

BY THE FOUNTAIN, I FOUND THE WATER SO FINE I BUILD A PAVILION AROUND IT

Architecture and Decoration of the so-called Nymphaeum of Hadrian in the Archaeological Park of Baiae (Campania, Italy).

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Scientific tradition attributes the construction of several buildings in Baiae, to Emperor Hadrian (Di Fraia 2011; Di Fraia 2019). However, it is questionable whether Hadrian, who died in Baiae in 138 AD, lived to see the completion of all his construction projects. Sector L (SL), a western terrace in the Archaeological Park of Baiae (Fig. 3, a-c), suggests otherwise.

In the 1st half of the 2nd c. BC, SL consisted of the ‘Stanze di Venere’ in the north (Ling 1979), a bath complex decorated in Nero's time with stucco and wall painting (Fig. 2), and a building complex in the south, whose function is largely unknown.



Fig. 1. Wall-painting remains from the ‘Stanze di Venere’, Neronian time (L. Narès)

However, construction work on the nymphaeum was not very far advanced at the time of Emperor Hadrian's death (Fig. 3, b). Its Niches were blocked before the end of the construction (Fig. 4). The half-dome was completed in *opus mixtum*, but the adjacent room structures were finished in *opus vittatum mixtum*. This was accompanied by a fundamental change in use and suggests new owners, probably his successors.

The ‘Antonine Pavilion’

In the end, the ‘Antonine Pavilion’ was a heated complex intended for a synaesthetic experience (Nieberle 2023) (Fig. 3, c). It offered naturally and artificially heated floors, domed vaults, artificial waterfalls, a magnificent view and appropriate furnishings, with marble and magnificent ceiling paintings (Fig. 2), but also grotto decorations in the rooms where the waterfall flowed into (Fig. 5). Unfortunately, most of this decoration has disappeared.

At least, the barrel vault of SL-E0-Raum 45 still shows remnants of these once fine paintings (Fig. 2 and 6). The ochre yellow background presents a composition with predominant concentric bands and borders (Barbet 2021, chap. 6). A red framed compartment on the eastern side seems to preserve some undetermined figure. From its left corner extend a yellow band and a thin garland, the delicacy of which can be discerned.

To the east of the ‘Antonine Pavilion’, a spacious portico was built, ending in a semicircular apse on the north side and opening up adjacent room structures, one of them still preserves a mosaic (SL-E0-R12) of this phase (Esposito/Miniero 2000, 258-260).



Fig. 2. SL-E0-R45, wall-painting remains, Antonine time (L. Narès)

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Fig. 3. a. Map of the Archaeological Park of Baiae; b. Map of the Sector L (SL); c. general view of the ‘Antonine Pavilion’ (M. Nieberle)



Fig. 4. SL-E0-R35, remains of the Hadrian's nymphaeum



Fig. 5. SL-E0-R36, remains of opus musivum, Antonine time



Fig. 6. SL-E0-R45, detail of the wall-painting, Antonine time (L. Narès)