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### FROM THE EDITOR

#### Embodiment in Art Practice

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Artistic expression is necessarily embodied. Each art form entails different sets of movements that an artist learns through repetition and feedback. Like a health care practitioner, an artist monitors and responds to the body. By “knowing thyself” through expressions of embodiment, an artist can investigate ethically, socially, and culturally fraught dimensions of one’s own personal health care story. Long recognized as therapeutic, art making also can disrupt expectations for bodies. The late artist, Lisa Bufano, created, among other works, **performance** pieces that highlighted mobility despite her double lower-leg amputation.

Among an artwork’s lasting impressions might be an acknowledgement of what the art is made of. Using the body’s leavings—shavings, clippings, flakes—artists can highlight the body’s natural degradation. This theme variously compliments and contradicts the aims of health care; although mindfully accepting one’s impermanence can be restful, health care practitioners tirelessly work to extend lifespans and to keep the body from emulsifying.

Some artworks’ material choices demand reckoning with the political realities of health care. In Gwyneth Zeleny Anderson’s *Menstrual Cycle* (2023), an angry, flower-headed cartoon painted with menstrual blood stomps around the United States capitol. Zeleny Anderson writes: “My rage about the overturning of *Roe v Wade* feels cartoonish and justified; I want to bleed on it all.”<sup>1</sup>

The body inspires concepts, enacts practices, and constrains processes. Like Olympic athletes whose sports are apparent from the mere silhouette of their figures, so, too, may the **medium of the artist shape her body**. The thumbnail of a book binder is like a bone folder. The calluses of a guitarist are like leather. When heavy metals were more commonly used in paints, the mind of a painter might have been warped by toxins. The effects of an art practice on a body can be more fleeting; as a cartoonist sketches characters, her face subconsciously scrunches into grimaces, scowls, and jubilation.

This theme issue, “Embodiment in Art Practice,” welcomes questions about how art affects the body, such as how to address tension in artistic practices between art’s physical demands and its potential to offer healing to creators, viewers, or readers. How should a practice adapt to the **changing abilities** of a body? What should we know about

how art practices influence embodiment experiences? What are the key lessons health care can glean from these investigations?

By centering the body, the contributing artists broaden and deepen our understanding of intersections among ethics, aesthetics, and health care. Archives of artistic work, such as this theme issue, provide insight into changing reactions to, reflections on, and recordings of embodiment. When artworks are curated for discourse on health care ethics, a shared goal between art and medicine is highlighted: to better understand human experiences and shape best practices accordingly, in human-centered ways. The works featured herein illuminate the humanistic impulses common among artistic creation, caregiving, and research.

### References

1. *Menstrual Cycle*. Gwyneth Zeleny Anderson. 2023. Accessed January 16, 2025. <https://gwynethvzanderson.com/section/519630-Menstrual%20Cycle.html>

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