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Lela Graybill

## A Proximate Violence: Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors

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Abstract:

Arriving in London in 1802, Madame Tussaud's waxworks show presented visitors with a viscerally engaging fantasy of trauma in the form of her "Chamber of Horrors," a singular collection of deathly figures drawn from the annals of the French Revolution. This essay considers the specific rhetorical and aesthetic modes that developed as Tussaud increasingly commodified not only contemporary history and society, but also individualized experiences of violence.

## A Proximate Violence: Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors by Lela Graybill

All circumstances taken together, the French revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world. The most wonderful things are brought about, in many instances by means the most absurd and ridiculous, in the most ridiculous modes, and apparently by the most contemptible instruments. Every thing seems out of nature in this strange chaos of levity and ferocity, and all sorts of crimes jumbled together with all sorts of follies. In viewing this monstrous tragicomic scene, the most opposite passions necessarily succeed and sometimes mix with each other in the mind: alternate contempt and indignation, alternate laughter and tears, alternate scorn and horror.

– Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

The nearer it approaches the reality, and the further it removes us from all idea of fiction, the more perfect is its power.

– Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of the Sublime and the Beautiful*

In 1802 a prominent collection of Parisian waxworks was transported to London, commencing what was to become a nearly thirty year tour of the British Isles. The collection had been modeled by Philippe Curtius (1737–94) and his apprentice and heir, Madame Tussaud (1761–1850).<sup>[1]</sup> Waxworks displays were not uncommon at the time, but Curtius's collection stood apart. The typical display, often at a fairground, might represent a scene of allegory or fantasy, or even portray a story from classical literature. Two of the better known waxworks collections of the eighteenth century, the Dutch Doolhof collection and Mrs. Salmon's in London, exhibited such scenes as Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, Salome dancing before King Herod, David slaying Goliath, and Queen Thomira with the overthrow of Cyrus the Great.<sup>[2]</sup> Curtius distinguished himself from these shows by presenting figures taken from contemporary history that were cast from live subjects. He cultivated personal relationships with men such as Benjamin Franklin, Voltaire, and Rousseau, all of whom were said to have sat for Curtius to have their wax portraits made.<sup>[3]</sup> Curtius's collection was in this way unique, claiming direct ties to the notable and notorious figures that were presented to the public.

Tussaud capitalized on the singularity of the collection when she opened the show in London, revealing to the public a set of figures that had been secreted away while in France.<sup>[4]</sup> Alongside the display of figures from the French and British monarchy were a set of death heads—wax busts cast from the severed heads of the most famous villains of the French Revolution (fig. 1). These were accompanied by other markers of the recent violence in France: a scale model of the guillotine, models of the Bastille before and after its destruction, and a staging of the "villainous" proponent of the Terror, Marat, stabbed and dying in his bath (fig. 2). The actual bloodstained shirt in which Henri IV had been assassinated was also included in Tussaud's display, augmenting both the authenticity and the intimacy of her show. Tussaud, it was later said, "stops at nothing for the satisfaction of her public."<sup>[5]</sup>

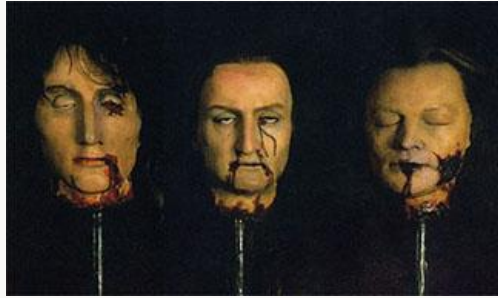


Fig. 1, Marie Tussaud (attributed to), *Guillotined heads of Jacques-René Hébert, Jean-Baptiste Carrier, and Maximilien Robespierre*, cast from molds dated c. 1794-1795. Wax and mixed media. London, Madame Tussaud Archives. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 2, Marie Tussaud (attributed to), *Jean-Paul Marat at his Last Breath*, cast from mold dated 1793. Wax and mixed media. London, Madame Tussaud Archives. [\[larger image\]](#)

Tussaud's display, like many other entertainments of its day, blurred the line between the representational and the real, creating a phenomenological terrain arguably ushered in by the French Revolution itself.<sup>[6]</sup> Looking across the channel in 1789, Edmund Burke had seen with prescient clarity the aesthetic character of the events unfolding in France, that "monstrous tragicomic scene."<sup>[7]</sup> There the politics and the aesthetics of representation had collided; abstract ideals were manifested through spectacular action and given visual, theatrical form. Burke was one of the first to recognize that the French Revolution would constitute nothing less than a complete metaphysical break with the past. The equality sought by Revolutionaries in France necessitated a seamless correspondence between individual identity and collective power. Were it obtainable, this ideal would collapse all distinctions. The paradoxical achievement of the French Revolution was to locate a politics of difference at the core of modern liberal selfhood. With the overturn of the Old Regime, sovereign individuals would form not in relation to a pre-ordained divine order, but in their contingent *difference* from non-sovereign beings.

The violence associated with the French Revolution, that central "attraction" of Tussaud's collection, forcefully asserted the legitimacy of the sovereign individual. The sovereign individual could be understood as first and foremost a *separate*, autonomous being.

Revolutionary executions were staged to re-enact the bodily and psychic distance of the citizenry from one another; even during the excesses of the Terror, victims faced the guillotine's blade singly, one by one. The Revolutionary government's assertion of individual autonomy culminated in and depended upon the literal destruction of the king's body. The king's execution signaled that final rupture between a hierarchical symbolic past and the new order, in which the autonomous individual might possess a real and present power.

In her first shows in London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, Tussaud mingled violated bodies and their accoutrements with her more civil compositions of royal celebrities. Soon, however, she moved the former to an "Adjoining Room"—later dubbed "The Chamber of Horrors"—and began to charge the public an additional sixpence for admission.<sup>[8]</sup> One of the longest-running exhibits of Revolutionary violence, Madame Tussaud's Chamber is a quintessentially modern spectacle; both commodified and privatized, Tussaud's display is "popular" in all senses of the word. The graphic scenes of suffering and torture that pervade early modern history were legitimized by the religious and pedagogical purposes to which they were put; collective identities and power relations were explicitly and openly enacted across their stage. Tussaud's displays of wounds and weapons—their fragmented nature, as well as their status as pure attraction—operated on a different logic. Eschewing the traditional social and psychological hierarchies of the Old Regime, Tussaud courted an intriguing—and ambiguous—reciprocity between spectacle and spectator.

This essay considers the specific rhetorical and aesthetic mode developed at the Chamber of Horrors in relation to emerging notions of selfhood in the wake of the French Revolution. In its early days, Tussaud's show purported to operate as a tool of enlightenment understanding and moral sociability. Eventually, however, the exhibition came to function openly as a site of entertainment, curiosity, and fascination. Increasingly, Tussaud commodified not only contemporary history and society, but also individualized experiences of violence. I argue that Tussaud employed a rhetoric of fragmentation and disjunction—both between the individual figures and between the figures and the context of their display—to create a viscerally engaging fantasy of pleasurable trauma, founded on sensate experiences of the self. This form of violent display developed alongside, not against, the very production of the liberal modern subject.

### **The Wax Salon**

Tussaud's exhibition had its origins in the nascent public sphere of eighteenth-century France, and the hybrid social practices that characterized that milieu. In Paris, Curtius's display had been known as the *Salon de Cire* (The Wax Salon). There, models of contemporary luminaries were offered up for viewers in a space of sociability. Louis Sebastian Mercier gave an enthusiastic description of the *Salon's* celebrity in his *Tableau de Paris*. "Curtius's wax figures," he wrote,

are much celebrated on the boulevards, and much visited. He has modeled kings, great writers, beautiful women, and famous thieves. One sees Jeannot, Desrues, the Count d'Estaing, and Linguet; one sees the royal family seated at an artificial banquet: the emperor is next to the king. The crier booms loudly from the door: Come in, gentlemen, come see the grand banquet; come in, *c'est tout comme à Versailles*. One pays two pieces per person; and Curtius makes sometimes almost 100 écus per day, with the display of his illuminated mannequins.<sup>[9]</sup>

Two prints convey the sense of fashionable elegance that Curtius cultivated in his displays. In one we see well-dressed women with their young children, looking at a carefully staged scene with full-length portrait figures (fig. 3). The second depicts royals *en grand couvert*. The *grand couvert* was a centuries-old tradition where any properly-dressed person could go to the king's palace and view the royal family dining at public meals. Curtius has here staged the event for a paying audience, showing the French royal family seated at a banquet table alongside emperor Joseph II, Marie-Antoinette's brother (fig. 4).<sup>[10]</sup> In these images, as in Curtius's *Salon*, special care was given to *mise-en-scène*; accurate furniture and clothing were essential, and the life-sized models were positioned to convey naturalistic social attitudes. "Each new adventure," Mayeur de Saint-Paul wrote in 1788, "provides him with a subject with which to vary his display. The mannequins on which the heads are placed are very well attired; in sum, this curiosity is not to be missed."<sup>[11]</sup>



Fig. 3, Jean B. Dambrun, *Salon de Curtius*, c. 1786. Engraving, from a suite of twelve almanach illustrations. Bibliothèque National de France, Cabinet des Estampes, Paris. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 4, *Le Salon de Curtius*, 1784. Illustration, *Les Aventures parisiennes*, almanach nouveau, galant, historique, moral et chantant, sur les plus jolis airs. (Paris: Jubert, 1784), figure 4. [\[larger image\]](#)

The *Salon de Cire* offered visitors a space of performance and play. The *grand couvert* was a public event at Versailles. Curtius's exhibition eased the social protocol of the occasion. The

content and mise-en-scène of the *Salon* encouraged acts of social comparison and differentiation, not only between actual and represented figures, but also among visitors themselves. The arrangement of the exhibition space effected this interchange. Some scenes, such as the Royal Banquet, were staged behind a balustrade in a proscenium space (figs. 3 and 4). Others were available to closer inspection by the elite. As biographer Pamela Pilbeam suggests, "rich visitors...could wander among the models and touch them, imagining they were in a real *salon* with distinguished guests eager for clever conversation. Less well-off clients paid a mere two *sous* for a view from a roped-off raised area at the rear. They got double value, pondering which of the notables below was wax and which real."<sup>[12]</sup> The 1785 *Almanach du Palais-Royal* described how Curtius's *Salon* was "divided by a balustrade, in two parts. One pays two pieces for the first, and 12 for the second, where one can find displayed all the figures that are usually very good likenesses. The variety of personages that one can see there is striking."<sup>[13]</sup> The *Salon de Cire*, like much of the Palais-Royal, was a space of social mixing—the "striking variety" referred to here surely describes more than the identities of the models themselves.

For a time, Curtius's *Salon* at the Palais Royal had a counterpart in his *Caverne de Voleurs* (Den of Thieves) on the Boulevard du Temple. Where the *Salon* displayed wax figures of the elite, wealthy, and famous, the *Caverne* displayed models of notorious criminals and villains.<sup>[14]</sup> At the *Caverne de Voleurs*, Curtius offered viewers a transgressive intimacy with those who were socially and politically reviled. Mayeur de Saint-Paul describes how "Curtius, always alert to new attractions, obtained permission to make a mask of a condemned man. He colored it, dressed it in the appropriate attire, and had a man known as a barker herald the portrait of the unfortunate thief."<sup>[15]</sup> By modeling criminals with the same attention to detail that he lavished on the respectable wax figures of his *Salon*, Curtius seemed to be offering the *Caverne* as its pedagogical complement. At one site could be found figures for emulation, at the other, figures for approbation. The spatial separation of the *Salon* and the *Caverne* was designed to secure the moral and social legibility of the figures. Viewers could anticipate the spectacle they would view at each site, and the moral opposition between the two exhibitions offered a mutually reinforcing context for the figures therein.

Curtius walked a fine line between pedagogy and attraction. Pedagogical pretext could legitimate his—and the audience's—investment in marginal characters, but it might also undermine the social acceptability of that appeal. In the course of his description of the *Caverne*, Mayeur de Saint-Paul relates an incident that contributed to the closing of the exhibition. Curtius apparently displayed the model of a military officer who had been condemned for theft. Striving for authenticity, Curtius dressed the figure in official military uniform. People objected to the contradictory message conveyed by his coupling of criminality and respectability (a thief dressed in military uniform), and forced Curtius to remove the figure.<sup>[16]</sup> Eventually the *Caverne* was closed down. The wax exhibition showcased political and criminal celebrities, yet this story demonstrates that viewers had a primary role in determining its content. Curtius—and Tussaud after him—were continually engaged in a delicate negotiation of the multiple, shifting sensibilities and subjectivities of the modern public.

Curtius later consolidated the two exhibitions by abandoning his site in the Palais Royal and moving the entire collection to the Boulevard du Temple. His reconfigured *Salon* featured an

eclectic model of showmanship, not only in the variety of the collection but moreover in its mode of display. Inventory records show that Curtius's consolidated collection included portrait heads and full figures, as well as paintings, prints, and other curiosities.[17] This shifting content was another eclectic dimension of his show. The singularity of the *Salon* was secured both by the *product* on display, and the fact that the process of *making* the show was also on view. New figures were added regularly, usually by appending a new bust to an existing mannequin. Pilbeam points out that "Curtius did not designate specific rooms as workrooms, so all over the building there were models in process of construction, repair, being coloured, decorated and dressed." [18] A satirical print by P. D. Viviez from 1787, "Changez-moi cette tête," shows the regular event of the changing of heads (fig. 5). A crowd presses in at the entrance to the left. One worker brings a bust down from a shelf while another two set a headless mannequin. A fourth raises a hammer and chisel to a female model. To the right, a customer contemplates a set of breasts and buttocks for purchase. Heads are literally rolling, one discarded on the floor and approached by a curious cat, with a sword nearby in the foreground. The print gives some indication of the exhibition's level of attraction to a curious public, as well as the parodic effect of its flamboyant display of the showman's process.



Fig. 5, P.D. Viviez, *Changez-moi cette tête*, 1787. Madame Tussaud Archives, London. [\[larger image\]](#)

Ready changeability of the wax figure was key to Curtius's ability to keep abreast of contemporary events, which in turn ensured the continuing novelty of his show. Where the more common itinerant wax modeler would simply seek out a new location when public interest waned, Curtius invested his efforts in creating a viable permanent exhibition. The periodic rotation of figures kept his singular skills before the public eye, and there is every indication that audiences visited Curtius's waxworks to appreciate the artist's work as much as to get a glimpse of celebrity. Contemporary descriptions almost uniformly refer to him as a sculptor rather than showman (he was admitted as a sculptor to the Academy of St-Luc in 1778), and it was widely known that he enjoyed the patronage of the Prince de Conti.[19]

Curtius's focus on contemporary people and events also invited viewers to invest in the reality effect of his display. Curtius's wax busts were not only portraits, they were *imprints*, trace figures of the original models registered in wax.[20] Their relic-like status was enhanced by the real hair and teeth that Curtius frequently used on his figures, as well as the clothing he would sometimes obtain from the models themselves in order to dress his mannequins.[21] While the success of allegorical wax tableaux seen at fairs and traveling shows depended on the convincing representation of a *story*, Curtius's popularity was built on the promise of the

indexical model to bring the viewer into direct, unmediated contact with otherwise distant personages.

Curtius's exhibition thus addressed viewers in conflicting modes. The indexicality of his figures gave the audience a sense of unmediated proximity and intimacy with the people on display. But Curtius was also marketing his own talents as a sculptor, putting the art of wax-modeling on display by showing figures in various stages of completion. His artistic, mediating hand was frequently in evidence. Despite the acknowledged popularity of Curtius's exhibition, Mayeur de Saint-Paul raised several criticisms in his description of the show:

Everyone reproaches Curtius for his carelessness in changing the figures. Today you see such and such great man from our century, then tomorrow nothing will remain of it but its shape. The wax heads are hollow; in lifting the hair from the back one can introduce there one's hand, the eye is changed, substituted with another of a different color; a red moustache takes the place of a black beard, and this figure that yesterday represented Scipio or Hannibal, today represents Mandrin leading his band of smugglers: the good Public, who cannot tell the difference between the two, leave much satisfied with what they got for their two pieces, persuaded that they saw yesterday a great man at Curtius's, and that today they trembled at the sight of a villain.[\[22\]](#)

By focusing on contemporary figures and remaking his display on a regular basis, Curtius (perhaps unwittingly) foregrounded a fundamental exchangeability between personages from different classes and social realms. The mannequin that one day supported the king's head might the next hold the bust of a criminal. What was thrown into relief was more than the art of his craft: it was the artifice of identity itself.

### **Revolution *chez* Curtius**

By 1789 Curtius was actively experimenting with two different modes of exhibition and showmanship. The first centered on appropriate contextualization: figures were displayed within a coherent social narrative that guided viewers to an appropriate response (emulation or approbation). The Royal Banquet represented the most elaborate of these constructions. Cordoned off in a theatrical space, contemporary royalty and men of letters partook of shared meal and conversation, modeling the civilizing tendencies of polite society (fig. 4). The second mode focused on contingency and change. Personalities and figures were displayed as essentially—and literally—exchangeable, fragmented markers of the social and political body (fig. 5). This mode of exhibition had pragmatic advantage, allowing Curtius to accommodate easily the vicissitudes of modern celebrity. It also permitted a certain measure of portability, and much of Curtius's exhibition traveled throughout the 1780s and 1790s.[\[23\]](#)

The "inside view" model of display, where spectators were given a temporal and spatial intimacy with the objects of their attention, facilitated a form of engagement that was predicated on both psychic and physical acts of comparison and differentiation. In this way Curtius was able to create a sense of immediacy in his show, heightening the illusion of privileged access to otherwise inaccessible personages. Where the tableau's organizing principle worked to situate the viewer in a fixed relation to a meaningful whole, the rhetoric of immediacy—constructed through the imprint of a face, the inclusion of a piece of actual clothing, or the souvenir of an event—left meaning open to contingency and change, to the



subjective understanding of the individual viewer who was now called upon, as if a witness, to complete the chain of signification.

The trajectory of the French Revolution proved a crucial turning point in the development of the wax museum's rhetorical mode. Revolutionary sentiment promulgated a greater degree of transparency and authenticity in all areas of social and political life. As the mediated representational form of monarchical government was replaced by a republican model, immediacy became a prime value. Historian Lynn Hunt writes, "The republicans...valued transparency—the unmediated expression of the heart—above all other personal qualities. Transparency was the perfect fit between public and private; transparency was a body that told no lies and kept no secrets."<sup>[24]</sup> In this cultural climate, spectatorial experience took on a different kind of political relevance. If transparency alone would guarantee the maintenance of a legitimate social order, the spectator must then be more than a passive receiver of meaning; she must be its co-creator, its confirmation and legitimation. In this context, Curtius's exhibition would retain its validity and relevance only insofar as the public could be convinced of his absolute fidelity to the particularities of contemporary events and personages. Curtius and Tussaud responded accordingly, cultivating a new role for themselves. Rather than artists, the wax modelers were now public witnesses.

The role of witness was not entirely without precedent in Curtius's practice. Indeed, as Marina Warner points out, the material of wax itself has long connoted "testimony" and "truth," since it "has been used as the stamp of authenticity since the beginning of written documents."<sup>[25]</sup> Prior to the Revolution, Curtius had frequently emphasized his personal relation to the models he cast. With the opening events of the Revolution, however, the association of waxworks with contemporary history became powerfully tied to events (rather than personages). In July of 1789, when people took to the streets in angered response to the summary removal of Necker and the duc d'Orléans, the Revolutionary mob made Curtius's *Salon* their first destination (fig. 6).<sup>[26]</sup> Curtius published a pamphlet shortly thereafter, detailing his involvement in the events of those days:



Fig. 6, Pierre-Étienne Le Sueur, *The Beginning of the French Revolution*, 12 July 1789. Cut-out gouache mounted on card. Musée Carnavalet, Paris. [\[larger image\]](#)

On July 12, following the motion made at the Palais Royal in regards to the dismissal of Mr. Necker, of which they had just learned, a crowd of citizens turned up at my salon on Boulevard du Temple. They demanded insistently that I provide them with the wax busts of this Minister and that of the duc d'Orléans, that they might carry them in

triumph through the Capital. I entrusted the busts to them, begging the multitude to not put them to inappropriate use.

Everyone knows that this is the era of our liberty. The enemies of the Nation, the foreign spies that had been disseminated among us in order to enslave us, could not watch without indignation the homage that the public paid to a Prince and a Minister, treated as Citizens. They assailed the crowd that accompanied this patriotic display. I won't recount the horrors that transpired on that unforgettable day, I will only say that the bearer of the duc d'Orléans's bust was wounded by a bayonet thrust into his stomach, and that the bearer of Necker was killed by a *Dragon* (royal guardsman) at the Place Vendôme. The bust of the duc d'Orléans was returned to me without damage: but that of Necker wasn't returned until 6 days later by a Swissman of the Palais-Royal; the hair was burned and the face bore the damage of several thrusts of the sword.

In this way I flatter myself that the Revolution began at my place.[\[27\]](#)

The traditionally royalist tenor of Curtius's show placed him in a precarious position with the new Revolutionary government, and this self-published pamphlet—signed "Curtius, Vainqueur de la Bastille"—evinces his quick move to align himself with the new order. The testimony is striking for its conflation of symbolic and literal violence. Curtius retreats from the grander story of triumphant mayhem that saw the messy decapitation of two public officials, offering in its place a description of the day's violence via an account of the "experiences" of the wax heads themselves. The bearer of the bust of the duc d'Orléans is wounded, the bust survives intact. The bearer of Necker's bust is killed, the bust is burned and violently attacked. Curtius does not present a story, he offers testimony—the pieces of the larger narrative that he himself witnessed. As with the "inside view" model of display he had cultivated in his exhibition, he leaves open a space for the reader/viewer to construct meaning out of the fragments of a larger story.

Wax modeling was a swift process when compared to the care and time involved in painting or sculpture. Working with Tussaud to meet the commemorative demands of rapidly moving contemporary events, Curtius solidified his position as chronicler of the Revolution as it gathered momentum. Where history painters struggled to adapt to the shifting political landscape—Jacques-Louis David's abandoned project for the *Oath of the Tennis Court* speaks to the challenges of that task—Curtius and Tussaud moved directly into a journalistic role, participating in the Revolution's great task of documenting everything.[\[28\]](#) In her exhibition catalogues from the United Kingdom, Tussaud would claim to have been repeatedly commissioned by the Revolutionary government to make death masks of recently guillotined victims. Her memoirs tell the story of her modeling Marat after his assassination:

She was fetched by some *gens d'armes*, who took her to the house of Marat, just after he had been killed by Charlotte Corday, for the purpose of taking a cast from his face. He was still warm, and his bleeding body and the cadaverous aspect of his almost diabolical features presented a picture replete with horror, and Madame Tussaud performed her task under the influence of the most painful emotions.[\[29\]](#)

Similarly, a contemporary eyewitness placed Curtius at the graveside of Madame de Saint Amaranthe following her execution: "He made up the face with a posthumous smile, rendered her beautiful and charming"—and proceeded to press the severed head into a layer of wax that

he had poured on the spot.[30] There is no archival evidence to corroborate Tussaud's claims about the National Assembly's involvement, yet, as Marc Sandberg points out, "the imagined scene of Madame Tussaud at the foot of the guillotine receiving heads to model persists as a foundational, almost mythic scene for the birth of the modern wax museum." [31] Whether the incidents ever occurred is less relevant than the fact that Curtius and Tussaud wished to present their craft as testimonial, transparent, factual. What was being marketed in each of these stories was less the authenticity of the objects than the shocking immediacy of the witnessing experience itself.

Curtius died on September 26, 1794, leaving his business and property to Tussaud.[32] Tussaud inherited the exhibition at a pivotal moment, just as the Revolution's most violent episode was coming to a close. From its beginnings, the *Salon* had traded in two commodities: the cultural value of specific bodies and the spectatorial experience that was constructed around those bodies. Prior to the Revolution, the commercial venture of the *Salon* had depended heavily upon the social and cultural context of the Old Regime. The veneration of royalty and circles of enlightenment sociability, the hierarchical disposition of social types, and the pleasures of illusion and artifice were all key to the *Salon's* value, legitimacy, and popular success. Revolutionaries attacked all of these, and did so definitively: they cut off the king's head. The execution of the sacralized body of the king forcefully demonstrated the frank materiality of physical being, dramatically undermining early modern belief in the legibility of metaphysical order through the physical expressions of actual bodies. This loosening of the connection between bodily coherence—both literal and expressive—and metaphysical meaning opened untried terrain for the waxworks exhibition. More than ever, individual and subjective spectatorial experience would occupy center stage.

### **A Separate Exhibition**

Though French in its origin, Tussaud's exhibition became an establishment in the United Kingdom, within the context of a public witnessing the developments in France from a distance. Tussaud brought her show to London in 1802 at the invitation of Paul de Philipistal, who had a Phantasmagoria at the Lyceum theater.[33] Like the panoramas and magic lantern shows that were then popular, the Phantasmagoria was a show of optical illusions. Its distinctive attraction was hiding the projector from the audience's sight and manipulating it to produce moving images on a screen. Philipistal used the effect to animate both living and dead figures, but he emphasized the ghostly and fantastical (fig. 7). His show took place in a darkened room and used special effects such as smoke and sound.[34] In an advertisement in the *London Times*, Philipistal described how he would, "by his skill in Physics, produce the Phantoms or Apparitions of the dead or absent, in a way more complete and illusive than has ever been offered to the eye in a public Theatre...such as imagination alone has hitherto painted them." [35] Madame Tussaud's show would have offered a striking complement in its media and mode of presentation. Her displays were known for an elaborate illumination that involved candelabra and large gilded mirrors (fig. 8).[36] The tangible materiality of Tussaud's models stood in marked contrast to the dematerialized nature of Philipistal's projections. Tussaud also played with ideas of animation, life, and death but, unlike Philipistal's, her figures were not designed to simulate apparitions. Where Philipistal conjured the spirit, Tussaud presented the corpse. Her novelty was an open display of several figures on which the marks of violent death were rendered in vivid detail: Robespierre, Carrier, Fouquier-Tinville, Hebert, and Marat (fig. 9).

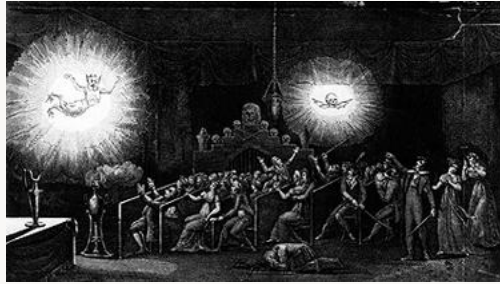


Fig. 7, Frontispiece, Étienne Gaspard Robertson, *Mémoires récréatifs, scientifiques et anecdotiques* (Paris: Chez l'auteur et à la librairie de Wurtz, 1831-33). [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 8, *Madame Tussaud's Exhibition of Wax-Work* Illustration, *London Interiors: a grand national exhibition of the religious, regal, and civic solemnities, public amusements, scientific meetings, and commercial scenes of the British capital* (London: J. Mead, 1841-44), facing page 137. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 9, Marie Tussaud (attributed to), *Guillotined heads of Jean-Baptiste Carrier, Antoine-Quentin Fouquier-Tinville, Maximilien Robespierre, and Jacques-René Hébert* (top, left to right); *Jean-Paul Marat at his Last Breath* (bottom), cast from molds dated c. 1793-1795. Wax and mixed media. London, Madame Tussaud Archives. [\[larger image\]](#)

Tussaud played to the pervasive anti-Revolutionary sentiment of her audiences throughout her traveling years in the United Kingdom. One of her earliest innovations was the addition of a catalogue that viewers might purchase for an extra shilling or sixpence.[37] These catalogues, which offered biographical and historical details pertinent to the models on show, endeavored "to blend utility with amusement," as the preface explained.[38] Though she would later incorporate figures of local celebrity, her first catalogue, printed in Edinburgh in 1803, registers the exhibition's bias toward recent French history.[39] In addition to the death heads, the show included full-length figures of the late Royal Family of France, Madame du Barry, the Princess de Lamballe, Charlotte Corday, and Mirabeau, among others. Two models showing the Bastille before and after its destruction and a scale model of the guillotine completed the collection; Revolutionary violence was a prime attraction of the display.

Tussaud's catalogues were more than supplementary reading, they were guides to the experience of the exhibition.[40] In Paris, Curtius and Tussaud had employed barkers to attract visitors and embellish the models with explanations of their significance. The design of the catalogues produced a more immersive environment. Each catalogue was arranged according to the spatial layout of the current show, allowing viewers to navigate the displays at their own pace and without overt theatrical mediation. This approach helped cultivate an illusion of presence that was reciprocal: personages were shown as though physically present, but the visitor too was made to feel present, as a witness to history. The interactive pleasures of the wax exhibition centered around experiences of encounter, comparison, discovery, and recognition. Tussaud always included a model of herself and at times her children, "to shew by living comparisons, her skill in the art of modeling." [41]

The Chamber of Horrors, or "Adjoining Room" as it was then called, was the exhibition's climax. The catalogue explained to visitors that the Adjoining Room formed "a separate exhibition, well worthy of the inspection of artists and amateurs," of "highly interesting figures & objects," that were set apart "in consequence of the peculiarity of their appearance." [42] Although no descriptions of the appearance and disposition of the figures in the Adjoining Room exist from this early period, the catalogues give some sense of what a visitor might have encountered. Always listed at the start of the Adjoining Room description is the category designated "Heads, &c." Robespierre's death head gets first billing, and Tussaud marks it as having been "taken immediately after his execution, by order of the National Assembly." Later incarnations of Tussaud's staging of the heads give an idea of their possible appearance at the time (figs. 10 and 11). Robespierre's head was of particular note, as his jaw had famously been shattered by gunshot prior to his execution, a detail which Madame Tussaud carefully included. The catalogue describes how with his disfigured face Robespierre lay "extended on a table, in the severest of agonies." [43] Following Robespierre were presented several other death portraits: Marat "in the agonies of Death," along with the heads of Fouquier-Tinville, Hebert, and Carrier, each shown "as they appeared after the Guillotine." [44] The guillotine was itself represented "upon a scale of three inches to a square foot." [45]



Fig. 10, Marie Tussaud (attributed to), *Guillotined head of Maximilien Robespierre*, cast from mold dated c. 1795. Wax and mixed media. London, Madame Tussaud Archives. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 11, Marie Tussaud (attributed to), *Guillotined head of Maximilien Robespierre*, cast from mold dated c. 1795. Wax and mixed media. London, Madame Tussaud Archives. [\[larger image\]](#)

Tussaud's catalogue characterized each of the fragmented, wounded figures in the Chamber of Horrors as villains. The Revolution's victims, by contrast, were always portrayed in full figure in the earlier segments of the exhibition.<sup>[46]</sup> Such a division offers significant insight into how the violated bodies were to be viewed. The paradox of tragic pleasure, where spectators delight in having their darkest emotions aroused, had become a particularly acute social concern in the course of the eighteenth century.<sup>[47]</sup> The evident attraction of viewing and reading publics to scenes of suffering and violence threatened to unravel the bonds of sympathy that were then being suggested as the foundation of a new, enlightened social order.<sup>[48]</sup> Tussaud made an explicit choice in presenting villains—and only villains—with bodies that were broken and mutilated: she chose to appeal to scopophilic desire instead of sympathy. While the integral bodies of the Revolution's victims solicited a sympathetic gaze by virtue of their evident humanity, the fragmented, wounded figures in the Adjoining Room offered a more ambiguous spectacle. They were not representations of sentient people, but were evidently corpses.

**"Passenger, lament not his fate, for were he living, thou would'st be dead"**

Wax sculpture was singularly predisposed to operate as a medium of deathly display. In ancient times wax was used for preservation and effigy, and it was used from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries for anatomical modeling.<sup>[49]</sup> These associations with funerary ritual and dissection—with death—resurfaced in Tussaud's exhibition to very different effect. In Paris, Curtius's wax exhibition had always sought to vivify and animate the portrait genre, whether the display focused on figures of prominence or of infamy. Even in the *Caverne de Voleurs*, criminals were presented in lifelike states, shown as they had appeared *before* their execution.<sup>[50]</sup> When busts were shown separate from mannequins, they were typically placed on pedestals or in niches, framed in a familiar artistic manner.<sup>[51]</sup> Whole figures were positioned to evoke a sense of liveliness and presence.

In a travelogue of 1804, Thomas Holcroft described his visit to a Parisian waxworks exhibit, where "The malefactors were put in different attitudes: sitting, standing, and lying, each in straw...And loaded with chains." He continues:

As I entered, these chains were clanked with a din that might inspire horror: the exhibitor, with a gloomy terror in his voice, recounted their individual crimes; their grand robberies, rapes, and assassinations; appearing to value himself most upon him who had been the most wicked; and ending with their execution, and their blasphemies, after having been racked, while expiring on the wheel.<sup>[52]</sup>

Holcroft's description illustrates the way in which nineteenth-century waxworks displays were frequently concerned with bringing their subjects to life—with the problem of animation. For most showmen, the appeal of colored wax lay in its approximation of living flesh. Added theatrics—the interactive poses of the figures, ambient sounds, and live narration—reinforced this primary assumption, that wax modeling would create a convincing illusion of life.<sup>[53]</sup>

Madame Tussaud's exhibition provided no such theatrical contextualization for her figures. The disposition of the integral and the fragmentary bodies throughout the exhibition posed a different kind of aesthetic logic. In the absence of barkers, visitors were free to engage the exhibition space at their own pace and according to individual curiosity and desire. The only form of "framing" or "context" that Tussaud offered in addition to the catalogue was the spatial layout of the show.<sup>[54]</sup> The Adjoining Room worked in dialogue with the spaces that preceded it. Several models from the main exhibition space were described in the catalogue as victims of the Revolution, prefiguring the monstrosity of the corpses to be found in the Chamber of Horrors. The figure of Madame St. Amaranthe, for example, was said to be modeled "a few months before her execution."<sup>[55]</sup> Tussaud rhapsodized in the catalogue that she "was one of the most lovely women in France," a virtuous and pitiable character. She continued:

When Robespierre directed the Revolutionary storm, he became enamoured of her charms, and endeavoured to persuade her to become his mistress; but she, as virtuous as she was beautiful, rejected his solicitations with scorn and indignation. Robespierre, who never wanted a pretext for destroying anyone who had given him offence, brought Madame St. Amaranthe before the Revolutionary Tribunal, and at the age of 22, in all the bloom of youth and loveliness this victim of virtue was hurried into eternity. Of all the monsters who figured in the French Revolution, none have descended to posterity

with a name so abhorred as Robespierre. The crimes that he committed were of so horrible a nature, that they have handed down his character to future ages, as the guiltiest of the guilty. Well does he deserve the following epitaph that has been written on him: —"Passenger, lament not his fate, for were he living, thou would'st be dead."[\[56\]](#)

Tussaud's provocative use of this well-known epitaph makes the suggestion that Robespierre's death came in place of the viewer's death. If the full figure compositions of the main exhibition should be viewed with sympathy, then the fragmented bodies in the Chamber of Horrors were open to an altogether different kind of emotional—and phenomenological—engagement.

In many ways this narrative followed a typical crime and punishment scenario, where public punishment was meant, among other things, to reinforce the citizenry's sense of order and safety. Marie-Hélène Huet has argued this point, suggesting that "the internal organization of the Tussaud museum described a space of political utopia, so to speak, a space where the king's majesty would be glorified and exposed to public scrutiny, but a space also sustained by scenes of punishment awaiting all those guilty of *lèse-majesté*."[\[57\]](#) But in the absence of a broader judicial context such as actual punishments would have provided—the reading of the sentence, the witnessed act of punishment, the presentation of the executed to the public—Robespierre's head may have also presented the viewer with a threatening double of herself. In the Adjoining Room, the violated body constituted the *only* locus for viewer identification. The (intact) body of Madame St. Amaranthe might elicit a sympathetic gaze, but Robespierre—whose severed head was on display in the Chamber of Horrors—was not only construed as unsympathetic, but moreover as a disconcerting reminder of one's own violability as a physical being.

A disjunction between the focus of the catalogue text and that of the models themselves heightened ontological tension in the Chamber of Horrors. While the catalogue nearly always narrated a life, the figures portrayed a death. Tussaud's biographical sketches were replete with anecdotes of the atrocities each villain had committed before his death. Robespierre, visitors were told, "though not visibly engaged in the atrocious scenes of the 20th of June, the 10th of August, and of September...was anxious to reap the fruit of those bloody transactions, and when admitted into the convention...employed the darkest intrigues to lead his opponents to the scaffold."[\[58\]](#) Similarly, Marat, "delighting in blood...promoted the murders of September, and by repeated accusations, carried the most virtuous of the citizens, and the bravest of the Generals, to the guillotine."[\[59\]](#) But Tussaud stopped short of including descriptions of many of the details by which the villains' lives were ended; of Fouquier-Tinville Tussaud simply notes that "at length punishment came."[\[60\]](#) The description of Marat's assassination is no less succinct, as she relates how "with a blow of a dagger [Charlotte Corday] laid the monster dead."[\[61\]](#) While the catalogue sketches laid out scenarios of crime and punishment, the emphasis remained on the crime.

The display was another matter. The fragmentary figures in the Chamber of Horrors presented little more than the fact of violent death. Severed heads were staged to highlight the violence of the victims' death, blood often added to heighten the gruesome effect.[\[62\]](#) A model of the guillotine was also displayed, but Tussaud did not stage it with a model executioner and victim; it stood at the ready, open to the viewer's imaginative projection into the scene.[\[63\]](#) The fragmentary aesthetic of broken bodies established a disturbing set of equivalences



among various figures, despite their distinctive lives. These were literal fragments—broken rather than whole bodies—and they were narrative fragments as well. Figures were not staged to recreate the stories Tussaud related in her catalogue, instead, the personalities behind the severed heads were united in their violent fate. While early modern society had sacralized physical pain through religious and political ritual, Tussaud made a spectacle of the body *beyond* pain. The graphic effects of violation were shown on each figure in meticulous detail, but they referred less to the emotional torment and inner experience of the wounded figure than to the fact of violation, and to the body's—any body's—fundamental violability.

The violated bodies in the Chamber of Horrors did not signify *death* so much as the possibility of reversal, from the self-possessed position of viewer to the dispossessed status of victim. The models asked visitors not only to envision a death, but, further, to imagine the body as a series of fragments, and hence perhaps to imagine their *own* body as/in pieces. The Chamber of Horrors undermined a sense of both bodily and psychic coherence with the fragmentary aesthetic of its dismembered bodies. In its content, disposition, and textual elaboration, the Chamber of Horrors not only *thematized* the fragile boundary between life and death—it also *staged* it, de-sublimating violence with an aesthetic logic of the fragmentary detail.

### The Body in Pieces

In its devotion to the display of fearful imagery, Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors was not unlike many public entertainments of its day. Phantasmagoria, panoramas, dioramas, melodramatic theater and even large-scale academic painting frequently invoked violent subject matter for aesthetic effect. But while its content may have accorded with other arenas of display culture, its presentation did not.

Structured experiences of terror had come into vogue in the latter half of the eighteenth century, finding sophisticated philosophical elaboration in the development of concepts of the sublime. As described by its most prominent eighteenth-century theorists, Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, the sublime entails a process by which spectators are confronted with experiences of immersion, overwhelming infinitude and pleasing terror. This confrontation evokes a crisis of subjectivity whose resolution lies in the reconstitution of the individual's self-possession and spectatorial mastery. The sublime depends crucially on the viewer's temporal and spatial *distance* from the sublime object. "When danger or pain press too nearly," wrote Edmund Burke, in his 1757 *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, "they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience."[\[64\]](#)

The sublime describes a harnessing of frightening effects in order to shore up the innate power of one's own subjectivity, a sublimity, which Kant theorizes, "can be found in the mind."[\[65\]](#) Theories of the sublime offered a solution to an ancient philosophical problem, namely, why the sight of unpleasant—even terrifying—objects and events is frequently experienced as pleasurable. When encountered from a "safe" distance, the terrifying stretches the imagination and may even produce feelings of omnipotence in the viewer, offering a type of catharsis that is ultimately reassuring.

But whereas the sublime aesthetic relied on absorptive contemplation and closure, the visual rhetoric of the Chamber of Horrors depended on immediacy, repetition and fragmentation. Tussaud's Adjoining Room inverted the terms of the sublime, constructing an environment that eschewed distance in favor of a terrifying *proximity*. Tussaud's exhibition commodified a distinctive temporal experience, one founded on a phenomenology of sensation and shock. In the Chamber, horror grew out of a disturbing, unresolved reversibility between victim and viewer.

The indeterminate boundary between the living and inanimate—and between the viewer and the viewed—was at the center of Tussaud's project. Well into the nineteenth century, her catalogues included a provocative quote from Shakespeare's *A Winter's Night* on their title page:

Eye, nose lip,  
The tricks of his frown, his forehead; nay, the valley,  
The pretty dimples of his chin and cheek; his smiles,  
The very mould and frame of hand, nail, finger:—  
Would you not deem it breath'd? and that those veins  
Did verily bear blood?  
The very life seems warm upon her lip  
The fixture of her eye hath motion in't!<sup>[66]</sup>

In this passage, the hint of animate life paradoxically reduces the figure to a composite of parts, simultaneously suggesting death or dismemberment. This type of oscillation, between suggestions of vivification and mortification, exemplifies the type of experience Tussaud was presenting. The most "real" objects in her show were not portrait figures, but relics: "the most complete, truly wonderful, and best preserved Egyptian mummy," and "the shirt of Henry IV, of France, in which he was assassinated."<sup>[67]</sup> Neither object was consonant with Tussaud's emphasis on contemporary history, but they did underscore the metaphysical implications of her display. In her catalogues, Tussaud always noted which models were "Taken from Life,"—inadvertently playing with the implication that wax modeling might signify a kind of death.

The fragmentary aesthetic that characterized the Chamber of Horrors can be distinguished from its alternative, the waxworks tableau. Like much academic salon painting of Tussaud's era, the theatrical arrangement of figures in waxwork tableaux situates viewers in relation to a coherent scene. By the late nineteenth century, such theatrical arrangements had become the favored mode of exhibition in most wax museums (figs. 12 and 13 provide two examples). They were particularly dominant in Paris's Musée Grévin where, Vanessa Schwartz argues, they constructed a paradoxical sense of time:



Fig. 12, Tableau display depicting George Smith, 'Brides in the Bath' murderer with his last victim, Margaret Lofty. Madame Tussaud's, 1915. Wax and mixed media. Madame Tussaud Archives, London. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 13, Tableau display of the Swedish royal family. Swedish Panoptikon, 1889. Wax and mixed media. From Mark Sandberg, *Living Pictures, Missing Persons: Mannequins, Museums, and Modernity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), figure 4.20. [\[larger image\]](#)

[The museum's] evocation of "the present" in many respects allowed its visitors "to be there" as witnesses and even as participants in "current events." By emphasizing current events and celebrity, the wax museum offered a sort of "instant and living history" that not only emphasized the ephemeral but also seemed to extend the duration of the present. Its displays coupled ephemerality with an eternal present in much the same way that photographs would eventually do in the press.<sup>[68]</sup>

The tableau mode of display allowed visitors to imaginatively project themselves into scenes that were otherwise inaccessible, as Schwartz suggests, "to be there." Visitors were surely aware of the illusory nature of the simulation—they paid for that illusion, after all—and through this awareness of a temporal gap between the event and its viewing the ephemeral nature of the depicted moment was reinstated, ultimately available only to imaginative acts of recreation.

The wax tableau presented a spatially plausible location for the viewer, contextualizing spectators as both witness to and separate from the action of an already-complete scene. One

imagined being present to a moment in a sequence of moments—a coronation, a battle, or perhaps a murder. The effectiveness of the illusion depended not only on the verisimilitude of its figures and believability of the *mise-en-scène*; it also depended on acts of contemplative immersion. For convincing effect, the viewer necessarily occupied a coherent position within the display's logic.

The Chamber of Horrors neither offered nor depended on that kind of coherence. Its effectiveness grew instead out of nagging doubt—from the blurring of the line between the representational and the real. Even in the late nineteenth century, when, like most wax museums, Tussaud's gravitated toward the tableau mode of display, its owners resisted adding a display showing Jack the Ripper. The murderer's true identity was not known, and thus his appearance was not verifiable. Had modelers attempted to dramatize the sensationalized murders, their display would too readily have revealed its distance from reality. The Chamber needed more than spatial plausibility; it needed corporeal plausibility as well. While Grévin's tableau display of past events asked visitors to step back and take in the whole (a mandate usually enforced with a dividing rope), Tussaud's collaged display of relics and imprints demanded a closer look. The Chamber of Horrors thus offered an illusion of *temporal immediacy* coupled with a strong sense of *corporeal presence*.

### **Bringing the Dead Back to Death**

In an essay exploring cinematic representations of death, Vivian Sobchack articulates the inherent difficulty of representing death by visual means. She writes that "whereas being can be visibly represented in its inscription of intentional behavior (the 'having of being' animated concretely in action that is articulated in a visible world), nonbeing is not visible. It lies over the threshold of visibility and representation."[\[69\]](#) The animate body asserts a verifiable existence, while the mortified body opens a void. But violent and unnatural death offers a possible bridge between the two signifiers. "Death," Sobchack writes, "can only be represented in a visible and vigorous contrast between two states of the physical body: the body as *lived body*, intentional and animated—and the body as *corpse*, a thing of flesh unintended, inanimate, static."[\[70\]](#) The corpse presents an objective fact—the foundational materiality of the body—but also signifies something beyond the boundaries of sentient perception: the literal termination of the self. Sobchack argues that the corpse thus "exists with paradoxical semiotic force:"

It is a significant bodily sign of the body that no longer has the iconic power to intentionally signify itself as lived. Instead, the corpse engages our sympathy as an indexical object existentially connected to a subject who was once an intentional and responsive "being," and it generates our horror as a symbolic object bereft of subjectivity and responsiveness that stands for a condition we cannot existentially know and yet to which we must succumb.[\[71\]](#)

In its familiar corporeality, the corpse suggests some shared condition of subjectivity and elicits identification, even sympathy. At the same time, an unbridgeable gap creates a distance between the animate viewer and the inanimate viewed. The corpse literally embodies the absence of all sentience, a condition which by definition can never be experienced.

Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors was designed to amplify the "paradoxical semiotic force" of the corpse, not to contain it. This potentiality had been briefly recognized in 1794, when the

*Journal de la société républicaine des arts* featured an article condemning the dangers of popular interest in the "unedifying" likenesses displayed in local wax shows. The author, Athanase Détournelle, worried that citizens were being corrupted by these displays, noting that the people seemed to prefer death portraits of martyrs Le Pelletier and Marat that were rendered in wax over "les beaux tableaux de la Convention." Détournelle went on to suggest some of the limitations of wax modeling:

In general, artists understand that polychromatic wax cannot be employed in all genres, unlike sculptures made out of material in a single tone. Wax can convey little more than Sleep or Death, and even then the work must be executed by skilled hands.

By contrast, waxworks that intend to represent the living appear petrified and inspire terror, while marble, bronze and stone receive life from the chisel that animates them.  
[72]

Détournelle then relayed a dramatic anecdote to highlight wax's mortifying effect as a sculptural medium:

A young woman was promenading in the Chinese Garden, which is decorated with statues in marble and stone; she passed before these figures and remarked on their various attitudes without fear. Arriving at a lawn display, a Hermit made to inspire sympathy and compassion frightened her to the point that she fainted: the illusion that this immobile figure gave her was undoubtedly the cause of her fright.[73]

Perceptual confusion is portrayed by Détournelle as a threat to self-mastery, as a violation. The illusion created by the waxwork model seems an illusion of death—even when the represented figure is intended to convey life. This illusion of death is, moreover, perceived corporeally, overwhelming the viewer to the point of fainting. The uncanny effect of the wax mannequin provokes an uncontrollable terror, and the woman's physical response to the impression results in a literal disconnection from the world: a loss of consciousness.

It was just such a response that eighteenth-century theorists of tragic pleasure had worried over. What if spectators' attraction to violent or tragic scenes led to a society, not consolidated in the bonds of sympathy, but rather atomized and disconnected through over-stimulation? [74] It is not then surprising that Détournelle worried that waxwork displays of Marat's death were becoming more popular than the painting by Jacques-Louis David then hanging in the National Convention (fig. 14). Although Tussaud claims to have provided the model for David's *Marat at his Last Breath* (very likely the reverse was true), the two images construct entirely different viewing experiences.[75] In David's painting, the powerful immediacy of the scene was used to transcend the limits of death, to bring Marat back "*tout entier*," as Citizen Audouin had requested at the time of the painting's commission.[76] The waxworks tableau to be found at Curtius's *Salon*, by contrast, sought to make Marat's assassination palpable for the viewer, not to transcend but rather to *capture* death.



Fig. 14, Jacques-Louis David, *Death of Marat*, 1793. Oil on canvas. Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique. [\[larger image\]](#)

The difference has much to do with how the body is treated. David's *Marat*, as T. J. Clark has argued, is an abstraction. "The body is not there in the *Marat* in the same way as the other main objects David has gone to such pains to make real," Clark writes. "It is left as a generality: a kind of scaffolding on which other particulars—attributes, writings, instruments of the passion—are hung."<sup>[77]</sup> David's *Marat* can remain suspended, alive (*at his last breath*, as the title claims) because in his painting David constructs a form of presence that transcends—maybe even denies—the mortal body. Comparing the painting to Jacques Roques' *Death of Marat* (fig. 15, an image Clark significantly calls "as true to death as a Tussaud's waxwork"<sup>[78]</sup>), Clark describes David's *Marat* in this way:



Fig. 15, Joseph Roques, *Death of Marat*, 1794. Oil on canvas. Musée des Augustins, Toulouse. [\[larger image\]](#)

In David's painting, Marat's body is maneuvered into a state of insubstantiality. This is not to say that the arms and torso, which are what we mainly see, are hidden or even made difficult to read. But they do not elicit the kind of scrutiny—repelled, but for that very reason fascinated—that we find ourselves giving the corpse in Roques. They do not detain the eye in the same way. This is partly because so much of the body in the David is kept in shadow, and one which in David's treatment of it seems to make Marat much

the same substance—the same abstract material—as the empty space above him. The wound is as abstract as the flesh. And the blood coming out of it as impalpable as thread.  
[79]

Palpable wounds were, by contrast, what Tussaud specialized in. The attraction of her waxworks depended on the kind of forensic gaze that Clark attributes to Roques's painting. David deploys a familiar aesthetics of martyrdom where the violated body is intended to move the viewer to the contemplation of immaterial values. Madame Tussaud's Adjoining Room instead concentrated on bringing death itself close, in all its abject details. Marie-Hélène Huet notes, "the perversion inherent in Madame Tussaud's peculiar art...is that this art imitates death and that the product of this imitation of death is an imitation of life...In the Chamber of the Dead, the illusion of life never brings the dead back to life. On the contrary, one could say of Madame Tussaud that she brings the dead back to death." [80]

### Conclusion

The Chamber of Horrors came into being in the wake of the French Revolution and took the violence of that revolution as its core subject matter. It addressed an audience both removed from and implicated in the broad cultural rupture that violence represented. Simultaneously repudiating and reveling in that violence, Tussaud's Chamber presents a particularly complex instance of a modern struggle to reconcile individualistic values such as private desire and personal pleasure, with post-Enlightenment social demands of political equality and humanitarian sympathy. Tussaud's Chamber operates in the breach between modern liberal selfhood as it emerged from the French Revolution, and the violence that continues to complicate its liberating claims.

As Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors developed around a display of the sensational violence of the French Revolution, its subject grew to be more ontological than historical. Terrifying proximity was constructed by adding figures and objects of public fascination, not historical significance. Instead of placing viewers in a voyeuristic position of safety in the face of graphic scenes of violence, Tussaud's Chamber offered the pleasures of terrifying proximity. The expectations brought by the visitor were incorporated into the display through invitations to comparison and differentiation, attraction and repulsion. The pleasures of Madame Tussaud's display did not hinge on the sublimation of such tensions into feelings of coherence, stability, and mastery. Rather, fantasies of trauma gave free play to the fragmentary and ever-shifting nature of an identity founded on subjective experience.

In Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors, the graphic accuracy with which wounds and weapons were rendered was designed to reward a closer look, one that might lead to any number of reactions. An 1849 caricature from *Punch* models viewer responses, encompassing the cold clinical gaze of the gentleman with a monocle peering at Marat on the left, the terrified shock of the child to the right, and the generalized curiosity in between (fig. 16). The suffering body is no longer the focus of violent display; it is now the sensate spectator who has moved to center stage.



Fig. 16, Richard Doyle, Madame Tussaud Her Wax Werkes. Ye Chamber of Horrors!! Punch (September 15, 1849). [\[larger image\]](#)

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Lela Graybill is Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of Utah, specializing in the art and visual culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. She received her Ph.D. in Art History from Stanford University in 2006. Her current book project, *The Visual Culture of Violence in an Age of Reform, 1789 - 1832*, examines how shifting social attitudes, political practices, and technological developments transformed the staging of violence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Her research and teaching examines historical relationships between the fine arts, popular culture, media technologies, visibility, and display.

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[1] Tussaud was born Marie Grosholz. She married François Tussaud, a civil engineer, in 1795. Tussaud's parentage is uncertain. She was the daughter of Curtius's housekeeper, but always called Curtius her uncle. Curtius took her in when she was very young, and may have been her father. For more on the biography of Tussaud see Pamela Pilbeam, *Madame Tussaud and the History of Waxworks* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2003).

[2] Uta Kornmeier, "Madame Tussaud's as a Popular Pantheon," in *Pantheons: Transformations of a Monumental Idea*, ed. Richard Wrigley and Matthew Craske (Aldershot, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 154–55.

[3] Francis Hervé, *Madame Tussaud's Memoirs and Reminiscences of France: Forming an Abridged History of the French Revolution* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), 1:16.

[4] In Etienne Delécluze's memoirs he relates the story of a visit to the Paris waxworks show that Tussaud had inherited from Curtius. There, he and the artist Jacques-Louis David were offered a



special viewing of the death heads, which were in a back-room coffer and not on display for the general public. Etienne Delécluze, *Louis David, son école et son temps* (Paris: Macula, 1983), 342–46.

[5] "ne sait qu'inventer pour la satisfaction de son public." Alexandre Dumas, "Ce qu'on voit chez Mme Tussaud," in *Causeries* (1857; Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001), 167.

[6] For a discussion of related phenomena in early nineteenth-century display culture see Jonathan Crary, "Géricault, the Panorama, and Sites of Reality in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Grey Room*, no. 9 (Autumn 2002): 5–25.

[7] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. L. G. Mitchell, William B. Todd, and Paul Langford (1790; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 8:60.

[8] *Punch* is commonly credited with giving Tussaud's "Adjoining Room" (sometimes referred to as the "Separate Room") the title "Chamber of Horrors" in the 1840s. However, the phrase was being identified with Tussaud's display as early as 1837, when it can be found in a short story published in *The New Monthly Magazine*. It was most likely an invention of Tussaud's herself, which was then picked up and repeated in the popular press. See Henry Brownrigg, "Midnight at 'Madame T.'s," *The New Monthly Magazine* 49 (1837): 392–400.

[9] "Les figures en cire du sieur Curtius, sont très célèbres sur les Boulevards, et très visitées. Il a modelé les rois, les grands écrivains, les jolies femmes, et les fameux voleurs. On y voit Jeannot, Desrués, le comte d'Éstaing et Linguet; on y voit la famille royale assise à un banquet artificiel: l'empereur est à côté du roi. Le crieur s'égosille à la porte: *Entrez, entrez, Messieurs, venez voir le grand couvert; entrez, c'est tout comme à Versailles*. On donne deux sols par personne; et le sieur Curtius fait quelquefois jusqu'à cent écus par jour, avec la montre de ces mannequins enluminés." Louis Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris* (1782; Paris: Mercure de France, 1994), 2:543.

[10] For information on the history of Royal Banquet displays in wax see J. Adhémar, "Les musées de cire en France, Curtius, le 'banquet royal,' les têtes coupées," *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 92, no. 2 (1978): 202–14.

[11] "Chaque aventure nouvelle, lui fournit un sujet pour le varier. Les mannequins qui supportent les têtes sont très-bien habillés; en général, cette curiosité n'est pas à négliger." François-Marie Mayeur de Saint-Paul, *Tableau du nouveau Palais-Royal* (Paris: Maradan, 1788), 98.

[12] Pilbeam, *Madame Tussaud and the History of Waxworks*, 26.

[13] "divisé par une balustrade, en deux parties. On paie deux sols pour la première, & douze pour la seconde, où se trouvent placées toutes les figures qui sont ordinairement très ressemblantes. Il est curieux par la variété des personnages que l'on y voit." *Almanach du Palais-Royal* (Paris: Royez, 1785), 116.

[14] Mayeur de Saint-Paul, *Tableau du nouveau Palais-Royal*, 98.

[15] "Curtius, toujours avide de nouveautés, obtint la permission de faire un creux sur la figure du supplicé; il le colora, & ayant revêtu le mannequin d'habits convenables, il fit annoncer par un homme, qu'on appelle aboyeur, le portrait du malheureux voleur." *Ibid.*, 99.

[16] "Il avoit autrefois aux Boulevards deux cabinets, maintenant il n'en a plus qu'un. Le premier étoit le réunion de toutes les figures de scélérats; & le second, ce qu'il y avoit de plus intéressant. Voici à quelle occasion le cabinet de voleurs fut interdit. Un recruteur avoit été condamné à être pendu pour vol, & l'avoit été. Curtius, toujours avide de nouveautés, obtint la permission de faire un creux sur la figure du supplicé; il le colora, & ayant revêtu le mannequin d'habits convenables, il fit annoncer par un homme, qu'on appelle aboyeur, le portrait du malheureux voleur. Parmi ceux qui furent voir le portrait de ce criminel, un particulier s'offensa de l'uniforme que le mal-adroit Curtius avoit laissé au mannequin; il s'emporta, fit des plaintes, & l'on défendit le cabinet des voleurs." *Ibid.*

[17] *Inventory of No. 20 Boulevard du Temple, Paris Z1J1169* (Archives Nationales, Paris), cited in Pilbeam, *Madame Tussaud and the History of Waxworks*, 18.

[18] Pilbeam, *Madame Tussaud and the History of Waxworks*, 19.

[19] *Ibid.*, 17.

[20] Pilbeam describes Curtius's process: "He would begin by putting oil on his subject's skin and pomade to flatten any facial hair. Then he applied a fine plaster of Paris mask, putting straws or quills in his sitter's nostrils, to allow the person to breathe...The next stage was the one that required the most skill if the model was to be lifelike. Curtius would make a clay 'squeeze' or model of this mask and carefully check and improve it to ensure it was the best possible likeness. A final clay mould would then be made in two pieces to allow the finished wax head to be extracted. Hot wax was poured into the mould...When the wax was set, the pieces of the clay mould would be removed and any finishing done. Then the head would be colored and genuine

human hair inserted one hair at a time. Finally glass eyes, tinted to match the subject, were put in place. Actual human teeth were often used." Pilbeam, *Madame Tussaud and the History of Waxworks*, 28.

[21] *Ibid.*, 29.

[22] "Tout le monde reproche au sieur Curtius le peu de soins qu'il porte au changement des figures. Aujourd'hui vous voyez tel ou tel autre grand homme de notre siècle, dont demain vous ne reconnoîtrez que les formes. Les têtes de cire sont creuses; en soulevant les cheveux du côté de l'occipital, on peut y introduire la main, l'œil est changé, on y en substitue un autre de couleur différente; une moustache rousse prend la place d'une barbe noire; & telle figure qui représentoit hier Scipion ou Annibal, vous représente aujourd'hui Mandrin à la tête des contrebandiers: le bon Public qui ne connoît pas plus l'un que l'autre, s'en va très-satisfait pour ses deux sous, bien persuadé qu'il a vu hier un grand homme chez Curtius, & qu'aujourd'hui il a frêmi à la vue d'un scélérat." Mayeur de Saint-Paul, *Tableau du Nouveau Palais-Royal*, 99–100.

[23] Newspaper clippings and handbill advertisements in Madame Tussaud's Archives document travels to Calcutta, Madras, London, Norwich, Birmingham, and Baden.

[24] Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 96–97.

[25] Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media into the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 23.

[26] David McCallam discusses this incident at greater length in "Waxing Revolutionary: Reflections on a Raid on a Waxworks at the Outbreak of the French Revolution," *French History* 16, no. 2 (June 2002): 153–73.

[27] "Le 12 Juillet, à la suite d'une motion faite au Palais Royal, à l'occasion du départ de M. Necker, dont on venoit de recevoir la nouvelle, une foule de citoyens se rendit à mon sallon du Boulevard du Temple. On me demande avec instance le buste en cire de ce Ministre et celui de M. le duc d'Orléans, pour les porter en triomphe dans la Capitale. Je les confiai avec empressement, suppliant la multitude de n'en faire aucun mauvais usage.

Personne n'ignore que c'est là l'époque de notre liberté. Les ennemis de la Patrie, les satellites étrangers, dont on nous avoit environné pour nous asservir, ne purent voir sans indignation l'hommage public qu'on rendoit à un Prince & à un Ministre, qu'on regardoit comme Citoyens. Ils assaillirent le cortège, qui accompagnoit cette pompe patriotique. Je ne retracerai point ici les horreurs auxquelles ils se sont livrés dans ce jour à jamais mémorable, Je dirai seulement que le porteur du buste de M. le duc d'Orléans fut blessé d'un coup de baïonnette dans le creux de l'estomac, et que celui qui portoit M. Necker, fut tué par un Dragon à la place de Vendôme. Le buste de M. le duc d'Orléans me fut rapporté sans dommage: mais celui de M. Necker ne me fut remis que six jours après par un Suisse du Palais-Royal; les cheveux étoient brûlés, & le visage portoit l'empreinte de plusieurs coups de sabre.

Ainsi je puis me glorifier que le premier acte de la Révolution a commencé chez moi." Philippe Curtius, *Services du sieur Curtius, vainqueur de la Bastille* (Paris, 1790).

[28] On David's project see Philippe Bordes, *Le Serment du Jeu de Paume de Jacques-Louis David: Le Peintre, son milieu et son temps de 1789 à 1792* (Paris: Ministère de la Culture, Editions des Musées Nationaux, 1983).

[29] Hervé, *Madame Tussaud's Memoirs and Reminiscences of France*, 2:192–93.

[30] Hector Fleischmann, *La guillotine en 1793 d'après des documents inédits des Archives Nationales* (Paris: Librairie des Publications Modernes, 1908), 290.

[31] Mark Sandberg, *Living Pictures, Missing Persons: Mannequins, Museums, and Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 22.

[32] Last Testament of Curtius, DQ10.521, Archives de Paris, cited in Pilbeam, *Madame Tussaud and the History of Waxworks*, 61.

[33] London's *Morning Chronicle* ran this "Ship News" report on December 22, 1802: "We are informed that a very interesting Cabinet of Figures as large as nature, and other curiosities, arrived a few days ago in this metropolis from Paris, the work of one of the greatest artists in the world. They were executed a short time before the Revolution in France, and were intended for Tippoo Saib. The Collection is said to be commissioned by the celebrated M. de Philipsthal, and are to be exposed for public inspection in the Lower Theatre of the Lyceum, occupied by him last season. We are told it consists not only of Portraits of the late Royal Family, and other distinguished characters, taken from life—of various accurate models of several public edifices, the Bastille, &c. which were destroyed during the Revolution, but of the most complete Ægyptian Mummy ever shewn in Europe, besides several curious pieces of Antiquity. A more interesting

Exhibition, we believe, has never been seen in this or any other country." *Morning Chronicle*, December 22, 1802, 4.

[34] For more on the Phantasmagoria see Françoise Levie, *Etienne-Gaspard Robertson, la vie d'un fantasmagore* (Brussels: Le Préambule, 1990); Laurent Mannoni, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archeology of the Cinema*, trans. Richard Crangle (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000); Emanuelle Sauvage, "Les fantasmagories de Robertson: entre 'spectacle instructif' et mystification," *Conférences en ligne du Centre canadien d'études allemandes et européennes* 1, no. 2 (2004), [http://www.cceae.umontreal.ca/IMG/pdf/CEL\\_0102.pdf](http://www.cceae.umontreal.ca/IMG/pdf/CEL_0102.pdf), (accessed 18 July 2010).

[35] *London Times*, October 26, 1801, 1.

[36] Pilbeam discusses this aspect of the show. *Madame Tussaud and the History of Waxworks*, 25.

[37] The first catalogue dates from 1803. *Biographical Sketches of the Characters Composing the Cabinet of Composition Figures Executed By the Celebrated Curtius of Paris and His Successor* (Edinburgh: Denovan, 1803).

[38] *Ibid.*, preface.

[39] *Ibid.*

[40] Judging by the surviving catalogues from Tussaud's traveling years, it would appear that she had new catalogues printed any time the content and/or layout of her exhibition changed. These catalogues, *Biographical and Descriptive Sketches of the Whole Length Composition Figures and Other Works of Art Forming the Unrivalled Exhibition of Madame Tussaud*, are as follows: Cambridge: E & J Goode, 1818; Boston: John Noble, 1819; Manchester: J. Clarke, 1822; Bristol: J. Bennett, 1823; Birmingham: R. Wrightson, 1823; Bath: John Browne, 1824; Bury St. Edmund's: T. D. Dutton, 1826; Durham: Francis Humble, 1827; Penrith: James Brown, 1828; Duffield: G. Jewitt, 1830; Bristol: W. H. Somerton, 1831; Maidstone: R. J. Cutbush, 1833; London: J. Phair, 1833.

[41] *Biographical and Descriptive Sketches* (Bristol: J. Bennett, 1823), 32.

[42] *Ibid.*, 34.

[43] *Ibid.*, 37.

[44] Quote on Marat is from the *Glasgow Herald and Advertiser*, October 3, 1803, 1. Quote on the death heads is from a handbill, likely from Edinburgh c. 1810–11, Madame Tussaud Archives, London.

[45] *Glasgow Herald and Advertiser*, October 3, 1803.

[46] The model of the Count de Lorge, liberated prisoner of the Bastille, was the exception to this rule. His full-length figure was exhibited in the Adjoining Room alongside models of the prison before and after its destruction.

[47] Joseph Addison and Richard Steele in the pages of *The Spectator* (1711–14; London: T. Hamilton and R. Ogle, 1808), Abbé Jean-Baptiste Du Bos in his treatise *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (Paris: Jean Mariette, 1719), David Hume in his essay "Of Tragedy" (1757) in *Selected Essays*, edited by Stephen Copley, and Andrew Edgar (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 126–33, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his "Lettre sur les spectacles" in *J. J. Rousseau citoyen de Genève, à M. d'Alembert, de l'Académie française, sur son article Genève dans le VII volume de l'Encyclopédie, et particulièrement, sur le projet d'établir un théâtre de comédie en cette ville* (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1758) each considered the impact of representing extremes of violence or emotions upon individuals and society. And, as David Marshall suggests in *The Figure of Theater: Shaftesbury, Defoe, Adam Smith, and George Eliot* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Edinburgh: A. Millar, 1759) was itself a treatise on the theatricality of real life, and the dangers of viewing spectacles of suffering therein.

[48] The literature on the role of sympathy in the Enlightenment is extensive, a good recent overview may be found in Johnathan Lamb, *The Evolution of Sympathy in the Long Eighteenth Century* (London: Pickering & Chatto Ltd, 2009).

[49] This aspect of waxwork history is examined in *Ephemeral Bodies: Wax Sculpture and the Human Figure*, ed. Roberta Panzanelli (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008). Of particular interest for the present discussion is Joan Landes's essay in *Ephemeral Bodies*, "Wax Fibers, Wax Bodies, and Moving Figures: Artifice and Nature in Eighteenth-Century Anatomy," 41–65. See also Monika von Düring, Georges Didi-Huberman, and Marta Poggesi, *Encyclopaedia Anatomica: A Complete Collection of Anatomical Waxes* (Cologne: Tashen, 1999), and Jonathan Simon, "The Theater of Anatomy: The Anatomical Preparations of Honoré Fragonard," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36, no. 1 (Fall, 2002): 70.

[50] Mayeur de Saint-Paul confirms that figures were not presented with the marks of violence in Curtius's *Caverne*: "Je fus frappé de la tête d'un certain Turc, appelé Mustapha, qui, à ce que nous dit celui qui explique pour deux autres sous ce que l'on ne pourroit comprendre pour les deux premiers, avoit massacré fort injustement des plaisans qui s'étoient amusés à lui brûler la

barbe & les moustaches dans le coche d'Auxerre: cette tête me parut avoit du caractère, & aussi bien exprimer la fureur, que celle de Tarare peignoit de pusillanimité. Je ne pus cependant m'empêcher de faire une réflexion qui fit rire mes compagnons curieux. Je demandai comment il avoit possible de bien imiter la partie inférieure de la tête de ce Turc, puisqu'il avoit eu le menton fracassé par le coup de pistolet qu'on lui avoit lâché pour venir à bout de l'arrêter. Curtius me fit signe de me taire, & je le fis pour ne pas lui faire tort." Mayeur de Saint-Paul, *Tableau du Nouveau Palais-Royal*, 101–2.

[51] This practice may be observed in an illustration of Curtius's *Salon* from the mid-1780s (fig. 4).

[52] Thomas Holcroft, *Travels From Hamburg, Through Westphalia, Holland, and the Netherlands to Paris* (London: T. Gillet, 1804), 208–9.

[53] Although I am here tracing a different concern within the Chamber of Horrors, Uta Kornmeier discusses the history of lifelike modeling in Tussaud's exhibition as a whole in "Almost Alive: The Spectacle of Verisimilitude in Madame Tussaud's Waxworks," in *Ephemeral Bodies: Wax Sculpture and the Human Figure*, ed. Roberta Panzanelli (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008), 67–81.

[54] And, it is important to remember that the catalogue itself had a layout dictated by the spatial arrangement of the show.

[55] *Biographical and Descriptive Sketches* (Bristol: J. Bennett, 1823), 25. This model is still on display at Tussaud's in London, but is now identified as "Madame Du Barry."

[56] *Biographical and Descriptive Sketches* (London: J. Phair, 1833), 30.

[57] Marie Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 208.

[58] *Biographical and Descriptive Sketches* (Bristol: J. Bennett, 1823), 35.

[59] *Ibid.*, 37.

[60] *Ibid.*, 38.

[61] *Ibid.*, 37.

[62] Although the original molds of these figures survive, we have no images of their staging at the time. The photographs I use for illustrations show some of the different ways they may have been staged.

[63] Dumas wrote of the guillotine: "Elle est complète: le panier attend à droite, la bascule est baissée, le couperet est levé; il n'y manque absolument que le condamné." Dumas, "Ce qu'on voit chez Mme Tussaud," 164.

[64] Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, in Mitchell, Todd, and Langford, *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, 1:217.

[65] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 129.

[66] *Biographical and Descriptive Sketches*, title page.

[67] Handbill (Cambridge: E & J Goode, 1818). Madame Tussaud Archives, London.

[68] Vanessa Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-De-Siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 137–38.

[69] Vivian Sobchack, "Inscribing Ethical Space: Ten Propositions on Death, Representation, and Documentary," in *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 233.

[70] *Ibid.*, 236.

[71] *Ibid.*

[72] "En général, tous les Artistes conviendront que la cire colorée ne peut s'adopter dans tous les genres, comme la Sculpture en une matière quelconque, du même ton. Elle ne pourroit convenir tout au plus que pour représenter le Sommeil ou la Mort, encore il faudroit que le travail fût confié à des mains habiles.

Dans tout autre cas, ces sortes d'ouvrages où l'on a voulu représenter des hommes vivans, semblent pétrifiés et inspirer la terreur, tandis que le marbre, le bronze et la pierre reçoit la vie du ciseau qui l'anime." Athanase Détournelle, "Salon de Curtius," *Aux Armes et Aux Arts! Journal de la société républicaine des arts* (Paris, 1794): 20.

[73] "Une jeune femme se promenoit dans un Jardin chinois, orné de statues de marbre et de pierre; elle passa auprès de ces figures et en remarqua les différentes attitudes sans effroi. Arrivée

à un cabinet de gazon, un Hermite fait pour inspirer la douceur et la compassion, l'effraya au point qu'elle s'évanouit: l'illusion que lui causa ce personnage immobile, fut, sans doute, la cause de sa peur." Ibid.

[74] See David Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).

[75] See Helen E. Hinman "Jean-Louis David Et Madame Tussaud." *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (1965): 331–38.

[76] Quoted in Jean-Claude Bonnet and Lise Andriès, *La Mort De Marat* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), 61.

[77] T. J. Clark, "Painting in the Year 2," in *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 37.

[78] Ibid., 36.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Huet, *Monstrous Imagination*, 205.

## Illustrations

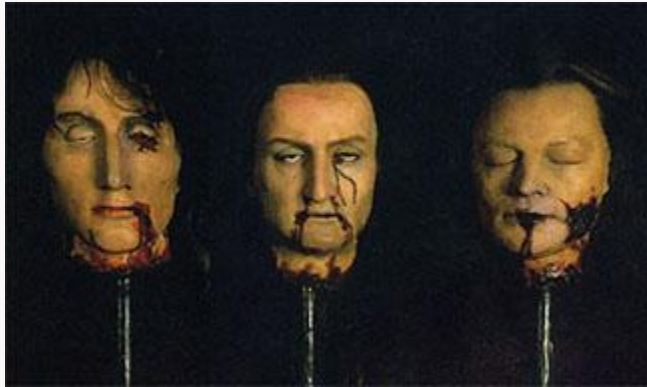


Fig. 1, Marie Tussaud (attributed to), *Guillotined heads of Jacques-René Hébert, Jean-Baptiste Carrier, and Maximilien Robespierre*, cast from molds dated c. 1794-1795. Wax and mixed media. London, Madame Tussaud Archives. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 2, Marie Tussaud (attributed to), *Jean-Paul Marat at his Last Breath*, cast from mold dated 1793. Wax and mixed media. London, Madame Tussaud Archives. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 3, Jean B. Dambrun, Sallon de Curtius, c. 1786. Engraving, from a suite of twelve almanach illustrations. Bibliothèque National de France, Cabinet des Estampes, Paris. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 4, Le Sallon de Curtius, 1784. Illustration, *Les Aventures parisiennes*, almanach nouveau, galant, historique, moral et chantant, sur les plus jolis airs. (Paris: Jubert, 1784), figure 4. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 5, P.D. Viviez, *Change-moi cette tête*, 1787. Madame Tussaud Archives, London. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 6, Pierre-Étienne Le Sueur, *The Beginning of the French Revolution, 12 July 1789*. Cut-out gouache mounted on card. Musée Carnavalet, Paris. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 7, Frontispiece, Étienne Gaspard Robertson, *Mémoires récréatifs, scientifiques et anecdotiques* (Paris: Chez l'auteur et à la librairie de Wurtz, 1831-33). [\[return to text\]](#)





Fig. 8, *Madame Tussaud's Exhibition of Wax-Work* Illustration, *London Interiors: a grand national exhibition of the religious, regal, and civic solemnities, public amusements, scientific meetings, and commercial scenes of the British capital* (London: J. Mead, 1841-44), facing page 137. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 9, Marie Tussaud (attributed to), *Guillotined heads of Jean-Baptiste Carrier, Antoine-Quentin Fouquier-Tinville, Maximilien Robespierre, and Jacques-René Hébert* (top, left to right); *Jean-Paul Marat at his Last Breath* (bottom), cast from molds dated c. 1793-1795. Wax and mixed media. London, Madame Tussaud Archives. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 10, Marie Tussaud (attributed to), *Guillotined head of Maximilien Robespierre*, cast from mold dated c. 1795. Wax and mixed media. London, Madame Tussaud Archives. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 11, Marie Tussaud (attributed to), *Guillotined head of Maximilien Robespierre*, cast from mold dated c. 1795. Wax and mixed media. London, Madame Tussaud Archives. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 12, Tableau display depicting George Smith, 'Brides in the Bath' murderer with his last victim, Margaret Lofty. Madame Tussaud's, 1915. Wax and mixed media. Madame Tussaud Archives, London.

[\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 13, Tableau display of the Swedish royal family. Swedish Panoptikon, 1889. Wax and mixed media. From Mark Sandberg, *Living Pictures, Missing Persons: Mannequins, Museums, and Modernity* (Princeton, NJ:

Princeton University Press, 2002), figure 4.20. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 14, Jacques-Louis David, *Death of Marat*, 1793. Oil on canvas. Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 15, Joseph Roques, *Death of Marat*, 1794. Oil on canvas. Musée des Augustins, Toulouse. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 16, Richard Doyle, Madame Tussaud Her Wax Werkes. Ye Chamber of Horrors!! Punch (September 15, 1849). [\[return to text\]](#)