

SAVING THE TREASURE: BHUTAN CALLS FOR HELP



Bhutan's Buddhist monasteries are spoken of with the highest regard. As the country slowly lures tourists to discover some of these hidden treasures, specialists come to help preserve local incredible and largely unknown paintings.

Bhutan is one of the poorest countries in the world. On the other hand, it lies at the foothills of the mighty Himalayas and is a trekking paradise. **Local centuries-old monasteries are often very difficult to reach and while some are open to the public, most remain largely untouched.** However, specialists from The Courtauld Institute in London have been invited to help preserve the monasteries and their unique paintings.

Most of the paintings date back to the 16-19th century and as Professor David Park from the Courtauld Institute notes, they are absolutely stunning. **These paintings are largely unknown and the experts agree their artistic value is immense.** They praise the skill in the detail achieved by unique layering of colours and coating, and what amazes many even more is that some of these paintings measure over a hundred square meters.

The Bhutan department of culture has expressed worries about the state of some paintings and granted access to experts for a three-year collaboration which is financed anonymously by an American sponsor. The aim is to establish the level and pace of deterioration of these paintings and an efficient way to protect them. After all, with tourists come worries and Bhutan is well aware of the value of its famous monasteries.

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