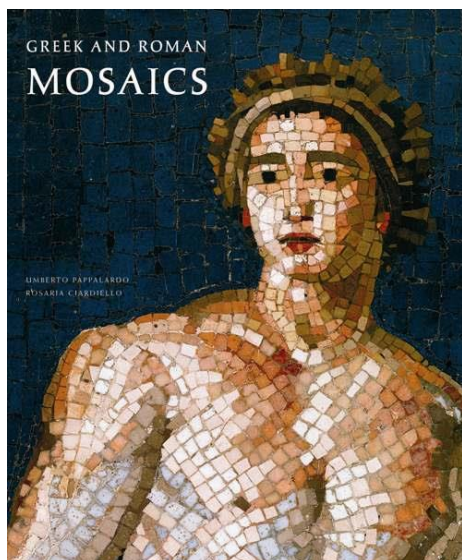


Greek and Roman Mosaics, by Umberto Pappalardo and Rosaria Ciardiello. Abbeville, October 2012. 320 p. col. ill. ISBN 9780789211255 (cl.), \$125.00.



This splendidly colorful compendium of ancient mosaics by Pappalardo and Ciardiello is a welcome addition to what may seem an already abundant world of mosaic scholarship. This book indeed “will be an essential visual reference” as stated on the book’s jacket, for its rich, color-intense photography fills a startling lacuna in contemporary scholarship. Even a quick comparison with images on ARTstor reveals that the photography by Luciano Pedicini in this work is more brilliantly crisp and detailed than the photography available online. The book is clearly informed by Umberto Pappalardo’s work as Inspector of Excavations at Pompeii and Director of Excavations at Herculaneum, with greater attention given to those chapters dealing with Pompeii. Co-author Rosaria Ciardiello has published works on a wide variety of topics and holds a doctorate in the archaeology of Magna Graecia.

The book is in two sections: the first includes essays on the origins, methods, types, terminology, workshop practices, dating, stylistic development, and iconography of the mosaics. The second section is a chronological analysis by geographical location of the major mosaics. The brevity of each section is, sadly, one of the major flaws of the text: some chapters are so short that the reader is left to wonder why the authors even bothered. For that reason alone this work can never replace such comprehensive texts on the subject, such as Katherine M.D. Dunbabin’s *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Despite the cursory nature of the text, the authors offer some intriguing theories. For instance, they conclude that many of the mosaicists utilized albums with drawings based on renowned artwork, thus explaining similar mosaics in vastly separate locations. They specify several instances of this: two mosaics depicting Berenice II in Thmuis, Egypt; numerous copies of the Drinking Doves mosaics (Delos, Pompeii, Tivoli, etc.); and mosaics based on Menander’s plays found in Pompeii and in Mytilene, Lesbos. Additionally, thoughtful analysis is given in the section on mosaics and architecture, where the authors suggest that the “mosaic floor could be used to produce a kind of kinetic aesthetic, directing or interrupting the flow of foot traffic” (p. 53) with linear patterns used in corridors and more static compositions used in rooms.

The book presents only a meager bibliography, which the authors readily admit to and suggest that more complete bibliographies can be found elsewhere. Not surprisingly, the book also lacks footnotes, which greatly lowers the usefulness of the text for anyone but undergraduates. Based on the exquisite photography, however, purchase of this book for any library striving for depth of their classical art collection is highly recommended.

Tamara Fultz, Associate Museum Librarian, Thomas J. Watson Library, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tamara.Fultz@metmuseum.org