

Exploring the "Universe Within"

OSC presents a unique encounter with the human body...

By Kristen Manieri

Psychologist Abraham H. Maslow once said, "What is necessary to change a person is to change his awareness of himself." And if awareness is what it will take to deal effectively with the many serious health issues facing Americans today, then exhibits such as *Our Body: The Universe Within* are making a contribution far beyond their entertainment value.

Through July 2007, the Orlando Science Center (OSC) is hosting the premiere of *Our Body: The Universe Within*, which takes up more than 15,000 square feet of space in its temporary exhibit hall. Boasting more than 20 actual bodies and 200 anatomical specimens, the exhibit takes visitors on a journey that for many will be uncharted territory. Judging by the shocked and amazed reactions to this exhibit, it's clear that many of us know very little about the flesh and bones we inhabit for our lifetime.

Studies and statistics galore point to an ever-increasing lack of respect and appreciation for the human body. According to the Center for Disease Control, over 66 percent of America's adults are overweight or obese. With more than 20 percent of our adult population smoking or drinking more than five alcoholic drinks per day, it's no wonder that cancer and heart disease have become so sadly common.

Do we just not know any better? With literally millions of people all over the world flocking to exhibits similar to the

one our OSC now hosts, we can no longer plead ignorance about the magnificence and delicateness of the human body. Though controversial, these exhibits are undeniably compelling to us humans, who just can't seem to miss the chance to see ourselves for the first time...from the inside out.

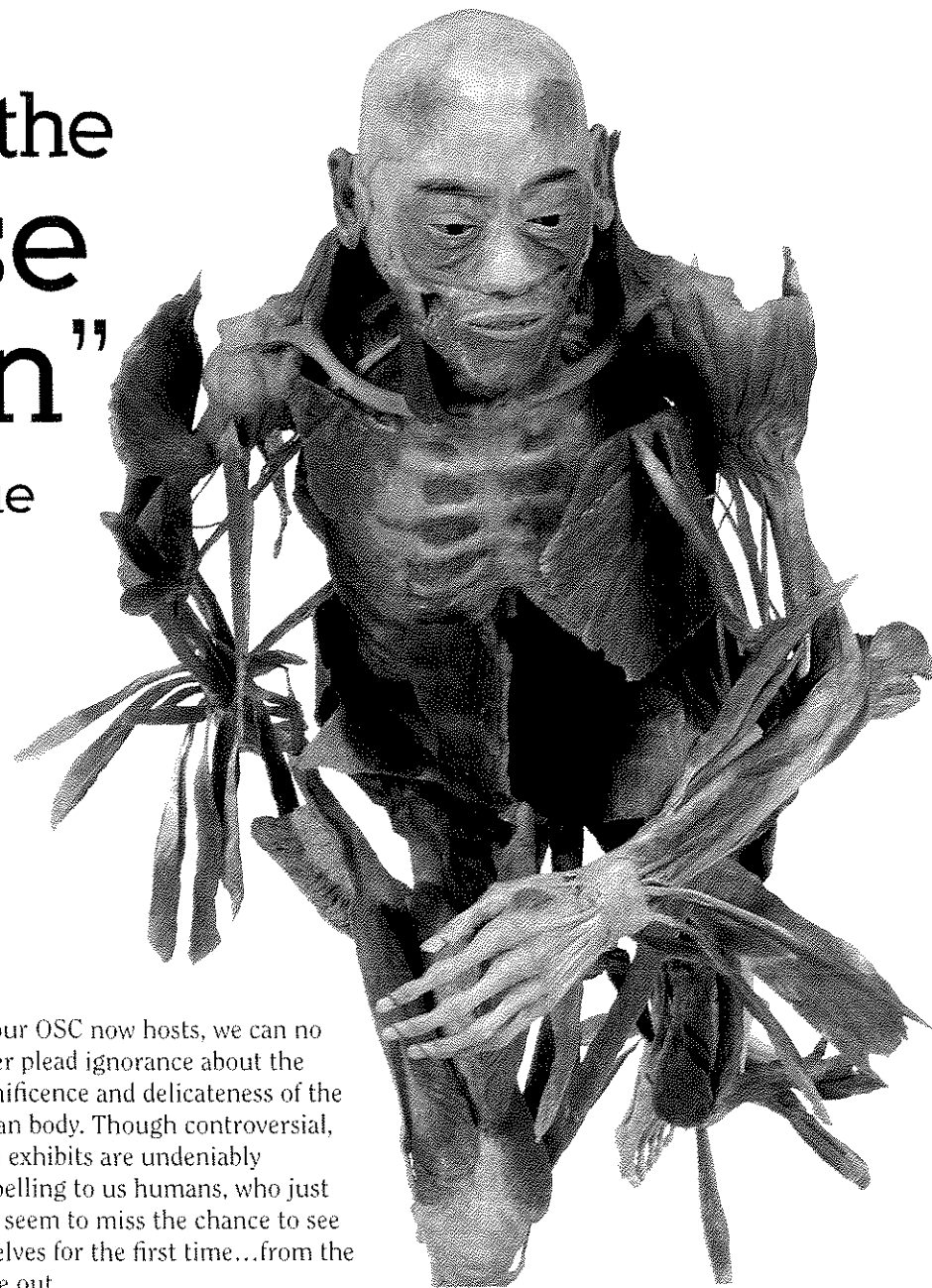
The exhibit is up close and personal. Standing inches away from a full body specimen, visitors can see every muscle and bone, every organ and artery, and every complex system that delivers life with what feels like no effort at all. Choose the optional audio tour and a pleasant voice will deliver an endless stream of information about every specimen in the exhibit. No doubt, every curiosity that you've ever had about the human body will be satisfied during your visit.

The bodies are preserved through a process called plastination or polymer impregnation. In a process taking up to 1,500 hours per specimen, the body's water and fat are replaced with reactive plastics that are initially pliable, enabling the bodies to be placed

in various positions. Specimens are perfectly preserved and completely dry and odorless. And in case you're wondering...no, you can't touch any of the bodies (as if you'd want to).

Aside from presenting all the many parts of the human body, the exhibit also features a prenatal section, which has been respectfully blocked off from the general viewing area of the exhibit. Here you'll see human specimens at each month of their development in the womb. For those with no special sensitivity to this area, this can be an extremely interesting part of the exhibit.

One of the most popular elements of *The Universe Within* is the smoker's lung. This cancerous specimen has been very impactful on visitors, causing many school-age visitors to proclaim, "I'll



"Kudos to OSC for providing an exhibit that is both respectful and enormously educational and for creating an atmosphere that is both reverent and engaging. It absolutely follows through with its promise...you will never look at your body the same way again."

– Kristen Manieri

Orlando Science Center • 777 E Princeton St., Orlando, 32803 • (407) 514-2000. Visit www.osc.org to download Family Exhibit guide.

never smoke." With the number one and two causes of death in the country being heart disease and cancer, maybe this exhibit will prompt many of us to 'never do' a lot of things.

No doubt, you'll leave this exhibit with a new appreciation for the study of anatomy. As you enter the exhibit, your first stop will be in "The Introduction Hall," an area that showcases how far this science has actually come. It's hard to believe that we once thought bloodletting would cure us, but when one considers the very limited means by which scientists had to study the human body, it's no wonder they were often mistaken.

As you move through the exhibit, you'll also come across "Leonardo's Library," a tribute to anatomical art. For centuries scientists relied heavily on artists to create accurate depictions of their anatomical research. "Leonardo's Library" features many of these classic works such as da Vinci's famous *The Vitruvian Man* and Henry Gray's *Gray's Anatomy* – which, by the way, has nothing to do with the television lives of medical interns.

Being fascinating and educational hasn't entirely protected exhibits of this kind from controversy. In fact, this exhibit has once again roused the age-old debate between scientific progress and human ethics. Is there a line that we cross in our search for understanding? Some people would say that body exhibits cross that line, becoming more like a freak show than a classroom. You decide.

Despite any concerns and inhibitions, know that *Our Body: The Universe Within* is a rare and unique experience to know the human body intimately and you might not want to miss it. Who knows? Maybe you'll even be inspired to take better care of *your* body.



Kristen Manieri is the author of the upcoming book *Great Dates Orlando: A Couple's Guide to the Orlando Area*. Visit www.greatdatesorlando.com to learn more.

A traditional Anglican Parish of Christ's One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.



SAINT ALBAN'S CATHEDRAL

3348 West S.R. 426, Oviedo
407.657.2376 stalbansil.com

Sunday Mass at 8:00 and 10:15
1928 Prayer Book

PUTTING THE CARE BACK IN HEALTHCARE.

Physiotherapy WORKS LLC

Physical & Massage Therapy

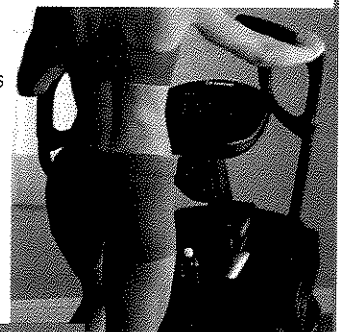
www.pt-works.com

DO YOU WANT TO REACH YOUR PERSONAL FITNESS GOALS WITHOUT INJURY?

Call Physiotherapy Works and learn more about our Personal Training Program
(407) 657-5029

Our Personal Training Program is supervised by our Physical Therapists to ensure that the exercises are appropriate for you and any injury you may have.

Featuring personal training, Pilates and Gravity Training System. No membership required.



First 5 callers qualify for FREE Personal Training session! (expires July 31, 2007)

Physiotherapy WORKS LLC

1890 Semoran Blvd, Suite 251 • Winter Park, FL 32792 License #MM15854