

Bedestan (St. Nicholas Church)

Last Updated Monday, 30 July 2012

The Bedestan (St. Nicholas Church) is one of the main monuments located within the walled city of Nicosia. Originally built in the 12th century during the Byzantine era, the Bedestan (St. Nicholas Church) is a harmonious mix of architecture including Gothic-style doorways and Renaissance overlays, additions made throughout the centuries. A carving of St. Nicholas found over the main doorway was a likely addition of the 15th or 16th century. By the 16th century, the church had become the orthodox Metropolis after being the Priory church of the Order of St. Thomas of Canterbury. During the Ottoman period, it was used as a "covered market place" or Bedestan.

The Project

The project focused on the restoration of the Bedestan structurally and architecturally. The project was completed in two phases, Phase 1 being the structural works performed between 2004 and 2006, and Phase 2 being the conservation and restoration works realised one year later and completed in October 2009.

When Phase 1 started, in 2004, the monument was found in very poor condition with a collapsed roof and various structural damages. ([Click here to see the pictures of Bedestan before restoration](#))

The monument's architecture showed not only signs of aging but also signs of damages caused by earthquakes and other natural phenomena occurred while the construction of the monument was underway.

This resulted into a structural investigation with the first phase of the project focusing on consolidation works aiming at recovering the original structure and improving anti-seismic properties.

Innovative solutions were applied to the foundations, elevated structure, columns and roof. An experimental technique comprising of the construction of a pendulum was used to improve anti-seismic properties.

When Phase 2 "restoration and conservation works" started in June 2005, a thick black deposit caused by the burning of tallow candles and oil lamps, had made it impossible to appreciate the original colors of the natural stones and the exterior façades had also been considerably damaged by air pollution.

Restoration and maintenance of the building were approached in an innovative manner using methods and procedures in accordance with the concept of "sustainable restoration".

Traditional techniques and materials with aesthetic characteristics compatible with the existing structure were used for the cleaning of the interior and exterior façades, treatment of frescos and the strengthening works on the pinnacle of the ribbed vault, above the main entrance on the western façade.

The direct beneficiaries of the project are the residents in the Selimiye area and the surrounding neighborhoods. The residents of Nicosia also benefit from the project, as it harmonized the center of the city near the newly restored market and the important mosque of Selimiye.

In 2009 the project was awarded the prestigious European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage/Europa Nostra Award in the

research category amongst a selection of 140 projects from 24 countries being appreciated for the completeness of the research and for the continuity given to the monument between its past, present and future needs.

In November 2009, a ceremony attended by a high number of representatives from both communities, marked the opening of the Bedestan to the public and the inauguration of the cultural centre.

{youtube}07VhOuL3jj4{/youtube}

Photo Gallery: Before restoration, During restoration, After restoration

Technical Study link

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