

PRESENTATION

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The universal appeal of the Alhambra, which consists of the walled enclosure itself, the Generalife estate and extensive surrounding land containing buildings and the remains of edifications that were historically related to the monument, affects everyone who visits it. It is a unique space in the world; a visit never disappoints and always inspires a desire to return. Washington Irving, Richard Ford, Alexandre Dumas and Gustave Doré experienced it in their day, those romantic travellers who helped raise awareness about the need to rescue the material aspects of the Alhambra from the process of deterioration.

This period of voicing concerns about the state of the monument was followed by society's growing interest in the Alhambra's gardens and the Orientalism they evoke in the romantic imagination, reflected in the plastic arts of the time. Following the Glorious Revolution of 1868, the Alhambra was separated from the Crown and passed into the hands of the State, and it was made a National Monument two years later.

1870 was unquestionably a turning point in the way Granada's monument can be understood and today, 150 years later, congratulations are due for having succeeded in making the Alhambra, and all the monuments it contains, a benchmark around the work for having one of the richest and most spectacular historical legacies and heritages in the world, and also for having become a paragon of heritage management.

This special issue of *Cuadernos de la Alhambra* takes up the baton of the commitment made in 1870, and what it means in the 21st century, underscoring the international recognition earned over the years by the Board of Trustees of the Alhambra and Generalife in the fields of conservation, restoration and the sustainable use of the monument in the face of public visits. And this continues in a year that, due to the global health crisis caused by Covid-19, has also been a turning point for the complex of monuments after it was closed to the public for the first time in its history.

The 49th issue of *Cuadernos de la Alhambra* has contributions from notable specialists including Professor Miguel Luis López-Guadalupe, Professor of Modern History at the University of Granada, Javier Piñar Samos, Doctor of Philosophy and Letters, and architect Antonio Almagro; in their respective articles they discuss topics such as the liberal revolution and its influence on Granada and the monument, the moment the Alhambra was made a «national monument» and the 250 years and more that have passed since it began to be recorded as an asset in graphic material.

In turn, architect Pedro Salmerón, in collaboration with members of his team, and Fernando Girón and Antonio Campos Muñoz, both linked to the world of medical science, analyse the restoration of the Maristán in Granada and its importance to medical culture of its time, while technical specialists from the Board of Trustees of the Alhambra and Generalife, including Elena Correa, Ramón Rubio, Jesús Bermúdez and Francisco Lamolda, address the important interventions carried out in the Partal Palace Oratory, the house of Astasio de Bracamonte, and the *hammam* at the Alcazar del Sultán.

The Sala de los Reyes (Hall of the Kings) is another space that has been restored and is highly regarded both for its location in the Palacio de los Leones (Lion's Palace) and for the unique nature of its materials and decorations. Dr Carmen Rallo Gruss, a specialist in the Middle Ages, gives a contextualized interpretation of the painted scenes that adorn the three vaults in this space and provides a reading of its iconographic message.

Bárbara Boloix, lecturer in Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Granada, closes this issue with an article in which she analyses the presence of Nasrid women in the Alhambra and the mark that they left, within key four spheres: political, architectural, pictorial and symbolic.

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to the authors of the articles, as well as to the editors of the Research and Dissemination Service of the Board of Trustees of the Alhambra and Generalife, and to all the people who have collaborated in producing this commemorative issue of *Cuadernos de la Alhambra*.