



FACTVM
FOUNDAATION
FOR DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY
IN CONSERVATION



From Tutankhamun to Martian relaxation pods via Veronese
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Suddenly last week our relationship with Egypt came alive again - the Egypt that directly concerns the Foundation. In November last year Baroness Ashton, the European Union High Representative handed the facsimile of the Tomb of Tutankhamun, which had been carefully recorded in extraordinarily high resolution in Luxor and then recreated in the Madrid workshops of Factum Arte, as a gift to Egypt.

In her speech she said "The gift of the facsimile is a metaphor for the relationship between Europe and Egypt - the skills and technology that have been developed in Europe to create the facsimile are going to be transferred to Egypt where the local workers will be trained and those very skills and technology will become Egyptian". We heard last week that the process is now under way, that the installation is imminent and that we can plan new recordings in the tombs of Seti I and Queen Nefertari. The facsimile will allow the original tomb to be preserved without the constant damage it is suffering from visitors for which it was never designed.

Those skills and technology that Catherine Ashton mentioned are what we want to pass on not just to our friends in Egypt but to custodians everywhere - if only we had the money to do it all - and that's what I'm going to focus on for a second. We are sending out messages to a lot of people over the next few days hoping that what we do will resonate with thoughtful people. We want to place into the hands of those whose job it is to care for culturally important objects the means to preserve them - digitally. While the object ages and changes (as all things do, not just B list 'celebrities') and while they are at risk from intervention by human hand or agency whether benign or malign - their custodians will have the means to record them in profound detail - and we will be able to store that detail as raw data so that future generations will have exactly what we received and not just the, by then much changed, original.

Look at the extraordinary *Wedding at Cana* painted by Paolo Veronese in the mid C16th - a tremendous nine and a half by seven metres describing with incredible activity Christ's first miracle - painted in situ in Palladio's refectory on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice - a marvellous story book spread across the whole end wall. That was then but the painting has changed greatly - it now hangs in the Louvre opposite the Mona Lisa - its position is low, heavily framed in gold, the lighting artificial, the atmosphere muted, the crowds hurried - the Louvre is not a refectory with soaring windows, chattering monks and clattering plates.

The painting has changed physically too - time, restoration, Napoleonic soldiers' swords, accidental damage, alteration - though, amazingly, saved from Napoleon's order to burn it as it was too big to move when he married Marie Louise of Austria in the Louvre - all these things and more have been inflicted on the original so what we see in the Louvre now is not what Veronese saw or felt in Venice - the surface has changed dramatically. If you read the description we have posted here you can begin to see and if you read the Cini Foundation publication or their brief describing Factum Arte's creation of the facsimile - then the story of change begins to unfold.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Benedictine Abbot in the 1560s had had a Lucida scanner (or one of the Brothers had, probably) from the Foundation and had recorded exactly what the painting looked like then. Well - that's what we want to do now with as many objects as possible so that in fifty, one hundred, five hundred years our very great grandchildren can say - thank you for the record - as they gaze at the perfect early C12st data re-materialised and projected holographically in the Martian landscape as they recline in their relaxation pods.