The imagination within Human Anatomy

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Abstract

Beginning in the early sixteenth century, the mystery of human anatomy began to be understood as researchers dug further into the inner workings of the human body. To share their findings, they began to publish visual illustrations of the dissected specimen. The diagrams created from the sixteenth to early nineteenth centuries varied dramatically from those that followed there after. As the content and informational value increased, creativity and amusement decreased. This poster will document the change over time of visual anatomy, focusing on why and how anatomy lost its imagination in favor of naturalism.

Background

The idea of anatomy stems all the way back to ancient Egypt, but the scientific aspect did not manifest until much later. The first anatomist lived during the second century and based most of his observations on that of animal dissections. Human dissection was not performed until 1315 at the hand of Mondino de Luzzi. De Luzzi was the first anatomist to provide an anatomically correct version of the human body.

Methods

I gathered and assessed images from several different time periods, looking in specifics for diagram type and accuracy.

Results

The Egyptian depiction of human anatomy was based solely on knowledge of what existed, but without the observation of a real human, the placement and accuracy of the diagram is lacking.

De Luzzi, as the first to perform a human dissection, provides the first anatomically correct sketch of the human body. It is straightforward and recognizable but still creative and attracts the viewers attention.

Da Vinci's drawings of anatomy are quite detailed and fact-oriented. His drawings have some creativity but are not posed in overly expressive ways as Vesalius' drawings were.

Both sketches possess accurate and complete anatomy of the human body.

Vesalius depicts his humans in expressive stances and seems to capture them in the middle of some form of motion. This adds creativity and live to the lifeless anatomy of the human.

The modern depiction and that of Vesalius are built in similar fashions regarding the anatomical side, but very different when observing the creative side.

Discussion

As time progressed, the depiction of human anatomy became more stiff and less imaginative. With the rise of modern science, the place for art and creative expression within scientific work began to swindle. In modern times, viewing a scientific diagram, such as that of the human anatomy, in a way that possesses a creative or expressive style, is rare.

In the times of Di Vinci or Vesalius, it was common to have background scenery or a prop within the diagram. Often the specimen was drawn with expression both on the facial structure and within the stance and presumed movement of the human.

References

Against the 'Statue Anatomized': The 'Art' of Eighteenth-Century Anatomy on Trial.

Gumberg Library

All photographs were taken from the Wikipedia commons.