Obituary

ROSA MARÍA ESBERT ALEMANY
1942 - 2011

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It greatly saddens us to inform you about the loss of Professor Rosa María Esbert Alemany. She passed away in Murcia on December 15th, where she had gone to wait for a transplant. Rosa Esbert was born in Torrelavit (Barcelona) in 1942. She held a Bachelor’s degree in Geology and a Doctorate in Science from the University of Barcelona, where she started working as an Assistant Professor in 1965. In 1972 she moved to the University of Oviedo with her husband Modesto Montoto, where she was an Adjunct Professor and later Full Professor in Petrology and Geochemistry. It was at this university where she came into her own as a teacher and researcher, and in where she left an indelible mark.

In 1978 she embarked on a line of work within Petrology on the topic of stone deterioration, where she applied a new petrophysical approach giving a considerable impetus to this type of study. The research team, which she directed, carried out twenty basic and applied research projects, and more than fifty research and consulting contracts. Nine doctoral theses and fifteen research projects were completed under her guidance, and she was responsible for training various generations of researchers. Through her pioneering studies about characterization, deterioration, durability and the conservation stone materials in buildings she earned her reputation and became an expert on both a national and international level.

In keeping with the university spirit, Rosa’s teaching was always as important, if not more so, as her research. She attended to her students with much enthusiasm that they frequently corresponded. Her teaching work extended to the organization of a number of different courses: courses for the University Extension Department of the University of Oviedo, University Expert Course on “Conservation of Stonework in Buildings”, as well as courses, seminars and conferences organized by Official Associations of Architects and Building Surveyors. She also participated in a variety of Master’s programs in the area of conservation and restoration of stone materials as a guest professor.

Perhaps her most singular achievement was her collaboration with other technicians in the restoration of monumental buildings by consulting on the interventions which required special knowledge of stone material. This component of her career was very gratifying to her. It allowed her to show her capacity to teach and learn in this field in collaboration with the other professionals involved in each project, and always within the multidisciplinary approach that she always promoted. She participated in multiple intervention projects on monuments, cathedrals (Oviedo, León, Murcia, Almería, Seville, Lleida, Palma de Mallorca, Burgos, Girona…), churches (Asturian Pre-Romanesque, San Isidoro in Oviedo, Santa María de Castro Urdiales, Santa María de Laredo, Sagrada Familia in Barcelona…), monastaries (Santillana del Mar, Santo Domingo de Silos, San Pedro Mártir in Toledo…) and other monumental buildings (National Library and the Prado Museum in Madrid, La Pedrera and the Liceu Theater in…).
Barcelona, Reina Victoria Theater in San Sebastián...). It is also worth mentioning her relationship with the Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro (ISCR, Rome), and with the Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural de España (IPCE, Madrid).

Due to her professional recognition, she participated in a variety of committees of scientific journals (Materiales de Construcción, Boletín Geológico y Minero de España, Loggia, Menhir...), in the "Traitment des pierres des monuments" work group, ICOMOS Paris, and in the organizing committees of various congresses. She was an expert for the European Council on the conservation of Architectural Heritage, coordinator of the Conferences organized by the IPSE on “Stone material intervention criteria” (Madrid 2002), and in the Conferences organized by the IPCE and the INAH on “Stone material intervention criteria” (Mexico 2004). In recognition of these merits, she was the first honorary member of the GEIIC, the Spanish Group of the International Institute for Conservation, and received the CICOP award for her professional and personal experience in the Conservation and Restoration of National Heritage.

All those who worked with her, collaborated on her projects or took classes from her; anyone who knew her can confirm her kindness and empathy. Apart from her scientific contributions, Rosa Esbert will be remembered as a lively, tenacious, optimistic person; friendly and with a noble sense of friendship; firm in her convictions, but flexible enough to accept suggestions and ideas from others. Her death has left a void but also a double legacy. On the one hand, among the group of professionals she formed, both within the university as well as in other areas: they will carry on with the same rigor, passion, and spirit of self-improvement which she instilled in them. And on the other hand, that of her commitment, work and love for her family which will live in our memory.

Selected Publications

http://www.sociedadgeologica.es/archivos/geogacetas/Geo20%20(5)/Art67.pdf

http://www.geol.uniovi.es/TDG/Volumen21/TG21-01.PDF


Esbert, R.M., Alonso, F.J. and Ordaz, J. (2008). La petrofísica en la interpretación del deterioro y la...
The national cathedral plan, passed in 1997, promotes the existence of these interdisciplinary groups by achieving, in a more or less general way, the previously described objectives.

It is important to remember that, in order to put these objectives into practice, a series of basic aspects must be taken into account:

The general intervention criteria must be established in each project. They should be within the framework established by the Venice Charter (1964), the Restoration Charter (1972), and the Krakow Charter (2000), which is based on the spirit of the Venice Charter, but also adds other aspects which should also be taken into consideration.

In relation to this, the Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural de España (IPHE), hosted a series of conferences related to interventions on Heritage sites built in stone in February 2002. The conclusions of these conferences were published in the article: “Intervention Criteria in Stone Material” in the journal of the Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural de España. Bearing in mind that in our country a great part of architectural Heritage tends to be the property of the Catholic Church and its safekeeping and conservation falls on the State, such duality tends to cause problems of diverse nature in practice. In any case, there is always initial complexity.

Apart from the general considerations that frame the topic of conservation interventions, there are other more everyday aspects which would highlight and can be summarized as follows: