



## PRESS RELEASE

### 1,500 students join pop artist Romero Britto at The O<sub>2</sub> for Tutankhamun art initiative

- Giant pyramid commemorates the return of Tutankhamun to London
- Ticket on sale date for exhibition announced

London, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2007 — Today 1,500 children from around the world gathered at the newly opened O<sub>2</sub> to help pop artist Romero Britto create a 45 ft pyramid commemorating the return of King Tutankhamun to London after 35 years. To coincide with the arts project, organisers of the eagerly anticipated "Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs" exhibition also announced that single tickets will go on sale to the public on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2007 and revealed that a new Howard Carter Gallery produced in collaboration with The British Museum will form part of the exhibition.

To date, more than 180,000 tickets for the exhibition, which opens at The O<sub>2</sub> on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2007, have been reserved or sold in the UK, setting a pre-sale record for the blockbuster show which has been enjoyed by over 3 million people in the US during a four city tour.

The pyramid, designed by Britto, is the artist's tribute to the Pyramids of Giza, the last remaining of the Ancient Seven Wonders of the World. To launch the Pyramid Project, 1,500 school kids from the UK, US, Belgium, France and Egypt painted panels for the pyramid alongside Britto. The Pyramid Project will culminate with the giant pop art pyramid travelling from the artist's studio in Miami to London to be unveiled at a ceremony in October. Details of the location of the giant pyramid will be revealed at a later date.

To commemorate today's art initiative, each school and student will have their names inscribed on the base of the 45 ft pyramid. A 25 ft replica pyramid will be on display outside The O<sub>2</sub> for the duration of the Tutankhamun

exhibition while 12 smaller pyramids (8 ft ), also designed by Britto, will be on view in the capital in one of the largest public arts installations London has ever seen.

The international arts event has received significant response with almost 7,000 students from 192 schools registered for participation. Events have already taken place in Fort Lauderdale and Philadelphia, two of the US markets for the Tutankhamun exhibition. Students from each of these cities have been selected to fly to London to join this unique arts initiative.

"I am extremely honoured to participate in such an important and historic project," said Romero Britto. "The Pyramid Project is a fun and interactive way to educate children about ancient Egyptian civilisation and culture. Through this initiative, students will have the opportunity to embrace their inner artist and express their creativity, while leaving a lasting historical mark. "

"I am thrilled to see school children from all over the world working together to commemorate Tutankhamun's return to London," said Zahi Hawass, Secretary General of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities. "The opportunity for children to participate in the construction of a pyramid will be a life-lasting memory and one that I hope will further endear the world's youth to the wonders of Egypt."

Visit London's chief executive, James Bidwell, said: "The Tutankhamun exhibition will draw hundreds of thousands of people to London to experience the ancient wonders of Egypt alongside the brand new, world class facilities of The O<sub>2</sub>. The Pyramid Project is a wonderful way to welcome Tutankhamun back to London, involving children from around the world in working with one of today's most exciting artists to produce artworks which will be displayed across the capital for everyone to enjoy. "

David Campbell, CEO and President of AEG said: "We are elated to host the forthcoming Tutankhamun exhibition and are excited to be involved in bringing this unique spectacle to the attention of a whole new generation. There can surely be no more exciting way to launch the designated exhibition space at The O<sub>2</sub>. "

Pyramid Project is climate neutral. Climate Care is offsetting a total of 88.10 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions produced from the students travel to and from The O<sub>2</sub> plus overnight hotel accommodation.

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**Images:**

Images from the Pyramid Project Paint Party will be available within the Arts section at [www.picselect.com](http://www.picselect.com) from 1pm 5 July 2007. If you do not have a login, click on the register button on the site's home page and wait for an e-mail to confirm your account has been activated

**Notes to editors:**

A total of 45 primary schools from 15 London boroughs participated in the Pyramid Project.

For more information on the Pyramid Project please go to: [www.pyramidproject.co.uk](http://www.pyramidproject.co.uk)

Climate Care offsets emissions by funding sustainable energy projects.

**PYRAMID PARTNERS AND SPONSORS TO DATE INCLUDE:**

Eurostar has transported the students from Belgium to take part in this international arts initiative.

- InnoVida Holdings Inc.
- NEC
- bmi
- The O<sub>2</sub>
- Kids Love London (part of Visit London)
- Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt
- Eurostar
- Hilton Hotels
- Premier Travel Inn
- National Geographic Kids
- Fredrix Artist Canvas
- Climate Care

**About Romero Britto**

Romero Britto is one of the premiere pop artists of our time. Through his use of vivid colours Britto creates contemporary masterpieces that evoke a spirit of hope and convey a sense of warmth. His original artwork, dubbed the art of healing, merges bright colours, and playful themes with compositional elements of cubism.

Britto's work provides art lovers around the world an open-minded and optimistic view of life, from the mental canvas of an artist who is inspired daily by the world around him. As a talented and creative child growing up in Brazil, Romero Britto often painted images on any medium he could find, including scraps of cardboard and newspaper. His inner passion and drive to excel served as an incredible asset for a young man with a longing to nurture his creative side and experience all that life had to offer. His innate love for learning and education inspired Britto to channel his focus and commitment to excellence into his artwork. This dedication is what has helped Britto become an

international success during the last 20 years. The catalyst that began his ascension into the fine art arena was a commission to create the artwork for Absolut Vodka's world-wide advertising campaign (which also included contributions by Andy Warhol, Keith Haring and Kenny Scharf). His work has appeared in numerous publications in the United States and internationally, including Art in America, People Magazine, the New York Times Magazine and Arts & Antiques, and he has worked on commissions from companies including Movado, Microsoft X-Box, Evian, Disney, Audi and Pepsi. Britto's works have also been collected by Arnold Schwarzenegger, Andre Agassi, U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy and Sir Elton John.

Never forgetting his humble beginnings, and always appreciative of the many mentors he has had over the years, giving back and lending a hand to those in need has become one of his top priorities. As a result, in 2007 the Britto Foundation was established to allow him to lend his time, resources and talent to children and organizations all over the world, while continuing to spread joy and happiness through his works. Through the foundation, his goal is to provide support to individuals and organizations who work to create, encourage, promote and preserve education and humanitarian based initiatives benefiting children around the world.

A number of related merchandise items will be sold in the gift shop of the exhibition, with proceeds going to support international literacy programming through The Britto Foundation.

### **About the exhibition**

The exhibition, organized by National Geographic, AEG Live Exhibitions and Arts and Exhibitions International, with cooperation from the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities, will include 50 major objects excavated from Tutankhamun's tomb, including his royal diadem — the gold crown discovered encircling the head of the king's mummified body that he likely wore while living — and one of the gold and precious stone inlaid canopic coffinettes that contained his mummified internal organs.

More than 70 objects from other royal graves of the 18th Dynasty (1555 B.C.-1305 B.C.) will be showcased as well, including those of pharaohs Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV and the rich, intact tomb of Yuya and Tuyu, parents-in-law of Amenhotep III and great-grandparents of Tutankhamun. Yuya and Tuyu's tomb was the most celebrated historical find in the Valley of the Kings until Carter discovered Tutankhamun's undisturbed burial chamber in 1922. All of the treasures in the exhibit are between 3,300 and 3,500 years old.

Unique to the London-based exhibition will be a dedicated gallery to Howard Carter, the British archaeologist who discovered Tutankhamun's tomb. The Howard Carter gallery will highlight the finding and excavation of the tomb and will provide insights into the life of Carter whose tenacity led to the discovery of the best preserved and most intact pharaonic tomb ever found in the Valley of the Kings.

The exhibition runs from 15 November 2007 to 30 August 2008. Over 180,000 tickets have been sold or reserved to-date. Tickets and information is available at [www.visitlondon.com/tut](http://www.visitlondon.com/tut) or [www.kingtut.org](http://www.kingtut.org)

### **About The O<sub>2</sub>**

The O<sub>2</sub> will be Europe's leading entertainment destination – a new city-within-a-city for Londoners and the world to explore and enjoy. The O<sub>2</sub> will be a leisure and hospitality experience of a kind never before known in the UK. The centrepiece of The O<sub>2</sub> will be Europe's finest indoor music and sports venue. The O<sub>2</sub> arena will attract global stars and events to The O<sub>2</sub>, including 2012 Olympic events.

The Entertainment District will surround The O<sub>2</sub> arena. Open to all, night and day, it will comprise a mixture of leisure attractions including an 11 screen cinema, exhibition space, Indigo Music Club, restaurants, bars and cafés, all lining an avenue as wide and long as Bond Street.

### **About Visit London**

Visit London is the official visitor organisation for London. Its role is to promote London as the most exciting city on the planet, targeting domestic and overseas leisure and business visitors as well as Londoners. Visit London works in partnership with the Mayor, the London Development Agency and the tourism industry in London.

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