Lost Tudor Sculptures Reassembled With Help from 3-D Scanning

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University of Leicester experts have tried to recreate two Tudor monuments using 3D laser scanning and 3D prints to illuminate their historical research. The elaborate tombs of Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk – one for himself, and another for Henry VIII’s illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond – were meant for Thetford Priory, but they were not complete when the priory was dissolved in 1540. Some parts of the monuments were salvaged and later finished off in a different style and with different materials, in St. Michael’s Church, Framlingham, Suffolk. Other parts were abandoned in the ruins of the priory and were discovered by excavators centuries later; those parts are now scattered in various museums. The researchers have now brought together all these pieces and used drawings in 16th century manuscripts, 3D laser scanning and 3D prints to recreate the monuments as they were originally intended.

Dr Phillip Lindley, of the University of Leicester’s Department of the History of Art and Film, said, “Our exhibition studies the catastrophic effects of the Dissolution of Thetford Priory and of Henry VIII’s attempted destruction of Thomas Howard, third duke of Norfolk, on the ducal tomb-monuments at Thetford. Parts of two unfinished monuments were salvaged in 1540 and later moved to St Michael’s, Framlingham, Suffolk: other pieces were abandoned in the ruined priory, only to be excavated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Using 3D laser scanning and 3D prints, we have – virtually –
dismantled the monuments at Framlingham and recombined them with the parts left at Thetford in 1540, to try to reconstruct the monuments as they were first intended, in a mixture of the virtual and the real.”