

Protective Shelters for Archaeological Sites with Mosaics

A Project of the MOSAIKON Initiative

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Shelter in Hagar Qim, Malta. © J. Paul Getty Trust, 2010.

The *Protective Shelters for Archaeological Sites with Mosaics* project is a collaboration between the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI), Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), and Historic England (HE). This project has grown out of years of experience in the conservation of mosaics and archaeological sites and in the construction and evaluation of archaeological shelters. As a part of the MOSAIKON initiative, the aim of the project is to improve the conservation and management of archaeological sites with mosaics throughout the southern and eastern Mediterranean regions.

BACKGROUND

Protective shelters for archaeological sites have always presented complicated issues. Sometimes, rather than serve as a solution, shelters have instead created new problems or exacerbated existing ones, often resulting in the increased degradation of the object or structure they are meant to protect. They are often seen as easy solutions that protect remains while leaving them accessible to visitors; in fact, the very first decision of whether or not to rely on a shelter should be based on an understanding of significance, management context, condition and risk, and required resources. This information needs to be collected and assessed by a multidisciplinary team of experts: archaeologists, architects, conservators, and engineers. The assessment and evaluation process is continual, and iterative, and must be performed throughout the design, construction, and, of particular importance, post-construction phases. The ongoing confusion about how to best approach the sheltering process, the paucity of good examples, as well as the absence of a truly practical set of guidelines for the professional field, led to this project.

PURPOSE

The GCI, IAA, and HE are developing a set of practical guidelines which will guide heritage professionals and decision-makers through the entire process of sheltering archaeological sites, from the initial decisions of whether or not to implement a shelter, through the design and construction phases, to the ongoing and future maintenance and evaluation requirements. Expected to be published in fall 2018, these guidelines will provide a helpful methodology for the problem of sheltering archaeological sites.



Exterior of Brading Roman Villa, England. Photo © J. Paul Getty Trust, 2016.



Chedworth Roman Villa, England. Photo © J. Paul Getty Trust, 2016.



Shelter from the Site of Kourion, Cyprus. Photo by Scott Warren © J. Paul Getty Trust, 2014.



Exterior of Vesunna Gallo-Roman Museum, France. Photo © J. Paul Getty Trust, 2016.



Interior of Vesunna Gallo-Roman Museum, France. Photo © J. Paul Getty Trust, 2016.



Shelter in Witney Bishop Palace, England. Photo © J. Paul Getty Trust, 2016.



Details of a Dyonisos mosaic at the Villa of The-seus, Paphos, Cyprus. Photo by Scott Warren © J. Paul Getty Trust, 2014.



Mosaics in the House of Dionysos, Paphos, Cyprus. Photo by Scott Warren © J. Paul Getty Trust, 2014.

THEMES

Some of the main points that will be illustrated in the guidelines include:

- Diversity of types of shelters, such as closed, open, or semi-closed; permanent or temporary structures; new construction or modification of existing structures
- Protection is always the primary function of a shelter, but other functions such as design quality, presentation, and visitation must be considered
- Multidisciplinary teams must be involved in the process, as sheltering requires a breadth of knowledge and expertise
- Integration with a larger site conservation and management plan is crucial, as the decision to shelter should be part of a holistic vision for the site
- Sheltering process does not stop with construction, as ongoing maintenance, evaluation, and adaptation as necessary are critical to the long-term success of the structure

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