

Gunther von Hagens'

# **BODY WORLDS**

**The Anatomical Exhibition of Real Human Bodies**

## **BRIEFING**

### **on Wrongful Allegations and Reports by Media on BODY WORLDS Exhibitions**

April 3, 2006

With several anatomical exhibits, similarly titled and derivative of Gunther von Hagens' BODY WORLDS, that have shown around the world—"Bodies, The Exhibition," "Body Exploration," "Bodies Revealed," "Mysteries of the Human Body," and "The Universe Within,"—there has been confusion among the media and the public about the origin of the bodies used in Gunther von Hagens' BODY WORLDS exhibitions.

It is important to note that Gunther von Hagens' BODY WORLDS is not affiliated with any of the above exhibits. Though Dr. Gunther von Hagens' Plastination invention that makes anatomical display possible has been used by the above exhibits, Dr. von Hagens is not affiliated with any of the other exhibits that use his invention and methods, and have, in some cases, copied the unique expressive character of many of his distinctive plastinate specimens.

Recent media reports have wrongfully stated that Gunther von Hagens' BODY WORLDS uses the bodies of executed Chinese prisoners in the BODY WORLDS exhibitions. Gunther von Hagens' BODY WORLDS refutes the statement in its entirety, as it is factually incorrect. Exclusive of a small number of dissected specimens and fetuses acquired from established morphological institutes, such as anatomy and pathology programs, and historical anatomical collections, all the specimens on display in Gunther von Hagens' BODY WORLDS exhibitions stem from a unique Body Donation Program established in Heidelberg, Germany in 1982. Later managed by the Institute for Plastination (IfP) established in 1993, the Body Donation Program is the primary source of the specimens-bodies willed by donors during their lifetime for the express purpose of serving BODY WORLDS mission to educate the public about health and anatomy.

While other exhibits have revealed that they use unclaimed and found bodies originating from China, Gunther von Hagens' BODY WORLDS has never needed to seek bodies from China or anywhere else for its exhibitions. Indeed, there are no Chinese plastinated bodies in Dr. von Hagens' exhibitions. Currently, the Institute for Plastination has a donor roster of 6,800 individuals, which includes 208 North Americans. The already deceased on the IFP's donor roster number 350.

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In addition, the Chinese authorities stringently supervise the import and export of anatomical specimens of human origin from China, by Dr. Gunther von Hagens. Dr. von Hagens is bound by current regulations to export only anatomical specimens that originate from the Institute for Plastination's Body Donation Program in Heidelberg, Germany.

All IfP documents relating to donated bodies have been scrutinized and approved by two ethics committees formed by the *California Science Center* in Los Angeles and the *Museum of Science and Industry* in Chicago, where BODY WORLDS exhibitions took place in 2005. Gunther von Hagens' BODY WORLDS declares categorically that it has never used bodies of executed Chinese prisoners, in its anatomical exhibitions of real human bodies.

After THE SPIEGEL, a German news magazine, reported the use of executed Chinese bodies in the BODY WORLDS exhibition, an interim injunction was taken against it. In accordance with Germany's laws, the SPIEGEL ONLINE GmbH is now restricted from claiming, either literally or by implication, that "Gunther von Hagens is exhibiting the corpses of executed Chinese prisoners in the BODY WORLDS exhibition." According to the court, if the interim injunction is violated, the SPIEGEL ONLINE GmbH must pay Dr. von Hagens a fine of 250,000 Euros. "I have never plastinated the bodies of executed persons, for, based on my ethical convictions, I disapprove of using such bodies for anatomical purposes," Dr. von Hagens says.

Although the allegations were investigated and discovered to be unfounded by a court in Germany, these false and malicious statements continue to be circulated and disseminated by illegitimate news sources via the Internet, and often reported as fact by mainstream media. Gunther von Hagens' BODY WORLDS has won interim injunctions in Germany against North German Radio, NDR and German TV Station, ZDF, and written agreements from T-Online and Suddeutsche Zeitung to prevent further dissemination of these false and malicious statements. Gunther von Hagens' BODY WORLDS will continue to exercise its legal authority by suing for defamation, libel, and slander any individual or news organization that continues to publish or broadcast these false and malicious statements about Dr. Gunther von Hagens and BODY WORLDS.

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