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Madame Tussaud

Lead: Despite the advent of television and the internet, the biggest tourist attraction in Britain remains a bizarre collection of wax figures imported to England two centuries ago for a temporary stay.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Marie Tussaud (nee Grosholz) did her apprenticeship with Philippe Curtius in the heady revolutionary days of Paris, 1789. Crowds of the curious flocked to their salons to see exhibits featuring among other oddities, King Louis XVI and

his Queen Marie-Antoinette eating their inedible dinner in frozen solitude. The most avid interest then and now continues to be the Chamber of Horrors, the waxed collection of notorious murderers caught in the act of taking their victims.

Curtius was a supporter of the Revolution and was among the leaders of the National Guard who led the July 14th attack on the ancient prison and fort in the heart of Paris, the Bastille. He recalled the story and hyped his own participation in his gallery where people came to see the death heads of the Bastille defenders and later those of Maximilien Robespierre and the King and Queen.

Philippe Curtius died in 1794 and Marie inherited the business, but a pitiful marriage and mounting debt caused her to flee France for Britain in 1802 with her young son. She intended the trip to be a temporary tour, but she never returned. Tussaud combined a highly competent creative skill with an almost infallible sense of marketing. She knew that people wanted to witness the bizarre in an up-scale environment and so she placed her “galleries” in fashionable London neighborhoods and resort towns such as Bath and Brighton. These wax figures were the closest most people came to seeing the real thing. How these wax works have survived and continued to prosper in the face of the media explosion is a

continuing wonder to those who study marketing.

**At the University of Richmond,
this is Dan Roberts.**

Resources

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<http://www.madame-tussauds.com/>

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