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Bu dergideki makalelerde kullanılacak olan kısaltmalar Alman Arkeoloji Enstitüsü yayın kuralları, Bulletin de l'Association internationale pour l'Etude de la Mosaïque antique, AIEMA - AOROC 24.2016, La Mosaïque Gréco Romaine IX ve Der Kleine Pauly dikkate alınarak yapılmıştır.

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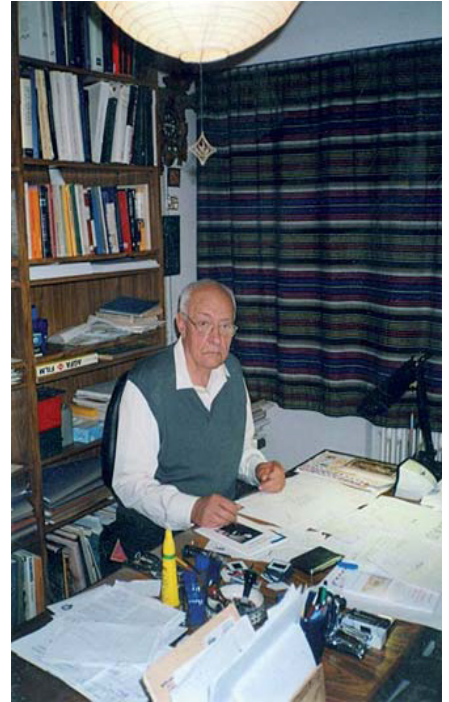
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José María Blázquez Martínez in memoriam (1926-2016)

José María Blázquez Martínez (Professor of Ancient History and Fellow of the Spanish Royal Academy of History) passed away on March 26, 2016, in the city of Madrid (Spain) after a full life devoted to teaching, scientific research and the spread of antiquity; and leaving all of us -who have had the immense fortune to enjoy his mastership and overwhelming personality-, with an immense sadness.

Prof. Blázquez graduated in Philosophy and Letters from the University of Salamanca in 1951 and defended his PhD in the Complutense University of Madrid in 1956. During the next decade, Prof. Blázquez continued his training under the supervision of Prof. Pallottino at the University of La Sapienza in Rome and, granted by the DAAD, at the University of Marburg, under the supervision of Prof. Matz and Prof. Drerup. Subsequently he made other successful research stays at the University of Tel Aviv, the British Academy of Rome, the University of Catania, and in the German Archaeological Institute branches at Istanbul, Damascus and Riyadh. In this regard, Prof. Blázquez always defended the importance of international networks that, through academic contact with other schools and colleagues, conceived as essential for personal development and the progress of scientific research.



After this intense formative period, José María Blázquez obtained a position as Professor of Ancient History at the University of Salamanca (1966-) and shortly after at the Complutense de Madrid (1969-), where he was designated as Professor Emeritus. At the same time, he was an active member of the former Institute of Archaeology "Rodrigo Caro" (CSIC), that he directed during more than ten years (1973-1985). Finally, in recognition to his academic trajectory, Professor Blázquez was elected as a Fellow of the Spanish Royal Academy of History. In all these institutions Prof. Blázquez developed a brilliant contribution to the promotion of Ancient History in Spain, especially important was his capacity for mentoring (he supervised more than 40 PhDs during his academic life) large teams of teachers and researchers, that obtained several tenured positions in different universities and academic institutions. He was also a prolific author publishing many handbooks and monographs that are authentic milestones in history the Spanish scholarship (i. e. *La Romanización, Historia social y económica. La España Romana. Economía de la Hispania romana*, Bilbao, 1978, *Historia de España Antigua, I. Protohistoria*, Madrid, 1980; *Historia de España Antigua II. Hispania romana*, Madrid, 1978). Largely influential was also his leadership in the direction of the scientific journals as *Archivo Español de Arqueología* (1973-1987) and *Gerión* (1983-2010). In addition, Prof. Blázquez directed numerous archaeological excavations at Caparra (Cáceres), Cástulo (Jaén), La Loba (Fuenteovejuna, Córdoba), and in the Monte Testaccio (Rome).

By virtue of its training and its wide perspective, Prof. Blázquez's research trajectory was the reflection of the scientist dedicated to the study of antiquity, with a masterful management of

diverse written and archaeological sources, always connected with current intellectual debates of all social and human sciences. During his career published more than 37 books, acting of editor in other 9 monographs. He also published 234 articles in the most prestigious, both Spanish and International, scientific journals and several chapters in collective volumes. His research interests covered multiples areas on the study of antiquity: the Phoenician and Greek colonization of the Western Mediterranean, the Late Iron Age communities of the Iberian Peninsula, the study of Pre-Roman religions, the Impact of primitive Christianity in the Late Roman Empire, and, of course, the ancient economy of Roman Spain, with an special focus on the exports of *Baetican* olive oil.

Finally, we would like to highlight his research on Roman mosaics, whose first publication dates from 1975 - "Arte y Sociedad en los mosaicos del Bajo Imperio" [Art and Society in the mosaics of the Late Roman Empire] *Bellas Artes* 75, 1975, pp. 18-25 -soon followed by- "Mosaicos romanos del Bajo Imperio" [Roman mosaics of the Late Empire], *Archivo Español de Arqueología* 50-51, 1977, pp. 269-293., In this regard, Prof. Blázquez continued the a research line previously initiated by his teacher Prof. Antonio García y Bellido. Since 1976 to 1996, Prof. Blázquez promoted and directed the Corpus of Mosaics of Spain, within the framework of the international project sponsored by the AIEMA. Through this monumental labor, Prof. Blázquez contributed to establish the study of Roman mosaics as an authentic sub-discipline in the field of the Spanish Classical archaeology.

The obtention of several I+D Research projects, funded in competitive calls by the Spanish Ministry of Science (acting as Principal Investigator from 1976 to 1997) and an International Project of the Joint Hispanic-American Committee, with the University of West-Lafayette, Purdue (Indiana-USA), allowed Prof. Blázquez to create a permanent research team on the study of Roman mosaics. This team, which I (Prof. Neira Jiménez) am honored of have been part, managed the realization of the above mentioned *Corpus de Mosaicos de España* (CME), a work continued afterwards by its dear colleague, Dr. Guadalupe López Monteagudo (CSIC). In addition to the publication of 12 volumes of the CME, he presented numerous papers on the Hispanic, African and Near Eastern Roman mosaics in the most prestigious conferences on these topics, such as the International Congresses organized by the AIEMA or *L'Africa romana* conference, organized by the Centro di Studi sull'Africa Romana of the Università degli studi di Sassari, as well as in countless courses and seminars in other institutions and universities, such as the Roman Mosaic Seminar of the UC3M, to which he attended every year, without missing any of the 9 editions celebrated.

Prof. Blázquez was a firm believer in the work developed by AIEMA, having been named member of Honor of this scientific association. He also formed part of the editorial board of the Journal of Mosaic Research, where he published various articles, and presented papers in both the 11th International Colloquium on Ancient Mosaics, held in Bursa on 2009, and in the 5th Colloquium of AIEMA Turkey, held in Kahramanmaraş on 2011. Prof. Blázquez was a true lover of Turkey.

Prof. Blázquez was an unavoidable reference in the international scholarship on ancient mosaics, many colleagues who share our pain remember his vitality even in the XIII. AIEMA Congress held in Madrid on September 2015, where he gave the inaugural conference. As a testimony of his enthusiasm for the study of ancient mosaics, he was already thinking of traveling to the next AIEMA Congress scheduled for 2018 in Cyprus. Proof of his infinite generosity, he prepared

tirelessly until the end of his days a text on Diana in the mosaics of Roman Spain for X SMR, held in September 2016 at Universidad Carlos III de Madrid.

His decisive contribution to the study of antiquity has earned him numerous recognitions from many international academic institutions and associations: Fellow of German Archaeological Institute (1968), Board member of the L'Association Internationale d'Epigraphie grecque et latine (AIEGL), Member of the Hispanic Society (1974); Fellow of the Academy of Arts and Archaeology of Bologna (1980), Fellow of the Spanish Royal Academy of History (1990), Fellow of the New York Academy of Sciences (1993), Fellow of the Academia Nazionale dei Lincei (1994), Fellow of the Fine Arts Academy of Santa Isabel de Hungría (Seville) (1995), Fellow of the Real Academia de Bones Letres de Barcelona (1997), or Fellow of the Académie de Aix-en-Provence (1999), among others. He also received many prizes as the Franz Cumont prize from the Académie Royale de Belgique (1985), the Great Silver medal of Archaeology from l'Académie d'Architecture de Paris (1987), or the Cavalli d'Oro prize from Venice (2003). Prof. Blázquez was named *doctor honoris causa* by the universities of Valladolid (1999), Salamanca (2000), Bologna (2001), León (2005), and Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (2015), and received the *Orden del Mérito Civil*, one of the highest recognitions granted by the Spanish govern.

He was a genius as scholar, but also a genial person. For both reasons, colleagues, students, and friends of many countries, that have the fortune of meet Prof. Blázquez during his life, feel a great emptiness for the loss of our dear teacher.

Prof. Dr. Mustafa Şahin
Bursa Uludağ University

Prof. Maria Luz Neira Jiménez
Universidad Carlos III de Madrid



Archaeology / Arkeoloji

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Cube Designs in Roman Baetica Mosaics

Roma Çağı Baetica Mozaiklerinde Küp Tasarımları

Sebastián VARGAS VÁZQUEZ*

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Abstract

The cube and the prism are frequent components of geometrical compositions featured in Roman mosaics. They can be found as free elements belonging to the secondary decoration of many pavements, or as part of friezes or mosaic panels, sometimes mixed with other geometrical figures to shape various compositions and sometimes used as exclusive motifs and single theme, forming unitary and/or modular panels. This paper will focus on the latter.

In our catalogue of Geometrical Designs, these modular compositions with three-dimensional cubes or “tumbling blocks” and with elongated cubes or prisms define models E3 and E3A respectively. Even though these are present in a significant number of pavements in the Roman Baetica, we cannot assume their widespread use since they are so far absent from sites with a well-established mosaic tradition, such as Italica, Hispalis or Carmo. In contrast, Astigi and Corduba are the cities where more pavements with these designs have been found.

In this paper we will also analyse the process of development of both models, and how these compositions, dominant and solid by their own characteristics despite the sense of movement they transmit, can produce diverse effects and create different optical perceptions by simply changing the point of view from which they are observed or with a slight colour change. This last aspect is essential to allow the design its main feature, which relates to a three-dimensional effect.

Keywords: Roman Baetica, geometric mosaic, geometric design, composition, cube.

Öz

Küp ve prizma, Roma mozaikleri içinde yer alan geometrik kompozisyonlar arasında sık görülen bileşenlerdendir. Çoğunlukla birçok döşemenin ikinci plandaki süslemesine ait serbest elementler olarak görülen bu desenler, mozaik frizlerinde ya da panellerinde kimi zaman diğer geometrik desenlerle beraber farklı kompozisyonları şekillendirmek için, kimi zaman özel bir motif ve tek bir tema olarak üniter ve/veya modüler paneller olarak da görülmektedir. Bu makale ikincisine odaklanacaktır.

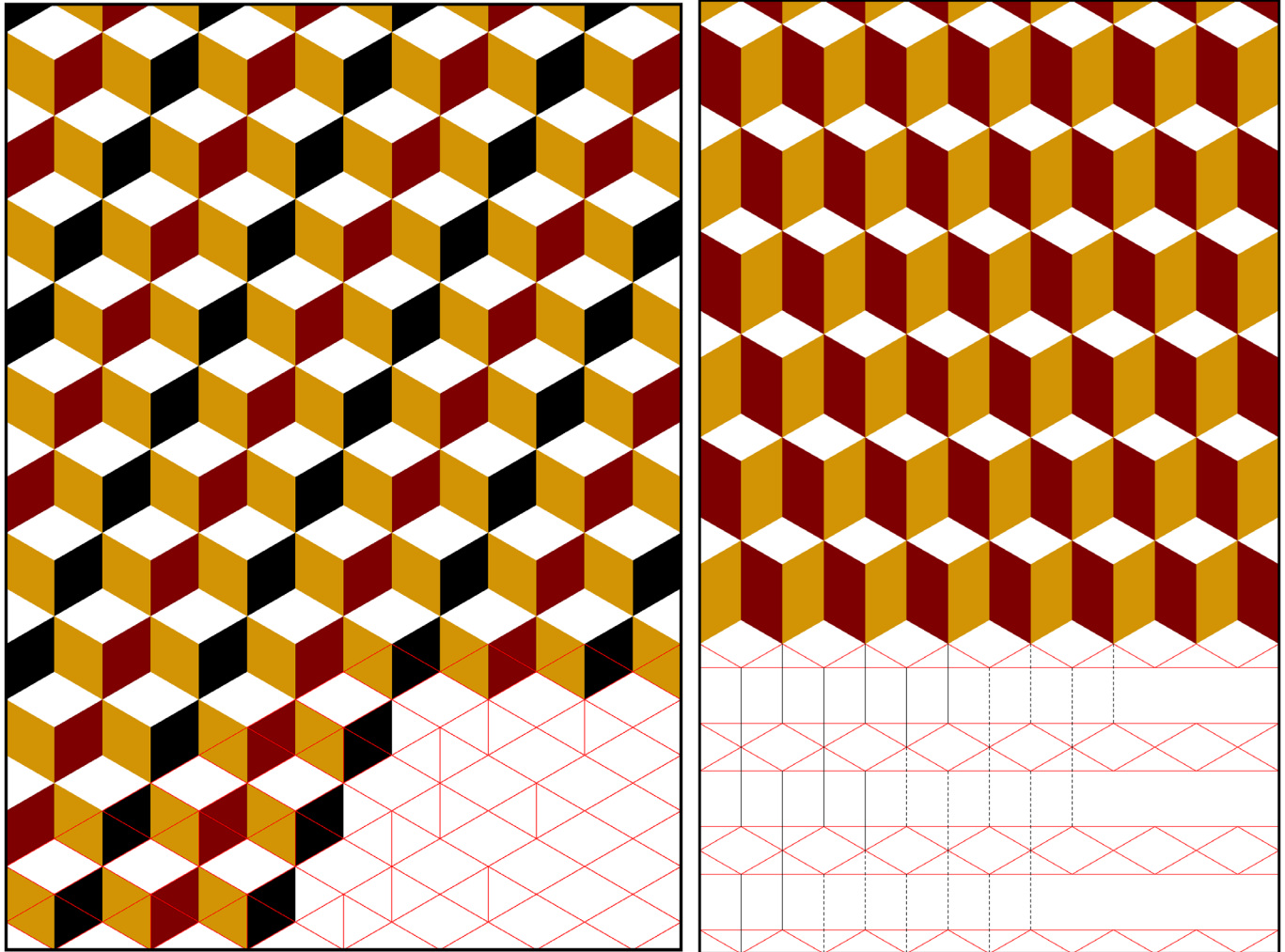
Geometrik Tasarımlar, kataloğumuzda, üç boyutlu küpler veya “devrilme blokları” olan bu modüler bileşimler ve uzun küpler veya prizmalar, sırasıyla E3 ve E3A modellerini tanımlamaktadır. Bunların Roma Çağı Baeticası'nda önemli sayıdaki döşemede mevcut olmasına rağmen, Italica, Hispalis veya Carmo gibi köklü bir mozaik geleneğine sahip olanlarda görülmedikleri için yaygın olarak kullanıldıkları düşünülemez. Aksine, Astigi ve Corduba bu tasarımların görüldüğü mozaiklerin en çok tespit edildiği yerlerdir.

Bu makalede her iki modelin gelişim süreci de analiz edilecek ve bu kompozisyonların aktardıkları hareket duygusuna rağmen, kendi karakteristiklerine göre baskın ve sağlam olarak nasıl farklı etkiler yaratabileceği, gözlemlendikleri açığa göre veya hafif bir renk değişimi ile nasıl farklı optik değişimler yarattıkları ele alınacaktır. Bu son özellik, tasarımın üç boyutlu bir etki ile ilgili ana özelliğine izin vermek için gereklidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Roma Çağı'nda Baetica, geometrik mozaik, geometrik desen, kompozisyon, küp.

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The cube, taken as main motif in the composition of unitary or modular fields, constitutes model E3 (Fig. 1) in our catalogue of designs, while model E3A (Fig. 2) is a direct variant from the former achieved by elongating the figures (Vargas Vázquez 2014: 126, 171; 2016a: 237-238).



Model E3 represents a modular composition of tangent cubes joined by their vertices and their straight and oblique sides. Its pattern is easily and quickly achieved by using a geometrical base made up of a grid of hexagons tangent to each other on their straight and oblique sides (Fig. 3). This composition constitutes by itself our model E1, generally known as a honeycomb design. This, again, can be easily obtained from the geometrical base represented in figure 4A -which curiously reproduces our rhombus design (Design Vargas-Vázquez D20). In order to ensure regular hexagons in the composition, it is built taking into account that the distance between the lines of the structure on a vertical axis must be equal to the side of the hexagons we want to build, while its slant must be at a 60° angle, half of the interior angle (120°) of a regular hexagon; the angle of those lines to the horizontal axis will be 30° . The said structure allows us to build the model simply by drawing vertical lines at certain points to define the hexagons clearly, as shown in Fig. 4B. Once the weave of hexagons has been established, the cube pattern is obtained by following the steps shown in Fig. 4C, namely, dividing each of the hexagons into three identical diamonds or rhombus.

Figure 1
Desing by Vargas Vázquez E3.

Figure 2
Desing by Vargas Vázquez E3A.

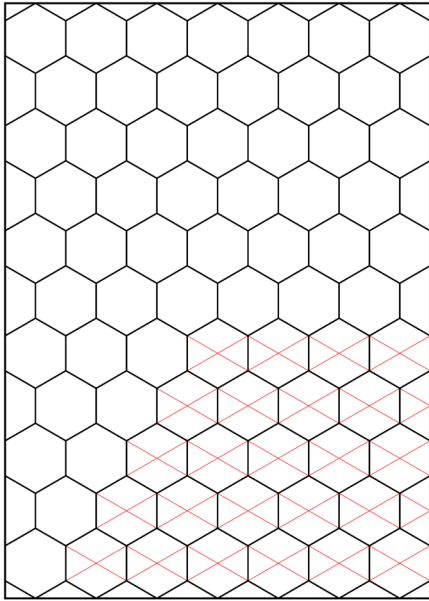


Figure 3
Desing by Vargas Vázquez E1.

A direct variant of Design E3 is our Design E3A (Fig. 2), characterized by the inclusion of elongated cubes or prisms. Now, the base to build this new design consists of a composition of irregular or oblong hexagons, instead of the one with regular hexagons. In order to build it, the structure used in Design E3 has been modified. Its appearance should be as shown in the lower part of the picture of Design E3A (Fig. 2). It is formed by parallel lanes within which the structure of oblique lines slanting 60° in relation to the vertical axis, or 30° in relation to the horizontal axis, can be created. The distance between the lanes will depend on the desired size of the prisms.

It can be inferred from all of the above that the construction procedure for both models is simple and easy if the methods described are used, without having to resort to more toilsome and/or complex geometrical operations, which would, at the least, delay the work considerably. The use of templates and frames or geometrical bases, such as those shown here, make it possible to build models like the one at hand without the need of applying cumbersome geometrical formulae or procedures. This has been a key topic in the research we have undertaken for the last few years, where we also look for examples to ascertain its veracity and demonstrate the use of this kind of shortcuts in the manufacture of some Roman mosaics (Vargas Vázquez 2016a: 275-290).

The presence of these cube and prism designs in Roman mosaic art is fully established and reaches nearly the whole of the Roman world. In the case of *Baetica*, the southernmost province of *Roman Hispania*, their appearance is equally confirmed from the examples we will readily present, with the regular tumbling blocks model as the most ingrained (Design Vargas-Vázquez E3). However, in spite of all the evidence and based upon the mosaics documented to date, we cannot confirm at the current point in the investigation, that it was a design in high demand throughout *Baetica*, since it seems to be absent in mosaic ensembles as relevant as Itálica, Seville or Carmona. The inverse case happens in the cities of Córdoba and Écija, and with them other areas within the *Conventus Astigitanus*, where several examples have been documented.

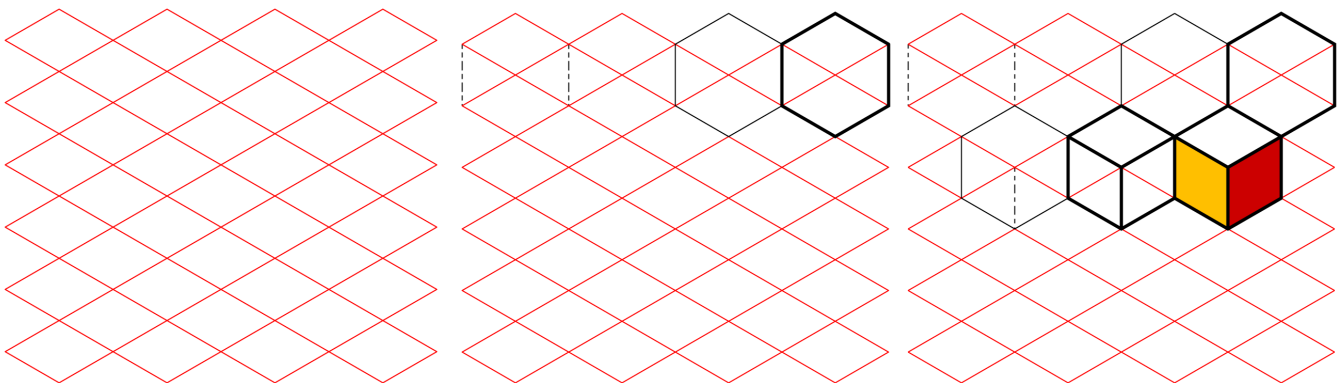


Figure 4 A-B-C
Desing by Vargas Vázquez.

In the case of Écija, Design E3 is documented in four pavements, although it is important to keep in mind that certain peculiarities present in all of them suggest, as we will see further on, the possibility of a single workshop as authors of all these mosaics.

In the mosaic known as The Triumph of Bacchus (Fig. 5), from the second half of the 2nd century, the composition with cubes is found in a secondary field bordering or framing the central panel on its right side, and it is most likely that, assuming a certain symmetry for the mosaic, the same was true for the left side,

now lost, in the likeness of the mosaic of Briseis (Figs. 7-8). In this case the picture is completed by means of a chromatic range based on white, ochre, red and black, giving the mosaic the distinctive depth of this kind of composition.



In this wonderful mosaic of The Triumph of Bacchus -besides the composition with cubes- the iconographic repertoire is noteworthy, with its main element displayed in the -partly lost- central emblema, in the form of a triumph drawn by male and female centaurs. It is a Bacchic scene completed with other depictions belonging to the same genre: we can see a bacchante lying on her back and a satyr running towards her, and Pan and Silenus's heads, as well as three Bacchic animals -gazelle, lion and panther- running to the right.

Figure 5
The mosaic of "the Triumph of Bacchus"
in Écija (Écija, Sevilla).

The Seasons are also represented in this mosaic, specifically Summer and Autumn, so it is safe to guess that Spring and Winter used to occupy the two circles symmetrically placed in the upper part of the emblemata that was lost. Leda, standing with her back to the viewer, while possessed by the swan (San Nicolás 1999: 347-387; San Nicolás 2005: 975-985), is an icon repeated -as we will see later- in the mosaic depicting Zeus's affairs. One of the Dioscuri -the offspring of the union between Leda and Zeus shapeshifted into a swan- standing in front of a horse in a stance similar to the Dioscurus portrayed in the mosaic of Zeus's affairs (Fig. 6). Orpheus is standing between two trees, playing his lyre and accompanied by a female figure who sits on a rock in the background with her back towards the viewer, identifiable as Eurydice. Narcissus is sitting on a rock between two trees, contemplating his own reflection in the water of the fountain (López Monteagudo 2005: 959-973; López Monteagudo 2013: 193-208). In addition to these representations, the mosaic still shows a fragmentary marine scene, of which only the tail of a sea animal -that could be a *kethoi*, judging by its shape- has been preserved (Vargas Vázquez et al. 2017: 45-50).

Another of the pavements in Écija where the cube design can be found is the recently uncovered mosaic of Zeus's affairs (Fig. 6), a magnificent specimen paving the *triclinium* of the *domus* where it was set. In this case the composition covers the length of an L-shaped panel.

The mosaic has a surface of 40m², and stands out for its technical mastery and decoration, consisting of several figurative panels and a geometrical L-shaped panel. The general layout of the pavement is peculiar as it simplifies the typical *triclinia* outline in "T" + "U", featuring instead a design made up of angle brackets or inverted Ls pitted against each other.

The cube design is carried out in this case in a very similar manner to the previous one, including the chromatic range and the serrated fringe that runs all around the edge of the field.

Together with the geometrical cube field, the mosaic displays a highly interesting set of figurative scenes, distributed along two fields. One of them, the vertical one, contains a Bacchic scene with a central area devoted to the production of wine, performed by four satyrs foot-crushing the grapes, which a fifth one is pouring into the *lagar* (treading vessel). The wine obtained flows into two *dolia* through a couple of orifices decorated with feline heads. To the left of this scene there is a female figure leaning back on a stone, her naked body partly covered with a drapery pinned to her head, crowned with a flower wreath and wearing a bracelet; an *eros* or Cupid accompanies her in a downcast attitude that seems to be a reference to the young woman's languor as she looks to her right, aware of her lover's betrayal. There is a basket behind the Cupid with some fronds sticking out, and a vine as a division element parting this scene from the winemaking one. The same happens on the right side of the winemaking scene; this time the vine is related to a goat who tries to reach a bunch of grapes. After this bucolic scene, a character appears in a short tunic and crown escorted by an old satyr holding a *pedum* who is pointing at the female at the other end. It is an enormously interesting representation through which the artisan wanted to recreate the myth of the moment when Bacchus, attended by the old satyr, spots his future wife, Ariadne, lying in Naxos Island after having been abandoned by Theseus. The Cupid standing beside Ariadne evokes the love about to be born. In any case, the tableau is perfectly in accordance with the rest of the mosaic, with a clear prevalence of love scenes, with Zeus as the protagonist in this case.



Figure 6
The mosaic of “Zeus’s affairs” in Écija-
(Écija, Sevilla). (Vargas Vázquez et al.
2017: fig. 70A).

The other field also displays different scenes, the most prominent is an abduction of Europa where the princess is already riding the bull but still stationary, as indicated by the flowery meadow, the presence of two of her companions feeding flowers to the bull, the flower basket on the ground, the stillness of the animal and the position of Europa holding her mantle above her head. In the background, the personification of a river occupies the upper area with its source slightly to the right and flowing -or channelled- towards a building that could well be a water mill; Mercury running, a Cupid to the left and another architectural representation, similar to the first one, maybe of a rural nature. Flanking and showcasing Europa and the bull’s scene, there are two female characters; the one on the left, with her back turned to the viewer, is bejewelled with bracelets, wristlets and necklace; of the right one, facing out, only the arms and parts of the head, hips and legs have been preserved. The absence of bracelets could hint at a male character albeit the remaining parts of the hips and belly suggest the opposite. The square frames surrounding the main scene are filled with representations of the seasons, one of a Dioscurus leading his horse, and various episodes related to Zeus as a lover: Leda and the swan, a satyr running after a maenad, remembering Zeus’s transformation or metamorphosis into a satyr to seduce the Theban princess Antiope, and Ganymede hounded by Jupiter’s eagle.

The mosaic displays formal features very similar to those found in the previously seen pavement of Plaza de Santiago -The Triumph of Bacchus- (Fig. 5), hinting at the possibility of them both belonging to the same workshop (Vargas Vázquez et al. 2017: 81-83).

The third mosaic from Écija where the presence of the cube design can be found is the one known as mosaic with an Iliad scene or of Briseis (Figs. 7-8). In this case, the composition is displayed in two fields distributed along the entrance and the back of the room they floored, again with a noteworthy execution that includes the chromatic range, virtually identical to the one used in both previous mosaics.

In this particular case, the two geometrical panels frame a third one that was set in the middle, of which only a few remnants of a figurative scene -almost lost- have survived, with only three figures remaining. To the right, a veiled female figure standing, covered head-to-toe in a wide, blue draped tunic; in the centre -virtually lost-, another character sitting or kneeling, dressed also in a pleated robe, holds a gold coloured sceptre in his left hand; behind him, to the left of the panel, a figure of which only part of the head with a winged helmet remains. Comparison with a mosaic found in Antioch (Turkey) dated to the same epoch as the one in Écija, where the characters are identified by their Greek names, leaves no doubt about the interpretation of the scene in Écija as an episode from the Iliad (Hom.II. I 320-347), the one in which a messenger from Agamemnon, Taltybios, surrenders Briseis to Achilles (Vargas Vázquez et al. 2017: 67-68).

The fourth and last of the Écija mosaics, where a composition with perspective cubes is documented, was part of the paving of a *domus* found in Écija’s Plaza de España (Fig. 9). This mosaic is only partially preserved, very fragmented; its overall measures are unknown and it appears devoid of any trace of figurative elements (Vargas Vázquez et al. 2017: 84-85).

As in the three previous pavements, this specimen is completed with a very similar chromatic range and is trimmed with a serrated fillet, following execution guidelines that are virtually identical to the ones established for all the others.



Figure 7
Mosaic with an Iliad scene or of Briseis in
Écija (Écija, Sevilla).
(photo courtesy E. Nuñez Pariente de León).

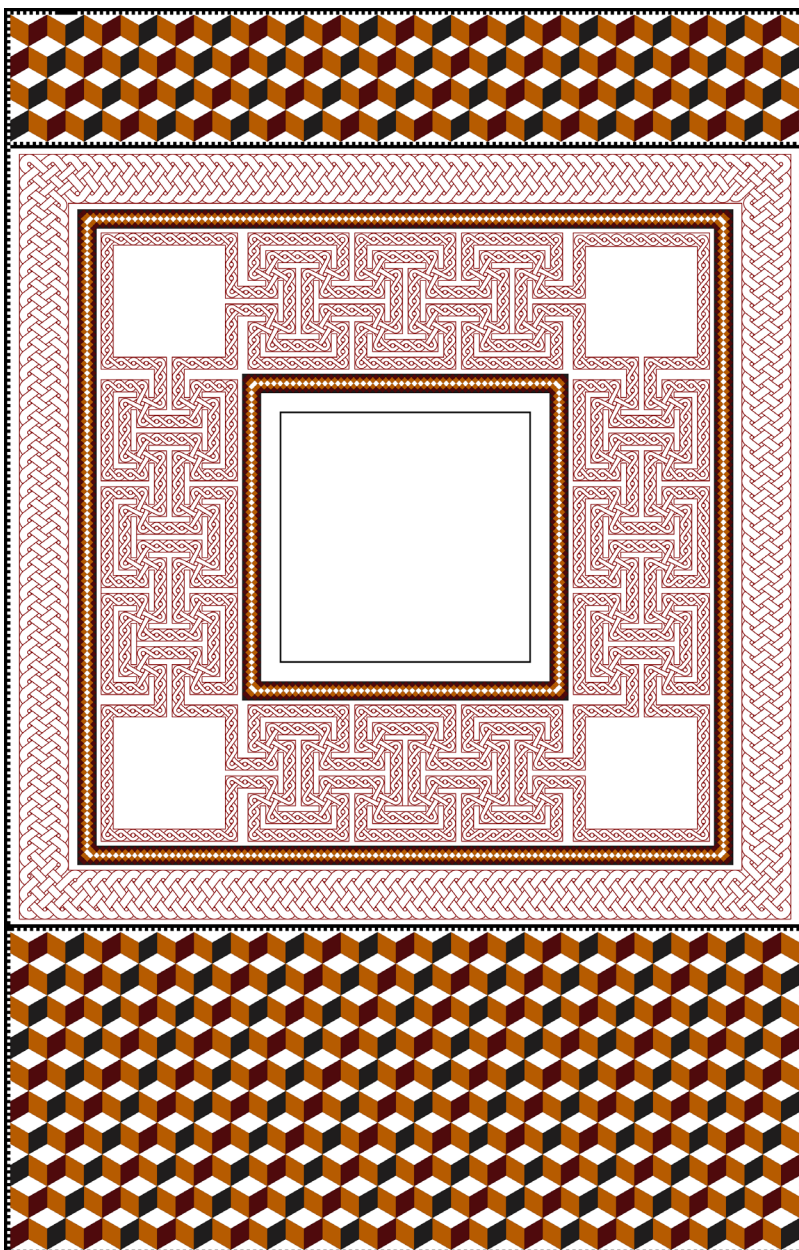


Figure 8
Mosaic with an Iliad scene or of Briseis in
Écija (Écija, Sevilla). (By Vargas Vázquez).



Figure 9
Geometric mosaic discovered in the Plaza de España de Écija (Écija, Sevilla).
(photo courtesy S. García-Dils).

The cube designs present in all these mosaics in Écija have curiously been developed in a very similar way, repeating the colour patterns in the figures (white, black, ochre and red) and the detail of framing the whole field with a black serrated trim fillet. This is an element that appears in a very analogous way in the four sites, following a thin line of three white tesserae and is totally adjoined to the composition. All of this, together with other details, establishes an undeniable evidence of a connection existing among the various pavements, hinting at the possibility that all belong to a single workshop (Vargas Vázquez 2014: 191). It is also interesting to ascertain that in the case of the first two mosaics, the use of a wave border or a multi-stranded braid border is repeated, the latter appearing again in the Briseis mosaic. In the cases of the Triumph of Bacchus and the Zeus's affairs mosaics, similarities increase with the resemblance perceived in the rendition of some of the characters, depicted in an almost identical manner, and even in the way the shades are executed.

Taking the Bacchic mosaic as a reference, all these pavements could be dated to around the second century AD, at some stage during Hadrian's rule, or immediately after that.

Outside the capital of *Conventus Astigitanus*, although within its administrative borders, the tumbling blocks design is also found -again ascribed to an urban area, in Antequera- in one of the mosaics that used to decorate what is currently known as the Roman *Thermae* of Santa María.

Specifically, we refer to the mosaic of Oceanus (Fig. 10), a polychromatic pavement with geometrical, plant and figurative decorations with a notable geometric field of cubes around a central emblem within which the god Oceanus is represented as a bust with its most recognizable attributes: crab legs and pincers protruding from his thick curly mane. The god's head emerges from the sea,

rendered as two lines of blue tesserae distributed below the bust. Worthy of mention are also other decorative elements set along one of the side bands of this mosaic, namely a pot for oil or ointment, a *strigilis* and possibly a pair of sandals, all of which could be associated with some sport activity.

Figure 10
The mosaic of Oceanus in Antequera-
Antequera, Málaga. (photo courtesy M.
Romero Pérez).



With regard to the tumbling blocks -or cubes- composition, it is interesting to highlight again the use of colour as a fundamental strategy to emphasise the effect of deepness and to achieve a correct perspective, and even more importantly, the change of orientation format, turned with respect to the central emblem and Oceanus's portrait itself, to obtain a marked effect of movement that evokes the flow of water (Vargas Vázquez 2016a: 60-61, 300). This mosaic is dated to the late 2nd or early 3rd centuries (Atencia et al. 1990: 220-226; Atencia 1991: 157-159; Romero 1992: 56-62; López Monteagudo et al. 1999/2000: 509-542; López Monteagudo 2006: 485-491; López Monteagudo - Neira 2010: 1-189; López Monteagudo 2011: 287-302; Vargas Vázquez 2016a: 60-61).

Two other pavements where the cube design can be documented, still located to the boundaries of the *Conventus Astigitanus*, belong in this context to a rural entourage, as they pave rooms in the Roman villas of Martos (Martos, Jaén) and Fuente Álamo (Puente Genil, Córdoba).

In the mosaic from the Roman villa of Martos (Fig. 11), unearthed in 1959, the colour is, once again -as in the Écija and Antequera specimens- the tool to achieve the much desired and very characteristic perspective effect. However, the difference compared with the others -apart from the different colour range, this time based on white, black and grey- is a remarkable elongation of the figures, which now compose a configuration of prisms or elongated cubes (Design Vargas Vázquez E3A). The pavement has been dated to the second half of the 2nd or early 3rd century (Recio 1973: 625-647; Blázquez 1981: 61; Vargas Vázquez 2016a: 103).

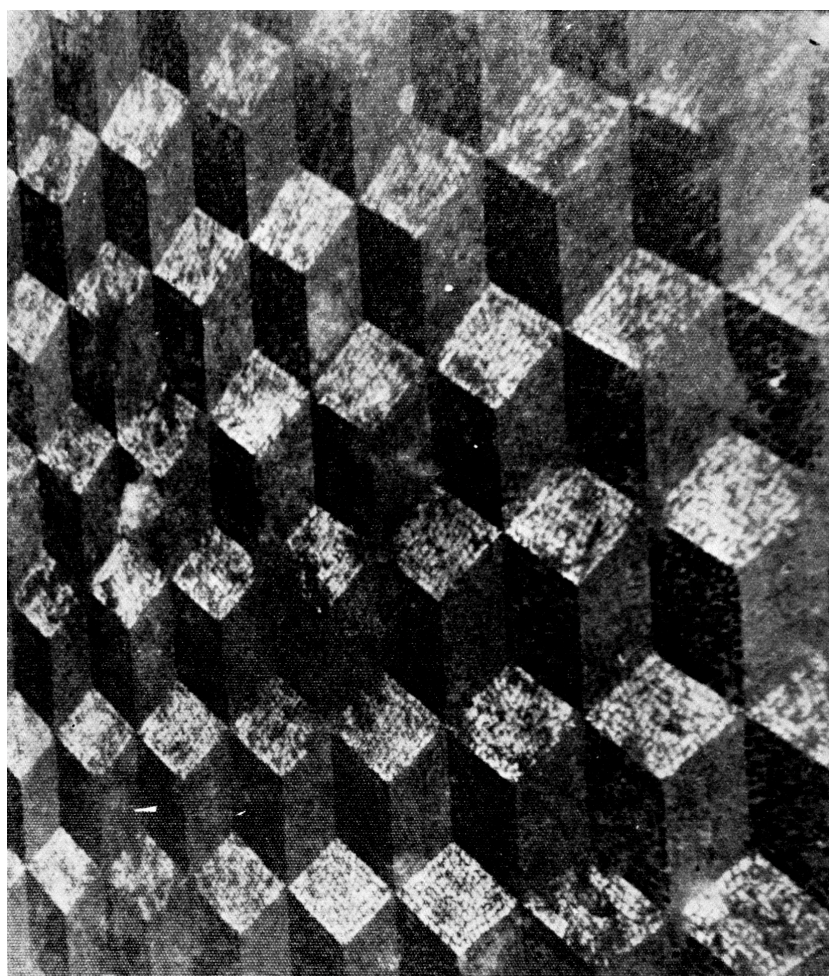


Figure 11
Geometric mosaic from the Roman villa of Martos (Martos, Jaén). (Recio 1973).

In the case of the Roman villa of Fuente Álamo, the mosaic -dating from the late 4th or early 5th century- paves a side space in room n^o.10 (Figs. 12-13). In contrast to the ones we have seen so far, the execution of the design is very simple, just in black and white and with very little profundity, due to the absence of a colour range and the sharp contrast between the different fields composing the cubes. All of this, in turn, highlights the oblong hexagons formed in the composition. The presence of secondary decorative elements, such as the squares with four-petaled flowers inlaid in the squares, which give shape to the composition and the lozenges inserted inside the rhombi or rhomboids, help disguise the three-dimensional effect of the design (Vargas Vázquez 2016a: 168-169; 2016b: 185-226).



This new manner of developing the design, in black and white, which is -at least partly- devoid of the perspective effect, cannot be attributed to an artisan's lack of knowledge on the technique to obtain the said effect. It is due, instead, to new fashions or tastes, which is confirmed in the Roman villa of Fuente Álamo by the intentional pursuit of a more or less homogeneous whole, in line with the rest of the mosaics in the room and with most other pavements in the house; all rendered in the same black and white scheme (Vargas Vázquez 2016a: 156-195; 2016b: 185-226).

Out of the *Conventus Astigitanus*, the tumbling blocks design is not very common and is apparently only present -so far- in Córdoba, ancient *Corduba*, the capital of the old *Roman Baetica*¹.

¹ In the case of Córdoba, the existence of more mosaics with the same design is very likely, since many of the mosaics uncovered there are locked in the storerooms of the city's Archaeological and Ethnological Museum, and have not been studied yet.

Figure 12
Room n^o. 10 from the Roman villa
of Fuente Álamo (Puente Genil,
Córdoba).

Figure 13
Geometric mosaic from the Roman villa of
Fuente Álamo (Puente Genil, Córdoba).



In this case, the design is carried out in variant E3 (Fig. 1), as in one example, using a chromatic range close to the Écija specimens -based on white, black, ochre, sienna and red, to obtain the quite characteristic depth effect in the design- as shown in the mosaic discovered in the Palace House of the Herruzos (Fig. 14), located in San Fernando de Córdoba Street, from the late 2nd or early 3rd century (Secilla - Márquez 1991: 337-342; Moreno 1995: 151-152 lám. 55, 57). In another example, as shown in Fuente Álamo, the design is performed in black and white without the adequate distribution of colours in the different facets of the cube, partially depriving the design of its three-dimensional effect, as shown in the mosaic documented in the Plaza de San Juan (Fig. 15), dated to the mid-2nd century (Moreno 1995: 62 lám. 7B). Here, in the total absence of secondary decorative elements in the lozenges or rhomboids that make up the prisms, the rhombi are only decorated over with smaller lozenges, thus highlighting

even more -if possible- the lack of perspective. Even though that mosaic is only known through a drawing by De Los Santos Gener (Moreno 1995: 62), it probably corresponds to the prism composition (Design Vargas-Vázquez E3A).



Figure 14
Mosaic discovered in the Palace House of the Herruzos, Córdoba (photo courtesy G. López Monteagudo).

The pavement discovered in José Cruz Conde de Córdoba Street is interesting as well (Fig. 16); it dates from the 2nd century, and the colour contrast in the various blocks areas is missing, resulting in the absence of a clear and evident perspective effect. The development of this pavement is also noteworthy, with alternating *opus sectile* and tesserae; the squares produced by the composition, specifically between the rhomboids, were created in marble, while the rest of the pavement was tessellated (De Los Santos Gener 1955: 89 fig. 40 plano V, j; Blázquez 1981: 27-28 figs. 9, 12; Moreno 1995: 108 láms. 34, 37B, 38A). Like in the mosaic of the villa in Fuente Álamo, the presence of rhomboids with a very linear plant motif introduced in the composition of rhomboids help obscure even more the perspective in the design. As for the typology of the composition, judging by De los Santos Gener's drawings, it seems obvious that this pavement displays the E3A variant design of elongated cubes or prisms.

In the light of all this, we can deduce that the cube design performed in a continuous or modular composition, in either a regular or irregular format (Designs E3 and E3A), was well accepted in *Baetica*, especially in the period between the second half of the 2nd century and the first decades of the 3rd. However, its use still holds good centuries later, as exemplified by a specimen from the Roman villa of Fuente Álamo dated to sometime between the mid-4th and early 5th century. Nevertheless, at the current point of the research we cannot claim that it was one of the most frequently demanded or most widespread designs in the Southern Hispania's province, since it is clearly missing so far in highly relevant mosaic ensembles such as the ones in Italica, Seville or Carmona. Écija and Córdoba are, so far, the urban areas with a higher demand for this specific type of decoration. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that, in the case of Écija, its four mosaics were very likely -two of them with almost total certainty- manufactured by artisans from the same and single workshop, specialised or having a special mastery in a composition they would apply to high-end mosaics. The presence of the tumbling blocks and the prisms design in two Roman villas bear witness to the acceptance of this design in the rural world, too.

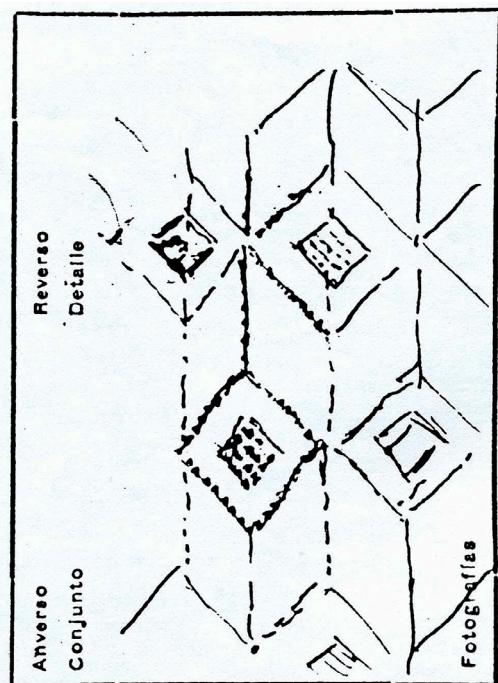


Figure 15
Mosaic discovered in the Plaza de San Juan,
Córdoba (Moreno 1995: 62 lám. 7B).

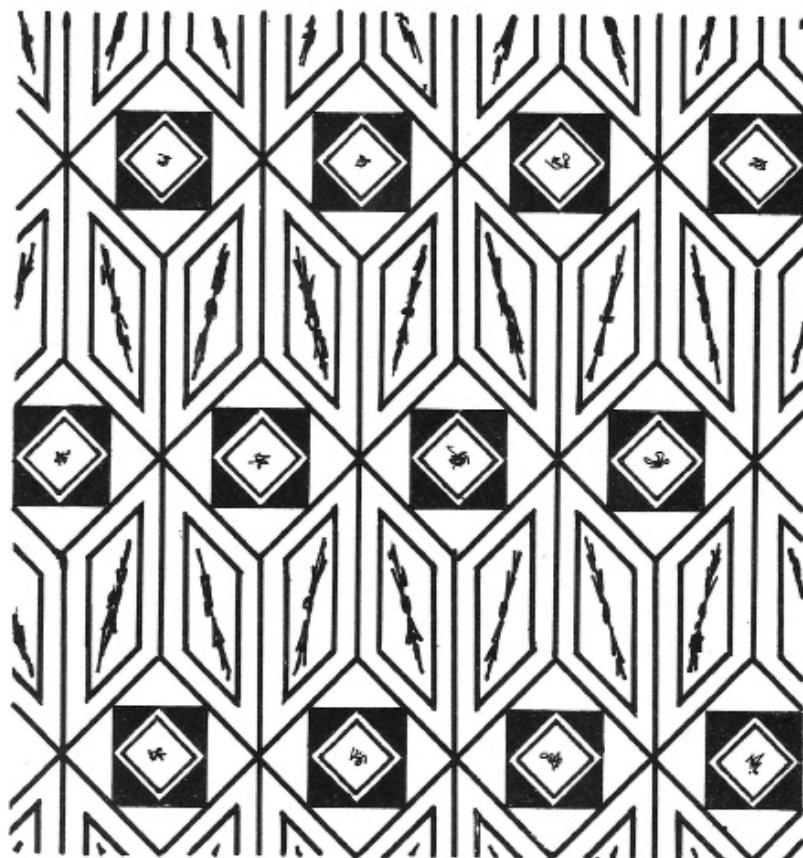


Figure 16
Mosaic discovered in José Cruz Conde de
Córdoba Street (Blázquez 1981: 114 fig. 12).

The most widely accepted form of laying the cube design in *Baetica* is in its regular version (Design Vargas-Vázquez E3), as exemplified by the four specimens in Écija, the one in the Santa María de Antequera Thermae, the one in the Palace House of the Herruzos in Córdoba and the one in the Roman villa of Fuente Álamo. If we talk about the mosaic from the Roman villa in Martos and those discovered in San José and José Cruz Conde streets in Córdoba, the chosen variant is the one with elongated cubes or prisms (Design Vargas-Vázquez E3A).

The issue of colour is quite significant, since the absence of an appropriate chromatic range -thus evading the necessary contrast between the different facets of the cube or prism- subtracts depth from the designs and strips them partly of their characteristic perspective. That same effect is enhanced, as we have seen, by the addition of secondary decorative motifs in the squares, diamonds or rhomboids that form the main figures. The manner of representing the composition, with a prevailing flatter quality, makes the rest of the figures -such as the oblong hexagons produced by the pattern and even the lozenges inserted inside them- stand out. This can be noticed in the mosaic of the Roman villa in Fuente Álamo and in those unearthed in San José and José Cruz Conde streets, in Córdoba. All the other specimens display a colour scheme distribution appropriate to generate the characteristic three-dimension effect.

This striking peculiarity, founded on perspective and no other, is what defines this type of design and almost monopolizes it, as happens with other compositions where a similar effect is achieved, or where the artist provokes a feeling of movement and/or distraction by prioritizing some figures or motifs above others. In any case, they seek to involve the viewer in order to be admired in their full

glory². We have already seen that, in order to obtain the desired effect, the use of colour is necessary; although, occasionally, a turn or change in the orientation of the composition can produce a new sensation and a new effect, more or less different from the original one. This is what happens, for instance, in the mosaic of Antequera, where the artisan who laid it knew that by turning the composition 90 degrees with respect to the main axis -coincident in this specific case with the gaze of the god Oceanus- the blocks would acquire a special mobility, creating the effect of a ribbon unfolding in a zig-zag pattern. Concurrently, this strategy provided the composition with a feeling of fluid, cadenced and at the same time continuous movement. Maybe the aim was to evoke the flow of running water and the rhythm of the waves, perfectly integrating this rather characteristic and outstanding design, normally so cut off from that kind of feeling, in the aquatic environment of the baths.

All the above makes the power of geometrical motifs and colour perfectly apparent, especially when both are combined. It proves that a simple change in the point of view or the orientation of the compositions, or the addition or removal of small parts, can arouse various feelings and even create different compositions, sometimes quite removed from the original (Vargas Vázquez 2009: 199-225; 2016a: 277, 321-322).

2 We have studied in depth the geometry play based upon the creation of visual effects which need a certain level of attention and interaction on the part of the observer, thanks to ambiguity, the changing appearance and the mobility or dynamism the figures gain within a single composition. The study can be found in the article: Vargas Vázquez 2009: 199-225. The obvious similarities of some of these creations with those born out of the artistic movement known as Op Art (short for optical art) -an art style that reached its top splendour in the 1960s, and that could boast the adherence of renowned artists such as Víctor Vasarely and the British artist Bridget Riley- are also highlighted in that paper. Those connections had been previously underlined and analysed by Gisela Salies in her master essay "*Irritations optiques dans l'ornementation pavimentale romaine*", published in the minutes for the 6th International Colloquium on ancient mosaics (Salies 1994: 423-430).

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