Mosaic conservation planning and implementation at the site of Bulla Regia, Tunisia

Thomas Roby; Livia Alberti˘; Cristina Caldi¨; Ermanno Carbonara^; Moheddine Chaouali°; Leslie Friedman**

**Getty Conservation Institute ˘Conservator, partner of Consorzio Arke ¨Conservator, Rome ^Conservator, Ravenna °Institute National du Patrimoine, Tunisia*

INSTITUT NATIONAL DU PATRIMOINE

MOSAIKON
Getty Conservation Institute Getty Foundation ICCM ICCROM

The Bulla Regia Mosaic Conservation project began in Spring, 2011 and grows out of the ten years of in situ mosaic maintenance technician training and mentoring activities that the Getty Conservation Institute and its partner, the Institut National du Patrimoine of Tunisia have undertaken. Three of the recently trained maintenance technicians are currently employed at the archaeological site of Bulla Regia, and they form the nucleus of the project by carrying out basic stabilization operations on mosaics throughout the year.

Recently trained INP technicians with periodic GCI supervision conserving the mosaics of the Maison de la Chasse. Photo: Scott S. Warren © J. Paul Getty Trust.

One of the main goals of the project is to carry out a complete in situ mosaic conservation program, which could serve as a positive example of conserving, presenting and maintaining an entire archaeological building, the *Maison de la Chasse*, and its architectural decoration. The majority of the conservation work, will be carried out over the next three years by GCI-trained mosaic maintenance technicians, in order to complete their training by experiencing a real conservation project and to highlight the importance of their work for the successful, sustainable conservation and maintenance of mosaics at major sites. The work is being planned, supervised and supported by a team of GCI staff and consultant conservators/instructors in collaboration with the INP site director. Another major aim of the Bulla Regia project is to develop a conservation plan for the approximately 300 excavated mosaics at the site. Many of these, after decades of being left exposed and walked on, are in very poor condition, and some are already beyond repair.

General view of the Maison de la Chasse, ground level. Photo: Scott S. Warren © J. Paul Getty Trust.

Given the resources of the site, both human and financial, the survival of hundreds of mosaics at Bulla Regia depends on developing and carrying out a prioritized plan of action to stabilize and protect through reburial many mosaics at the site, while conserving and presenting to the public only a selected number.

Rapid Survey Form - Mosaic Conservation Planning — Site: BULLA REGIA — Building: — Date: — FORM 1

IDENTIFICATION											CONDITION									INTERVENTION (# days for 1 technician)								NOTES
ID	room dimensions (m)		room m²	mosaic m²	lacunae m²	% of mosaic in the room	typology	lacuna type	relaid (1)	type of exposure	micro organism area		critical vegeta-tion area		critical structural area		critical tessela-tum area		sum of the 3 critical areas (%)	OVERALL CONDITION 1-5	workdays /1m2	complete stabilisation			long-term reburial		short-term reburial		
																						100	2.5	1	70	0.5	30	0.5	
	leng	wid									m²	%	m²	%	m²	%	m²	%				tessell stabiliz	lacuna treatm	microrg remov	tessell stabiliz	lacuna treatm	tessell stabiliz	lacuna treatm	

Rapid Survey Form - Mosaic Conservation Planning — Site: BULLA REGIA — Building: — Date: — FORM 2

	CONDITION		SIGNIFICANCE							EXPOSURE						INTERIM PRIORITY				NOTES
RANGES	1-5	3-15	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	4-20	1-5	2-10	1-5	1-5	1-5	3-15	1-5	1-5	6-30	20-100	1-5	1-5	
ID	OVERALL CONDITION	WEIGHTED OVERALL CONDITION (x3)	archaeological/ iconographic value	technical/artistic value	mosaic and context integrity	authenticity	SUM OF THE SIGNIFICANCE SECTION RATINGS	AVERAGE OF THE SIGNIFICANCE SECTION RATINGS	WEIGHTED AVERAGE OF THE SECTION (x2)	environment	visitation	structural collapse	SUM OF THE EXPOSURE SECTION RATINGS	AVERAGE OF THE EXPOSURE SECTION RATINGS	WEIGHTED AVERAGE OF THE SECTION (x1)	SUM OF THE WEIGHTED AVERAGES (/30)	INTERIM PRIORITY %	INTERIM PRIORITY RATING	ADJUSTED INTERIM PRIORITY RATING	

A rapid survey form has been created and is being tested in the field in preparation for surveying all mosaics AT the site. The two-part form will facilitate data collection, which in turn will aid the prioritization and programming of future mosaic conservation and reburial activities throughout the site.

The condition, significance and exposure data collected for each mosaic through the survey will provide the basis for decision-making about how best to preserve all the mosaics of the site, through a combination of reburial, protective sheltering and maintenance programs. The resulting conservation plan will provide a much-needed management tool for Bulla Regia, and potentially a planning example for other sites in Tunisia and in the Mediterranean region with significant collections of in situ mosaics.

One of many abandoned mosaics in very poor condition throughout the site of Bulla Regia. Photo: Livia Alberti.

A mosaic after recent maintenance treatments by INP technicians based at the site. Photo: Ermanno Carbonara.

Infilling of a lacuna using lime mortar, a common maintenance operation. Photo: Scott S. Warren © J. Paul Getty Trust.

Poster design: Juana Segura Escobar, GCI Graduate Intern