

## Now Shah Rukh wax statue in Paris museum too

Paris has a new tourist attraction: a lifesize wax statue of Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan has been unveiled at the the Grevin Wax Museum here, indicating the popularity of Indian cinema and the superstar in continental Europe.

As Khan, dressed in a pair of jeans and a black leather jacket, stepped out of a limousine in front of the museum, he was welcomed by African and Indian dancers outside the museum amid cheers from a crowd of fans Monday morning.

Accompanied by wife Gauri and close buddy Karan Johar, a filmmaker, Shah Rukh signed autographs for the fans but when some of them tried to embrace him, the matinee idol was whisked away by security guards.

A ceremony inside the premises was restricted to invitees and tickets to the museum were sold out at least for the day.

This would be the second wax statue of the star, after the one included in the Madame Tussauds' museum in London.

Mahatma Gandhi is the only other Indian honoured with a statue in this museum established in 1922.

Elke Mader of the Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology, University of Vienna, a Bollywood researcher, told IANS she was part of a crowd of about 500 fans who waited outside the museum to catch a glimpse of Shah Rukh.

The Austrian professor heads Bollyglobal, a global research project that studies Indian popular cinema in transcultural contexts. Mader flew to Paris soon after wrapping up a presentation at an international workshop on Reflections on Visual Culture at the University.

In the presentation titled 'Images of the Imaginary: Shah Rukh Khan Fanart and the Internet', Mader talked about the growing love for Bollywood across the world and the birth of a range of other activities that go beyond simply viewing films. The professor's research concentrates on Shah Rukh and the rise of the star and producer as an icon of audiences and fans of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Nasreen Munni Kabir, a British Indian filmmaker who made documentary 'The Inner/ Outer World of Shah Rukh Khan' and introduced the star to the Grevin in 2007, is glad to see the French people taking to Indian cinema.

'As the popularity of films is based on the appeal of stars it is only natural for the Grevin to display (a wax statue of) Shah Rukh,' Kabir wrote to IANS in an email.

Kabir who studied films in France spoke about many immigrants in France who love Indian cinema.

'Think of the many people of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria living in Paris who know Shah Rukh and love him. The gesture by Grevin is a recognition of the influence of non-white personalities around

the world and their huge fan following. It is a positive sign in [Europe](#) to include acknowledge the contribution of non-white cultures,' Kabir said.

Shah Rukh's frequent visits to Europe have resulted in a group of ardent fans on this continent that Mader compares to pilgrims who perform rituals similar to devotees of gods and goddesses like waiting for hours often even in discomfort in order to get a glimpse or a touch of their idol.

'Bollywood and more specifically Shah Rukh fan communities form part of the rapidly growing 'digitally empowered active audiences' that have become active and visible on the net during the past decade. Such internet activities are a typically global phenomenon. They are focused on Indian movies and Shah Rukh and are locally or regionally based at German, Japanese or Spanish speaking networks,' Mader said.

Giving the example of a forum called planet.srk, devoted to the Indian superstar, the professor counted 9,200 members, 9,717 threads, and 459,907 posts on April 20.

And this is only the beginning of Mader's research on Shah Rukh.

*Mehru Jaffer* ( © IANS / India eNews)