Sculptor Jeni Fairey on Hip-Hop Icon Tupac Wax Figure

Written by Robert ID2440
Tuesday, 21 March 2006 09:10 -

With the news of Tupac (2Pac) being immortalized in wax by the Tupac Madame Tussauds exhibit in Las Vegas we had some questions for Jeni Fairey about how the wax figure of Tupac Shakur (2Pac) all came about, her art and about the sculpture of Tupac (2Pac).

Jeni Fairey is the sculptor who is sculpting one of the greatest figures in hip-hop culture, rap artist Tupac Shakur (2Pac) for the Madame Tussauds exhibit in Las Vegas.

The unveiling of the sculpture of hip-hop cultures legendary icon rap artist Tupac Shakur (2Pac) will be on April 5, 2006, during a special ceremony commencing at 11:00 A.M. at the Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas.

Thanks to Versa Manos of Gorgeous PR, and Roxanne Holland of Tussauds Group External Relations and of course Jeni Fairey we were blessed to be afforded some time for Jeni Fairey to take time to answer our questions in a ThugLifeArmy.com Network Exclusive.
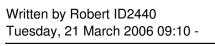
Robert - When did the idea for a wax figure of Tupac come about?

Jeni Fairey - It was discussed over several months during our Think Tank sessions. We had been monitoring guest feedback and realized that Tupac was by far the most requested rapper, so in October we made the decision that it was time to answer the call.

Robert - Did Amaru and Afeni Shakur contact you with the idea or did you contact them?

Jeni Fairey - We contacted Afeni with our proposal and to our delight she agreed to be involved!

Robert - With the information that Afeni Shakur has provided, in the way of pictures and personal information about Tupac (2Pac), does that make this project easier than some you have done in the past?

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Jeni Fairey - Yes, Afeni has been a great help providing lots a pictures and information such as his height, weight and sizes, which all help to make the figure as accurate as possible.

Robert - Has there been any discussion of making 2 of the Tupac figures and keeping one at the Tupac Amaru Shakur Center for the Arts in Stone Mountain, Ga.?

Jeni Fairey - We are discussing having the figure travel to The Center towards the end of this year.

Robert - Will the figure have to be in a refrigerated environment, or is it made of a "wax" that does not melt easily?

Jeni Fairey - The wax we use at Madame Tussauds is a special mixture of beeswax and Japan wax so it is suitable for display in Madame Tussauds Las Vegas at room temperature.
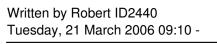
Robert - Are you on staff at Madame Tussauds or are you an independent artist selected by them for this project?

Jeni Fairey - I"m on the permanent team of staff at Madame Tussauds.

Robert - What other figures have you created?

Jeni Fairey - Beyonce Knowles, Ryan Seacrest, Simon Cowell, Hugh Hefner and Usher among others ...

Robert - What kind of maintenance is needed for a wax figure?

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Jeni Fairey - maintenance teams at Madame Tussauds make daily walk rounds to inspect and primp each figure before the attraction opens. All the figures have their hair washed and make-up retouched regularly.

Robert - What is the estimated cost of such a project as the Tupac (2Pac) figure?

Jeni Fairey – The cost is in the $250,000 to $300,000 range for the figure and additional costs for the actual area within the attraction.

Robert - Will Tupac (2Pac) fans in the UK be able to see the figure before it is brought to Las Vegas?

Jeni Fairey - No, the figure will be unveiled in Las Vegas for the first time

Robert - Is the figure to be life size or just a torso?

Jeni Fairey - it will be a full life size figure.

Robert - It is said that 330 pounds of clay will be used and the entire figure will weigh around 55 pounds. What will happen to the "clay" figure after it is finished?

Jeni Fairey - The finished clay body is molded and cast into fiberglass. Once we have molded the figure the clay is no longer needed and can be recycled.

Robert - We posted pictures of the head of Tupac (2Pac) being sculpted in clay, how is that transformed into wax?

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Jeni Fairey - Once the clay head is finished we then make a "piece mould" of the head using really fine quality plaster to pick up all the sculpted detail. This is then filled with specially colored molten wax matched to Tupac's skin tones.

Robert - Is the figure made in 'sections" and then put together?

Jeni Fairey - The head and the body are worked on separately in clay and are then joined before the figure is molded.

Robert - Are you the only artist sculpting the Tupac image?

Jeni Fairey - No, I am responsible for the head and our body sculptor, Livia is sculpting the body.

Robert - Will you paint the tattoos or will some other artist be responsible for that.

Jeni Fairey - A specialist coloring artist with lots of experience with tattoos has been assigned to hand painting each of Tupac's tattoos

Robert - Will all of Tupac's tattoos be painted on the figure - front and back?

Jeni Fairey - Yes, all but one, unfortunately. We could not find a detailed photograph of the tattoo on Tupac's right upper arm, so we made the decision to not include it.

Robert - Will his 'signature" bandana be wax, painted on or a real one?

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Jeni Fairey - it will be a real one.

Robert - Were you aware of Tupac was before this project?

Jeni Fairey - Yes, I knew a little about Tupac, however I have learnt so much more about him while working on this project.

Robert - When the figure is finished and we have a final look at it, I would like a chance to talk to you again and give you some feedback and check with you on the feedback that you will receive. I hope we can do that.

Thank you for the information and many Tupac fans are eagerly awaiting the debut of your work.

Jeni Fairey - I have thoroughly enjoyed working on this project and it has been a real honor to be involved in creating such an iconic figure.

Robert – Thanks again - Peace