# THE BODY AND PRESENCE – UNCANNY THINGS



What meaning cannot convey

Two seven hundred year old mummies found in Peru – reported in the Sydney Morning Herald on 25 February [Link]



A man of about 35 and a boy of 5.

The man had one eye open and “you can see his eyeball.

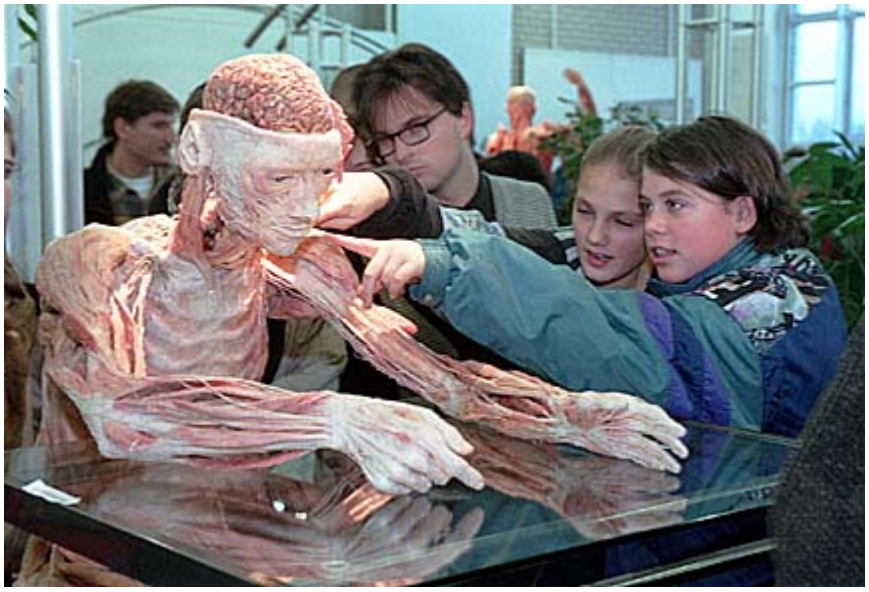
It’s perfectly preserved.” When the workers moved the body, they accidentally made a hole in his side, displaying his intestines, she added. Fat adhering to the skin was also extremely well preserved.

(Reuters)

The unexceptional, but also uncanny, presence of the past. Remember also Bataille’s focus on corporeal materialities – from *Histoire de l’oeil* (the metaphorical play through an enucleated eye) to the erotics of sacrifice. I think of the ritualized deaths of many bog bodies in northern Europe. You cannot help but look and stare.



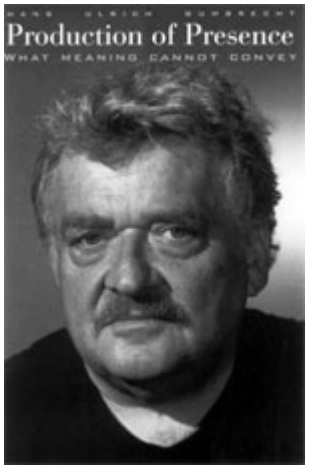
Gunther von Hagens’s Körperwelten exhibition continues its six year tour in Frankfurt (there till April). A lecturer in anatomy at Heidelberg, he invented plastination – preserving bodies by replacing body fluids and fats with reactive polymers (silicon rubber, epoxy resin, polyester).



*The Runner* is stripped of everything except bones and muscles. Its outer muscles fly backward off its bones, as if the muscles were being blown by the wind rushing past. *The Muscleman* is a bare skeleton that holds up its entire system of muscles. *The Figure with Skin* retains all its muscles and organs, but its skin is draped like a coat over one arm. *The Expanded Body* resembles a human telescope, its skeleton pulled apart so people can see what lies beneath the skull and the rib cage.

“What this does is build bridges back to your own body. When you look at the models, you can recognize yourself as a member of the human species. Your humanity becomes clear.”

Sepp Gumbrecht’s book *Production of presence: what meaning cannot convey* is just out. [Amazon link]




Wonderful stuff – reclaiming presence, thereness, tangibility – beyond interpretation, for literature and the humanities.

Brith Gof The theatre company I worked with from 1993. Haearn. Iron. A work of designed performance. 1993. Mike Pearson and Clifford McLucas – artistic directors.

"… Haearn has all the ingredients of previous shows plus some – awesome scenography, insidious, insistent sound, some flickering documentary film, fire breathing, pyrotechnics and aquatechnics, aerial acrobatics, quasi-operatic score and libretto, coal trucks, overhead gantry crane, lasers, smoke and wind machines, gods and mortals, a cast of 50 plus – and all the intellectual content. Premiered at the old British Coal shed in Tredegar, Wales, a 15,000 square foot onetime iron and steel works, it attempts to tell the creation of industrial society as forged in these South Wales valleys.

It does so through the Greek myths of Prometheus and Hephaestus, both of whom tried to create human life,

through the narrated writings of Mary Shelley, whose Frankenstein was into the same game, and through read texts describing medical and technical developments during the industrial revolution. The gods ride the gantry over 40 hospital beds cum foundry moulds, create their man and woman and then put them to work until they die.

There are some stunning images: man and woman, having been shocked into life, drenched in water, slipping and sliding, pull interminably against bungee ropes to get towards each other, finally only making contact through a wheel before death.”

(*The Guardian, UK*)



In recalling past works of performance Mike would point to a scar above his eye, his knee, never the same after …