

Giving Life to Anatomy

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Encased in other glass boxes are internal human specimens from head to toe: ankle, knee, and thigh bones; elbow, shoulder, and hip joints and other ball-and-sockets; an infants' skull, an adult vertebral column, thoracic organs, stomach, and an open heart.

After peering through the glass at a human spine, a father patted his son on the back and said, "See, yours is small because you're a kid, but when you're an adult, it will be that size." Next to the large double S-shaped spinal column is a gnarled vertebrae twisted and deformed by disease.

Many of the pieces emphasize the effects of disease and stress on the body and brain. For example, healthy lungs, white and speckled, were placed next to those blackened by years of smoking and the charred lungs of a coal miner.

Shrunken livers, artificial hips, mammary glands with breast cancer, kidneys wrought with tumors, arthritic and prosthetic knees, and an enlarged heart are among health-informing specimens.

"This is what I'll end up having," said a woman pointing to a knee of stainless steel to her kids. "One of those metal things replacing my knee."

Like the transparent sliver of a gemstone, thin slices of body parts illuminate human skin, muscle, bone, and everything in between in another specimen. One long slice of a 300-pound man exposes the thick fatty layer of tissue attributed to severe obesity.

Of the entirely preserved and erect human cadavers, there is a swinging baseball batter, a juggling soccer player, a back-bending yoga lady, an upside-down trick skateboarder, a head-first diver, a pair of figure-skaters, an acrobatic ringman, and the orthopedic body fitted with artificial corrections.

Each figure, naked-of-skin and



PHOTO BY CARI HACHMANN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

An OMSI visitor takes in *Body Worlds and the Brain*, an exhibit that shows the anatomy of the human body, both in its resilience and fragility.

situated according to their profession, portrayed all muscles necessary to perform the movements of their unique stunts, often with sections of the body removed or flayed open behind mirrors to offer new angles and reveal deeper truths about the physical human body. Most shockingly displayed is the drawer man, a giant of a person standing vertically with chunks of his body pulled outward like draw-

ers to unveil his organs inside. The X-lady looks like she could be a freak leader of an alien invasion with her crossed legs and muscles splayed open from cheek to shin.

Other displays include our mammal counterparts, like the tallest animal in the world – a giraffe—which stands ceiling high with its 22-pound heart and seven-vertebra neck, equal to that of a human neck.

There's a luminescent red light illuming the blood vessel configuration of a rooster and a small lamb, and body slices of an alligator and other creatures.

Upon exiting the easily two-hours spent inside the exhibit, which drew over 400,000 people during its first 2007 opening in Portland, visitors are encouraged to sign a guest book.

One lady thanks the body donors responsible for *Body World* and the *Brain's* existence.

"I am very thankful to those who donated parts of themselves to make it possible," she wrote. And to the exhibits' creators, "Thank you for investing all the time and effort it took to put it together—it was worth it."

Another guest appreciated the wealth of health information.

"I will continue to eat healthier and spend time taking care of my body," she said.

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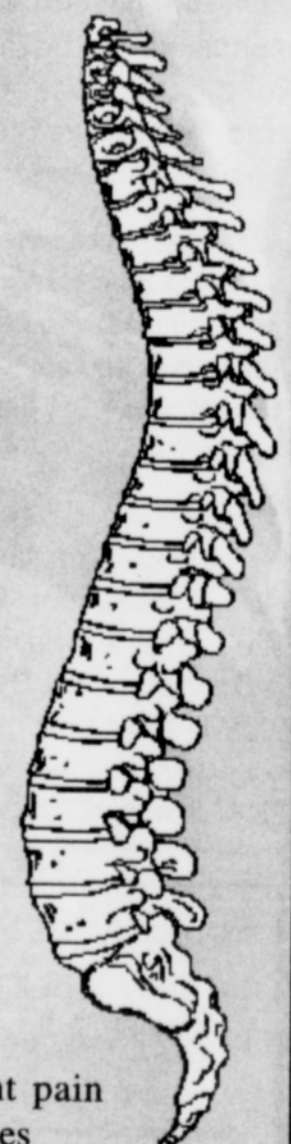
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