



"NEWS RELEASE"

KÖRPERWELTEN (BODY WORLDS) VISITS UNITED STATES FOR THE FIRST TIME

Los Angeles, California – The hall is tastefully decorated – oversized Renaissance images grace the walls, many bearing quotes from classic philosophers. The soothing, soft lighting works to draw in the large space, making it tranquil, almost cozy. This inviting décor, a perfect counterpoint to this extraordinary exhibit, puts the wary at ease, and enhances the viewing experience of those who came enthusiastically, knowing that an unforgettable experience lay ahead. From this gentle beginning of the presentation, to its dramatic crescendo, Dr. Gunther von Hagens' *Body Worlds*, at the California Science Center until January 2005, rivets, amazes, and above all, educates.

An unexpected host – a human skeleton – greets the visitor entering the hall, dangling ivory-white from its steel pole. Its form inclines to the left, gently pointing the way to the exhibit ahead. Glass cases gleam beneath the diffused lights; in them lie a variety of human internal organs, all real, in varying states of pre-mortem health or disease. Some are all in one piece, others cross-sectioned, or in “slices” which resemble nothing so much as thin sheets of stained glass. All have been preserved by a method known as “plastination,” a process invented by German physician and scientist Dr. Gunther von Hagens to preserve human specimens for

medical education. Complete human bodies preserved by this method are referred to as “plastinates.”

The visitor, moving along, soon encounters the first plastinates, each in a different pose, each created to instruct the observer about a different system of the human body. One specimen, near the exhibit’s beginning, has a standing skeleton with its bony hand resting on the rest of its body. This plastinate shows in strong relief the two complementary systems. Just yards away, in a large glass case, sits a “chess player,” his brain, which in a “living” chess game would be working hard, is visible, as is his spinal cord and most other internal organs.

At this point, the visitor is directed to the third floor of the Science Center to explore the second portion of Body Worlds. It does not disappoint, boasting amazing displays of “bodies” made entirely of blood vessels (but maintaining a fully human, or, in one case, duck shape), and internal organs of every kind, many with tumors and other diseases in evidence. (In this part of the exhibit, a plastinated liver and lung are on display and may be touched and handled by visitors). Fetuses in stages of development from one week to eight months may be seen (this last fetus, in one of the most amazing and touching displays, rests within its mother, who died during pregnancy). The bicycle rider, and the final plastinate, the truly astonishing horse and rider, must be seen to be believed.

Dr. von Hagens created this method of preservation in the late 1970s as a way to maintain intact the organs, tissues, circulatory and nervous systems of donated bodies in a lifelike manner, while preserving flexibility of the body. (Preservation of the skin in natural flesh tones has proven to be more difficult, but research is ongoing to perfect this process, as well.) This remarkable method allows the bodies, bequeathed to von Hagens’ organization during the

donors' lifetimes, to be "plastinated" with a solution of polymers and other ingredients that preserves them down to the cellular level. Dr. von Hagens may himself be seen at times at Body Worlds; he has created a series of educational talks and question-and-answer sessions aimed at both the general visiting audience and the potential body donor. Dr. von Hagens receives a tremendous number of requests about becoming a donor, and much information is available to those who wish to learn more. Jon Snyder, owner of Snyder's Embalming Service of California, has been selected by Dr. von Hagens to serve as his North American representative. Mr. Snyder will be in charge of the preparation of donated bodies in the United States.

As a perfect complement to the exhibit experience, the visitor may choose to first view the very excellent film "The Human Body," a collaboration between Discovery Pictures and BBC Scienceworld, in the IMAX theater just opposite the Science Center itself.

Body Worlds provides an incomparable educational experience for children and adults alike, and the visitor will find both groups abundantly represented at the exhibit. Anyone wishing to learn about the effects of such things as smoking, alcoholism, and other health-damaging activities will see blunt evidence of their deleterious effects. For all who visit Body Worlds, however, there will be a renewed appreciation of and respect for that amazing creation – the human body.

For more information about Body Worlds, visit the following Website:
<http://www.casciencectr.com/Exhibits/Weingart/BodyWorlds/BodyWorlds.php>.

- Liz Davenport