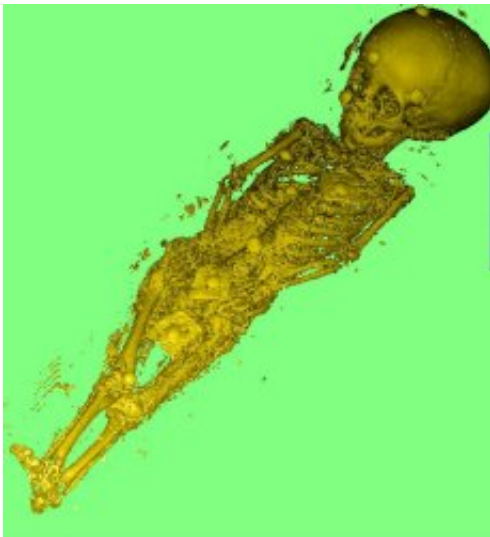


2,000-year-old mummy goes through 21st-century scanner

August 1 2006



The 3D image created from the scans

Oxford University researchers have used full-body scanning, usually used for medical reasons, to look at a 2,000-year-old Egyptian mummy from the University's Ashmolean Museum.

On the 29 July, the researchers put the mummy through a CT scanner at the MRI unit of the John Radcliffe hospital to find out what was under the bandages. The scanner is usually used to produce medical images of patients. They then created a 3D image of what the mummy looks like from the scans.

The Egyptian mummy is around three feet long and is a child. Little was known about it before the scans, but afterwards the radiographers could see that it was male (the penis is still preserved), aged between four and seven. Further analysis will enable them to find out more about its state of health and the cause of death.

The project combines art, medical science and archaeology: it is a collaboration between Oxford University medical scientists who are also radiographers at the John Radcliffe hospital; the University's Ashmolean Museum; and artist Angela Palmer, who intends to create a glass artwork based on the scan.

The small child lived in the Faiyum region of Egypt during the early Roman Imperial period, about 1,900 years ago. Mummified in the traditional Egyptian fashion, and carefully wrapped in linen bandages which form a lozenge pattern decorated with gilded studs, the child was one amongst the many infants buried in the vast cemetery at Hawara. The site was excavated by one of the founding fathers of Egyptian archaeology, Flinders Petrie, in the winter of 1888–9.

Sometimes the presence of toys in a grave from which there are no surviving human remains is the only evidence for the burial of a child. In the case of the Ashmolean's mummy, the museum had the body but no other information – until now.

While adding to the growing picture of how people lived and died in Roman Egypt, the mummy will also play a part in artist Angela Palmer's ongoing work generating etched glass images from anatomical scans. Angela will engrave the scans of the mummy's body onto sheets of glass. She will then transform the multi-layered sheets into a three dimensional recreation of the body. The results will be displayed in the Ashmolean museum in a joint presentation in which the unknown child from Hawara will take on new life in both the archaeological and the creative

sense.

Source: University of Oxford

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