

Tussauds plans a Riesenrad buy up

By Christopher Stringham

- Takeover bid for Vienna ferris wheel.
- Investment of 10 to 12mn Euros.

Vienna. Madame Tussauds, the London-based waxwork museum, is looking to start an attraction in Vienna as well as taking over operation of Vienna's iconic Ferris wheel.

Compelling combination

Johannes Mock, director of development at Madame Tussauds' owners, the Merlin Entertainment Group, says the combination of Madame Tussauds and the Ferris wheel is compelling. He said, "Vienna is not well served with very many family attractions and there is a lot of potential especially with synergies like this one. That is why we have a natural interest in the Ferris Wheel in Vienna."

Rental basis

He emphasised the arrangement would be on rental basis only, adding that for a number of reasons the Ferris wheel in Vienna was not for sale.

The apparent plan is for Merlin to rent space in the new Riesenradplatz in the Vienna Prater, and to establish a Tussaud branch there. The investment will total between 10 and 12mn Euros for a 2,500 square metre museum.

In addition to the original London location, there are Madame Tussauds museums in New York, Amsterdam, Las Vegas, Shanghai, Hongkong, and Washington



No dummies - Merlin want the Riesenrad. Photo: Europics

D.C. New attractions will open in Berlin this July and in Hollywood next year.

The figures to be presented in Vienna will have a strong local connection, according to Mock.

Mozart on display

Classical musicians such as Mozart will be displayed as well as current politicians. There will be a total of 70 to 100 figures.

The owner of the Ferris wheel, Peter Petritsch said he would be delighted at an offer to rent the attraction

to Madame Tussauds. City councilwoman Grete Laska said, "The fact that an internationally renowned company is interested in the Vienna Prater shows that we are heading in the right direction."

The Merlin Entertainment Group is the second largest entertainment company in the world operating Madame Tussauds, Sea Life Center, and the London Eye in London as well.

Some 32mn people visit the company's 51 attractions every year. ■