



Francois deMenil Architect, PC
270 Lafayette Street Suite 704 New York NY 10012
T. 212.779.3400 F. 212.779.3414
www.fdmarch.com

April 26, 2012

Greeting from Francois de Menil

Congratulation to His Beatitude, Archbishop Chrysostomos II, and to the people of Cyprus on this great milestone. The return and presentation of these Byzantine frescoes in their home country is a reminder of both the challenges and opportunities of international cultural stewardship.

The challenges are two-fold. First, to protect vital historical and archaeological sites around the world from looting. Second is to know when and how to do the right thing once you discover that a work of art has been stolen--and to have the courage to follow through on the situation.

The rescue and restoration of these beautiful frescoes is certainly an example of someone doing the right thing. My mother, Dominique de Menil, and the Menil Foundation believed firmly that these important 13th century frescoes must be saved and did so with the support of the Archbishopric of Cyprus.

These actions created the basis for new models of collaboration and collegiality, built on a trust and mutual respect. It was this historic relationship that made possible the restoration of the frescoes. It was this relationship that fully supported the proposal to loan the frescoes to the Menil Foundation and present them in our specially constructed Byzantine Fresco Chapel. Hundreds of thousands of people have come to visit over the last 15 years--and if you visit the website for the Chapel, you will see the comments from some of these visitors.

Therefore it is with great satisfaction, and deep emotion, that we return these frescoes to you. I am sorry that due to health reasons I am not able to be there in person. My mother believed firmly in the idea of stewardship: that there are things in this world which none of us can truly own, we are only charged with sustaining them for the next generation. For nearly three decades we have served this role as steward, born of a belief in the power of art to shape lives and transform societies. It has been our great honor and we thank you for your trust--and know that the future of these frescoes is equally secure on their long-awaited return home.