

Battle of Issus by Philoxenos of Eretria Essays Examples

War



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There original Battle of Issus by Philoxenos is lost but its copy was found at the House of Faun. This power and novelty of this work is achieved by the sense of movement caused by positioning of horses and diagonal spears. Furthermore, it opens a new period in Hellenistic and Roman mosaic art because it is made from tesserae and not from pebbles.

Battle of Issus is a Hellenistic floor mosaic. It was made near 310 BC by Philoxenos of Eretria. The artwork was lost and nowadays mainly known by a copy found in the House of Faun in Pompeii. This work is called Alexander Mosaic, 8 feet 11 inches x 16 feet 9 inches (Harris, Zucker). It is made of over a half million tesserae, small mosaic tiles. These tiles are no longer than 4 mm and made of four basic colors: white, yellow, black and red. It was found in 1830s when German archeologists found the House of Faun during excavations in Pompeii. At present day the replica is placed at that house. The original mosaic is located at the Naples Museo Archeologico Nazionale. The artwork illustrates one of the most important battles in the ancient history. Alexander the Great attacks the Persian King Darius III in the second battle between their armies. The battle actually took part at the Pinarus River. Alexander's army was larger than the Darius one. Persian King was a great warrior and talented commander, yet Alexander was the most prominent person at that historical period. The fight was full of blood and victims. Though Alexander was injured during the battle, Darius was made to leave the battlefield. This battle became one of the most important battles in world history because it allowed Alexander to conquer almost all parts of the known world (Weijgaert). And crucial moment of this battle was depicted by talented painter from Eretria Philoxenus.

The scene of Alexander Mosaic represents the turning point of the battle when Darius tries to leave the battlefield. The composition of the artwork is based on two protagonists: Alexander on the left without helmet and rushing on his horse Bucephalus, and Darius on the right with Persian cap on the head fleeing right on his chariot. There are many details catching eye details. They highlight the confusion of the battle: the horse of Persian warrior is falling down; another warrior keeps the image of horror on his face. Besides, another soldier is crushed by the Darius' chariot. His face is covered but it can be seen at the reflection of the shield. The composition of the mosaic is mainly diagonal. The center of painting shows diagonals of Persian spears and Persian rearing horses. Another diagonal is reached by the position of Darius, his charioteer and by Alexander and wounded Persian soldier.

Battle of Issus provides an insight into development in painting at the time of Alexander. The mosaicist used tesserae instead of pebbles. The mosaic is also famous for genial technical solution of problems that had been long faced by Greek painters. The picture of rearing horse is done in a realistic manner. Reflection of Persian soldier's face in the shield is another impressive detail to be mentioned. Besides, shadows appear by all objects of the mosaics. Most impressive about Battle of Issus is the psychological intensity of the drama. Author managed to depict all the emotions at the warriors' faces. Furthermore, he showed movement with the help of diagonal spears.

Works Cited

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