



LISA NILSSON *Midsagittal Female*, 2013, mulberry paper, 31 x 8 x 18.5 inches

MARIANNE BORUCH

# Cadaver, Speak: 15

*In the fall of 2008, poet Marianne Boruch spent six hours a week in a dissection lab with 16 medical students, learning about human anatomy through cadaver dissections. The following poem, the fifteenth section of the title poem from Boruch's book Cadaver, Speak, is written from the perspective of the cadaver to whom Boruch felt most connected, the body of a 99-year-old woman.*

You'd never guess the way  
one of them put his hands around my heart, hoisting it  
high as a baby.

Hardly rocket science, as people say, to say that.

Still they take turns with it, pretty much oohing and ahing  
though no, no  
bright beastly cry lets loose.  
My lungs too.

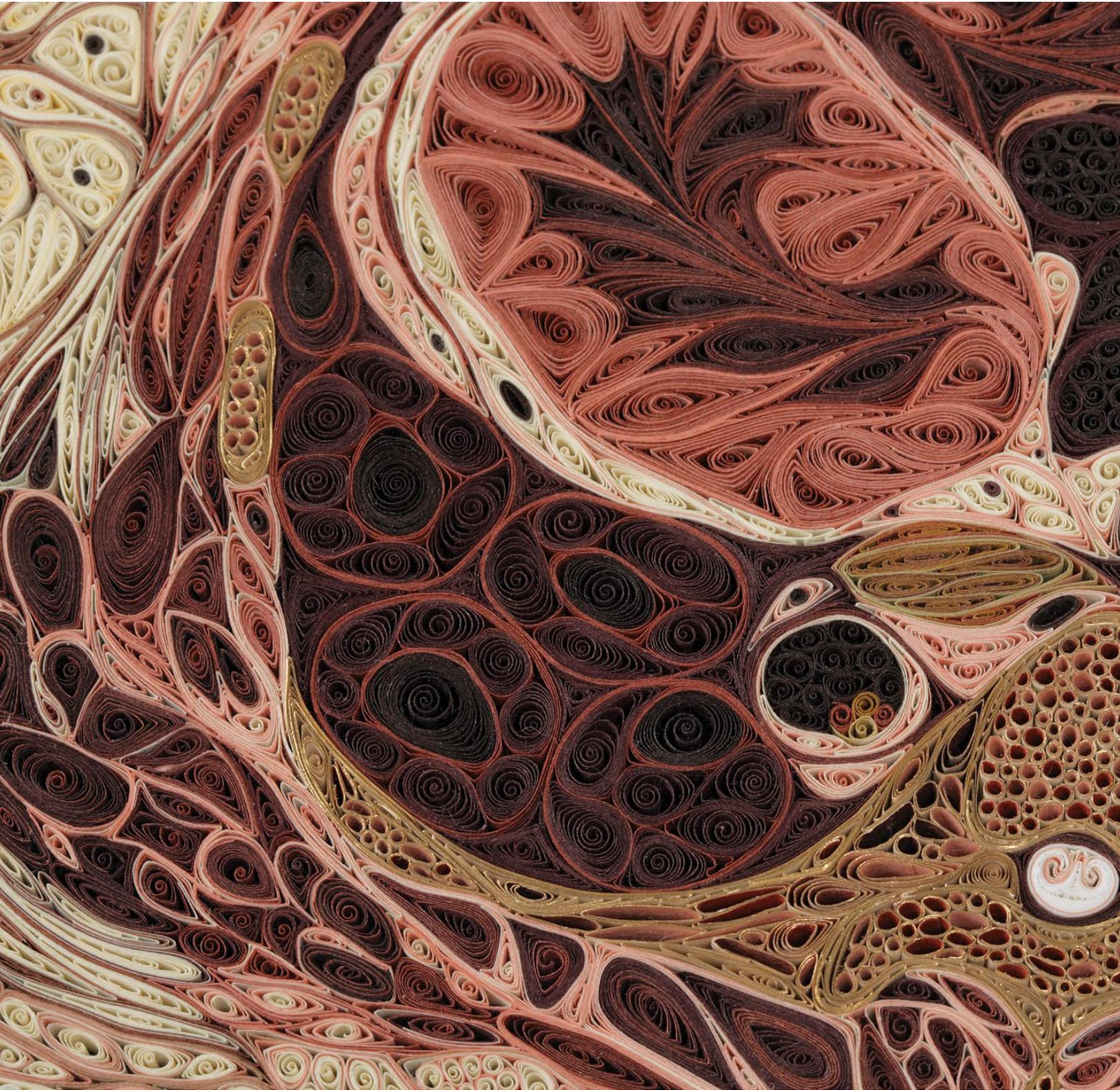
*They're almost*

*velvety*, another boy says. Why, how like a pet—  
is that it?—the kind you love to touch, sent to its corner  
to sleep in a rhythm, both such good doggies.  
But lungs don't match  
in shape or size, each a fully  
separate fiefdom. I learned that here.  
A curious pleasure as these doctors-to-be  
press every side soft.

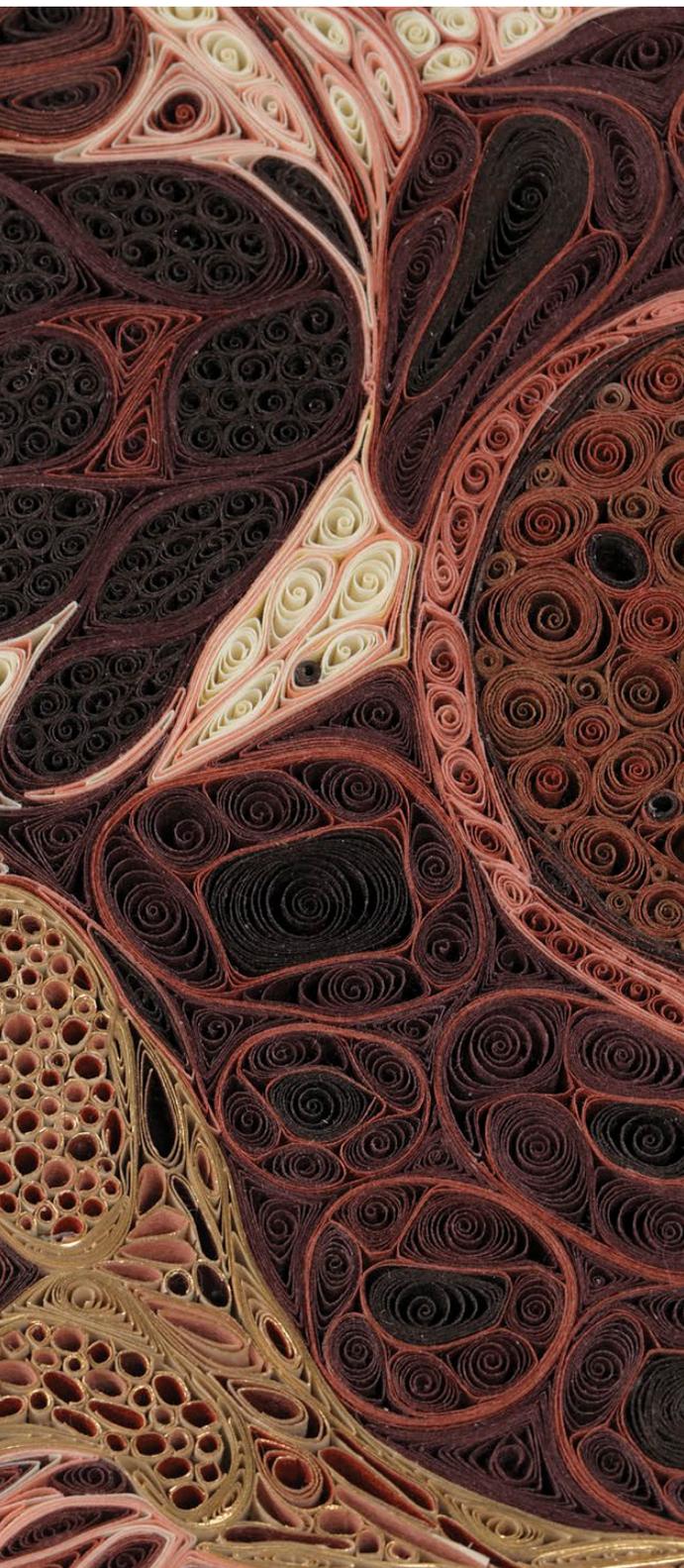
My breath's still there, a breathing.

The last poor racket I made probably, dreadful  
middle of the night.

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*Female Thorax (detail), 2013*



# Lisa Nilsson: *Tissue Series*

Quilling, the art of manipulating small strips of paper into elaborate designs and objects, is believed to have originated in ancient Egypt, although its precise origins are unknown. During the European Renaissance, quilling was practiced by nuns and monks who used it to create and decorate religious objects of devotion. Quilling gained popularity in eighteenth century England as a “proper” craft for ladies of leisure and schoolgirls. One can only imagine how these earlier practitioners would respond if they were to encounter the modern creations of artist Lisa Nilsson.

Trained as an artist and illustrator at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, Nilsson’s lifelong fascination with anatomy led her to take a break from her art practice in 2010 to attend a medical assisting program at McCann Technical School in North Adams, Massachusetts. Informed by this training, Nilsson began to apply the quilling technique to representations of the human body. She rolls and shapes narrow strips of Japanese mulberry paper and the gilded edges of old books, recreating images of cross sections of the body typically created by medical imaging technologies.

About the work Nilsson writes, “The fleshy, malleable quality struck me early on. It was the paper’s willingness to conform in shape to fill a cavity and its springy, bouncy quality when coiled that made me think of flesh and anatomy. In making these sculptures I aspire to a treatment of the body that combines the sensual pleasure and graphic strength of an art object, the informative and analytical approach of a scientific specimen, as well as the reverential and devotional nature of a religious reliquary.”

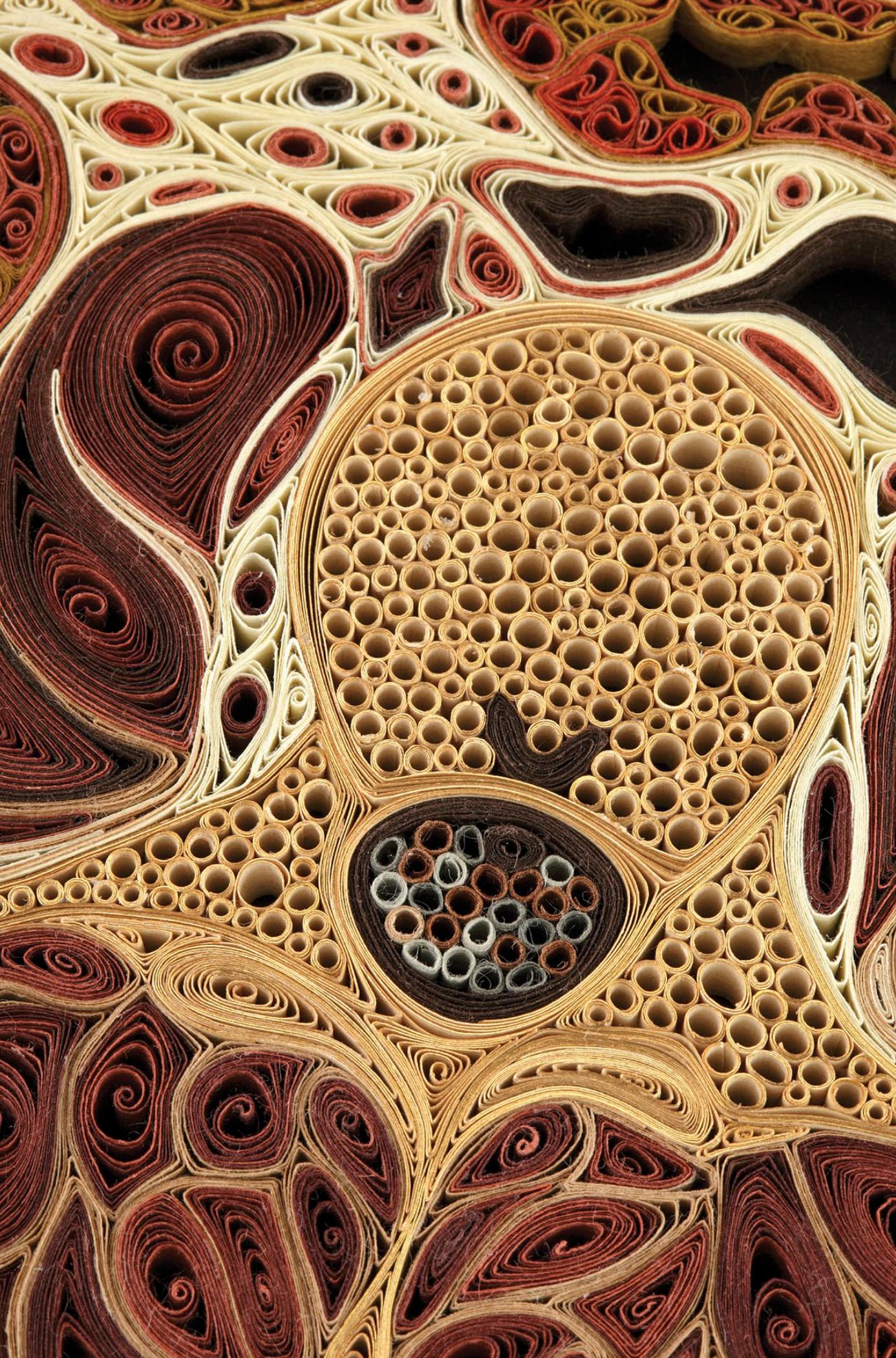
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To view more examples of work by Lisa Nilsson, visit [www.lisanilssonarts.com](http://www.lisanilssonarts.com). All images courtesy of the artist.



Above: *Praying Hands*, 2012; Right: *Thorax* (detail), 2011







Left: Abdomen (detail), 2011; Above: Midsagittal Female (detail), 2013