

Ukrainian Icons, Religious Murals Endangered

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOCMP) has expressed a desire to repaint the interior of the Church of St. Cyril, formerly part of the Cultural Preserve of the Cathedral of St. Sofia, in Kiev, Ukraine. While the cathedral of St. Sofia remains a UNESCO protected-site, the Church of St. Cyril has been removed off of the list of protected sites. The proposed repainting could include the over-painting of murals created by such prominent nineteenth-century artists as Mikhail Vrubel (1856-1910) and Nikolai Murashko (1884-1901), and, even more significantly, unique 12th century frescoes.

The medieval frescoes of the Church of St. Cyril are the only



specimens of monumental 12th century Orthodox iconography to survive in the Ukraine's capital city. The Church of St. Cyril of Alexandrian was built by either the Princess Maria Mstyslavivna or her husband Prince Vsevolod Ol'hovych (r. 1139-1147), and served as the burial chapel of Maria and her children.

According to a UOCMP newsletter, an official of the UOCMP complained about the Vrubel oil paintings not being "iconic" enough, and that museum restrictions prevent the burning of candles required for proper Orthodox services.

There is, however, another side to the story: According to a report in the Ukrainian newspaper Day, humidity inside the church reached levels four or five times higher than the norm, which could have led to

the plaster peeling off together with the artwork, a result of errors committed during a Soviet-era restoration effort. Fungus posed no less a threat to both the frescoes and murals by Vrubel.

"However, this is not just about the frescoes," explained Nelia Kukovalska, general manager of the St. Sophia Kyiv National Architectural Preserve, which includes St. Cyril's Church, in an interview with the Ukrainian newspaper Day. "Now, after carrying out a series of preventive measures, we have made it impossible for the aggressive, external environment to damage the monument. Thanks to moisture proofing of the groundwork and church walls, the humidity level will be stable. This will allow us to carry out a total restoration of all the frescoes starting next year."—LAD

Burqini: A New Style Dives in Action

Lebanese - Australian designer Aheda Zanetti has created a new style of swimwear for veiled Muslim women and girls. The garment which she calls a "burqini"—a combination of the words *burqa* and *bikini*—covers all but the hands, feet and face, but allows for more ease of movement in the water than traditional Islamic swimwear.

The thirty - eight - year-old designer migrated from Lebanon to Australia when she was only two years old. "As an active person who liked to participate in community activities and sport, I found myself restricted due to cultural and religious beliefs," she says on the web site for the Ahiida label



she created (www.ahiida.com). The burqini line of swimwear is intended to allow Muslim girls and women to participate in water sports like surfing and swimming while continuing to adhere to an Islamic dress code that stresses modesty.

At first glance, the burqini resembles pair of light sweatpants with hooded, long-sleeved pull-over. Made of water-repellent, chlorine-resistant polyester, it lacks the zippers, and loose coverings and ties common on other Islam-friendly swimsuits. It is available in colorful "slim fit" or "modest fit," styles with the top piece reaching the

thigh or the knee respectively and the pant being either straight-leg or boot-cut.



The most innovative feature of the burqini is the Ahiida "hijood," a close-fitting hood that replaces the traditional *hijab* or head covering. "You can't comfortably wear a veil when swimming!" says Aheda. "It is probably easier to swim in a jumper and a pair of denim jeans, so I came up with an innovative alternative, which uses a high-grade, light fabric that was also water repellent an important factor, so that the garment doesn't cling to the body. It is suitable for women who swim to relax, and for athletes."

—CJF