

The beauty of preservation? This artist creates work from organs and pig's fat

By **Lily Silverton**, for CNN

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Photos: "Making Beauty" by Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva

"Haruspex" (2015) by Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva at the Arsenale di Venezia, Holy See Pavilion, 56th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia – For her solo exhibition at the Djanogly Gallery in Nottingham, Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva will show "Haruspex" -- a piece commissioned for last year's Venice Biennale -- which responds to the scriptural verse "In the Beginning... the Word became flesh." At the center of the installation is a chalice-like form made from a cow's stomach.

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Story highlights

Macedonian artist [Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva](#) works with waste material

She has recently opened her first major UK solo exhibition, "[Making Beauty](#)," at the [Djanogly Gallery](#) in Nottingham

The works on show are made from materials such as organs and pig's caul fat

(CNN) — Art and animal flesh collide in "[Making Beauty](#)," [Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva's](#) first major UK solo exhibition, at the [Djanogly Gallery](#) in Nottingham.

Known for her immersive installations, the Macedonian artist works across sculpture, installation, video, photography and architectural intervention, with materials ranging from the ephemeral and precious to the downright strange.

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Specifically, she works using [animal organs](#), transforming the perishable waste products into artistic materials via a chemical process akin to embalming.



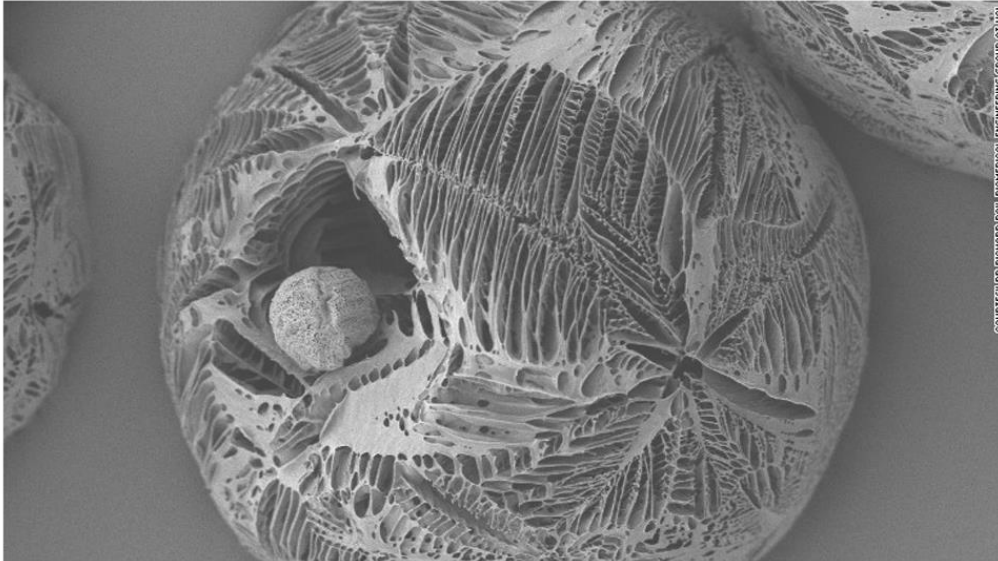
"Haruspex" (2015) by Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva

At the Djanogly Gallery, Hadzi-Vasileva will show three works including "[Haruspex](#)," which centers on a chalice-like form made from a cow's stomach; and "[Fragility](#)," which routes light through pigs' caul fat, juxtaposing experience and materiality.

The most recent, "[Making Beauty](#)," was produced with the support of the UK's [Wellcome Trust](#). For the last year, Hadzi-Vasileva has been collaborating with UK medical research centers to create sculptural and sound works focusing on digestive diseases and inspired by medical processes and technologies, made using organs.

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Hadzi-Vasileva spoke to CNN about the appeal of waste and the true nature of beauty.



Highly porous polymer microparticle made using a thermally induced phase separation process, 200 microns in diameter

What made you decide to start working with waste materials?

I became interested in the idea of waste product as something that could be preserved. I started looking at materials that have no value and asked, "How can that be preserved and turned into something more valuable?"

My first project, in 2000, looked at the salmon fishing industry where maybe 10 percent of the fish has value, and the rest can be thrown away. I wanted to look at that other 90 percent.



"Fragility" (2015) by Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva at Fabrica Gallery in Brighton, UK

How did your most recent work, "Making Beauty," come about?

From a young age I've always been very interested in the hidden cavities and spaces -- those we're not aware of and don't encounter. Our stomach is our second largest organ, it is a part of our body that does so much, but we never see it. And I guess maybe I have a fascination with death. I'm interested in the fact that people that don't want to face it or talk about it.

And another level was exploring how we have become a bit more aware of our health in everyday life. Society has become more obsessed with healthy living.

Has it made you more aware of your own diet?



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Of course, and my food and intake and what I'm doing to my body. Everything you put in has an effect on you. It's made me more aware of everyday intake. Lots of things that are meant to be healthy are really not, and lots of things -- like pig's caul fat -- which have traditionally been thought to be bad, are good for you.

What's the response to your work like?

People are usually quite surprised by the work. Which sometimes has to do with the scale. For example with "Fragility" -- where the subject matter is dying -- people are completely memorized and overwhelmed and then when they figure out what it's made from, there is another level of surprise.

Walking inside feels like you're entering the stomach itself. It creates a dialogue and opens up discussions, which for me can only be a good thing.

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Do you receive any criticism?

I give a lot of information on where the materials come from, but you can never make everybody happy. I've had some criticism from animal rights groups attacking the meat industry and the medical industry. But I feel like I'm saving something that would have been thrown away otherwise, like I'm giving something a second life.

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Logistically, is your work very difficult to produce?

Very! I've spent years and years trying to preserve certain things in different ways. Skin is no problem, but organs are very hard to keep alive. They're fragile.

Something that interests me though is that I make the work, and then I step away and it has its own life, it changes. There is something very beautiful about that.

nothing lasts forever.

Nothing is permanent. Not even stone or metal. We can preserve and conserve and treat something well, but

"Making Beauty: Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva" is at Djanogly Gallery, Nottingham Lakeside Arts from 20 August -- 30 October 2016.