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KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS:  
REASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS  
AMERICAN HERITAGE IN ITALY

## Museo di Anatomia - Sistema dei Musei e Orto Botanico dell'Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia

Indirizzo Via Berengario, 14 - 41121 Modena (MO)

*Form compiled by: Ciro Tepedino (curator, ciro.tepedino@unimore.it).*

### Introduction

The foundation of the Museo Anatomico di Modena is linked to the support of Archduke Francesco IV d'Austria Este, thanks to whom it was possible to enlarge the spaces devoted to the teaching of medical disciplines. Above the Anatomical Theatre (1775) a new floor was built, in which the Museum of Anatomy was created so as to provide an adequate location for the growing number of anatomical preparations produced during the lessons.

In 1822 the first room was completed, to which a second was added in 1839 and a third in 1840. In 1852, thanks to the support of Archduke Francesco V, the fourth room was finished, and in 1854 the museum was inaugurated; it still preserves its original furnishings. Enriched until 1926, above all through the work of the anatomical directors Paolo Gaddi (director from 1840 to 1871) and Giuseppe Sperino (director from 1898 to 1926), the museum contains more than a thousand preparations which, from 1977 until 2012, the year of its closure following the earthquakes that struck the city of Modena, were displayed according to the criterion of descriptive anatomy, that is, by systems. The holdings consist chiefly of dried, mummified or formalin-fixed specimens, but there are also fine wax and plaster models. Of particular note are the anatomical waxes executed in the second half of the nineteenth century by the ceroplast Remigio Lei, modeller of the Institute of Anatomy of Modena, and the eighteenth-century painted terracottas

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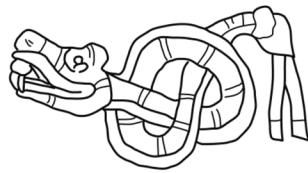
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depicting the different stages of pregnancy and childbirth, the work of the Bolognese ceroplast Giovan Battista Manfredini. Also noteworthy are two collections of crania: the ethnographic-anthropological collection of Gaddi and the interesting nucleus of crania classified according to the theory of Lombroso, the founder of criminal anthropology. The museum is currently undergoing a careful restoration campaign in order to restore it to its former splendour and reopen it to the public as soon as possible.

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| <b>Collection name</b>                            | Ethnographic-Anthropological Collection   |
| <b>Collector</b>                                  | Prof. Paolo Gaddi (Modena 1805 – Saliceto Panaro, MO 1871), anatomist, professor of anatomy and director of the Museo di Anatomia of the University of Modena from 1840 to 1871.  |
| <b>Cultural areas</b>                             | Caribbean; Central and Southern Andes; Austral America; Northwest Coast   |
| <b>Ethnic group / community / cultural sphere</b> | Unknown.<br>The crania are identified according to the classification of human “races” in use at the time when the collection was assembled (nineteenth century) and which also underpinned the arrangement of Gaddi’s collection.<br>They were divided as follows: Aryan (Caucasian) race; Melanic (Ethiopian) race; Tatar-Sinic (Mongolian) race; Malayo-Polynesian (Malay) race; American race.<br>All the crania in this collection are identified as belonging to the “American race”. |

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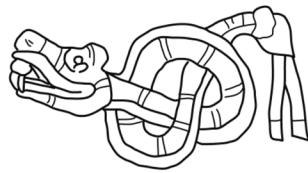
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| <b>Description of the collection</b> | Italy's first Anthropological Collection consists of about one hundred crania and plaster casts of crania from different "ethnic groups". There are examples of crania of different forms (spheroidal, ovoid, ellipsoidal, platycephalic), alongside sectioned crania intended to highlight the anthropometric parameters used by nineteenth-century anthropologists, as well as a number of phrenological crania. The collection is supplemented by five wax busts of male individuals reproducing the features of a Caucasian, a Japanese, a Mongolian, an Ethiopian and a Bedouin (didactic supports for the anthropological concepts of the collection, based on the classification of humankind into five races according to the anthropologist Blumenbach). The collection of crania from the Americas consists of ten examples, four of which come from populations of the Andean region (two are casts), two from populations of the Northwest Coast (North America), one from a population inhabiting Patagonia, a cast of the cranium of an individual from the Lesser Antilles and two generically classified as "Indian cranium". |
| <b>History of the collection</b>     | In 1866, in a room adjoining the Anatomical Museum, the Ethnographic-Anthropological Museum of the University of Modena was opened to the public, the first of its kind in Italy. It was created on the initiative of Professor Paolo Gaddi, director of the Anatomical Museum and dissector of the university anatomy  |

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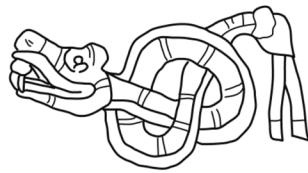
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|                        | <p>laboratory. In the nineteenth century anthropology was establishing itself as an academic discipline, and studies of craniometry and cranial forms were considered of great importance in explaining the differences between human groups, with the aim of dividing humankind into categories often identified with the term “races”. In his anthropology lectures (1869) Gaddi maintained that the cranium, in its form and volume, is the most variable part in subjects of “different races”, hence the importance of using craniometry and cephalometry to measure and compare cranium and brain, without neglecting “linguistics” and physiological criteria in order to support the idea of the existence of “races” within the human species. From 1841 until 1871, the year of his death, Gaddi devoted himself to collecting remains belonging to individuals from various human groups, requesting them from friends, colleagues and Este diplomats on mission abroad. In this way he succeeded in creating a notable collection, comprising crania and plaster casts of crania belonging to individuals from various populations, as well as crania used for phrenological, craniometric and prosopometric studies. The collection was further enriched by wax busts made by the Modenese artist Remigio Lei, depicting different “ethnic types”.</p> |
| <b>Online database</b> |   |

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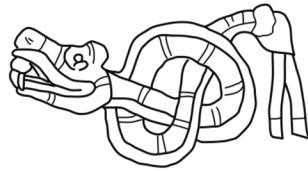
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| <b>Web page</b>     | <a href="http://www.museianatomici.unimore.it">www.museianatomici.unimore.it</a>   |
| <b>Bibliography</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Gaddi P., (1870) Il museo etnografico-antropologico della R. Università di Modena 1870, Relazione del Sig. Prof. Cav. Paolo Gaddi letta nell'adunanza del 13 gennaio 1830 Atti e Mem. Accad. Sc. L. A. Modena, vol. XI, sez. di scienze, pp. 49-62).</li></ul> |

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