



MOUNT NEBO FRANCISCAN MONASTERY

THE RENOVATION PROJECT IN A GLANCE

Throughout the years the original shelter had been improved to present a dignified appearance for the Sanctuary of Moses, as well as an adequate environment for the treasures preserved inside it. However the proved geological instability of the mountain top led to the decision to replace the old shelter with a new one. Several architect studios were contacted to present their ideas for the new Memorial and the project prepared by Arch. Roberto Sabelli was finally chosen. All the preliminary geological and structural studies were made by the University of Florence, Italy. The sudden death of Fr. Michele Piccirillo, in October 2008, created a difficult situation that led to a succession of unanticipated delays. Finally in 2012 the central administration of the Custody of the Holy Land took over and the work was brought to the end under its direct supervision.

A great deal of attention has been devoted to the methodical and careful restoration of wall structures and mosaic floors under the responsibility of the experienced Italian restorer, Franco Sciorilli. The mosaics were mainly replaced on the original floor levels, except when they belonged to a space from where different superimposing mosaics originated. In that case one is mounted on the wall next to its original place. The restoration work has been carried out with the help of a team composed of local workers, instructed and co-ordinated by Franco Sciorilli himself. Invaluable work was conducted also by the renowned Italian master, Antonino Vaccalluzzo, who spent many months fine tuning the mosaic restoration.

Work Phases

First Phase (2008-2011)

Supervisors: Fr. Michele Piccirillo, then Fr. Carmelo Pappalardo
Conceptual Design: Prof. Arch. Roberto Sabelli
Geological consultant: Prof. Geol. Piergiorgio Malesani
Structural Consultant: Ing. Riccardo Papi
Site supervision: Gianfranco Micallizzi

Second Phase (2012-2016)

Supervisors: Fr. Ibrahim Faltas and Fr. Eugenio Alliata

Executive design and site supervision

Chief Engineer and Structure: Prof. Ing. Roberto Scotta,
with Ing. Andrea Perin
Architecture: Prof. Arch. Sandro Pittini
with Andrea Bozzo and Arch. Luisa Boschi
MEPs: Ing. Renato Zanatta with Ivano Bressan

Technical supervision

Architectural aspects and Management: Arch. Osama Hamdan
Structural Aspects and Management: Ing. Shadi Qumseya

Archaeological Investigations: Fr. Eugenio Alliata and Dr. Davide Bianchi
Supervisor of the restoration: Franco Sciorilli



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The main objective of the project of conservation and enhancement of the Basilica Memorial of Moses and part of the monastery on Mount Nebo was to preserve the site in its historical, archaeological and artistic importance. At the same time, the project aimed also to promote the religious aspect of the place. The project, in fact, has achieved its objectives by responding to the needs of pilgrims and faithful, together with the requests of local and international tourists and visitors. The project also took into account other faiths, since the site is important for the three monotheistic religions.

The work included the installation of a new shelter to create a pleasant environment within the Byzantine basilica, which could, at the same time, protect and preserve the historical archaeological and artistic content of the basilica, especially the mosaics. The new roof was in need of a new structure and new solid foundation, because the old roof had structural problems.

New walls have been raised without weighing on the remains of the ancient walls, lined inside with wood and outside with stones, creating a ventilated facade to improve the conditions within the Basilica.

The conservation work included all the historic masonry and all elements which were added after the archaeological excavations were removed, leaving therefore only the original parts.

All the mosaics of different historical periods have been restored, the oldest layers are still in situ and the upper ones were located on the walls of the church, at the place where they had been found.

Some archaeological finds have been restored, columns, balusters, pulpit, etc. and placed inside the basilica.

Catwalks were installed to protect the mosaic floors but also to enhance them, creating a visitor path inside the Basilica.

The rooms of the ancient monastery adjacent to the Basilica have been preserved.