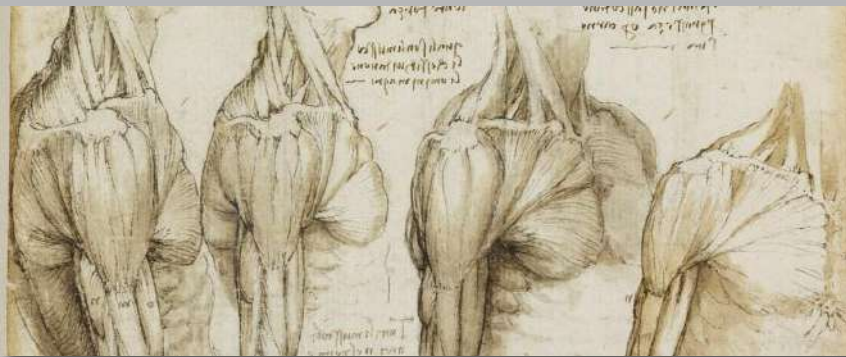




Da Vinci Anatomy Retreat: human anatomy of the trunk and limbs

4 Days and 5 Nights

Sculpting Muscles on a Base Skeleton, enjoying the nature and and Witness a Real
Cadaver Dissection"



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.

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



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.



Bridging the Gap Between Entertainment and Anatomy

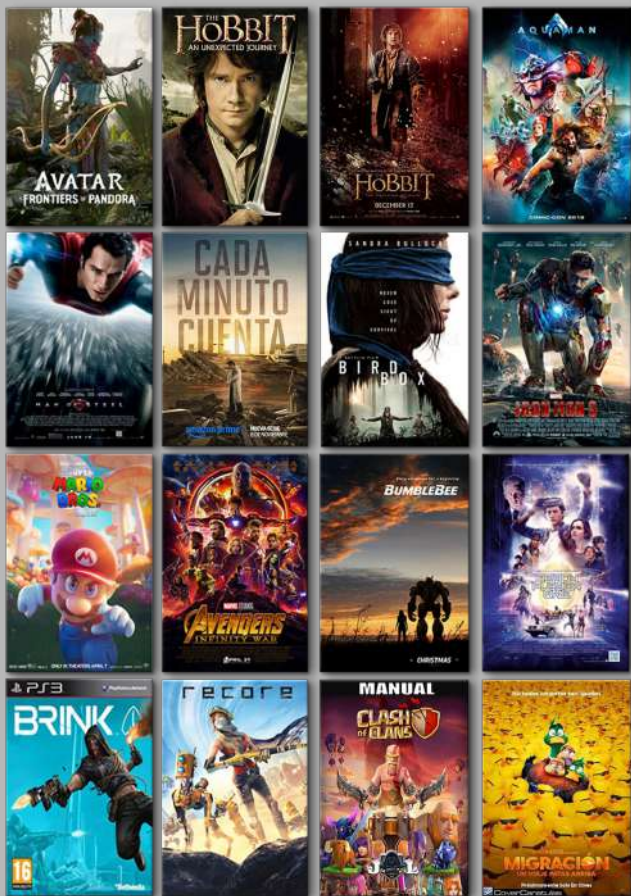
I've found a deep sense of purpose in my path as both an artist and educator.

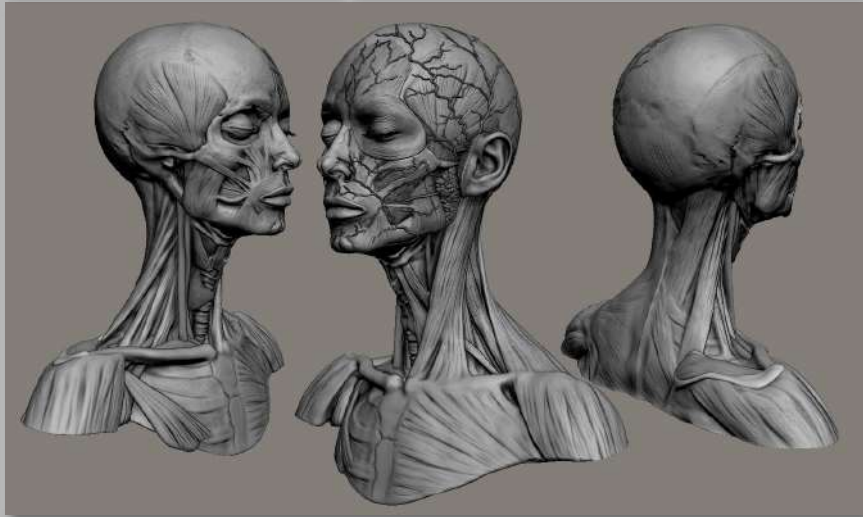
This journey has taken me across countries and cultures, connecting me with amazing people along the way.

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.





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.



Why is it important to have an in-depth understanding of anatomy?

My dedication to anatomy has led me to study it in depth through cadaveric dissection, just as our esteemed teachers did in the past. This has been a magical and irreplaceable experience for me as an artist and anatomy enthusiast, as it has opened my eyes to a much broader and revealing perspective. Today, one of my activities is teaching anatomy with cadavers to first-year medical students as a supporting professor. This allows me to constantly interact with anatomy in its purest and most real state, as well as when I create characters for the entertainment industry such as films or video games, or when developing products for medical training and practice.

This in depth knowledge has greatly benefited me as an artist . To truly understand something, you must study it in its purest form, not just through interpretations. Therefore, I can affirm that in-depth study with dissections has given me a complete vision and knowledge.



We will always begin by studying the bony structures upon which we sculpt the musculature. In doing so, we will not only learn about muscular anatomy but also about muscle origins and insertions, and how the entire musculoskeletal system interacts. Next, we will examine how the skin reflects the internal structures, studying the effects of localized fat and other factors such as proportions and age. We will also explore how the facial muscles contribute to expressions and review the major veins to consider, which are visible on our body, allowing us to create our final works convincingly and knowledgeably, without the need for interpretation or invention.



Take pleasure in the amenities and the overall experience

Learning is only one aspect of the experience. We'll enjoy stunning views of the Sierra Calderona, Valencia's lush and spectacular natural park. The grounds also offer ample space to sit, read, and relax while breathing in the fresh mountain air, or to continue reviewing what you've learned and discussing it with your classmates.





Accommodations

The accommodations are modern cottages, fully equipped with everything you need for a perfect stay.

Enjoy your mornings on the terrace with breakfast provided, and stargaze at night under clear skies.

The cottages are located within the same grounds, just a short walk from the classroom.



For whom is this course intended?

This course is designed for individuals with an artistic profile who want to delve deep into anatomy, as well as for students or professionals in the health or medical sciences who wish to review or deepen their knowledge of human anatomy through the techniques of sculpture.

No prior knowledge is necessary as we will build a solid foundation from scratch. We will begin the classes with osteology, focusing on the parts related to the muscles that we will work on next. In this way, we will see the origins and insertions of each muscle and its function, and we will also discuss the main blood vessels most visible under the skin as well as localized fat, general proportions, and how age affects our anatomy.

Anatomy is a complex language that can only be mastered through persistent study throughout a lifetime, so this course does not try to convey the false message of "learn anatomy in a week," as the complexity of this subject requires a lot of dedication and time. The goal is to create a solid foundation through the observation of real structures, without which it is impossible to ever fully understand their beauty and functionality.

None of this is possible without a great deal of passion, which is what drives those of us who love this subject and will study it all our lives.

What we can guarantee is that we will ensure that each student receives not only a solid learning experience that will mark a before and after in their knowledge of anatomy but also a pleasant, unique, and unforgettable experience around sculpture with various enriching activities.

Some of the activities we offer include:

- Visits and talks by renowned artists who will share their experiences as artists and from whom we can always gain valuable advice.
- After class hiking for those who want to enjoy a guided tour in the wonderful Sierra Calderona park and recharge their batteries and lungs with fresh air.
- An unique experience at the University of Valencia, where we will study what we have learned in the classroom through dissection of a cadaver.
- Welcome special dinner
- Farewell special dinner
- All meals and hotel included

At the end of the course, we will package all sculptures so you can take them home and continue working on them and refine them completely.



Course Program

Vivencia is a 4-day (5-night) intensive training that combines anatomical sculpture, nature, and hands-on learning.

Arrival is scheduled for Tuesday afternoon/evening. We'll pick you up at a meeting point in Valencia, followed by a welcome dinner.

On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, we'll work in the natural setting of **1Respiro**, sculpting the human body muscle by muscle over a specially designed base figure. Each day includes theory, live demonstrations, and practical clay sculpting sessions:

Mornings: 9:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Afternoons: 3:00 PM – 6:30 PM (open studio time with supervision in a relaxed atmosphere)

After 6:30 PM, we'll either enjoy a talk with a guest artist or take a nature walk in the mountains.

On Saturday morning, I will personally review each participant's sculpture. After lunch, we'll head to the Faculty of Medicine of Valencia for an optional anatomical dissection session, where you'll observe firsthand on a real cadaver what we've studied throughout the week. (Included in the course fee — and highly recommended!)

We'll wrap up with a farewell group dinner in Valencia.

The course includes transportation from a meeting point in Valencia to the accommodation and back, both upon arrival and departure



Course Structure

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Tuesday afternoon arrival. Welcome dinner

Wednesday : Day 1

- Osteology of the lower limb
- Muscles of the leg and thigh
- Sculpting with supervision

Thursday: Day 2

- Osteology of the trunk and pelvis
- Muscles of the back, chest, and abdomen
- Sculpting with supervision

Friday : Day 3

- Osteology of the arm and forearm
- Muscles of the arm and forearm
- Sculpting with supervision

Saturday Day 4

- Morning: General review
- Afternoon: Visit to the dissection room at the Faculty of Medicine to review what was learned on a real cadaver

Sunday

Morning: Breakfast, packing and wrapping of sculptures.

- Transfer to the meeting point in Valencia.

Things to keep in mind

All you need to bring is your eagerness to learn.

At the beginning of the course, you will receive theoretical materials and all the supplies needed for sculpting: base, armature, clay, and a full sculpting tool kit (rollers, spatulas, loop tools, scrapers...), plus an apron.

At the end of the course, your sculpture will be carefully packed so you can transport it safely. Optionally, you may purchase our tool and apron kit if you wish to continue practicing at home.

We recommend that each student review the day's content after class, as every session will start with a Q&A to resolve any doubts from the previous day.



Exclusive Benefits for Students

By joining this course, you'll enjoy discounts on future training programs and in our online store *Locos por la Anatomía*, where you'll find dissection models, anatomical sculptures, and much more.