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## THE FORGOTTEN MUSEUMS OF EGYPT: A CASE STUDY ON WAX MUSEUM

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### **Abstract**

*This research focuses on the forgotten museum in Egypt, especially wax museum, one of the unique museums in Egypt. This is related to its significance as the only wax museum in Egypt and one of the attractive museums for all targets group, from here comes the purpose of this research. The research focuses on the history of the wax museum, its collections from wax sculptures and scenes, the current situation for the museum collections and the building. Also, the research introduces a new vision for the museum to support it to reopen again for the visitors. It is important to try to solve the problems that these types of museums suffer from, by this way be sure you help the community that you are living in. and you will let the community understand the cultural heritage with these examples of attractive wax working.*

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### **Keywords**

*Wax, Museum, Sculptures, Collection, Fine Arts.*

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## **Introduction**

A wax museum or Wax working is a museum that contains wax sculpture or wax scenes that represent famous people from the history or famous events, display in lifelike poses and real clothes. The origin of wax museums goes back to the early 18th century at least, and wax funeral [effigies](#) of royalty and some other figures exhibited by their tombs had essentially been tourist attractions well before that. According to the ICOM Statutes, adopted by the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria on August 24th, 2007:

“A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment”. From this definition, it is clear that museums are something is very needed in our lives today. There are museums started very strong and at the time became neglected. Therefore, it is essential to focus on these forgotten museums.

In Egypt, there are different types of museums that belonging to different ministries and authorities, are forgotten either from the visitors nor the authority for instance; Agriculture, Ethnography and Wax museums. Wax Museum is considered the only wax museum in Egypt and one of the oldest wax museums all over the world. This kind of museums is very attractive for the visitors; Therefore, this paper will focus on Egyptian Wax Museum and its importance, location, history, collections. Also, the paper will introduce a new vision for this museum to

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come back it to life once again.

**Helwan Wax Museum:**

The wax museum in Helwan is a small Egyptian museum located in Helwan, Cairo. It was founded in 1934. The museum contains many waxworks, as well as rare collections of the stages of the development of Egyptian history, from the Pharaonic to the modern era. The museum has many waxy sculptures that have been meticulously made by specialists to be ranked fourth in the list of the world's best wax museums, and the second most famous wax museum in the world (Mostafa El-Menshawy, 2015).



**Fig. 1** satellite photo of Helwan Wax museum



**Fig. 2** The main entrance of Wax Museum  
<http://www.moc.gov.eg>

The museum was founded in 1934 by the Egyptian artist George Abdel Malik in Tahrir Square, before moving to Garden City, and from there to Ain Helwan in 1950, the museum was created as an attempt to reflect the Egyptian historical events and highlight its importance on the Arab and international levels. Wax Museum experts classify it as an educational museum. Wax Museum experts classify it as an educational museum. It tells, through dozens of statues that are sculpted very carefully, the history of Egypt in a stereotypical form, which makes it a kiss for thousands of students and tourists alike. The Egyptian wax museum is the fourth largest in the world after the museums of France, England and Australia in terms of its holdings, but it occupies second place in terms of fame (Mostafa El-Menshawy, 2015).

**The collections of the museum:**

The museum includes 116 statues and 26 views telling the history of Egypt, from the 18<sup>th</sup> Pharaonic dynasty until the revolution of July 23 and is currently being developed to reflect

the second phase of Egypt's revolution history to the present. The statues of this museum, made of wax, give the impression that it is in front of figures of flesh and blood (Mohamed Ibrahim, 2015).

The museum was established by the Egyptian international artist George Abdel Malik. He was one of the most famous Egyptian artists of his time. He was well versed in the embodiment of many stories and novels, which chronicle the history of the dawn of the Pharaonic Civilization, through the Greek, Coptic and Islamic Civilizations. Wax sculptures are among the museum's most prominent collections. The artist Abdel Malik divided the historical ages that passed through Egypt in 26 scenes, which had significant animating backgrounds, adding to the scenes the effects of life in its ancient times (Mohamed Ibrahim, 2015).

### **The museum sections:**

The division of the museum depends on the allocation of a number of halls for each period of time. Each hall is surrounded by a lush garden that gives the museum a special luster. It is possible to move from one era to the next, through the interconnected rooms, in chronological order. To other galleries displaying the museum's holdings (Mostafa El-Menshawy, 2015).

The visitor begins with the section of the Pharaonic era, which simulates the history of the Twelfth Dynasty, which ruled Egypt for two hundred and fifty consecutive years. The artist was created in the embodiment of the kings of this family starting with Amenhotep IV. He is the first advocate of uniting worship and renouncing the worship of birds and animals and worshipping the sun as one God. The scene shows the leader Hor Muhab next to his wife, and one of the wild tigers that accompanied the armies in its battles when he was the leader of the armies of ancient Egypt (Mohamed Ibrahim, 2015).

### **Ramadan Nights Section:**

With the end of this hall, the visitor can move to another hall through one of the designated corridors, where he can see a religious scene showing Moses being pulled out of the Nile in this corridor. The backdrop shows the Pharaonic temples, the Nile and the throne of Asia. At



Fig. 3 Ramandan Nights

the end of the corridor we find a hall with scenes narrated stories and novels about the era of Islam and the Caliphs and most of the Muslim leaders, wherein one of the scenes shows a statue of the most famous reader of the Koran in the era of the Prophet is Abdullah bin Masood as well as a scene of the Kaaba, Until the revolution of July 1952 (Mohamed Ibrahim, 2015).

Beside another of the hall there is another scene tells the ways of treating Salah al-Din of Richard I (Lionheart) and tells how Salah al-Din is the one who defeated the Crusaders at the site of Hattin in 1187, which liberated the city of Jerusalem and then the reconciliation of Ramallah and then leave Richard to Syria, Islam is the religion of love and peace.

In the hall opposite the hall of Islam, there is a wonderful scene of Louis IX, this scene depicts the capture of Louis in the house of Ibn Luqman in Mansoura after the defeat of Qatz, one of the leaders of Shajar al-Durr, who took over the army after the death of her husband. In the hall of the last show there are several typical scenes like, the scene dedicated to President Gamal Abdel Nasser, in addition to a scene for the nights of Ramadan and its connection to the Egyptian street, especially the use of lanterns, in addition to the typical scene of the art of the "Arajouz." Despite the knowledge of ancient Egyptian history, adds another dimension to this history and works to form a picture in the consciousness linking the past to the present (Mohamed Ibrahim, 2015).

### **New Vision for Wax Museum:**

#### **The Museum Rehabilitation:**

The museum is closed since 2009 because the safety measures are not sufficient. It suffers from extreme neglect in the last era, where no renovation or maintenance was carried out and it was filled with refuse, as well as cracks in the building walls, also many of the wax sculptures on display exhibit visible damage because of lack of air-conditioning (Mohamed Ibrahim, 2015). It must be borne in mind that the museums in Egyptian are under the jurisdiction of the various

ministries concerned (ministries of Petroleum, Transport, Agriculture, etc.) and not under a single body such as the authority of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (Hassan, F., 2005).

This museum follows the Fine Arts Sector at the Egyptian Ministry of Culture since 1997 (Moc.gov.eg, 2018), therefore, to start the rehabilitation and developments works, the museum needs a lot of money, in the same time the current financial situation for the museum authority is not good.

Sponsor is something urgent and important, this is the time of need to generalize the idea of the sponsor in all our museums for their development and helping them to still open to the public. This sponsor will help the museum to come back to life again. This process will include different things (the museum building, building cadres, The museum display, The garden of the museum, etc.).

### **Rehabilitation of the physical building of the museum:**

In September 2009, the Ministry of Culture issued a decision to close the Wax Museum in order to preserve it for the safety of the visitors, this was according to the reports of the committee that received the building from Cairo Governorate, which confirmed that the security specifications are "non-existent".

The physical building of the museum is suffering from deteriorations, cracks, appropriate ventilation and other factors (Mohamed Tarek, 2014). Therefore, the museum needs a lot of efforts to rehabilitate it from inside and outside of the safety of the collections and the visitors. This requires moving the collections to another place for restoration in parallel with the rehabilitation of the museum building.

### **Building Cadres:**

The employees of the museum are the institution's most vital asset. Regardless the importance of the collections, without the museum staff who curate and conserve the collections and the display or otherwise make these available to their public, even the museum's most important treasures will be a little real value or use (Boylan, P., & Woollard, V., 2006).

In previous years, Egypt suffers from a lack of skilled workers to restore waxwork. The museum needs to build a qualified staff able to achieve the museum goals, this will be by training courses in guiding tours, wax restoration, outreach programs etc.



### **Improve The museum display:**

The museum display is an old one, no redisplay action has been taken before, therefore the museum display needs to be updated with the display of the same type of wax museums all over the world for instance; [Madame Tussauds](#), historically associated with [London](#), is the most famous name associated with wax museums, The [Movieland Wax Museum](#) in [Buena Park, California](#) is one of the most popular wax museums in the United States for decades.

The current situation for the collections, it needs conservation and restoration after a long time of neglecting. The display needs more interactive tools and videos describing waxworks and how it is made.

### **Rehabilitation of the museum garden:**



**Fig. 4 Wax Museum Garden**

The museum has a large untapped garden, suffering from neglect. The development of the garden can be on different levels as follow; Care the garden and plant it with different types of plants and flowers, Exploit the garden to put some different statues, Using the garden as a place of workshops for all target groups on how to use and make a model from wax.

### **Innovation outreach programs:**

This kind of museums is very attractive to its visitors; therefore, the museum needs a plan for its programs to cover all target groups School, University. Families and individual. hands-on activities are essential with wax. Special programs are for Disabled. Loan box is a box contains waxworks, can the museum team go to schools with this box to reach to the student in their schools.

For instance, creating a program called “Ancient Egyptian Living Wax Museum”. This program will be by school students, they have to create Ancient Egyptian statues of Kings, Queens, etc. from these collections they can establish a small museum from work working.

### **Build a website for the museum:**

As museum information resources become more technically complex, and the users of those resources become more information literate, the needs and expectations of visitors become increasingly sophisticated (Marty, P. F., 2008). Social media is something essential and important in our societies today, therefore the wax museum needs to exist on social media by the professional website, Facebook page, twitter account, Instagram.... etc.

### **Increasing the income of the museum:**

Increasing the income of the museum is by different things for instance: the museum tickets, paid workshops, cafeterias, gift shops for waxworks, etc. through all these sources, the museum can benefit from this income in museum maintenance and allow to achieve its goals.

### **Conclusion**

In short, the museums exist to serve the community and to increase the community awareness. In many countries governmental support has been reduced, therefore it has to find alternatives, for instance, sponsors. Sponsors are very important to support museums in our days. As sponsors, museums can continue to introduce their message to their communities.

In Egypt, Museums are belonging to different ministries, different authorities, therefore, most of them need renovations. Wax museum is one of them, the only wax museum in Egypt. This museum needs a management plan to overcome what happened to the museum in last years. This will be a real sponsor, able to support and fund the museum, to achieve its goals.

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