What Did They See? Looking at Art in a Medical Setting: Brâncuşi's Écorché at the Faculty of Medicine in Cluj[1]

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Abstract: The main question addressed by this paper stems methodologically from the intersection between the history of art and the history of medicine as embodied by the anatomical object: what do professionals in medicine see when looking at a work of art which takes the human body as its subject? In this particular instance, the medical figure is represented by Victor Papilian, appointed in 1919 as Head of the Institute of Anatomy at the Faculty of Medicine in Cluj, while the work of art presented to his students is the Écorché, executed earlier in 1902 by Constantin Brâncuşi. The story of the Écorché is punctuated by controversies surrounding the number of its original pieces and copies (in Bucharest, Craiova, Iaşi and Cluj), directly related to the institutional efforts invested in their acquisition (either by faculties of medicine or academies of art). However, it is generally agreed that this sculpture primarily functions as a didactic prop, no matter its recipient (the medical student or the training artist). By contextualizing Brâncuşi's Écorché within the specific field of anatomical knowledge developed at the Cluj Faculty of Medicine in the third decade of the twentieth century, I propose an argument for its hybrid nature, mainly by pointing out the distinct interests corroborated in the creation of this anatomical object with an emphasis on the changes set in motion by the contexts of production and distribution.

Keywords: Faculty of Medicine, Écorché, Constantin Brâncuşi, Victor Papilian, anatomy, medical setting, history of art, context of display, medical gaze, didactic prop

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Rezumat: Principala întrebare adresată în această lucrare derivă metodologic din intersecţia dintre istoria artei şi istoria medicinei, aşa cum este ea reprezentată de obiectul anatomic: ce văd specialiştii din medicină atunci când privesc o operă de artă ce îşi ia ca subiect corpul uman? În cazul analizat aici, figura medicală este întruchipată de către Victor Papilian, numit în anul 1919 în funcţia de şef al Institutului de Anatomie al Facultăţii de Medicină din Cluj, în timp ce opera de artă prezentată studenţilor săi este *Écorché*-ul, executat mai devreme, în anul 1902, de către Constantin Brâncuşi. Istoria *Écorché*-ului este punctată de controverse în jurul numărului de piese originale şi cópii al acestuia (aflate în Bucureşti, Craiova, Iaşi şi Cluj), în directă legătură cu eforturile instituţionale depuse pentru achiziţionarea lor (fie de către facultăţile de medicină, fie de către academiile de artă). Cu toate acestea, faptul unanim acceptat este că această sculptură funcţionează în primul rând ca necesar didactic, indiferent de destinatarul ei (studentul la medicină sau artistul în formare). Prin contextualizarea *Écorché*-ului lui Brâncuşi în domeniul specific al cunoaşterii anatomice dezvoltate la Facultatea de Medicină din Cluj în al treilea deceniu al secolului al XX-lea, este propus un argument în favoarea naturii sale hibride, în special prin evidenţierea intereselor distincte coroborate în crearea acestui obiect anatomic, cu accent pe schimbările declanşate de contextele sale de producţie şi distribuţie.

Cuvinte-cheie: facultate de medicină, Écorché, Constantin Brâncuşi, Victor Papilian, anatomie, context medical, istoria artei, privire medicală, necesar didactic

Introduction

The collision between the history of art and the history of medicine has given rise in recent decades to a growing number of studies aiming at deciphering their fascinating, if not sometimes perplexing instances.[2] This has precipitated a mobilization of textual, material and

[2] See Jon Agar, Crosbie Smith (eds), *Making Space for Science. Territorial Themes in the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998); Grant Malcolm (ed.), *Multidisciplinary Approaches to Visual Representations and Interpretations* (Amsterdam: Elsevier Academic Press, 2005); Sandra Cavallo - David Gentilcore (eds.), *Spaces, Objects and Identities in Early Modern Italian Medicine* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2008); Renée van de Vall and Robert Zwijnenberg (ed.), *The Body within: Art, Medicine and Visualization* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Sarah Ferber, Sally Wilde (ed.), *The Body Divided. Human Beings and Human 'Material' in Modern Medical History* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Patricia A. Baker, Han Nijdam, Karine van't Land (ed.), *Medicine and Space. Body, Surroundings and Borders in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Sachiko Kusukawa, *Picturing the Book of Nature: Image, Text, and Argument in Sixteenth-Century Human Anatomy and Medical Botany* (Chicago: University of

visual sources, staged not only as historically transformative objects of cross-disciplinary investigation, but also as tools for dismantling convoluted dilemmas: how do we get to know what we see? What do we understand from looking at objects used by doctors, but crafted by skilful artisans or artists? Who authors medical illustrations and to what extent may they do so? How much data can images of irrefutable artistic virtuosity convey about the scientific contexts they stem from? Such questions have nurtured the pivotal works of researchers active in the interdisciplinary field of 'science, technology and medicine'[3] and whose primary aim is to shed light on the ideas, instruments and relationships that have developed between artists and doctors in the process of deciphering the natural world. In this methodological perspective, one such enduring meeting gestures towards an anatomical object located in the faculty of medicine in Cluj: Constantin Brâncuşi's Écorché from 1902, commissioned by the anatomist Dimitrie Gerota at the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest, sent in the mid-1930s to Victor Papilian, then head of the Department of Topographic and Comparative Anatomy in Cluj.

The purpose of this study is to provide an answer to a double-folded question: how was the écorché perceived by those who commissioned it and those who made use of it? In situating the analysis within the theoretical background mentioned above, the argument unfolds in the following steps: firstly, narrative details concerning the times when the écorché was produced and distributed are laid out, for the purpose of extracting the main storyline made possible by research so far. Secondly, I examine the notion of agency to highlight the profiling of the people

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Chicago Press, 2012); Rina Knoeff, Robert Zwijnenberg (ed.), *The Fate of Anatomical Collections* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); Domenico Bertoloni Meli, *Visualizing Disease: The Art and History of Pathological Illustrations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

[3] See Bruno Latour - Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life. The Construction of Scientific Facts* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986); Lorraine Daston - Michael Otte (eds.), 'Style in science', special issue, *Science in Context* 4/2(1991): 223 - 447; B.T. Moran (ed.), *Patronage and Institutions: Science, Technology, and Medicine at the European Court, 1500 - 1750* (London: Boydell, 1991); John V. Pickstone, 'Ways of Knowing: Towards a Historical Sociology of Science, Technology and Medicine', *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 26/4 (1993): 433 – 458; Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature. Museums, Collecting and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Oakland: The University of California Press, 1994); Lorraine Daston, Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (New York: Zone Books, 1998); Pamela M. Henson, '"Objects of Curious Research": The History of Science and Technology at the Smithsonian', *Isis,* 90 (1999): S249 – S269; Thomas Glick et al. (eds.), *Medieval Science, Technology and Medicine: An Encyclopedia* (New York, NY and London: Routledge 2005); John V. Pickstone, 'Working Knowledges Before and After circa 1800: Practices and Disciplines in the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine', *Isis*, 98/3 (2007): 489 – 516; Robert Bud et al. (eds.), *Being Modern. The Cultural Impact of Science in the Early Twentieth Century Book* (Oakland: UCL Press, 2018).

involved in the dynamic of distinct outlooks for the écorché, with a particular emphasis on the theorization of the artist-anatomist interaction and the rapprochement between their actions and the larger tradition of cultural exchange they were familiar with. Motives and the issue of didacticism pertaining to the creation of the écorché entail the development of the third section of analysis: here I explore the medical ideas that contributed to the design of the object, epitomized in the teaching of anatomy, with a focus on Gerota's and Papilian's anatomical views and methods. The study delves into the positioning of the écorché as a merely instrumental genre of illuminating a museological impulse inhabiting the anatomist's choice for keeping the object: here I address the écorché's potential to have been conceived more as an exhibit than as a didactic tool by the anatomist, and how, beyond acquiring knowledge about the human body, Papilian's relation with Brâncuşi's écorché is more revealing of his perception of art and his placement within an expanding culture of collecting art in Cluj, as well as within his own literary work. From this point on, the text explores the effectiveness of objective knowledge activated by the écorché by tracing a rapprochement between Brâncuşi's object and the visual culture of anatomy. On one hand, this section of my text is meant to highlight the value of the écorché in terms of display and function and the impact it had on the teaching of anatomy by way of artistic visualizations in the larger European context. On the other, it supports understanding how such culture prompted not only changing interpretations of the écorché, but also its polymorphous representation in the anatomists' quest to conflate boundaries between its artistic and medical investments: to put it briefly, the displacements incurred by the écorché's meaning in relation to the anatomist's perspective. Far from being appropriated in a manner solely oriented towards the pragmatic use in the teaching of anatomy, Brâncuşi's Écorché mutates from a pedagogical instance of sculpture into a work of art in the possession of Papilian, the anatomist who energetically engaged with the artistic scene of his time. The paper's conclusion argues that Brâncuşi's Écorché unveils a fundamentally hybrid nature pertaining to the anatomical object, and that it marks a transition from its initial context of production, where it performed more of a didactic role, to the context of reception, where it mobilized the anatomist's interest for early twentieth century modern art.

Defining the écorché

The écorché is defined as an anatomical illustration or sculpture that represents the body of a living being or a bodily fragment, stripped of its skin and fat tissues, with the purpose of revealing to the onlooker the

internal parts.[4] Anatomical images can range from high to low fidelity, and manifest varying degrees of realistic depiction. Starting with the Renaissance, one area of artistic anatomy slowly began to be individually conceived as a field of representation mainly focused on the morphology of muscles, veins and joints, and increasingly integrated developing medical perspectives, such as views of the organs within the torso and abdomen. During the Renaissance, artists performed their own dissections and produced wax écorchés, figures without skin, but showing off musculature, in a move that had been described as simultaneously referencing the societal interest for corporeal visualizations, as well as establishing the success of their respective makers on the art scene.[5] The end result of these anatomical images mirroring the medical work of fellow colleagues in the realm of anatomy was to prefigure the merging of pictorial virtuosity with the conquering of what would have been understood as objective knowledge. Another concept brought into discussion within the anatomical representation of the body is that of 'manikin', which is a jointed model of the human body, used in the teaching of anatomy starting with the eighteenth century,[6] based on earlier models used by artists in their pursuit of realistic depiction of bodily movements. The 'manikin' is similar to 'mannequin' in the sense that it is a human-shaped model used to simulate the human body: however, instead of being used in the realm of clothing, manikins are meant to contribute to the advancement of medical knowledge and assist in the simulation of surgical or clinical scenarios. The purpose around these objects is to provide anatomists, surgeons, clinicians and their students a safe environment to learn and practice their skills, without resorting to the use of a live patient. Both manikins and mannequins act as human simulators, despite their uses being different: the quest for realism is reframed in the history of art as an endless production of artificial men and women: explicit images of anatomically accurate bodies, écorchés in the categories of sculpture, drawing or painting become, in their stylized form, an implicit blueprint for looking at the world in an objective manner. Notwithstanding the surface or medium that allow for their configuration, art history's écorchés inaugurate a phantasm of developing objectivity-infused inquiries: the possibility to translate and transcribe tridimensional reality on the surface of the canvas, wall or paper via investigations of the anatomical rendering of

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[4] Monique Kornell, "Ecorché" entry, Grove Art Online (https://www.oxfordartonline.com/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oao-9781884446054-e-7000024851?rskey=wlwxjs&result=1), accessed on February 1st, 2021.

[5] Ibid.

[6] K. F. Russell, 'Ivory Anatomical Manikins', *Medical History* 16/2 (1972): 131 - 142.

the body had been linked to the formation and proliferation of fluid encounters between the works of anatomists and the vision of artists.[7]

The history of Brâncuşi's Écorché - contexts of production and distribution

Constantin Brâncuşi's Écorché does not exist as a single material item.[8] The bibliography brings forth a number of art historians and medical figures who, on one hand have attempted to establish a precise chronology concerning the number of the écorché's originals and copies, while on the other hand set out to extract the messages conveyed by the entity itself: is it a work of art meant to convert the artist's desire to do an unusual sculpture, is it rather a co-authored piece of an indelibly didactic nature, or is it ultimately an anatomical object designed to look like a work of art, but acting as another tool of instruction in a museum of anatomy?[9] The trouble with delineating a precise mode of analysis is

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[7] See Glenn Harcourt, 'Andreas Vesalius and the Anatomy of Antique Sculpture', *Representations*, 17 (1987): 28 – 60; Brian P. Kennedy - Davis Coakley (eds.), *The Anatomy Lesson: Art and Medicine*, exhibition catalogue (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 1992); Mimi Cazort et al. (eds.), *The Ingenious Machine of Nature. Four Centuries of Art and Anatomy* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1996); Deanna Petherbridge - Ludmilla Jordanova (eds.), *The Quick and the Dead. Artists and Anatomy*, exhibition catalogue (London: Hayward Gallery & University of California Press, 1997); Elliot Bostwick Davis, "William Rimmer's 'Art Anatomy' and Charles Darwin's Theories of Evolution", *Master Drawings*, 40/4 (2002): 345 – 359; Cynthia Klestinec, 'Civility, Comportment and the Anatomy Theater: Girolamo Fabrici and His Medical Students in Renaissance Padua', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 60/2 (2007): 434 – 463; Raphaël Cuir, *The Development of the Study of Anatomy. From the Renaissance to Cartesianism: da Carpi, Vesalius, Estienne, Bidloo* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009); Domenico Laurenza, 'Art and Anatomy in Renaissance Italy. Images from a Scientific Revolution', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 69/3 (2012): 5 – 48; Roberto Lo Presti, 'Anatomy as Epistemology: The Body of Man and the body of Medicine in Vesalius and his Ancient Sources', *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme*, 33/3 (2010): 27 – 60; Elizabeth Hallam, *Anatomy Museum. Death and the Body Displayed* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016); Andrew Graciano, *Visualizing the Body in Art, Anatomy, and Medicine since 1800: Models and Modeling* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2019).

[8] For an excellent analysis of the work in terms of copies and originals see: Elena Dumitrescu, *Ecorşeul Brâncuşi - Gerota. Istoria unei lucrări realizate la Şcoala de Belle Arte din Bucureşti* [Brâncuşi-Gerota Écorché. The History of a Work done at the Belle Arte School in Bucharest] (Bucureşti: Editura UNARTE, 2013).

[9] See George Oprescu, *Sculptura Româneascăˇ* [Romanian Sculpture] (Bucureşti: Meridiane, 1965); Mircea Deac, *Brâncuşi* (Bucureşti: Ed. Meridiane, 1966); V.G. Paleolog, *Tinereţea lui Brâncuşi* [Brâncuşi' Youth] (Bucureşti: Ed. Tineretului, 1967); Petre Comarnescu, *Brâncuşi mit şi metamorfozăˇ în sculptura contemporanăˇ*[Brâncuşi mith and metamorphosis in contemporary sculpture] (Bucureşti: Meridiane, 1972); Sidney Geist, *Brâncuşi - un studiu asupra sculpturii* [Brâncuşi- a study of the sculture] (Bucureşti: Meridiane, 1973); Petre Oprea, *Incursiuni în sculptura româneascăˇ sec. XIX-XX* [Incursion into Romanian sculpture] (Bucureşti: Litera, 1974); Barbu Brezianu, *Brâncuşi în România* [Brâncuşi in Romania] (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei RSR, 1976); Gheorghe Ghiţescu, *Permanenţele artei* [The Permanents of Art]

reflected in the omissions, ambiguities and discontinuities one can detect in this bibliography.[10] Given the shortage of archival sources and the tendency to work out arguments within the framework of their respective disciplines, it becomes apparent where the conditions for the difficulty of deconstructing the significance behind the many versions of Brâncuşi's Écorché stem from. In the historiographical space of the Écorché, its art historical mobilization is based on considerations of genre, artistic formation, the acquisition of stylistic virtuosity, perhaps as a stepping-stone towards future emancipation of form; in a way, the Écorché is inadvertently subjected to a silently condescending approach in art history - it symbolically imagines the work of art as one dutifully inscribed in a trajectory that sees it as a catalyst for radical change in the sculptural realm of the twentieth century. Scholars, nevertheless agree that the Écorché is a single work of art that materialized between 1901-1902 in several material formats: it was initially made by Brâncuşi in plaster and after the extraction of its negatives, the statue was replicated after 1903 in several exemplars made of gypsum (white or coloured).[11]

Brâncuşi started working on the Écorché in 1901, while in his final year at the academy of art in Bucharest, benefitting from the support of his professor in artistic anatomy, Dimitrie Gerota, who was also active as professor of topographic anatomy at the Faculty of Medicine. For his Écorché, Brâncuşi was awarded the bronze medal in the anatomy competition and the Écorché was exhibited at the Atheneum[12] in 1903, being met with critical and public success. At the time, the Atheneum's building hosted the school of arts' picture gallery ('Pinacoteca'), exhibitions of contemporary art, as well as the classes of human anatomy, perspective, theory of decorative arts, aesthetics and history of art.[13] Gerota played a pivotal role in the creation of the work. In order to complete his Écorché, Brâncuşi not only frequented the anatomy classes in the medical school,

(Bucureşti: Ed. Meridiane, 1976); Gheorghe Brătescu, *Trecut şi viitor în medicină - Studii şi note* [Past and Future in Medicine – Studies and Notes] (Bucureşti: Ed. Medicală, 1981); Gheorghe Ghiţescu, *Antropologie artistică* [Artistic anthropology] (Bucureşti: Ed. Didactică şi Pedagogică, 1981); Doina Lemny, Cristian-Robert Velescu, *Brâncuşi inedit - însemnări şi corespondenţă românească* [Brâncuşi- notes and correspondence] (Bucureşti: Ed. Humanitas, 2004); Elena Dumitrescu, *Ecorşeul Brâncuşi - Gerota. Istoria unei lucrări realizate la Şcoala de Belle Arte din Bucureşti* [Brâncuşi-Gerota Écorché. The History of a Work done at the Belle Arte School in Bucharest] (Bucureşti: Editura UNARTE, 2013).

[10] Ibid., pp. 13 - 39.

[11] Ibid., pp. 57- 69.

[12] Ibid., p. 73.

[13] Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, *Învăţământul artistic românesc 1830 – 1892* [Romanian Artistic Education 1830-1892] (Bucureşti: Meridiane, 1999), p. 154.

but was allowed to attend the dissection activities carried out by the doctor. Aware of the young artist's potential, Gerota wanted to support Brâncuşi in his ambitions to study abroad, hence, after the Atheneum exhibition, he was the one in charge with organizing the execution of several replicas of the écorché, to be distributed equally in artistic and medical environments, and for which young Brâncuşi was financially compensated. One of these originals was sent by Gerota to Victor Papilian, professor of topographic and comparative anatomy at the Faculty of Medicine in Cluj, sometime in the mid-1930s.[14] For several decades after this offering, information concerning the existence of an original work by Brâncuşi simply evaded the literature of the time. It was only by the late 1960s that light was shed upon the existence of a Brâncuşi écorché in Cluj: during a visit in town, Gheorghe Ghiţescu, professor of artistic anatomy at the academy of art in Bucharest, identified the object as an original work by Brâncuşi, and consequently informed art historian Barbu Brezianu about its existence.[15] Later on, Cluj anatomist Ioan Albu sent a letter to Brezianu, describing the work in detail; he also later published an article in 'Clujul Medical' where he confirmed the existence of the original work in the department's museum of anatomy. He based his argument not only on Ghiţescu's previous identification, but also by recalling the oral testimony of C.C. Velluda (1893 - 1978), a long-time assistant and collaborator of Papilian.[16] Egon Lövith (1923 - 2009), professor at the department of sculpture at the Ion Andreescu Institute of Visual Arts, took charge of the restoration works for the Écorché, firstly by detaching negatives, an intervention followed by the execution of several other copies: two of them were given to the Faculty of Medicine, two were kept for the institute of arts in Cluj and the negatives were also preserved, in order to allow for the production of copies for various educational institutions in the country. Brâncuşi's Écorché's trajectory eventually included a larger number of copies: two were distributed in the 1980s to the Army's Fine Arts Studio in Bucharest and in Târgu Jiu, and later, in the 1990s, other copies were sent to the High School of Music and Fine Arts in Alba Iulia, the Faculty of Music and Visual Arts at the University of Pecs, 'Corneliu Baba' High School of Art in Bistriţa, 'Aurel Popp' High School of Art Satu-Mare and the 'Patriarch Justinian' Faculty of Orthodox Theology at the University of Bucharest.[17]

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[14] Ion Albu, 'Victor Papilian, 1888 - 1956', in I. Simiti (ed.), *Figuri reprezentative ale medicinii şi farmaciei clujene* (Cluj-Napoca: Litografia IMF, 1980), p. 88.

[15] Dumitrescu, *Ecorşeul Brâncuşi,* annex 10, no page no.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Dumitrescu, *Ecorşeul Brâncuşi*, p. 137.

The interesting detail in this list of events is that, according to C.C. Velluda, Victor Papilian, a former student of Gerota in Bucharest, entered into possession of the écorché sometime in 1934 or 1935. The work is included in the museum of anatomy founded by Papilian at the department of anatomy a decade earlier, at a time when things were already changing in a museological sense: the museum of anatomy could not be visited anymore by the general public, and the anatomical objects were meant to be seen only by the professor of anatomy and his students. The Écorché's identity as a work of art remains hidden for the public at large, and the Écorché's display is bestowed the sole purpose of helping students learn anatomy; besides attending the professor's lectures and applying his methods during the dissection lessons in the designated laboratories, students were supposed to visually grasp the field of anatomy by consulting book illustrations and by looking at the wet and dry specimens in the museum of anatomy.

Investigating agency - the artist and the anatomists

Having so far provided the narrative context for Brâncuşi's Écorché, I will move next to the issue of agency and succinctly present the main figures responsible for the way the history of the Écorché unfolded. Dimitrie Gerota (1867 - 1939) was an anatomist, physician and radiologist. He was born in Craiova, being the son of a priest. In 1886, Gerota enrolled in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Bucharest, and graduated in 1892. After graduation, he travelled and furthered his studies for four years in France and Germany. After returning to Bucharest, he started practicing medicine and teaching at various institutions. Considered to be the first Romanian radiologist, Gerota researched the anatomy and physiology of the bladder and appendix, and developed a method for injecting lymphatic vessels, known in textbooks as the 'Gerota method'.[18] During his lifetime, his merits were recognized in the way he applied anatomy to surgery, as well as for being the founder of a large emergency-care hospital. Gerota also founded a museum of anatomical-surgical casts. Together with Francisc Rainer (1874 - 1944), he was Victor Papilian's professor of anatomy in Bucharest.[19]

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[18] https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Gerota+method, accessed on February 1st, 2021.

[19] Cristian Bârsu, 'Fighting for Anatomy. Overview regarding two prestigious Romanian anatomists of the 20th century: Victor Papilian and Grigore T. Popa', *Romanian Journal of Morphology and Embryology*, 57/1 (2016): 331 – 337.

Constantin Brâncuşi (1876 - 1957) is ubiquitously presented as a key figure in the history of modernist development of the sculptural form in the beginning of the twentieth century. The Écorché, without exhibiting literal clues of this emancipatory destiny of the sculptural morphology, nevertheless represented a novelty in the local context, it being the first oeuvre of this kind, originally designed and executed within the institutional framework of a Romanian school of art. Up to Brâncuşi's undertaking of the task, no other professor of sculpture at the institute had come up with the idea of making an écorché (the existing écorchés were plaster casts brought from Paris). As a student in the department of sculpture, learning from and training under the supervision of artists Ion Georgescu (1856 - 1898) and Wladimir C. Hegel (1839 - 1918), Brâncuşi makes a rather unconventional choice when he decides to work on an écorché: beyond the requirements of treating plaster as a valid medium for an exercise in visibility (revealing the inner structure of the body), the format allowed for the expression of a yearning. Despite his naturalistic appearance, his 'flayed man' might be seen not only as a successful instance of reuniting the natural and the ideal in a single piece of sculpture, but also as a tentative leap in transgressing the boundaries of the Neoclassical school of sculpture he was part of during his study years.

Victor Papilian (1888 - 1956) was an anatomist, writer and active figure on the cultural scene of Cluj in the first decades of the twentieth century. After he graduated from the Conservatory of Music, he pursued studies of medicine in Bucharest between 1907 - 1916, under the supervision of anatomists Francisc Rainer and Dimitrie Gerota.[20] In 1915 he was appointed president of the Students' Society of Medicine in Bucharest and in 1919 he was invited to be head of the Department of Anatomy at the Faculty of Medicine in Cluj. While there, he became a member of the Society of Biology and the Society of Anthropology, and he was also appointed dean of the Faculty of Medicine (between 1930-1931, and 1940-1946). In addition to his medical research, Papilian gained notoriety for his many artistic interests: he was director of the Romanian Theatre (1936-1940), director of the Cluj Philharmonic, as well as a member of the Writers' Society of Transylvania. During the Communist regime, he was imprisoned in 1952 for a period of two years. Papilian was a prolific writer of fiction and a passionate collector of art. According to his assistant, C.C. Velluda, Gerota personally sent him Brâncuşi's Écorché. His art collection included works of contemporary art.[21]

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Ioana Vlasiu, 'Colecţii şi colecţionism în Clujul interbelic', *Studii şi cercetări de istoria artei, artă plastică*, 8/52 (2018): 29 - 43.

Papilian was good friends with dermatologist Coriolan Tătaru (1889 - 1957) and encouraged him to open a museum of casts; in his turn, Tătaru was also an avid collector of art.[22] According to Ioan Albu, during the temporary evacuation of the Faculty of Medicine in 1940, to Sibiu, Papilian took the écorché with him and kept it in his small office, without confessing to anyone the value it had.[23] In the archives of the faculty of medicine there are no indications of an official transfer made from Bucharest to Cluj between 1933 - 1937, but Albu posits that the écorché was a personal donation.[24]

The relationship between Gerota and Brâncuşi

Having briefly described the main figures of the story, the emphasis falls nevertheless on an important question: why was the écorché ultimately commissioned? In order to answer it, I will first examine the relationship between Gerota and Brâncuşi. Gerota was both an anatomist and a surgeon. He adhered to the German school of modern anatomy that drew a close link between anatomy and surgery in the advancement of modern medicine.[25] His experiences abroad were defining for his career as an anatomist. During his studies in Berlin, he worked for a period of three years as an assistant to the renowned anatomist Heinrich Wilhelm Gottfried von Waldeyer-Hartz (1836 - 1921), who coined the notions of 'chromosome' and 'neuron' as anatomical–morphological concepts. Waldeyer was not only a gifted teacher, but also an excellent microscopist and microscopic researcher. Among his many anatomical and embryological studies, Waldeyer became known for his pioneering research on the development of teeth and hair, and many of the terms he invented are still in use today. He also published the first embryological, anatomical and functional studies about the naso-oro-pharyngeal lymphatic tissue. During his studies in France 1894, Gerota worked as an assistant to Paul-Julien Poirier (1853 - 1907) and Luis Hubert Farabeuf (1841 - 1910): Farabeuf's anatomical practice brought great service to surgery, mixing a topographical view with physiology and his anatomical discoveries and inventions of surgical tools bear nowadays his name ('Farabeuf's triangle of the neck', 'Farabeuf retractors' and 'Farabeuf forceps').[26] He wrote an influential 'Précis de manuel opératoire', and was also greatly respected for the beauty of his anatomical drawings, of which

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Dumitrescu, *Ecorşeul Brâncuşi,* annex 10, no page no.

[24] Albu, '*Victor Papilian'*, p. 90.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Konstantinos Laios et al., 'Louis Hubert Farabeuf (1841 - 1910). A pioneer of topographical, clinical and surgical anatomy', *Italian Journal of Anatomy and Embryology*, 123/1 (2018): 46 - 50.

he made use during teaching classes (lost nowadays).[27] In a photograph from 1908 taken from his office, Farabeuf is surrounded not only by surgical instruments, but also by a large anatomical picture ('planche murale')[28] and a 1926 caricature shows him demonstrating the articulation of the knee on one such 'planche murale'.[29]

After he returned to Bucharest, Gerota got involved in the organization of a museum of anatomy, being the first anatomist pursuing this museological project at the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest. His endeavour reinforced the importance played by the practice of developing visual artefacts in the activity of an anatomist at the beginning of the twentieth century. Gerota founded a museum of anatomical-surgical pieces with objects made exclusively by himself, by the method of injecting fragments of dead bodies with coloured wax; his work was considered significant, since for this museum he was awarded the gold medal and the diploma of honour in the 'Science exhibition' organized in Bucharest, in 1903.[30] Next to the description of the renal fascia, Gerota's fame as an anatomist is closely linked with the development of the formaldehyde method. In the creation of anatomical specimens, his method consisted in first injecting the formaldehyde, then freezing the corpse, and finally sectioning the corpse: 'one of the most valuable properties of formic adhesive is to fix the organs in their natural situation and to give them a remarkable elasticity'.[31] The main advantage of this method consists in the possibility of sectioning full corpses into longitudinal and latitudinal sections, so that the anatomist can carefully trace the disease's trajectory and its aftermath in the ill body. This method also allowed Gerota to articulate the description of the renal fascia, later known as 'Gerota's fascia': 'Thanks to this property one can study the anatomy of the whole body… I was able to section whole corpses into transverse or longitudinal slices [...]'.[32] In his work, Gerota acts as a specialist who locates, names and describes anatomical regions and markers, by way of intense visualization.

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[27] Ibid., p. 49.

[28] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:M._Farabeuf,_professeur_d%27anatomie_honoraire,_dans_son_cabinet_%C3%A0_la_fa_CIPB0294.jpg, accessed on February 1st, 2021.

[29] https://www.biusante.parisdescartes.fr/histmed/image?medchanteclx1926x16x0011, accessed on February 1st, 2021.

[30] Dumitrescu, *Ecorşeul Brâncuşi*, pp. 40 - 42.

[31] Laios et al., *Louis Hubert Farabeuf (1841 - 1910)*, p. 49.

[32] See Dimitre Gerota, 'Über die Anwendung des Formols in der topographischen Anatomie', *Anatomischer Anzeiger*, 1895, vol. XI.

The preservation of specimens in the history of anatomy is a story intertwined with the museological framework that consolidated the authority of the anatomist not only as a medical figure in charge of mapping objective knowledge within the confines of human corporeality, but also as a curator of an anatomized way of seeing. For example, Dutch medicine by the mid-seventeenth century performed wax-based experiments resembling Egyptian embalming: organs injected with wax could preserve their structure before the decomposition of tissues.[33] Colouring was an important addition, because when combined with red, green or yellow dyes, it affected the perception of the anatomical formation. By late 1770s in Scottish medicine, spirit was used in the creation of soft tissue specimens. In England at the same era, turpentine was applied by anatomist John Sheldon in the process of drying specimens in order to render them transparent, so that he could have a clearer picture of the mercury injections applied to blood vessels. When wax injections became more widely used due to their increased quality, mercury-based technologies were gradually abandoned.[34]

Gerota was willing to both inspire and encourage young Brâncuşi in his work. The anatomist's activity at the school of art in Bucharest - where he was drawing, in front of the students, various schemes and structures of the body - was deemed of utter importance by the head of the school. In a letter sent by G.D. Mirea (1852 - 1934) to the ministry of education, he emphasized the importance of Gerota's class of artistic anatomy in the training of the young artists.[35] Books remained a valuable source of instruction too: in his communication with Brâncuşi, Gerota is thought to have provided him with two important sources of visual documentation, namely Paul Richer's 'Artistic Anatomy' (1893) containing 110 plates and 300 figures, as well as Franz Liharzik's 1871 volume devoted to the structure of the human body. Paul Richer (1849 - 1933) was a French anatomist, neurologist, historian of medicine, illustrator, sculptor and medallist. He worked as professor of artistic anatomy at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, was appointed member of the Académie Nationale de Médecine (1898), and significantly, he was also an assistant to Jean-Martin Charcot (1825 - 1893) at the Salpêtrière,

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[33] Rina Knoef, 'Dutch Anatomy and Clinical Medicine in 17th-Century Europe', *European History Online* (EGO), published by the Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz 2012-06-20, http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/models-and-stereotypes/the-dutch-century/rina-knoeff-dutch-anatomy-and-clinical-medicine-in-17th-century-europe, accessed on February 1st, 2021.

[34] Phyllis Allen, 'Medical Education in 17th Century England', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences,* 1/1(1946): 115 – 143.

[35] Dumitrescu, *Ecorşeul Brâncuşi,* annex 6, no page no.

together with whom he conducted research not only on hysteria and epilepsy, but also co-authored studies about the relationship between medicine and art: *Les Démoniaques dans l'art* (1887) and *Les Difformes et les malades dans l'art* (1889). The myology plates in Richer's *Artistic Anatomy* (no. 53 - 55, no. 59 - 62, no. 68 - 71)[36] present écorchés detailing the muscles of the torso and the head, paralleling earlier images developed in ancient classical sculpture as well as their neoclassical iterations. A few of these plates render fragments of myological set-ups, explaining in schematic drawings accompanied by textual descriptions the relation between bones and muscles. They also pay close attention to the spatial distribution of each element, without sacrificing at any point a sense of unity, harmony and symmetry hailed by classical theories of aesthetics. Such anatomical illustrations at Brâncuşi's disposal promote a picture of idealized beauty far removed from the rather distressing encounters with the human material during dissections at the faculty of medicine. The anatomist carefully arranges these fragments on the surface of the page according to the laws of symmetry and by keeping under tight control the page's margins. Muscles and bones are constricted to the contouring of their general shape, while at other times the anatomist as artist resorts to a juxtaposition of contour less anatomical spaces and carefully demarcated ones through the use of an uninterrupted line. Plate 74 opens the series of 'topographie morphologique' dealing with the exterior surface of the body: the way shading was applied says perhaps less about anatomical content (as simplified as it might have been in a book of artistic anatomy), and more about the technology of seeing anatomy through the draughtsman's eyes. Polished, neat, shaded surfaces of the body echo the practice of drawing after classical sculptures in the education of young artists. Richer, in a line of artist-anatomists, orchestrates a liminal process that characterizes the relationship between medical and artistic anatomy: the conversion of medical knowledge into visual schemes, able to be read and understood on the basis of acquaintance with the cultural heritage of post-Renaissance corporeal art.

Anatomical realms - artistic and medical

After Brâncuşi's departure to Paris, Gerota is the one responsible for making the Écorché known in Romania and he will never present the Écorché as his work, despite having co-authored it.[37] In order to grasp the meaning of Gerota's decision of commissioning the original copies after

[36] https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k205846w.pdf, accessed on February 1st, 2021.
[37] Dumitrescu, *Ecorşeul Brâncuşi*, p. 55.

Brâncuşi's Écorché, we need to look beyond the narrative details of the story. In this sense, the iconography of Gerota's anatomical studio[38] is helpful, as it reveals it as an ambiguous and eclectic space, mixing the private and public nature of anatomy. It speaks of the juxtaposition of art and nature, as well as of the representations of their encounter in the shape of wax models and anatomical moulages. A multitude of representations of the human form are brought together, be they of an anatomical, ideal or museological nature. It demonstrates that anatomy relies on a mixture of textures, materials and intentions not only in the teaching spaces and laboratories, but also in the private space of the anatomist's office. The protagonist of the photo is Brâncuşi's Écorché and there is one important detail to be taken into account: the écorché belongs to the 'white' series, that is, the gypsum had not yet undergone the medically-oriented stylized painting in red (for the muscles) and yellow (for the tissues), even if it strikingly models anatomical accuracy. On the left, a human-sized skeleton fulfils the role of displaying the human body devoid of any flesh; stacks of shelves presenting dry and wet specimens fill the back wall; large X-Ray photographs show the newly acquired technology, invented just a few decades earlier by Roentgen and for which the scientist was awarded in 1901 the Nobel prize in Physics; on the right, anatomical moulages in wax after a pregnant woman's body reference not only the interest in anatomical visualization, but also Gerota's earlier investment in gynaecology, having co-authored with O. Schaeffer a book called 'Elements of Gynaecology'. What is striking in this particular photographic instance of the ambiance of an anatomist's office is the clear cohabitation of distinct anatomical realms, artistic and medical, united however by a longing for scientific translation of content: the anatomist positions himself as a curator of experiences in visuality, assigning objectivity to various pictures and artefacts, in a bid to organically contain a corpus of images and imaginings of the human body (conceived as a frail entity prone to incurring disease which then prompts medical assistance). Gerota's office, as captured in the photograph, speaks to the anatomist's predilection for mixing materials, surfaces, and their assigned visualizations. In this sense, the anatomist reveals an identity which is not divorced from the museological impetus inherent in the practice of collecting distinct media in order to make visible the encounters between the body and the anatomical gaze.

During Brâncuşi's time at the academy of art in Bucharest, the young artist could consult the collection of imported statues meant to assist in the development of the sculptural form. The first imported

[38] After a photo published in Elena Dumitrescu, *Ecorşeul Brâncuşi*, p. 46.

statues were those brought in 1864 by Theodor Aman from Paris, representing gypsum casts executed in the Louvre workshop as copies after the following statues: Apollo of Belvedere, Diana, Venus, Antinous, a smaller-sized écorché and ten metopes from the Parthenon.[39] In addition to these statues, Brâncuşi was also able to consult the anatomical atlas of Dr. Julian Fau, given as a present to the school's library by Petru Verussi in 1868, who received a state scholarship to study in Paris. According to a letter sent to the minister in September 1903 by G.D. Mirea: '[...] we agreed with a moulder to make copies, in double numbers, after: Apollo, Antinous, Ariana, Child with Swan, Diana, Faun with Pipe, The Gladiator, Mercury in repose, Venus of Medici and Venus of Milo, for a sum of 1650 lei – a sum that is higher than the price these models were paid for in Paris. The company in charge with them is Luigi Brida - the first Italian workshop of sculpture, gypsum ornaments and cement'.[40] By 1903, the school of art's inventory contained a number of eleven statues representing late nineteenth-century copies after canonical statues from Antiquity. The aftermath of Brâncuşi winning the bronze medal and the 1903 display of the Écorché at the Atheneum is reflected in a letter sent by the students of the art academy, asking for the commissioning of several copies after the écorché, in order to support the development of the artistic anatomy as well as the correct anatomical understanding of the human body by the artists in training.[41] In the absence of teaching material, it was very difficult for young artists to develop their skills, representation-wise.

I will next explore the details found in a photo of Brâncuşi's workshop,[42] and in which one can notice the sources of inspiration for his own anatomical work. The sources are: a fragment of anatomical moulage in the shape of a leg écorché; a fragment of an arm écorché; a human skeleton; a copy after Houdon's Écorché from the eighteenth century (1767); a copy after the statue of Antinous from the Capitoline Museum in Rome (bought by Theodor Aman in Paris). The posture of Brâncuşi's écorché closely mirrors the one of Antinous, which triggers the question of the artist's motives in re-enacting it. Gheorghe Ghiţescu argued that the choice for modelling the écorché after Antinous relied upon the artist's preference for an elegance of form, as the androgynous-looking body exhibiting a thinly veiled musculature resonated with a concept of beauty assigned to the rhymed

[39] Ionescu, *Învăţământul artistic românesc,* p. 154.
[40] Dumitrescu, *Ecorşeul Brâncuşi*, annex 1, no page no.
[41] Ibid. annex 2, no page no.
[42] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Constantin_Brâncuşi_-_Ecorseu.jpg, accessed on February 1st, 2021.

movement of proportions.[43] Charles Bell (1774 - 1842), Scottish anatomist and anatomical artist, wrote a book entitled *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression in Painting* (1806), demonstrating that ancient models often imitated by painters did not accurately reflect anatomical realities. Even if the book combined his interest in art and medicine, the book's audience mainly targeted visual artists. Bell argued in favour of paying greater attention to anatomy in the representational projects of accurate presentation of the body.[44] A few years earlier, in 1801, Bell had written a book accompanied by illustrations entitled 'Engravings of the Arteries', meant to be used by students of medicine as a foundational text for surgical study and practice. Truthful learning of anatomy could be achieved when detailed descriptions were joined with meticulous drawings; in choosing the type of body most suitable for representation, Bell was in favour of going for a diversity of bodies, and also proposed that the artists ought to represent the most typical anatomical examples. Concerning the copy after Houdon's 'flayed man', it is worth mentioning that his source of inspiration consisted in the figures of anatomy and the anatomical plates of Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1751 - 1722).[45] According to Quatremère de Quincy, the écorché '[...] had become, in schools, the normal example of human muscular anatomy':[46] 'Houdon's merit lies in having produced, with a view to future sculptors, a work entirely educational in character, which had been tried before him, but not really carried out', according to Émile Delerot and Arsène Legrelle.[47] The presence of the copy after Houdon in the workshop where Brâncuşi was working on his own écorché recalls the presence of this type of statue in the pictorial realm. One such example is an oil painting from the Wellcome Collection in London, entitled 'A man holding an écorché statuette'. The statuette is based on an original wax model designed around 1600 in Florence by Ludovico Cigoli, il Cardi, 'La bella anatomia', or 'Lo scorticato', later reproduced in plaster and bronze and becoming very popular. The

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[43] Ghițescu, *Permanenţele artei,* p. 162.

[44] See Carin Berkowitz, *Charles Bell and the Anatomy of Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

[45] Morwena Joly, 'L'obsession du *dessous* : Diderot et l'image anatomique', *Recherches sur Diderot et l'Encyclopédie*, 1/43 (2008): 57 - 70.

[46] Quatremère de Quincy, *Recueil de notices historiques lues Dans les séances publiques de L'Académie royale des beaux-arts à l'Institut, vol. 1* (Paris: Adrien Le Clere, 1834), pp. 393-394; http://archive.wikiwix.com/cache/index2.php?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnumelyo.bm-lyon.fr%2Ff_view%2FBML%3ABML_00GOO0100137001101401854#titre_complet, accessed on February 1st, 2021.

[47] Émile Delerot - Arsène Legrelle, *Notice sur J.-A. Houdon, de l'Institut (1741-1828)* (Versailles, 1856), http://archive.wikiwix.com/cache/index2.php?url=https%3A%2F%2Farchive.org%2Fdetails%2Fnoticesurjahoud00legrgoog%2Fpage%2Fn8%2Fmode%2F2up, accessed on February 1st, 2021.

schools of art in Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth century produced copies of this original statue for the instruction of their students in the correct rendering of the human body, equally for the painting and sculpture departments. The difference between Houdon's écorché and Cigoli's 'Lo scorticato' is not only one of style, material and era: it is also embedded in the status of the anatomical representation in the artist's imaginary, promoting two distinct understandings of the value of the écorché for the advancement of an objective understanding of corporeality on the part of the artist.

Anatomists in Cluj and their interest for anatomical collections

Moving further in the present analysis, it is the context of dissemination for Brâncuşi's Écorché that is worth investigating. I will focus on Papilian and his interests as a collector, as well as on one of his most important literary works. The practice of collection is intimately linked with the status of the anatomist starting from the mid-nineteenth century.[48] A double thread of interests of the anatomist as collector can be traced, according to the medium of representation: the anatomist as collector of anatomical artefacts and equally, of works of art. The tradition of exhibiting anatomical artefacts in Central Europe had been the object of research in several studies.[49] The history of anatomy at the Faculty of Medicine in Cluj is punctuated by an encounter with the works of Clemente Susini (1754 - 1814), potentially through two important figures: the first anatomists at Cluj, credited with founding the museums of anatomy at the Faculty of Medicine - Czifra Ferenc (1826 - 1878) and Davida Leo (1852 - 1929). The first's specialty was pathological anatomy, while the latter's was topographic anatomy. Czifra Ferenc was keenly interested in the visual culture of displaying anatomy, and during his study trip, undertaken in 1871, he visited the collections of anatomy that were displayed in Pest and Vienna (currently hosted in the Semmelweis Museum in Budapest and the Josephinum in Vienna).[50] As a professor of anatomy, twice in 1882 and 1885, Davida Leo travelled abroad at public

[48] See Rina Knoeff - Robert Zwijnenberg (eds.), *The Fate of Anatomical Collections* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

[49] See Tatjana Buklijas, 'Mapping anatomical collections in nineteenth-century Vienna', in Rina Knoeff - Robert Zwijnenberg (eds.), *The Fate of Anatomical Collections,* pp. 143 – 161; Mélanie van der Hoorn, 'Monsters in Vienna: The pathologisch-anatomisches Bundesmuseum', *Etnofoor,* 11/1 (1998): 77 – 94; Birgit Nemec, 'Anatomical Modernity in Red Vienna: Textbook for Systematic Anatomy and the Politics of Visual Milieus', *Sudhoffs Archiv,* 99/1 (2015): 44 – 72; Bettina Dietz, 'Making Natural History: Doing the Enlightenment', *Central European History*, 43/1 (2010): 25 – 46.

[50] See Emil Pasztor, 'Medical Education in Hungary from 1769 to 1971', *Orvostort Kozl*. 53:3-4 (2007): 5-35.

expense to study the furnishing and equipment of autopsy, pathology, and forensic institutes; he visited the medical faculties of Vienna, Prague, Munich, Erlangen, Heidelberg, Würzburg, Tübingen, Giessen, Göttingen, Jena, Leipzig, Halle, Berlin, Strasbourg, Nancy, Zurich, Bern, Basel and Paris.[51] These examples gesture toward the presence of a museological awareness on behalf of the Cluj anatomists, and of a cultural link between this Central European culture of display and the practice of collecting anatomical objects long before Papilian received the écorché in the 1930s. By visiting the medical faculty of Vienna, Davida Leo would have certainly been acquainted with the anatomical figure of a flayed man displayed at the Josephinum (a museum open also to the general public since the end of the eighteenth century).

The value of anatomical collections in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century has been read as the securing of a core component in the development of anatomical research.[52] Specimens of anatomy and pathology resulting from dissections were assembled in exhibition devices which formed the blueprint for the future medical museums. In their turn, these medical museums became one of the gatekeepers of academic credibility for anatomists starting with the mid-nineteenth century: their 'modern' identity set itself apart from the previously inscribed one in the figure of the barber-surgeon precisely through a combination of achievements in discovering and naming anatomical structures (or correcting previous errors) on one hand, and the anatomist's own execution of a collection of specimens with the aid of new methods of preserving bodily structures, on the other. Whilst in eighteenth-century collections, 'curiosities' occupied the majority of the display spaces, at the end of the nineteenth century the realization that it was essential to correlate symptoms with anatomical lesions fruitfully contributed to the theorization of the modern anatomical collection, an indelible marker of the anatomist's expertise. An eager student of anatomy meant a potentially famous future surgeon, ready to cure and save lives, thus the prestige of anatomists as teachers became widely understood as the marker of a modern medical institution.

Teaching was often carried out through the use of visual aids, atlases, drawings made in real time in front of the audience, as well as through the display of dry and wet specimens. From this perspective, it is highly suggestive to examine the plans for the building of the institute of anatomy in Cluj and discover that a large number of rooms were dedicated to the display of normal and pathological specimens of

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[51] Ibid.

[52] See Findlen, *Possessing Nature.*

anatomy.[53] Davida Leo's input in the spatial configuration of the pavilion of anatomy's architecture is marvellously explained in his own words, on the occasion of a publication of an anthology in 1903 of all existing university buildings in Cluj. After the integration of Transylvania into the Kingdom of Romania in 1918 and the institutional establishment of a Romanian-led department of anatomy the year after, the first things to be removed from the building were precisely these early anatomical collections created by the Hungarian anatomists. They were taken to the medical faculty at the University of Szeged, where many of the Hungarian professors transferred their activities. It is for this reason that Victor Papilian, appointed in 1919 as head of the freshly-refashioned department of anatomy, found little in terms of anatomical artefacts and undertook the task of creating new pieces for a new museum of anatomy, a decision which practically involved a high degree of both economic and epistemic investment.[54] A change however was visible: if during the tenure of Davida Leo, the anatomical museum could be visited by the general public, there is no archival or textual mention that the museum established by Papilian could be seen by regular visitors. In his medical and literary works, Papilian delves into issues concerning the formation and application of the scientific gaze upon objects from the natural world, but there is no mention any longer of the importance of the medical collection from a museological perspective. His identity as maker of anatomical artefacts is overshadowed by his personality, deeply immersed into the cultural scene of his time, especially in its literary and visual arts manifestations.

Papilian - collecting and writing on art

The practice of collecting art is reflected in Papilian's relationship with the art production of the 1920s-1930s. After the First World War and the Union of Transylvania with Romania, the city of Cluj experienced a boom in artistic activities due to the founding of the School of Fine Arts in 1925 and the donation of Virgil Cioflec's important collection of Romanian art to the University, open for public access.[55] Personalities linked to liberal professions, such as lawyers or doctors, are involved in the emerging prestige of art, because they support art production, in an increasing

[53] L.Davida, *L'institut d'Anatomie in Les Facultés de médecine des Universités Royales Hongroises de Budapest et de Kolozsvár, Ouvrage offert à Mm. Les membres de Congrès [XVIe Congrès International de Médecine] par le Ministre Royal Hongrois des Culte set de l'Instruction Publique*, (Budapest, 1909), p. 283.

[54] Cornel Sigmirean, *Românii şi învăţământul superior din Transilvania şi Ungaria în anii 1900 – 1918* [Romanians and Higher Education in Transylvania and Hungary in 1900-1918] in Sabin Manoilă, *Istorie şi demografie* (Cluj-Napoca: Fundaţia Culturală Română, 1995), pp. 226 – 256.

[55] Vlasiu, *Colecţii şi colecţionism în Clujul interbelic,* p.30.

number of exhibitions. The most well-known figures of doctors-collectors in Cluj were those of Coriolan Tătaru, Victor Papilian, Miklos Elekes and Nicolae Mărgineanu. Their interest in modern art had contributed to the change in artistic taste and supported the artistic practice of several young artists, including Catul Bogdan, Sándor Szolnay, Romul Ladea, Nagy István, Anastase Demian, Ion Vlasiu, Jenő Szervatiusz, Nicolae Brana, Tasso Marchini, Eugen Gâscă, and Traian Bilţiu Dăncuş. Having their works bought for private collections, these artists started asserting themselves or they consolidated an already acquired reputation. Papilian's art collection is documented in an important catalogue for one of the most visited exhibitions of visual arts in 1946, and it included works by Elena Popea, Anastase Demian, Eugen Gâscă, Ion Vlasiu, Romul Ladea, Radu Puşcariu.[56] Papilian's keen interest in the art of his time is marked not only by his activity as collector, by attending cultural Salons, but also by the intriguing collaboration with a local artist. For one of his literary works, Papilian, the anatomist, commissions Catul Bogdan as illustrator for his work of fiction entitled 'Faust's Soul' (1928).

Without being able to reference particular texts devoted to the role of visual art and artists within medical circles, it is nevertheless fruitful to read Papilian's *Immortality's Tormented Ones*. Written between 1941 - 1945 during his refuge in Sibiu, the literary trilogy presents, amongst others, the multifaceted interactions between medical figures and issues pertaining to the sphere of art in pre-WWI Bucharest. The work is rich in vivid depictions of the struggles encountered by young protagonists in their ambitions to reach highly desirable positions on the Bucharest medical scene; it is however more than the narrative matrix that catches one's attention. The trilogy is infused with implications related to the act of seeing, as performed within a medical setting. It shows Papilian's peculiar interest in zooming in on his protagonists' lives as their medical framing is punctuated by issues stemming from the world of art. In this sense, his literary production supports his investment as collector of art, because it uncovers his obvious positioning as a specialist in medicine tackling art-related issues. I will quickly present a few of these aspects, in order to shed light on Papilian's ways of approaching the field of art through his protagonists, as they debate, perform and move in medical circles.

The medical figures whose actions and thoughts are systematically intertwined with the art/medicine collisions are those of Leluţ (an ambitious hospital intern who eventually gets the much desired professorship of the histology department at the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest), Leonin

[56] Ibid.

(Leluţ's opponent, seemingly devoid of career goals, but a gifted young surgeon who is deeply invested in existential questioning of practicing medicine), Magheru (a practitioner of psychoanalysis, who disputes the value of Freudianism, as well as an established figure on the Bucharest medical scene, whom Leonin is very much in awe of), Urlieşu (a well-respected experimental scientist, as well as pathologist, who rejects Magheru's views on almost every level and is much admired by Leluţ), Ioana Stamatu (a celebrated poet who is an early adept of Modernism in art) and Eustaţiu (a much-revered contemporary painter by almost every character in the book, except for Leluţ, who repeatedly finds himself at a loss when dealing with his art). The myriad of scenes involving these characters render visible the vital encounters between the worlds of art and medicine, the way value is transacted and negotiated both in a scientific and artistic sense.

Seeing in connection with the formation of knowledge through using the eye is one of the main features of these encounters. Teaching Leluţ the fundamentals of experimental science, Urlieşu reveals to him that many of his peers have no idea how to look at things[57] because they don't make enough use of their powers of observation, and in particular on those relying on sight required from their medical status. 'Looking at' becomes a recurrent *topos* in the way he elaborates the requirements involved in the development of a scientific eye, and which Leluţ is ready to incorporate in his daily activities, thus exasperating his colleagues with his incessant over-watching and recording of their every word or gesture. From this perspective, Urlieşu places the art of painting in the closest vicinity to medical work:[58] a scientist is primarily called to exercise his vision-dependent function, much as a painter, whose occupation/endeavor develops the power of close inspection. Being a true scientist equals being able to apply to the highest degree the results of an observation-based sensibility. Interestingly, Urlieşu's theory is mirrored by Eustaţiu's take on the relationship between the eye and the act of seeing in reaching artistic authenticity: a great artist is called to look at the world around

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[57] Victor Papilian, *Chinuiţii nemuririi* [vol. I *Marius Leluţ*, vol. 2 *Gaby Leonin*, vol. 3 *Manoil;* editor and preface by Titus Bălaşa] (Craiova: Scrisul Românesc, 1976) (original in Romanian, my translation): ' [...] not one of them knows how to observe. They have ears, but they won't hear; they have eyes, but they won't see…', vol. I, p. 69; '[...] our professors would be geniuses, if only their intellectual bags would contain this minuscule instrument, the power of observation.', p. 70.

[58] (original in Romanian, my translation) 'It is the closest form of art to our profession. It develops in us the power of observation which [...] is the primary trait of the man of science.', *Chinuiţii nemuriri,* p. 286.

him beyond the biological conditioning and get rid of the anatomical teachings, such as écorchés after dead bodies. In abandoning the anatomy-infused way of seeing, artists are able to develop truthful forms as 'symbols' and 'movement-thinking'.[59]

Tensions arise when limits are inevitably attached to this celebrated power of the observing eye. Despite his efforts to comprehend the intimate movements behind Urlieşu's face, Leluţ finds himself struggling: he is able to anatomically read the visual clues, but finds it impossible to endow them with meaning; thus he is left without a real understanding of his protector's intentions.[60] As a defender of Magheru, who is vying for the same professorship that Urlieşu had set his eyes upon, Eustaţiu centers his criticism on seeing, as a catalyst for discerning value, this time in the realm of medicine, and not in that of art. Urlieşu's 'entire science values less than one glance of Magheru, because Magheru is able to look at things, while Urlieşu sets a screen of lead between him and the world'.[61] The painter's virulence is also aimed at anatomy as an institution, which again and again fails to render the young surgeon receptive enough to the true message of painting.[62]

The novel is rich in passages tackling the topic of looking at modern art, both with positive and negative outcomes. Tomaziu, a colleague of Leluţ and Leonin, is a frequent visitor of the 'Independenţa' exhibition and is known for his keen interest in acquiring contemporary paintings;[63] Leonin has in his possession two paintings by Ştefan Luchian;[64] Magheru owns drawings by Auguste Rodin, a precious gift received from Rainer

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[59] (original in Romanian, my translation) 'A great artist must see with his eyes cleaned even from the curtain of the eyeball. He must look at and absorb the view. He must learn from the beauty of the human body's shapes, from the transparency of the dream and the depth of the eyes, from the softness of the skin and the elasticity of the tendons, and not from the rigid proportions and the ecorches' copy after dead bodies. The form ought to be symbol and movement - thinking.', *Chinuiţii nemuririi,* p. 344.

[60] (original in Romanian, my translation) 'In vain he put down the shape of the nose, the dimensions of the lips, the prominence of the cheekbones. On top of the largely pared back shirt's collar, he was able to see the ribbons of the two sternocleidomastoid muscles, the angles of the thyroid cartilage and the depth of the suprasternal notch. He could see everything and yet something escaped him.', Papilian, *Chinuiţii nemuririi.*, p. 68.

[61] Papilian, *Chinuiţii nemuririi,* p. 343.

[62] (original in Romanian, my translation) 'It is anatomy that has turned you all into idiots [...] you should rather look at carpets and flowers all day long. They ought to teach you painting, not anatomy. Ravish your soul with the variety of lines and the subtlety of the colours [...] Search for that trace of mystery in the richness of the stained-glass windows or that of a sunrise...Because a beautiful painting should have a fragment of secrecy able to escape anatomy and geometry.', Papilian, *Chinuiţii nemuririi*, p. 344.

[63] Papilian, *Chinuiţii nemuririi*, p. 19, p. 60.

[64] Papilian, *Chinuiţii nemuririi*, p. 61.

Maria Rilke.[65] Numerous discussions bring forth the argument of Nicolae Grigorescu's lesser status in comparison with modern painters and the need, among the younger generation of artists or any practitioner of art, to leave behind the classical heritage and instead start a 'spiritual movement'.[66] Eustaţiu's modern take on pictorial visuality is compared with the art of Matisse, Bonnard and Cézanne, and praised for having the courage to simplify the form and get rid of the debased academic prescriptions, in attempting to transcribe natural shapes into geometric forms.[67] Magheru insists on the importance of 'educating the eye' in order to be able to appreciate the morphological reductions contained within the paintings of Eustaţiu.[68] In an effort to flatter the particularly modern sensibility of Lia Caloianu, Leluţ appropriates Eustaţiu's vocabulary and mocks the status of anatomy in the training of the artistic eye.[69] Lia's uncle turns out to be a painter who left Paris for Tahiti, and Magheru praises Gauguin's style.[70] Urlieşu owns a volume with reproductions after Claude Monet and in his turn, frames in a positive light the painter's achievements in refraining from merely 'copying nature'.[71]

The conversations on art carried out by medical figures show their inclination to look at medical acts as endowed with an artistic dimension. In this sense, dissection is positioned as a form of art few can really master, and those who are unable to do so are consequently shamed for it. Urlieşu, the pathological anatomist, is able to perform 'elegant'

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[65] Papilian, *Chinuiţii nemuririi,* p. 164.

[66] Papilian, *Chinuiţii nemuririi*, p. 152.

[67] (original in Romanian, my translation) '[...] he dared in our poor little country to make art at the same time with Matisse, Bonnard and Cézanne...Eustaţiu entirely pushed away anecdoche from painting...He simplified the cumbersome technique of the academic art, framing into quasi geometric planes the utterly varied forms of nature and thus searching to infuse them with the true discipline of the human spirit .', in Papilian, *Chinuiţii nemuririi*, p. 410.

[68] Papilian, *Chinuiţii nemuririi* p. 189.

[69] (original in Romanian, my translation) 'I resent flowers, because I love art too much [...] Someone who likes art is unable to appreciate flowers too…[...] There are painters who render nature in a deformed way, they enlarge proportions, destroy the lines and mock our poor anatomy. Good for them. What kind of importance anatomy has, when we're dealing with beauty, in Papilian, *Chinuiţii nemuririi*, p. 235.

[70] Papilian, *Chinuiţii nemuririi,* p. 349.

[71] (original in Romanian, my translation) 'It is only a copy, but look at this subtle chromatism, which only the perfect eye of the man of science is able to detect…[....] Claude Monet had a miraculous vision. His eye was a magnifying glass and a stethoscope. He did not rudely copy nature, as many painters do, but he first contemplated and only afterwards expressed. He proved, before physicists, the reality of the light's undulating movements. His eyes caught the artifice of the perspective…[...] For Leluţ, Claude Monet seemed like a great man of science, possessed by a miraculous power of observation.', Papilian, *Chinuiţii nemuririi*, p. 286.

dissections and thus instigate 'choreographic emotions' in the audience.[72] By attending the autopsies performed by Urlieşu, the young interns gradually become participants in a visual spectacle characterized by a kind of aesthetic beauty. Urlieşu holding a heart in his hand turns into an 'aesthetic painting';[73] professor Anghel Drăghiceanu defends the art-like nature of surgical interventions;[74] Leonin frequently provokes Leluţ's envy because of his undisputed talent for carrying out operations for an audience which becomes fully immersed in a spectacle of aesthetic enjoyment. Leluţ discovers that such is the emphasis placed on the aesthetic nature of the surgical act, that he is almost driven to the point of exasperation: his agile movements are too 'acrobatic' for being considered artistic,[75] and everyone around him seems unable to get rid of an artistic vocabulary in the surgical rooms.[76] Leluţ's seemingly exclusive outlet for rejoicing aesthetic emotion is delegated to the space of the laboratory: the orderly nature of the instruments and the various colour combinations created in the test tubes provide him with those rare instances of authentic enjoyment.[77] Cleaning the instruments feels like a 'thing of art'.[78] Despite his best efforts at appropriating the language and format of modern art, Leluţ repeatedly fails to align his taste with that of his opponent, Leonin, for whom mental cohabitation with the acquisitions of modernity seem natural. Leluţ's modest victories in the realm of aesthetics are contained in his end-of-year 'rigid' and 'meticulous' drawings supporting the medical content of his papers, and for those he presents at the Society for Medical Students.[79]

Painting is the primary medium characters in the novel debate about; much less is written about the others - architectural descriptions are intertwined with existential readings of Leluţ's reactions in his communication with Magheru and Ioana Stamatu, and they underlie his

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[72] (original in Romanian, my translation) 'Urlieşu seemed to have the gift of bringing life even in the house of death. How much safety, how much elegance! What a wonderful surgeon he could have turned into [...] Now, moving forth and back the big knife, as if ready to sketch a drawing, Urlieşu opened the muscles on the ribs, sectioned the diaphragm and cut open the abdomen. [...] This is too a kind of aesthetics, Blidariu said. Mr. Urlieşu has a line which curves from the forehead, on the face's profile and merges with the line of the body, through his hands, up to the instruments of the autopsy. In their evolution, his hands trigger choreographic emotions.' in Papilian, *Chinuiţii nemuririi*, p. 138.

[73] Papilian, *Chinuiţii nemuririi*, p.139.

[74] Ibid. p. 361.

[75] Ibid. p. 201.

[76] Ibid. p. 223.

[77] Ibid, p. 175.

[78] Ibid, p. 417.

[79] Ibid, p. 473.

profound anxiety in understanding modern art. Without specifically mentioning names of contemporary sculptors, there is one passage in the book that might allow for the supposition that Brâncuşi's art is present in Magheru's house and art collection: entering the entrance hall of his house, Leluț is struck by the massive presence of marble and stone and is surprised to notice the existence of a significant number of sculptures '[...] on prismatic bases made of wood. And how strangely they were executed. Stiff, linear, as if cut with an axe'.[80] Significantly, this is the only passage in the trilogy that succinctly brings forth the changes in the conception of sculpture brought by its recent developments, even if it is one-sided and shown in its fear-inducing effect on the viewer.

The visual culture of anatomy

Having previously tackled the manifestation of a double-folded context surrounding Brâncuşi's Écorché in connection with the field of anatomy, I will proceed further to detailing the concept and historical realities of a visual culture of anatomy whose impact can be linked equally to Gerota and Papilian, and their respective institutional frameworks. In doing so, the emphasis falls on a more nuanced account of the way anatomists were trained to look, not only at art, but more tellingly, at the very objects they manufactured and included in their collections and museums of anatomy. This branch of visual culture had been for centuries conceived as a fluid platform operating between two poles: one, the pedagogical component of art addressing corporeality and second, the immersion into artistry-based production by a certain branch of medical science (anatomy). This section explores possible models and similar objects for Brâncuşi's Écorché as fundamentally an anatomical object, and it addresses the following questions: how was the anatomical object displayed in order to reflect its value as an artistic object? How was it used in order to fulfil its role as a didactic item?

The starting point for formulating the proposed answers is that of setting a clear distinction between the media these objects were executed in. Brâncuşi's Écorché in Cluj is a statue made of gypsum, onto which red and yellow painting was added to highlight the body's muscles and tissues. Colour 'anatomizes' what was traditionally delegated to the environment of neoclassical carving or what was preponderantly the 'Antinous' in Brâncuşi's Écorché. Colour fixes an anatomical layer and meaning on a surface that, left white (like in the photograph of Gerota's

[80] Ibid. pp. 163 - 164.

studio in Bucharest) seems infused with an ideologically charged aesthetics, delegated to the sphere of art history. Brâncuşi's Écorché opposes resistance to interpretation simply by virtue of the medium it is made of. 'Anatomical écorchés' were representations of 'flayed men' executed altogether in a different medium: wax. And wax is a term, in its turn, ideologically charged, this time, by the history of medicine. Wax helped the visualization attempts of the anatomists, because it solved a problem concerning the conservation of bodies which was impossible in the eighteenth century. Wax was chosen as a preferred medium because it was easy to be used for moulding human structures, and it also helped make visible the scientific interest and achievement of the anatomist. When travelling abroad, Davida Leo visited the anatomy collections of Pest and Vienna and had the opportunity to engage with the anatomical objects as they were also staged for artistic and rhetorical purposes. Clemente Susini's (1754 - 1814) pivotal role led to the founding of museums affiliated to medical schools, such as those of Bologna and Florence, suffused with bodies either embalmed or moulded in beeswax.[81] The relationship between the work of Susini with the Central European space is reflected in the collections kept nowadays at the Semmelweis Museum in Budapest and the Josephinum in Vienna. Josephinum's famous collection of wax anatomical and obstetric models is the result of a personal initiative of Joseph II.[82] Inspired by the wax models he saw in Florence, Joseph II ordered 1,192 models for the newly-founded academy in Vienna. In charge of their production were anatomists Felice Fontana and Clemente Susini. After their arrival in Vienna, the objects were shortly put in a museum set-up and thus understood both as visual aids in the teaching of anatomy, as well as objects triggering collective awe because the general public also had access to them.[83]

At the end of the nineteenth century, a prominent figure of the Viennese anatomy emerged and whose medical ideas about a 'living anatomy' were much admired by both Gerota and Papilian:[84] Joseph Hyrtl (1810 - 1894). Hyrtl's approach is a much clearer illustration of the didactic dimension of the anatomical object, and he was also an avid

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[81] See Thomas N. Haviland, Lawrence Charles Parish, 'A Brief Account of the Use of Wax Models in the Study of Medicine', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences,* 25/1 (1970): 52 – 75.

[82] See Alessandro Riva et al., 'The evolution of anatomical illustration and wax modelling in Italy from the 16th to early 19th centuries', *Journal of Anatomy,* 216 (2010), pp. 209 - 222.

[83] Ibid.

[84] See Crisan Mircioiu et. al, *Omagiu Victor Papilian* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Medicala a UMF, 1988).

collector of artworks.[85] Hyrtl emphasized the need for anatomical instruction with a clinical orientation, later an idea powerfully promoted by the anatomists in Cluj (both in the Hungarian and Romanian traditions).[86] In his view, physiological experiments on animals were cruel and devoid of real use in advancing scientific anatomical knowledge. Though not known for discoveries in the field of anatomy, Hyrtl was considered the most gifted teacher of anatomy in the nineteenth century and he also discovered a method of producing large quantities of anatomical models: by injecting vessels and bone cavities with a stiffening material and then removing the surrounding soft tissue, he executed corrosion preparations admired by many anatomists of the time. Moreover, his famous 'osteological tableaux' include a large-scale recreation of the Laocoön group, which had been interpreted as a successful integration of representational strategies and 'vanitas' iconography in the context of display culture.[87] Hyrtl's 'anatomical' Laocoön infuses the identity of the medical model with the configuration of an anatomical artwork.

The importance of the medical museum is keenly reflected in these anatomical collections that facilitated the accuracy and acceleration in the process of acquiring knowledge by the students and the way they supported the anatomists' efforts as teachers. By the end of the nineteenth century such collections were open to the public, a fact that had been interpreted also as a bid to alleviate the pain incurred by the knowledge that bodies were dissected in spaces proximate to those dedicated to therapeutics and healing of patients. In short, anatomical museums were open to the general public with the less than subtle undertone that they were beneficial to society. Moreover, they also contributed to the transformation of medical schools into universities, and they were perceived to indicate academic excellence, teaching expertise, and authority. The museum of anatomy was not only a site endowed with pedagogical virtues, but it also signalled the institutional significance of a place engaged in advancing medical knowledge. This feature that linked museology, medicine, anatomy and societal recognition already makes us aware of the investment of power in visualizing medical knowledge through anatomical artefacts, specimens and objects. In this perspective, the écorché becomes a vehicle whose formation may stem from the field of art, but which may play a multiplicity of other roles.

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[85] See Alys X. George, 'Anatomy for All: Medical Knowledge on the Fairground in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna', *Central European History* 51 (2018), pp. 535 - 562.
[86] See N. Olinic - Cristian Bârsu, 'Clujul medical. 1920 – 1999. Date de istorie', *Clujul medical*, 72:3 (1999), pp. 409 – 418.
[87] George, 'Anatomy for All', pp. 546-547.

Conclusion

The history of Brâncuşi's Écorché reads like a story, intertwining details of artistic pursuits and particulars of medical set-ups, where the history of the object reclaims a double attention: on one hand, on the art historical context of Brâncuşi's body of work, on the other hand, on the scientific context of the medical knowledge of the era in the field of anatomy. The Cluj Écorché brings into attention several protagonists and contexts of production and reception. More precisely, the individual genre of the 'flayed man' gave rise not just to a singular object, but to several ones, and its uniqueness is deposited neither in materiality, nor in a referential system. Brâncuşi's Écorché is born at the crossroads of art and medicine, and their theoretical counterparts, i.e. art history and the history of medicine, found themselves at pains in deciphering its layers of meaning. Where art history assigns meaning to aspects related to artistic biography, genre, style, originality, studio practice and the role played by such specimens in the training of artists, the history of medicine is finding itself in the difficult position of shedding light on the materiality of its artefacts, with instruments that belong to the sphere of humanities, devoid of medical terminology. This paper proposes an argument for the hybrid nature of Brâncuşi's Écorché at the Faculty of Medicine in Cluj and points out several layers of multifaceted encounters: the anatomist as collector and organizer of the visual display of medical knowledge; Gerota's relationship with Brâncuşi positions the former as a supporter of artistic production; an interplay between the visual culture of anatomy, on one hand, and the tradition of organizing a collection for didactic purposes, or museums of anatomy, on the other; the context of production differs from the context of reception, despite the mingling of anatomical and artistic agencies.

The Cluj écorché's hybridity is galvanised by the distinct interests corroborated in the creation of the anatomical object. On one hand, it was a way for young Brâncuşi to assert his growing artistic prowess and for Gerota, the anatomist, to support the artistic trajectory of an exceptionally gifted student at the department of sculpture. On the other hand, the anatomist's involvement represents a key-identifier in discerning the artistic propensities of the commissioning agent, as well as of his eclectic taste within the anatomical imaginary. Placed within the context of its arrival at the faculty of medicine in Cluj, as a personal gift sent by Gerota to Papilian, the écorché highlights the importance of dissection in

anatomical practice: the 'flayed man' signals the anatomist's mission of rendering visible the inner structure of the body, for the higher purpose of bringing new knowledge able to help the living bodies.