

Gunther von Hagens'

# BODY WORLDS

## BODY WORLDS Celebrates Record Milestone of 50 Million Visitors

Heidelberg, November, 2019 –During the past 24 years the creators of BODY WORLDS have brought medical education to audiences around the world, on November 27, 2019 they will welcome their 50 millionth visitor. This number makes BODY WORLDS the most successful traveling exhibition of all time and marks a moment of distinction in the history of anatomy.

The bold and first-of-their kind BODY WORLDS exhibitions have travelled to six continents, 34 countries and 140 cities.

What is it about BODY WORLDS that has captivated and resonated with so many millions of people from different cultures and religions, of various ages and with diverse occupations? For curator, Dr. Angelina Whalley, who has been responsible for the content, design and conceptual planning of the exhibitions since their inception, the key to the success of BODY WORLDS is that the exhibition profoundly changes our view of our inner selves. She explained, "Visitors look at another human body and discover their own in a new way. The experience presents the body not only as the basis of our physical existence, but also as a mirror for our own way of life. Whatever we do or don't do, how we eat, exercise, socialize - everything has a physical effect on us, both positive and negative. BODY WORLDS brings these associations to our mind and presents the uniqueness of human life against the background of death. The knowledge gained in the exhibitions sharpens the sense of one's own vulnerability and one's own health."

The unprecedented success of the exhibitions is based on Dr. Gunther von Hagens' groundbreaking process of plastination, a method to conserve anatomical tissue invented by the physician and anatomist in 1977 at the University of Heidelberg. It took him many years to perfect the technology. But it was not until about 20 years later that it received the recognition it deserved through the first public exhibition. The idea of creating a public anatomical exhibition was by no means obvious; back then it was still common for anatomy to be shown privately in the ivory towers of universities

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for anatomists and medical students. Plastination was also originally meant to serve solely for advanced education and science.

However, when Dr. von Hagens first presented his plastinates to the Japanese public at the Tokyo National Science Museum in 1995, he could not have predicted the incredible hype and revolution that his invention would trigger. Today, Dr. von Hagens said, "I underestimated how long it would take for plastination to be a success. But more significantly I underestimated how big the success would be."

Ever since Dr. von Hagens has believed in the democratization of anatomy and has put his work at the service of educating the general public about the human body. He has received numerous accolades from renowned institutions for his work, including a lifetime achievement award for his significant contributions to the public understanding of science from the global association, ASTC (Association of Science and Technology Centers) which counts upwards of 650 science centers, museums and related institutions as members.

## **About BODY WORLDS:**

In 1995, the success story began in Japan, where the first public presentation of plastinates was shown, which later became known as BODY WORLDS. To date, several exhibitions with additional themes are touring the world, including two animal exhibitions, known internationally as BODY WORLDS: ANIMAL INSIDE OUT.

In Europe, the exhibitions have attracted 22 million people, including 11.5 million in Germany alone. There have been 19 million visitors in North American museums and science centers, of which 15 million have been across the United States. Three million have seen the exhibitions in Canada and one million in Latin America. The remaining 9 million visitors are from Asia (8 million), Africa and Oceania.

The bodies in the exhibition come from the Institute for Plastination (IfP) body donation program, based in Heidelberg. The donation program initiated specifically for Plastination has existed since the early 1980's and today has more than 19,000

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donors. All of these individuals have decided during their lifetime that their bodies should be transferred to the Institute after their demise and be available for educational purposes through plastination for future generations.

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