. Moreover, medical-themed sculptures document significant medical events in history and their societal impacts, raising public awareness about these diseases and emphasizing the importance of scientific research.

In this way, sculpture art provides viewers with a scientific and aesthetic experience, revealing the profound and comprehensive effects of health and medicine on human life. This unique combination of art and medicine showcases humanity's struggle, resilience, and innovative spirit in the quest for health and well-being. By doing so, it establishes an emotional connection with the audience, fostering empathy and awareness. Sculptures at the crossroads of art and medicine reflect medical ethics and human rights, highlighting the ethical dimensions of medical interventions, patient rights, and human dignity, thereby creating societal awareness.

As with all artworks depicting medical subjects, sculptures play a significant role in enhancing health education and awareness. From works used in anatomy classes to art pieces documenting the evolution of modern medicine, sculptures present scientific knowledge from an aesthetic perspective. The use of art in health education allows complex medical information to be presented in a more comprehensible and visually impactful way. The foundation of this education is built upon dissection studies conducted over thousands of years.

2.1. Presentation of human anatomy in art

The history of dissection extends back approximately 2500 years. Initial anatomical studies were conducted on animals and plants, as human dissections were prohibited. Trepanation, the practice of drilling holes in the skull to treat medical conditions, dates back to the Paleolithic era and is one of the earliest examples of anatomical practice. Anatomical

knowledge from Ancient Egypt is documented in papyri dating back to the 4th millennium BCE. In Ancient Greece, anatomy progressed with the works of Alcmaeon and Hippocrates, and further advanced during the Hellenistic period in Alexandria with Herophilus and Erasistratus performing dissections on human cadavers. However, these activities lasted only 30-40 years and were followed by an 1800-year hiatus in human dissection in Europe (Yücesan, 2022, p. 152-153).

The applications, learnings, assumptions, purposes, motivations, and dedicated spaces for anatomy practices from past to present have been understood to be extremely important for a better understanding of anatomy. Known as the "Restorer of Anatomy," Mondino de' Liuzzi is considered the first to perform a dissection, document it, and publish his findings. His fundamental text, *Anathomia (Anatomy)*, contained the collected experiences from the ancient anatomists, as well as de' Liuzzi's first-hand account of his own experiences with dissection (Di Matteo et al., 2017, p. 3).



Figure 1: Anatomie (Valuerda) 1568.

Source: https://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/historicalanatomies/Images/1200_pixels/valverde_p71.jpg

The illustrated work "Anatomia Carpi" by Berengario da (1460-1530), which compiles information about anatomy, stands out. Notably, after Carpi, collaboration between anatomists and artists was established, and artists, by adding an aesthetic dimension, depicted cadavers in motion (Figure 1). Anatomical examinations for medical education were initially conducted in the teacher's home but later moved to major universities, or more precisely, medical schools, such as those in Montpellier, Padua, and Bologna. Anatomy demonstrations were held publicly once a year, and these demonstrations were first conducted in temporary anatomy theaters (Tepe Yılmaz & Yılmaz, 2016, p.47-48).

The structure of permanent anatomical theaters, built for the sharing and demonstration of anatomical studies, is based on temporary anatomical theaters. Anatomy demonstrations were held publicly once a year in temporary anatomical

theaters. Initially, pre-Vesalian physicians like Alessandro Benedetti (1450-1512) and later surgeons and anatomists such as Guido Guidi (Vidius Vidius) (1509-1569) and Charles Estienne (1504-1564) expressed how temporary anatomical theaters should be designed and utilized. Following the long use of temporary theaters, the first permanent anatomical theater built for educational and demonstrative purposes was constructed in Padua (Padova) under the patronage of Hieronymus Fabricius ab Aquapendente (1537-1619) between 1584 and 1592 (with some sources indicating completion in 1594 after renovations).

The Renaissance was a period of significant innovations and discoveries fueled by the symbiotic relationship between art and science. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Italian Renaissance artists demonstrated a profound interest in exploring the intricacies of the human body. During this period, the Florence Academy of Art mandated anatomy classes for its students, requiring them to draw from cadavers and skeletons. Although few artists had the opportunity to perform dissections themselves, many expanded their anatomical knowledge by attending public dissections conducted by local physicians and studying existing anatomical texts. The Church viewed dissection as the desecration of the dead, yet occasionally permitted the dissection of the bodies of executed criminals.

Artists of the era made considerable efforts to understand the human form in detail. The renowned painter and historian Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), in his work *Lives of the Artists*, emphasized the critical importance of anatomical knowledge for artists. Vasari argued that without a solid understanding of anatomy, artists could not produce realistic and accurate works, thereby highlighting the essential role of this knowledge in the realm of art. Vasari describes anatomy in this way: "Again having seen human bodies dissected one knows how the bones lie, and the muscles and sinews, and all order of conditions of anatomy . . ." (Vasari, 1998, p. 422).

Many artists, including Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti, and Andreas Vesalius, showed a profound interest in anatomy and dissection. These figures exemplify how dissection studies during the Renaissance had a profound impact on both art and science, leading to groundbreaking advancements in understanding human anatomy. Leonardo da Vinci's greatest contributions to modern academia are his detailed studies of human anatomy. His notebooks are filled with carefully drawn two-dimensional representations of organs, tissues, and skeletal structures revealed during dissections. He modeled the internal structure of the heart's pulmonary artery with glass casts and tried to understand the mechanics of its function. Additionally, he drew extremely accurate cross-sections of the human skull, which are still used in medical student lectures today (O'Neill & Cone, 1983, p. 45).

Due to the frequent use of human figures in Renaissance paintings, scholars have long assumed that Leonardo conducted his anatomical studies to improve his painting. For

example, Edward MacCurdy, E.H. Gombrich, and some writers outside the art history community have suggested that Leonardo's anatomical studies were aimed at better depicting the human figure (MacCurdy, 1906, p. 26). In his famous translation of Leonardo's notebooks, Edward MacCurdy states, "[modern research] has revealed how [Leonardo] studied the structure of the human frame to better paint and sculpt" (MacCurdy, 1906, p. 27). This view is not unique to MacCurdy. Although his works were published in the early 1900s, the notion that Leonardo approached his anatomical studies with the intent to improve his art remains prevalent among the general public and many art historians (Gombrich, 1989, p. 112).

Michelangelo Buonarroti also participated in dissection studies. Michelangelo's dissections aimed to enhance his understanding of the human body's complex structure and increase the realism in his sculptures and paintings. It is suggested that Michelangelo's anatomical knowledge was derived from three main sources: first, the observation of live models and surface anatomy; second, the dissection of cadavers, particularly focusing on bones and muscles; and third, references from antiquity. There is debate regarding how his knowledge of dissection informed his depiction of both deep structures and surface anatomy. Additionally, issues arose from his labeling and use of symbols in his studies. Nonetheless, it is evident that during his time, both the science of anatomy and its terminology were in their early stages of development (Pearce, 2023, p. 13).

Another notable example of dissection studies is the Body Worlds exhibitions by anatomist Gunther von Hagens. These exhibitions aim to analyze the internal structure of the human body, encompassing both aesthetic ideals and an appreciation for the extraordinary significance of the human form. The Body Worlds concept, created by Dr. Angelina Whalley and Dr. Gunther von Hagens, emphasizes preventive healthcare as their primary goal. The exhibitions are designed to educate the public about the workings of the human body and demonstrate the effects of healthy and unhealthy lifestyles. Their ultimate objectives include promoting the idea of healthy living, showcasing the potential and limits of the human body, and questioning the meaning of life through the examination of the body (Yücesan et al., 2022, p. 159).

Studying anatomy and examining the general structure of the body is complex, and the presence of expert cultures can be problematic. However, a human cadaver should not be viewed merely as an art, entertainment, or educational object, given its extraordinary significance, unlike wax models or MRI images. Considering von Hagens's emphasis on education as a primary goal and the common norms and laws regarding respect for human remains, his work's educational value should be assessed independently of other components, regardless of how valuable or integrated they may be (Burns, 2007, p. W1).

2.2. Visual expression of health problems in sculpture

Artists have depicted the human body, its diseases, deformities, and symptoms in their sculptures for centuries, captivating both aesthetic and scientific interest. The human body has been a subject of observation, replication, dissection, and examination by both scientists and artists, leading to explorations of fundamental questions about the body. Despite widespread prohibitions on dissection in ancient and medieval times, significant figures like Galen and Vitruvius continued their work on the mechanics and proportions of the body. Their theories not only persisted but also dominated Western thought for centuries (Camsari, 2022).

The Renaissance stands out as one of the most critical periods for the intersection of anatomy and art. Artists examined corpses and conducted dissections to enhance their anatomical knowledge. Renowned artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo created detailed anatomical studies of the human body, reflecting diseases and deformities in their works. Some sculptures by Michelangelo are suggested to depict signs of tumors in the female body. According to an article by James Stark published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, "A large swelling medial to the nipple; a swollen nipple-areola complex; and an area of skin retraction just lateral to the nipple" indicate the presence of a tumor. Thus, it is highly probable that Michelangelo intentionally depicted a woman with a disease, specifically cancer (Stark & Nelson, 2000, p. 1578).

Some art historians argue that Michelangelo lacked knowledge about the female body or that he based the sculpture on a male model and later added appropriately sized breasts. Other critics note that the figure's hips, neck, and shoulders appear more male. Another interpretation suggests that Michelangelo deliberately created a male figure with added breasts, reflecting his homosexuality (Strauss & Marzo-Ortega, 2002, p. 514).

In the modern era, sculptors have become more explicit and detailed in expressing health issues. As medical knowledge and public awareness of health problems have increased, artists have placed greater emphasis on these themes in their works. Sculptures have addressed various diseases and health conditions, such as cancer, obesity, anatomical disorders, and mental health issues. These works are often created with the intention of raising public awareness.

Contemporary sculptors today use more diverse and innovative techniques to address health issues. For instance, some artists employ 3D printing technology to depict diseases and health problems. Works like Marc Quinn's 'Evolution' series are significant contemporary art pieces that explore diseases and the evolution of the human body.

The visual expression of health issues in sculpture requires the artist to possess both scientific knowledge and aesthetic sensibility. These works reflect not only the art but also an awareness of medical and societal health issues. In this context, sculpture art serves as a historical and cultural record of the human body and its diseases, highlighting its profound importance.

2.3. Examination of sculptures in the context of art and medicine

Michelangelo's famous sculpture of David has been questioned in the context of the intersection of art and medicine due to its depiction of an uncircumcised David. The influence of the Church and its patrons on Renaissance art has been discussed as a possible explanation for this depiction. However, there have also been claims that this was a choice made by Michelangelo himself or that he was indifferent to anatomical details (Strauss & Marzo-Ortega, 2002, p. 514).

In many sculptures and in the everyday physiology of humans, the major vein running from the upper body to the groin is not visible. In the sculpture of David, what is visible is not the major vein but rather the jugular vein, one of the large superficial veins. The prominence of the jugular vein can occur as a sign of high intracardiac pressure and potential cardiac dysfunction. In the case of David, who is young and physically fit, it could be hypothesized that this is a temporary result of a stress state brought on by preparing for battle against a giant. This theory is further supported by the fact that David is shown preparing for battle against Goliath (Mundell, 2019).

Michelangelo's choice to depict the jugular vein prominently may have been influenced by his deep anatomical knowledge and his intent to reflect the physiological state of David at a moment of high tension and readiness. This artistic decision aligns with the Renaissance emphasis on realism and the accurate portrayal of human anatomy, despite the overarching influence of religious and cultural norms of the period.



Figure 2: Pietà, Michelangelo Buonarroti 1498-9.

Source: <https://www.gennarocucciniello.it/gc/michelangelo-buonarroti-la-pieta-1498-99-roma-basilica-di-san-pietro/>.

One of the most striking sculptures in terms of anatomy is Michelangelo's Pietà (Figure 2). An interesting aspect of the Pietà is that Michelangelo was unaware of the existence of venous valves, as indicated by the presence of blood-filled veins in the arms of the crucified Jesus. Examining the Pietà from another perspective, we see that it is the embodied imagination of a conception. When was Jesus taken down from the cross and placed in Mary's lap as imagined by the artist? In what hour of death is he? Since the answers to these questions are unknown, we can say that Michelangelo wanted to make Jesus beautiful in his own design here. Medical examination and interpretation are unnecessary for this sculpture.

As a sculptor and painter, Michelangelo also created frescoes on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, including nine main scenes in four large and five small sections centered in the chapel. The work progresses from the chapel's altar end to the entrance in chronological reverse order and is divided into three groups, each consisting of three panels. The first group represents the creation of the world, the second represents the story of Adam and Eve, and the third represents the Noah legend. Medical professionals, along with art historians and critics, have analyzed Michelangelo's frescoes.

In an article published in the Journal of the American Medical Association by Dr. Frank Lynn Meshberger (1990), it is claimed that the drawings of the composition of God and the figures around it depict the anatomy of the human brain, and that the wine-colored robes with flying capes represent the meninges. It also suggests that the artist implies that the concept of God is a product of the human brain through the body he placed within the human brain. After this observation, questions were raised about Michelangelo's other frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. Following Meshberger's publication, many people have claimed that there are numerous very specific anatomical images in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel frescoes, such as the brain, kidney, and brain stem.

Michelangelo's work, both in sculpture and painting, demonstrates a profound intersection of art and anatomy, revealing his deep interest in the human form. His depictions of the human body, whether in the Pietà, the Sistine Chapel frescoes, or other works, continue to captivate both art historians and medical professionals, offering insights into the Renaissance understanding of human anatomy and the artist's creative vision.

2.4. Realism: the convergence of art and anatomy

Rodin is considered one of the most famous sculptors of the modern period due to his realistic sculptures. An important element in understanding Rodin's art is something that cannot be fully explained by external influences. Ernst Gombrich asserts that art is not necessarily related to other developments of a particular era and is not entirely or consistently the product of social, economic, and political conditions or the spirit of the time. What is not present in the literature about Rodin's art is his questioning mentality, which was neither

inherited nor acquired in the classroom. This is the core of his genius. More specifically, it is a certain type of questioning that sets this artist apart from other sculptors of his era (Elsen, 2003, p. 13).

Aristotle discusses the dislike that is felt towards all imitative products in his *Poetics* and claims that this is characteristic of humans. He argues that our experiences with art confirm this, saying, "through mimesis, we take pleasure in seeing the most accurate representations of things that in themselves we view with loathing, such as the forms of wild beasts and corpses" (Tunalı, 1987, p. 16). This is due to the deep pleasure that comes from learning, and this pleasure is not unique to philosophers but to all humans. Similarly, Rodin's realism and his representation of this in his sculptures underscore an important point.

Rainer Maria Rilke expresses the "secret" of Rodin's art as follows: "For Rodin, an arm, a leg, or a body part is no longer thought of separately; they are considered a self-sufficient, completed, and whole model. The distinctiveness of a plastic art piece lies in its self-contained nature and the absence of any incomplete movements within it. The sculpture should expect nothing from the outside and should not refer to anything unrelated to itself" (Elsen, 2003, p. 589).

Rodin's approach to sculpture, focusing on the complete and self-sufficient nature of each part, reflects a profound understanding of human anatomy and movement. His works capture not only the physical form but also the emotional and psychological depth of his subjects. This holistic perspective is what sets Rodin apart and cements his place as a pioneer of modern sculpture.



Figure 3: Auguste Rodin, Right and Left Hand, modeled ca. 1885, cast 1974.

Source: Elsen, A. E. (2003). *Rodin's Art: The Rodin Collection of Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University*. Stanford University Press. pp. 583-588

Rodin's interest in the deformities of human hands is most prominently exemplified by his sculptures "Large Clenched Left Hand" and "Small Clenched Right Hand" (Figure 3). These

sculptures depict the claw hand deformity, which results from median and/or ulnar nerve paralysis and forearm muscle injuries. This condition, which is aesthetically displeasing and psychologically traumatic, is characterized by muscle atrophy and finger deformities. However, in Rodin's hands, the thenar and hypothenar muscles of the thumb are not atrophied (Elsen, 2003, p. 587).

Understanding the anatomical and clinical correlations in Rodin's subjects demonstrates the value he placed on the artistic portrayal of the human body. The deformities found in the hands he sculpted not only show his accuracy and attention to detail but also the humanity in his work. Deformities such as Dupuytren's contracture, claw hand, Boutonniere deformity of the thumb, and clinodactyly shape the human hand. These imperfections give life to the subject and allow the viewer to identify with the hand (Judson, 2017).

The artist's task consists of making one thing of many, and a world from the smallest part of a thing. In Rodin's work there are hands, independent little hands, which are alive without belonging to any single body. There are hands that rise up, irritable and angry, and hands whose five bristling fingers seem to bark like the five false heads of Cerberus. There are hands that walk, hands that sleep and hands that wake; criminal hands weighted with the past, and hands that are tired and want nothing more, hands that lie down in a corner like sick animals who know no one can help them. But then hands are a complicated organism, a delta in which life from the most distant sources flows together, surging into the great current of action. Hands have stories; they even have their own culture and their own particular beauty. We grant them the right to have their own development, their own wishes, feelings, moods, and occupations (Rilke, 2011, p.50).



Figure 4: Marc Quinn's monumental sculpture of Zombie Boy for Science Museum, 2011.

Source: <https://artlyst.com/news/marc-quinn-sculpture-zombie-boy-announced-science-museum/>

"Self-Conscious Gene" is a bronze sculpture created by Marc Quinn, specifically commissioned for the Medicine Galleries at the Science Museum in London (Figure 4). This sculpture features Canadian model and artist Rick Genest, widely known as "Zombie Boy." Genest gained

notoriety for tattooing anatomical images onto his body following a brain tumor diagnosis during his youth. The sculpture, which stands approximately 3.5 meters tall, depicts Genest holding a medical book that showcases renowned anatomical illustrations. Quinn's artwork delves into the intersections of medicine, technology, and identity. The tattoos on Genest's body represent his quest for self-understanding. Through this sculpture, Quinn encourages viewers to reconsider their own relationships with their bodies, highlighting the confluence of academic medical knowledge and popular culture (Science Museum Group, 2019; Treviño, 2018).

The "Self-Conscious Gene" sculpture is exhibited in the Medicine Galleries, surrounded by over 2,500 medical artifacts that chronicle the history of medical research and practice. This piece also serves as a tribute to Rick Genest, who passed away unexpectedly during the creation of the artwork. The sculpture provides visitors with a profound visual experience, illustrating how medicine has shaped human life both historically and in contemporary times (Artlyst, 2018; Science Museum Group, 2019).

Quinn's work not only memorializes Genest but also bridges the gap between medical science and personal identity. By immortalizing Genest's tattooed body in bronze, Quinn underscores the symbiotic relationship between body art and medical illustration, inviting viewers to reflect on the ways in which medical knowledge and personal identity are intertwined. This sculpture stands as a testament to the enduring impact of medical science on individual lives and cultural expressions.

2.5. Artistic representations of obesity

When examining the images of overweight people presented in art, it becomes clear that obesity has different meanings for individuals and societies. Today, obesity is considered to be a fatal health issue. Since people objectify images, the representation of the body has constantly changed in every society. One of the figures that explain this is the Willendorf Venus, depicted as a short, overweight woman with no human face and large breasts and hips (Early Paleolithic, 20-30 BC). This sculpture, considered the first artistic representation of obesity, has maintained its place in the history of art for centuries with the idea that obesity is attractive and indicates good health, fertility, and high socio-economic status.

The marginal social status of fat bodies is evident even in an era of tolerance and respect for diversity, through the persistent popularity of fat jokes, mockery in pop culture, public health initiatives against the so-called "obesity epidemic," the slow food movement, the vilification of fast food, and the wild financial success of weight loss industries. In cultures where thinness is valued as the ideal body, fat bodies are deemed undesirable, unhealthy, immoral, and irresponsible. These beliefs stem from the ideology of healthism, which views health as a personal responsibility and moral obligation. Body size is considered controllable, and fatness

is seen as physical evidence of behaviors like overconsumption and inactivity. Thus, fatness is perceived as irresponsible and immoral. According to Erving Goffman, fatness constitutes a “spoiled identity,” seen as both a physical abomination and a blemish of individual character. The stigmatization of fat bodies has been traced back to the 19th century and has worsened with the recent “obesity epidemic.” Weight bias is widespread and permeates nearly every aspect of contemporary life (Grombacher, 2014, p. 4).

The perception of a full body as a sign of health, beauty, and vitality continued until the second half of the 20th century when scientists discovered the relationship between saturated fats, trans fats, and metabolic and cardiovascular diseases. From that period on, something began to change, and large bodies began to cease being symbols of health and beauty. On the contrary, some artists have used the image of a large body to symbolize the conflict between the individual and society (Ferrucci, 2010, p. 55). Fat art helps us understand how fat bodies have been visually and socially constructed throughout history in comparison to idealized thin bodies while also aiming to counteract the prejudices that the public and scholars have towards fat people (Snider, 2012, p. 13).

In *Woman Eating*, Duane Hanson visually depicts the woman's weight, social class, and nonconformist eating proficiencies (Figure 5). The woman's large body is already noticeable, but the dress tightly fitting around her stomach makes this even more pronounced. Her cheap and worn-out clothes indicate her social class. Objects on the table such as the can of peanuts, empty ice cream dish, glass of soda, and uneaten banana split are arranged as symbols of transgression caused by her eating urges, serving as evidence of her overconsumption. This arrangement is not a random placement of objects; it is carefully curated to show the viewer that the woman is overweight because she eats too much. However, since overconsumption is taboo in fat-phobic cultures, this seemingly objective observation carries hateful connotations: she is fat because she cannot control her appetite and, therefore, is irresponsible. *Woman Eating* can thus be interpreted as both a display and critique of transgressions against Western body norms. Even if the artwork is not overtly activist, art can catalyze critical analyses of the hegemonic concepts of fatness and the marginalized position of the fat individual (Grombacher, 2014, p. 29).



Figure 5: Duane Hanson, *Woman Eating*, 1971.

Source: Grombacher, P. J. (2014). *Fat Liberation: A Feminist Perspective*. University of Alberta.

"Woman Eating" embodies these complex social concerns. By addressing issues of modern American class disparity, obesity, and rampant consumerism, it also touches on themes of American citizenship and identity, questioning who is considered significant in the national narrative. In an idealized national image that venerates youth, thinness, and affluence, elderly, overweight, and lower-class Americans are frequently marginalized. This idealization tends to demonize these groups as societal "problems," reflecting a collective fantasy of an "official" national body that continues to be defined by white, male, middle-class, and heteronormative standards. Hanson's representations of the human body bring these perceptions to light, emphasizing the connection between self-perception and the perception of others.

Audiences in art museums may often view bodies like that in "Woman Eating" with a sense of detached distaste. Critic Peter Schjeldahl notes that encountering Hanson's sculptures enhances awareness of the ongoing drama of social class distinctions in America. He comments, "In the company of fellow members of a fortunate class, I stroll among likenesses of dramatically less privileged citizens," thus highlighting the stark contrast between the viewer's own social standing and that of the subjects represented (Doss, 2006, p. 12). Hanson's works serve as a stark reminder of the deeply entrenched social inequalities and the way these are perceived and internalized within society. The way we see ourselves is deeply intertwined with how we perceive others, and Hanson's art makes this interplay strikingly visible.

By presenting figures that defy the idealized norms of American society, Hanson's "Woman Eating" challenges viewers to confront their own biases and the societal structures that perpetuate these inequalities. The sculpture forces a reckoning with the uncomfortable realities of social exclusion and the superficiality of societal ideals, thus sparking a critical dialogue on the true nature of American identity and citizenship. This engagement with Hanson's work underscores the importance of art in reflecting and critiquing social dynamics, encouraging a deeper understanding of the varied and often invisible lives that constitute the nation's body politic.

Chinese sculptor Xu Hongfei is one of the artists who has addressed the concepts of obesity and beauty in modern sculpture. Xu's works challenge societal beauty standards and adopt an aesthetic approach that redefines these norms. His sculptures typically depict large-bodied female figures in joyful, dynamic, and lively poses. These figures demonstrate that beauty is not confined to a slender body but can be found in every body shape (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Rhythm, a sculpture by Xu Hongfei, 2022.

Source: <https://www.chinadailyhk.com/hk/article/280055>

Xu Hongfei's sculpture art represents a significant work that challenges societal perceptions of the body and promotes a positive body image by depicting large female figures. The women depicted in Xu's sculptures are portrayed as confident, joyful, and energetic in various scenes of everyday life. These women, defying social expectations and traditional beauty standards, convey a message of self-acceptance and living life to the fullest.

Xu's bronze sculptures feature large female figures with exaggerated body proportions. The women in the sculptures can be seen engaged in various daily activities, such as playing the cello, dancing the tango, doing yoga, riding a horse, or scolding a mischievous dog. In every instance, the women are depicted as self-assured, optimistic, and energetic. These figures often draw attention to scenes where a large woman is being lifted into the air or carried by a smaller partner.

Xu Hongfei's works highlight the power of art to convey social messages and contribute to societal improvement. His sculptures encourage people to be at peace with their bodies and to stand against societal pressures. In this context, Xu's works play an important role in modern society regarding body positivity and self-confidence (Lin, 2023).

2.6. Fetus

The 14 bronze sculptures crafted by contemporary sculptor Damien Hirst in the capital of Qatar, Doha, have ignited notable reactions both within Qatar and globally. Ranging in size from 5 to 11 meters, these sculptures intricately portray the stages of fetal development inside the uterus, encompassing fertilization, twin pregnancy, birth, and the fetus. Positioned on the exterior of the Sidra Medical Center in Qatar, these works serve as a public display, allowing everyone to witness and comprehend the miracle of life. The final sculpture in the series, depicting a naked newborn baby, has particularly stirred attention and discussion. The decision to portray the newborn in this manner has sparked additional interest and dialogue around the artistic choices made in representing the culmination of the life cycle.

Additionally, Damien Hirst's bronze sculpture *Verity*, which he gave to the coastal town of Ilfracombe on the North Devon coast of England for temporary exhibition for 20 years, is 20 meters tall and weighs more than 25 tons (Camsarı, 2022, pp. 196-197). The sculpture depicts a pregnant woman's body leaning on books. Half of the body shows the abdominal area, revealing the uterus and fetus inside the uterus, and mammary tissue under the skin. The woman is also depicted holding a sword in one hand and a scale in the other. Like the previous example, the giant sculpture placed in the town's harbor area has also caused a lot of controversy.

Hirst's works, especially those depicting detailed anatomical structures, often provoke strong reactions due to their explicit representation of the human body. The sculptures in Doha, for instance, challenge viewers to confront and appreciate the complexities and beauty of human development. This public display of fetal development stages is both educational and provocative, sparking discussions about the boundaries of public art, cultural sensitivities, and the role of art in public spaces.

Similarly, *Verity* in Ilfracombe has sparked debates over the depiction of pregnancy and the female form. The sculpture's anatomical transparency and the combination of traditional symbols of justice (the sword and scales) invite interpretations regarding the nature of truth, transparency, and the role of women in society. These discussions highlight the impact of Hirst's work in challenging societal norms and encouraging public discourse on complex issues.



Figure 7: Marc Quinn, Evolution, 2005.

Source: <http://marcquinn.com/artworks/single/evolution>

Marc Quinn's sculpture, "Evolution" composed of nine large sculptural components and an uncarved marble block, presents the human embryo throughout its stages of development; each sculpture represents a month of pregnancy (Figure 7). This work explores the idea of life emerging from the material world and references Michelangelo's famous unfinished sculpture

Slaves made for the tomb of Pope Julius II. Quinn states that this sculpture "tells how matter becomes animate." Like his *The Complete Marbles* series, this work was carved under Quinn's direction by traditional stonemasons in Pietrasanta, Italy, using scans of real embryos and clay models (Marc Quinn, n.d.).

The *Evolution* series depicts a fetus in various stages of formation. Each sculpture in this series brings the viewer closer to the finished human form within the marble block. Each piece represents a being at different stages of development: first resembling a tadpole, then a fish, followed by a creature with stubby limbs and a giant, drooping head. Quinn breaks new ground here by forcing viewers to look at things they do not want to see but need to see (Glover, 2008).

Quinn's work challenges viewers to confront the process of human development, emphasizing the transformation from inanimate material to animate life. The series reflects his fascination with the interplay between art and science, exploring themes of existence, creation, and the essence of life. By using scans of real embryos and traditional sculpting techniques, Quinn bridges modern technology with classical artistry, creating a profound visual narrative of human development.

The *Evolution* series not only showcases the physical changes during gestation but also invites viewers to reflect on the broader implications of life's beginnings. Quinn's meticulous attention to detail and the raw portrayal of embryonic stages provoke thought and discussion about the miracle of life and the often unseen stages of human development. This work underscores the artist's ability to blend scientific precision with artistic expression, resulting in a powerful commentary on the origins of life.

2.7. Statues depicting the personal and societal effects of epidemics and pandemics

Throughout history, epidemics have left enduring imprints manifested in the structures of hospitals, walls, cemeteries, and monuments. Statues recounting the narratives of diseases such as smallpox, plague, cholera, the 1918 flu pandemic (Spanish flu), AIDS, SARS, and COVID-19 have frequently found their place in public spaces, adorning building facades or residing within indoor spaces. These statues serve as both monuments and visual representations of the diseases, acting as poignant reminders of the past and the role of science. They are less commonplace than monuments dedicated to wars, political figures, or more conspicuous tragedies. Pandemic disease monuments, born from the present but conceived as contributions to the future, encapsulate perspectives extending beyond the immediate confrontation of the epidemic experience. They embody thought-provoking approaches, aiming not only to raise awareness about how the planet grapples with pandemics but also to stimulate collective consciousness. These monuments serve as reminders that humanity is

perpetually subject to nature and integral to the ecosystem in which it resides (Camsarı, 2022, p. 194).



Figure 8: The Cistercian monastery at Cadouin, "The Bad Rich" ornament, late 15th century.

Source: Delluc, G. (2017). 23ème COLLOQUE DES AMIS DE CADOUIN. Retrieved from <https://www.amisdecadouin.com/les-actes-des-colloques/>

The first representations showing the deformations caused by disease on statues are seen on the tympana or walls of religious buildings. One notable example is a few statues carved in a spectacular Gothic style in the Cistercian monastery at Cadouin in France (Figure 8). The statue of Lazarus from Cadouin shows a person with very pronounced clinical symptoms of several cardinals and lepromatous lepers. Therefore, it is alleged that the sculptor was aware of less pronounced features such as lagophthalmia, having encountered patients in advanced stages of the disease. In the statue of Lazarus, the physical symptoms of the disease are meticulously rendered, showcasing the artist's observational skills and the medical knowledge of the time (Manchester & Knusel, 1994, p. 206). As the only recorded example showing the limb and facial features of a lepromatous leper developed in the context of the parable of Lazarus in the Bible, the statue is considered one of the most important, clinically accurate, and best-preserved statues in the history of art defining leprosy (Delluc, 2015, p. 441).

The statue of Lazarus at Cadouin Monastery is a significant work that reflects the aesthetic and artistic understanding of the Gothic period. The fine detail work and dramatic facial expressions of the statue embody the characteristic features of Gothic art. During this period, artists focused on realistically and emotionally depicting religious figures and stories. The deep figures and facial expressions in the composition enhance the plastic value of the work while also strengthening its aesthetic and dramatic impact. With these characteristics, the statue of Lazarus perfectly exemplifies the aesthetic principles and artistic approach of the Gothic era, holding great importance in both artistic and medical history.

The Plague Column in Vienna, also known as the Pestsäule (Figure 9), stands as one of the city's most renowned monuments, symbolizing the response to the devastating plague epidemic. The construction of the Vienna Plague Column was initiated in reaction to the

catastrophic plague that struck Vienna in 1679, resulting in thousands of fatalities. The monument was erected between 1687 and 1692. In response to the epidemic, the citizens of Vienna, along with a religious brotherhood, planned to construct a pillar dedicated to the Holy Trinity and the "Nine Choirs of Angels." To escape the plague, Emperor Leopold initially fled to Kahlenberg and subsequently to Prague. On October 18, 1679, he vowed to erect a column of grace once the epidemic had ended (Kirsch, 2017, p. 2).



Figure 9: Wiener Pestsäule "Vienna Plague Column", 1693.

Source: <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/vienna-pestsaeule-plague-column>

The Vienna Plague Column is not merely a monument commemorating the plague; it is also a religious, political, and artistic symbol of Vienna's history. Considering its construction process, iconographic themes, and artistic contributions, the Pestsäule is recognized as a significant example of Baroque sculpture (Kirsch, 2017, p. 7). The monument's construction began with a temporary wooden column and was later completed with contributions from artists such as Matthias Rauchmiller, Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, and Ludovico Burnacini (Boeckl, 1996, pp. 42-45). Fischer von Erlach is noted for his work in architectural arrangement and the placement of the iconographic program, while Burnacini's cloud formations and dramatic designs added to the uniqueness of the Pestsäule. Meanwhile, Strudel played a crucial role in the final stages of the monument's completion by detailing the sculpture groups, demonstrating significant initiative (Boeckl, 1996, pp. 50-54).

The Plague Column is divided into three levels: Human, Angel, and God. The three-stepped base symbolizes the human world, and each wing of the base corresponds to one of the three divine persons. The first level is adorned with twelve reliefs designed by Fischer von Erlach. These reliefs depict biblical events of salvation and show God as both a punishing and merciful entity. Among the reliefs, there are inscriptions honoring the Trinity. The upper part of the base features reliefs adorned with coats of arms. The second level symbolizes the angelic realm, with a cloud pyramid spiraling upwards. Nine life-sized angels bearing various

emblems occupy this level. The third level crowns the pyramid with the three divine persons: the "Trinity in the ring of light." The angels on these level bear similarities to Bernini's angel figures, and the curvature of the three-winged base echoes Bernini's architectural form language (Kirsch, 2017, pp. 4-6).

The Pestsäule is not just a plague monument; it is also a religious, political, and artistic symbol of Vienna's history. Considering its construction process, iconographic themes, and artistic contributions, the Pestsäule is a significant example of Baroque sculpture. Its aesthetic structure, adorned with cloud and angel figures in a triangular pyramid shape, presents a dynamic composition rising upwards (Boeckl, 1996, p. 41). The Baroque period is characterized by exaggerated movements, dramatic compositions, and intense emotional expressions, and the Pestsäule perfectly embodies this artistic approach. The depiction of Emperor Leopold I in prayer conveys both a religious and political message (Boeckl, 1996, p. 43). As Christine M. Boeckl states, the Pestsäule not only commemorates the plague epidemic but also symbolizes the repulsion of the Ottoman Empire's siege of Vienna in 1683, reflecting the power of the Habsburg Monarchy and the belief in divine assistance in achieving victory (Boeckl, 1996, p. 45).

Another significant work is The AIDS Memorial Quilt. This project is a large community art project created to commemorate those who died of AIDS (Figure 10). Initiated in 1985 by gay activist Cleve Jones in San Francisco, California, the project began with marchers writing the names of loved ones who had died of AIDS on placards and attaching them to the walls of the San Francisco Federal Building. These placards resembled a patchwork quilt, which inspired Jones and other activists to develop a more permanent memorial.



Figure 10: Aids Memorial Quilt, 1987.

Source: <https://www.thedallasway.org/stories/written/written-stories/2015/5/10/names-project-aids-memorial-quilt>

Named the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, it was supported by generous donors and volunteers. Volunteers created over 46,000 individual 3-by-6-foot memorial panels, most of them honoring one person who died of AIDS. First displayed on the National Mall in

Washington, DC, in 1987, the quilt has since been exhibited in many cities, raising millions of dollars for AIDS service organizations. Each panel is made from different materials and objects, and every display of the quilt includes celebrities, politicians, and family members reading aloud the names of the people for whom the quilt panels were made. The AIDS Memorial Quilt, the largest community art project in the world, was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. Over the past 20 years, the quilt has been viewed by more than 15 million people and has raised over \$3 million for AIDS service organizations. The quilt is both a joyful remembrance and a reminder of the tragedy of lost lives. Each panel is made with love for the person being honored, serving as a powerful statement and a memorial to all the people and their loved ones whose lives have been transformed by this epidemic (Fee, 2006, p. 979).

The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt can be regarded as a comprehensive example of contemporary art and the power of activist art. Meeting social, political, and cultural criteria both aesthetically and content-wise, this work emphasizes the diversity and individuality of contemporary art. Each panel is made from different materials and personal items, utilizing art not only as an aesthetic experience but also as a means of expression and communication. The size and scope of this piece reflect the boundary-pushing nature of contemporary art, going beyond traditional art concepts.

Additionally, the AIDS Memorial Quilt is a powerful example of activist art. Created to draw attention to the AIDS epidemic, honor those affected, and raise awareness in society, the work aims to break down stigma and prejudice associated with AIDS. The loving and careful creation of each panel turns this work into a personal and emotional memorial. The reading of names during exhibitions and the participation of celebrities, politicians, and family members further strengthen the activist aspect of the work. In this way, the AIDS Memorial Quilt is a strong example of how art can be used as a social tool and its potential impact on social change.



Figure 11: National Covid Memorial Wall, 2021, London.

Source: Tovey, R., & McCulloch, L. (2024). COVID-19 grassroots memorial practices in the UK. *Visual Studies*, 1-9.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1472586X.2024.2346629>

Monuments are designed "to stop time, to prevent the process of forgetting, to create a state, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial" (Nora, 1989, p. 19). Almost everywhere in the world, these "sites of memory" typically take standard forms: tombstones, figurative monuments, memorial parks, and photographic memories. Monuments are created for mourners but not by them, and in the case of mass losses, they often promote a homogenized collective narrative (Molyneux, 1995, p. 18).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound effects on societies, and it is important to transform this impact into lasting memory. Public reflection and commemoration efforts, carried out in a diverse and inclusive manner through the collaboration of state and non-state actors, have been significantly enhanced by artistic initiatives. The inclusivity of art in addressing physical commemoration efforts has been shown to better meet the needs of communities.

In this regard, The National COVID Memorial Wall (Figure 11) stands as an effective example. In the summer of 2020, hearts, rainbows, and flowers became the visual language of COVID-19 memorials in the United Kingdom. Rainbows typically expressed support for National Health Service workers, while hearts, flowers, and yellow were associated with loss and remembrance. These motifs, drawn from various contexts such as greeting cards, queer activism, and emoji culture, were not imposed on communities as suitable symbols for COVID-19 losses; rather, they emerged from the constraints of public mourning displays. Window art and sidewalk drawings adapted to quarantine conditions and allowed individuals to create their own memorials. During less restrictive periods between lockdowns, "sites of memory" associated with COVID-19 became more collaborative and increasingly accessible, moving from private homes to public spaces (Tovey & McCulloch, 2024).

2.8. The concept of social plastic-social sculpture in the healing of society and people associated with medicine: the artist Joseph Beuys and others

The concepts of social sculpture and social plastic assert that art not only provides an aesthetic experience but also plays an active role in social transformation and healing processes. These concepts aim to harness the dynamic and transformative power of art to impact social structures, cultural norms, and political systems effectively. Social sculpture and social plastic encourage the participation of individuals and communities, transforming art from a passive object to an active tool for interaction and transformation. Particularly in relation to medicine, the healing power of art can profoundly impact both individual and societal health and well-being. This perspective offers new insights into how art can be utilized for social healing, cultural change, and the advancement of social justice.

One prominent figure in associating social sculpture with medicine for the improvement of society and people is the German artist, Joseph Beuys. Beuys defined the concept of "social

sculpture" as the transference of the principle of transformability to society, culture, science, and ultimately politics. A notable aspect of Beuys' work is the paradigm centered around humans. In his work, Beuys focused on humanity and life, perceiving people as both physically and socially ill. His personal healing journey, following an accident during his service as a pilot in the German army during World War II, became central to his art. This process transformed into themes of mourning, self-healing, the interaction between suffering and healing individuals, and periods of recovery in Beuys' work. Beuys conveyed these themes in his works not only for himself but as a valid form of healing for a trauma-experienced society. It is suggested that the significant tension existing in the body and consciousness of the individual self can only be comprehended. This tension can escalate to the point of tearing or even collapsing, even if not through emotional and mental activities. In this context, Beuys primarily addresses the fragility and mortality of humans. These needs stem from the effort to exceed the limits always achieved through overexertion and weakness (Mennekes, 2007, p. 353).

Many artists have continued Beuys' concept of social sculpture. Allan Kaprow, the creator of Happenings, blurred the boundaries between art and life. Parallel to Beuys' understanding of social sculpture, Kaprow's works emphasize social participation and interaction. Kaprow's work "" transforms viewers into active participants, making art a part of life (Kaprow, 2003, p. 67). Allan Kaprow's narratives on social art are closely related to his desire to blur the boundaries between art and life in his works. Kaprow's desire to see art as part of life resulted from Meyer Schapiro's approach to art within the context of socio-economic history. Schapiro's views on art having not only an aesthetic but also a social function played a significant role in Kaprow's art practice. Kaprow advocated for the transformation of art from a private domain to a form of social action (Allen, 2015, p. 174).

Suzanne Lacy, a feminist performance artist, reflects social issues and the experiences of marginalized groups in her works. By embracing the concept of social sculpture by Beuys and Kaprow, Lacy uses art as a tool for social change. Her work "The Roof is on Fire" brings together different segments of society through open discussions with young people and initiates a dialogue. Suzanne Lacy's "The Roof is on Fire" project is a good example of how empathetic understanding can be produced through collaboration. In this project, the space and performative nature of the car provide students with the opportunity to speak as common inhabitants of a particular culture and environment, while the audience (residents and viewers in the media) represents the dominant culture that is comfortable telling young people of color what to think but struggles to listen to them. The central importance of listening is evident in Lacy's extensive discussions with students and the openness that the work encourages in the audience (Kester, 2005, pp. 20-22).

Thomas Hirschhorn creates temporary sculptures and installations that address political and social issues. Like Beuys, Hirschhorn uses art as a tool for social change. Thomas Hirschhorn, influenced by Joseph Beuys' understanding of social sculpture, has adapted this concept to his own art. By adopting Beuys' approach of changing traditional sculptural materials and introducing new ones, Hirschhorn promotes social participation and communication in his works. Hirschhorn also embraces Beuys' notion that art is not sacred but rather contributes to an ongoing discussion, emphasizing the need to create communication structures in his art that appeal to a wide audience. Hirschhorn's projects go beyond providing an aesthetic experience to offer platforms for social interaction and participation, demonstrating that art can be used as a tool for social change (Buchloh, 2005, pp. 78-81).

The concepts of social sculpture and social plastic highlight the potential of art in processes of social change and healing, encouraging artists and viewers to take on more active and participatory roles. These concepts expand the boundaries of art, showing that it can be used as a social, cultural, and political tool. The relationship between art and medicine not only improves physical health but also supports mental and emotional healing processes. Social sculpture and social plastic enable individuals and communities to take an active role in improving their environments and living conditions. Thus, the transformative power of art serves the goal of creating a more just, conscious, and holistic society. These approaches emphasize the value of art not just as an aesthetic experience but as a tool for social and individual healing and change. This integration of art and medicine provides a broader and more comprehensive perspective on health and well-being.

3. CONCLUSION

Art has a significant transformative power for society as a whole, presenting complex medical situations in a comprehensible and accessible way. Many visual arts, like sculpture, are also intertwined with medicine. It is thought that the exploration, discovery, and implementation of art forms in the medical field will bring a different perspective in terms of awareness, helping to increase knowledge about many diseases. Additionally, an interdisciplinary approach will offer opportunities to better understand the interaction of humans with the world and to improve life in general.

The intricate relationship between art and medicine reflects the intertwining of these disciplines in their exploration of humanity, health, and societal issues. Sculpture, as a form of visual art, has played a significant role in portraying medical themes, human conditions, and the effects of epidemics and pandemics. Sculptors have skillfully depicted medical conditions, anatomical details, and the impact of diseases on the human body, contributing both to artistic expression and scientific understanding. From the classical representations of the human form by artists like Michelangelo to modern sculptures addressing contemporary issues such

as the COVID-19 pandemic, sculpture serves as a medium to communicate complex ideas about health, disease, and the human experience.

Monuments and sculptures dedicated to medical advancements, healthcare workers, and the commemoration of epidemics stand as powerful reminders of the intersection between art and medicine in the public domain. These sculptures not only celebrate human achievements but also serve as educational tools, raising awareness about the importance of health and the role of science in shaping our understanding of the world. Furthermore, the concept of "social plastic" or "social sculpture," as advocated by artists like Joseph Beuys, emphasizes the transformative potential of art in shaping society. Beuys viewed art as a healing force, capable of addressing both physical and social ailments. Through his works, he sought to contribute to the healing of individuals and society, highlighting the interconnectedness of personal and collective well-being.

In the contemporary art scene, artists like Damien Hirst challenge societal norms and perceptions, using sculpture to explore the complexities of life, birth, and the human body. Exhibitions like Body Worlds aim to educate the public about anatomy and health, blurring the lines between art and science.

Ultimately, the examination of sculptures in the context of art and medicine provides a rich tapestry of insights into the human condition, offering a unique lens through which to explore the intersection of creativity, science, and societal values. This interdisciplinary approach fosters a deeper understanding of our shared experiences and the role that art and medicine play in shaping our perceptions of health, illness, and the human journey.

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