

MOSAIC WITH A CIRCUS SCENE

Artist: Unknown
Date: End of the 2nd Century AD
Dimensions: 145 x 68 cm
Material: Stone
Inventory Number: 1055

Total Cost € 6.100,00

STATE OF PRESERVATION:

The mosaic is in overall good condition but some tiles are slowly detaching due to time, corrosion and in particular, the heavy travertine support system.

RESTORATION PROCESS INCLUDES:

- Cleaning of the mosaic surface
- Replacing of the travertine support with a flexible aluminium honeycomb (areolam)
- Restoration of the bedding of the tiles

This mosaic depicts a fight scene between fairs in the arena. On the left side is a kneeling elephant ridden by a man whose job it is to incite the animal to fight a bull, the latter being tied by a rope to a ring. On the right hand side there is a man riding a camel and leading a lion with a leash. The whole scene is characterized by a vivacity of expression and a very effective employment of *chiaroscuro* effects created with many different colored tiles.

In ancient Rome, circus shows featuring fights between men (*munera*) and animals (*venationes*) were very popular, in particular when they featured beasts from distant lands, such as elephants and lions.

This mosaic was found in 1711 at the excavation site in the garden of the church of Santa Sabina on the Aventine. All the pieces of the mosaic were purchased for the "Ecclesiastical Museum," which Monsignor Francesco Bianchini was preparing at that time on behalf of Pope Clement XI Albani (1700-1721).

The mosaic, along with others on display in the Pio-Clementine Museum, originally decorated the floor of a luxurious villa on the Aventine Hill and dates towards the end of the second century AD. In this mosaic, it is possible to recognize later additions made during the 18th century, especially in the upper portion, which were installed by Giuseppe Conti and Thomas De Rossi. Presently, this mosaic is located at the entrance of the Bramante Staircase.

