

P R E S S R E L E A S E

A palace awakens new forces

In the An Dinh Palace, in the former imperial capital Hué, restorers from Germany have successfully implemented a groundbreaking concept that combines conservation and restoration with an on the job training and certification scheme. Built 1916–1918, the Palace, a UNESCO World Heritage site, had suffered from the tropical climate and inadequate maintenance – and from the country's chronic shortage of restorers. The new scheme solved both problems in one: from 2003–2008, the Palace was conserved and restored to UNESCO standards and, in parallel, fifteen local Vietnamese with a background in the arts found a new vocation, one that opened up good prospects not only for them personally but also for their country's wealth of historical monuments.

The An Dinh Palace is full of unique wall and ceiling paintings commissioned by Vietnam's penultimate emperor Khai Dinh. Its interior design is a unique fusion of traditional Vietnamese and European Baroque elements. Today, it's possible once again to revel in the splendour. Thanks to the team's meticulous implementation of a critical restoration concept, the visitor can compare how things once were and what they have become.

The project was funded in the framework of the Cultural Preservation Programme maintained by Germany's Federal Foreign Office, and directed by various non-profit German heritage preservation associations. The 'Society for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage' (GEKE) is supporting the production of a

book about the project. On-site work and the training scheme for local Vietnamese artists and artisans were carried out under the aegis of the German Conservation Restoration and Education Projects (GCREP) team, led by Chief Restorer and Project Manager, Ms. Andrea Teufel. The Huế Monuments Conservation Center (HMCC) had restored the Palace exterior and grounds previously and also gave its support to this project. Now local people and tourists alike have once again discovered the An Dinh Palace – and newly qualified restorers are at work on other projects.

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