

The evolution of Clemente Susini's anatomical iconography from his beginnings at La Specola waxwork to his artistic maturity, as seen in the collection of Cagliari

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In 1772, Clemente Susini (1754-1814) freshly graduated at the Florentine *Accademia di Belle Arti* was hired, as assistant of the sculptor Giuseppe Ferrini and dissector aid, by Felice Fontana (1730-1805) physicist of the Grand-ducal court. The latter was then setting up the ceroplastic workshop of the *Regio e Imperiale Museo di Fisica e Storia Naturale* (called La Specola) funded by the Grand-Duke Peter Leopold. Ten years later, he was appointed first modeller, a job that he carried on until the end of his life. In forty years of work Susini realized, or oversaw, the production of over 2000 wax models most of which for the great collection of La Specola in Florence and that of the Josephinum in Vienna completed in 1780-1786 [1]. Aside from both the former, made under Fontana's directorship, Susini produced other models commissioned to the Museum from Italy and abroad. Noteworthy, among these is the collection for Cagliari made in collaboration with the Sardinian anatomist Francesco Antonio Boi (1767-1850) in 1803-1805. At the time, Fontana was no more interested in wax modelling and Susini was free, at last, to fully express himself. Cagliari's waxes are more realistic, there are no posing figures, and the models do not exhibit the "rosy skin" of those of La Specola and Vienna. Most of the 23 cases bear the date and Susini's signature, a seal of authorship lacking in the other collections of Florentine waxes. The target of Susini and Boi appears to be quite different from that seen in the earlier collections. The References to clinical and functional anatomy seem purposely pointed out in order to give students of surgery and medicine relevant information on their professional training. There is no attempt to make anatomy more attractive for a general public or to educate citizens according to the project of "popularizing" anatomy so dear to Fontana and Peter Leopold. Moreover, it seems that Susini and Boi have reached a degree of "cooperation of art and science" that anticipate the current trend of anatomical illustration [2].

References

- [1] Lemire M. (1990). *Artistes et mortels*. Paris, France: Chabaud. 446 p
- [2] Ghosh SK. (2015). Evolution of illustrations in anatomy: a study from the classical period in Europe to modern times. *Anat Sci Educ* 8:175-188.

Keywords

Anatomical Waxes, Clemente Susini, Francesco Antonio Boi, Cagliari, La Specola