



square yard of wall surface), they have matched the colour of paints and plaster, the rosiness of the sarcophagus, the cracks in the white ceiling, the sandy floor, even the hue of the modern strip lighting, so precisely that had I been blindfolded and transported from one to the other, I would not have known which was which. The chamber even reproduces exactly the bumps on the original surfaces, the cracked paint, even the black dots of ancient micro-bacteria that stipple the walls and ceiling.

"I think texture and sensation are very important," he told me. "I want the tomb chambers

**Before I saw the replica tomb I was sceptical about its appeal. I was wrong**

to sound the same, maybe even smell the same. This level of authenticity has been impossible until now." He also hopes the original tomb will stay open for a while. "I want visitors to have the opportunity to experience both and to judge for themselves."

The Tutankhamun replica is part of a larger project: in the future, Lowe plans to replicate the tombs of Tuthmosis III, Nefertari and Seti I. He argues that "responsible tourists will have a role to play in

It's ambitious, but his winning combination of artistic vision and technical ability just might change the way we think about replicas, and originals. I, for one, hope it does. Tourism will recover in Egypt, the crowds will return, and the monuments need to be protected, even if that means closing them. The alternative is simple: we will love the tombs to death — and future generations will not forgive us.

The Replica Tomb of Tutankhamun will open in Luxor on Wednesday. Entry to the replica and to Carter's House is expected to cost about £3.

● Anthony Sattin travelled as a guest of the Egyptian Tourism Authority ([egypt.travel](http://egypt.travel))

# It's a dead ringer

**Anthony Sattin** gets a sneak peek at Tutankhamun's replica tomb

**H**istory is repeating itself in Luxor. In 1922 Howard Carter unveiled the tomb of Tutankhamun to an invited audience of diplomats, ministers, celebrities and press. On Wednesday, another Englishman, Adam Lowe, will appear before a similar bunch of dignitaries to unveil his replica of the young pharaoh's burial chamber.

The replica is needed, Lowe argues, to save the original.

After Tutankhamun was buried, the high priests sealed and covered his tomb, assuming no living person would ever enter again. They couldn't have imagined the phenomenon of modern cultural tourism. Millennia later, tens of thousands file through the tombs in the Valley of the Kings each year. It's hot. They sweat, and pant. Years of that accumulated humidity and heat, along with some botched restoration, has made paint and plaster blister and left tomb walls irreversibly damaged. The spectacular tomb of Seti I has deteriorated so much, it has been closed to the public.

Tutankhamun's tomb is not as impressive, but tales of treasures and curses ensure it is one of the most visited, which makes it particularly vulnerable. Parts of the plaster and paint have begun

to crack, putting the decorated walls at risk. While the Egyptian government, needing all the funds it can generate from tourism, is loath to take action, many experts have called for the tomb to be closed — which is why the opening of the replica is so important.

The replica sits in the grounds of the house Howard Carter lived in 90 years ago during his excavations. Before I saw it, I was sceptical about its appeal. I was wrong.

Lowe and the team from his company, Factum Arte, have replicated the burial chamber in minute detail, with an exactitude that would have been impossible even 20 years ago. Designing bespoke 3D scanners, writing software, researching ancient pigments and spending a great deal of time (some 400 hours, for instance, to re-create a single



## Even older: the original replica

Adam Lowe's project isn't the first of its kind. One of the most successful copycat sites is Lascaux II, a replica of 17,000-year-old cave paintings in the Dordogne. It took a team of artists 11 years to create, after the original was closed in 1963 because



of damage caused by visitors' breath. The reproductions, situated just a few hundred yards from the original site, are a marvel, a swirling scene of mammoths, leaping horses and an 18ft-long bull. Buy tickets from the tourist office in Montignac; £8.



Sunlight streams into the replica before the roof is fixed in place

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