Dear Friends:

This month, we take a look at the fantastic and sometimes whimsical illustrations of skeletons that appear in the Library’s collections, in anatomical atlases and artist books. We also share a blog post on pioneering surgeon Dr. Emily Dunning Barringer to wrap up our series on early women Fellows of NYAM.

First Mondays Virtual Tour: “What Lies Beneath”

Join Historical Collections Librarian Arlene Shaner and celebrate All Souls’ Day/Day of the Dead with a look at what lies beneath our skin: skeletons! Explore some of our classic books of human anatomy, including Andreas Vesalius’ De humani corporis fabrica (On the fabric of the human body), published in 1543.

From the Collections:

Goyard Bidloo, Anatomia Hymni corparis

The anatomical atlas of Goyard Bidloo (1649–1713), published in 1685, was extravagant in its illustrations. In this image the skeleton climbs out of the open grave, hourglass in hand and silky shroud tossed recklessly aside, evoking the passing of time and the way of all flesh. Bidloo’s talented artist, Gerard de Lairesse (1644–1711), studied with Rembrandt and was skilled in many arts beyond his work in anatomical illustration.

Color Our Collections:

Crocodile Skeletons, Oh My!

Check out the palm trees, pyramid, and bony crocodile engraved by Gerard van der Gucht for William Cheffelden’s Osteographia, or, The anatomy of the bones (London: 1733). The image is from the Historical Medical Library of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia. #ColorOurCollections gathers images from libraries, archives and museums around the world.

Images from the Past:

“The Gravedigger”

In 1932 NYAM was part of an international publishing venture to reprint the woodcuts from several of Andreas Vesalius’ classic works of anatomy. The new work was titled Icones Anatomicae (Anatomical images). This image of a skeleton, sometimes referred to as “The Gravedigger,” is from that book. Sadly, Vesalius’ original wooden blocks, having survived for 400 years, were destroyed in World War II. The images live on in the books on our shelves and on our website.

From the Blog:

NYAM Women in Medical History

We continue our celebration of early women NYAM Fellows by featuring Dr. Emily Dunning Barringer (1878–1967), admitted as a Fellow in 1908. She was the world’s first female ambulance surgeon, the first woman to have a surgical residency, and president of the American Women’s Medical Association in 1942. Through that association, she organized the American Women’s Hospital in Europe, which provided medical care during and after World War II.
Noted Elsewhere: Oliver Sacks

“Science on Screen,” a project of the Coolidge Theater, features a discussion of the life and work of Dr. Oliver Sacks, the neurologist and best-selling author of The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and other works. Kate Edgar was Sacks’ longtime editor; Atul Gawande is a renowned surgeon and New Yorker writer; both speak in connection with Ric Burns’ recently completed documentary, Oliver Sacks: His Own Life.

We look forward to welcoming you back to the Library. As we wait, stay safe, stay engaged and stay connected.

The NYAM Library Team

Your support helps us preserve the Library’s treasures, share them with researchers and the public, and safeguard the history of medicine to inform the future of health.

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About NYAM
The New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) tackles the barriers that prevent every individual from living a healthy life.

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