

Viewpoint: 'Mammoth debacle' — The not-so-encouraging backstory to George Church's \$15 million start-up hoping to resurrect the extinct woolly mammoth

[A] team of scientists and entrepreneurs has formed a company called [Colossal](#) that aims to “bring back the woolly mammoth.” They raised fifteen million dollars in funding to do this job (cf. P. T. Barnum). The motivating force for this endeavor is well-known Harvard geneticist [George Church](#), who for years has said that a “resurrected” woolly mammoth, constructed using DNA sequence from mammoths frozen in the permafrost, was right around the corner.

Well, the corner hasn't been turned, and, if I don't miss my guess, it won't be. This project is fraught with so many problems that the likelihood of producing a woolly mammoth is close to zero.

In fact it IS zero, because they're not going to resurrect that extinct creature. What they are doing is making a genetically modified Asian elephant by inserting into its genome a maximum of sixty mammoth genes that they think differentiate the modern species from the extinct one.

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Further, a lot of other genes differ between a mammoth and an Asian elephant. What guarantee is there that the inserted mammoth genes would be expressed correctly, or even work at all in concert with the Asian elephant developmental system?

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.](#)