

# Body Building

By Jonathan Copsey / STAFF

The room is eerily lit. Just enough light streams from the ceiling to walk by. Mostly, it's just dark. Standing in this gloom, life-sized and alien, is a body composed of millions of microscopic blood-red hairs. This is your body.

Well, not just your body; It's everyone's body and a part of "Bodies... The Exhibition" at Atlantic Station. Alternately reminiscent of Frankenstein's lab and a surrealist's painting, Bodies is an exhibit probably like no other. Where else can you walk between upright bodies stripped of their flesh (and sometimes more) not only standing, but playing and acting?

It's more like a museum, really, only instead of pieces of art within the display cases, there are organs and whole systems of bodily functions. A liver here. An arm there. The digestive tract over there.

But, for Brittany Clements of Alpharetta, this is about as interesting as a museum can get. She's a guide at the exhibition, dressed in a white lab coat that could be worn either by a doctor or surgeon. Clements just finished her undergraduate degree in dietetics from UGA and is currently an intern working toward being a dietitian. Volunteering at the Bodies exhibit seems like it'd be a natural fit.

"I knew someone who worked there and knew of the exhibit and thought that it would be a great way to keep up to date on my knowledge with the body," said Clements. "As a dietitian, I don't deal a lot with anatomy but have a lot of experience with physiology."

Anatomy is what she gets at the exhibition. And plenty of it. Somewhere between a textbook and a sideshow, Bodies uses real human body parts that have been amazingly preserved to provide viewers with a glimpse into the human body like never before – which is by turns amazing and horrendous.

Each room of the exhibit is divided by function; there's the muscular system, the digestive system (Clements' favorite), the circulatory system, etc. Individual organs or structures are in museum cases and whole bodies are upright, typically in athletic poses that show off the organs of their specific room. For instance, the body in the room detailing muscles has all of his muscles exposed and is in the pose of shooting a basketball. The viewer can see which muscles are being used where, with three dimensional detail that a schoolbook or video could never offer.

"Seeing it was amazing," noted Clements

of her first visit to the show. "I was so interested in the preservation process. People say all the time that they [the bodies] just don't look real. They look plastic. Having seen an



embalmed body I just couldn't see how they did this. An embalmed body isn't so distinct. The muscles lie flat and turn brown in color. Not the same shape or integrity [as if they were alive]."

There's nothing truly gruesome in the exhibit. Nor even really disturbing. No blood, no gore. Just bodies and body parts. Perhaps it is the museum-like atmosphere or just the sheer surreality of it, but Clements claims that she's never seen anyone get sick or upset by the display. Fainting yes, but never sick.

"The mood is usually very solemn. Quiet people reading and trying to take it all in," Clements said. "It's very strange the first time you're in there, that there are 100 people in this room and it's very silent. People are very respectful and read and take it all in."

## LEARNING FROM THE DEAD

Believe it or not, for a long time, European doctors were forbidden to examine cadavers. The ancient peoples of the Mediterranean – the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans – all studied anatomy exhaustively. So exhaustively that, once Christianity set in, the Church essentially declared all anatomy was leant so there was no need for the further desecration of bodies. Of course, there was still plenty to learn, as anyone who knows the history of the term "hysteria" can attest. It was not until fairly recently that doctors were once again able to study and learn from corpses.

The bodies in Bodies came from donors and from China. China has a law stating that

unclaimed, unidentified corpses can be donated to medicine for students to examine. Once in the hands of the exhibition's organizers, scientists used a



Photo above right: SPECIAL;

Photos above left and left

by Jonathan Copsey /STAFF

**Bodies... The Exhibition has preserved bodies on display for both children and adults to learn from. Everything from Throwing a baseball to breathing to conducting an orchestra is detailed through the amazing preservation of human bodies and organs.**

processes, which left just a delicate network of blood vessels remaining.

## ENCORE

This is Bodies' second jaunt in Atlanta, which makes it a first for the exhibition; they have never returned to a venue, but Atlanta's turnout was such that it demanded an encore. For a global show, that speaks highly of Georgia.

As a medium for education for all ages and all interests, Bodies is unparalleled. Everyone can identify with the exhibit, be it through the kidney with kidney stones, the smokers' lungs or even the skeleton dancing with its muscles.

Bodies... the Exhibition is located at the Premier Exhibition Center in Atlantic Station, 265 18th St, 2nd floor, Atlanta and is open seven days a week. For more information and tickets, visit [www.bodiestickets.com](http://www.bodiestickets.com).

