

# Make them alive

THE MUMMY  
PROJECT

Joachim Granit

**MAKE THEM ALIVE**  
The Mummy Project

by  
Joachim Granit

Still from The Mummy Project, animation.



**I'LL CALL JOACHIM GRANIT.** He answers the phone in his studio, just in from jogging along snow-packed ski tracks. Jocke is reasoning, thinking aloud, revising, rejecting, renewing. Dynamics, creativity, humanism.

Our discussion continues from hotel rooms in Alexandria and Jerusalem and then back again. Jocke deconstructs and reassembles structures, and discusses his longstanding fascination with mummies. Who is he, this very lively person, with dry rustling of long dead kings and noble ladies? Why does he repeatedly seek out these misshaped bones, and stare so deep into their owner's sarcophagi and tombs?

I sense it concerns the eternal human. The mummies, brought into being by Joachim Granit in sepia-toned watercolors, with their shy smiles and unseeing, calculating eyes, their lips and loose mouths... In their desolation their appeal and profound humanity express what we all are, in our greatness and frailty, over the millennia.

I am continually haunted by these mummy physiognomies by night. They do not intimidate me, but instead, awaken many memories...

**ARKIVBYGGNADEN** is proud to present Joachim Granit to the line of exciting artists who have exhibited in the building over the last eight years. We welcome the opportunity to be the first in the kingdom to show all his Mummy Suite!

**/STIFTELSEN ARKIVBYGGNADEN  
JAN AXEL NORDLANDER**

#### CONDENSED BIOGRAPHY

**JOACHIM GRANIT** was born in 1960, educated at the Royal Academy of Fine Art in Stockholm and is currently a Creative Director at the foundation of Färgfabriken, Center for Contemporary Art and Architecture in Stockholm.

Joachim has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions, both in Sweden (e.g at Konsthuset, Galleri Flach, Galleri Engström and Bolbrino Gallery) and abroad (in cities like St. Petersburg, Tunis and Tokyo among others). He has furthermore participated in several group shows and various film/audio projects in Frankfurt, Osaka, at the Venice Biennial and at the Modern Museum in Stockholm.

Joachim is represented by the Modern Museum in Stockholm, the National Public Art Council, several universities and by the Swedish Radio. He has received fellowships from organisations such as Helge Ax:son Johnson and The Carl Larsson Foundation. He has held lectures at several universities and art schools, and participated in a number of architectural and urban planning projects in Sweden and internationally.

**WHY THIS FASCINATION** with mummies? I will try to give you some answers. Insufficient, but perhaps a few clues to this scripture's content and some indication as to why I have, for many years as an artist, been inspired by what can be interpreted as, "in museums." This coupled with a dose of bygone cultures interspersed with Jules Verne and Edgar Allan Poe, is a start. The mummy work is slightly morbid, but it is brought into existence with a large measure of respect and humility for life, and at the same time, it reflects on what awaits us all.

The fact is that it is easier to draw or paint an old human being than a child or young person. With faces puckered, the mummies announce their age and emanate character. The pen and brush easily comprehend their many folds and crevices, their lines always adhering fluidly to the paper, leaving a clear and genuine impression. Mummies are therefore, one of the best objects to work with. They are not old wrinkled apples picked one day in September and slowly dried in an attic. They contain something more. A face conveys experiences and sensations, such as joy, peace and sometimes anxiety. Our bodies act as reference points and we often have an ambivalent relationship with them. When we are twenty years old, ageing is something that lies far in the future. At fifty, it is a brutal fact.

There is, however, another perspective when looking at resolution and slow decay, an aesthetic, we can translate as, "ruin romanticism". Old buildings and objects grow old and create stories, and in some cases, myths, propelling our imaginations. These images of mummies are not made to frighten, but encourage a different perspective on what is ugly or beautiful. Their faces and bodies exude pride, looking inward but also at the viewer. They communicate, and so, what are their stories? A mummy is technically a shell with no interior, stuffed with rags, and in

some cases, with eyes made of stone or glass placed in the skull, giving the illusion of life. Their facial expressions convey so much more. Those who have seen these images often respond with “They look alive.” I see this as a positive reaction.

The images were made freely after pictures found in books, on the Internet, and from images secretly taken with camera phone (note no flash) in the spring of 2011 at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. My first encounter with mummies was in the spring of 1978 when I was a young art student traveling in Egypt. My fellow students and I spent a day sketching them at the Egyptian Museum, and although the memory is blurry and the drawings have disappeared, the experience has been etched in my consciousness.

**/JOACHIM GRANIT**

**MUMMY** (from the Persian *mumiai*, pitch or asphalt), a dead body, as preserved by the ancient Egyptian method of embalming. The preservative climate of Upper Egypt and the belief of the Egyptians in life after death must be the causes which led them to take unusual care for preserving the bodies of their dead. In prehistoric times in Egypt the dead were laid in the graves on mats in the crouching position common in the burials of primitive peoples, and were supplied with jars of food, flint instruments, et c. Perhaps the attempt was already made to preserve the bodies by drying or otherwise. In a few instances, such bodies, probably more than five thousand years old, have been found with skin and hair well preserved though dried and shrunken; usually everything but the bones has decayed.

The Egyptians did not stop at the mummification of the human body; sacred animals, birds, reptiles, fishes, and even insects were treated in a similar way, and the meat offerings deposited with the wealthy dead were likewise “preserved.”

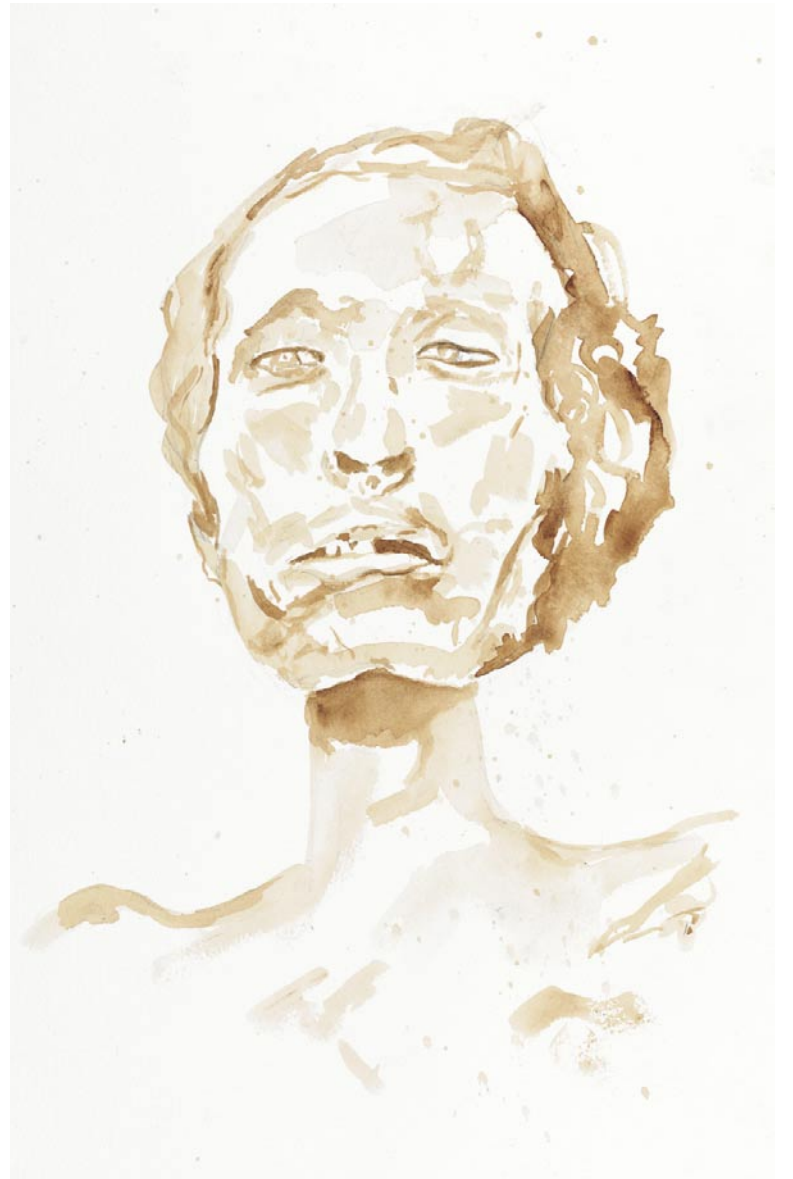
What the Egyptians really thought of mummification can only be partially guessed. Custom, changing in some degree from century to century, governed their practice, and no doubt was regulated by the priests. At first the luxury of mummification was reserved for the king, who was identified with Osiris and was buried with an abundance of ritual and magic words. But the king required his courtiers, and his courtiers in turn needed their servants in permanent attendance. Partly in consequence of this, the deification of the king, with all its concomitants, was gradually extended through the ranks of the noble and wealthy until it came within the reach of the humblest, and even animals shared the honour of deification after death.

Excerpt from *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1911).

MAKE THEM ALIVE

Watercolors 2011-2012

*Zadptahefonkhou*





*Tuthmosis IV*



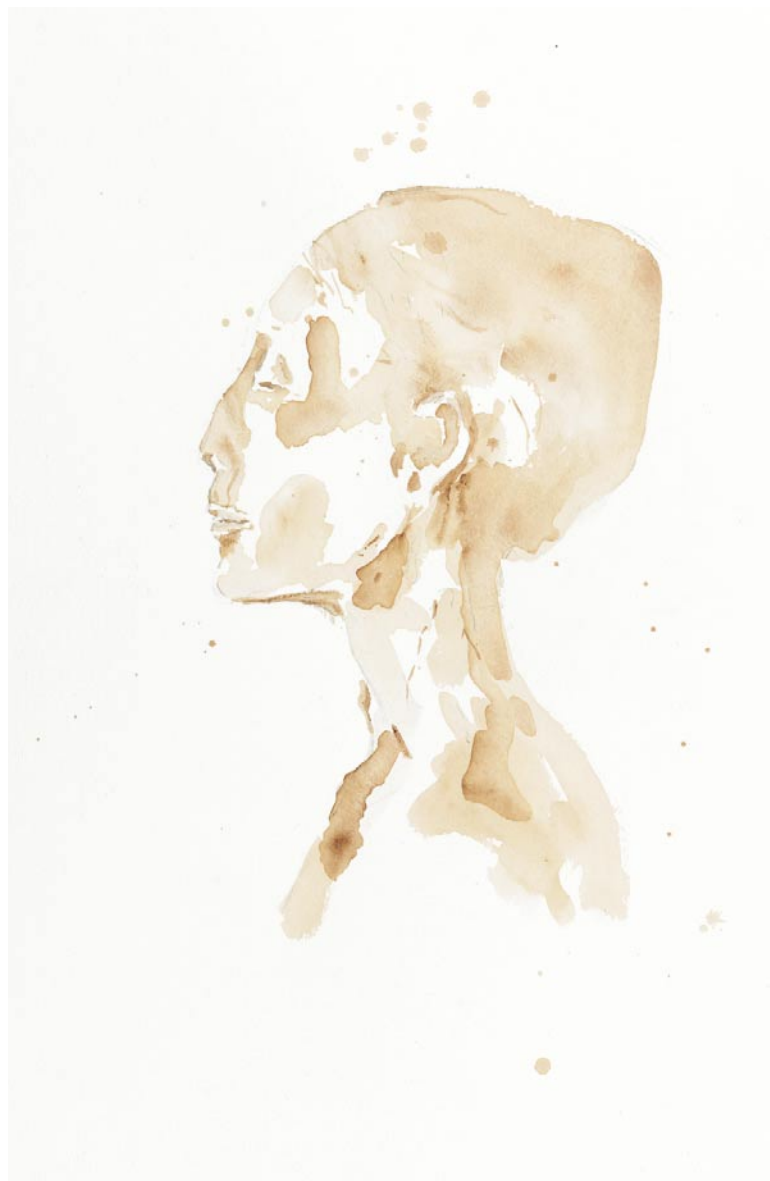
*Unknown*



*Tuthmosis I*



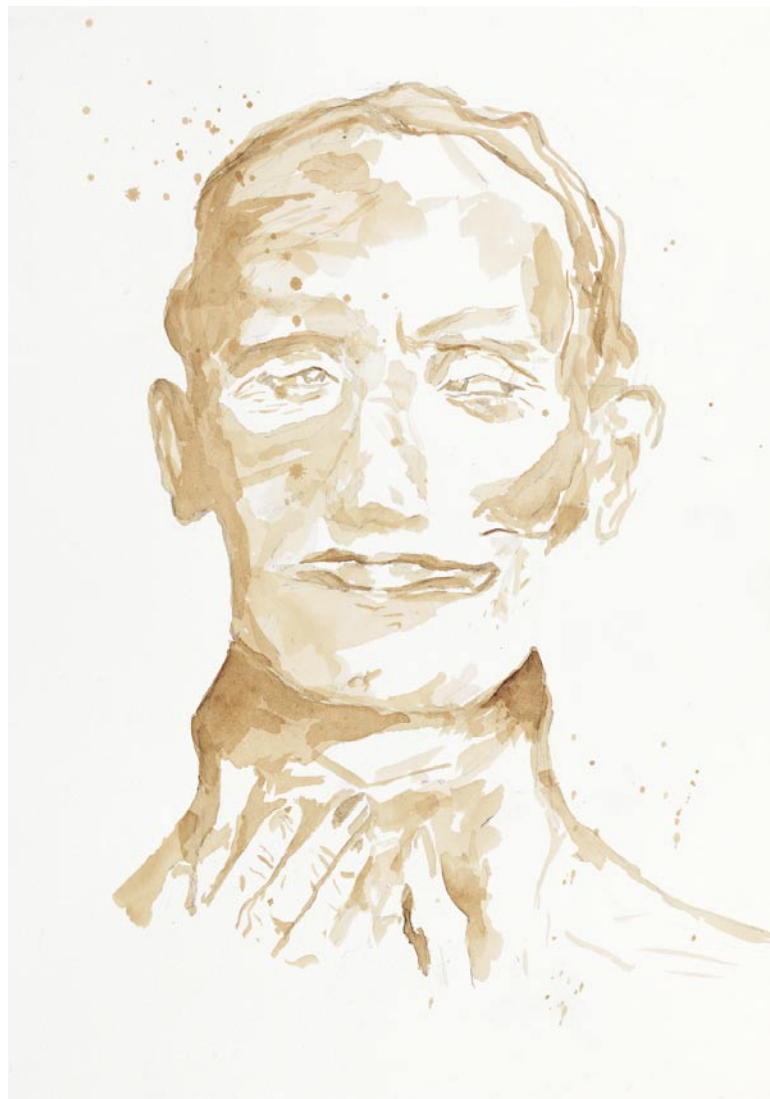
*Tuthmosis IV*



*Unknown*



*Yuya*



*Group of Three*



*Unknown*





*Tuthmosis*



*Nsitanebashrou*



*Feet*



*Unknown*



*Maihepri*







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animation.

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[www.joachimgranit.com](http://www.joachimgranit.com)

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