

## A Joint Quest Towards Enlightenment Between Donor, Anatomist, and Visitor

**G**unther von Hagens' BODY WORLDS is a collaboration—a joint quest towards enlightenment between donor, anatomist, and visitor. Created by Dr. Gunther von Hagens—the leading anatomist of our time—BODY WORLDS is the only anatomical exhibition fueled by intellectual curiosity, forged in the heat of scientific discovery, enabled by the generosity of donors, shaped by the anatomist's awe of the human body, and supported by the aspirations of visitors yearning to know more.

Donors who so generously willed their bodies for the purpose of Plastination—to educate the public about anatomy and physiology—take center stage in this unprecedented homage to humanity. Excluding a small number of specimens acquired from anatomical collections and anatomy programs, the plastinated specimens on display in Gunther von Hagens' BODY WORLDS exhibitions stem from a unique Body Donation Program established in Heidelberg, Germany in 1982, and later managed by the Institute for Plastination (IfP) in Heidelberg, established in 1993. Currently, the Institute for Plastination has a donor roster of 8,000 individuals that includes 700 Americans. The already deceased on the IfP's donor roster number 400.

Unlike other anatomical exhibitions that use unclaimed and found bodies without the legal consent of the deceased or their next of kin, BODY WORLDS uses the donated bodies of people who, during their lifetime, willed their bodies for Plastination and the education of many. From the beginning, the donors were excited about the groundbreaking technique of Plastination, and recognized that they were going to be part of something unprecedented. They wanted to make the education of future generations their enduring legacy.

The donors' participation in this aesthetic, dynamic, and compelling tribute to the human body is facilitated by anatomist, Dr. Gunther von Hagens: the creator of BODY WORLDS, and the inventor of Plastination, the groundbreaking method of specimen preservation that he first pioneered for the education of medical students.

Visitors to BODY WORLDS are also full participants in the scientific quest. Their efforts to fathom the mysteries of the human body, to honor its splendor and fragility, to claim solidarity with the donors, and recognize humanity's joint and inescapable fate are marked by great curiosity, awe, and gratitude.

BODY WORLDS is ultimately a collaboration between the donors who so generously willed their bodies, Dr. Gunther von Hagens—the leading anatomist of our time—and viewers, for whom the post mortal bodies are a locus of reverence, learning, enlightenment, and appreciation.

Since 1995, nearly 25 million people around the world have visited BODY WORLDS to claim knowledge about the human body that was previously the exclusive domain of anatomists and medical professionals. Gunther von Hagens' *BODY WORLDS: The Original Exhibition of Real Human Bodies* has caused a revolution in the sphere of anatomy by offering the public an unprecedented education about the human body in all its splendor.