Human anatomy: head and neck with cadaver

Dive deep into anatomy

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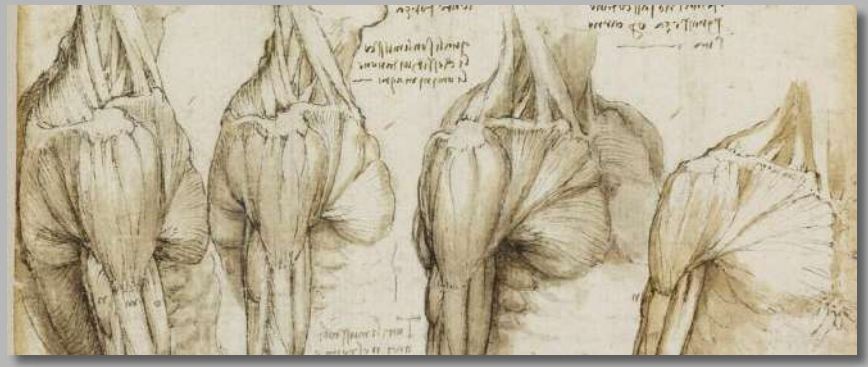

Pioneering anatomists

Artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo understood that to master form, they had to study structure.

Through their drawings and notes, they laid the foundations of anatomical art—creating studies that captured not just the surface, but the inner workings of the body: bones, muscles, proportions, and harmony.

These works remain timeless because they reveal a way of seeing—a bridge between science and creativity that still inspires artists today.

This course follows that same spirit, bringing anatomical knowledge to the hands of modern creators through a visual and artistic approach that respects tradition while embracing new tools and technologies.

The significance of anatomical understanding

Whether you're creating stylized characters or pursuing anatomical realism, understanding the human body from the inside out brings depth, accuracy, and credibility to your work.

When an artist truly understands the structure beneath the skin, they can invent, exaggerate, or stylize with confidence—because their choices are informed, not improvised.

The body is not just form, it's function. Knowing how bones, muscles, and fat interact improves the way we sculpt movement, weight, and personality.

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Who teaches the course?

The course is taught by Rafa Zabala, an artist and educator with an uncommon journey that bridges the worlds of sculpture, digital creation, and academic anatomy.

Rafa began his artistic path over three decades ago through traditional sculpture, working on large-scale artistic and religious commissions. His passion for form and structure eventually led him into the digital world, where he became a character and creature artist for some of the most prestigious studios in the film and video game industries.

His credits include major productions such as *The Hobbit*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Avatar: Frontiers of Pandora*, and collaborations with filmmakers like George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, as well as global icons like Paul McCartney and Lady Gaga.

Over time, his fascination with the human body evolved into a deeper exploration of anatomy, guiding him back to the foundations of form. Rafa now collaborates with the Faculty of Medicine in Valencia, assisting in cadaver-based anatomy courses and developing anatomical learning tools for medical education.

Combining his hands-on experience in dissection with decades of sculptural expertise, Rafa offers a unique perspective—equally visual, structural, and artistic. His teaching is direct, inspiring, and built to empower digital artists with a clear, intuitive understanding of the human body.

"Anatomy is not just science—it's the language of form. And once you speak it, you sculpt with purpose." —RZA

Instructor
Rafa Zabala

- Founder of Rafa Zabala Anatomy
- Tradicional sculptor
- Character and creature modeller
- Art Director
- Anatomy instructor

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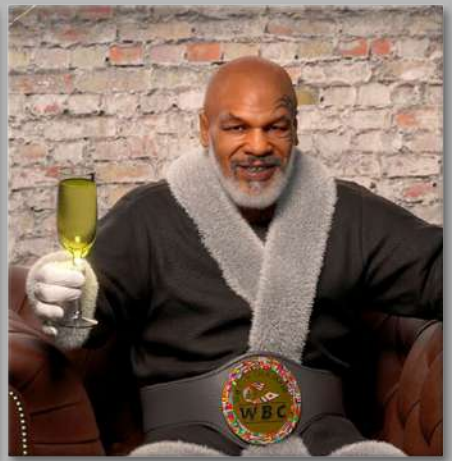
Anatomy as the driving force of my career



Since an early age, I've been passionate about anatomy. Its study and observation have always guided my artistic path.

What began as curiosity became a lifelong journey—from traditional sculpture to digital characters and creatures in film and games.

Today, my work reflects a deep anatomical foundation, not only in human forms but also in animals and imaginary beings. Recent years teaching at the University of Valencia and working with real human anatomy have brought new depth to my creative vision.

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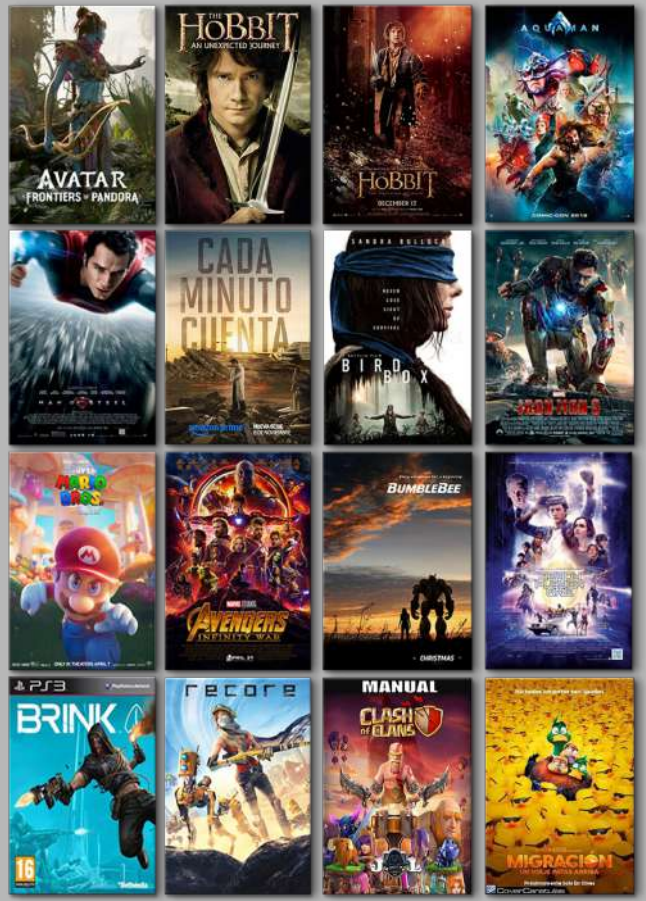
Bridging the Gap Between Entertainment and Anatomy



SOCIEDAD

De trabajar en «El Hobbit» a desarrollar simuladores aplicados a la medicina

► El escultor digital valenciano Rafa Zabala crea prototipos, que se pueden utilizar como práctica para los estudiantes o para reproducir posteriores intervenciones ► El artista recrea todas las capas del tejido humano con distintos materiales

Los trabajos cuentan con un certificado médico para reflejarlo «de la manera más fiel posible»

I've found a deep sense of purpose in my path as both an artist and educator.
This journey has taken me across countries and cultures, connecting me with amazing people along the way.

At the heart of it all is my passion for anatomy—the driving force that led me to explore new creative horizons and eventually feel at home among doctors and surgeons, who now embrace me as one of their own.

They have become my mentors in a more demanding anatomical stage, offering knowledge that has profoundly shaped my perspective.

I believe every artist can benefit from a solid foundation in anatomy, and I'm here to share that knowledge with those who wish to truly understand the human body.

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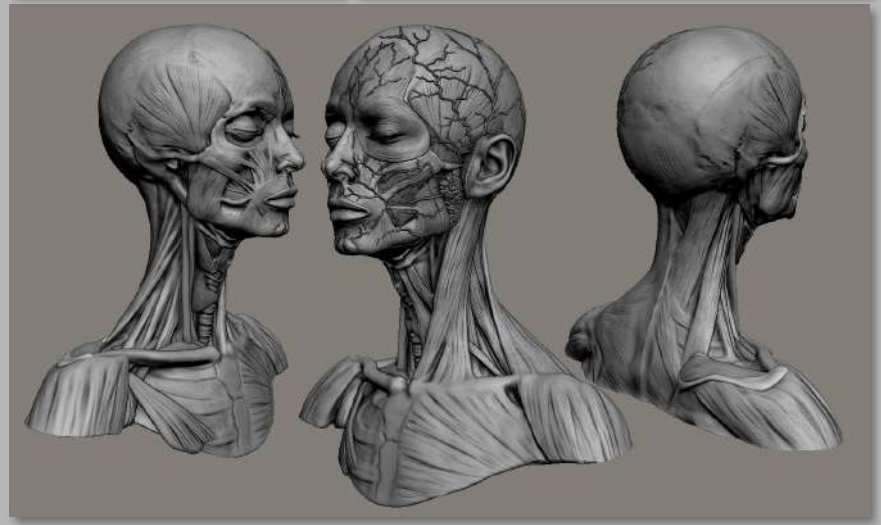

Exploring new applications

These are examples of medical simulators I've created in collaboration with the private company *Iface Simulator*. You can find more about their work on their official website.

Currently, I'm developing new and challenging projects for both the medical and industrial sectors—combining anatomical precision with innovative materials and sculptural techniques.

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Connecting Anatomy and Reality

This course takes place in the academic setting of the Faculty of Medicine of Valencia and offers an intensive three-session experience focused on the study of the human head and neck through direct cadaver observation.

Unlike a purely artistic or textbook-based approach, this course combines academic precision with a visual and structural perspective that reinforces what is learned. Each session is designed to bridge theoretical knowledge—acquired through atlases, models, or illustrations—with its practical application on the real human body.

Throughout the course, we analyze in detail the cranial osteology, facial, cervical, and masticatory muscles, as well as other key structures of the neck. We explore essential aspects such as muscle insertions, spatial relationships, symmetry, and how these anatomical elements appear on the surface of the face and neck.

Using anatomical sculptures as didactic tools, we demonstrate how specific volumes visible in the cadaver translate into forms that can be represented in sculpture or drawing. This dialogue between direct observation and visual representation helps to answer questions that many manuals or digital models often leave unresolved.

A unique opportunity to connect theoretical knowledge with the tangible reality of the human body, and to understand the anatomy of the head and neck with clarity,not speculation.

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A Distinguished Finale: Dr. Alfonso Valverde

As a masterful closing to the course, we are honored to count on the endorsement of Dr. Alfonso Valverde, surgeon, full professor of anatomy, and head of the body donation program.

With over 30 years of experience in the Department of Anatomy and Embryology at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Valencia, Dr. Valverde has devoted his life to the study and teaching of human anatomy. He served as the department's director for six years and has led the university's body donation program—a role as delicate as it is essential to medical education.

His dedication to teaching, clarity in pedagogy, and scientific rigor have inspired generations of medical professionals. His international reputation is reflected in his work as a reviewer for the renowned "Gray's Anatomy for Students, 4th edition", a global reference for thousands of students.

Dr. Valverde's involvement brings not only academic excellence to the course, but also a unique opportunity for students to ask questions and learn directly from one of the most respected anatomists I have had the privilege to know.

Who is this course for?

This course is designed for artists who feel that anatomy books don't fully answer their visual questions and who need a direct experience to clearly, three-dimensionally, and realistically understand the structure of the human head and neck.

It's also intended for medical or scientific professionals who want to review and strengthen their anatomical knowledge from a more visual and practical perspective—especially those whose specialties may have taken them away from in-depth anatomical study.

No prior knowledge is required, as we start from scratch to build a solid foundation. We'll begin with cranial and facial osteology, and progressively explore each muscle—analyzing its shape, function, insertions, and how it appears on the surface of the face and neck. We'll also cover the most visible blood vessels and key nerve branches to gain a comprehensive understanding of the cranio-cervical region.

This course is not about memorizing names—it's for those who want to truly understand what they see in illustrations, sculptures, or 3D models and confidently apply that understanding to their artistic, medical, or teaching work. Through direct observation of the human body, students will bridge the gap between theory and reality, resolving doubts that may have lingered unanswered for years.

Anatomy is a language learned with time and passion. This training is not a shortcut—it's a transformative experience that leaves a lasting mark on the way we observe, interpret, and represent the human body.

Throughout the course, we'll compare what we study in class with images of anatomical or classical sculptures, carefully selected to help us recognize how real cadaver volumes are translated into sculptural representation.

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Programa

This intensive course includes a total of 10 hours of instruction, delivered over two days:

- Friday afternoon: theoretical session from 16:00 to 20:00

- Saturday, full day:
  - Morning: 9:00 to 13:00 (with a short break)
  - Afternoon: 15:00 to 17:00
- Throughout the course, we combine theoretical content with direct cadaver observation in the dissection room at the Faculty of Medicine of the Valencia University.
  We'll explore the anatomy of the head and neck in depth, connecting each structure to its sculptural representation for a clear and three-dimensional understanding.

Friday afternoon

- Osteology of the skull
- Muscular structure of the face and neck
- Circulatory and nervous systems
- Factors of age, ethnicity, and expression

Saturday morning

- Review of skull osteology
- Facial and cervical muscles in the dissection room
- Translating facial structure into sculpture

Saturday afternoon

- Circulatory and nervous systems
- Factors of age, ethnicity, and expression

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Things to Keep in Mind

No materials are required. All you need is a willingness to learn, punctuality, and a focused attitude.

At the beginning of the course, each student will receive all the necessary materials for the practical sessions, along with a lab coat to be used throughout the training.

Student Benefits

As a student of this course, you'll enjoy exclusive discounts on future training programs and in our online store *Locos por la Anatomía*, where you'll find sculptures, anatomical models, and educational products related to both artistic and medical anatomy.

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