

An Update on Training in the Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites with Mosaics

A Project of the MOSAIKON INITIATIVE

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Participant presentation, Paphos, Cyprus.
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Under the auspices of MOSAIKON, the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) and its partners are implementing a series of training courses on the conservation and management of archaeological sites with mosaics. Based on years of experience in providing training in the conservation of mosaics and archaeological sites, these courses aim to improve the skills and knowledge of those charged with the care and stewardship of the mosaic heritage in the southern and eastern Mediterranean regions.

BACKGROUND

With centuries of cultural and artistic achievement, the Mediterranean basin is an area of active archaeological excavation and research. Among the most extraordinary archaeological resources of this region are the mosaic pavements of classical antiquity. Increasingly, archaeologists and conservators have acknowledged the importance of preserving extant mosaics in their archaeological contexts, where scholars and visitors alike are better able to understand their cultural values and their significance to the site as a whole. However, maintaining mosaics in situ requires measures that integrate conservation with site management, providing for the study and visitation of the site while preserving the integrity of the archaeological fabric.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In collaboration with its partners, the GCI has completed two regional courses to date, and the third is in progress. These courses put the conservation of in situ mosaics in the context of broader site management issues such as visitation, urban encroachment, and development pressures, and teach all aspects of conserving and managing archaeological sites with mosaics. Topics covered include documentation, site management planning, deterioration processes, preventive measures, and intervention treatments, as well as site presentation and interpretation. The courses emphasize long-term planning and decision-making based on a process of data gathering, analysis, and prioritization. Course participants are site managers, archaeologists, architects, and conservators from the region.

Each course lasts approximately one year, beginning with an intensive three-week workshop at a mosaic site in the region. An extended mentoring period follows, during which participants take on practical training projects at their home sites or institutions, guided by course instructors. Lastly, a final review workshop is held with the participants at a site outside of the region, providing an opportunity to see different management approaches and examples, revisit important subjects, and to share and discuss their own work.



LESSONS LEARNED

An evaluation is completed at the end of each course to help identify the strengths of the program, and those areas requiring new thinking. Each course, however, presents a unique set of challenges: each needs to address the specific issues of the site where the course is being held, and it must be tailored to the profiles and needs of the course participants. Additionally, adaptability is imperative. For example, the large political and social changes that have occurred in the region have required rapid logistic and programmatic responses, as well as significant pedagogical modifications, including changes to locations and partners, participant and instructor selection, and to the subjects covered.

OUTCOMES

• Tyre, Lebanon, Rome and Herculaneum, Italy, 2010-2012

Fifteen participants from five countries completed the first course (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Syria)

• Paphos, Cyprus and Herculaneum, Italy, 2014-2015

Twenty participants from twelve countries completed the second course (Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, Serbia, and Tunisia)

• Volubilis, Morocco, and Rome, Italy, 2017-2018

Nineteen participants from six countries are taking part in the current course (Algeria, Cyprus, Lebanon, Mali, Morocco, and Tunisia)

After the completion of the third course, over fifty heritage professionals will have been trained from sixteen different countries. It is they who will continue to take the work forward, to conserve and manage their country's archaeological heritage for the future.

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