

Meier, Allison, "A Magazine Scans the Connective Tissue Between Medicine and Art," HYPERALLERGIC, 6 May 2015.

HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

A Magazine Scans the Connective Tissue Between Medicine and Art

Filled with scrawled notes for poems on prescription pads by William Carlos Williams, photographs by Stuart Franklin of a condom factory production line at the peak of the AIDS crisis, and collages by Melissa Meyer based on torturous-looking orthodontic headgear, *Esopus 22: Medicine* feels like a giant patient file for the cross between the medical and visual arts. The 230-page issue of the nonprofit arts magazine is its first annual publication since it started in 2003, moving to a larger format — with over 60 contributors — from its previous biannual editions.

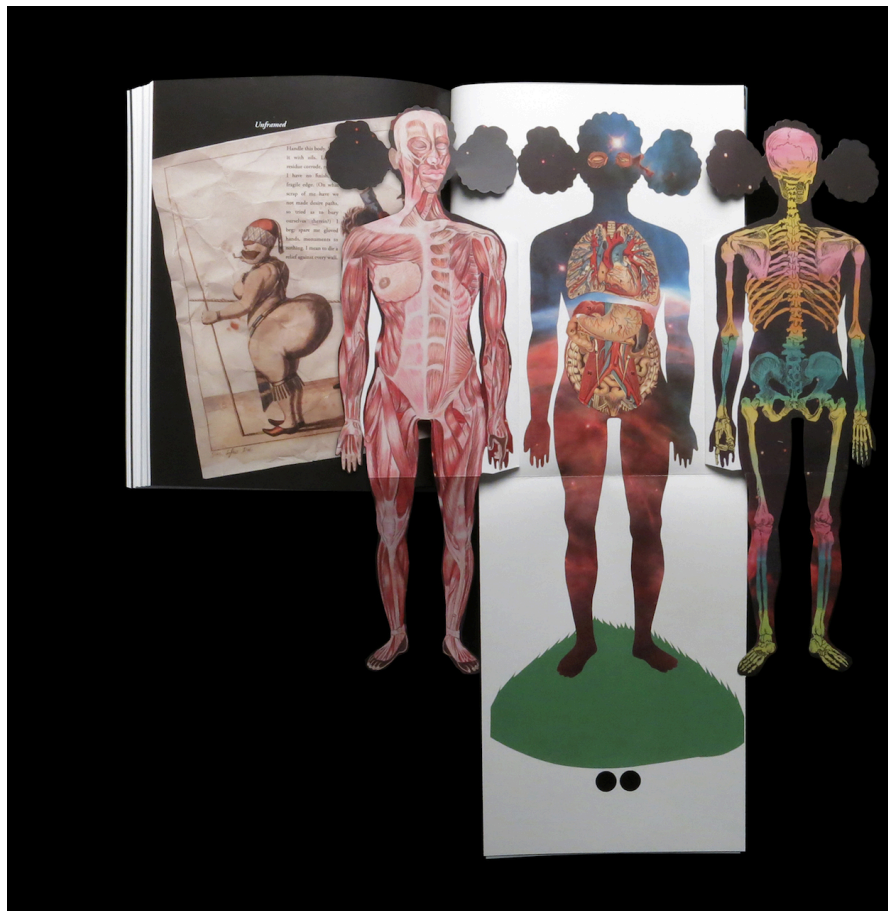
"I think it's sometimes too easy to create a dichotomy between medicine — which is often characterized as analytical or 'scientific' — and the arts, which are typically thought of as more intuitive," Tod Lippy, the editor, designer, and main mastermind of *Esopus*, told Hyperallergic. "So the idea was to really delve into the intense creativity that informs both disciplines, especially where they happen to intersect."

For example, designer Thomas Juncher Jensen rendered ideal waiting rooms based on reader suggestions, and reproductions of archival material from the Museum of Modern Art present a 1943 exhibition by war veterans, part of the institution's Arts in Therapy program.

Esopus 22: Medicine has its free launch party on May 7 at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture's new Chelsea space, and will host an event on May 26 at The Kitchen featuring issue contributors Nina Katchadourian and Okkervil River's Will Sheff, who's included on an accompanying CD of bodily organ-inspired music. Also related is a screening of Frederick Wiseman's 1970 documentary *Hospital* on June 14 at the Museum of the Moving Image. In the magazine, emergency room physician and author Paul Austin introduces startling black-and-white images from the film, which he says demonstrate "afresh how our system is still broken" in the "most disturbingly accurate depiction of my workplace that I have ever seen. It gives few indications of the time of day. The light is fluorescent, the shadows unchanging. But that doesn't matter: The sorrow may speed up or slow down, but it never ends. Night or day."

That stark feeling is echoed in Teresa Matas's *Arte Terapéutico* (2015), shown publicly for the first time in the issue of *Esopus*. For the series, Matas photographed headlights at night and then drew them in pencil and white marker, after her son died in a car accident. Other contributors focus on the medicinal control of bodies, like Fred Tomaselli, who, for his *Chemical Celestial Portraits, Series 2* (2014), asks sitters for their drug histories and birthdays, creating astrological signs from pills on paper.

William Villalongo's *Anatomy of a Muse* (2015), on the other hand, examines the historical, anatomical objectification of black women's bodies, including Sarah Baartman, the 19th-century "Hottentot Venus" whose body was displayed both in her life and after her death (her remains were on view in Paris until the 1970s). Alongside poetry by Nicole Sealey, a beautiful fold-out figure by Villalongo reveals dissected layers like an old paper autopsy flap book. One of the most complicated of the hand-inserted objects in *Esopus*, this particular element took eight people three whole days to assemble. It and all the collected projects in the issue offer a sense of how art and medicine interpret the relationship between our bodies and the world.



William Villalongo, "Anatomy of a Muse" (2015), folded out