

International

Tut-Tut ... replica of pharaoh's tomb hailed a landmark in conservation

Facsimile in Luxor will prolong life of original

Test of balance between archaeology and tourism

Patrick Kingsley Cairo

An exact replica of the tomb of Tutankhamun is set to be installed near the 3,000-year-old original, in what one of the world's leading Egyptologists has called a revolutionary development in Egyptian archaeological conservation.

Officials hope the £420,000 project will prolong the life of the original while promoting a new model of sustainable tourism and research in a country where many pharaonic sites are under severe threat.

Tutankhamun's tomb is one of 63 burial sites in Luxor's Valley of the Kings. After years of visitors, some have had to close due to damage while others - such as Tutankhamun's - are under threat, with restoration efforts likely to make the problem worse.

"The attempt to fix the tombs to make them visitable is itself now the largest long-term risk to the tombs," said Adam Lowe, whose Spanish-based firm Factum Arte led and funded the creation of the tomb's replica under the supervision of Egypt's supreme council of antiquities.

The project aims to divert visitors away from the threatened original while still giving them the chance to experience what it is like inside. The process could be used to give visitors the chance to experience other sites that are too fragile ever to be opened again.

"It's revolutionary," said Kent Weeks, a leading Egyptologist who has been researching pharaonic sites since the 1960s. "It's not just a way of protecting the tomb of Tutankhamun, but it's a test case, a model that could be used to protect other sites across the country."

The project's leaders acknowledge that visiting a replica will sound less appealing to many than seeing the real thing. But they hope the facsimile, which is indistinguishable from the original, will give visitors a better understanding of the tomb.

The original version can only be visited for short periods at a time, making it more difficult to appreciate. But the sturdier replica will be able to accommodate more people for longer periods.

"The challenge is to get people to visit the facsimile and say: my god, I can't tell the difference - and what's more, there are things I can experience in the facsimile that I can't in the original," said Lowe. "We want people going to both, and tweeting and blogging and saying: this is a very interesting moment in the history of conservation, we understand the problem, and the facsimile is better than the original."

With tourism decimated since the ousting of Mohamed Morsi as president in July, Egyptian authorities hope the new tomb will help bring visitors back to Luxor.

"This is the first build in the Valley of the Kings for 3,000 years," said Nigel Hetherington, co-author of a book about the area. "We are essentially replicating a pharaoh's tomb for the first time ever."

He said that if was replicated across Egypt's many other historical sites, many of which are under threat from looting and decay, the project could have other far-reaching benefits.



PHOTOGRAPH: KHALED DESOUKI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Tutankhamun's gold death mask at the Egyptian museum in Cairo. His tomb in the Valley of the Kings is under threat from tourism. Below, archaeologist Howard Carter at the tomb in 1923



"It's a long-term plan that will put Egyptians in charge of documenting their own heritage. With this technology, they'll be able to scan any of their sites. In terms of building a database, it's a godsend, and it could safeguard not just the Valley of the Kings, but all of Egypt's heritage sites."

The facsimile is said to be one of the most sophisticated replicas ever made. Its creation involved measuring 100 million points in every square metre of the original tomb. Factum Arte used laser scanners to capture the texture, shape and colours of the tomb, before reproducing it with machine-operated blades, some with a width of less than two-tenths of a millimetre.

The process builds on that used to make replicas of fragile caves in southern France, and a high-resolution facsimile of Veronese's Wedding at Cana.

The tomb's replica will be installed near the Luxor home of the legendary Egyptologist Howard Carter. The installation is scheduled to start in December.

"There are a lot of arguments between conservators and tourism experts about whether replicas will help or hinder tourism," said Weeks. "But we should be able to show that there is no conflict between the economic needs of the country and conservation needs of the tombs. One can make a much more meaningful visit to the replica than one ever could to the original."

Woman shot dead after Washington car chase

Dan Roberts Washington

A woman with a young child in her car attempted to breach a White House checkpoint yesterday, prompting a high-speed chase through the streets of Washington that ended near the US Capitol when police shot her dead.

Government buildings on Capitol Hill were placed on lockdown and members of Congress sheltered in their offices as the incident unfolded.

Capitol police said the woman was chased between the two centres of government, striking a police vehicle shortly before she was stopped. Officers shot the woman dead. The one-year-old child was unhurt.

Less than three weeks after a fatal shooting at the nearby navy yard left 12 dead, the incident put security forces on full alert and led to the temporary

suspension of business in the House of Representatives, where lawmakers were debating the government shutdown.

The incident began at about 2.10pm ET when the woman attempted to get past an outer security checkpoint at the White House. She was challenged by secret service officers, and a police chase ensued. At one point, police cars surrounded the vehicle but the woman reversed into one of them and drove off again. The chase eventually ended 1.7 miles from the White House, near the US Capitol, where the woman was shot.

Witnesses reported hearing several "loud bangs" outside the Capitol complex. Video later emerged of a black car being chased at speed around the heavily-guarded roads close to the US Senate buildings.

"We heard three, four, five pops," said Senator Bob Casey, a Democrat who was walking from the Capitol to an office

building across the street. Police ordered Casey and nearby tourists to crouch behind a car for protection, then hustled everyone into the Capitol, according to the Associated Press.

Cathy Lanier, chief of the Metropolitan police department in Washington, said the incident was not an accident and that the suspect attempted to breach two security barriers. This was a lengthy pursuit," Lanier said.

Capitol police chief Kim Dine said the two scenes were quickly secured after a short security lockdown meant hundreds of government staff were told to "shelter in place". He told reporters on Capitol Hill: "We have no information that this was related to terrorism or is anything other than an isolated incident."

He confirmed that a Capitol police officer was hurt. The injured officer was evacuated by a helicopter which landed on the lawn in front of Congress.



ALEX WAS DEFENDING THE ARCTIC FOR ALL OF US. NOW SHE NEEDS ALL OF US TO DEFEND HER.

Alex knows that if we don't save the Arctic, the consequences could be catastrophic. That's why she put her liberty on the line in a peaceful protest against the Russian oil giant, Gazprom, drilling for the first time in the Arctic's icy waters.

For making this heroic stance she is now in a prison cell - along with 29 others aboard the Greenpeace ship Arctic Sunrise - after armed Russian Coast Guards illegally seized the vessel in international waters.

On September 26, the Arctic 30 appeared at a preliminary hearing in Murmansk where 22 were remanded in custody for two months. Three days later, so were the remaining eight. All 30 now face investigation for possible piracy.

Their detention by the Russian authorities is repressive, absurd and a completely disproportionate response to a peaceful protest. We need you to help us free them.

We're doing everything we can to secure the release of Alex and all of the Arctic 30. We need to make the Russian authorities listen. We need them to know that people around the world are standing with the Arctic 30.

The Arctic 30 are people who care enough about the world we live in to take a stand, and protect it. The Arctic is a stunning place, home to many unique species including polar bears and Arctic foxes. Drilling for oil here is an appalling act that threatens this extraordinary environment, and the world's climate.

Please add your voice to our efforts, and help us free the Arctic 30.

Over 800,000 people have joined us in demanding the release of Alex and the Arctic 30 over the last few days. Add your name now.

**Text*: ARCTIC30+YOUR NAME to 60777
Or visit: www.greenpeace.org.uk/arctic30**

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