

CONFERENCE REPORT FROM LIMASSOL, CYPRUS

BY RIKKE FOULKE

The conference in Limassol, Cyprus was the second international conference on the topic of Salt Weathering on Buildings and Stone Sculptures. The first conference was held in 2008 in Copenhagen, Denmark. This year's conference was attended by 75 specialists on salts from 22 different countries. Most participants were material scientists, conservators of stone, and conservation chemists who focus on preservation of heritage sites. There were some petrologists, archaeologists and two other paintings conservators, one who specializes in the treatment of wall paintings. Ioannis Ioannou and Magdalini Theodoridou from the University of Cyprus organized and hosted the conference. Keynote speakers were Andrea Hamilton from the University of Edinburgh and Ákos Török from the Budapest University of Technology, Hungary. Bernard Smith from the University of Belfast was scheduled as a keynote speaker, as well, but he was unable to attend the conference.

The first day of lectures included three sessions: the physics of salt crystallization and saline transport phenomena and physics of salt crystallization and saline transport phenomena were the topics of the morning session and case studies were featured in the afternoon. The case studied presented the "Silk Tomb" in Petra, Jordan, Al-Namrud Monuments in Iraq, Baroque frescoes in Sümeg, Hungary. Poster sessions were held in the afternoon, which introduced 20 international projects focusing on damages in buildings from salt and efflorescence.

The first day concluded with a short trip to the Venetian Limassol Castle which used to be a fortress to ward off pirates. It had been the residence of Richard the Lionheart and his court. Currently the castle is a museum of medieval works of art. After the tour of the castle the group visited the nearby Carob Mills. Carob is cultivated in Cyprus and is valued for its nutrients and the sweet syrup made. We were all encouraged to purchase some carob syrup as a souvenir.

Laboratory investigations and experimental techniques were the topic of discussion the morning of the second day of lectures. The group traveled to the capital and largest city of Cyprus, Nicosia in the afternoon. In 1974 Nicosia became a divided capital. The northern part of the island and city is occupied by the Turkish Republic while the southern part of the island is

governed by Greek Cypriots. Gates dividing the city may be crossed and within the past couple years it has been easier to travel between the two halves of Cyprus, with a passport.

The first stop in Nicosia was the Cyprus Archaeological Museum. We were impressed that a sign posted outside the museum identified the collection as consisting of "local artifacts". It is the richest collection of Cypriot artifacts in the world and only a very small percentage is on display. The second stop was the residence of the Archbishop of Cyprus, which holds a vast collection of icons. For a conservator of paintings, this was a special treat, although we were not given nearly enough time in the gallery to see all the works of art. We took a break from touring the cultural centers and shared a coffee in the historical part of town.

Dinner on the second day was hosted at the restored building Chateau Status. This venue is in the "buffer zone" or "Green Line" in the divided city and is located across from Ledra Palace, which was the finest and most lavish hotel in Nicosia prior to 1974. Today offices of the Fulbright Institute of Diplomacy and the United States Agency for International Development occupy the palace rooms. Dinner was a full buffet of traditional foods and the beautiful day ended with a performance of traditional dancers.

The last day of lectures focused on general conservation issues. Our St. Nicholas project was featured in this session. More case studies were presented in the morning and desalination treatments were presented in the afternoon. The St. Nicholas treatment was well-received. Our international colleagues were impressed with the images and had wished they could see more of the murals in the presentation. In the end, the presentation was limited to a mere 14 minutes. There was an audible reaction during the presentation at the point where it was proposed to create a "sacrificial band" in walls adjacent to the murals. This was viewed as a very good and safe measure. Discussions in small groups were most helpful and offer some options to pursue for the treatment of St. Nicholas. Some colleagues were interested in learning more about the treatment method with nanoparticles and others were offering a continued communication and possibly assistance in their labs.

In conclusion, participation in this conference was most enlightening. Salts are a very complicated problem and few professionals dedicate their careers to studying the mechanisms, physics, transport and effects of efflorescence. There is a support group out there for conservators who are challenged by efflorescence on works of art. We were able to find an elegant solution to the stabilization of salts in St. Nicholas, but there is some room for improvement in our technique and can apply this new information in the preservation of our local treasure.

- *Rikke*