



# Higher Edu



**Embalmed:** Dissected body parts can be sketched at UNSW

# Drawn and quartered

Patricia Karvelas

THE University of NSW last week provided a rare chance for people from artists to plastic surgeons to take up the Leonardo da Vinci role by sketching body parts from the university's collection.

The workshop seeks to revive old skills and bring together science and art.

Specimens used in the school of medical sciences' annual Leonardo workshop are embalmed and professionally dissected parts from bodies donated to the university for study.

Brian Freeman, director of medical teaching, said he believed UNSW was the only university in the world providing this opportunity to the public.

"When one draws one makes a connection between the object and the brain. And the first anatomists were artists. It's been a long tradition," he said.

"They are drawing bones, heads, faces, half torsos, legs and arms. At the start of the week we begin with the legs because it's easier to approach the most remote part of the body first, and towards the end of a five-day workshop we finish up with the heads and the organs. "There's a gap in art education between depicting the outside of the body and understanding what's underneath the surface. We want to fill that gap. There's also a divorce between art and science and by running these courses we are bringing it back together, we're reintroducing a nexus which formerly was very common," he said.

Artist Susan Dorothea White gave artistic guidance during the week-long workshop.

Ms White said that by discovering what is under the skin, participants improve their skills in rendering the human form.

"We had a plastic surgeon come along who wanted to learn to draw to illustrate to his patients how he was going to give them a beautiful navel and fix them up.

"In the last hundred years artists have been deprived of the opportunity to draw anatomical specimens. We are giving them that opportunity," she said.

"The workshops are designed to improve the life-drawing skills of artists and anyone interested in the human body."

Students were able to draw muscles, tendons, fascia, joints and bones.

Sketching sessions were interspersed with illustrated talks on the influence of anatomy in art history, with slides of works by artists such as da Vinci, Rodin, Alice Neel, and Hokusai.

The first workshop was held in October 2000.

Monica Epstein, an artist who enrolled in the course for a third time, said: "It gives me a great understanding of the body in a way that normally is not allowed for artists. I find it quite a privilege to go into this world."

The university hopes to run another workshop in May.