



Detail at a house in Ribe.  
Image: Teodora Boyadzhieva

## Reviving the Vibrant Past: An Interview with Teodora Boyadzhieva on the Colours of Ribe Project

By Marcus Johns

In the heart of Denmark's historic town of Ribe, a captivating journey into the past is unfolding. Teodora Boyadzhieva, a skilled murals and easel paintings conservator at the Konserveringscenter Vejle, is at the forefront of this endeavour. She's part of an ambitious project called the "Colours of Ribe," which seeks to unearth the rich, vibrant history hidden within the town's architectural heritage.

**Q: Teodora, could you tell us a bit about yourself?**

A: Certainly! I'm Teodora Boyadzhieva, and my specialty lies in the conservation of murals and easel paintings. I work at Konserveringscenter Vejle, where I'm involved in various conservation projects, including the fascinating Colours of Ribe initiative.

**Q: What is the Colours of Ribe project all about?**

A: The Colours of Ribe project is an exploration into the historical use of colours on the wooden facades of

Ribe's old houses. We're analysing the pigments from different periods, especially the Renaissance and Baroque eras, to understand how these choices compare with those in other historic towns in Denmark and Europe. This project is a collaboration between museum curators, archaeologists, scientists, architects, and conservators, all working together to recreate a historically accurate picture of the town's colour palette.

**Q: What is your role in this project?**

A: My role, alongside my colleague Michael Højlund Rasmussen, is to analyse the samples we collect and make the scientific data accessible and understandable for the wider audience. In May, we visited Museum Vest's storage facilities to gather samples from six wooden architectural elements. We carefully extracted flakes, embedded them in resin, and then polished them for detailed examination. Our job is to translate these scientific findings into meaningful insights about historical pigments and their usage.

**Q: What challenges have you encountered so far?**

A: One of the main challenges is ensuring seamless communication among specialists from various fields. Each expert brings unique knowledge, and integrating this into a cohesive project can be complex. Additionally, the process involves extensive data collection and interpretation, which must be both accurate and accessible for public engagement. We also face technical challenges in analysing multiple colour layers and weathered samples.

**Q: How does chemical analysis contribute to the project?**



Theodora Boyadzhieva

A: Chemical analysis is crucial for identifying the specific pigments used in the past. For instance, finding titanium white in a sample reveals that the paint was applied after 1923. However, analysing multiple layers can be tricky, especially when they are mixed or weathered. Advanced spectroscopic methods help us differentiate and study these layers effectively.

**Q: What techniques are you using for these analyses?**

A: We employ various sophisticated techniques using facilities available to us at SDU, Kiel University, Newtec Engineering A/S and Heimdal-archaeometry. These include X-ray fluorescence and Raman spectroscopy, SEM-EDX, and multispectral analyses. We're also hoping to utilize X-ray diffraction and nano infra-red spectroscopy in the future. Each method provides unique insights into the pigments and their historical context.

**Q: What are your hopes for the outcome of the Colours of Ribe project?**

A: I'm optimistic about the project's potential. By examining more houses and comparing our findings with other historical sites, we hope to provide a comprehensive understanding of Ribe's historical colours. Beyond the technical results, I'm excited about working with such esteemed professionals and fostering collaboration across borders. Ultimately, we aim to enhance the local

community's appreciation of their town's vibrant history and make these discoveries widely known.

The Colours of Ribe project promises to be a rich tapestry of historical discovery, bringing the past vividly to life and connecting the present with Ribe's colourful heritage.