

DRAWING OUT THE FEELING

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...Guy's Hospital, Gordon Museum is the oldest and largest of its kind. Medical memorabilia have been accumulating there since the 1800's. Since it's only accessible to the trade, a medical student friend sneaked me in as an 'Operating Theatre Technician'.

We were the only visitors. Along with the bones of giants, dwarves and several headed babies, we were treated to the preserved remains of murder victims, bizarre suicides, dissected criminals, abnormal births and human anomalies of every description. Pickled organs and body-parts in jars rounded out the show.

Anatomy was something I'd studied in Art school and, and I'd taught myself taxidermy as a teenager*. Guts and dead bodies, didn't bother me. This was bodies from a different point of view though: Mr. Hart's point of view. These images were to be recorded and manipulated in order to *create* fear and death. There was certainly evidence of it here. The skull of a woman caved in with an axe : the stomach of a suicide who'd swallowed scalding water; the arm and shoulder of a man, flash fried when it had touched the third rail. In terms of the assignment there was also plenty of disease, but disease leaves very little of *itself* behind. Viruses are self-serving microscopic termites that burrow into flesh and bone until all that's left are the ravaged remains of the victim. Even those

would disappear if not for formaldehyde and extremely competent sculptors.

A hanged man had been sliced into sections horizontally from head to foot then perfectly modeled in wax. (Even the rope tear on his neck had been faithfully reproduced.) Studying the slices close up was a disquieting sensation. Nothing in the intricate arrangement of tissues was extraneous or arbitrary. Everything worked toward a single purpose: to sustain life. All of which was beyond our comprehension or control. Viewed on a larger scale, it had the mystery and complexity of an alien landscape. On a molecular level, unknown to the sum of its parts, it was accident and opportunity waiting to happen. Manipulating such forces would be a monumental undertaking, as Mr. Hart would discover. Drawing pictures of them likewise. It wasn't so much about what they looked like. As Bill had indicated, it was about "drawing out the *feeling*".