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THE TRUE STORY OF RASCAR CAPAC

A 52-minute documentary film directed by Frédéric Cordier

A co-production by
ARTE GEIE, RTBF, Un film à la patte, Panoramique Terre & Moulinsart



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Introduction

THE TRUE STORY OF RASCAR CAPAC is a science documentary led like a police investigation into pre-Colombian mummies from Chile and Peru, one of whom, RASPAR CAPAC, inspired *The Seven Crystal Balls* from *The Adventures of Tintin* by famous Belgian

cartoonist Hergé.

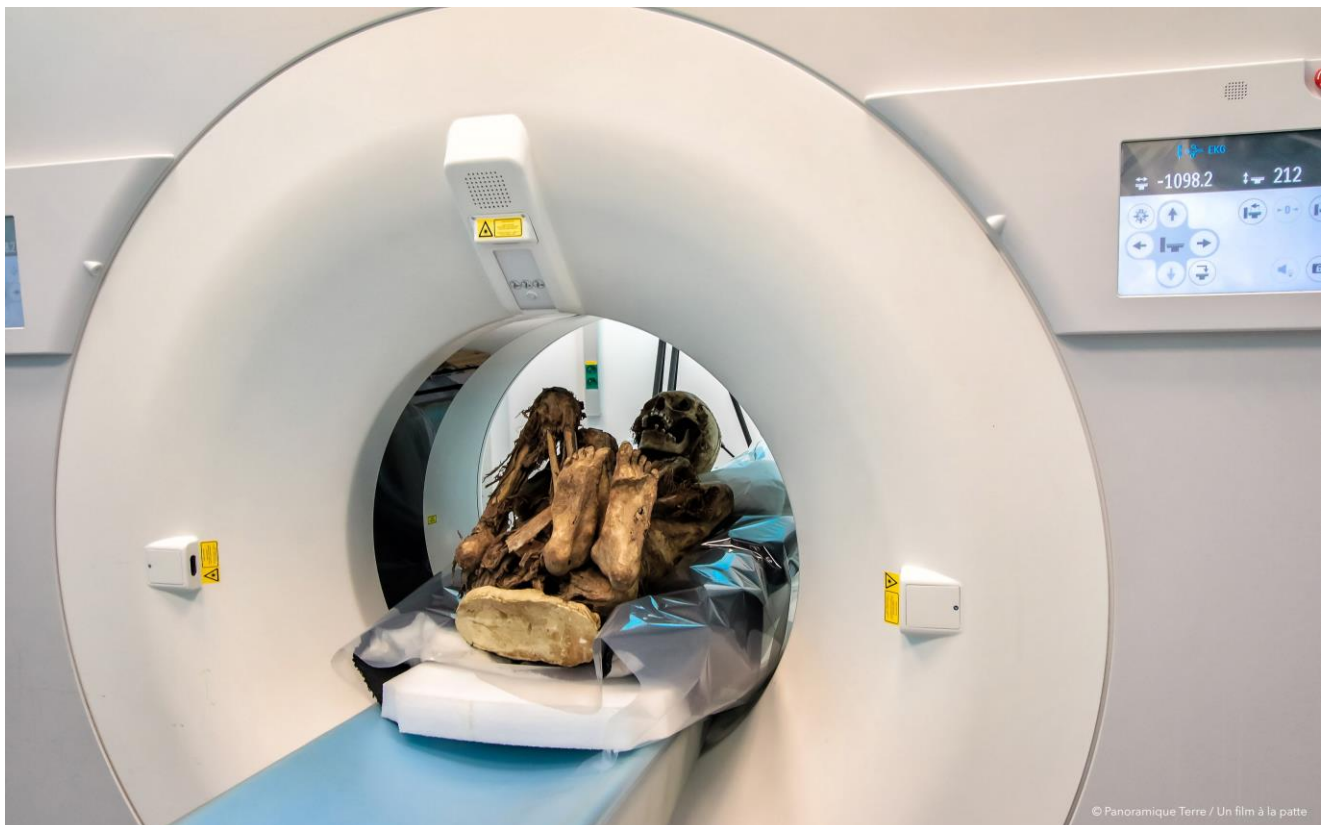
In reality, the mummy Rascar Capac arrived at the Art & History Museum in Brussels in the middle of the 19th century under unknown circumstances. By uncovering the origins of Rascar Capac, the film will reveal previously unknown facts about his life, the reasons for his death and even which illnesses he had.

The documentary will follow the investigation in the field, in specialised laboratories in Belgium and France and along the wild Pacific coast of Chile and Peru. Using modern technology to research and carry out tests on Rascar and other similar mummies will allow us to understand a lot more about these pre-Columbian mummies who, compared to their Egyptian counterparts, we still know very little about. This scientific adventure is far from over.

Synopsis

So who was Rascar Capac? Where did he come from? How old was he when he died and what was the cause of his death? What did his diet consist of and what was his position in society? And, most intriguing of all, how did he somehow end up in Brussels in the middle of the 19th century, along with six other mummies who then spent over 175 years shut away in wooden crates in the basement of the Art & History Museum? Who are they? How are they different to the Egyptian mummies that have been the subject of so much research?

Now, a team of scientists, led by Serge Lemaître, archaeologist and curator of the Art & History Museum in Brussels, is going to study the mysterious mummy for the first time with the help of modern technology to try and unravel his mysterious origins and discover the story behind his lifeless corpse.



Director's Note of Intention

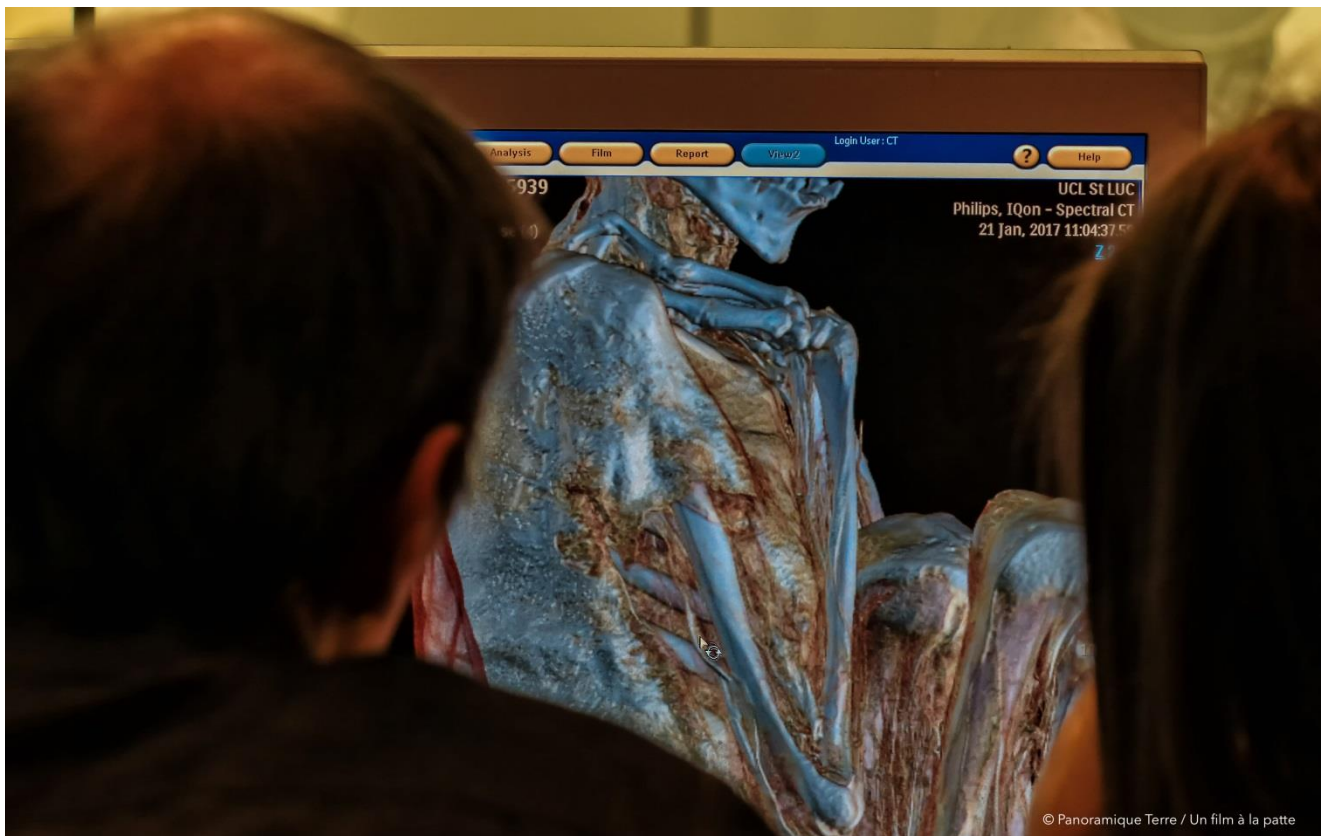
Mummies have always caught the collective imagination and fascinated fans of mystery, adventure and archaeology the world over.

This fascination likely has its roots in the fear of death and the dreams of eternal life that humans have harboured since time immemorial. Mummies seem to have the power to evade time because they preserve the most ephemeral part of us: our flesh.

Using answers provided by the scientists' research into Rascar Capac's origins and way of life, we will find out not only who brought Rascar and the other mummies to Brussels, but also how and why they did it. All of this raises an important issue, which is brought up in the documentary, regarding the difficulty museums and curators have identifying, tracing and controlling all of their artefacts when some of the objects arrived centuries ago.

Scientific research into Rascar Capac and other mummies discovered in-situ, from previous and ongoing archaeological digs, enables us to provide answers about Rascar's history and identity. We also want to learn about the funeral rites, the embalming process and how these pre-Columbian cultures lived, as we know so little about them in comparison with the Egyptian mummies.

By following Serge Lemaitre and his team's every step in the field and by using archives of Hergé's comics to show his passion for history and archaeology, as well as animations and medical and scientific imaging, 3D reconstructions of Rascar's face, footage shot in Chile showing Rascar's way of life and interviews with historians, scientists and passionate Tintin fans, the film aims to tell the story of a fantastic scientific adventure and bring us face to face with a childhood fantasy.



A major scientific investigation

Nobody had ever conducted an in-depth analysis of Rascar and the other mummies. Now, thanks to the examination and study of the mummies' fossilised remains, insect larvae found in the bodies and objects associated with their habitat or funeral rites, the multidisciplinary team hope to solve the various enigmas surrounding the mystery of Rascar Capac and use science to tell us more about pre-Columbian mummies. Such as why, for example, Latin American mummies were left intact, while Egyptian mummies were prepared and eviscerated to facilitate the embalming and conservation of the body.

What nobody knows yet is whether, just as in Hergé's Tintin comic, a deadly curse is about to befall the researchers who have dared to disturb the mummies' eternal slumber.

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