Definition: **mosaic** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

Technique of **surface decoration using small pieces of coloured material set tightly together in an adhesive to form patterns or pictures.** The technique was employed for floor and wall decorations in ancient Mesopotamia and Greece. Roman mosaics commonly featured a central design or a portrait, surrounded by a decorative geometric border. The art developed rapidly in early Christian times especially during the 4th-6th centuries and continues to be used for floors, church interiors, and wall decorations.

Summary Article: **mosaic**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Design or picture, usually for a floor or wall, produced by setting small pieces (*tesserae*) of marble, glass, or other materials in a cement ground. The ancient Greeks were the first to use large-scale mosaic (in the Macedonian royal palace at Pella, for example). Mosaic was commonly used by the Romans for their baths and villas (a well-known example being at Hadrian’s Villa in Tivoli) and reached its highest development in the early Byzantine period (for example, in the church of San Vitale, Ravenna).

**Earliest forms** Mosaic was used in Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt for ornament on a small scale. Jewellery and movable objects, such as the *Standard* of Ur (British Museum), are examples.

**Roman** Mosaic pavement, which seems to have originated with the ancient Greeks, reached its highest development among the Romans. Roman mosaic varies from the formal pattern to elaborately pictorial effect. Famous examples are the doves of Pliny at Hadrian’s villa, Tivoli, represented with great delicacy of colouring, and the mosaic copy from Pompeii of the battle between Alexander and Darius, after the painter Philoxenos. In Britain, mosaic floors often survive on the sites of Roman villas.

**Byzantine** In the Byzantine period, mosaic in the form of coloured and gilded glass was impressively used for mural decoration on a large scale. The richness of gold leaf, calculated irregularities of surface, and the juxtaposition of different colours are combined with a great simplicity of form. Mosaic remained the dominant form of mural ‘painting’ until the rise of fresco in Italy.

In Rome the early Christian mosaics in the churches of Sta Costanza (4th century) and Sta Maria Maggiore (4th–5th centuries) are the first great examples of religious composition. In Ravenna there are the famous masterpieces of the church of S Vitale (6th century) representing the Emperor Justinian, the Empress Theodora, and their attendants. Other masterpieces at Ravenna are Sant’ Apollinare Nuovo and the tomb of Galla Placidia. In the cathedral of Torcello, near Venice, there are mosaics dating from the 12th century.

Other important examples are the mosaics found in Istanbul (formerly Constantinople) in the cathedral of Sta Sophia (now Hagia Sophia; 6th century), and the church of Kariye Camii (13th century). In Greece there are mosaics in the church of S Demetrios, Salonika (7th century); in the church of Daphni (between Athens and Eleusis; 11th century); and, near Athens, at Hosias Lukas (11th century). In Kiev in Russia there are important mosaics dating from the 11th century.

Byzantine artists worked in many centres, not only in Greece and Italy, but also in Palermo and Monreale in Sicily (which saw a great flowering of mosaic painting in the 12th century), Cologne, Cordova,
Later mosaics In modern times the art of mosaic seems to have been well preserved only in Venice. There both Byzantine tradition and later developments are represented in St Mark’s Cathedral, which has a sequence of work from the 12th to 18th centuries, with later examples designed by Titian and Tiepolo.

More recent attempts to revive pictorial mosaic have not been very successful. In England during the 19th century the Arts and Crafts Movement and the Gothic Revival led to some small-scale mosaics in churches, and W B Richmond produced work in St Paul’s Cathedral.

Among 20th-century figurative mosaics, there are those of the Swedish artist Einar Forseth for the City Hall, Stockholm, and of English artist Boris Anrep for Westminster Cathedral, London, and for the floor of the entrance hall of the National Gallery, London.

Other recent examples of mosaic work can be seen in the hall of the Houses of Parliament.

images
Alexander mosaic
charioteer mosaic
Deesis Mosaic, Hagia Sophia
Masada mosaic
mosaic, Aquileia
mosaic at the Church of San Clemente
mosaic of Classis
mosaic, Pompeii

APA
Chicago
Harvard
MLA


© RM, 2018. All rights reserved.
APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA