

Wallpaper*

Medical marvels: Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva's gracefully gruesome sculptures take Nottingham

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Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva presents her medically-inspired sculptures in Nottingham's Djanogly Gallery. Pictured: installation view, *Fragility*, 2016

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INFORMATION

'Making Beauty' runs from 20 August to 30 October 2016. For more information, visit the [Djanogly Gallery website](#)

Photography: Nick Dunmur.
Courtesy Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva and Djanogly Gallery

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Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva's work is beautiful, if a little eerie. The Venice Biennale representative's sculptures have a sinister secret: they're made from animal innards. She assures us, it's all in the name of medical progress.

For a new exhibition in Nottingham's Djanogly Gallery, the Macedonian-born artist has teamed up with scientists and medical professors to draw a wider public awareness to digestive diseases, as well as helping to ease the stigma surrounding them. Supported by the Wellcome trust, the project saw Hadzi-Vasileva shadow doctors the Nottingham's Digestive Diseases Biomedical Research Unit. Her work, sometimes harrowing, sometimes witty, always gracefully rendered, is a way of breaking down one of the final taboos of the body: talking about our guts. 'It has problems, just like any other part of our body, and there's no reason we shouldn't be talking about it', curator Neil Walker reasons.

A photomontage of medical images Hadzi-Vasileva collected during the research process opens the show, which prepares visitors for a candid video installation of individuals frankly discussing their experiences with digestive diseases. From here, things get markedly more sanguine. The first installation to use animal viscera inhabits the next two rooms of the gallery. *Fragility* (2015), was first installed at Fabrica, a decommissioned Regency church in Brighton. The artist uses chemically embalmed pigs' caul fat, elevating it from a perishable waste product into a delicate, decorative material. The translucent work which covers the entire room, softly sifts the light creating a tranquil, contemplative space. The intention, Hadzi-Vasileva explains, is to recreate the phenomena of a near-death experience.

A residency at Michelin starred London restaurant Pied à Terre produced some of the artist's more light-hearted work. *Gill's Slit's* is made from skate bones the artist salvaged from the restaurant bins. Its jutting, charismatic wings capture the 'machismo of the kitchen', as well as reflecting how 'mesmerised' Hadzi-Vasileva was with the artistry of the dishes being produced, the curator explains.

Walker is keen to point out that all animal-based materials used in the exhibition have been carefully and responsibly sourced, and around 80 per cent of the products would have just been thrown away had they not been salvaged by Hadzi-Vasileva. This chimes with the artist's penchant for using materials of little financial or personal value; transforming them into something ethereal, and in this case, scientifically progressive.