

Lydia Larson

Every field has its own visual history. From Law to Music, there is a specific process, technique, and rule set unique to the individual practice. Furthermore, there are distinctive visuals, no matter how pronounced or subtle they might be. The practice of embalming is a field that may not often be considered by many for the very nature of what it is. Yet, by taking an inside look at the origin, processes, advancements, and culture of funeral directors and embalmers, one can truly see that this ancient practice that is still going on today is an art form in its own right. More so, we can see a reflection of our own culture in the physical arrangement of death itself...or what is left over.

Embalming by definition is essentially the art and science of temporarily preserving human remains to forestall decomposition and to make them suitable for public display at a funeral. The three goals of embalming are sanitization, presentation and preservation (or restoration) of a corpse. Different cultures had different reasons for preserving their dead. In ancient cultures, it was often because of strong beliefs about what came next in the afterlife. The earliest form of embalming, and truly extreme forms of preservation happened in Egypt (WYFDA). The Egyptians believed that the body needed to be intact for thousands of years after death. As a result, their methods of embalming were very developed, involved, and sophisticated for the time. The typical breakdown of Egyptian embalming started with the removal of the brain. The skull was then repacked with resin. Next, they removed the internal organs through an abdominal incision. The organs were either washed and mixed with resins and spices and returned to the body or were placed in separate burial vases called canopic jars. This step was referred to as evisceration. The body would then be immersed in a natron (sodium salt) solution for anywhere between twenty to seventy days. After the body was taken out of the salt solution, it was placed in

the sun and allowed to completely dehydrate. Lastly, the body was wrapped in long strips of cloth about 1200 yards by 3 1/4 inches. Gum or glue held the cloth in place. The body was placed into a sarcophagus and returned to the family. It was within a walled suburb known as the Necropolis (Literally, "City of the dead") that all activities pertaining to the dead took place. Only those who were higher up in class were allowed to work with the dead. It was a considered a place of high honor to be an embalmer. Coffin makers, artists, and the embalmers all resided together within the Necropolis working side by side (WYFDA).

Even though the Egyptian embalming methods were very sophisticated, they were not the only ancient people practicing embalming. Aboriginal inhabitants of the Canary Islands also practiced mummification of their dead in a similar manner as the Egyptians. Other people, such as the Babylonians, Persians, and Syrians were concerned with the preservation of their dead as well. They placed the deceased in large containers filled with honey or wax under the assumption that by depriving the bacteria in the body of air, the body could not decompose (WYFDA). Other cultures, such as the Greeks, had specific traditions that were intertwined with the embalming process. The Greeks placed a cake of honey next to the deceased in order to appease the three-headed dog Cerberus who was thought to guard the entrance to Hades. Yet, the cake was not enough for the deceased to arrive at their destination, there was a fee to pay. In order to cross the passage over the river Styx into the land of eternity, a coin was placed in the mouth. This custom was unique to the Greeks but there were also those who had a much simpler process. The Jews for example, did not embalm or cremate their dead because of religious laws. Instead, they wrapped the body and applied various oils and spices. The Romans on the other hand, were much more complex, communal and ceremony based. The body would be washed daily for

seven days with hot water and oil by a group of slaves called pollinctores. This step was part of their tradition and also was meant to prevent premature burial. Next, a funeral procession would be held at night. The procession was managed by a Designator, who could be considered one of the earliest funeral directors (WYFDA). All of the kin would participate in the funeral procession in the same way that a family would be involved in funeral preparations today. The family played an important role in ensuring that the deceased person was prepared to make their journey to the “otherworld” (Kellehear, 53).

Every ancient culture and people group had their own unique processes and traditions when it came to preparing their dead. However, like most customs and processes, they evolve with time. In the case of embalming, it was due to a strand of various scientific developments and advanced knowledge of the body that led to updated technique. A new visual awareness about the inside workings of the body often came about through the work of artists like Leonardo DaVinci who visually documented their discoveries. His detailed drawings of anatomical plates as a result of his own dissections not only informed him of the interior makeup of the body, but others as well. Furthermore, he was known to preserve his specimens through arterial injection (WYFDA). Dr. Frederick Ruysch, a botanist and also anatomist, was credited with the discovery of the first successful system of arterial embalming. Like DaVinci, he produced many drawings of his results. He is often considered the Father of Embalming. It was around the mid-seventeenth century that doctors and inventors made specific discoveries that helped further advance to what is now, modern day embalming technique. Dr. William Harvey, an English physician, discovered the circulation of blood and Dr. William Hunter, inspired by Davinci’s findings, was credited with being the first to officially adopt arterial injection as the major means of preservation. Others, such as Anthony Van Leeuwenhoek invented and

manufactured the microscope in 1683. Finally, with a much closer look, he discovered bacteria. The final discovery of major significance to the field of embalming in the early years was formaldehyde. It was Alexander Butlerov and Wilhelm von Hofmann that were credited with this important discovery (WYFDA).

Like any discovery that begins to be refined, there is usually not only a practical application, but most always, a financial one. Initially in more modern times, embalming was prominently used during wartime to preserve the bodies of soldiers in order to ship them home for burial. Jean Gannal was a notable apothecary's assistant because he became the first to offer embalming to the French general public (WYFDA). In America, it was not until the Civil War that embalming was truly practiced. It was Dr. Thomas Holmes who became part of the Army Medical Corps and was sent to Washington D.C. to work. He was knowledgeable in modern day methods (and therefore was coined the "Father of Modern Embalming") of embalming and was called upon to embalm the bodies of thousands of fallen soldiers (WYFDA). As a medical doctor in the Civil War, he was constantly on the move and an embalming station needed to be efficiently set up anywhere at any time.

Some type of tarp or tent would be erected for the embalmer to work under on the field and often tables were nothing but make-shift planks of wood propped up on a couple of kegs. Using a rubber tube connected to a box filled with embalming fluid, Holmes would pump the fluid into the body by hand by squeezing a ball at the end of the tube. This was a very long process that took several hours. At this time, Holmes would have charged \$7.00 for an enlisted man and \$13.00 for an officer (NMFH). After the war, Holmes continued embalming and began to offer his services to the general public for \$100.00 (WYFDA).

After the war, Holmes sold his prized embalming fluid to other embalmers. He called it Innominata. After a few years however, he began to cut back on embalming and

reportedly “opened a drugstore, manufactured root beer, and invested in a health spa” instead (Roach, 79). Even so, embalming got promoted in other ways. One of the most significant events that helped to spread the practice of embalming was when Abraham Lincoln’s fully preserved body traveled across the country for viewing (Roach, 79). This helped to popularize embalming as many people who had never seen a preserved body now had the opportunity. Even though more people were now learning how to embalm, it was still a very new profession in the United States and most people did not set out to become embalmers. Yet, coffins still needed to be made and often this job fell into the hands of those with any sort of craftsmanship skills, which were usually cabinet makers, local carpenters, or more often, hardware store owners (Holden, *Early Funerals*). At the turn of the twentieth century it was typical, especially in small towns, for the hardware store owner to evolve into the undertaker of the whole town. This was largely due to the fact that, nobody wanted to deal with death and somebody had to do it. Over time, the hardware store owner’s responsibility would not only be to build the casket, but many of these people eventually learned how to embalm the body because of increasing requests. They would also transport the deceased from the home to the grave plot and organize and plan how many days the newly embalmed body would be available for viewing. These hardware store owners turned undertakers were some of the earliest funeral directors in America (*Interview with Bob Sytsema*). They would acquire all the necessary paraphernalia for a seamless transition into the role of town undertaker. They would need an embalmer’s kit which consisted of several different tools and rubber hoses, a hearse, door badges, coffin rests, etc. In cold, rural places, a typical hearse may have been a horse drawn sleigh (for winter months) as in the case of John Sytsema, the first undertaker of the rural town of McBain in Michigan (*Interview with Bob Sytsema*).

In the early years of embalming in America, the undertaker would embalm the deceased person in the home. The body would be laid out on a bed or a couch and the embalmer would find a large artery to pump the embalming fluid into. This is called the “embalming site” (*Interview with Bob Sytsema*). There are three main sites that are used on almost every person: under the arm, the neck, or the thigh. During this time, the embalmer would not be able to undress the deceased person to clean the body because the family would not want the embalmer to see their deceased relative without clothing. Therefore, the entire process was done with the family right there watching. The blood was drained into a large glass keg and carried through the house and dumped outside. This obviously was not the most ideal situation especially if there were little children watching. To solve this problem, homes eventually allowed for a funeral parlor. This was one of the first steps that distanced the living from the dead. It was an act designed to conceal. This room in the house was specifically designed for the deceased person to be embalmed in a more private setting and also, for the viewing of the body. The room was typically in the front of the house, near the entryway, so the embalmer would not have to carry the blood through the house and could dispose of it more conveniently. The body would be laid out on a day bed and a black crepe paper bow was hung on the front door to signify that this house was in mourning (this is why funeral directors are wittingly called “crepe hangers” to this day). Whenever the black bow was hung on the door, anyone could drop in to view the body and pay their respects day or night, without needing an invitation ahead of time. These early funerals were held in the home and if the family wanted to host an additional service, the embalmer/undertaker helped with the planning and execution of those plans as well (*Interview with Bob Sytsema*).

Embalming is still alive and well today in American (no pun intended). Today, it is no longer the local hardware store owner who evolves into the undertaker of the town. The funeral homes that exist today were passed down through the families of the original hardware store owners. Interestingly, very few new funeral homes open in America. In the case of John Sytsema's funeral business, it was essentially built from ground up on word of mouth, personal relationships, and trust. Today, it resides in Muskegon, Michigan and is now owned and run by his grandson, Bob Sytsema (*Interview with Bob Sytsema*). This kind of lineage is typical for most funeral homes today. However, the embalming process has changed and there are highly sophisticated programs to study and licenses to obtain. Today, there are people who set out to become embalmers. According to StateUniversity.com, a job statistics website, the average embalming salary in 2011 is \$34,690 per year. A noted summary of the duties of a contemporary embalmer are described as, "Embalmers and funeral directors who serve as embalmers often wash, shave, remove blood from, apply embalming fluid to, use wax or plastic to shape, put makeup on, dress and/or arrange dead bodies. Embalmers sometimes fill in as pallbearers, assist during funeral services, prepare bodies for autopsies, deal with bodily remains, file police reports and/or help with autopsies" (StateUniversity.com) To become an embalmer, one would study Mortuary Science which combines all aspects of embalming, funeral planning and directing, restorative arts, and plastination. Basic required courses in Mortuary Science are medicine, law, chemistry, biology, sculpture, and color theory.

The intersections and parallels of art and embalming are fascinating. In the same way an artist in art school studies color theory, it is one of the most important and practical courses an embalmer is required to take. When the embalming fluid is pumped through the deceased person's circulatory system, the fluid must be dyed a specific pigment to mimic

the natural flesh tone of the individual. Someone with dark skin and yellow undertones would require a different dye solution than someone with light skin and pinkish undertones. There is no formula to make the dye because it is so specific to the individual (*Interview with Bob Sytsema*). In the same way a painter must understand without a prescription what colors to mix to achieve a desired effect; an embalmer must be able to make these judgments as well from looking at a photo of the deceased person from when they were alive. As a result, with the right color embalming fluid pumped through the body, it will appear natural and full of life in order to be displayed.

To display the body in the most attractive state possible is of course, the final goal of an embalmer. However, there is an entire process that must occur before the body can be officially displayed and like in any process, there are usually tools or equipment involved. In the same way an artist has a variety of tools and materials, embalmers are no different. They may order their supplies off the internet, the way an artist has access to many online shopping options such as DickBlick.com or Utrecht.com. The Embalmers Supply Company sells online and in store, everything an embalmer would need such as; the Natural Expressions Mouth Former, which is a piece of plastic held against the mouth that acts as a type of sewing pattern to “set the features” (a process involving suturing the mouth closed from the bottom of the nose cartilage to the lower mandible), Oval Eye Caps (to keep the eyes closed), various size of latex amber tubing (for body fluids), Extremities Positioner (to hold arms in place), Wood Handled Spatulas (which look suspiciously like palette knives), etc. (<http://www.embalmers.com/>). These tools are designed not only for the more invasive, internal side of the embalming process, but also for the restorative and cosmetic side.

All of the external manipulations of the body, and the finer, more sophisticated cosmetic side (the finished results that we see) fall under the category of Restorative Arts and Plastination. Charleen M. Moore at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Texas comments, “In relation to embalming, plastination removes the horror factors such as smell and wetness, but the immediacy remains. There is touchability, a sense of authenticity, and indeed, a certain beauty. The plastinated specimen can take on the same sense of artistry that is apparent in the anatomical waxes” (Moore, 2). All embalmers are trained to some extent in what is called Restorative Arts. This is essentially the process meant to restore a cadaver, at least visually, to temporarily resemble something of their former self. The embalmer works from a photograph that the family has provided (Interview with Bob Sytsema). To see the body in a recognizable and restored state is an extremely important part of being able to acknowledge the death, properly mourn, and eventually, let go. Embalmers work hard to ensure this closure can happen for the family understanding that “seeing is believing” (*Interview with Bob Sytsema*). This type of external artistry takes many forms. Some typical examples of repairs a restorative artist is involved with would be tissue reduction, building structural foundation for any trauma, working with wax, wax alternatives for missing body parts, mandible repair, crushed eye socket, extreme cranial repair, and simple swelling reduction to more complex bone reconstruction (WYFDA).

Restorative Artists use similar materials that a Fine Artist might use. A common repair to the face that embalmers often deal with is a missing mandible due to cancer or some other trauma. By utilizing the existing muscular of what is left, the embalmer carefully fills in the space with plaster of Paris. The filling has to match the original underlying structure of the face in order for the finished face to truly resemble the person

from when they were alive. It is a delicate process. Next, after the plaster of Paris is dried, a batch of wax is dyed to precisely match the natural flesh tone. The wax is sculpted over the plaster to take the place of skin and finally, makeup is applied over the whole face to create the most natural finish possible (*Interview with Bob Sytsema*). At the end of the entire process, “The plastinated specimen has brought tridimensionality to teaching in the form of clean, touchable, authentic, non-smelly, non-toxic, non-biohazardous specimens” (Moore, 2). As Moore states, the body takes on a third dimension. It is no longer a living, breathing human and yet, it is also not a dead, decaying body. There is a third state in which the body is suspended which ultimately, culminates for viewing purposes. W.J.T. Mitchell in *Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture*, surmises that we cannot explain an object as a result of the “social construction of the visual field” but instead, we must seek deeper insight and look at the world in terms of, “the visual construction of the social field” (Mitchell, 238). Embalming used to be a very raw process. It was done in the home, with limited technology and tools. The family may have even watched. It was considered normal for death to occur in the home, surrounded by family. Even the embalmer spent a much more significant amount of time with the body. According to Bob Sytsema, at the turn of the twentieth century, about 80% of the embalmer’s time was spent with the body. Now, only about 10% is spent with the body. All of the extra time is spent on the production aspect of the funeral: planning, flowers, seating, invitations, food, transportation, advertising etc. The arrangement and production of the funeral itself has become the more weighted part of the process, rather than time with the actual body, which in the end becomes a clean, neutral, and perfectly arranged body (*Interview with Bob Sytsema*). While the restorative arts process has enabled the family to view their loved one in a form more closely resembling their former self, it has also covered over in plaster,

wax, and make-up an aspect of the reality of what has happened. Does every person want to see their loved one's body in this highly constructed third dimension of being?

In America, death itself has become a highly developed business, but are we in denial? In Jessica Mitford's, *The American Way of Death*, she considers a more critical approach to the way we handle the process of death. She writes, "Alas, poor Yorick! How surprised he would be to see how his counterpart of today is whisked off to a funeral parlor and is in short order sprayed, sliced, pierced, pickled, trussed, trimmed, creamed, waxed, painted, rouged and neatly dressed—transformed from a common corpse into a Beautiful Memory Picture. This process is known in the trade as embalming and restorative art, and is so universally employed in the United States and Canada that the funeral director does it routinely, without consulting corpse or kin" (Mitford, 54). While there are many benefits to the contemporary practice of embalming, it is important to stop and analyze what these practices convey about our culture and our desire to be further removed from death than ever before.

In an age of rapidly advancing and ever evolving technology, the world of embalming may soon have a digital component. With the help of medical imaging researchers, we now have completely detailed virtual models of actual human cadavers. The Visible Human Project is a complete, anatomically detailed, three-dimensional representation of the normal human body. The purposes of these virtual cadavers are to "simulate the body's physiological reaction to injury, manipulation, or disease" (Hilbelink, 4). Furthermore, one of the most significant, recent and groundbreaking projects that has developed as an off shoot to The Visible Human Project, is called The Virtual Soldier Program. This program was launched in 2003 and contains specific virtual gross anatomical information down to a cellular level. The main goal of the project is to

“demonstrate that a detailed computer-based simulation can be built that can accurately predict and display in real time, the complete range of morphological as well as physiological changes that occur immediately following a bullet wound to the chest and heart of a virtual soldier” (Hilbelink, 4). Machines can interpret this information and create molds that can fill in wounds or make casts for medical students to study. Interestingly, embalming in America initially began with a demand because of wounded and killed soldiers. If computers now contain a database for actual cadavers on a cellular level, in the future they could potentially create the molds and do the work that embalmers do by hand today. So far this has not happened. However, with the significant technological advances that are spilling over into related fields such as biology, anatomy, medicine, etc. the field of embalming may not be far off.

It is unknown what the future of embalming will look like or how it will be arranged. We can only predict based on the information we have now. Whether practices eventually turn back and become more holistic or whether they develop further down a more virtually based path, it is difficult to say. It can be said however, that the techniques used today are very sophisticated and that embalmers practice a form of extremely unique artistry with each body they come in contact with because after all, as one advertisement notes, “you can never make a last impression twice.”

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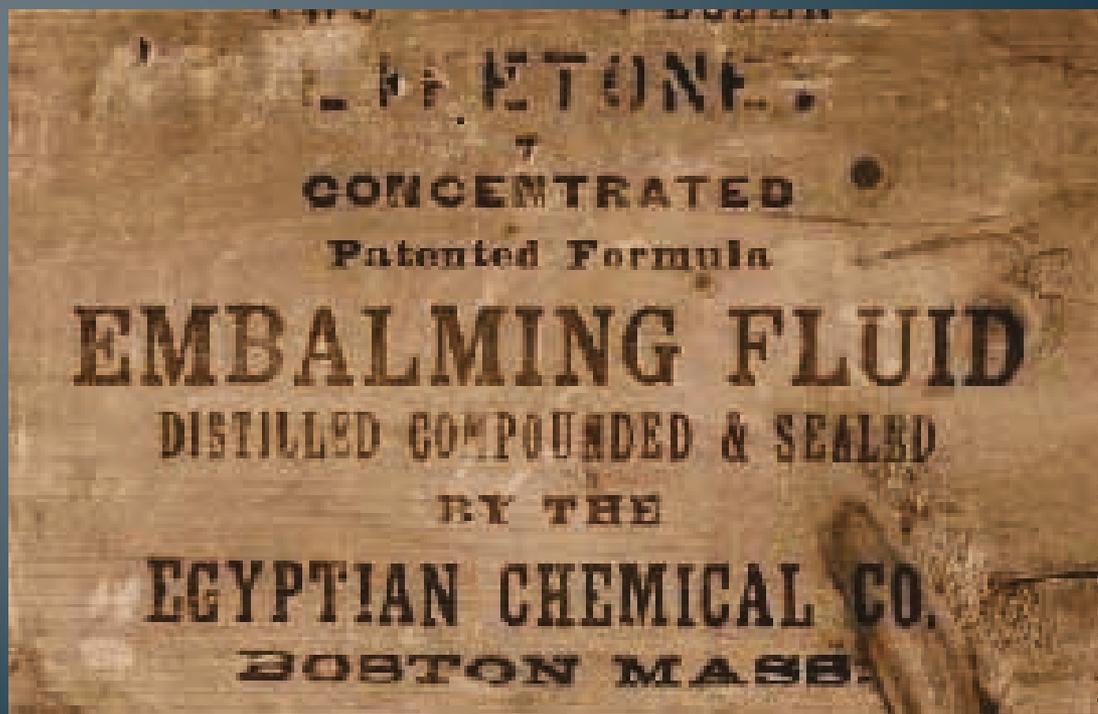
Crepe Hangers, Hardware Stores, and Color Theory: Embalming as Art

An investigative look into the unique origin, methods, and processes of embalmers, the culture of funeral directors and beyond.

By: Lydia Larson

What is embalming?

- the art and science of temporarily preserving human remains to forestall decomposition and to make them suitable for public display at a funeral. The three goals of embalming are sanitization, presentation and preservation (or restoration) of a corpse to achieve this effect.



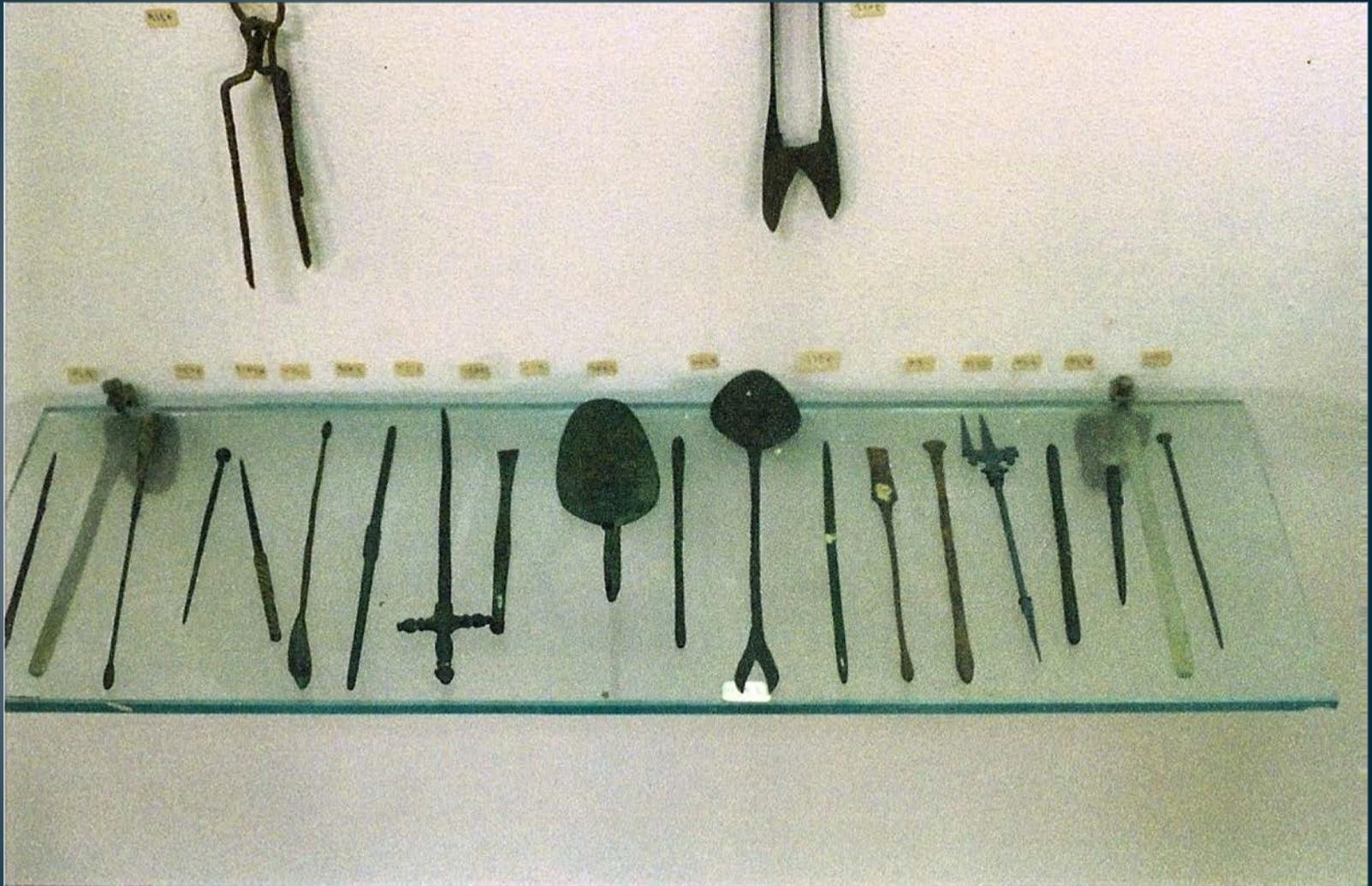
Origin and Early Practices

- Egypt is credited with being the land where embalming began.
- During the period from 6000 BC to 600 AD approximately 400,000,000 bodies were mummified.
- Egyptian embalmers were members of the priesthood.



Egyptian Embalming Technique

- Step 1. Removal of the brain. The skull was then repacked with resin.
- Step 2. Evisceration. The internal organs were removed through an abdominal incision. The organs were either washed and mixed with resins and spices and returned to the body or were placed in separate burial vases called canopic jars.
- Step 3. Immersion. The body was immersed in natron (sodium salt). The caustic action of the solution would cause the fingernails and toe nails to be removed. They were replaced in keeping with the belief that the body must be intact 3,000 later. This immersion lasted for 20-70 days.
- Step 4. Dehydration. The body was cleansed, straightened and allowed to dehydrate in the sun.
- Step 5. Wrapping. About 1200 yards of 3 1/4 inch bandage was used to wrap the body. Gum or glue held the clothe together and helped in fitting it around the body while it was still damp. The body was then placed in a sarcophagus and returned to the family.
- The cheapest method was reserved for the poorest class of people which made up about 80% of the Egyptian population. It basically consisted of immersion in the natron solution.
- Within a walled suburb known as the Necropolis (Literally, "City of the dead") all death care activities took place. Within these walls resided all those involved in these activities including coffin makers, artists, and the embalmers. Also located here were the crypts and tombs.



Egyptian Medical instruments on display at Coptic Museum in Cairo

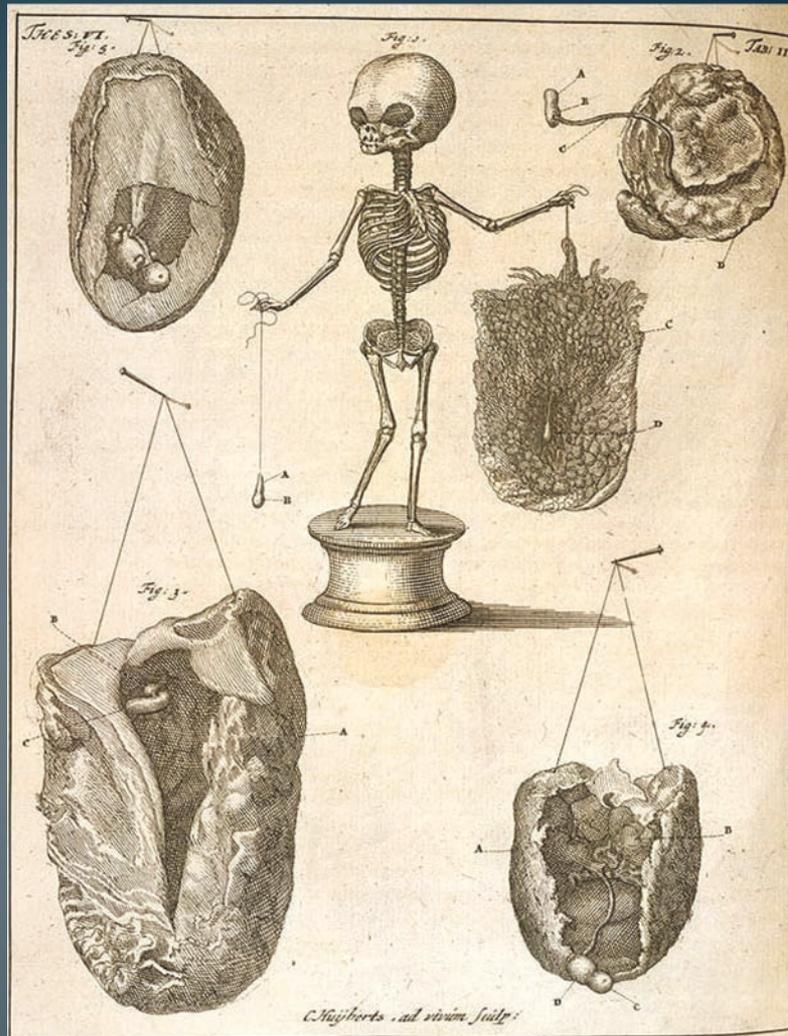
Other Early Practices

- Ancient Ethiopian tribes preserved their dead in a manner similar to the Egyptians.
- Aboriginal inhabitants of the Canary Islands from 900 BC practiced mummification of their dead.
- Babylonians, Persians, and Syrians preserved their dead by placing them in jars of honey or wax. By depriving the bacteria in the body of air, decomposition was prevented.
- Peruvians practiced mummification 1000 years prior to being conquered by Spain in the early 16th century.
- Jewish custom is for simplicity. Embalming and cremation were generally not allowed because they were seen as mutilation of the body. As seen in the scriptures, preparation for burial consisted of wrapping the body and the application of oils and spices.
- The Greeks believed that the deceased must make a journey across the river Styx to the land of eternity. A coin was placed in the mouth of the deceased to pay passage over the river. A cake of honey was placed next to the body to appease the three headed dog, Cerberus, who guarded the entrance to Hades. Interment was delayed three days to prevent premature burial. (Cremation came into practice in about 300 BC.)
- Roman customs: The body would be washed daily for seven days with hot water and oil. This delay also was to prevent premature burial. A group of slaves called pollinctores performed this function. Funeral processions were held at night to avoid defilement of the living. The procession was managed by a Designator, who functioned much like the modern day funeral director. Burial later gave way to cremation. At one point cremation was forbidden within the gates of Rome because of the smoke pollution of so many bodies being burned at once.

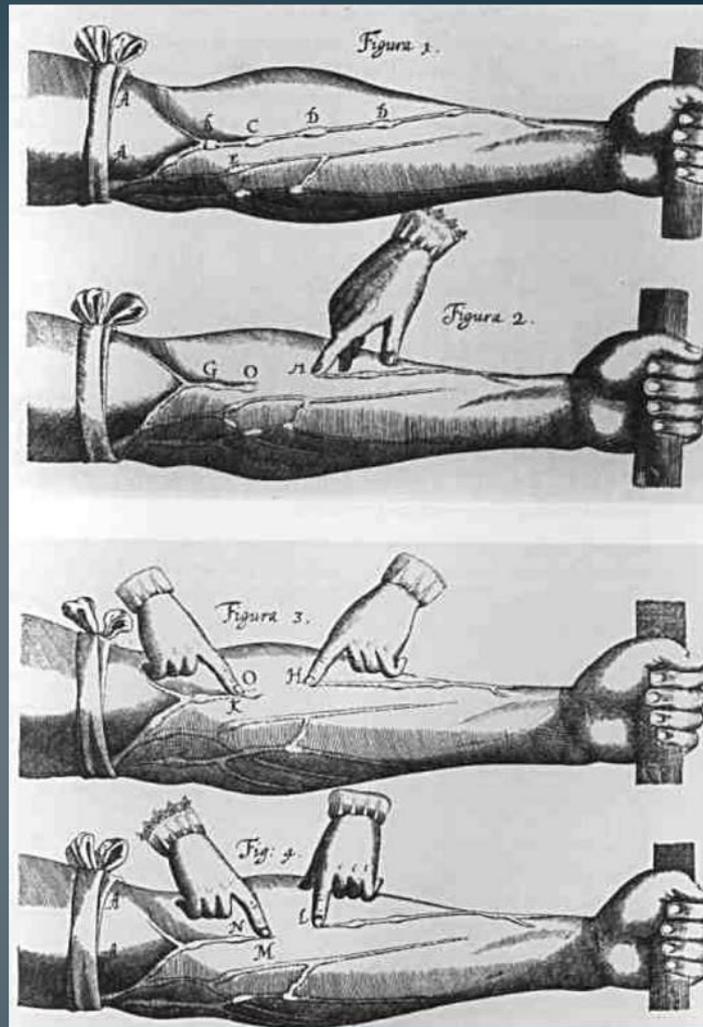
Influences of Scientific Development



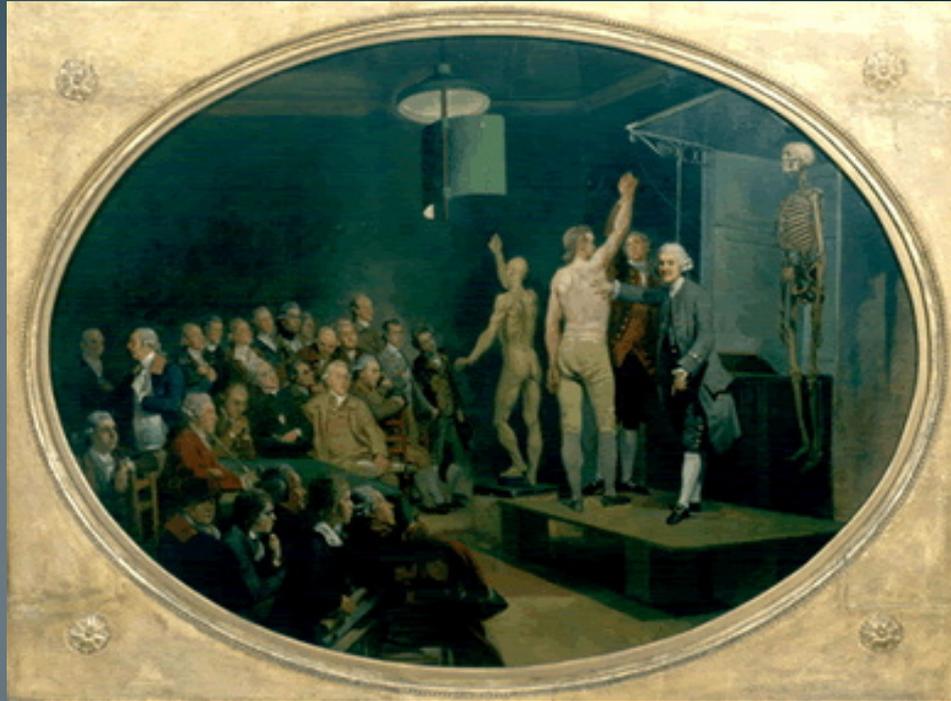
Leonardo DaVinci (1452-1519) produced hundreds of anatomical plates as a result of his dissection of the human body. He most likely used arterial injection to preserve his specimens.



- Dr. Frederick Ruysch (1665-1717) is generally considered the father of embalming with his discovery of the first successful system of arterial embalming.



- Dr. William Harvey (1578-1657) was the English physician who discovered the circulation of blood.



Dr. William Hunter teaching anatomy at the Royal Academy c. 1775 By Johann Zoffany

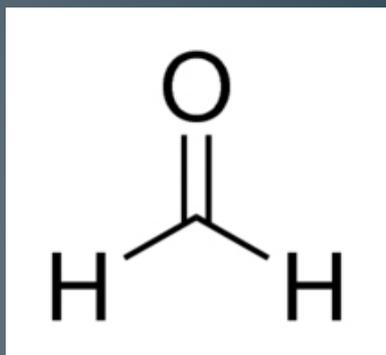
Dr. William Hunter (1718-1783) is credited with being the first to successfully adopt arterial injection as a means of preservation.



- Jean Gannal (1791-1882) began as an apothecary's assistant and became the first to offer embalming to the French general public.



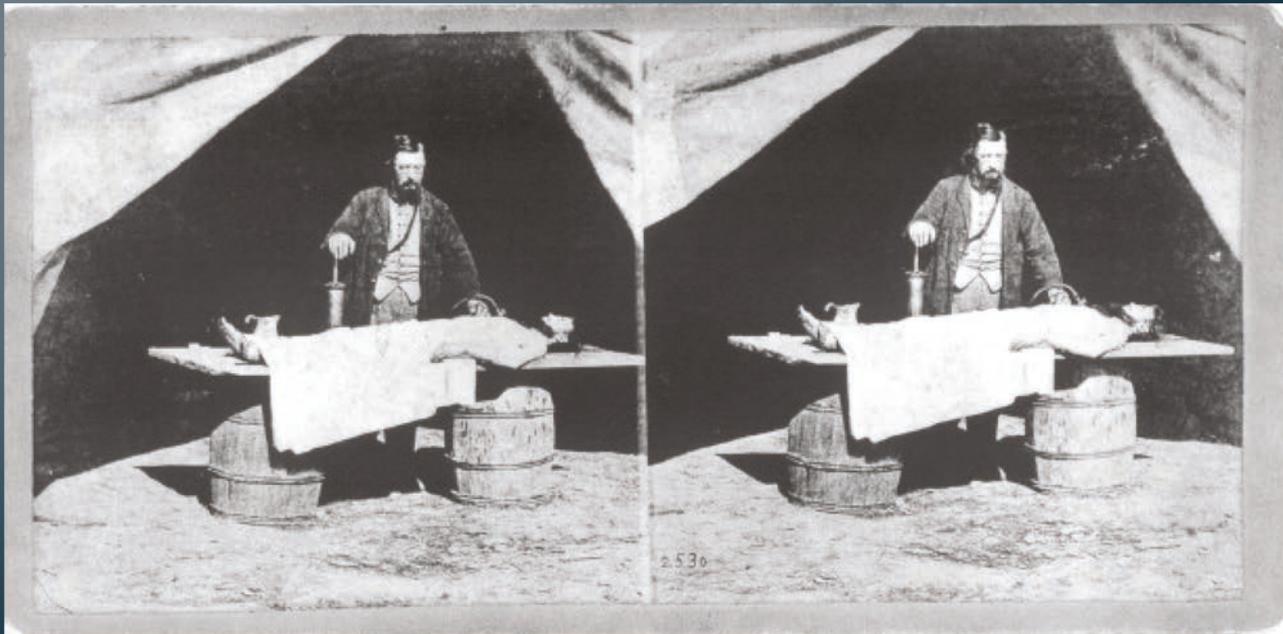
Anthony Van Leeuwenhoek (1632-1723) manufactured the microscope and discovered bacteria in 1683.



- Alexander Butlerov (1828-1866) and Wilhelm von Hofmann (1818-1892) are credited with the discovery of formaldehyde.

Early American Embalming

- Modern embalming really got its start during the Civil War period. Dr. Thomas Holmes received a commission as a captain in the Army Medical Corps and was assigned to Washington, D.C. where he embalmed many army officers killed in battle. He reportedly embalmed over 4000 soldiers and officers. He is considered the “Father of Modern Embalming”
- President Lincoln took a great interest in embalming and directed the Quartermaster Corps to utilize embalming to allow the return of Union dead to their home towns for proper burial.
- When he realized the commercial potential of embalming, Holmes resigned his commission and began offering embalming to the public for \$100.





- Dr. Thomas Holmes (1817-1900) is generally considered the father of modern embalming. He experimented with preservative chemicals while working as a coroner's assistant in New York and later began offering his services to the public.



Turn of the century embalmer's kit



By the turn of the century, wooden coffins were being made to order by the local carpenter or cabinet maker. The cabinetmaker rarely became involved in any aspect of the funeral other than providing the coffin. Even the conveyance of the deceased was done by someone else, the livery man.

With the passing of time, these men became more and more involved in providing other services and advise to those planning the funeral.

Eventually the person who would "undertake" to manage all funeral details and provide funeral merchandise became known as an "undertaker." He eventually obtained and provided all the necessary items for the funeral including the hearse, door badges, coffin rests, etc.

Embalming Job Statistics in 2011

- Education and Training: High school plus training; license
- Salary: Average—\$34,690 per year
- Employment Outlook: Good

Duties:

- Embalmers and funeral directors who serve as embalmers often wash, shave, remove blood from, apply embalming fluid to, use wax or plastic to shape, put makeup on, dress and/or arrange dead bodies. Embalmers sometimes fill in as pallbearers, assist during funeral services, prepare bodies for autopsies, deal with bodily remains, file police reports and/or help with autopsies, according to Stateuniversity.com.

Color Theory

- Color theory is one of the important required courses in mortuary science.
- The embalming fluid is dyed to match the color of the specific individual's flesh.
- With as many different flesh tones that there are, the embalmer has to know what color dyes will work the best to provide a natural appearance to the skin. Every person requires a slightly different dye mixture. There is no formula.



Current Embalming Processes

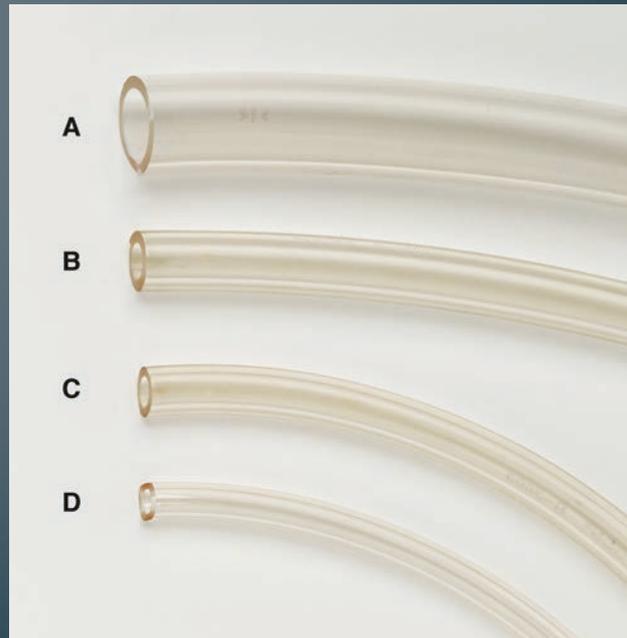
- Analyzing and planning. No diagrams or mapping. Photograph from the family.
- Disinfecting and washing of the body. Making the body safe to be around.
- Spray with disinfectant. Swab inside of mouth and nostrils with disinfectant.
- “Setting the Features” –closing the eyes and mouth with sutures. Mouth is sutured from nose cartilage to muscles in the lower mandible: pull together, make a knot, and tie it. This is called “posing.”



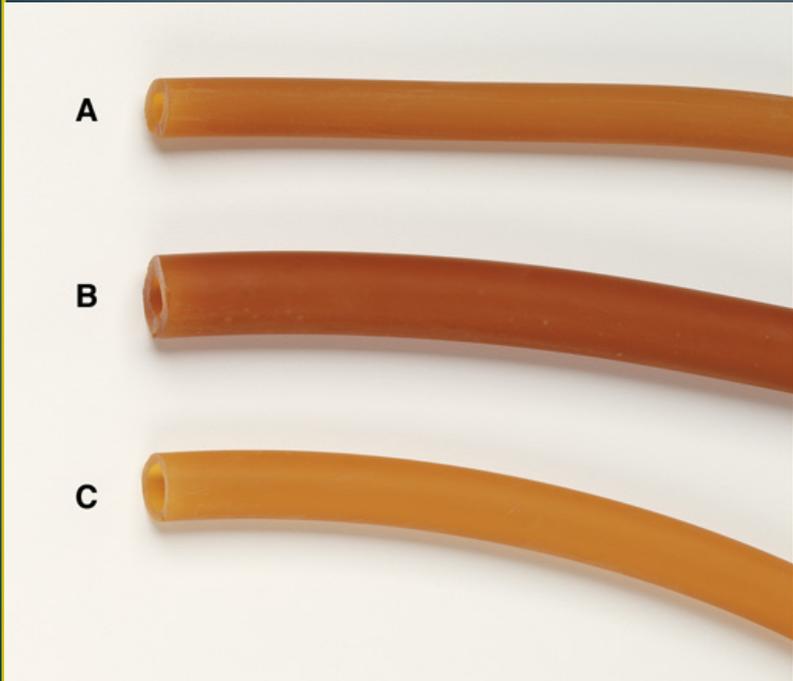
NATURAL EXPRESSION MOUTH FORMER
(Courtesy of **The Embalmers Supply Company**)

Current Embalming Processes Continued...

- Finding the pressure points (where blood vessels are close to surface: neck, armpits, thighs. Also referred to as “embalming site”) This differs from male to female.
- Incision is made – no bigger than 4 inches – artery is found. An electric pump carries embalming fluid to replace blood. The fluid is pumped through the entire circulatory system, pushing all the blood out. This is called the “preservation stage”.



CLEAR PLASTIC TUBING



LATEX AMBER TUBING



SUCTION CUP TUBING HOLDER



Oval Eye Caps from **The Embalmers Supply Company**



Insight Eye Replacer from **The Embalmers Supply Company**



“Assures hands will stay in place even on very obese cases. Made of 1" wide Velcro.™”

Extremities Positioner from The Embalmers Supply Company



Arm and Hand Positioner from **The Embalmers Supply Company**

“Supports both upper arm and forearm. May be used after dressing to maintain position while casketing the body. Adjustable. With 1" nylon strap.”



Wood Handled Spatulas from **The Embalmers Supply Company**

“This pair of fine professional instruments has blades ground to meet all technical requirements. The handles are high quality rosewood, and the blades are steel. The smaller blade is $2\frac{1}{4}$ " and the longer blade measures $3\frac{1}{2}$ ””

Restorative Arts & Plastination



“In relation to embalming, plastination removes the horror factors such as smell and wetness, but the immediacy remains. There is touchability, a sense of authenticity, and indeed, a certain beauty. The plastinated specimen can take on the same sense of artistry that is apparent in the anatomical waxes.”

Teaching with the Preserved Body: From Desiccation to Plastination
By Charleen M. Moore, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Texas

“Seeing is believing”

Bob Sytsema, embalmer and funeral director for Sytsema Funeral Homes



- Tissue Reduction
- Building Structural Foundation for Any Trauma
- Working With Wax
- Wax Alternatives
- Mandible Repair
- Crushed Eye Socket
- Extreme Cranial Repair
- Simple Swelling Reduction to more Complex Bone Reconstructs

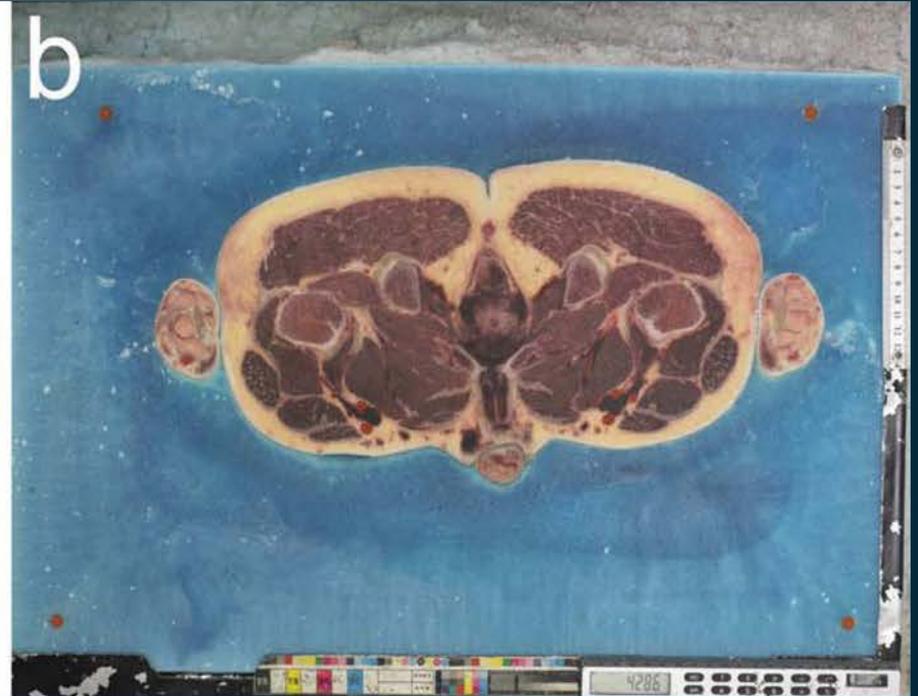
The Visible Human Project

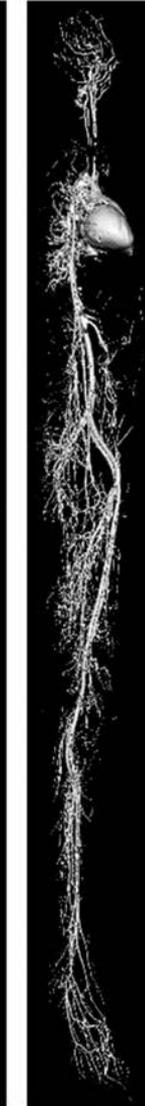
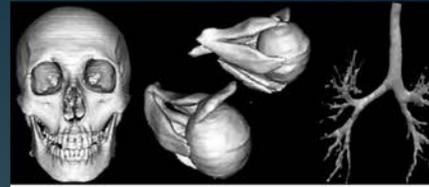
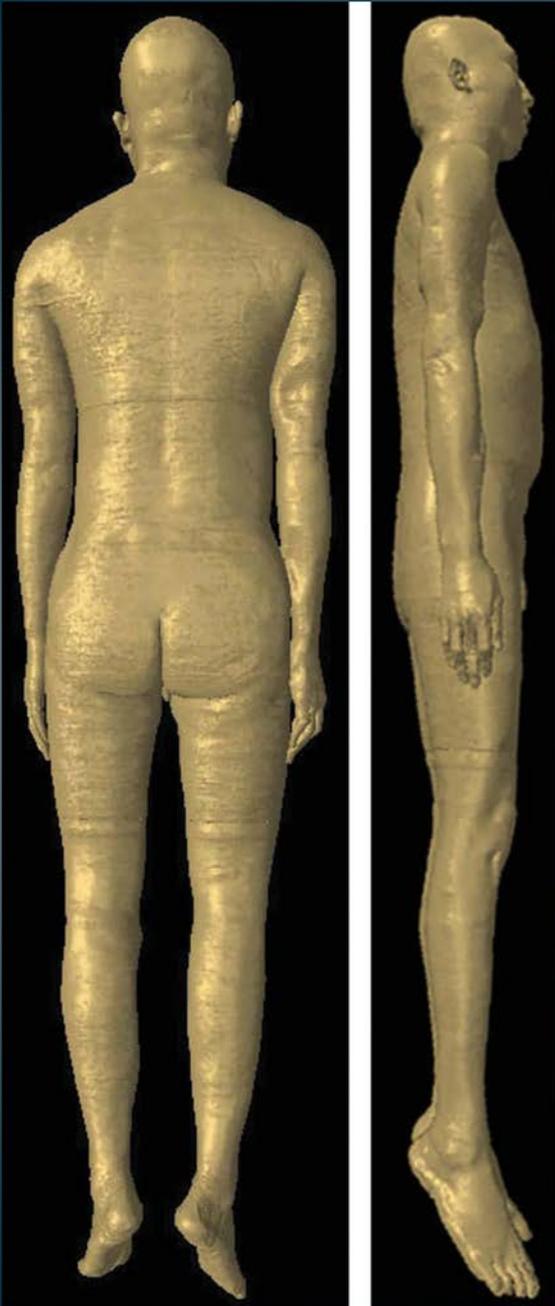
The Visible Human Project® is an outgrowth of the National Library of Medicine's 1986 Long-Range Plan. It is the creation of complete, anatomically detailed, three-dimensional representations of the normal male and female human bodies. Acquisition of transverse CT, MR and cryosection images of representative male and female cadavers has been completed. The male was sectioned at one millimeter intervals, the female at one-third of a millimeter intervals.

The long-term goal of the Visible Human Project® is to produce a system of knowledge structures that will transparently link visual knowledge forms to symbolic knowledge formats such as the names of body parts.

[YouTube - The visible human project \(HQ\)](#)







“...a dialectical concept of visual culture cannot rest content with a definition of its object as the “social construction of the visual field,” but must insist on exploring the chiasmic reversal of this proposition, *the visual construction of the social field*. It is not just that we see the way we do because we are social animals, but also that our social arrangements take the forms they do because we are seeing animals.”

-W.J.T. Mitchell, *Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture*

“Back in the day, my Grandfather would spend about 80% of the time caring for the body. Now, we only spend about 10% of the time with the body because of all these new technologies. The rest is all planning and production.”

-Bob Sytsema, embalmer and funeral director for Sytsema Funeral Homes



“The plastinated specimen has brought tridimensionality to teaching in the form of clean, touchable, authentic, non-smelly, non-toxic, non-biohazardous specimens.”

Teaching with the Preserved Body: From Desiccation to Plastination
By Charleen M. Moore, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio,
Texas

“Alas, poor Yorick! How surprised he would be to see how his counterpart of today is whisked off to a funeral parlor and is in short order sprayed, sliced, pierced, pickled, trussed, trimmed, creamed, waxed, painted, rouged and neatly dressed—transformed from a common corpse into a Beautiful Memory Picture. This process is known in the trade as embalming and restorative art, and is so universally employed in the United States and Canada that the funeral director does it routinely, without consulting corpse or kin.”

-*The American Way of Death*, by Jessica Mitford
(pg. 54 1964 edition)



The Advertising Dilemma



Q. What in the world is the best way to advertise the business of death?

a.



RUSSELL PETERSON

Peterson Funerals

Peterson-Albinson



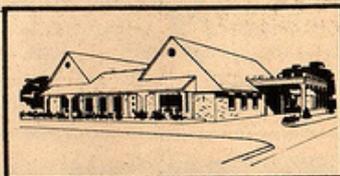
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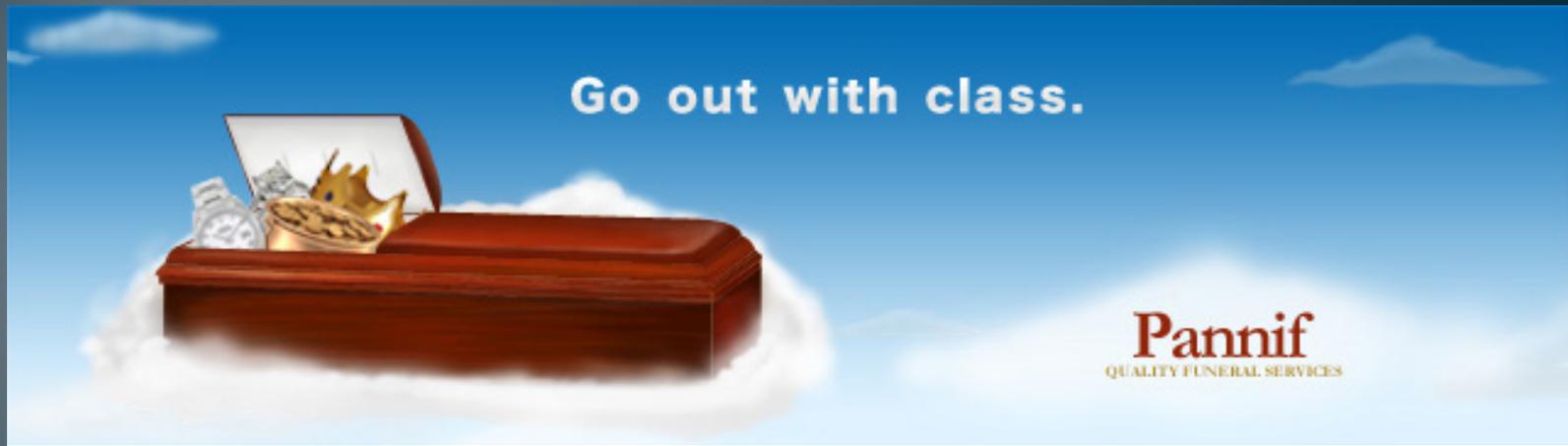
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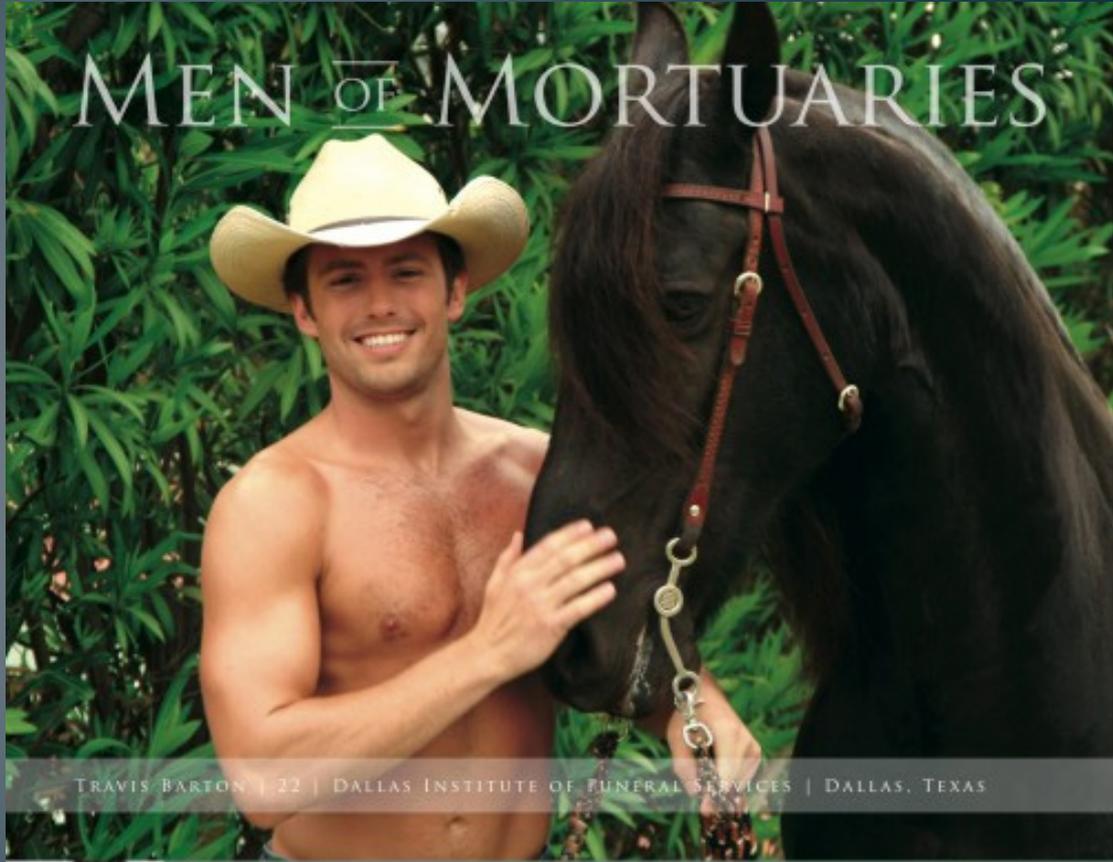
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a. ??



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TRAVIS BARTON | 22 | DALLAS INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL SERVICES | DALLAS, TEXAS



YEEHAW TRAVIS IS HOT WHEN THIS 22-YEAR-OLD FUNERAL DIRECTOR APPRENTICE IS NOT HELPING FAMILIES COPE WITH THE LOSS OF THEIR LOVED ONES. HE'S ENJOYING LIFE ON THE FARM - WORKING WITH COWS, HAYING HAY, BUILDING FENCES AND RIDING HORSES. TRAVIS WAS MORE THAN HAPPY TO HELP KAMM SINCE HIS GRANDMOTHER IS A BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR.

MARCH
CELEBRATING LIFE 2008





Customizing





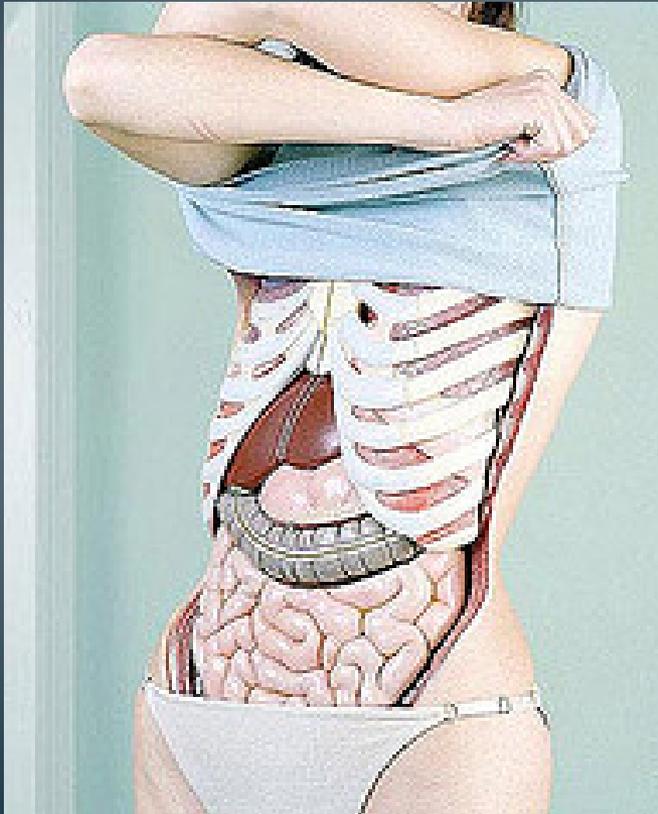








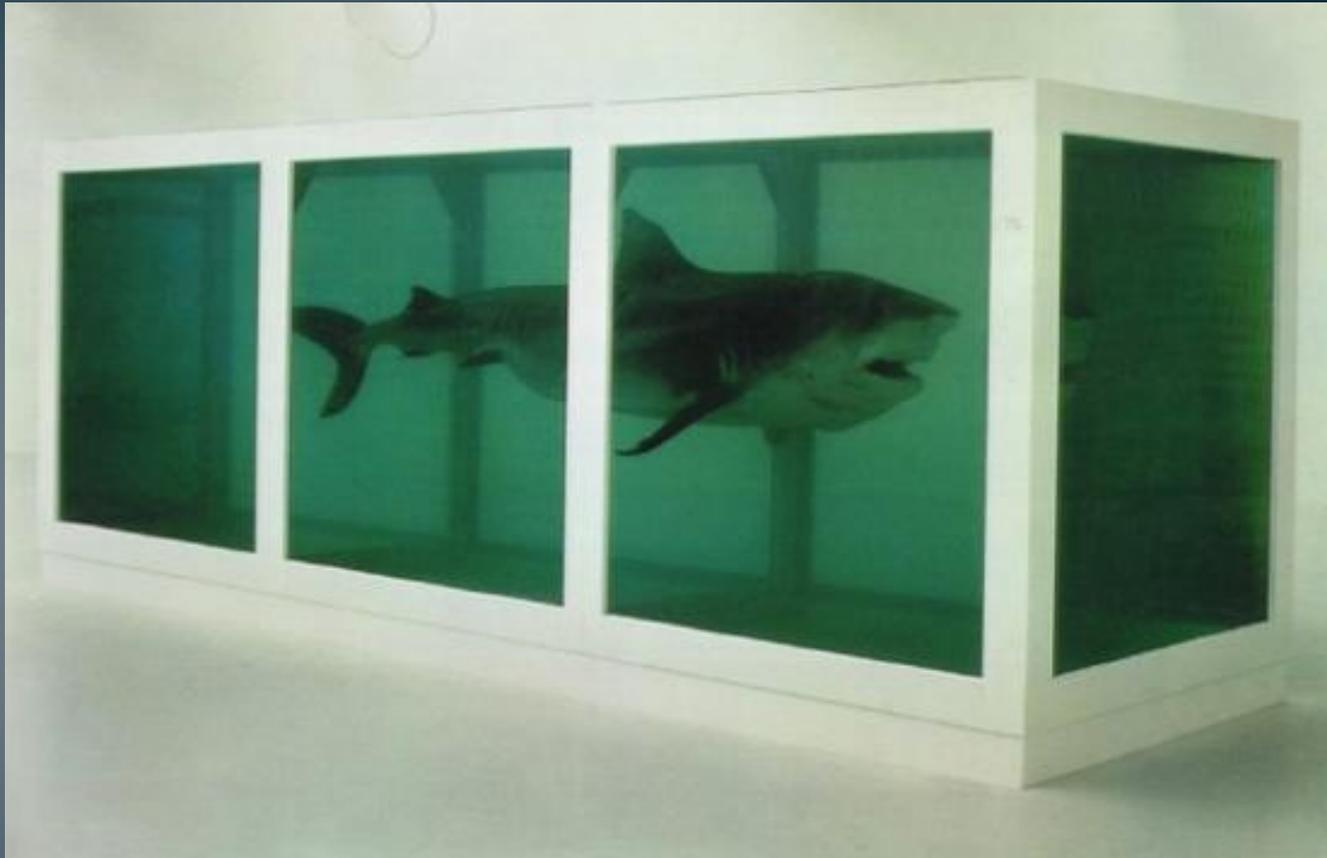
so...let's get real.



“Koen Hauser’s art work *Modische Atlas der Anatomie* is perhaps misplaced on this blog. It doesn’t have much with contemporary biomedicine to do (it draws on a long tradition for using macroanatomy, pathology and prosthetics for curious art works), and it has circulated in the medical sector of the blogosphere for quite a while now (see e.g., *Street Anatomy* and *Unbounded Medicine*):

But I nevertheless think Hauser’s work is worth drawing attention to, because it reminds us of the potential use of medical (and biomedical) images in contemporary fashion and design. Commercial designers seem indeed to agree: The *Virtual Shoe Museum* already uses another of Hauser’s works in their collection.”

posted June 25, 2007 on *Biomedicine on Display* Blog



Damien Hirst, *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*, 1992