

Presidential Letter

Dear fellow plastinators,

The field of plastination is going through a polarization into artistic, commercial, research and teaching branches. Moreover, has the expiration of Dr. von Hagens' U.S. patents led to the development of several new polymers.

Plastination has recently been used for the production of healthy and pathologically altered human specimens, that were exposed to the public in both Osaka and Tokyo, Japan as well as in Mannheim, Germany in connection with literature (e.g.: The dream of immortality) and music and dancing performances (e.g.: Is it possibly the death?). This exhibition called "The Human Body World" produced a worldwide discussion including statements about human dignity, violation of the sanctity of the soul and macabre mummification technique.

Plastination, however, has primarily been used for medical purposes, mainly for teaching students and members of medical professions as well as for gaining new results in medical research since years and this has finally led to the formation of the International Society for Plastination. Article II of the bylaws and constitution of the ISP refers to the ISP as a multidisciplinary organization, including persons within all fields of SCIENCE interested in the technique of plastination to produce material for TEACHING, RESEARCH or DIAGNOSTIC PURPOSES.

Although I do not want to judge the use of plastination for such exhibitions, I must state that from an anatomist's point of view the artistic and commercial exposition of dissected human cadavers may damage the reputation of anatomy departments and do not correspond to the bylaws of our society. People who donate their bodies to anatomy programs do this in order to support the education of highly qualified future doctors and to support medical professionalists in learning and testing surgical treatments in the dead body before they touch and invade the living body by needles and scalpels. But they do not want to be sold to the public.

The announcement of several companies, to have new and cheaper polymers usable for plastination that could re-

place the Biodur™ polymers sound promising. However, as far as now those polymers have not been tested and led to the production of satisfying specimens. Moreover, there is no evidence that these companies have solutions for all the plastination procedures. That is why, I suggested to invite those companies to participate in the 9th International Conference on Plastination, show their products and results and face up the discussion.

There are many interesting new developments in the field of plastination and the 9th International Conference on Plastination in Trois-Rivières, Québec, Canada during July 5-10, 1998 will give you the chance to learn about both the standard and new and/or altered procedures, to learn about new polymers and equipment, to present and discuss your own results and last but not least ask the experts.

The sixth biennial meeting of the ISP on Thursday, July 9, will also offer all members of the ISP to vote for a new executive committee, that will lead the society through the next two years.

Thus, I strongly recommend that you come to Trois-Rivières to participate in the conference, that is hosted by our vice-president, Prof. Dr. Régis OLRÉY and our journal editor Gilles GRONDIN. They have established an excellent and interesting scientific as well as a wonderful evening and spouse program and I know that they are waiting for you eagerly and they will welcome and treat you with the greatest hospitality.

Finally, I want to thank the ISP members for their input in the society, especially via Email, and the Executive Committee Members for their support, especially Ronn WADE for providing us with the listserver and Gilles GRONDIN for pushing the quality and quantity of our journal.

Yours sincerely,

Andreas H. Weiglein