

# CONSERVATION *Egypt*

## Luxor builds new tomb for King Tut

Egyptian authorities aim to preserve original chamber by diverting tourists to €500,000 replica

### PRESERVATION

**Luxor.** An exact replica of Tutankhamun's burial chamber is to be built in Luxor next month, in an attempt to preserve the original for future generations by reducing the number of tourists who visit the site.

The life-size facsimile was created by the Madrid-based company Factum Arte between 2009 and 2010, using 3D laser scanners, at a cost of €500,000. It was scheduled to be built in early 2011 next to the archaeologist Howard Carter's Luxor home, which is now a museum, but the project was delayed by the 2011 revolution. As well as creating a detailed record of the tomb's current state of preservation, the replica will enable tourists to explore the burial chamber. This cannot be done in the original chamber, where barriers restrict movement and visitors can feel rushed.

The country's ministry of antiquities is keeping Tutankhamun's original tomb open, although the number of visitors is now limited to 1,000 people a day. Fluctuations in temperature and humidity, brought about by the breath of tourists, as well as harmful attempts at conservation, have caused the painted



The number of visitors to the Boy King's burial chamber is limited to 1,000 a day. Inset, a detail from one of the tomb's paintings

scenes to deteriorate badly. Other tombs in the Valley of the Kings – the burial site of pharaohs for 500 years, beginning in the 16th century BC – face similar problems, forcing the ministry to open and close them on a rotating basis to allow enough time for necessary conservation work. With almost two million tourists a year visiting the Valley before the revolution, however, achieving sustainable tourism has long been a challenge.

Replica tombs, if accepted by the

public as authentic attractions, could help to achieve a balance between tourism and conservation. They could give tourists an immersive experience of an ancient space, while enabling the original tombs to be preserved for future generations. At the same time, the ministry would continue to receive much-needed revenue, while keeping the original tombs closed. Plans to fully scan the tombs of Queen Nefertari (viewable by appointment only) and King Seti I (closed to the public since the 1980s) have been put forward by

Factum Arte, but are on hold until the money can be raised. Replicas could give tourists their only chance to experience these fragile tombs.

### Tourism needs Tutankhamun

Tutankhamun's replica tomb comes at a time when Egypt sorely needs a boost in tourism. Violence in Cairo and the Sinai Peninsula is deterring visitors from holidaying in Egypt, and travel warnings from the governments of the UK, the US and Russia remain in place. A report by the research firm STR Global states that only one in six beds in Cairo's hotels was occupied in July. The fall in tourism has had a crippling effect on the economy. Earnings from tourism reached \$9.75bn in the 2012/13 financial year, compared with \$11.6bn in 2009/10, before the revolution. According to statistics from the ministry of tourism, 5.9 million tourists visited Egypt in the first half of 2013, bringing in \$4.4bn of revenue – but since the ousting of President Morsi in July and the subsequent army takeover, the number of tourists has fallen by 45%, creating estimated losses of \$1bn a month.

The replica tomb is due to be transferred to the Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza upon the museum's completion in 2015. *Garry Shaw*

## Items looted in revolution go on show in Cairo

### EXHIBITION

**Cairo.** Egypt's ministry of antiquities is celebrating the recovery and restoration of artefacts from the Egyptian Museum that were damaged or looted in the early days of the 2011 revolution, by staging the exhibition "Destruction and Restoration" at the Cairo museum.

"This exhibition sends a message to the world about how much Egyptians care about their heritage and how much effort they will exert to preserve it," said the antiquities minister, Mohamed Ibrahim, at the show's opening.

Around 29 artefacts are on display, including a statuette of Akhenaten holding an offering table. The table was broken and the statue stolen during the raid in January 2011; the statue was recovered 13 months later. Also included is a statue of Tutankhamun standing on a leopard, which took conservators six months to restore.

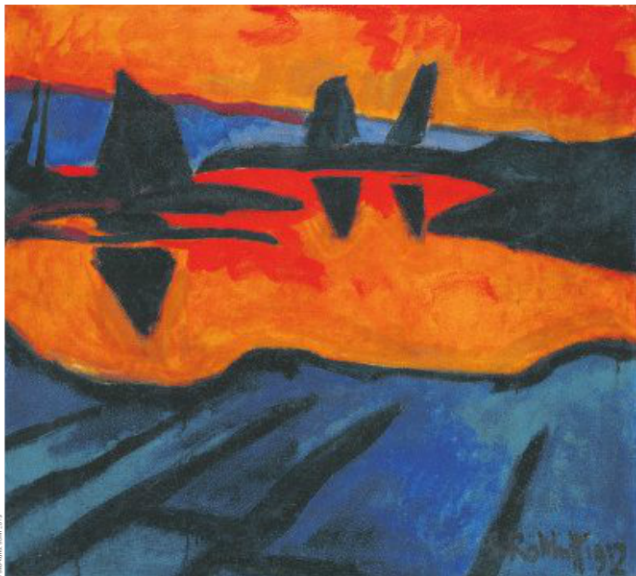
Unfortunately, only part of another famous sculptural group featuring Tutankhamun, this time with the Boy King being held aloft by the goddess Menkaret, is on display. The broken statue of the goddess was found in the museum's garden and has been restored, but the figure of the king has not yet been recovered. According to Ahmed Sharaf, the ministry's head of museums, 28 artefacts are still missing, including a sash that once belonged to Akhenaten's daughter, Merit Amun.

The show is due to run until the middle of this month. *Emily Sharpe*



This statue of Tutankhamun has been restored

### Autumn Auctions in Berlin 27 – 30 November 2013



Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, WATT BEI EBBE, 1912. Oil on canvas. 76 x 84 cm (29 7/8 x 33 1/4 in.). Signed and dated. To be sold on 28 November 2013

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