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BOOK REVIEW

The Complete Guide to Anatomy for Artists & Illustrators
by Gottfried Bammes

Hardback, 504 pages
Search Press
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Gottfried Bammes (1920-2007), once Professor of Artistic Anatomy at the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts, was the prolific author of many successful books on life-drawing, some published in English. *The Complete Guide to Anatomy for Artists & Illustrators,* initially published in 1964 as *Die Gestalt des Menschen,* is undoubtedly his masterpiece. The nine editions of this book in German are a measure of its success and impact and this – the tenth and the first in English – is very welcome.

The bulk of the book consists of six chapters devoted to regional anatomy, each integrating descriptions of the structural components in relation to the dynamics of function and to artistic expression. The final section of each chapter gives relevant examples from works of art. Throughout, the emphasis is on providing the teacher with progressive methods of instructing the student to acquire an integrated approach that combines art and science. Three further chapters address more general issues: bodily proportions in relation to age and gender; the dynamics and bearing of the human body; and the "building blocks" of the body, namely, the skeleton, muscles, and skin and fat.

The English text sometimes betrays its origin but any weakness in translation is fully compensated for by the wonderful range of more than 1,200 illustrations which speak a universal language. The anatomical drawings are notable for both their clarity and attractiveness. There are also sketches and diagrams by the artist-author and photographs of nude models that cover a wide variety of ages and body-forms. The diagrams of silhouetted figures and limbs in action, with the skeleton and muscle delineated, are particularly informative.

The medical historian will be interested in the introductory chapter, showing how Renaissance humanism called for more than the simple rendering of the human form, which had previously satisfied the demands of mediaeval religious painting. Leonardo da Vinci, though not the first anatomist, launched the study of anatomy as an artistic, dynamic process. Vesalius set new standards for scientific observation, discrediting Galen, and, with Stephan von Calcar, reached new heights of artistic anatomical representation.

This volume can be warmly recommended as an essential reference book for professional figurative artists and illustrators, for teachers of life drawing, and for keen students of the art.

Barry Hoffbrand
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