

Motherhood Undone: A Magical Teaching Tool

Roger Pierson, MS, PhD, FEAS, FCAHS, Ed Hughes, MBChB, MSc, FRCSC

This image is of an anatomical manikin (approximately 18 cm long) carved in ivory by an anonymous sculptor circa 1600. Many types were carved for physician and midwife teaching in France, Germany, and Italy during the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries.

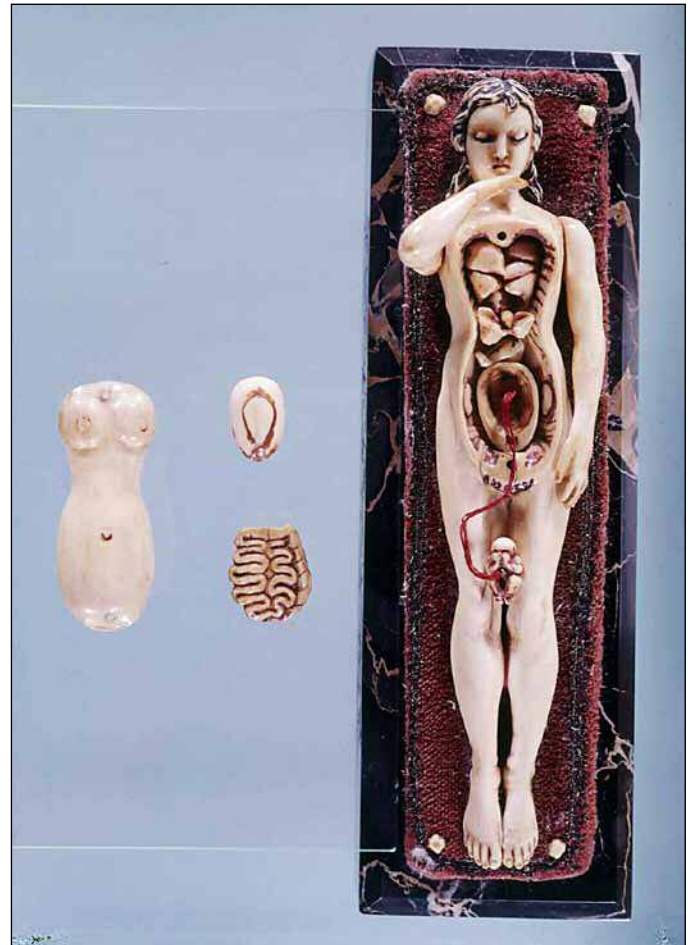
The thoracic and abdominal walls may be removed to reveal the viscera. The internal organs are carved into the original block of the sculpture, and the red silken threads represent the umbilical cord. One can only imagine the discussions that took place over this small representation of a pregnant human body.

The manikin is in the collection of the Alabama Museum of the Health Sciences at the University of Alabama at Birmingham,¹ and is depicted in the US National Library of Medicine.²

Next month, watch for a more modern take on the same theme, but from a patient's perspective, by the artist Frida Kahlo.

REFERENCES

1. Alabama Museum of the Health Sciences at the University of Alabama at Birmingham [web site]. Available at: <http://www.uab.edu/amhs>. Accessed January 10, 2013.
2. US National Library of Medicine. Dream Anatomy gallery. Available at: http://www.nlm.nih.gov/dreamanatomy/da_g_Y-2.html. Accessed January 10, 2013.



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