

The Sick Rose: Disease and the Art of Medical Illustration

By Richard Barnett

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The Sick Rose is a visual tour through the golden age of medical illustration. The nineteenth century experienced an explosion of epidemics such as cholera and diphtheria, driven by industrialization, urbanization and poor hygiene. In this pre-color-photography era, accurate images were relied upon to teach students and aid diagnosis. The best examples, featured here, are remarkable pieces of art that attempted to elucidate the mysteries of the body, and the successive onset of each affliction. Bizarre and captivating images, including close-up details and revealing cross-sections, make all too clear the fascinations of both doctors and artists of the time. Barnett illuminates the fears and obsessions of a society gripped by disease, yet slowly coming to understand and combat it. The age also saw the acceptance of vaccination and the germ theory, and notable diagrams that transformed public health, such as John Snow's cholera map and Florence Nightingale's pioneering histograms, are included and explained. Organized by disease, *The Sick Rose* ranges from little-known ailments now all but forgotten to the epidemics that shaped the modern age. It is a fascinating *Wunderkammer* of a book that will enthrall artists, students, designers, scientists and the incurably curious everywhere.

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Editorial Review

Review

If you're able to detach yourself from the knee-jerk reaction of: 'Oh my f**king god what's wrong with that dude's face?', these illustrations are really neat to look at. (Jonathan Smith *Vice.com*)

A memento of a remarkable genre ... the excellent choice of image, high production standards, and formidable scholarship of *The Sick Rose* suggest that it is a book that will endure. I would recommend it to anyone with an interest in art, medicine, history or, simply, the difficult and exhausting business of having and maintaining a body. (Niall Boyce *The Lancet*)

The strange, symbiotic relationship between medicine and social oppression is here given full-colour form: not only by anatomical illustrations of paupers' and criminals' corpses, but also by what - were they not so disfigured - would be regarded as straightforward portraits of the leprous and the syphilitic, the tubercular and the cancerous ... Richard Barnett's superbly erudite and lucid accompanying text would really suffice in itself as an introduction to the history of western medical science. (Will Self *The Guardian*)

Although *The Sick Rose* includes photographs of a leper's crutches, prosthetic noses, and a "medicated balsamic chest protector," it is for the most part a treasury of the most handsome and curious lithographic prints found in nineteenth-century clinical textbooks...Richard Barnett serves up fascinating synopses of the cardinal diseases of the period, each chapter dotted with grisly factoids- even acknowledging the role of state power, imperialism, and abjection in the manufacture of these images. (Andrew Bourne *BOMB Magazine*)

A squirm-inducing illustrated tour through a kaleidoscope of 19th-century diseases.... over 350 strangely fascinating images from the world's rarest medical books. (Hannah Lack *AnOther Mag*)

If you think you're squeamish and medical drawings aren't for you don't be put off. This incredible book transcends that. (Helen Rumbelow *The Times*)

The old lithographs that fill page after page of Barnett's *THE SICK ROSE* are of people and the diseases they suffer from commonplace ailments like eczema to gout to cancer. And the pictures are...horrible. And beautiful. And horrible. They are skillfully and carefully almost lovingly done by anonymous artists. (Lucas Peterson *Flaunt*)

Users Review

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