

Egypt fixing Tutankhamun mask after botched epoxy repair

October 20 2015, by Brian Rohan



German restorer Christian Eckmann begins restoration work on the golden mask of King Tutankhamun over a year after the beard was accidentally broken off and hastily glued back with epoxy, at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Oct. 20, 2015. The 3,300-year-old burial pharaonic mask was discovered in Tutankhamun's tomb along with other artifacts by British archeologists in 1922, sparking worldwide interest in archaeology and ancient Egypt. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)

Restorers put their work on the famed golden burial mask of King Tutankhamun on display in Cairo on Tuesday, over a year after the beard

was accidentally knocked off and hastily glued back on with epoxy.

A German-Egyptian team of experts showed off the mask in a laboratory in the Egyptian Museum, detailing plans for how the [epoxy](#) will be scraped off and the beard carefully removed before being reattached by a method to be determined by a joint scientific committee.

Christian Eckmann, the lead restoration specialist, said the work should take a month or two, depending on how long it takes to remove the beard, which will be attached after research into how the mask and beard attachment were originally made and joined.

"We have some uncertainties now, we don't know how deep the glue went inside the beard, and so we don't know how long it will take to remove the beard," he said on the sidelines of a news conference with Antiquities Minister Mamdouh el-Damaty and Tarek Tawfik, director-general of the still-under-construction Grand Egyptian Museum near the pyramids.

"We try to make all the work by mechanical means ... we use wooden sticks which work quite well at the moment, then there is another strategy we could implement, slightly warming up the glue," he said. "It's unfortunately [epoxy resin](#) which is not soluble."

A [museum](#) employee knocked the beard off during work on the relic's lighting in August 2014, after which it was hastily reattached with epoxy. When the error was revealed in January, the Antiquities Ministry quickly called a press conference where Eckmann said he and an Egyptian team could fix the epoxy-job and avoid permanent damage.



Actor Morgan Freeman listens to an Egyptologist explain an artifact during a visit to the Egyptian Museum, in Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Oct. 20, 2015. Freeman is in Egypt to work on a National Geographic documentary titled, "The Story of God." (AP Photo/ Mohamed El Raai)

The 3,300-year-old pharaonic mask was discovered in Tutankhamun's tomb along with other artifacts by British archeologists in 1922, sparking worldwide interest in archaeology and ancient Egypt.

It is arguably the best-known piece in the museum, one of Cairo's main tourist sites, which was built in 1902 and houses ancient Egyptian artifacts and mummies.



German restorer Christian Eckmann examines the beard of the golden mask of the famed King Tutankhamun as an Egyptian-German team begins restoration work over a year after the beard was accidentally broken off and hastily glued back with epoxy, at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Oct. 20, 2015. The 3,300-year-old burial pharaonic mask was discovered in Tutankhamun's tomb along with other artifacts by British archeologists in 1922, sparking worldwide interest in archaeology and ancient Egypt. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)

Eckmann said that during the restoration, experts would conduct a detailed study of the mask's ancient manufacture technique that had not been done previously to determine what materials and techniques were used.

"We are using this chance to gain new information about the manufacture," he said.



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Members of an Egyptian-German restoration team remove a foam cover from the golden mask of the famed King Tutankhamun before beginning restoration work over a year after the beard was accidentally broken off and hastily glued back with epoxy, at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Oct. 20, 2015. The 3,300-year-old burial pharaonic mask was discovered in Tutankhamun's tomb along with other artifacts by British archeologists in 1922, sparking worldwide interest in archaeology and ancient Egypt. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)



German restorers Christian Eckmann and Katja Broschat begin work on the restoration of the famed golden mask of King Tutankhamun at the Egyptian Museum, in Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Oct. 20, 2015. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)

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