

Biomedical visualisations can validate patient experiences and perceptions empowering patients and convincing doctors in the search for a diagnosis, treatment, or cure. However, they are often deceptive and of questionable legibility. They are also inaccessible to non-specialists and often de-contextualized. This can lead to epistemic uncertainty, overdiagnosis, unnecessary interventions, healthcare inequalities, and epistemic or social injustice. The discussion builds on, but aims to go beyond the analysis of the creation and use of images in biomedical knowledge and practice as well as their social conditions and consequences. The panelists are interested in how images in the context of biomedicine can be interpreted and used by patients, artists, and scholars, and how new visual languages can be created to intervene in biomedical and public discourse. This shift in focus highlights the various forms of knowledge and expertise that exist beyond the realm of scientific and clinical specialists and that can inform and enrich biomedicine. This conversation began in April 2023 as part of the research group Practices of Validation in the Biomedical Sciences at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science. At the time, Alfred Freeborn and Elizabeth Hughes invited 30 academic researchers, artists,

activists, and medical professionals to form interdisciplinary groups and present their preliminary projects in a workshop in September 2024. The first output of this work was the edited, open access volume *Biomedical Visions: Epistemology, Medicine and Art Practice* (Hatje Cantz, 2025). This discussion aims to reflect on results so far and continue the discussion in a public forum, focusing particularly on the intended and unintended audiences of biomedical visualisations, patient activism, and artwork based on science.

Organized by
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Image credit: Ketty La Rocca, *Craniologia 12*, 1973, lightbox, handwriting on X-ray, 70 × 50 × 15 cm
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Biomedical Visions

The Art of Science and the Science of Art

With
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