

Virtual Mentor

American Medical Association Journal of Ethics
October 1999, Volume 1, Number 2: 12.

ART OF MEDICINE

The Sacred Heart: An Atlas of the Body

Audiey Kao, MD, PhD

In *The Sacred Heart: An Atlas of the Body Seen Through Invasive Surgery*, photographer Max Aquilera-Hellweg captures haunting pictures of the human body exposed and deconstructed during surgeries ranging from removal of a brain tumor to a cesarean birth. These graphic photographs are at once repulsive and mesmerizing, reminding us that the human body when sick manifests a terrible beauty.

Healing and learning appear to be paired processes, occurring together throughout human activity. But nowhere are these processes as prominently seen as they are during medical training.

For most students, the medium that most readily lends itself to retaining some visual memory of a succession of fleeting moments is the camera. Through photographs, the highlights of yesterday's happenings remain vivid and communicable to others. The subtle interplay of light and shadow that renders a photograph unique may even be likened to the delicate shifts that characterize interactions between patient and physician or between student and teacher.

Audiey Kao, MD, PhD is editor in chief of *Virtual Mentor*.

The viewpoints expressed on this site are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the AMA.

Copyright 1999 American Medical Association. All rights reserved.