



Gunther von Hagens
KÖRPERWELTEN

A life for the imperishable

A Documentary - 60 Min.

Gunther v. Hagens

The cinematic portrait of the inventor of „PLASTINATION“:

Gunther von Hagens' globally renowned exhibitions, „BODY WORLDS,“ have captivated over 50 million visitors. In 2002, we had the privilege of recording an exclusive interview with him, forming the foundation of this documentary. In the interview, Gunther von Hagens outlines his long and arduous journey to his invention, which became a revolution in anatomy. In 2006, he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, which affected his motor skills and speech center. Unfortunately, such an authentic representation of his personal intentions and motivations will never be possible again. Additionally, we later produced scenes from various exhibitions and conducted interviews with Gunther's wife, Dr. Angelina Whalley, who serves as the curator responsible for the design of the exhibitions, as well as the highly elaborate production of the plastinates at the Plastination Center in Guben, founded in 2006.. Furthermore, the documentary raises questions about the meaning of existence. The reflections on the transience of life, sparked by „BODY WORLDS,“ undoubtedly elevate the documentary beyond mere scientific and anatomical interest. They invite the audience to contemplate the complexity of the human body and embark on a journey of self-discovery.



Gunther von Hagens

Anatomist Gunther von Hagens, born in 1945 in Alt Skalden, now in present-day Poland, invented and developed the art of plastination between 1977 and 1995. He discontinued his education in East Germany (DDR) prematurely and initially worked as a mail carrier and elevator operator. After obtaining his high school diploma through evening courses, he worked as a nursing assistant in a hospital and a pharmacy in his former hometown Greiz, where he is now an honorary citizen. In 1965, he began studying medicine in Jena.

In 1968, Gunther von Hagens demonstrated against the violent suppression of the Prague Spring and attempted to escape to the West. As a result, he was imprisoned by the East German regime. He was later released in 1970 as a political prisoner through a ransom payment made by the Federal Republic of Germany. After his release, he continued his studies and completed his dissertation in Heidelberg in 1975. In 1977, he began working with the impregnation of anatomical specimens in Heidelberg, which led to his first experiments with plastination. In 1993, he founded the Institute for Plastination, which eventually gave rise to the „BODY WORLDS“ exhibitions in 1996.



Dr. Angelina Whalley

Angelina Whalley, born in 1960 in Hanover, is a German physician specializing in physiology. Since 1997, she has been the director of the Institute for Plastination in Heidelberg. She began her medical studies at the University of Berlin before transferring to the University of Heidelberg, where she earned her doctorate in physiology in 1986. In the same year, she was licensed as a physician. For three years, she worked as a scientific assistant in the Plastination Laboratory of the Anatomical Institute, and for two years, she was employed at the Pathological Institute of the University of Heidelberg. In collaboration with Gunther von Hagens, she co-authored the work „Schnittanatomie des menschlichen Gehirns“ (Sectional Anatomy of the Human Brain). Since 1993, she has been the head of BIODUR-Produkte, a company that produces plastic materials and accessories for plastination.

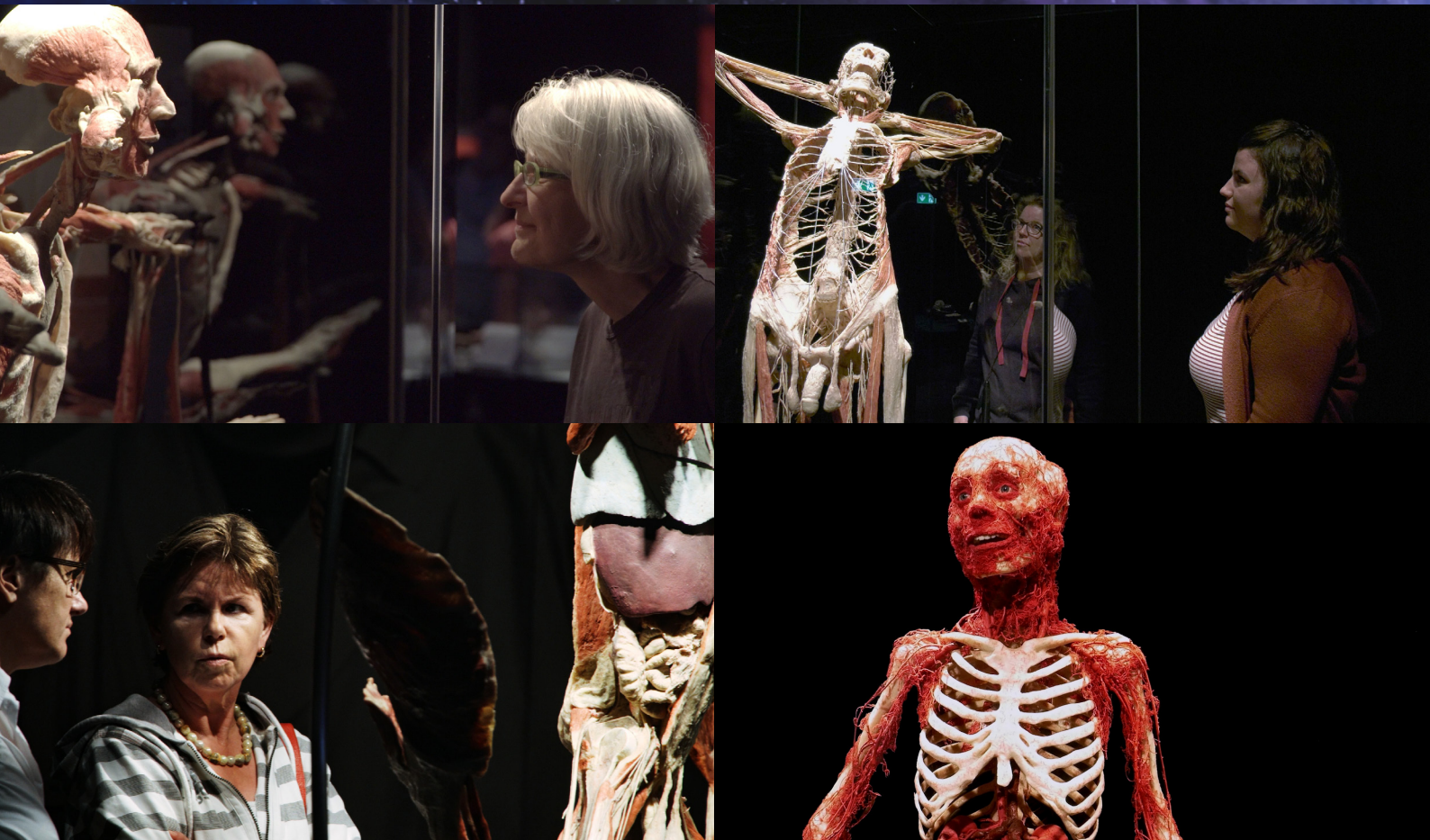
As a curator, she developed the concept of the „BODY WORLDS“ exhibitions. She has been married to Gunther von Hagens since 1992. After his Parkinson's disease diagnosis, he handed over the future development of his ventures to his wife and his son Rurik from a previous marriage in 2010.



The documentary

The documentary comprehensively showcases the production of the plastinates, something that visitors of the „BODY WORLDS“ exhibitions do not get to see. Particularly impressive is the enthusiasm of body donor Heidi from Cologne. She is fascinated by the idea that after her passing, her body undergoes a kind of resurrection in the form of a plastinate. Curator Dr. Angelina Whalley and her husband, Gunther, vividly explain the impact of the exhibitions and the plastinates on the visitors. Gunther talks about how he didn't lose his heart in Heidelberg, as described in the song, but in Japan, where he experienced a level of enthusiasm he had never seen before. His exhibitions continue to polarize the public to this day. The spectrum ranges from outright rejection to frenetic enthusiasm.

The theme of the documentary also revolves around the encounter with death, the realization of one's own mortality, and the meaning of the pursuit of money, power, and material possessions.



Clips from the documentary

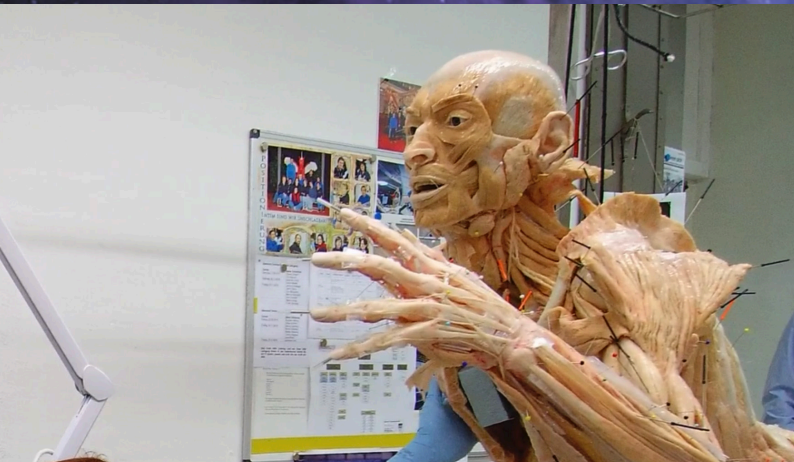


CREATIV MEDIENGRUPPE

Production of the Documentary

The documentary also comprehensively showcases the production of the plastinates, which are created through an elaborate process. Some of the images may not be easy to bear, but they are authentic, integral to the overall context, and not visible to visitors at the „BODY WORLDS“ exhibitions. We spent days filming at the „PLASTINARIUM“ in Guben and visited various exhibitions, including those in Zurich, Aachen, Stuttgart, and Ravensburg.

Although the exclusive interview with Gunther von Hagens took place several years ago, its depth and unique authenticity remain undiminished. During the filming, Gunther von Hagens was seen overseeing the work, sometimes getting involved himself, and instructing students in the intricate tasks. The production involved six cameramen.



Daten und Fakten

Original Titel: Gunther von Hagens „Körperwelten“ - Ein Leben für das Unvergängliche -
titel english: Gunther von Hagens „Body World“ - A life for the imperishable -

Production

Creativ Mediengruppe GmbH & Co.KG
Creativ Suisse TV AG

Production year

2023

Country of origin

Germany

Years of production

2002/2018/2023

Genre

Documentary

Original language

German

Language

English

Length of film

60 min

Final size

Digital 2048x1080

Sound

2.0/5.1

fps

25

Director

Jean Paul Saron

Prod. director

Kay Tilgner

Script

Anna T. Schreiber/
Hans Günter Grenouillet

Contributors

Dr. Gunther von Hagens
Dr. Angelina Whalley
Heidi (Körperspenderin)

Camera

Guido Saum
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Speakers

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