

PRESENTATION

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In 1965, the Alhambra and Generalife Board of Trustees published the first issue of Cuadernos de la Alhambra, a journal that represents the institution's spirit of scientific curiosity. Now, fifty years later, as well as being the main tool for spreading knowledge about the rich cultural heritage of this monument, this free to access and free of charge journal is also a leading publication in the field of research.

This special monographic issue on the restoration of the painted vaults of the Alhambra's Hall of the Kings is a good example of the excellent research being carried out in the Alhambra and Generalife monumental complex. It brings together the research of many specialists who explain the importance of this project, which in 2021 was short-listed for the European ILUCIDARE Special Prizes for "its uniqueness and the rare and unusual conservation challenges it faced".

The work also allowed strategic partnerships to be formed between interdisciplinary and international experts working to preserve it. It was promoted by the Alhambra and Generalife Board of Trustees with the collaboration of the Andalusian Institute of Historical Heritage (IAPH) and a range of specialists, organisations and companies from Spain, France, Italy and Belgium. As a result of their contributions, it has been possible to find answers to certain questions and open up new avenues of research into the paintings on leather in the Hall of the Kings, located in the Palace of the Lions and built during the second reign of Muhammad V, at the end of the 14th century.

The historian Nieves Jiménez Díaz, in her article "Main documented works on the vaults of the Hall of the Kings from the end of the 15th century to the 20th century" (Principales intervenciones documentadas de las bóvedas de la Sala de los Reyes desde finales del siglo XV al siglo XX) analyses the architectural and pictorial works carried out on the vaults of the Hall of the Kings from the end of the 15th century to the 20th century.

In "The restoration of the roofs of the Hall of the Kings" (La restauración de las cubiertas de la Sala de los Reyes), the Historical Heritage architect Pedro Salmerón Escobar provides a detailed look at a wide-ranging and complex piece of work that covers both the main hall and the alcoves with paintings in the Hall of the Kings.

In their articles, Elena Correa and Ramón Rubio Domene, head of the Restoration Department and head of the Restoration of Plasterwork and Tiling workshop, respectively, highlight the artistic uniqueness and beauty of the three vaults with tempera painting on leather in the Hall of the Kings, a work whose technical features have no known precedents in the Hispano-Muslim world.

Also contributing to this monograph are the Arabist from the University of Granada, José Miguel Puerta Vilchez, who presents the study “The artistic and thematic uniqueness of the figurative painting in Al-Andalus” (La singularidad artística y temática de la figuración pictórica andalusí), and the art historian Manuel Parada López de Corselas, who in the article “The paintings in the Alhambra's Hall of the Kings: Vegetal-astral paradise, au vif portrait and knightly virtue” (Las pinturas de la Sala de los Reyes de la Alhambra: Paraíso vegetal-astral, retrato au vif y virtud caballeresca), gives a holistic analysis of these in the context of the palace.

The Research Group in Computer Graphics and Virtual Reality at the University of Granada, formed by Pedro Cano Olivares and Juan Carlos Torres Cantero, has also participated in this monograph with the article “Use of 3D laser technologies in the restoration work of the Hall of the Kings” (Utilización de las tecnologías láser 3D en los trabajos de restauración de la Sala de los Reyes). The University of Seville is also involved through the contributions of the restorer Benjamín Domínguez-Gómez and María José González López, a conservation specialist and senior lecturer, in the articles “The wooden supports of the paintings in the Hall of the Kings: technical-constructive study, state of conservation and treatment” (Los soportes de madera de las pinturas de la Sala de los Reyes: estudio técnico-constructivo, estado de conservación y tratamiento) and “Painting technology in the vaults of the Alhambra's Hall of Kings” (Tecnología pictórica de las bóvedas de la Sala de los Reyes de la Alhambra), respectively.

The publication is completed with an article in which Pilar de Hoyos, Isabel Sánchez Marqués and Fernando Guerra-Librero, from Ártico, examine the restoration of the dado in the Hall of the Kings, a task carried out following strict archaeological restoration principles and involving numerous interdisciplinary studies and contributions.