Interestingly, and surprisingly, there has never been an illustrated book focusing on the body, one that gives not only a complete history of how the human form has been represented in visual culture over time, but also how it has become - literally and metaphorically - the canvas on which and through which we talk about human experience.

Unprecedented in its scope and rigour, Body of Art spans art Western and non-Western, ancient to contemporary, figurative, abstract and conceptual. Works are curated by theme into ten chapters: beauty, the absent body, religion and belief, bodies and space, sex and gender, emotion embodied, power, the body’s limits, the abject body and identity. Dynamic juxtapositions create an original and thought-provoking take on this most fundamental of subjects and an illustrated timeline provides broader historical and social contexts.

With works ranging from eight-armed Hindu gods and ancient Greek reliefs, to John Singer Sargent’s intriguing Madame X, from Robert Mapplethorpe’s seductive photographs to Sarah Lucas’s provocative sculptures, this is more than a book of representations. Bringing to life the diversity of cultures through the prism of the body, it celebrates and communicates art with accessible scholarship, to thrill and inform both enthusiast and expert.
VENUS OF WILLENDORF. c.24,000–22,000 BC
Location: H H1 (c.16) Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna

This small statuette, originally coloured red, is a rare stone example of a Paleolithic ‘Venus’ figurine; most are fashioned from clay. It was found in 1908 on the site of a nomadic settlement on the banks of the Danube in Austria, and would have been brought from elsewhere, as the oolitic limestone from which it is made does not occur locally. There were never any feet, and the figure cannot stand independently, but unlike most Venuses it does possess hands, which rest above the pendulous breasts. The breasts, thighs, hips and buttocks are grossly exaggerated, and the navel and pubic opening are distinct, all of which suggest a function for the object as some sort of fertility symbol. The face is undeveloped, apart from a spiral design that may indicate an elaborate arrangement of hair, and the suggestion that she is looking down has led to interpretations of these figures as having an attitude of submission. It may simply be that the individual features of a face were of no significance in a figure created as a symbol of natural fecundity and reproduction. Venus figurines held a fascination in the early twentieth century for Pablo Picasso, who kept replicas in his studio.

KRWITOS BOY. c.490–80 BC
Location: Acropolis Museum, Athens

Named in honour of an early fifth-century BC sculptor whose works this face resembles, the Kritios Boy can be seen either as one of the last kouros (‘youth’) figures of the Greek Archaic period (800–480 BC) or as one of the earliest surviving Early Classical (c.480–50 BC) sculptures. The frontal stance follows the tradition of Archaic votive sculptures, with the left leg forward and arms at the sides, but for the first time the right leg is relaxed, with the knee bent and the figure’s weight on the back leg. Moreover, the sculptor has depicted with fine accuracy the anatomical shifts that this motion produces in the upper body, raising the left side of the pelvis and curving the spine slightly, producing a sense of arrested movement. Instead of the fixed ‘archaic’ smile, the expression is relaxed, and the slight turn of the head means that the youth no longer engages directly with the viewer. This imparts a sense of voyeurism to the work that sets it apart from earlier kouroi, adding to the eroticism of the slim musculature of the youthful frame. The eyes would originally have contained inlays of some other material, adding to the sculpture’s verisimilitude, and the hair and wispy sideburns reflect contemporary bronze sculpting techniques.

BEAUTY

Clothed, we stand and look. Naked, Beecroft’s (b.1969) women stand and are looked at. Their bodies do not deny the gaze, but their postures are too rigid and mathematical to be erotic; too conspicuous and obstinate to pass easily into the tradition of the merely beautiful. In the history of European classical nudes the woman’s body has – with few exceptions – been suggestively available. Languid and sensual, the painted female body coyly waits to be possessed and activated by the spectator. But who owns Beecroft’s constellation of bodies? By constructing a tableau vivant that is cold and tense, these women in wigs and high heels have more in common with the bored and confrontational stare of Manet’s Olympia than with Titian’s dreaming Venus of Urbino. Beecroft combines and questions a multitude of signs from the history of Western art, fashion, advertising and science fiction, but in all her performances the women remain inaccessible in their nakedness. It is, rather, the clothed spectator who adopts the passive posture of the observed.
POWER
SANDRO BOTTICELLI. THE BIRTH OF VENUS. 1486
Tempera on canvas, 172.5 cm × 278.5 cm (68 × 109⅔ in). Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

Venus, goddess of love and beauty, stands naked on a seashell floating in the sea. Flying nearby, Zephyrus, the west wind, blows her ashore. Awaiting her there is one of the Horae, goddesses of the seasons; she holds a robe decorated with flowers, ready to cover Venus’s body. Botticelli (1445–1510) painted this work for the wealthy banker Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici to represent the Neo-Platonic concept of divine love. The picture was also among the first to represent mythological stories with a seriousness traditionally reserved for religious themes. Here, Venus is not an erotic symbol but the embodiment of beauty, the contemplation of which was intended to inspire noble thoughts. To Plato – the ancient Greek philosopher most esteemed by Lorenzo and his circle – beauty was interchangeable with truth. Botticelli has painted Venus almost as if she were a statue, rendering her flesh marble-pale. Although Botticelli’s Venus, with her attenuated neck and tilted head, adopts a more awkward and improbable pose; her stance recalls an ancient Greek prototype: the Aphrodite of Knidos (fourth century BC, now lost) by the Athenian sculptor Praxiteles. Known as the Venus Pudica (or “Modest Venus”), because of the position of her hands, it inspired many copies (see p.87).
These 24 photographs showing a man running are among the first successfully to capture the human body in motion. They form part of Muybridge’s (1830–1904) ‘Animal Locomotion’ series, commissioned by the University of Pennsylvania in 1872. Working with professors of physiology, engineering and anatomy, Muybridge spent four years on the project, creating 24,000 photographs, of which 781 feature men and women performing common actions. Custom-built cameras operated with electrical shutters allowed Muybridge to take multiple exposures in sequence at regular intervals. The university constructed an outdoor studio with cameras placed so as to capture subjects from the side, front, back, and from a 45-degree angle. The Running Man photographs demonstrate the action and movement of the human body’s limbs and muscles in a way that had previously been impossible. Although originally intended as a scientific study aid (as indicated by the anthropometric grid behind the subject), the photographs of this anonymous runner have transcended their original context to become iconic images in the history of photography and represent an important step in the development of cinematography.

A superhuman marching man, his body shaped by the powerful force of wind and speed, thrusts dynamically forward. This sculpture embodies the philosophy of Boccioni and the Italian Futurists, for whom movement, power and technology were the essential attributes of the modern world. Here, both the body and the surrounding air displaced by it are rendered in an arabesque of curves, flames and straight lines. Over more than two years, Boccioni (1882–1916) perfected these forms in paintings, drawings and sculptures, including a series of precise studies of human musculature. In 1912 he published his ‘Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture’, in which he described his vision for a new sculptural practice: ‘Objects would no longer be mere attributes or decorative elements, but would be embedded into the muscular lines of the body itself. ‘Let us fling open the figure’, he wrote, ‘and let it incorporate within itself whatever may surround it’. Boccioni’s experiences translating dynamism and force into sculptural form were cut short when he was wounded while fighting in the Italian army in 1915. The following year, almost recovered from his injuries, he was killed in a fall from a horse during cavalry exercises.
In the late eighteenth century the nature and origins of dreams were popular topics of discussion, and visions of the night featured heavily in the Gothic novels then coming into vogue. In Western art, however, dreams were still relatively unexplored territory. Fuseli’s obsession with picturing sleep and dreaming found its most famous expression in *The Nightmare*, which was greeted with both horror and admiration. It was not just the hideous squatting creature that excited interest, but the fact that this incubus, the horse and the girl’s submissive pose all had obvious sexual connotations. The idea that dreams might contain supernatural properties as well as fragments of everyday experience clearly intrigued Fuseli. (The age of reason had begun to ascribe the origins of dreams to physical causes such as indigestion, and a rumour circulated that Fuseli deliberately ate raw pork in order to induce dreams.) Yet here, rather than illustrating the vagaries of a dream, Fuseli conveys the unmistakable terror and suffocating oppression of a nightmare. In spite of the somewhat pantomime presence of the horse, the crouching incubus—a demon of the night that preys upon human women while they sleep—can still elicit a distinct sense of fear in viewers.

A woman in a red dress sits hunched on the edge of a bed. With her arms folded, she stares glumly into space. Behind her, a naked man has his face down on the bed, his head buried in a pillow. The body language of this couple suggests a deep tension. Summer sunlight streams through the window and illuminates the woman but leaves her companion in shadow, further emphasizing the emotional distance between the pair. The artist Josephine Nivison, Hopper’s wife, actually modelled for the legs of the male figure. The dissatisfaction she felt with the sexual dimension of her marriage to Hopper (1882–1967) is well documented and probably informs this uncomfortable scene with its sense of voyeurism. The bodily intimacy recently experienced by this couple has given way to melancholy, alienation and despair. Hopper’s original title for the painting was *Triste Apres l’Amour* (‘Sad After Love’); but worried that this might jeopardize its sale, he retitled it *Summer in the City*. 
Displayed above the heads of viewers, elevated and untouchable, Beuys’s Felt Suit is both a secular relic and a surrogate self-portrait. A sculptor, performance artist, political activist and unconventional thinker, Beuys (1921–86) was high priest of the avant-garde in post-war Germany. During his lifetime he became a cult figure, largely as a result of the personal mythology and identity that he created for himself. Beuys emerged from the wreckage of Germany’s recent past as a type of modern shaman whose tools included fat and felt. To him, these organic materials were emblems of healing: fat is a nurturing, body-sustaining substance, and felt has insulating properties. Produced as a multiple (in a reasonably affordable and accessible limited edition), Felt Suit was modelled on one that Beuys wore in an anti-war action that he performed in Düsseldorf in November 1970. In its colour and cut the suit appears utilitarian, and the fact that it has no fastenings suggests that it might be a prisoner’s or convict’s uniform, symbolic of the body it once encased. However, Beuys explained that the character of the material dictated the lack of buttons and buttonholes, since the suit was not intended to be worn but instead to signify spiritual or evolutionary warmth.

‘Being living sculptures is our life blood, our destiny, our romance, our disaster, our light and life,’ wrote conceptual artist duo Gilbert and George, who presented themselves as ‘living sculptures’ in the 1960s and 1970s. For The Singing Sculpture, the artists covered their hands and faces in bronze powder, dressed in tweed ‘responsibility suits’, as they called them, and stood atop a table while singing along to the 1930’s standard ‘Underneath the Arches’ playing from a tape recorder below. When the song finished, one of them stepped down to rewind the tape so they could perform the whole routine again. This sometimes went on for up to eight hours. Rather than trying to embody the classical virtues that inspired the idealized figurative sculpture of antiquity and the Renaissance, Gilbert and George looked to lowbrow sources, such as pop music, and the acts of metallic-painted street performers who pose as statues for tips. And unlike professional singers or actors, Gilbert and George made no attempt to astound their audience through their stage presence and performed with minimally stiff and awkward movements. The work’s innovation derived not from retinacy in a medium – sculpture, theatre or music – but rather through the conceptual framing of the living body in an art context.
Lucian Freud's full-length portrait of Sue Tilley (a Social Security official who posed for the picture at night so as not to interfere with her office hours) responds to a long Western tradition of reclining female nudes, as seen, for example, in Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* (c. 1508–10). Yet here Freud (1922–2011) daringly forsakes the idealized body of a traditional sleeping Venus with soft, luminous flesh and long, slender proportions. Through his unflinching realism and the deadpan, slightly overhead vantage point, which flattens the background and thrusts the figure closer to the picture plane, Freud intimately exposes the aesthetic of a real body. He renders the pull of gravity upon Tilley’s flesh with sensitivity and observes subtle changes in skin tone—for example, the cooler flesh colours swirling around her right thigh transition to warmer yellow and pink on her knee. He treats paint as flesh by using heavy impasto to build the texture and shape of human forms (forms that resonate in the billowing cushions of the floral patterned couch). The whole painting seems alive with flesh, as the colours of the skin echo in the earth tones of the setting.

Dana Schutz’s reclining male nude, *From Frank from Observation* (2002), is one scene from a series of post-apocalyptic scenarios dreamt up by Schutz (b. 1976). Frank, a fictional subject, is the last man on Earth, and Schutz the last remaining painter (and woman). Stretched out on a beach, sunburnt-pink, scruffy and obliging, Frank poses like a pin-up, yet his sexuality is somehow benign. Despite being the only surviving specimen of masculinity, in his isolation he is emasculated. By inventing a world where Frank is her only subject, and by extension her only available muse, Schutz hardly subverts the tradition of the reclining nude, in which women have historically been painted as passive, receptive and suggestive odalisques in service of the male gaze. By taking portraiture back to her own imaginary ‘ground zero’, Schutz makes Frank both model and fool.

In his philosophical novel *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–91), philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche disparagingly describes the ‘Last Man’ as a figure who is tame, mediocre and uninspiring; a man ‘who lives the longest’ and makes ‘everything small’. Under her active and lampooning brush, Frank’s body becomes the property of Schutz—a plaything, the butt of a joke, a Nietzschean loser.
The art of the ancient Greeks. Yet his calm body be-
contrapposto over his shoulder. His idealized, youthful frame
Testament boy-hero appears to stand relaxed,
Michelangelo's sculpture depicts David moments
Marble, H 4.34 m (169 in), including base. Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence
the city's town hall (it was replaced with a copy and
public fell so deeply in love with the work at its
enlarged David's head to compensate for the ex-
original intended location was atop a buttress

The Origin of the World was not publicly shown until 1988. However, both
report in 1872 when displayed by a dealer and
ick of pearl a frank testament to their passionate
The two bodies entwine in ecstatic abandon – the
The Sleepers
GUSTAVE COURBET. THE SLEEPERS. 1866

The theme of lesbianism, contemporary figures, without the conventional
of pearls a frank testament to their passionate
The two bodies entwine in ecstatic abandon – the
The Sleepers
GUSTAVE COURBET. THE SLEEPERS. 1866

The first book to celebrate the beautiful and provocative
ways artists have represented, scrutinized and utilized
the body over centuries
Examines art through that most accessible and relatable lens: the human body
There are no directly comparable titles in the market; this is the only book to examine the subject in such depth and scope
Diverse and multi-cultural, it explores the manifestations
of the body through time, cultures and media

Visually arresting, it will surprise, inspire and inform
art lovers everywhere

Over 400 artists featured: works range from 11,000 BC hand stencils in Argentine caves to videos and performances by contemporary artists such as Marina Abramovic, Joan Jonas and Bruce Nauman

Follows in the tradition of bestsellers such as The Story of Art, The Art Book, The Photography Book and 50,000 Years of Art

Perfect gift for the holidays, a classic in the making and
an indispensable reference for any home library

### Book specifications
- Binding: Hardback with cloth binding
- Format: 305 × 238 mm (12 × 9 ¾ inches)
-Extent: 440 pp
- Word count: 100,000
- Number of images: 550 col.
- ISBN: 978 0 7148 6916 7

### Cover image
- Robert Mapplethorpe
- Self Portrait. 1976
- © The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation
- Courtesy Art + Commerce

---

**KEY SALES POINTS**

- The first book to celebrate the beautiful and provocative ways artists have represented, scrutinized and utilized the body over centuries
- Examines art through that most accessible and relatable lens: the human body
- There are no directly comparable titles in the market; this is the only book to examine the subject in such depth and scope
- Diverse and multi-cultural, it explores the manifestations of the body through time, cultures and media
- Visually arresting, it will surprise, inspire and inform art lovers everywhere
- Over 400 artists featured: works range from 11,000 BC hand stencils in Argentine caves to videos and performances by contemporary artists such as Marina Abramovic, Joan Jonas and Bruce Nauman
- Follows in the tradition of bestsellers such as The Story of Art, The Art Book, The Photography Book and 50,000 Years of Art
- Perfect gift for the holidays, a classic in the making and an indispensable reference for any home library