



Published: 11.05.2007

King Tut's 'amazing' face unveiled, can now be seen beneath glass

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LUXOR, Egypt — King Tut's buck-toothed face was unveiled Sunday for the first time in public — more than 3,000 years after the youngest and most famous pharaoh to rule ancient Egypt was shrouded in linen and buried in his golden underground tomb.

Archaeologists carefully lifted the fragile mummy out of a quartz sarcophagus decorated with stone-carved protective goddesses, momentarily pulling aside a beige covering to reveal a leathery black body.

The linen was then replaced over Tut's narrow body so only his face and tiny feet were exposed, and the 19-year-old king, whose life and death has captivated people for nearly a century, was moved to a simple glass climate-controlled case to keep it from turning to dust.

"I can say for the first time that the mummy is safe and the mummy is well-preserved, and at the same time, all the tourists who will enter this tomb will be able to see the face of Tutankhamun for the first time," Egypt's antiquities chief Zahi Hawass said from inside the hot and sticky tomb.

"The face of the golden boy is amazing. It has magic and it has mystery," he added.

Hawass said scientists began restoring the badly damaged mummy more than two years ago. Much of the body is broken into 18 pieces — damage sustained when British archaeologist Howard Carter first discovered it 85 years ago, took it from its tomb and tried to pull off the famous golden mask, Hawass said.

But experts fear a more recent phenomenon — mass tourism — is further deteriorating Tut's mummy. Thousands of tourists visit the underground chamber every month, and Hawass said within 50 years the mummy could dissolve into dust.

"The humidity and heat caused by . . . people entering the tomb and their breathing will change the mummy to a powder," said Hawass.

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