

**Tesserae Optimus Maximus in Chicago**

Constructed with a seating capacity of 2,500 people, and a total length of ¼ of a mile, the Banquet-Ristorante and Lounge Venuti's, located across the street from the Medinah Country Club, is one of the most imposing buildings in the Chicago area. Displaying already one of the largest ancient mosaic reproduction projects in the continent, Venuti's is Gnosis' largest commercial project to date. Still the banquet's ownership wanted to emphasize this imposing building even further through a design inspired in the grandiose roman architecture with influences from the Italian Renaissance and a selection of authentic materials. They wanted "the hand carved heavy solid marble columns, and the natural stone ancient style mosaics..."

Time constraints for the completion of the project were daunting; yet the Gnosis design team engaged in the adaptation of the ancient mosaic 19 grand mosaic reproductions to be displayed on the exterior of the building and the main banquet entrance. An impressive 4 million tesserae of marble were hand-cut and placed in 19 ancient mosaic reproductions. The mosaic project took 4 months from concept development to installation.



**"An impressive 4 million marble tesserae were hand-cut to form 19 grandiose reproductions of ancient roman mosaics... all in 4 months from design to installation"**



**- Completely covered in Italian stone, solid hand-carved marble columns, and reproductions of ancient mosaics throughout the exterior, Venuti's is a modern times tribute to classical architecture -**

The front façade of the building, also the grand entrance of the banquet area utilized primarily for weddings and private receptions, displays amplifications of the four seasons as they appear in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century North African mosaic of -Neptune and the Four Seasons-, two in each side of the main entrance, representing in this case the perpetuity, significance and authenticity of the festivities. On the far extremes are four more mosaic representations of a variety of games and theatrical scenes taken from noble and imperial villas close to Rome. Entering the banquet through the main entrance, a reproduction of Herculeum's wedding of Neptune and Amphitrite mosaic can be found above a fountain, representing the eternal unity of the gods. The depth and color richness on this mosaic was achieved through the use of several exotic stones.

The north side of the building faces the entrance of the restaurant and lounge and displays three large mosaics with bacchic themes, inspired from private residences in the Roman Tunisia.

The south side of the building, holds reproductions of two sections of Pompeii's famous mosaic of Alexander the Great defeating Darius in the great battle of Issus. At the center lays a reproduction of the central figure of Gnosis' Stag Hunt mosaic from Pella, Macedonia.

Finally the back of the building, facing the back garden, kitchen areas of the banquet and restaurant, has four adaptations of sections of a pavement from Xenia displaying food and wine related figures, surrounding a central reproduction of the drinking contest mosaic from Antioch, displaying defying Hercules and a relaxed Bacchus in a drinking contest.

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Mosaic art in the XXIst century home is refreshingly original and to tell the truth, quite impressive. It fits perfectly into almost any kind of environment and adds sophistication to the overall design. However, mosaic art, when it's not integrated into a surface represents an interesting implementation challenge: It's suddenly too heavy to hang from almost any wall!

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