

Media Inquiries

Rob Smith, Public Relations Assistant

646-424-9594, rsmith@wmf.org

Holly Evarts, Director of Public Relations

646-424-9594, hevarts@wmf.org

WORLD MONUMENTS FUND CELEBRATES THE RESTORATION OF CARTUJA DE MIRAFLORES IN BURGOS, SPAIN

CHURCH WITH SUPERB ALTARPIECE BY GIL DE SILOE REPRESENTS MAJOR TURNING POINT IN THE HISTORY OF SPAIN

For Immediate Release—Burgos, Spain, March 19, 2007... A monument that evokes a major turning point in the history of Spain and the world has just been restored by the World Monuments Fund: **Cartuja de Santa María de Miraflores**, which contains the tomb of the Infante Alfonso and the mausoleum of his parents, King John II and his second wife Isabel, whose daughter Queen Isabella was the major patron of Christopher Columbus. The church, part of the monastery complex of Santa María de Miraflores in Burgos, embodies the last flowering of the middle ages in Spain, just prior to the marriage of Isabella and Ferdinand in 1469 which joined the royal lines of Castille and Aragon, creating modern Spain as we know it today, and opening up the era of exploration.

“We are very proud to have taken part in the restoration of this exceptional monument,” said **Juan Carlos Fierro, President, World Monuments Fund Spain**, “since it demonstrates our commitment to the conservation of Spain’s historic patrimony, which is the main objective of WMF-Spain. Cartuja de Miraflores is full of history, from its awe-inspiring architecture to the centuries-old rites that are still performed today. This is a place that Spain — indeed, the world — cannot afford to lose.”

A number of philanthropists, preservationists, and local officials gathered together today to celebrate the restoration of this significant site, including **Her Royal Highness Infanta Doña Pilar, the Duchess of Badajoz; President of World Monuments Fund Spain, Juan Carlos Fierro; President of World Monuments Fund Europe, Bertrand du Vignaud; the Archbishop of Burgos, Most Reverend Francisco Gil Hellín; President of the Regional Government of Castille and León, Juan Vicente Herrera; President of the Burgos Provincial Government, Vicente Orden Vigara; Mayor of the City of Burgos, Juan Carlos Aparicio; President of Iberdrola Electric Company, Ignacio Sanchez Galán; President of Historic Patrimony of Castille and León Foundation, Santos Llamas**, and other distinguished guests.

The restoration of the church’s altar and mausoleums, which cost \$700,000, was funded by grants from the World Monuments Fund — including the Robert Wilson Challenge to Conserve Our Heritage and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation European Preservation Program — and the philanthropic division of Iberdrola, a

private electric company. Additional funding for this project and for the conservation of the stained glass was provided by the regional government of Castille and León, the archdiocese of Burgos, and the Foundation of Castilian Patrimony.

“Today’s inauguration is particularly special for the World Monuments Fund,” said **Bertrand du Vignaud, President of World Monuments Fund Europe**, “ as it is the last in a recent series of noteworthy ceremonies that show the ever stronger presence of WMF in Europe. In the past year we have celebrated the completion of restorations in Venice (Andrea Verrochio’s equestrian statue of Bartolomeo Colleoni), London (Nicholas Hawksmoor’s 18th-century church, Saint George’s, Bloomsbury), and Rome (the medieval cloister of Santi Quattro Coronati), as well as the signing of new agreements for the restoration of other significant monuments throughout Europe, including in Germany, France, Croatia, Romania, Italy, and Portugal.”

Located in northwestern Spain, Cartuja de Santa María de Miraflores was designed by Hans and Simon of Cologne in 1452, following the destruction by fire of an earlier monastery complex. Completed in 1482, the monastery complex contains one of the most impressive ensembles of late gothic interior art and architecture to survive in Spain. Two intricately carved stone sepulchers are housed within the church, including the mausoleum of King John II and his second wife Isabel and the tomb of their son Infante Alfonso, who died at the age of 14. The church is quite austere, except for the superb altarpiece designed by sculptor Gil de Siloe (active c. 1467–1505), which features delicately carved angels and other exquisite decorative flourishes with a Moorish motif that echoes the design of the mausoleum.

The complex is still home to the Carthusian Order, a cloistered group of monks who have devoted their lives to God and the solitary life and observe vows of silence. Cartuja de Santa María de Miraflores is one of the few places in Spain where rosaries are still made from roses.

Although the monks had long desired that a complete study and restoration of the art housed within the church be undertaken, there was always the problem of a lack of funding. In 2004, Fundacion Iberdrola stepped forward to support the conservation and was soon joined by WMF, its partner on a prior restoration project.

The jointly funded project was launched by WMF Spain in 2005 with a technical team from Junta de Castilla y Leon supervising the conservation efforts. The work involved documenting and conserving the main altar and mural paintings, the intricately carved tomb of Infante Alfonso, the alabaster mausoleum of King John II and Queen Isabel, and the wrought-iron rood screen. During the investigation of the site, the team made the surprising discovery of Infante Alfonso’s remains, thought to have been lost during the Napoleonic invasion and looting of the 19th century. The restoration of the altarpiece and the tombs in Cartuja de Santa María de Miraflores was completed in December 2006.

#