

## **Residence as a self-presentation of urban elites. Architecture and decoration of the House of Orpheus in Nea Paphos, the ancient capital of Cyprus.**

"Seeing a man's home is to see the man" or "show me how you live, and I'll tell you who you are" - these proverbs explicitly exemplify the main subject of the presented project.

It aims to resolve the question about an owner of one of the residences in Nea Paphos, the capital of ancient Cyprus, seen throughout his house, its arrangement and decoration.

The so-called House of Orpheus, explored under the direction of Demetrios Michaelides in 1982-1992, was a subject of only partial studies. The discoverer attached a particular importance to the figural mosaics, published in a more detailed way, while the other aspects were only mentioned in the excavations' reports. Meanwhile, the house is a very interesting, multifold example of urban residence which eminent location, the scale, and complexity of decoration seem to testify the owner's wealth as well as his social and political position. The Roman house was a constant focus of public life, thus was arranged in such a way as to distinguish between social activity and private life. The ability of the house to both invite and control access (diversified for *clientes*, *amicis* and *familiares*) would appear to make it well suited for activities of Roman citizens, being a public display of their success, dignity and prestige.

The House of Orpheus is worth of (and need) such comprehensive studies. To resolve the problem of self-presentation of the owner of this residence, his social and political status and his cultural identity, we should complete the previous studies about layout and mosaics' iconography with new information regarding decoration, including architectural decor.

To achieve this goal, the Principal Investigator with two Co-investigators will conduct non-invasive fieldworks in Nea Paphos as well as queries in archives and libraries in search of all published and unpublished information about the House of Orpheus. The results of three dimensional measurements, supplemented with archival data would allow to virtual 3D reconstructions of selected architectural units. The collected material will let to define newly the distinction of house's spaces (*pars antica* and *pars postica*). The complex evaluation of the architecture of the House of Orpheus would be the first such case study of house in Nea Paphos, essential for research on domestic architecture in Cyprus as well as in other regions of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The House of Orpheus must have been seen in a broader context of domestic architecture in the Mediterranean area where studying housing provides the possibility to follow the process of Romanisation regarding the ordinary (although wealthy) man. This kind of research seems to be extremely significant, especially in the regions inhabited firstly by the Greeks (or, at least people of Greek origin), later 'replaced' by the Romans. Cyprus lying at the crossroads of trade routes was for centuries a real cultural melting pot.

Inhabited by Greek speaking people, since the beginning of the Ptolemaic rule was strongly influenced by Alexandrian culture and art. This impact survived also under Roman rule (imposed in the 1st century BC), still being well reflected in architectural forms and decoration. However, with the process of Romanisation, domestic architecture had to change. The residences of the rich citizens, constituting the core of the new urban elite, reflected a trend among provincial notables in the Greek east to express their *Romanitas* in altering the plans and selection of design elements for their houses. Their houses, being a way of self-presentation, were the illustration of their status, their mentality, their taste and position in the society. The obvious problem of the owner of the House of Orpheus to solve was to find a way of demonstration of the provincial urban elites' understanding of their new Roman identity, while preserving at the same time their "Greekness". The question is even more intriguing in the context of Greek inscription found on the mosaic in the House of Orpheus mentioning the Latin *tria nomina* of Gaius Pinnius Restitus, supposed owner of the house. Was he the Romanized Cypriot or maybe the Roman citizen from outside Cyprus? Was he brought up and educated in the Greek tradition or rather according to Roman standards? Did the estate provide him with a position in the Paphos society or vice versa, the achieved social status brought him wealth? Presented the project, based on an analysis of the House and the rooms' design, is going to give the answer to these ones as well as other questions.