Write a museum label for this object

Ezio Martinelli
American, 1913–1981
***Untitled (Studies)*, ca. 1950**
Ink on paper

Gemini originally attributed this to Efraín Recinos, but it corrected itself without any additional input when it was asked to double check the artist.

In this sheet of studies, Ezio Martinelli explores the tension between the biological and the abstract. A key figure in mid-century American Surrealism and a contemporary of the Abstract Expressionists, Martinelli used pen and ink to map the "internal landscape" of the human form. Rather than depicting the body as a solid, recognizable entity, he breaks it down into a series of jagged, biomorphic structures that resemble a fusion of skeletal remains, neural pathways, and mechanical components.

The work is clearly surreal in character and drawing from Surrealist themes, but it's not quite right to call it "American Surrealism." Martinelli's location, associates, and forms place him firmly in the New York School amid Abstract Expressionism.

These sketches function as a visual laboratory, where Martinelli tests the "prickly" aesthetic that would later define his large-scale bronze sculptures. The central radiating burst and the twisting, claw-like appendages reflect the postwar anxiety common to the New York School—an era in which artists often sought to reinvent the human figure as a resilient, albeit fragmented, survivor of global upheaval.

Martinelli simultaneously applied this visual form across media to his paintings, drawings, and sculptures. While the drawings clearly inform some of his sculptures—the extended figure in the upper right mirrors one of his small bronzes sometimes called *Flying Woman,* for example—he's not "testing" the aesthetic.

Note on Suitability: This work contains abstract, skeletal depictions of form. It is considered appropriate for all audiences, serving as an excellent entry point for younger viewers to discuss how artists use imagination to change how we see the "inside" of a person.

I find this an odd takeaway. Gemini seems to recognize on some level that the sinister, knobbled contours and twisted, biomorphic forms are uncomfortable and that we might want to shield young viewers from associations with dissection and suffering. In suggesting that we emphasize imagination, this discomfort is soothed without being acknowledged or explained. If the goal is to avoid the emotion, it might be better to direct attention to descriptions of form.

Enzio Martinelli
American, born 1913

Ideas for Trinity
1954

Ink on paper

Gift of Solomon B. Smith, 1968.1.1

Gemini has trouble with 20th century art movements, and it shows here, deferring to form over context and philosophy when identifying Martinelli as an American Surrealist. Abstract Expressionism is an especially difficult task for the AI since there are so many different terms and sub-strategies among the various artists. The model appears to throw a variety of terms around to make a reasonable if vague placement.

Martinelli's interest in these twisting, skeletal forms can also be seen in sculptural works like *Demiurge*, in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. A demiurge is an architect or artisan of the universe separate from its creator, suggesting some thematic overlap with *Ideas for Trinity.* In treating this work as an untitled study of generic forms, Gemini presents the drawing as an example of process rather than a rumination on a specific subject and downplays the religious meanings the title implies.