

CONSERVATION OF BUTRINT MOSAICS




MOSAIC OF ROOM XVIII-E – SOUTHERN GALLERY

2016

CONTINUE OF PRELIMINARY INTERVENTIONS

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 *Southern gallery / room XVIII-E*

❖ **Brief summary of preliminary interventions made in 2015**

a. Cleaning

After being eliminated the vegetation, it was passed in the displacement of sand and plastic mesh layers. During the monitoring campaign of 2007, according to the report, Triconch mosaics, including mosaics in question were opened, and along with documentation of their status, they were cleaned with dry brush and recovered with a layer of sand 25 cm, plastic mesh and another 10 cm layer of sand. The first layer of sand was laid directly on the surface of the mosaic, inadequate coverage and misplaced it. This action did not take into account the environmental context in which the mosaics stays, especially the fact that during most of part of the year they are under water.

b. Lacunas filling

As usual and ongoing for the filling of deep lacunas were prepared and used two types of mortar. After cleaning and washing, the deep ones, the bottom was filled with stones and tiles of medium sizes. Above it was applied a thick layer of mortar in 1:3 ratio, thereby imitating the original layers of the mosaic. After hardening of the first level, the upper layer of the lacunas filling, was laid a fine mortar conducted with fine inerts. Even in this case the proper ratio based on preliminary samples were used 1:3. The upper layer was done and left almost 1-2 mm below the tesserae row in order to better read the forms, as well as improving the aesthetic aspect of the recovery act. Also to the mortar was given the right chromatic report.

c. Edges realization

Taking present the diversity of pathologies present of the mosaic, it was necessary to proceed with the stabilization of its static conditions with keeping the tesserae within their context. For this reason, were made a series of edges, using suitable mortar as binder ratio-inert, and in terms of chromatic.

d. Leveling of the crashed fragments

During the work it was considered necessary the leveling of some crashed fragments of mosaic and bringing them in a quota with the most substantial floor. Their leveling was accomplished by lifting, cleaning them and filled the bottom with mortar.

e. Cleaning of superimposed mortar layer

On the mosaic was also identified some areas where a layer of mortar was superimposed over the surface. In this case was thought reasonable to clean that, but of course leaving trace of them as evidence of a later and another phase of the room including its floor. The operation was made mechanically and carefully by using small professional chisels.

f. Cracks filling

The treatment of fractures or cracks in order to prevent the advancement of this pathology and further degradation of the material, was implemented by using hydraulic mortar suitable as binder-solid ratio and in chromatic terms.

g. Re-cover of the mosaic

After completing the conservative interventions the work proceeded with re-covering the floor mosaic. By not repeating the previous mistakes of 2007, was decided to lay first a quality plastic net with small knitting. Above it was set a high quality geo-textile and over it a layer of 30 cm of new washed river sand.

❖ Preliminary interventions made in 2016

a. Continue of superficial cleaning

The re-open of the mosaic and its cleaning was easier this year, because of the correct manner of covering made in the previous year, as mentioned above. In this way taking present the environmental context, the infiltration of different kind of impurities were minimized.

In order to improve the physical conditions of sustainability and life extension of its in-situ conservation, the work continued with the chemical cleaning. Aiming at eliminating further different type deposits mainly pathogenic micro elements (mainly colony of bacteria, fungus and algae) was made a washing of the surface using non-ionic detergent and biocide reports 1 and 2% respectively in aqueous solution.

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Lacunae filling

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During all the preliminary conservation work of the eastern part of southern gallery, the water was relatively present, depending on the level of the Vivari channel, also to the groundwater, due to the capillary effect.