

Gunther von Hagens'

BODY WORLDS 2

The Anatomical Exhibition of Real Human Bodies

BIOGRAPHY

Gunther von Hagens



Gunther von Hagens is the inventor of the plastination technique and creator of the BODY WORLDS exhibition. In 1965, he began his medical studies at the University of Jena. He spent two years as a political prisoner in East Germany after having distributed leaflets protesting against the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops and an unsuccessful attempt at escaping from East Germany. In 1970 the West German government bought his freedom for US\$20,000, enabling him to finalize his medical studies at the University of Lübeck in 1973. In 1974, he received his license to practice medicine before moving to the University of Heidelberg, where he finalized his doctoral thesis as a resident in the Department of Anesthetics and Emergency Medicine in 1975. He started an eighteen-year career as a resident and lecturer in the Institute of Pathology and the Institute of Anatomy at the Heidelberg University in 1976.

Back in 1977, at the department of Anatomy of Heidelberg University, he invented plastination as a groundbreaking technology for preserving anatomical specimens with reactive polymers. The process was patented between 1978 and 1982. Also in 1978, Gunther von Hagens started his own company, BIODUR Products, which has since marketed special polymers and equipment for plastination. These are currently exported to four hundred institutions in forty different countries worldwide. Gunther von Hagens founded the Heidelberg-based Institute for Plastination in 1993, with the aim of offering plastinated specimens for educational use and for the BODY WORLDS exhibition, which had its premiere in Japan in 1995. He finalized his engagements at Heidelberg University in 1995 and consequently accepted a visiting professorship at Dalian Medical University in China in 1996. In the same year, he also became the director of the plastination research centre at the State Medical Academy in Bishkek/Kyrgyzstan. He has since been active at both locations and in 2001 additionally founded a private company (the "Von Hagens Dalian Plastination Ltd.") in Dalian, China, which currently employs two hundred people. In 2004 Dr. von Hagens began a visiting professorship at the New York University College of Dentistry where he will help design the first non-dissection anatomy curriculum in the U.S. to use plastinated specimens exclusively as an educational model.

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Important scientific publications of Gunther von Hagens:

G. von Hagens Patents:

- German patent 27 10 147 (1978)
- British patent 1558 802 (1984)
- Belgian patent 863.949 (1978)
- South African patent 78/1330 (1980)
- Austrian patent 360 272 (1980)
- US patents 4,205,059 (1981), 4,244,992 (1981), 4,278,701 (1982), 4,320,157

G. von Hagens: "Technique for an improved exploitation of polymers in the preservation of biological tissue" (Original title: "Verfahren zur verbesserten Ausnutzung von Kunststoffen bei der Konservierung biologischer Präparate"). Patent application open to public inspection DE 32 32 756 AI, German Patent Office Munich.

"Heidelberg Plastination Folder" (Original title: Heidelberger Plastinationshefter"). 160 pages (1985/86), Institute for Anatomy at Heidelberg University, INF 307, 69120 Heidelberg.

G. von Hagens, K. Tiedemann, W. Kriz: "The Current Potential of Plastination"

Anatomy and Embryology (1987) 175: 411-421.

G. von Hagens: "Impregnation of Soft Biological Specimens with Thermosetting Resins and Elastomers"

Anatomical Record (1979) 194: 247-255.

"Cross-sectional Anatomy of the Human Brain" (Original title: "Schnittanatomie des menschlichen Gehirns"). A photographic atlas of plastinated series of body slices. Steinkopff (publisher), Darmstadt (1990). ISBN: 3-7985-0780-5

G. von Hagens, L.J. Romrell, M.H. Ross, K. Tiedemann: "The Visible Human Body"

"A Photographic Atlas of Plastinated Slices of the Human Body" (Original title: "Ein fotografischer Atlas plastinierter Scheiben des menschlichen Körpers"). Lea & Febiger (publisher), Philadelphia, London (1991). ISBN: 08121-1269-5. Translations into German, Spanish, and Japanese.

For more information, visit www.bodyworlds.com.

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