

The Devnya Mosaic Museum

The Devnya Mosaic Museum portrays Roman and Early Byzantine mosaics from Marcianopolis. The idea for its creation was born in the course of the archeological investigation, which began in 1975 and continued, with interruptions, for five seasons. During this investigation a large Late Roman building with mosaics was discovered.

The museum was constructed according to the project of architect Kamen Goranov over part of the ancient fundaments of the mosaics with building. It was built in the end of the 3th - the beginning of the 4th century A.D. on the place of earlier buildings, destroyed during the Gothic invasions in 251 A.D. With some works and reconstructions the building survived until the beginning of the 7th century.

The building takes the place of a whole insula living with a length of 37,15 m (North-South) and width of 37,75 m (East-West). Its plan follows the traditions of the Greco-Roman atrium-peristilic house. Twenty-one residential and warehousing premises with a total area of 1409 sq. m. are situated around a patio (atrium) (5,87 x 11,11 m), surrounded on three sides by a limestone colonnade (peristil) (92,63 sq. m.), covered with stone paving and having a well in the middle. The walls of the residential premises have been covered by color plaster and murals, with gypsum decorations. Five of the premises of the building and the portico were covered with multicolored floor mosaic - one of the best examples of Roman mosaic art of those times, found in Bulgaria.

Three of these mosaics are presented in the museum in situ, i.e. in the places where they were found, and the rest, after conservation and partial restoration, were transmitted on a new supporting fundament.

The mosaics were made according to the classic opus tessellatum and opus vermiculatum techniques and small stones were used - cubes from marble, limestone, baked clay and colored glass (smalta) in 16 colors. They portray mostly persons and scenes from the Greco-Roman mythology, exotic animals and birds, plant and geometrical motifs.

The museum halls present various finds related to the architecture of the building and the way of life of its inhabitants.

"Gorgon Medusa" mosaic

The mosaic covering the floor of the living room - dining room (tablinum) (8,00 x 8,00 m), portrays the shield of the goddess Athena Palada, decorated in the middle with the severed head of Gorgon Medusa. She protected people from evil and turned to stone the malevolent ones with her dreadful looks and withering stare.

According to Greek mythology, Gorgon Medusa was the most fearful one and the only mortal of the three daughters of the sea deities Phorcys and Keto, grandchildren to Gaea (Earth) and Pontus (Sea). She was very beautiful, with stunning hair, which Minerva turned into snakes when Gorgon was raped by Neptune in her temple. With her face she turned to stone everyone who looked at her.



The hero Perseus (son of Zeus and Danae) decapitated the sleeping Gorgon Medusa by approaching her with his back first and looking at her reflection in his copper shield (a gift from Athena Palada). He succeeded in cutting her head off with his crooked sword (a gift by Hefest). Perseus managed to escape by the pursuing Gorgons with his winged sandals (a gift by Hermes). He gave the severed head of Gorgon Medusa to the goddess Athena Palada and she attached it to her shield to scare off her enemies.

Head of Gorgon Medusa - opus vermiculatum, opus tessellatum. Antique building with mosaics, tablinum. In situ. The end of the 3th - the beginning of the 4th c. A.D.



Tiger (a detail from the mosaic "Gorgon Medusa") - opus vermiculatum, opus tessellatum. Antique building with mosaics, tablinum. In situ. The end of the 3th - the beginning of the 4th c. A.D.



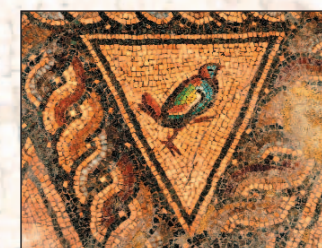
Triangular mural with an antelope (a detail from the mosaic "Ganimede and the Eagle") - opus vermiculatum, opus tessellatum. Antique building with mosaics, tablinum. In situ. The end of the 3th - the beginning of the 4th c. A.D.



Triangular mural with a lion (a detail from the mosaic "Ganimede and the Eagle") - opus vermiculatum, opus tessellatum. Antique building with mosaics, tablinum. In situ. The end of the 3th - the beginning of the 4th c. A.D.



Triangular mural with a bird (a detail from the mosaic "Ganimede and the Eagle") - opus vermiculatum, opus tessellatum. Antique building with mosaics, tablinum. In situ. The end of the 3th - the beginning of the 4th c. A.D.



"Satyr and Antiope" mosaic

The bedroom (cubiculum) floor (5,60 x 4,40 m) is covered with a mosaic, illustrating one of the many love affairs of the supreme ancient Greek god Zeus. Among the preserved mosaics from this time, this subject is extremely rare.

According to Homer, the nymph Antiope was the beautiful daughter of the Boeotian river god Asopus, and according to another myth version - daughter of the king of Thebes, called Nycteus. Antiope was seduced by Zeus who transformed himself into a young satyr (mythical creature from the suite of Dionisius - god of wine and gaiety - personifying unbridled animal fertility).

"Ganymede and the Eagle" mosaic

The reception hall (ecus) (5,60 x 13,40 m) is the biggest room in the building, covered with mosaic. One of the central pieces (emblems) presents the ancient Greek legend for Ganymede and the eagle.

In Greek mythology Ganymede was the most handsome among the mortals - son of the Troyan king Tros and the nymph Kaliroe. Zeus, under the appearance of an eagle, abducted Ganymede and took him to Olympus where he made him cupbearer to the gods and granted him eternal youth.



"Seasons" mosaic

The Seasons mosaic covered the floor of the (gynaecium) - the women's room (8,60 x 7,80 m). During one of the reconstructions of the building, the biggest part of the mosaic has been destroyed.

A rectangular frame of geometric ornaments holds a round emblem, probably with a figurative character, surrounded by intricately intertwining geometrical ornaments. The empty spaces carry portrayals of a rooster pecking at grapes, birds and a pair of Roman sandals.



Text: Anastas Angelov

Photos: Rosen Donev



Opening hours:

10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Days off - Saturday and Sunday

Mosaic Museum

9162 Devnya, Bulgaria
phone: + 359 519 / 29 09

Opening hours:

In winter: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., Days off - Sunday and Monday
In summer: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., Day off - Monday

Visitors centre

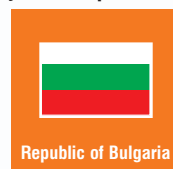
41, Maria Luiza blvd., 9000 Varna, Bulgaria
phone/fax: + 359 52 / 624 948
www.varna.yes.bg, e-mail: vc_varna@abv.bg



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European Union



Republic of Bulgaria



Municipality of Varna

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