

Maad

The Church of St Charbel in Maad belongs to a Maronite community and was raised during the medieval period on the ruins of a Roman temple incorporating parts of this earlier structure, such as the columns dividing the interior into three aisles. Two layers of wall paintings dating from different periods survive in the room adjacent to the apse. The first layer dates from the 12th century, the second, painted directly on top of it, is of 13th-century date. At present losses in the outer layer have partially revealed the underlying murals (best visible on the north wall). Depictions of saints and a kneeling figure of a donor can be seen on the north wall, with an archangel in the upper portion of the composition. The south wall features an elaborate scene of the Dormition of the Virgin with a standing figure of Christ accompanied by apostles and angels. Inscriptions in Old Syriac survive in fragmentary form on the halos of these figures.



Attempted cleaning and removal of efflorescence from the surface of a painting reveals the degree of its soiling.

Student at work.



The Dormition of the Virgin after conservation.



The simple, linear style of the wall paintings is associated with a local movement in art sometimes referred to as the Syriac style. Examples of it are found in the territories of present-day Lebanon and Syria. The wall paintings survive in very poor condition and were initially secured in the 1970s by Lebanese and Italian specialists. Polish conservators carried out treatments during two summer seasons in 2008 and 2009.

This work focused on fixing delaminated layers of painted plaster in danger of becoming detached, cleaning their surfaces of hard salt accretions, replacing losses with fresh plaster and limited previous retouch of the painted layer.

As well as being secured, the wall paintings also substantially regained their clarity and colour intensity.

◀ Detail of painting before and after removal of dirt and salts.

