

▷ 'Beaten-up Woman',
1906, Miguel Ribeiro

William Ewing calls the oeuvre of Portuguese doctor-turned-photographer Ribeiro, "conceptually, technically and aesthetically extraordinary ... one of the most significant medical documents of the late 20th century". In order to get permission to photograph patients at the South African hospital where he was working at the time, Ribeiro agreed to donate the results to the hospital's slide library.

The images, as here, frequently transcend the clinical and become a witness to the brutality of a regime. But politics were not in fact his guiding motive.

Ribeiro wished to record disease and illness and do so in a way that, in his own words, "should include the suffering inherent to it".



Skin and bone

From hospital ward to battlefield to a hairy back at bathtime, a new anthology redefines the art of nude photography. Robin Muir celebrates some of its startling discoveries

The anthologies of photographs edited by William Ewing, director of the Musée de l'Élysée in Lausanne, Switzerland, have achieved cult status. The disparate and intriguing pictures on these pages are from *The Century of the Body*, his third book of images of the human form. In it, Ewing has assembled well-known pictures, lesser-known ones from 20th-century masters, and plundered the stockrooms of dealers, auction houses, galleries and private collections. The range is wide: from Man Ray's turbaned odalisque, the *Violon d'Ingres* (1924) and Mapplethorpe's study of unconventional femininity, *Lisa Lyon* (1982), to an outstanding piece of unattributed decadent fantasy, *Centaur* (c.1910), and a startling image from 1907, the first full-body X-ray photograph from the early years of the last century.

There are curious links. The Parisian nightscapes of Brassai, for example, are geographically, culturally and historically years away from the giant, colour-saturated artworks of Rineke Dijkstra. Compare, however, the former's gilded partygoer *en route* to the Bal des Quar'z Arts, 1932, to Dijkstra's latterday Birth of Venus on a Polish beach, and perhaps in spirit a hundred years isn't really that far a journey.

In the century that remodelled the human form like no other, Ewing's anthology stimulates discussion of the limitless possibilities of photography and science, with an eye firmly on the achievements of its more primitive, formative years. □

'The Century of the Body', edited by William A Ewing, is published in hardback on 13 November by Thames & Hudson, priced £36