

Small Business Solutions. 



One of the 36 mummies on loan from the **Museo de las Momias de Guanajuato** in Guanajuato, Mexico.

Photo credit: Dustin Walsh/Crain's Detroit Business

2:43 pm, October 8, 2009

Detroit Science Center's Eekstein Workshop creates exhibit of 'accidental' mummies from Mexico

By Dustin Walsh

The **Detroit Science Center** is set to display 36 mummies on loan from the **Museo de las Momias de Guanajuato** in Guanajuato, Mexico.

The "Accidental Mummies of Guanajuato" exhibition will celebrate its world debut on Friday, Oct. 9 at 7 p.m. with the "Gran Noche de Estreno" preview event featuring Vicente Fox, former president of Mexico.

The displayed mummies are "accidental" because their mummification occurred naturally, instead of by embalming. The bodies — buried from 1861 to 1958 — were preserved due to an arid climate and burial in above ground cement crypts — the cement naturally absorbed the moisture from the bodies. One in every 100 buried in the city cemetery of Guanajuato experienced this rare process, according to the exhibit materials.

The mummies range in age from infancy to 80 years old. Bodies were exhumed from the cemetery starting in 1865 due to unpaid taxes by the families of the dead. More than 100 mummies are featured in the exhibit's original home in Guanajuato.

The touring exhibit celebrates the Day of the Dead celebration in Mexico, which occurs annually on Nov. 1 and 2, while respectfully humanizing the mummies, said Martina Guzman, content developer for the exhibit.

"They (DSC) put together something really powerful," she said. "It displays the mummies as human beings."

Advertisement

The DSC's curatorial proposal is what led Mexican authorities to abruptly drop their talks with a Chicago-based museum to sign with the center, Guzman said.

Kevin Prihod, president and CEO of the DSC, said the touring exhibit, which was created by the **Detroit Science Center Design & Exhibits** at **Eekstein's Workshop L.L.C.**, a Ferndale-based wholly owned subsidiary of the center, will run until April 11 in Detroit before embarking on a three-year national tour.

"This is a very significant investment with a significant return," Prihod said. "Creating the subsidiary was one of our ways of being self-sustaining."

The \$2 million, 10,000-square-foot exhibit is the first the center has developed for a national tour. Prihod said he expects 2 million visitors will see the exhibit with gross revenue estimated at \$30 million to \$40 million, which will be shared with Museo de las Momias and other hosting museums.

Ticket prices will be determined by hosting museums. Tickets for the DSC exhibit are \$24.95 and include general admission to the center's other offerings. The exhibit will open to the public on Oct. 10.

Following its run in Detroit, the exhibit, an official event of the Mexico 2010 Bicentennial, will reopen on Cinco de Mayo in a major city with a "large Hispanic population," Prihod said.

Kelly Fulford, vice president of sales and marketing, said the exhibit will stop at two locations annually over the following three years. The DSC has not announced any of the additional six tour stops.

The DSC has planned several events while the exhibit is in Detroit, including the VIP preview party on Oct. 9., and one for DSC members and teachers on Oct. 15.

Fulford said 300 people are scheduled to appear at the event, including Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano and State Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Detroit.

Tickets for the VIP preview are \$125 each or \$200 per couple and include a strolling dinner and tequila tasting.

For more information call (313) 577-8400, ext. 432 or e-mail vipevents@sciencedetroit.org.

© 2009 [Crain Communications Inc.](#)