

Article

The rotten, the disembowelled woman, the skinned man

Body images from Eighteenth century Florentine wax modelling

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Florence's La Specola Museum stirs up strong emotions. Among its collections, the valuable anatomical wax models created between the end of 17th and the beginning of 18th century stand out owing to their marvellous and provocative nature. The aim of this essay is to analyse the communication models epitomised by some of these works by means of historical semiotics, to nourish the widespread, but often underestimated assumption that science and the means used to spread it have always been influenced by intellectual suppositions and constantly interact with contemporary culture.

Keywords: Science communication, Florentine wax modelling.

The smell of putrid corpses

Among the oldest wax models at the La Specola Museum are an *Anatomical Head* and the famous miniature, free-standing *Theatres* created by the Sicilian clergyman, Gaetano Giulio Zumbo (1656-1701), the inventor of Italian anatomical wax modelling.¹

The *Theatres* feature four compositions created mainly for didactic purposes and are called *The Plague*, *The Triumph of Time*, *The Vanity of Human Glory* and *The French Plague*.² On the other hand, the *Head* is an anatomical waxwork of inestimable value, being the earliest surviving anatomical wax model explicitly created for medical didactic purposes. This model was even mentioned by Albrecht von Haller (1708-1777), a distinguished 17th-century physiologist, who defined it in the following terms; “wax head modelled with care (...) whereby the artist intended to recreate the process of decay”.³

Zumbo's *Theatres* give shape to baroque nightmares. They are gruesome Christmas cribs. Their composition is the same as that of the Christmas cribs tracing their roots back to Sicily and Naples, but their purpose is different: while the latter represent the joy of the Gospel, Zumbo's cribs give a distinctly anti-Christmas message. They represent an idea which is the reverse of the song of joy and then even imply that salvation will not be possible. Each of the children's bodies lying in the foreground, livid with putrefaction, seems a feeble, deformed version of the Christ child. The manger is full of bones and rotting bodies. The mothers lie exhausted beside their newborn children and resemble Caravaggio's portrayals of Mary, scantily dressed and supine. These women say “Thy will be done” not to a God of fertility, the Creator of all living things, but to Nature, an impersonal force for the destruction of the world and its cultures. The *Theatres* are cribs devoid of God, which may be the reason why they appear as festering abortions. Here *Adeste fideles* is replaced by *De profundis*.⁴

Nature is represented on a sort of inclined plane down which it slides into deterioration. But that is not all. The *Head*, bleeding from the nose and mouth, is likely to be that of an executed man. Its features are altered, the teeth displayed, almost gnashing in grimace. It stands to reason that these works show stylistic elements typical of contemporary late-Baroque sculpture. Zumbo came from Sicily and had lived for four years in Naples – he was therefore steeped in Spanish culture. His heads' features are reminiscent of the more passionate Spanish expressionist style of art works to be found in the cathedrals of Northern Mediterranean countries. Here, characters such as the *Beheaded Saint John* and *Crucified Christ* – e.g. the skin-covered Crucified Christ in Burgos – are drenched in their own redeeming blood, their mouths open or contracted into a spasm. The following generations of artists/craftsmen tended to

regard human body fluids in wax models – especially blood – as taboo. Nevertheless, Zumbo’s purpose here is to portray the suffering human being. Thus, the *Head* represents the consequences of a wretched man’s death throes, whereas the bodies in the *Theatres* are writhing in pain. If organic matter is meant to decay, pain must then represent the inevitable fate of human beings, even after death. The spasm of death reaches fulfilment when rigor mortis sets in.

What is the body image emerging from Zumbo’s works and, above all, what anatomical detailing did he provide? The Sicilian clergyman moulds either whole bodies, however lacerated – such as in the *Theatres* – or simply heads, which form coherent wholes compared to other anatomical parts. He tends not to pay much attention to detail. In the *Theatres*, though all critics hold the opposite opinion, it is clear in some cases that the bodies are not very accurately modelled, undoubtedly because of his intention to model bodies in a putrefied state. Nevertheless, though swollen, putrefied bodies are misshapen, the process of putrefaction itself is sometimes unfaithful to reality. His mannerist background led him to ignore that the greenish-brown figures, with their swollen bellies torn to pieces, would have been highly unlikely to retain clear definition in their facial features or leg and arm muscles. The colours, even though altered by time and restoration, are untruthful and exaggerated, as if from a nightmare. Their appearance seems due more to his dark sense of colours than to his fidelity to reality.

However, this does not mean that purely scientific aspects are not held in due consideration – though this is more the case of the *Head* than of the *Theatres*, which have completely different purposes. For instance, the physician, Domenico Cotugno (1736-1822) admired how Zumbo modelled the parotid gland and its auditory canal, described about 30 years earlier by the Danish anatomist, Nicolaus Steno (1638-1686): “I saw the anatomical wax model created by the clergyman Zummo and noticed that Steno’s parotid canal in the wax head, where it joins the mouth, is shown divided into two separate parts”.⁵

The majority of Zumbo’s wax models are covered with skin, though in some sculptures – such as in the *Head* – the epidermis or, less commonly, the surface muscles are removed. Paul Valéry (1871-1945) considers that “the humanity in a man lies within his skin’s outer layer. If the skin is removed and the body dissected, then only machinery will be left”. Zumbo’s aim is seemingly to portray artistic human-symbolic bodies, not solely anatomical machines. In short, Zumbo’s bodies are dead and decayed, partly covered with skin, thus relatively opaque. Moreover, they are represented – though not in their entirety – as coherent wholes. What is gained in terms of expressive force, is lost in terms of anatomical accuracy – especially in the *Theatres*.

Zumbo’s works evoke a sense of an overwhelming stench. Nowadays, they perturb visitors. However, one might ask what reactions they triggered when they were created and first displayed. The *Theatres* give shape to ancestral phobias about coping with “damp” death, which, throughout history, was deliberately marginalised by society as a carrier of diseases and, in broader terms, a vessel of misfortunes.⁶ Unlike the 18th and 19th centuries, people living at the end of the 17th century were familiar with death and decay. Zumbo’s works were disturbing, but at the time of their creation did not emanate the evil aura they were to many years later. In particular, they reveal the modeller’s abilities and fidelity to reality. In 1707, an anonymous writer pointed out that “the talented sculptor’s [*Theatres*] resemble reality so much that those who look upon them are inevitably seized by horror”.⁷

During the 19th century, a drastic change in views on Zumbo’s waxes was partly brought about by a renewed terror of death. The Sicilian clergyman titillated the viewers’ most secret instincts. While people in the 18th century had an aversion to putrefaction – an instance being the important hygienic measures taken by Napoleon in readjusting regulations on cemeteries –, in the 19th century it was regarded as the explosion of nature against culture. As the catalyst for the disintegration of the widely-praised Enlightenment. As sadistic revenge of wet against dry.

The dusky-coloured, pungent fluids oozing from rotten flesh – the quintessence of death – were closely associated with love.⁸ They inevitably exerted a strong influence on the 18th century’s morbid, Gothic idea of artistic beauty. It was not by chance that the Marquis de Sade (1740-1814) declared his fascination for them while on a visit to Italy:

In this hall, a bizarre idea came to life: a tomb full of corpses at different stages of putrefaction, from the moment of death till the complete destruction of the individual... The impression created by this masterpiece is so strong that each sense seems to trigger alarm to the others. You bring your hand to your nose as an automatic reaction.⁹

The dead bodies, especially if decayed and dismembered, conveyed the idea of a shift from rationality to primitive instincts, thus giving free rein to unbridled sensuality. The alcoholic stench of rotten bodies set the stage for a hormonal orchestra. Life and death fluids mingled in a drenched and decadent orgy.

The morbid fascination for gruesome pseudo-fluids remained unchanged throughout the 18th century, at the end of which it came to a sudden halt. In the 19th century, the general public changed both its idea of artistic beauty and its attitude towards death. The latter was suddenly seen as “pornographic”, thus so frightening as to be unutterable and unsuitable for representation, except in the most delicate terms.¹⁰ In the 19th century, visitors declared:

Let us throw a veil upon these perverted works. They can only be looked upon with disgust and their appearance accounts for the French audience’s coldness in the face of such impressive anatomic theatre.¹¹

Zumbo’s wax models had by then lost favour in the public eye.

The penetration of sham virgins

Works from the purely anatomical collection will be examined hereafter. The naturalist Felice Fontana (1730-1805)¹² set it up with the aim of creating a sort of miniature universe, to enable physicians to avoid “soiling their own hands” and symbolically to dominate the changing, varied universe of the “flesh” bodies from the inside of the room. Wax models were not created with the sole intention of representing anatomical parts, but, above all, of replacing them. This is why Fontana set out a sort of “anatomical encyclopaedia”, which included the wax models and accompanied watercolours with annotations. At present, the pictures hang on the wall, but were once kept in drawers beneath the corresponding caskets, altogether constituting an authentic, three-dimensional anatomy treatise, inciting a visitor to state that “it is all assembled to deliver the most instructive of lessons”. The disturbing nature was replaced by reassuring artificiality. As claimed by the followers of the Enlightenment, the education of nations was meant to improve their spiritual life.

The quality of the works appeared exceptional from the outset. However, the wax models seemingly imitated, more than just nature, the great classics of anatomical representations and of Greek sculpture. In some ways, the anatomical representations were to be considered copies of works of art, i.e. copies of copies.

The *Medici Venus*, largely the work of Clemente Susini (1754-1814)¹³ – the best known of the second generation artists of the Florentine School – is the collection’s pride owing to its aesthetic and scientific/didactic value alike. The statue was so highly regarded by contemporaries that they ordered more or less faithful copies. These works are now kept in anatomical museums all over Europe, the best known of which being in Poggi Palace in Bologna, the Josephinum Museum in Vienna, the Semmelweiss Museum of the History of Medicine in Budapest, and possibly the Museum of the Wellcome Institute in London.

First of all, an analysis of the name, *Medici Venus*. Where does it come from? The answer is common knowledge: the artist was inspired by a homonymous Hellenistic copy of a Greek sculpture dating back to the 4th century B.C. and now kept in the Uffizi Gallery. Moreover, the statue’s appellation puns the word *Medici*, which is both the name of a famous Florentine family and the plural form of *medico*, Italian for “doctor” – the profession the waxwork was intended for.

The Greek *Venus* represents a classical beauty in a state of complete harmony, expressed through the calm and perfect balance of her leg and arm movements. Her expression is reassuring. Her posture protects her against impertinent glances and is due to her willingness to be portrayed in a statuesque pose – not to modesty. Her sensual – rather than purely sexual – attitude is represented explicitly, though not excessively. In the Florentine version, many features differ. The female wax statues in La Specola and, in particular, the *Medici Venus* embody a beautiful woman’s death throes: her head leans touchingly on a pillow and her arms are open. In the Budapest version, the right leg is slightly raised, as if in a last attempt to conceal what will be examined shortly after with sadistic and voyeuristic glee. In the Bologna sculpture, the head sags more clearly and the body seems to have such an unstable balance as to

insinuate that the *Venus* is on the brink of collapse. Vienna's beauty turns her eyes away, apparently offering herself as a sacrifice to an unknown torturer, at whose hands she suffers abuse but at whom she dare not look. While the anatomical models, also those of females, from the Bologna School – e.g. *Eve* by Ercole Lelli (1702-1766) – were unaware of their fate, Florence's models – the *Medici Venus* being the most obvious – are aware of what is happening to them and seem to be conscious sacrificial lambs on a dissecting-room table.

Their horizontal position recalls funerary sculptures, that is to say the anthropomorphic decoration of the sarcophagi. A masterpiece of this moving, highly embellished art is the tomb sculpture of Beata Ludovica Albertoni (1473-1533) by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680). Reminiscent of the latter, the *Medici Venus*' body lies horizontally, her head slightly bowed. In particular, her expression resembles that of Bernini's sculpture – somewhere between agony and ecstasy. The two women are caught in the act of dying, but their features betray a barely-concealed orgasm.¹⁴

The *Venus* seems to delight in her own suffering. Aesthetically.¹⁵ She expresses a sadomasochist satisfaction that Aby Warburg and Georges Didi-Huberman regard as a typical element of some Florentine art movements.¹⁶ She invites onlookers to admire her smooth, falsely demure body and to “enter” her by dismantling her piece by piece – to “penetrate her cognitively”, as Francis Bacon (1561-1626) would have put it, accustomed to this kind of metaphor. Her falsely demure attitude awakens earthly love. The pearl necklace she wears seems evidence of her lasciviousness. However, it also serves the purpose of covering the cut under the throat and is considered by some critics a symbol of human vanity.

The *Venus* propagates an infectious sensuality. Contagious. It inspires the viewpoint that every work can be interpreted in a sexual way. In April, 1792, Madame Vigée Lebrun (1755-1842), portraitist and friend to Queen Marie Antoinette (1755-93), remained shocked at the sight of this perturbing sculpture:

That sight made such an impression upon me that I nearly fainted. For several days I could think of nothing else, to such an extent that I failed to look at anyone without mentally stripping them of clothes and skin.¹⁷

The *Venus* became a heathen goddess who freed the *Self* from the *Super-Ego*'s control. However, she differs from the Greek *Venus*, outwardly composed in her classical perfection. She is a lustful, oriental goddess, drenched in oil and bathed in incense, who provides the onlooker with the courage to cry out things nobody would ever dare to say – even if they are obvious. That is, that the human being is naked. That every waxwork can be divested, even of its skin. That they are capable of being eviscerated and penetrated. That clothes are a bourgeois convention, unable to hide the nakedness of existence. The *Venus* is therefore obscene and “antisocial”. Whatever reaction she may arouse – excitement, indignation, approval or disapproval – after seeing her, nobody remains the same. Her ubiquitous presence even invades dreams.

The *Venus*' pregnancy only becomes evident at the end of the “examination”. It is the last marvel provided by this sinful work of art to the viewer. The woman, kept within a crystal casket, is herself a casket or natural container, as was often the case with anatomical representations of female body. Thus, her virginity lies only within her skin's outer layer. Today's onlooker is shocked to find an absolute inconsistency between the pregnant womb and the rest of the body, which, as an item of an anatomical collection should be above all as faithful to reality as possible. Upon closer inspection, the *Venus* turns out not to be pregnant and a foetus has been inserted into her womb. The young girl has neither an enlarged abdomen nor heavier breasts, nor bodily alterations typical of pregnancy. These aspects are ignored, as they would have both rendered her less fascinating and dissipated the final surprise. Therefore, this waxwork was created to be an ideal female body rather than a truthful representation of its organs – that is, a sign of its reproductive potentiality as opposed to gestation. Moreover, the foetus is too well-developed to be of such small proportions. The pregnancy is purely symbolic; if a woman at her physiological peak is to be portrayed, then she must be an expectant mother, even at the cost of anatomical inaccuracies.¹⁸

The skinning of marble statues

Contrary to the emotions stirred up by the female sculptures, the male versions are less evocative. For instance, the wax model representing the superficial lymphatic vessels resemble Michelangelo's *Adam* in the Sistine Chapel. However, the characters differ in their postures; while Adam stretches out his forefinger to the Creator, the wax figure withdraws his arm and points at himself, as if to place himself at the centre of universe. The anatomical wax model is willing to belong to the scientific world, from which God is excluded.¹⁹

The "anatomical Adam" was simply a recurrent subject for eighteenth-century wax models and, more generally, anatomical works. However, the artists'/craftsmen's or scientists' intention was the creation of a new, ideal pattern of wax male figures. Unlike the *Venus* statues, the male bodies had no skin, hair or frills whatsoever, thus allowing them to be seen more as an ideal and rendering them "universal examples", independent of space and time. Most of the male statues' features were drawn from masterpieces of Greek sculpture – e.g. Uffizi Museum's *Apollo* – and this is why viewers still get the impression they are looking at a collection of ancient statues, from which the marble layer resembling the superficial tissues has been removed.

Unlike Zumbo's putrefied, tormented models, these statues were meant to represent living bodies. As in Winckelmann's analysis of *Laocoon*, the male figures' bodies suffered severely, but their calm expression resembled that of neoclassical statues. The hyper-realistic colours – including deep red and blue, used for the arteries and veins respectively, and the light gilding of the bones – emphasized their forms, thus drawing even closer attention to their superiority.

The question now arises of the differences in how male and female bodies of La Specola's wax models are represented.²⁰

<i>Woman</i>	<i>Man</i>
Passion	Lack of passion
Internal organs	Pre-superficial organs
Modular structure	Layering
Softness	Hardness
Horizontal position	Vertical position

Passion vs. Lack of passion. The female body's sensuality and ability to enchant have already been thoroughly discussed. The women are passionate, in that they let their emotions dominate them, as is shown from their expressions or, in one instance, where a statue sensually clutches at a plait. On the other hand, the men are less sexually arousing despite their fine appearance. Their eyes are dull and often wide open. If an attempt is made to conceal the female statues' pudenda from the onlooker's sight by means of a leg or arm movement, the men's genitalia are shown with nonchalance. It is as if the already-skinned men had nothing more to lose. The woman represents "Venus", the man "Marsyas". That is to say, while the female statues arouse owing to their obvious, unceasing potential for brutalisation, the violence displayed upon the male bodies has already been perpetrated and does not require potentially limitless extension.

Internal vs. Pre-superficial organs. The "visceral" nature of the female characters has been already discussed. The *Venus* statues are always ready to have their own bowels, lungs, and other internal organs removed. Their abdomens resemble a large dinner-tray, into which the person holding it plunges his/her hands to remove jelly-like organs. In this formless mass, the womb is certainly the most important part, as it is the focus of the female body's ideal representations – even in an unfertilised state. The female body is constituted around the womb, around which the other organs cluster. Woman is, therefore, a full box.

On the other hand, the male is chosen to represent "pre-superficial organs", that is the outer muscle layers as opposed to the skin. His virility is expressed through the neoclassical harmony of his muscular

forms, in contrast to the softness of the female tissues. If his internal organs are to be represented, the man is likely to be as “hollow” as a container without contents. The only important internal organs to be found are the kidneys and the heart, which is regarded as the male figure’s centre – as with the womb in the female statues. Every internal organ of the male body aims at directing the viewer’s attention to the outer wrapping, which is a layer woven with blood vessels. The inner part, on the other hand, resembles a large bubble surrounding the heart, which is only needed to emphasise the outer part. In short, Man is an empty box.

Modular structure vs. Layering. Body representations usually follow two distinct patterns of visual images, i.e. the topographic or the systematic pattern. According to the topographic pattern, all the organs from a certain body region are represented – as are nerves, vessels, and what links them to the adjacent parts. As a full box, the female body is represented according to this very pattern, its main feature being a variety of microscopic elements. Female statues have, therefore, a modular structure. On the other hand, the male body is characterised by the unity of the microscopic elements, thus, it is generally represented according to the systematic pattern. This tends to combine parts from a single system – e.g. skeletal, muscular or nervous systems – and to omit the rest, if possible. In general, only bones, ligaments, and cartilage or different muscle layers are joined together. The male body can not be dismantled owing to the outer layering of its organs. The only way truly to know it is to strip it like a fish.

Softness vs. Hardness. The female body is chosen to represent soft, loose tissues found mainly in the abdomen. Furthermore, only the female wax models are covered with skin, which gives the illusion of soft sensuality. Males are, instead, chosen to represent hard tissues and are never covered with skin, their muscles being in most cases the sculptures’ core. In some male models, the artists failed accurately to reproduce veins and arteries, as they are too swollen and their colours too intense. On the other hand, a skeleton’s sex is hard to classify, although one can hazard a reasonable guess as to its masculinity. Lymphatic vessels and nerves are to be found in the male figures, possibly because they are modelled as small threads which get tangled close to rigid parts, resembling climbing plants on a wall. They were frequently represented thanks to the contemporary studies conducted by Paolo Mascagni (1755-1815), Professor of Anatomy at the University of Siena and, for a while, member of the museum’s research staff. Nevertheless, lymphatic vessels can also be found in female characters’ thorax and abdomen, offering an opportunity to dismantle two bodies.

Horizontal vs. Vertical position. Female models always lie flat on their backs, waiting for the executioner pitilessly to perform his duty. Male models, instead, are usually standing – which obviously does not mean that they never assume a horizontal position, but that at least they have the choice. Male organs appear firmer and, as it were, self-supporting.

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Notes and references

- ¹ Cfr. Cagnetta, F. (1977). *La vie et l’œuvre de Gaetano Giulio Zumbo*. In Aa. Vv. (1977). *La ceroplastica nella scienza e nell’arte*. Firenze: Olschki, 489-502. More recent books on wax modelling are: Giansiracusa, P. (a cura di) (1988). *Gaetano Giulio Zumbo*. Milano: Fabbri Editori; Giansiracusa, P. (a cura di) (1991). “*Vanitas vanitatum*”. *Studi sulla ceroplastica di Gaetano Giulio Zumbo*. Siracusa: Arnaldo Lombardi Editore.
- ² For an interesting analysis of the zumbian *Theatres* refer to Le Fur, Y. (1989). *Esthétique des cires anatomiques de Gaetano Giulio Zumbo (1656-1701) à Pierre Spitzner (1834-1896)*. Thèse de Doctorat, Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 29-79.
- ³ von Haller, A. (1700). *Bibliotheca anatomica*. Tuguri: Orell, Gessner, Fuessli et Soc., I, 809. For further information on another zumbian *Head*, presented at the *Académie des sciences* and lost during the French Revolution, refer to: Bovier de Fontenelle, B. (1704). *Histoire de l’Académie Royale des Sciences*. Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 57. Thanks to his great success, Zumbo won the monopoly for the manufacturing of anatomical waxes in all France. Cfr. Lemire, M. (1990). *Artistes et mortels*. Paris: Chabaud: 35-36.
- ⁴ Cfr. Wolkenhauer, A. (2001). «*Grausenhaft wahr ist diese wächserne Geschichte.*» *Die Wachsfiguren von Don Gaetano Zumbo zwischen Kunst und medizinischer Anatomie*. In Gabriele Dürbeck et alii (a cura di) (2001). *Wahrnehmung der Natur. Natur der Wahrnehmung. Studien zur Geschichte visueller Kultur um 1800*. Dresden: Verlag der Kunst Dresden: 71-85.

- ⁵ Cotugno, D. (1765). *Iter italicum anni 1765*, ed. Belloni, L. (1960) «Memorie dell'Istituto Lombardo, Accad. di Scienze e Lettere, Classe di Lettere», 27: 1-93; segnatamente 81-82.
- ⁶ Cfr. Favole, A. (2003). *Resti di umanità. Vita sociale del corpo dopo la morte*. Roma-Bari: Laterza, 34-35.
- ⁷ Anonimo (1707). *Mémoires pour l'Histoire des Sciences et des Beaux-Arts*. Paris: Trévoux, III, 1832.
- ⁸ On the macabre atmosphere of that period, refer to: Praz, M. (1948, ried. 1996). *La carne, la morte e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica*. Firenze: Sansoni, 85-164; Ariès, Ph. (1977). *L'homme devant la mort*. Paris: Seuil: 439-40.
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- ¹⁰ Cfr. Gorer, G. (1965). *Death, grief and mourning in contemporary Britain*. London: The Cresset Press, 47-65.
- ¹¹ Molinier, E. (1897). *Histoire générale des arts appliqués à l'industrie [...]*. Paris: Lévy et C. 1897, 234.
- ¹² For more information on Fontana, refer to: Knoefel, P. K. (1984). *Felice Fontana. Life and Works*. Trento: Società di Studi Trentini di Scienze Storiche; Mazzolini, R. (1984). *Fontana, Gasparo Ferdinando Felice*. Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, XLVIII, 663-69; Mazzolini, R. (2004). *Plastic Anatomies and Artificial Dissections*. In de Chadarevian, S., Hopwood, N. (eds.) (2004) *Models. The Third dimension of science*. Stanford: Stanford University Press: 43-70.
- ¹³ For more information on Susini refer to: Pyke, E. J. (1973-86). *A Biographical Dictionary of Wax Modellers*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, I, 143. An interesting collection, made almost only by Susini, is the one in the Museo di storia della medicina in Cagliari. For coherence sake, it will not be discussed in this composition.
- ¹⁴ Cfr. Kadar, Z. (1977). *Sul profilo barocco della cosiddetta "Venere dei Medici" di cera*, in Aa. Vv. (1977), *La ceroplastica nella scienza e nell'arte*, cit., 525-31.
- ¹⁵ Cfr. Bucci, M. (1976). *Anatomia come arte*. Firenze: il Fiorino, 45-60.
- ¹⁶ Cfr. Warburg, A. (1924). *Bildniskunst und florentinisches Bürgertum*. Trad. francese, *Essais florentins* (1990). Paris: Klincksieck, 124-27; Didi-Huberman, G. (1999). *Ouvrir Venus*. Paris: Gallimard.
- ¹⁷ Vigée Lebrun, E. (1835-37). *Souvenirs*. Paris: H. Fournier, II, 154.
- ¹⁸ Cfr. Jordanova, L. (1984). *La donna di cera*, «Kos», 4: 82-86; Newman, K. (1996). *Fetal Positions. Individualism, Science, Visuality*. Stanford: Stanford University Press: 82-88; Showalter, E. (1990). *Sexual anarchy. Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*. New York: Penguin Books: 128-29.
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- ²⁰ Cfr. Jordanova, L. (1989). *Sexual Visions. Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 43-86. On the "discovery" of the anatomical difference of women, refer to: Schiebinger, L. (1991). *The Mind has no Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science*. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press: 27-29.

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