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Known as the "century of anatomy," the 16th century in Italy saw an explosion of studies and treatises on the discipline. Medical science advanced at an unprecedented rate, and physicians published on anatomy as never before. Simultaneously, many of the period's most prominent artists—including Leonardo and Michelangelo in Florence, Raphael in Rome, and Rubens working in Italy—turned to the study of anatomy to inform their own drawings and sculptures, some by working directly with anatomists and helping to illustrate their discoveries. The result was a rich corpus of art objects detailing the workings of the human body with an accuracy never before attained.

Art and Anatomy in Renaissance Italy examines this crossroads between art and science, showing how the attempt to depict bone structure, musculature, and our inner workings—both in drawings and in three dimensions—constituted an important step forward in how the body was represented in art. While already remarkable at the time of their original publication, the anatomical drawings by 16th-century masters have even foreshadowed developments in anatomic studies in modern times.