

Angela Dieffenbach  
Artist Statement

Inspired by anatomy, strange experiments, healthcare trends, and medical innovations, my work explores biology with an emphasis on medicine. Complex and compelling social issues have emerged from modern medical practices pushing boundaries between human and animal identity, especially in terms of transplants, animal derivative drugs, and in biologic constructions. The increase of post-natural beings-- organisms that are artificially constructed-- are redefining mortality and morality. Through study of anatomy's history in the visual arts and sciences, I've become fascinated with the role that artists play in the perception and understanding of the human vessel. As a result of modern medical practices, our bodies are becoming increasingly transparent. This transparency not only adds to the perceived omnipotence of medicine, but to curiosities of bodily exploration.

Because my work is based on scientific research, reading and inquiry is the foundation of my practice. Much of my research is tied to controversial experiments and post-natural concepts; I am interested in the ways in which animals and humans are altered. Specific investigations include extreme transplants (e.g. head, face, and fecal), and provocative experiments producing chimeras (a single organism composed of cells from different zygotes). Additionally, I am influenced by the hygiene hypothesis: "improved cleanliness and modern medical care may be lowering the ability of people to deal with otherwise nonlethal pathogens and disease". Consequently, parasites are prescribed as costly, modern treatments and used as a therapy for a wide range of diseases. Animal derivative drugs and biologic constructions have become a common and expensive tool used in healthcare. This altering of anatomy through cutting-edge and often controversial procedures exposes exciting possibilities along with problematic yet fascinating issues. Furthermore, I am influenced by seemingly outdated medical treatments (e.g. leeches) making a comeback in modern healthcare.

By referencing historic and contemporary symbols and methods, the work blurs past and present. I reference premodern medical anatomies and juxtapose modern medical imaging. Alluding to historical medical procedures and how they relate to modern treatment, the work draws attention to irony, absurdity, and the progress of technology. I use the vulnerability of the body and its contingent relationship to the medical industry and science as an instrument of inspection and reflection. While often I exaggerate or emphasize for the sake of composition, the work is based on real experiments or practices that are often unimaginable.