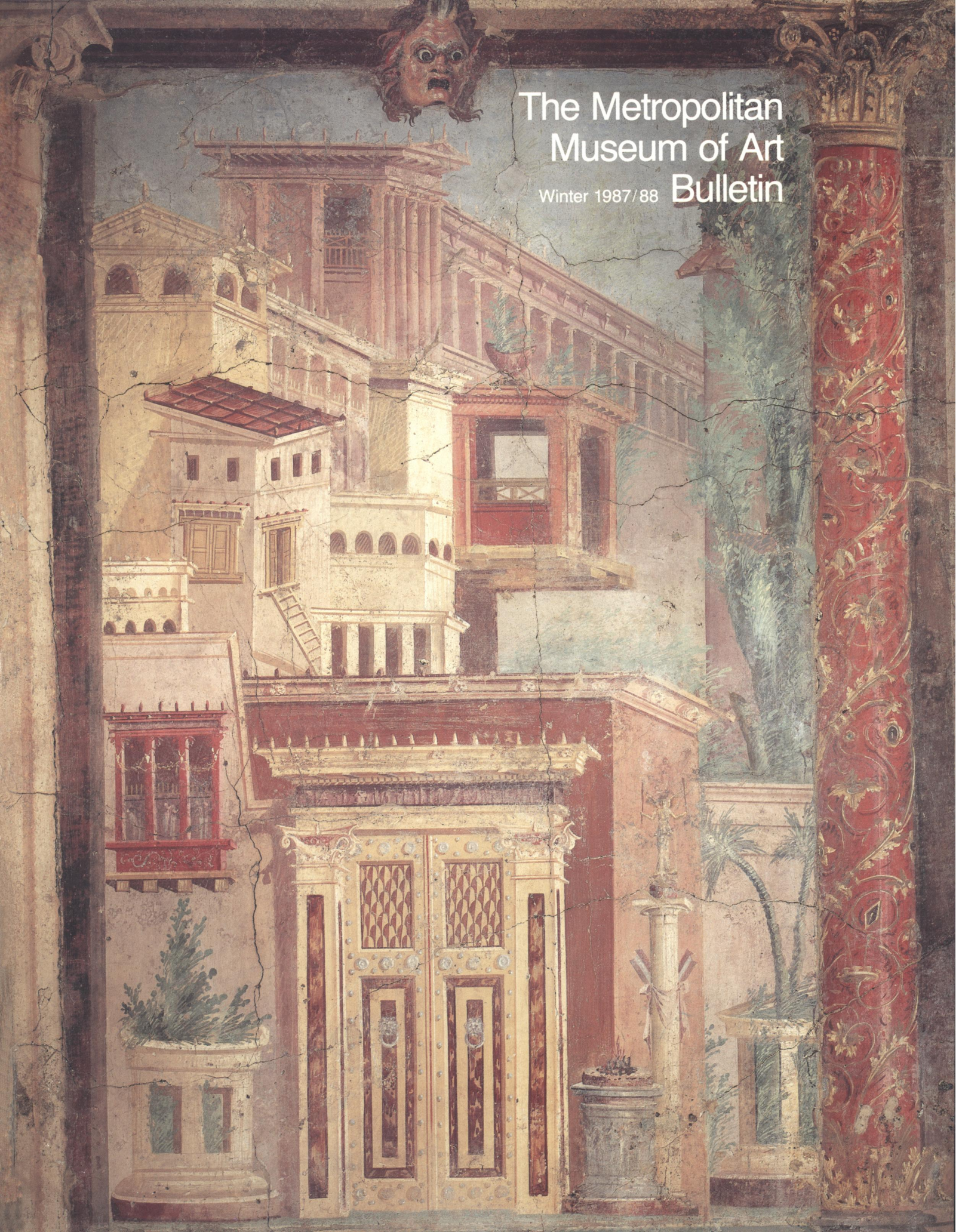


The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin

Winter 1987/88

POMPEIAN FRESCOES

IN

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Maxwell L. Anderson

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART BULLETIN

Winter 1987/88

Volume XLV, Number 3 (ISSN 0026-1521)

Published quarterly © 1987 by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Avenue and 82nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and Additional Mailing Offices. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* is provided as a benefit to Museum members and available by subscription. Subscriptions $18.00 a year. Single copies $4.75. Four weeks' notice required for change of address. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Membership Department, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Avenue and 82nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Back issues available on microfilm, from University Microfilms, 313 N. First Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Volumes I-XXVIII (1905–1942) available as a clothbound reprint set or as individual yearly volumes from The Ayer Company, Publishers, Inc., 99 Main Street, Salem, N.H., 03079, or from the Museum, Box 700, Middle Village, N.Y. 11379. General Manager of Publications: John P. O'Neill. Editor in Chief of the *Bulletin*: Joan Holt. Associate Editor: Merope Lolis. Design: Mary Ann Joulwan

Statement of Ownership Management and Circulation

Title of publication:
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART BULLETIN
Publication no.: 0026-1521
Date of filing: October 1, 1987
Frequency of issue: Four times per year
No. of issues published annually: Four
Annual subscription price: $18.00, or Free to Museum Members
Location of known office of publication: Fifth Avenue and 82nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10028
Names and addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Publisher: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Avenue and 82nd Street, New York, N.Y., 10028; Editor: Joan Holt, Fifth Avenue and 82nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10028; Managing Editor: None
Owner: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Avenue and 82nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10028
Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of the total amount of bonds, mortgages, and other securities: None

	Average number of copies during preceding 12 months (Oct. 86–Sept. 87)	Single issue nearest to filing date (July 87)
A. Total copies printed (net press run)	117,891	113,585
B. Paid and/or requested circulation		
1. Sales through dealers, carriers, street vendors, and counter sales	none	none
2. Mail subscription (paid and/or requested)	109,422	102,379
C. Total paid and/or requested circulation	109,422	102,379
D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means, samples, complimentary, and other free copies	1875	2500
E. Total distribution (sum of C and D)	111,297	104,879
F. Copies not distributed		
1. Left over, unaccounted, spoilage	6594	8706
2. Returns from news agents	none	none
G. Total (sum of E, F1 and 2)	117,891	113,585

Roman contributions to government, jurisprudence, and engineering are commonly acknowledged. We owe to the Romans the basis for an efficient system of centralized government, and their structural feats still amaze us. Yet the artistic legacy of the Roman world continues to be judged widely as an echo of the magnificent Greek traditions that preceded it. The creativity of Roman architecture, design, portraiture, and the decorative arts is nonetheless indisputable. Paintings in fresco, to cite the subject of this publication, certainly provide strong evidence of technical genius; works in this complicated medium have survived earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and are often in surprisingly good condition after having withstood centuries of adverse conditions. But wall paintings also vividly demonstrate the originality of Roman art with their lively admixture of narrative and decorative subjects, often combined with ingenious trompe l'oeil devices. Moreover, in their ambivalence toward the penetrability of the picture plane, these ancient wall paintings foreshadow artistic concerns that would engage some of the most creative artists of our own time.

The Metropolitan Museum's collection of Roman frescoes is the largest outside of Italy. An early appreciation of Roman decorative arts led the Department of Greek and Roman Art to acquire the exceptionally fine wall paintings from Boscoreale and Boscotrecase, two towns near Pompeii, in the first quarter of this century. They have been the focus of scholarly attention in the field of Roman art eyer since, and they are fascinating to modern viewers as settings of ancient life. The dining room walls of the Boscoreale villa surely witnessed elaborate banquets like those later described by Petronius in the *Satyricon* (ca. A.D. 60). The bedroom walls of Boscotrecase, on the other hand, are personal and intimate, and provide a provocative glimpse of the taste of the family of Rome's first emperor, Augustus, and of his daughter, Julia, the villa's owner.

Boscoreale and Boscotrecase are the subjects of this *Bulletin*. The text was prepared by Maxwell L. Anderson, Director of the Emory University Museum of Art and Archaeology, who tells the story of the two villas and charts the transition in the art of Roman wall painting from the baroque exuberance of the late Republic to the classical restraint of the early Empire.

We are deeply grateful to Giovanni Agnelli, whose generous contribution made possible the restoration and display of the Boscotrecase frescoes. They now take their place proudly among the Metropolitan's finest treasures.

Philippe de Montebello
DIRECTOR

FRONT COVER: *Detail of the east wall of Bedroom M (03.14.13) from Boscoreale*

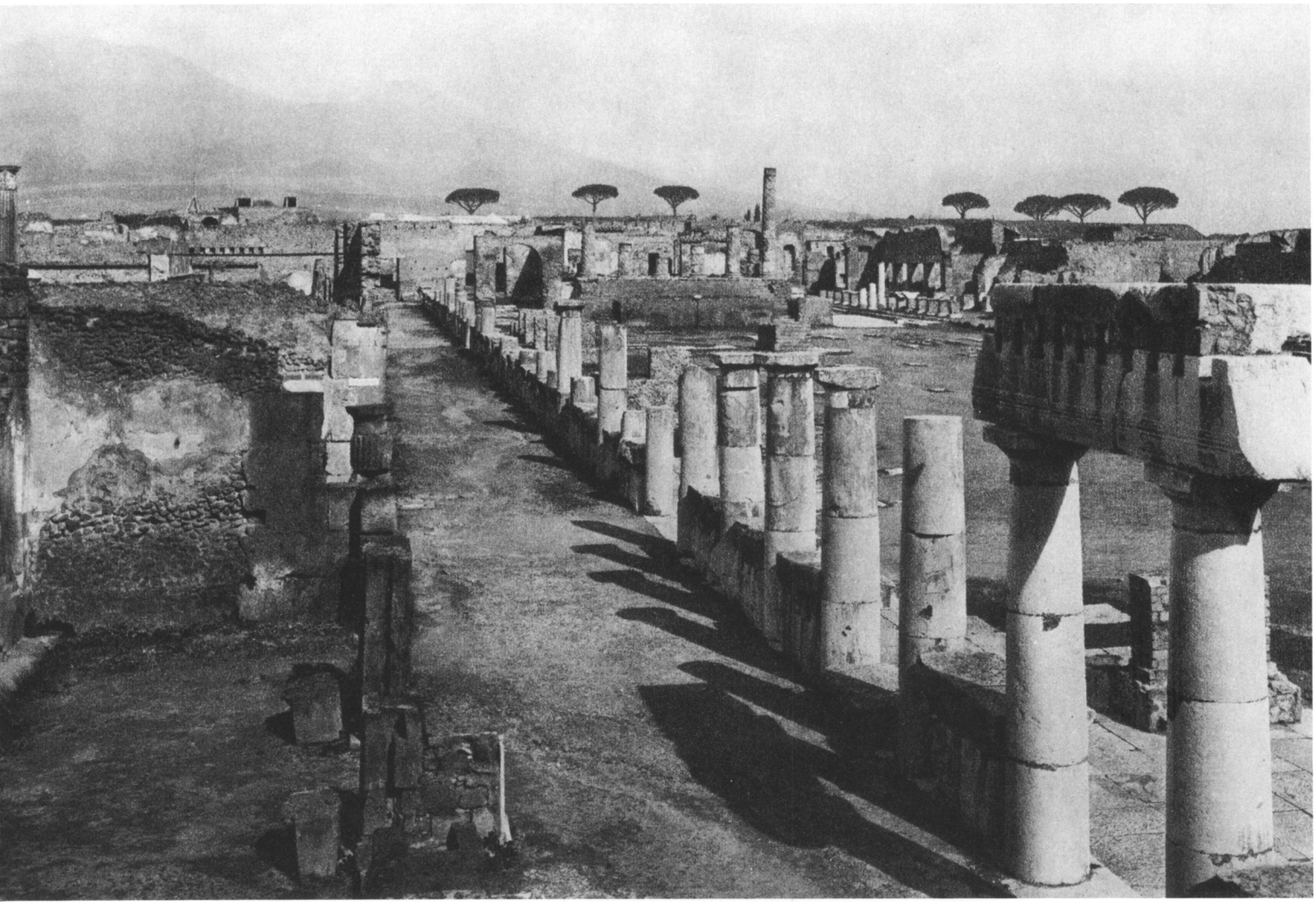
INSIDE FRONT COVER: *Detail of the cithara player and young girl (03.14.5) from Boscoreale*

OPPOSITE: *1. Satyr and maenad from the Casa dei Dioscouri, Pompeii, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples*

PAINTING IN ROME AND POMPEII

The few references to Roman painting in ancient literature usually concern portable examples on materials such as wood and ivory. Because these works have not survived, the Roman painters most highly praised in antiquity have passed into obscurity. During the late Republic, portrait painters like Iaia of Kyzikos (late 2nd–early 1st century B.C.) commanded high prices, according to Pliny, higher even than "the most celebrated painters of the same period, Sopolis and Dionysios." So too we read in Pliny that Arellius, who worked at the end of the first century B.C., was highly esteemed and would have been more so but for his regrettable habit of portraying goddesses in the image of his mistresses. The same author also tells us that the emperor Augustus exhibited two paintings in his forum: the *Visage of War* and *Triumph*. He displayed other paintings in the Forum of Julius Caesar, his adoptive father, and it is clear that the medium was used for propaganda and war reportage as well as for decoration.

The Roman paintings that have survived are in the durable medium of fresco, used to adorn the interiors of private homes in the Roman cities and in the countryside. According to Pliny, it was Studius "who first instituted that most delightful technique of painting walls with representations of villas, porticoes and landscape gardens, woods, groves, hills, pools, channels,

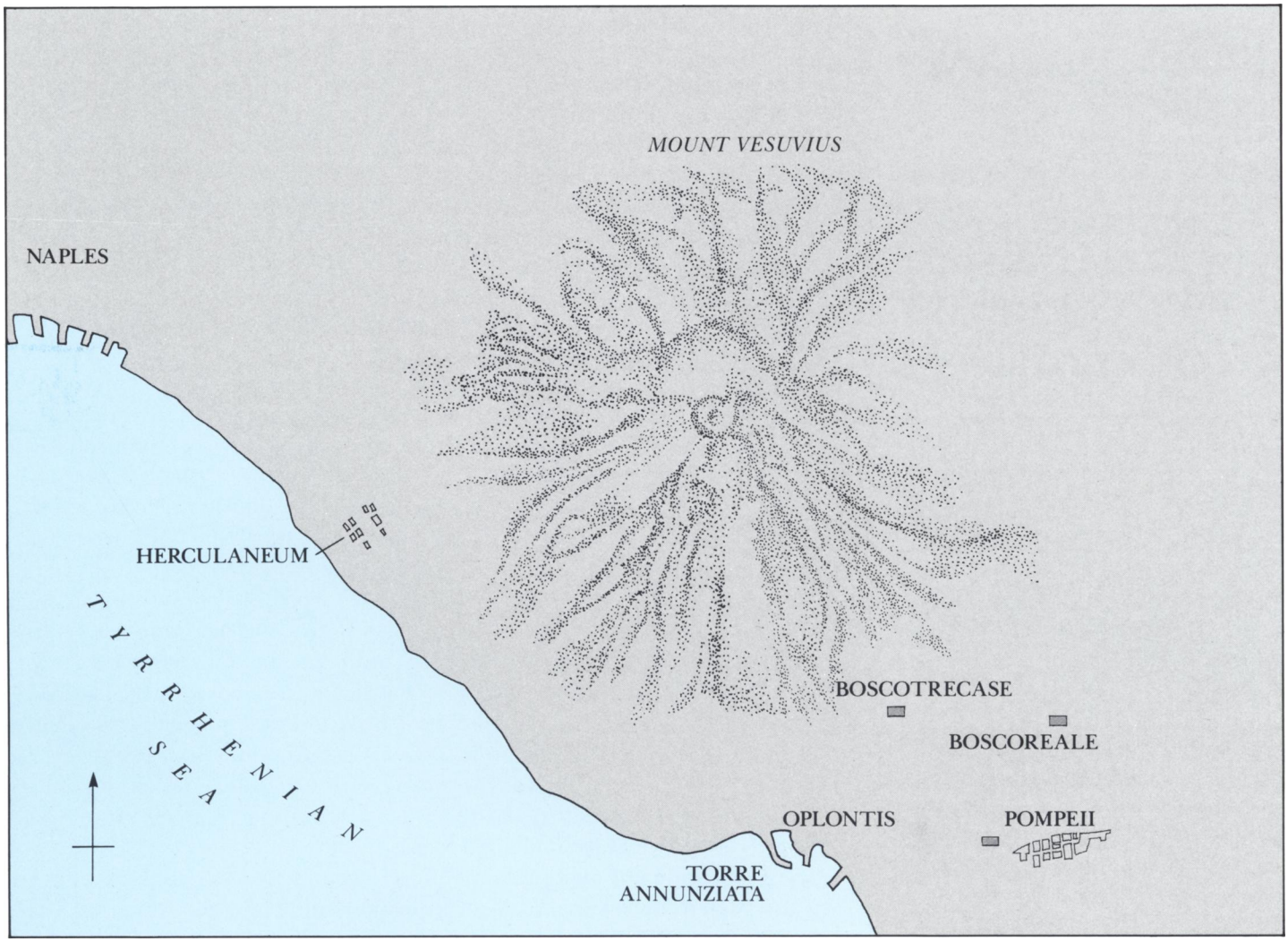


2. Mount Vesuvius looms at the left behind the ruins of Pompeii's commercial center, the Forum. From Amedeo Maiuri, Pompeii *(Rome, 1929), illus. p. 25.*

rivers, coastlines." Some have speculated that Studius was responsible for the decoration of the Villa Farnesina, in Rome, probably completed in 19 B.C. on the occasion of Agrippa's marriage to Julia, daughter of the emperor Augustus.

Despite a lack of physical evidence, we can assume that some portable paintings depicted the same subjects that are found on painted walls in Roman villas. It is even reasonable to suppose that Roman panel paintings, which included both original creations and adaptations of renowned late Greek works, were the prototypes for the most popular subjects in frescoes: the Fall of Icarus, Polyphemus and Galatea, Perseus and Andromeda, and the Death of Actaeon. It is probable that artists from Rome specializing in fresco often traveled to other parts of Italy with copybooks that reproduced popular paintings as well as ornamental patterns. The decorative elements shared by certain villas in the capital and in the region of Naples make this explanation all but certain.

The richest concentration of surviving frescoes has been found in Campania, the region around Naples. The eruption of Mount Vesuvius on August 24, A.D. 79, buried much of the countryside surrounding the volcano, including the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, as well as dozens of

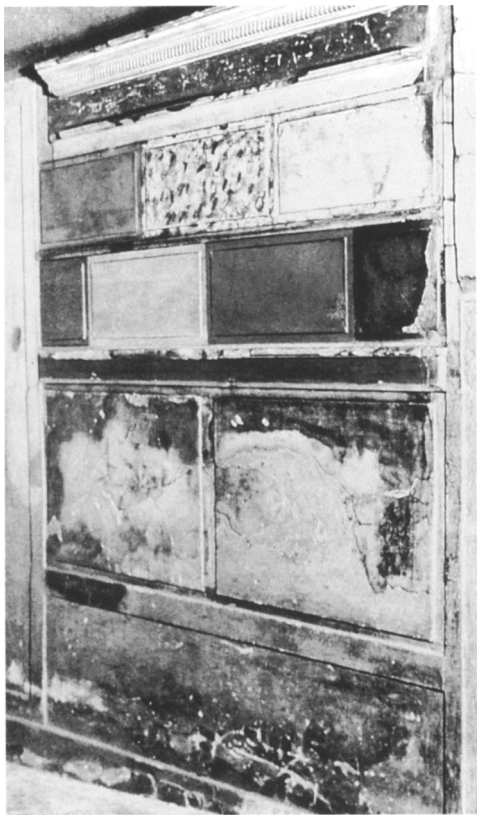


3. The villas of Boscoreale and Boscotrecase were located north of Pompeii and were buried during the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. *79.*

private residences nearby. As so often happens in archaeology, a disaster served to freeze a moment in the past—and allowed excavators from the eighteenth century onward to delve into the life of the region's ancient inhabitants.

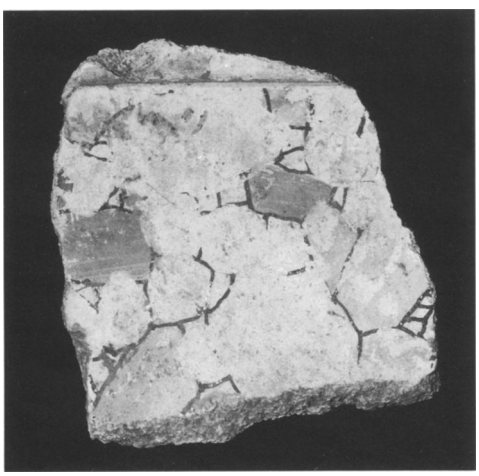
The many examples of fresco painting that have survived as a result of the eruption of Vesuvius are nevertheless but a fraction of what existed in the Roman world. Pompeii was not even among the thirty greatest cities of the Roman Empire. Thus with each discovery in the Vesuvian region or in Rome, scholars are forced to rethink issues related to chronology and style.

Because of two major acquisitions made early in this century, the Metropolitan Museum has the finest collection of Roman frescoes outside of Italy. Sections of painted walls from villas of the first century B.C. in the Neapolitan suburbs of Boscoreale and Boscotrecase were purchased and exported with the permission of the Italian government in 1903 and 1920 respectively. In the case of the second group of paintings, discovered in Boscotrecase in 1903 and acquired in 1920, the sequence of events was fortunate indeed, for had the paintings not been removed from their original context and offered for sale, they might well have been lost forever during the 1906 eruption of Mount Vesuvius.



4. The entrance vestibule of the Samnite House at Herculaneum displays typical decoration of the First Style of Roman wall painting, with an upper zone crowned by a stucco molding and painted central and lower zones simulating colored-marble slabs.

5. An example of First Style painting, this fragment (30.142.5) in the Metropolitan Museum simulates marble. A comparable fragment was recently excavated in Turkey at the site of Priene, and both may date from the early first century B.C.



The painted walls of Roman villas provide an unparalleled record of the life and worldview of the well-to-do two millennia ago. They are not only the physical remains of a site, but also mirrors of the Romans' cultural and artistic concerns. Frescoed walls in private Roman houses seem to have been almost exclusively decorative, only rarely appearing to have served a cultic or religious purpose.

It is a truism that the Romans were deeply indebted to the magnificent legacy of Greek culture. Roman narrative paintings are often presumed to copy works from the Greek Classical and Hellenistic periods, yet when they include mythological themes popular in the Greek world, the paintings are often casual and sentimentalized variations of earlier works. We must remember that for Roman patrons, as for us, Greek art had a historical fascination; Latin authors refer to the Greeks as the "ancients." The gap between the Greeks of the mid-fifth century B.C. and the Romans of the first century B.C. was as great as that between the High Renaissance and the Beaux-Arts period of the late nineteenth century.

Our knowledge of Roman and Pompeian villas of the first centuries B.C. and A.D. has grown considerably in the last decade and a half through systematic excavation and study. It has become clear that the decorative elements of these private homes are more profitably considered in their historical setting than as echoes of lost Hellenistic (late 4th–1st century B.C.) masterpieces. The nineteenth-century fascination with great ancient artists and shadowy cultural impulses has yielded to a more objective scholarly method, which seeks to examine each period and place as a particular milieu that drew to a greater or lesser extent from the past. It has become possible to conceive of a Roman private setting in Roman terms—as a place designed for first-century patrons who lived in rooms with elaborately decorated walls, ceilings, floors, and furnishings.

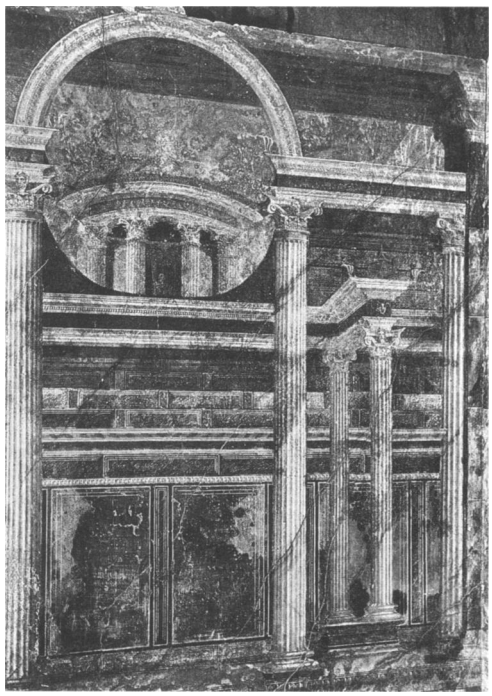
A development of Roman painting in four styles was discerned by August Mau in his seminal study of Roman painting of 1882. Although Mau's system is still basically sound, recent research has revealed frequent revivals of styles in later periods, leading to qualifications of the progression described by Mau. The First Style (ca. 200–60 B.C.) was largely an exploration of the possibilities of simulating marble of various colors and types on painted plaster. Artists of the late Republic (2nd–1st century B.C.) drew upon examples of early Hellenistic (late 4th–3rd century B.C.) painting and architecture in order to simulate masonry walls. The wall was routinely divided into three horizontal painted zones, and the uppermost was crowned by a stucco cornice of dentils, based upon the Doric architectural order (fig. 4). In general the mosaic floors of this period were more ornate than the walls, which lacked figural decoration.

The decline of the First Style coincided with the Roman colonization of Pompeii in 80 B.C., which transformed what had essentially been an Italic town with Greek influences into a Roman city. Going beyond the simple representation of costlier building materials, artists borrowed from the figural repertoire of Hellenistic Greek wall painting to depict gods, mortals, and heroes in various contexts. The stern-faced marble portraits of the late Republic might mislead one to imagine that it was a time of great austerity in contrast to the splendor and opulence of the imperial age, but it was in fact as socially variegated and populated by art collectors of extravagant taste as that which followed.

6. This room, painted with a variety of religious and cultic scenes, gave the Villa of the Mysteries, near Pompeii, its name. The large figures are characteristic of the Second Style.

In the earliest phase of the Second Style, prior to the middle of the first century B.C., the masonry wall of First Style painting endured, but columns appeared to break through the picture plane in an imaginary foreground. The next phase is found in both the Villa of the Mysteries near Pompeii (ca. 60 B.C.; fig. 7) and the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale (ca. 50–40 B.C.). The panels from Boscoreale, as we shall see, are an exceptional example of late Second Style decoration, teasing the eye with perspectival recession and providing copies of lost but presumably once-famous Hellenistic paintings. In the architectural vistas, deeply receding colonnades and projections of column bases into the viewer's space became commonplace. Often the wall was no longer acknowledged and simply embellished, as had been the tendency in the First Style, but was instead painted in such a way as to seem knee-high. We are encouraged to look above this socle, the only barrier before us, and out into fantastic panoramas or architectural confections (see figs. 27, 28). The fact that the viewer's eye was methodically tricked on such a scale gives us insight into the nature and extent of aesthetic refinement in the art of the late Roman Republic.

7. Bedroom B of the Villa of the Mysteries gives an example of Second Style trompe l'oeil in its depiction of a round temple behind a marble-faced wall and Corinthian columns.



In the Second Style copies of earlier paintings, as in the Boscoreale paintings of Room H, the intention was to create a picture gallery, of the kind we read about in ancient literature, that displayed elaborate reproductions of famous Hellenistic works (fig.32). The combination of paintings in a gallery was occasionally meaningful, as in the religious cycle of the Villa of the Mysteries, and occasionally haphazard, as in Boscoreale's Room H. At Boscoreale, the connection among some paintings is no greater than we would expect to find in a well-appointed residence of the nineteenth century; the choice of subjects appears to have been based on the quality and renown of the original pictures rather than some mysterious thread of meaning.

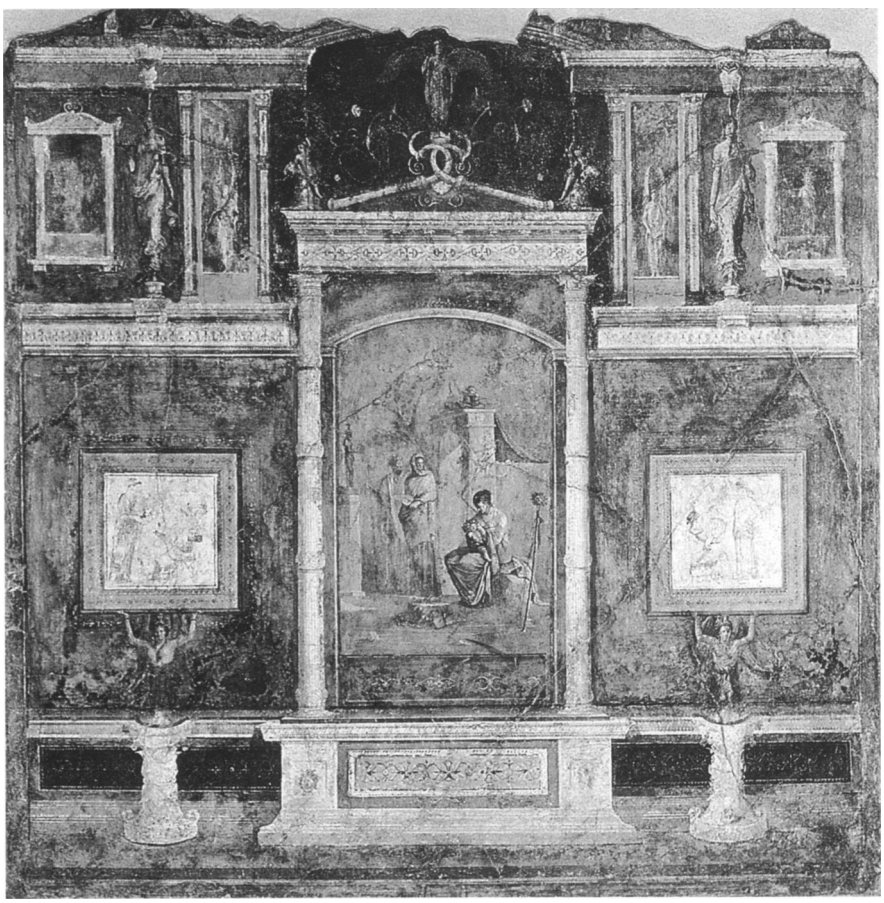
With the political transition from Julius Caesar's rule to that of Emperor Augustus (r. 27 B.C.–A.D. 14) in the second half of the first century B.C., sweeping artistic changes were introduced. When Octavian (later named

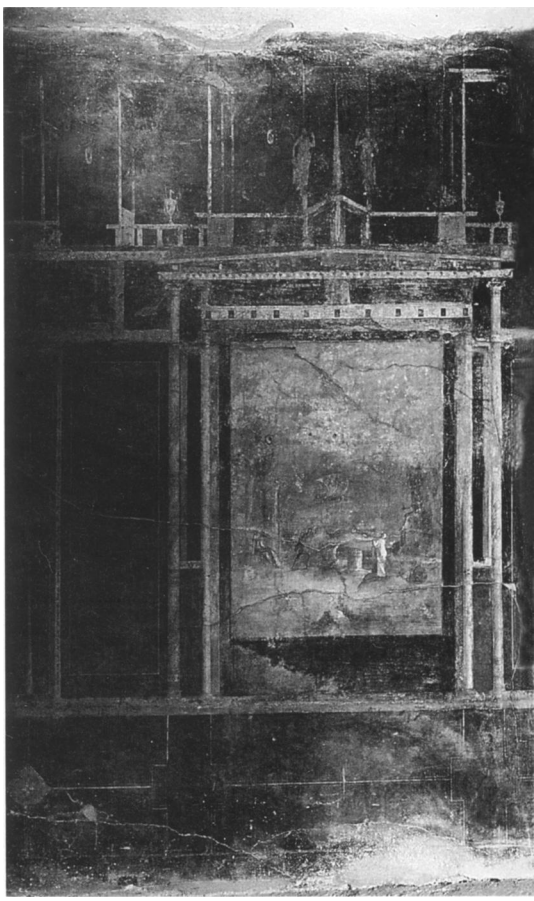
Augustus) defeated Mark Antony at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C., there followed a trend toward opulence in public monuments, epitomized by Augustus's declaration that he had found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble. During much of the Republic, elaboration was eschewed in public buildings, but in the early Empire, a change in political climate encouraged both public and private celebration of what was uniquely Roman in art rather than purely Greek-inspired artistic traditions.

Under Augustus, a new impulse to innovate, rather than re-create, asserted itself in architecture, portraiture, and other arts as well. Augustus oversaw the development of a new architectural order, the Composite Order, which mixed classical forms with Roman innovations and was first apparent in the Forum of Augustus in Rome (19 B.C.). His approach to official portraiture, which quickly influenced private portraiture, is exemplified by his statue from Prima Porta (ca. 20–17 B.C.; Museo Chiaramonti, The Vatican Museums). This magnificent work fuses fifth-century classicism and Hellenistic idealism, and suggests by the calm visage of the emperor, clad in the armor of a victorious general but barefoot like a deity, the security and prosperity that his reign would guarantee.

During the Third Style (ca. 20 B.C.–A.D. 20), coincident with Augustus's reign, the subject matter and style of fresco painting also changed abruptly. The introduction of this new style may in part be attributed to Augustus and Agrippa, his close friend and a patron of the arts, who sponsored many

8,9. Below: The alcove of the Villa Farnesina in Rome, constructed for Agrippa and decorated about 19 B.C., epitomizes the last phase of the Second Style in the diminished size of the central painting, which represents the nymph Leucothea cradling the infant Dionysos. From Museo Nazionale Romano: Le Pitture *(Rome, 1982), pl. 62. Center: In a Third Style wall of the dining room of the probably Augustan period Casa dei Cubicoli Floreali at Pompeii, the painting of Odysseus at the left has become simply one component of the whole decorative scheme. The dining room seems to depend closely on Bedroom 15 of the imperial villa at Boscotrecase.*



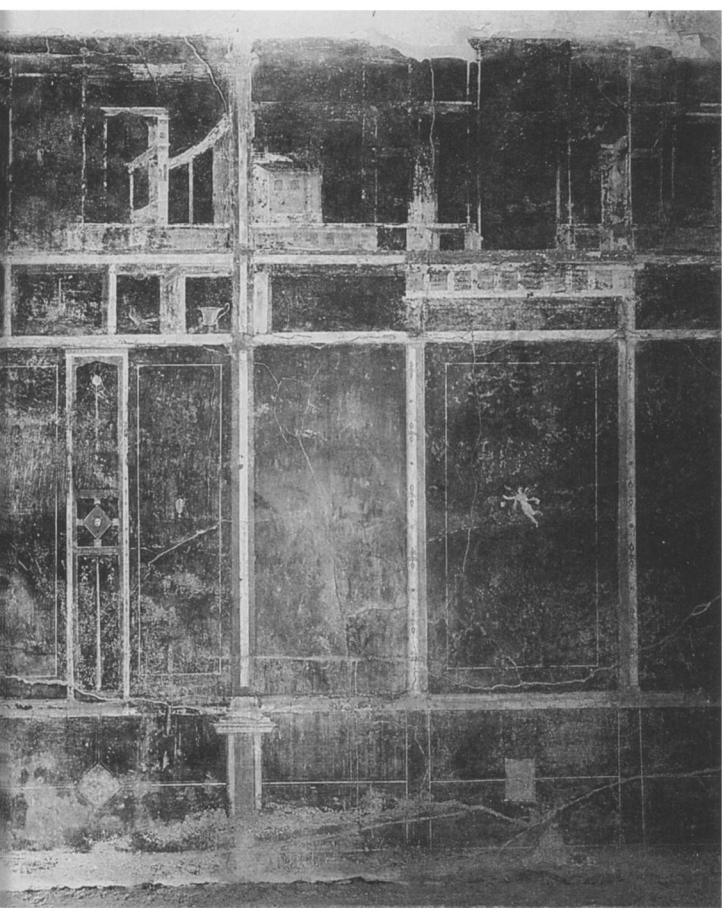


public buildings, such as the Pantheon in Rome. In fact, Agrippa's own villa in Rome, the Villa Farnesina (ca. 19 B.C.; fig. 8), anticipated the Third Style.

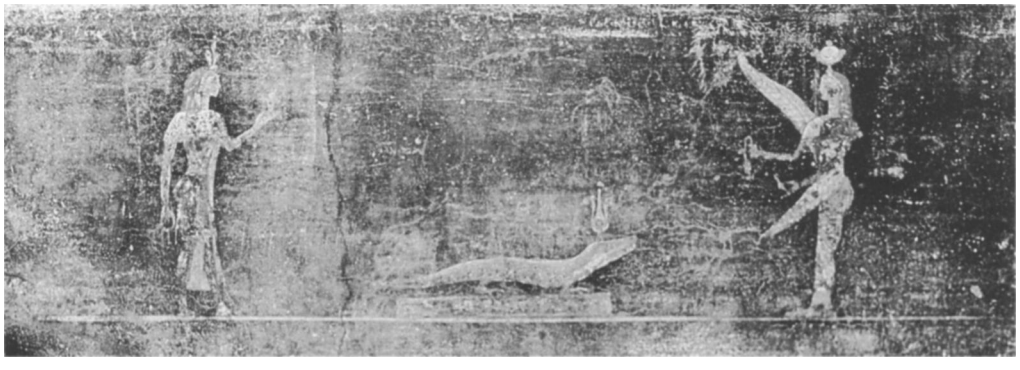
During this new phase of mural decoration, walls often had a single monochrome background color—such as red, black, or white—and were decorated with elaborate architectural, vegetal, and figural details. These drew upon familiar forms, including mythical beasts like sirens and griffins, but the original mythological symbolism of such animals seems to have been of practically no interest to the artists, who treated them as decorative devices. In decorative arts, the same basic indifference to subject matter was characteristic of the so-called Neo-Attic movement, which began to serve the Roman appetite for classicizing style as early as the late second century B.C. and was especially popular during the Augustan period.

Additional evidence of this primarily decorative, rather than symbolic, approach to wall painting is the fact that the multiplicity of figural scenes characteristic of the Second Style ended, and only a few stock scenes were used. These usually appeared in the center of the wall. As in the Second Style, they may be understood to serve as the equivalent of framed paintings, in which figures and landscapes were shown in fairly natural spatial perspective. These later paintings lose the importance they had earlier enjoyed, however, and are only a part, not the dominant element, in the overall decorative scheme. The paintings' subjects, which during the Second Style had begun to matter less than the fame of the works copied, became

10. The paintings of the Third Style Villa Imperiale at Pompeii (ca. 12 B.C.) show careful attention to detail and have much in common with those from Boscotrecase. Here an incense burner rises in front of a delicately described frieze and fantastic architectural features. The small paintings to either side of the incense burner are subordinated to the other decorative elements.



11,12. Above: In a detail of the north wall of the Black Room from Boscotrecase, Egyptian figures propitiate the deity Anubis in the form of a jackal. Below: A similar scene with a crocodile is part of a predella in the Third Style tablinum, *or vestibule, in the Villa of the Mysteries. Augustus's defeat of Antony and Cleopatra gave Egyptianizing motifs a symbolic character in Boscotrecase's imperial residence; in a private home such as the Villa of the Mysteries they merely reflected the taste of the day. (See also fig. 48.)*



less significant than the harmony of the paintings with the surrounding sections of the wall, the ceiling, and the mosaic floor.

Interest in reproducing famous Hellenistic masterpieces and portraying elaborate vistas was replaced by an acknowledgment of the two-dimensionality of the wall's painted surface. Third Style artists were preoccupied with artistic form rather than content and no longer fascinated with simulating depth. Although very skilled technically, they eschewed the perspectival exaggerations of the preceding style, except to poke fun at them, as on the north wall of Boscotrecase's Black Room (ca. 11 B.C.; figs. 47–50, back covers). Here the Second Style's distant landscapes seen through massive pediments are parodied by a miniature painting of a landscape on the wall—not in the distance—and a spindly canopy barely protruding into the viewer's space.

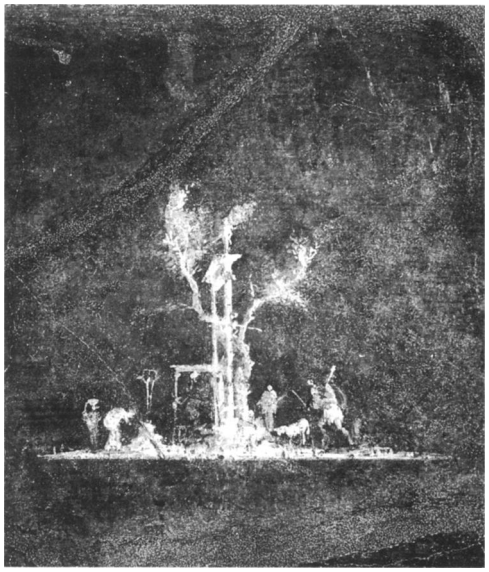
The Metropolitan's paintings from the imperial villa at Boscotrecase are among the finest anywhere of the Third Style, in some ways the most revolutionary phase because its insistent two-dimensionality reflects a moment when artists reacted against tradition rather than built upon it. This impulse, which is familiar to students of modern painting, was rarely attested in the history of the classical world.

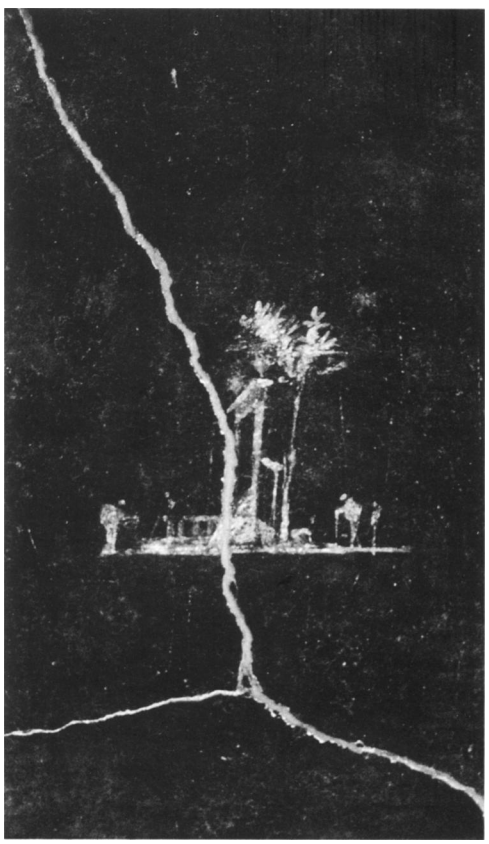
It was in large measure the perspectival conceits and playful attitude governing the late Second and Third Styles that prompted the condemnation of Vitruvius, the late first-century B.C. architect and writer. In one passage of his book *De Architectura*, Vitruvius laments:

> Imitations based upon reality are now disdained by the improper taste of the present.... Instead of columns there rise up stalks; instead of gables, striped panels with curled leaves and volutes. Candelabra uphold pictured shrines and above the summits of these, clusters of thin stalks rise from their roots in tendrils with little figures seated upon them at random.... Slender stalks with heads of men and of animals [are] attached to half the body. Such things neither are, nor can be, nor have been.... For how can a reed actually sustain a roof, or a candelabrum the ornaments of a gable?.... For pictures cannot be approved which do not resemble reality. (7.5.3,4)

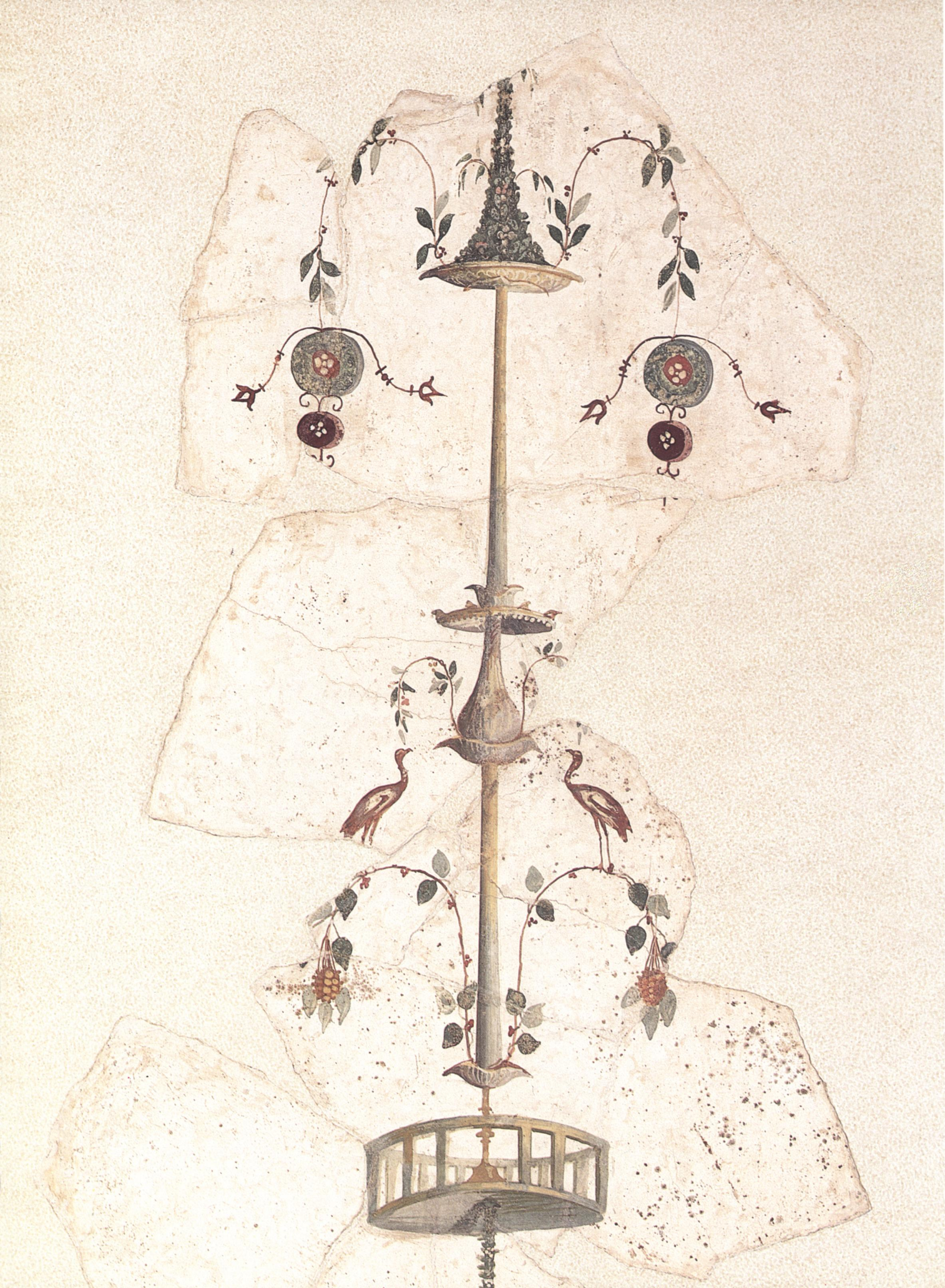
The crusty rhetoric of Vitruvius's conservative voice echoed Republican distaste for the novel artistic direction taken during the monarchy of Augustus, but the early Third Style, which was in effect the court style of the emperor Augustus and his friend Agrippa, eventually gave way to a rekindled interest in elaboration for its own sake. The color palette of the Third Style also evolved, so that the initial stark and restrained red, white, and black backgrounds eventually changed to green, blue, and yellow. This progression signaled a gradual revival of the ostentation and flourish of late Republican taste.

During the Fourth Style (ca. A.D. 20–79) there was a revival of interest in the simulation of depth on the painted wall and the depiction of fantastic panoramas, as well as a revived emphasis on narrative painting. In the Julio-Claudian phase of this style (ca. A.D. 20–54), a textilelike quality dominates and tendrils seem to connect all of the elements on a wall. The colors warm up once again, and they are used to advantage in the depiction of scenes drawn from mythology. A second subtype of the Fourth Style involves a flattening of the picture plane once more, and a third introduces a complete blanketing of the wall with painted images, a manifestation of the *amor pleni* (love of abundance) that is typical of contemporary Flavian (A.D. 69–96) architectural sculpture and decoration.





13,14. The landscape from the east wall of the Boscotrecase villa's Black Room (above) may have inspired a landscape of identical size in Pompeii's Casa dei Cubicoli Floreali (below). The scene in each shows a two-column structure near a tree, with figures approaching the apparent scene of sacrifice.



The decoration of a Roman villa was a highly organized enterprise. Wall paintings were carefully planned in advance with intricate systems of proportions and geometry, hinted at by Vitruvius. Private interiors were probably a cooperative effort of artists in itinerant workshops who specialized in painting backgrounds, landscapes, and figures, molding elaborate stucco cornices and ceilings, and creating mosaic pavements in conjunction with the wall paintings.

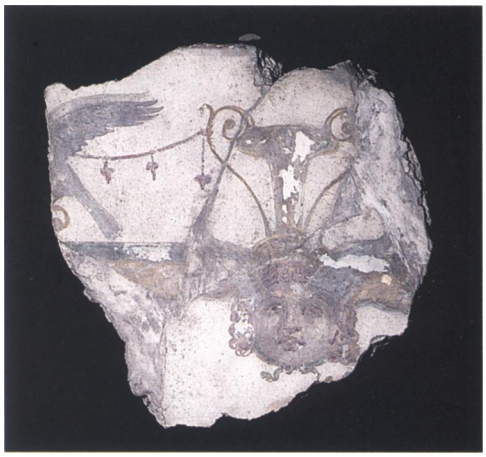
Some of the best evidence for the techniques of Roman artists is in Pliny's *Natural History* and in Vitruvius's manual *De Architectura*. Vitruvius describes the elaborate methods employed by wall painters, including the insertion of sheets of lead in the wall to prevent the capillary action of moisture from attacking the fresco, the preparation of as many as seven layers of plaster on the wall, and the use of marble powder in the top layers to help produce a mirrorlike sheen on the surface. Sections of each room were painted at different times, and the edges of each section (or *giornata*, meaning the extent of a day's work) are faintly visible on the surface. It seems that preliminary drawings or light incisions on the prepared surface guided the artists in decorating the walls *a fresco* (on fresh plaster) with strong primary colors; the lighter colors were apparently often added *a secco* (on dry plaster) in a subsequent phase, although there is vigorous and continuing debate about the exact methods of Roman painters.

Vitruvius is helpful as well in informing us about the colors used by Roman mural painters. Black was essentially drawn from the carbon created by burning brushwood or pine chips. Ocher was extracted from mines and served for yellow. Reds were derived either from cinnabar, red ocher, or from heating white lead. Blues were made from mixing sand and copper and baking the mixture. The deepest purple was by far the most precious color, since it came from certain sea whelks, but Vitruvius also describes less expensive methods of obtaining purple pigment by dyeing chalk with berries.

Affluent Romans of the first centuries B.C. and A.D. often had more than one residence, including a house in the city and a country villa, and those of a higher station, like senators and knights, frequently had several villas. The expenditure of vast sums on the construction and furnishing of these homes prompted considerable criticism; Lucretius noted sourly that boredom drove the rich from their city home to their country one and back again. Such was the quest for creature comforts and diversions that pisciculture—the breeding of fish in ponds—became a passion similar to the cultivation of tulips in seventeenth-century Holland, and many Roman writers complained that the business of government suffered because of it.

Certainly much of the condemnation of *luxuria* in Roman country estates was pure Republican lip service; Cicero was among the critics but had several villas himself and corresponded actively in search of statues for his gardens. The elaborate retreats of the late Republic and early Empire were amenities that seem to have been indispensable to the wealthy.

The *villa rustica*, or country villa, which permitted the owner to oversee the farms at his disposal, must have originated early on in Campania, which was first colonized by the Greeks in the middle of the eighth century B.C. Evidence for such villas is preserved only from the second century B.C. onward, however, when prominent Romans like Scipio Africanus Maior had a secondary residence outside of the capital for occasional stays. At that time, imported objects from Roman military conquests in Greece filled the



15–17. Opposite: This detail from the White Room of Boscotrecase recalls Vitruvius's passage describing the playful conceits of the late Second and early Third Styles, which he deplored. Above: The Julio-Claudian Gorgon mask (92.11.8) reveals some of the technical features of Roman fresco, with a colorful layer a secco *(on dry plaster) painted on top of the white fresco background. Below: A panel in the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, typifies the fantastic architecture painted during the Fourth Style.*

homes of Roman patrons both in the cities and in the countryside. Such booty fired the imagination of artists working in the region and accounts for much of the imagery in villas of the second and first centuries B.C.

During the late Republic, the agricultural productivity of farms adjacent to these villas became less important than the enjoyment the owners derived from the residences themselves. This trend was a source of irritation as early as the mid-second century B.C. to men like M. Porcius Cato, who saw in the striving for *luxuria* a debasement of longstanding Roman virtues associated with hard work and devotion to the state.

As the role of the country villa changed from a simple residence for overseeing agricultural productivity to a comfortable retreat, more slaves were kept year-round on the grounds and more rooms and service buildings were added. Similarly, as the owners grew increasingly sophisticated, it became fashionable to invite Greek philosophers and Roman literati to these retreats. The settings in which an owner entertained his guests changed accordingly, and simple paintings imitating masonry walls yielded to scenes drawn from Greek mythology.

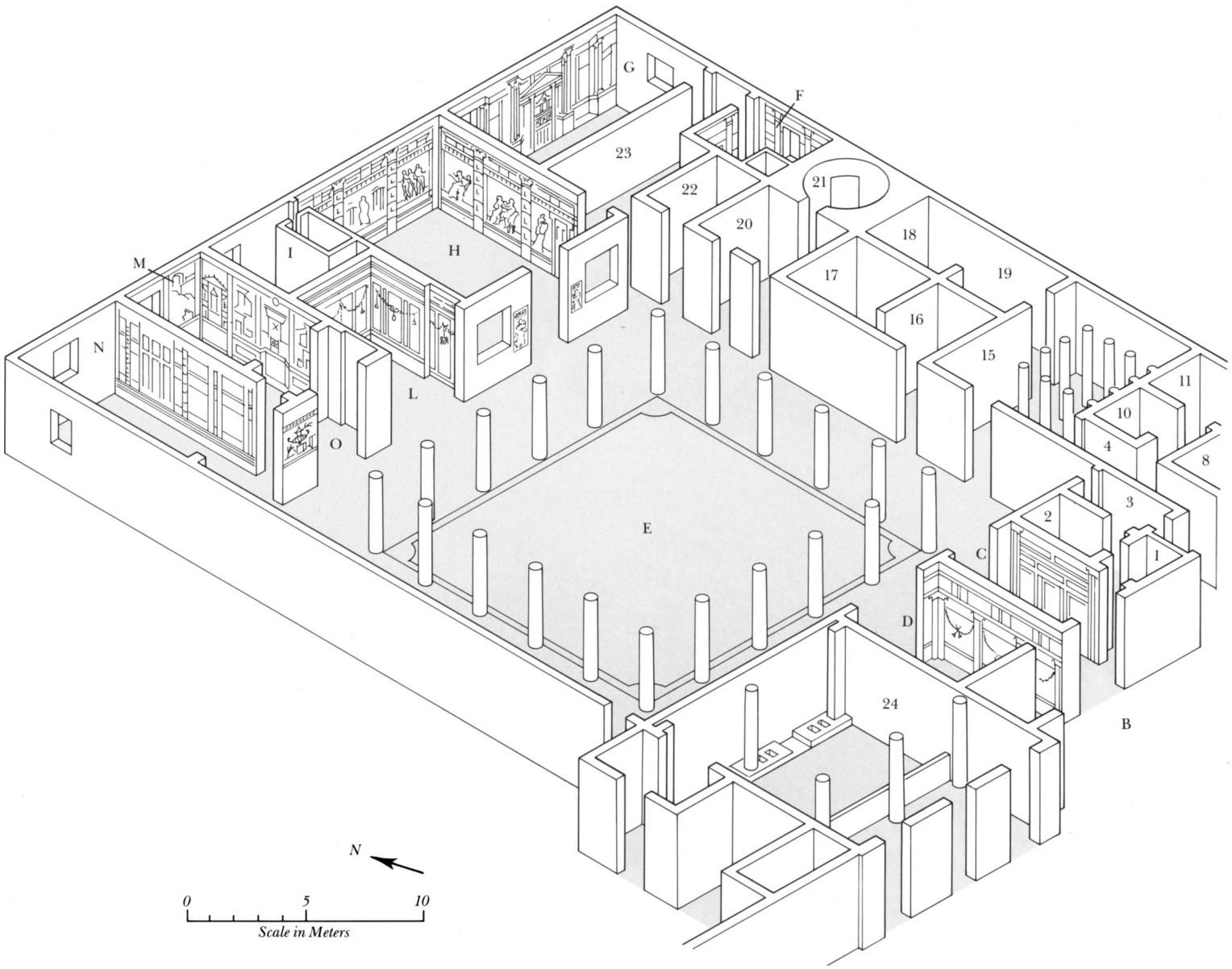
The cultivated taste that replaced mere ostentation was in no small measure responsible for the growth of the Second Style. The painted walls of dining rooms, libraries, and bedrooms, like those of the villa at Boscoreale, soon reflected the villa owners' intellectual and aesthetic savoir faire and were meant to be appreciated by visitors from the neighboring Greek city of Neapolis (ancient Naples).

18. Vesuvius can be seen to the northwest in this photograph of the villa at Boscoreale taken during its excavation, in September of 1900. In the foreground is the olearium *(Room 24 on the plan, fig. 21) for the manufacture and storage of wine and oil. The villa's entrance is at the right. Between the entrance and the olearium was the Room of the Musical Instruments, named after the subject of its frescoes; paintings from both rooms are now in the Louvre. Two columns of the peristyle emerge from the mound of earth at the right, still unexcavated at the time, and Bedroom M is just beyond the column farthest from the observer. From F. Barnabei,* La villa pompeiana di P. Fannio Sinistore *(Rome, 1901), pl. III.*

19,20. The two paintings at the left are from the House of Marcus Lucretius Fronto in Pompeii. Mount Vesuvius may be described in the background of the view of a seaside villa (above). The other painting depicts a suburban villa with its gardens in the foreground. Both images are datable to the early Fourth Style, about A.D. *50–75 or shortly before Vesuvius's eruption in August of 79.*

Tacitus tells us that during the early Empire, from the end of the first century B.C. through the middle of the first century A.D., those who could lived in "profusis sumptibus"—lavish extravagance—as the private residences of the period attest. Condemnations of such self-indulgence by writers like Martial continued, but Campania was filled with sumptuous properties, including the imperial estate at Boscotrecase, and until the end of the Roman Empire remained an inviting resort area of thermal cures, glamorous social life, and intellectual stimulation. Each villa's extensive grounds provided ample space for innovative landscape design and architectural and decorative experimentation, but the proliferation of such villas also resulted in motifs shared from one to the next, which has facilitated the archaeologist's tasks of establishing relative chronology and sorting out workshops.

The discovery of Roman villas in Campania has proceeded slowly, since so much of the countryside surrounding Vesuvius was covered over and subsequently built upon. By contrast, the remains of seaside villas—often owned in addition to *villae rusticae*—may be spotted underwater to this day in the Bay of Naples, especially in the area around Posilipo, ancient Pausilypon. The chance discoveries of the two villas at Boscoreale and Boscotrecase are especially important, since these were superb examples of late Republican and early Empire interior design. Dozens of other extraordinary villas in the region, both imperial and private, await careful excavation.



21. The villa at Boscoreale is shown here in a roofless isometric plan that includes features known only from the excavation report published by F. Barnabei in 1901. Retaining Barnabei's unorthodox system of identification, we can proceed around the villa clockwise:

B. Interior entrance
C. Passageway
D. Room of the Musical Instruments
24. Olearium, *for the production of wine and oil*
E. Peristyle. The six-column arrangement was imitated on the painted walls below the cantilevered roof of the courtyard. A large bronze vase (fig. 39) was painted on the wall across the entrances of Rooms N and O, and the Corinthian column (fig. 38) was at the southeast corner of the peristyle
N. Winter triclinium *(dining room)*
O. Sitting room
M. Cubiculum with a north window, which may have been original or added after the earthquake of A.D. *62 (see fig. 23)*
L. An open exedra *with three walls painted with garlands. The wall visible in the drawing is in the Musée Royal et Domaine de Mariemont, Morlanwelz, Belgium; the Metropolitan's panel (fig. 43) was on the facing wall*
I. This room was decorated with paintings of rusticated masonry, now in the Louvre and in the Mariemont museum
H. Probably a dining room. On the wall facing the south entrance were three paintings (left to right): Dionysos and Ariadne, Aphrodite and Eros, and the Three Graces. Only the center panel is preserved; it is in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. Above each painting were smaller triptychs; two of these, in very poor condition, are in the Metropolitan Museum. On the right (east) wall were the Metropolitan's paintings (figs. 34–36). A winged Genius was at each side of the southern entrance from the peristyle; one is in the Louvre, and the other is in the Mariemont museum. On the left (west wall), not visible, were three paintings now in Naples
G. Summer dining room(?). Paintings in the Mariemont and Naples museums
23. Passageway
F. Three paintings of this room are in the Metropolitan (see figs. 40, 42)
22. Uncertain function
20. Dressing room
21. Frigidarium *(cold bath)*
17. Tepidarium *(warm bath)*
18–19. Caldarium *(hot bath)*
15. Colonnaded courtyard
1–12. Servants' quarters

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22. Opposite: Detail of a mask of Pan from the Metropolitan's section of Room L

THE VILLA OF P. FANNIUS SYNISTOR AT BOSCOREALE

The frescoes from Boscoreale, an area about a mile north of Pompeii, are among the most important to be found anywhere in the Roman world. Boscoreale was notable in antiquity for having numerous aristocratic country villas. This tradition endured into the time of the Bourbon kings, as is attested by the region's name, the "Royal Forest," which implies that Boscoreale was a hunting preserve. The villa was discovered in late 1900 and excavated by Vincenzo De Prisco on the property of Francesco Vona. The paintings were cut from the excavated ruins, framed in wood, and then put up at auction; most of them went to the Metropolitan Museum, some remained in Naples, and others ended up in the Louvre and museums in the Netherlands and Belgium.

Like so many excavations of the period, this one was far from scientific and left much to be desired. The existing clues concerning the villa's ownership in antiquity are fragmentary indeed, and it is risky to base theories of ownership on brick stamps and graffiti, but all that survives points to the villa having been built shortly after the middle of the first century B.C. One piece of evidence, a graffito, indicates that the first auction of the villa took place on May 9, A.D. 12. There were at least two owners during the first century A.D. One was named Publius Fannius Synistor, as is known from

03.14.13

23,24. Bedroom M, the best-preserved room of the villa, has been reconstructed in the Metropolitan Museum. The mosaic floor, couch, and footstool come from other Roman villas and are of a later date. On the facing page is a detail from the north wall, showing birds at a fountain and garden architecture, all of which might have been seen through the room's window.

an inscription on a bronze vessel found in Room 24. The other owner bore the name Lucius Herennius Florus; this fact was determined from a bronze stamp found in the villa and now in the Metropolitan Museum. Although we know the names of later owners, no evidence enables us to identify the villa's original owner or the man who commissioned the frescoes. For the sake of convenience, the villa is ordinarily referred to as that of Fannius.

The surviving paintings are extremely fine examples of the late Second Style, the most renowned example of which is the Republican period decoration of the so-called Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii. Throughout the frescoes from the villa at Boscoreale there are visual ambiguities to tease the eye, including architectural details painted to resemble real ones, such as rusticated masonry, pillars, and columns that cast shadows into the viewer's space, and more conventional trompe l'oeil devices like three-dimensional meanders. In and around the fanciful architecture of the villa's Bedroom M,

for example, objects of daily life were depicted in such a way as to seem real, with metal and glass vases on shelves and tables appearing to project out from the wall. Cumulatively, these trompe l'oeil devices reveal the Republican owners' evident pleasure in impressing their guests at this comfortable summer retreat.

In 1964 excavations began on the site of a villa known as Oplontis, in the modern town of Torre Annunziata, near Naples. The excavations, which continue to this day, have shed much light on the school that is in all likelihood responsible for the villa of Fannius at Boscoreale. The frescoes at the villa of Oplontis include fanciful colonnades, rustic settings developed with improbably complex architecture, and various other subjects and decorative schemes also found at Boscoreale. Oplontis has much to teach us about the decorative traditions of this period, since unlike the remains of so many other villas in the region, it is well preserved in its original context.

Oplontis is particularly illuminating about the decoration of Boscoreale's Room M, which was a bedroom (*cubiculum nocturnum*) in the villa. This bedroom, which had a sitting room (*cubiculum diurnum*) to the south, is exceptional for the degree of detail in its painted scenes, which are combined with actual architectural features to create a very playful atmosphere. Above the richly painted walls of imagined rustic architecture was a stucco ceiling. Oplontis presents a useful parallel not for the landscape scenes of Boscoreale's Cubiculum M, but for the peristyle that opens out to those scenes. Both villas share the scheme in which red Corinthian columns with floral vines winding around them support a narrow entablature decorated with shields emblazoned with the so-called Macedonian starburst.

No less instructive is Pompeii's Casa del Labirinto, which bears a very close relation to Boscoreale in scale as well as in decorative detail. The landscape scenes with villa architecture, in particular, are quite similar to those of Bedroom M at Boscoreale.

Bedroom M is especially enlightening for modern viewers because it provides a particularly vivid picture of Roman luxury. The walls of the bedroom are painted in such a way as to conceal the fact that they are walls and to make them appear as views of the grounds of the villa—or an idealized version of the villa. The centers of the east and west walls are divided from the side sections by the splendid red columns. Between the columns we see, on the left side, a shrine known as a *syzygia*, which consists of a short entablature supported by two pillars. In the shrine's center stands a goddess holding a flaming torch in each hand (fig. 27). The shrine is walled off from us and shrouded below with a dark curtain, as if to keep us away.

To either side of the shrine are views of the entrance to a fantastic country villa. The central portal, which is double-doored, is as ornate as the remainder of the architecture and is apparently inlaid with tortoiseshell. The architecture that spreads out beyond it is vast and complex, and at the very top the farthest extension of the villa's high enclosure wall is visible (cover). The complex is best understood as a pastiche of balconies, towers, and buildings rather than a literal image of a particular architectural scene.

Bedroom M exhibits an impulse to fantasy that is very telling about the taste of the original owner. The Second Style, in general, and the painted configurations of such walls as these, in particular, developed out of an early Hellenistic painting style, as the Tomb of Lyson and Kallikles near Lefkadia in Macedonia demonstrates, but this room is very much the vision

25,26. Opposite: In the painting on the east wall of Bedroom M, this ornate door stands at the entrance to a fantastic villa (see larger detail, front cover). The door has decoration of inlaid tortoiseshell and bronze door knockers in the form of lions' heads. Above is a comparable door from the atrium of the villa at Oplontis, which was probably painted by the same workshop.

OVERLEAF

27,28. Left: This detail from the west wall of Bedroom M shows the entrance to a sanctuary with an archaistic statue of the goddess Hekate bearing two torches. The two-pillar structure with an entablature is later echoed in the miniature landscape paintings of Boscotrecase. Right: On the east wall of Bedroom M, a round temple, or tholos, *stands in an open-air sanctuary. An altar in the foreground is laden with an offering of fruit.*

of a late Republican landowner with grandiose pretensions who seeks to impress the viewer with the scope of his imagined grounds.

There is little to be learned about ancient religion in this room, since divinities serve chiefly as part of the landscape. Images of gods, satyrs, and fishermen are not meaningfully distinct. An urban sophisticate like our villa owner was more concerned with displaying emblems of wealth than in appeasing gods in whom he may not have fully believed; the educated Roman middle class was superstitious but agnostic.

Ampler confirmation of this agnosticism may be found in the villa's largest room, that described as H on the plan. (The elements preserved from that room are divided among the Metropolitan, the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples, the Louvre, the Musée Royal et Domaine de Mariemont

*29,30. The balcony from the east wall of Bedroom M is rich with decoration. Above the cornice is a series of eight crowning elements (*acroteria*); the columns supporting the horizontal beam have garlands and ox heads (*bucrania*) attached to them, typical adjuncts to Hellenistic and Roman architecture. A screen of figures appears behind the columns. Below these is a frieze with acanthus ornament, supported by timbers emerging from the wall.*

At the right is a detail from the right edge of the window of Bedroom M. The transparent glass bowl of fruit at the top is almost identical to a bowl painted in the villa at Oplontis. Below it is an image in yellow that represents a painting or a marble relief. The complex scene describes a Roman seaside town with fishermen, figures crossing a bridge, and a great variety of architectural forms, including houses and temples. These small vignettes show the painters' enthusiasm for conveying the details of everyday life.

in Belgium, and the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam.) Room H was about twenty-five feet square, with decoration consisting of eight main painted scenes that showed a figure or group of figures. Each scene was separated from the next by a painted column, which acted almost as a frame. This set the decorative scheme apart from that of the Villa of the Mysteries of some years earlier, in which the columns are behind the figures and thus do not interrupt a narrative continuum. Here the artists preferred to separate each main panel, as indicated also by the separate shrine paintings and architectural motifs in the upper zone above each panel.

In the center of the north wall was an image of Aphrodite joined by a diminutive figure of Eros. To the left was Dionysos reclining on Ariadne's lap, and on the right were the Three Graces, in their familiar late Classical pose.

On the west wall were, from south to north, a false doorway, an elderly bearded man leaning on a walking stick, and a pair of figures, one seated and one standing, with a shield between them. The figures have been variously identified and may be either mythological or historical.

The east wall featured three paintings now in the care of the Metropolitan. These are, from north to south (left to right), a citharist and a girl, a man and a woman (both seated), and a single image of a woman bearing a shield (figs. 34–36). As on the other side of the room, the single figure was in the panel interrupted by a doorway—this one not false, but actually leading out of the room, proving that the painted decoration conformed to the exigencies of the room's architecture.

The scenes in Boscoreale's Room H derive from the Greek tradition of *megalographia*, or large-scale painting, about which so much was written in antiquity; Apollinarius of Sidon, Petronius in the *Satyricon*, and Vitruvius all shed light on the use of megalographia in a Roman villa. Copies of famous paintings of the past evidently appealed to the owners of these homes. Although it seems likely that at least three of the panels in Room H allude to historical figures or personifications associated with Macedonia and Asia, the remainder cannot be brought together in a unified context. Thus, while there are some undeniable associations among three scenes, the others are paintings of divinities and what is probably a portrait of a philosopher.

The illustrated reconstruction of the room, undertaken for an exhibition in Essen at the Villa Hügel, gives a better idea of the relative importance of each major scene. The room may have served as the primary *triclinium*, or dining room. This suggestion has met with criticism by some who argue that dining rooms were usually smaller; the same scholars believe that Room H was reserved for the celebration of a cult, perhaps that of Aphrodite. Yet several of the painted figures are open to interpretations that diminish the possibility of an association with a cult. For example, the painting of a man

31–33. The reconstruction of Boscoreale's Room H (opposite, below) was first assembled for an exhibition in the Villa Hügel in Essen, West Germany, in 1979. The paintings (above), now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, with personifications (perhaps of Asia and Macedonia) and an elderly philosopher (possibly Epicurus) faced the paintings, now in the Metropolitan, that are illustrated in figs. 34–36. The panels on the far (north) wall described Dionysos and Ariadne (now lost), Aphrodite and the infant Eros (Museo Archeologico Nazionale), and the Three Graces (now lost). The painting of the Three Graces (opposite, above; Museo Archeologico Nazionale) serves to give an impression of the appearance of the missing version from the north wall. Above each large painting was a small triptychlike picture, two of which survive in the Metropolitan in poor condition.

34. The seated cithara player and the girl behind her may be portraits of a Macedonian queen and her daughter or maidservant. Unlike the cycle of figures depicted in the Villa of the Mysteries, each painting in Room H is a distinct scene set between Corinthian columns; part of one is visible at the right. Figures 34–36 are from the east wall of the room.

leaning on a walking stick is thought by some to be a portrait of the philosopher Epicurus and therefore unrelated to the worship of Aphrodite. Other suggestions have included the philosophers Zeno, Menedemos of Eretria, or Aratos of Soli, as well as King Kinyras of Cyprus. Thus, the picture gallery in Room H reveals the villa owner's interest in the painterly forms of the late Classical and Hellenistic periods, but the presence of unrelated figures that appear to be adapted from historical and mythological paintings in a room that was in all likelihood the focus of gastronomic, rather

03.14.5

than religious, ritual suggests that there was no veiled meaning in the room's decoration, but rather an overt one: these are images that attest to the cultivation of the man who entertained there.

It was the custom of Campanian villas at this time to decorate the peristyle with copies of classical statuary, and we may assume that this villa at Boscoreale was no exception. Boscoreale's paintings of gods, philosophers, and kings may have been arranged in the same somewhat haphazard way that statues of such subjects adorned the exterior of a villa, as in the case of

35. The nude man and himation-clad woman looking to the right may be a Macedonian king and queen or a pair of divinities. This painting and that on the facing page are perhaps copies from the same lost Hellenistic cycle; the other paintings in Room H may be unrelated.

03.14.6

03.14.7

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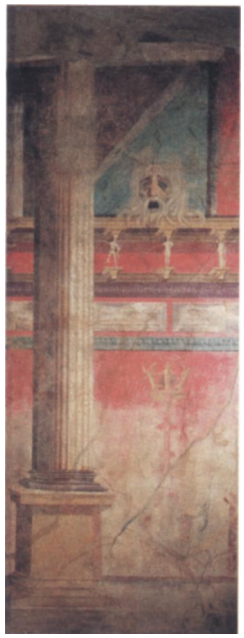
03.14.3

36–39. In the third painting from the east wall of Room H, a woman holds a shield bearing the image of a nude man, which may be a decorative device or a reflection. Unlike the other two (figs. 34,35), this panel has only a single figure, because it was adjacent to a doorway. The column with bosses was probably to the east of the southern entrance to Room H. The upper part of a column reproduced on this page is from the southeast corner of the peristyle and is the only surviving example of the painted columns of that enclosure. On the wall of the peristyle between Rooms N and O was the painting of the bronze vase above.

the Villa of the Papiri at Herculaneum, which has very recently been reopened for excavation.

The message we receive from this late Republican villa is that displays of wealth were best accompanied by symbols of the Greek past. By appealing to the forms of Hellenistic art, which were as much in vogue in late Republican villas as were classical traditions, the Roman patron signaled his appreciation of a classical heritage and, incidentally, invited lengthy treatises of modern scholars in search of his true decorative intentions and sources. His intentions were almost certainly not complicated; Room H is a display of erudition rather than a hall devoted to worship. His sources were, at this pivotal time in Roman history, near the time of Julius Caesar's death and the end of the Triumvirate, more firmly anchored in a past civilization than in the present. This approach to interior decoration stood in stark contradiction to the political values of the Republic, officially suspicious as it was of Greek tradition, and was to be upset in the succeeding reign of the emperor Augustus. Under Rome's first emperor was born the Third Style, best exemplified by the villa at Boscotrecase.

03.14.12



Naples

40–42. The vertical panels (opposite and below) reproduced on these pages are from Boscoreale's Room F, which was situated between the dining area to the north and the baths to the south. The function of Room F is unknown. The elaborate upper zone of the large panel includes paintings of sirens supporting the cornice, multicolored marble slabs, and a tortoiseshell-inlaid pilaster.

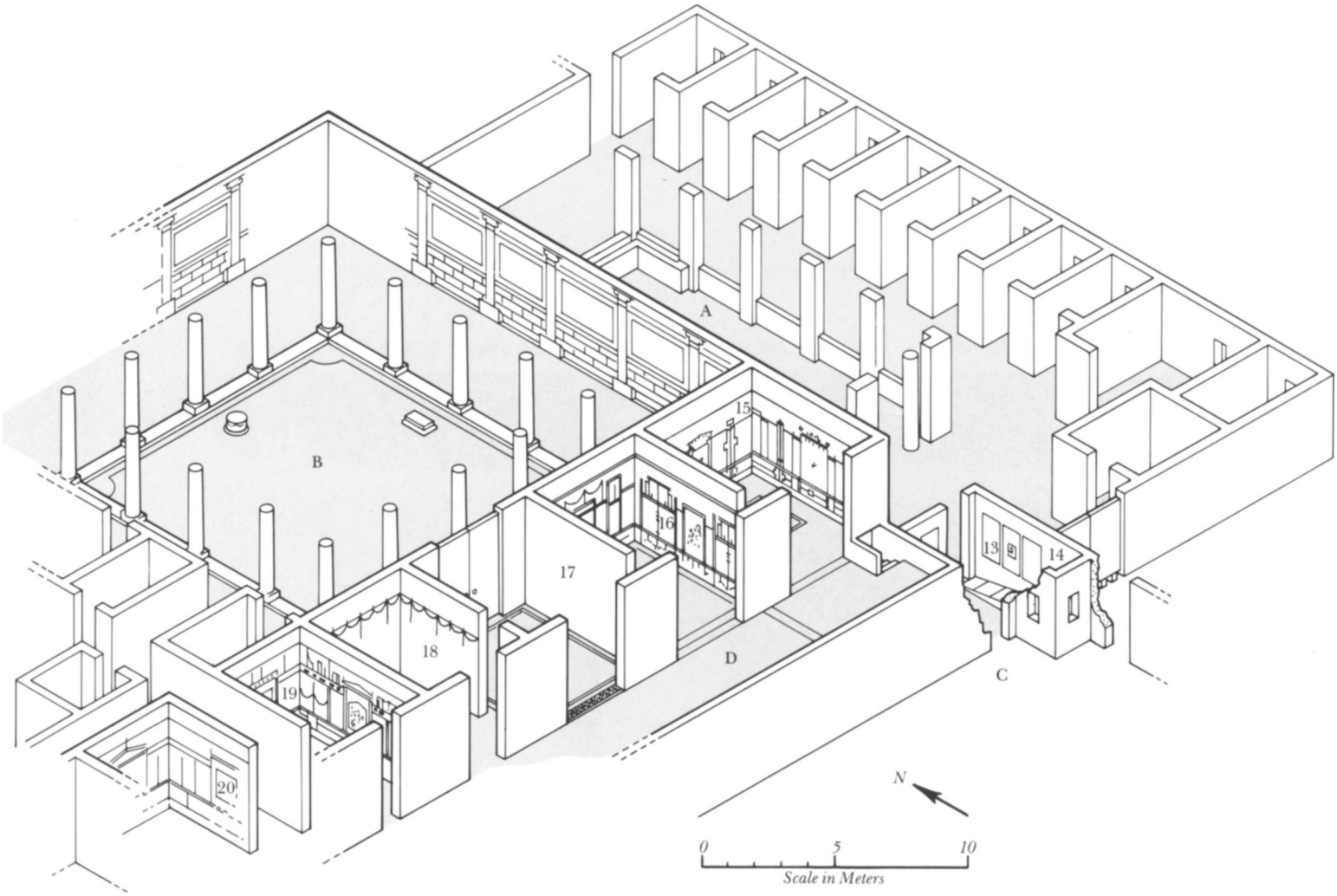
The magnificent architectural panorama at the left, similar to those in Bedroom M, is from Room G, which may have been the summer dining room. Like the views in Room M, these panels, now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, are largely derived from painted Hellenistic stage designs.

03.14.10

OVERLEAF

43. The superb west wall of the exedra, *Room L, includes a snake crawling from a basket, a satyr's mask, and a cymbal, all of which are suspended below a massive garland with bull's heads. The upper zone consists of a delicate egg-and-dart register supported by a vegetal frieze. The polychromed marble slabs below rest above a cyma of leaves, and the colored* faux-marbre *panels are evenly spaced below the horizontal panels of the upper zone.*

03.14.4



44. The villa at Boscotrecase, like the villa at Boscoreale, was organized around a central peristyle (B) with paintings of columns behind actual columns; this part of the villa may have been completed shortly after that of Boscoreale. The servants' entrance was at the southeast part of the excavated remains. A lararium, *or household shrine, stood to the left of the entrance. The servants' quarters lay to the east. These included an atrium and fountain basin.*

13. A kitchen storeroom decorated with paintings described by the excavator as in the Fourth Style; these included an image of Apollo stringing his lyre
14. Bathroom, accessible by ramp from 13
15. The Black Room, the easternmost room, is for the most part preserved at the Metropolitan (see figs. 47–50)
16. Preserved in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples
17. Exedra
18. This bedroom was decorated with a frieze of garlands
19. The Mythological Room. On the west wall was a panel with Polyphemus and Galatea; on the east wall were depicted Andromeda and Perseus (see figs. 54,55)
20. The White Room. Only two panels from this bedroom are preserved in the Metropolitan (see figs. 51–53)

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45. Opposite: Mask of Medusa from the west wall of the Black Room at Boscotrecase

THE IMPERIAL VILLA AT BOSCOTRECASE

Boscotrecase is the modern name of a small residential area to the south of Naples; the region's name may imply that there were once three houses of great importance in the area, which was originally wooded. In antiquity Boscotrecase commanded a sweeping view of the Bay of Naples. All seventeen of the paintings from Boscotrecase in the Metropolitan come from a villa of the late first century B.C. that stood near Torre Annunziata.

The distinction of the villa at Boscotrecase is that it was the country residence of certain members of the first Roman imperial family—the family of the emperor Augustus. It was discovered on March 23, 1903, when the train line that runs from Naples around the base of Mount Vesuvius was under construction. The owner of the property on which the villa was found, Cavaliere Ernesto Santini, excavated it with the help of an eminent Italian archaeologist, Matteo Della Corte, and was richly rewarded for his efforts.

The villa was large; the excavated area including bedrooms extended about 150 feet, and this was only part of the whole complex. Second Style paintings of columns decorated Peristyle B; in front of these were actual stucco-covered brick columns. This illusion of a double portico was used as well in the Boscoreale villa. The Second Style portion of the Boscotrecase villa was not, however, excavated. What was retrieved instead included

several sections of painted walls from four bedrooms in the villa; of these the Metropolitan owns the greater part of three, including the Black Room. The Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples houses the fourth, as well as part of the Black Room. These paintings are presumed, on the basis of their remarkable similarity to paintings in Rome's Villa Farnesina, to have been executed by artists from the capital.

The bedrooms had southern entrances that faced a long walkway opening to a breathtaking view of the Bay of Naples. Most panels feature delicate ornamental vignettes and landscapes with genre and mythological scenes set against richly colored backgrounds. Taken together, the paintings from Boscotrecase afford a glimpse into the taste of well-to-do Romans at the very end of the first century B.C. This glimpse is rendered especially important because of the discovery by M. I. Rostovtzeff in 1926 that the villa originally belonged to Agrippa, as did the Villa Farnesina.

While the Boscotrecase villa was probably constructed around 20 B.C. and Peristyle B painted at that time, the paintings in the bedrooms are of the Third Style, or date sometime after 15 B.C. Because of Rostovtzeff's interpretation of some inscriptions from the villa, a date of 11 B.C. is indicated for this second campaign of decoration. In 11 B.C., the year after Agrippa's death, the villa then nominally passed into the hands of his posthumously born infant son, Agrippa Postumus. The child was only a few months old, and the completion of the villa would have been overseen by Julia, Agrippa's widow and the infant's mother. The emperor Augustus must have visited his beloved daughter Julia in this splendid summer house where she and his son-in-law and good friend Agrippa had planned to live together.

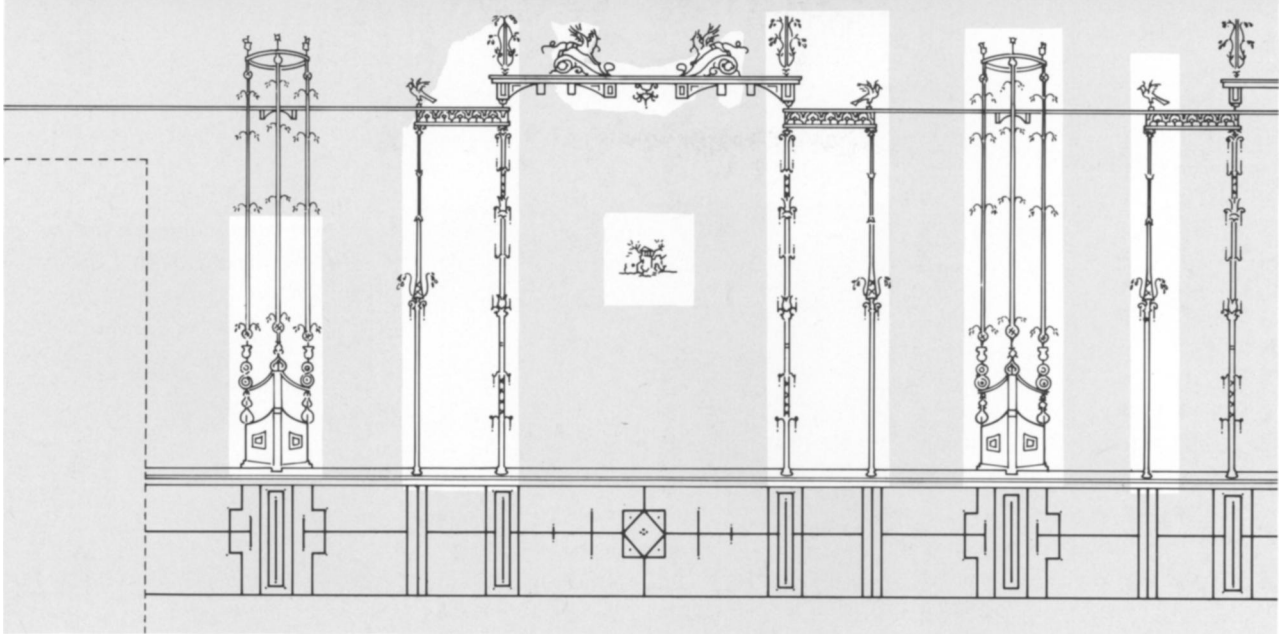
The date of 11 B.C. would place the paintings in the bedrooms at least a generation later than those from Boscoreale. Boscoreale's Second Style paintings of the 40s B.C. (and Boscotrecase's Second Style Peristyle B) exhibit more of an interest in the possibilities of trompe l'oeil. During the Third Style, as we have noted above, the wall's two-dimensionality was acknowledged, not denied, in the decoration; landscape vignettes were subordinated to the whole decorative scheme and rendered as paintings on a wall rather than as imaginary views out of rooms.

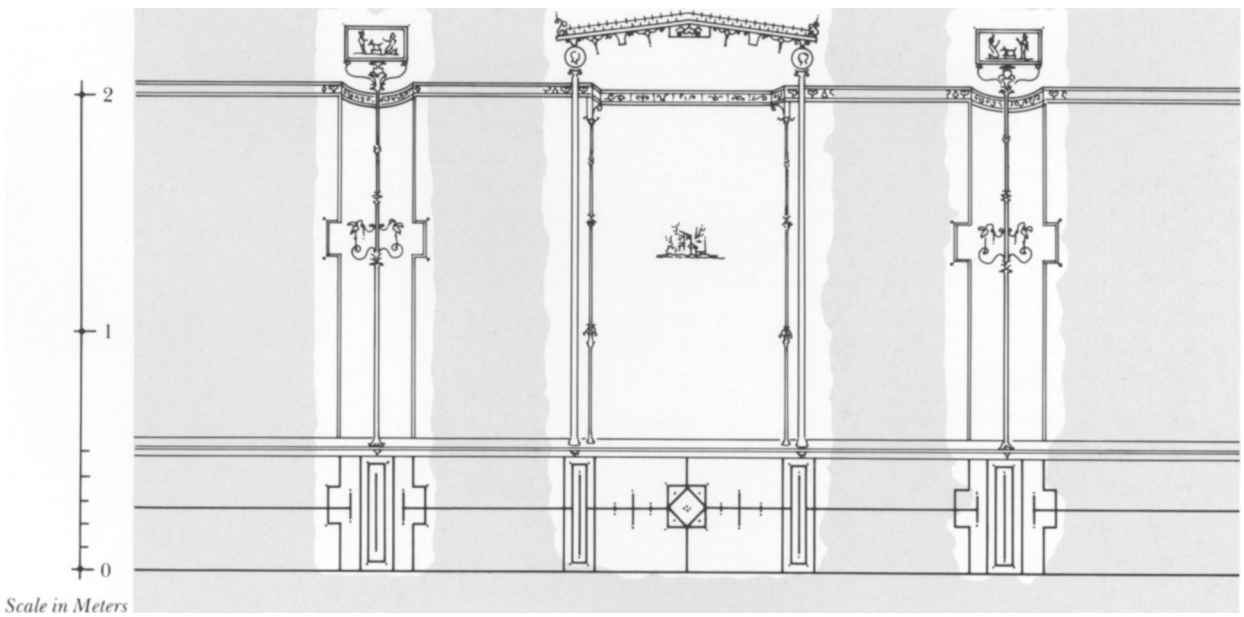
The decorative scheme of the Black Room, or Room 15, with its subtly geometric socle and candelabra, is linked to those of other Third Style commissions, like the decorated interior of the probably contemporary Pyramid of Cestius in Rome (12 B.C.). One entered the Black Room and the other bedrooms of the villa from a walkway (D), facing south; the west wall was thus on the left (see drawing p. 36 and fig. 47). A slim entablature, painted on a black background, runs the length of the wall. Unobtrusive but colorful parakeets surmount the entablature at regular intervals; these and heads of Medusa are the principal figural elements on the wall. A small landscape scene like those on the east and north sides of the room was in the center of the wall.

The floor was entirely of white mosaic except for a pattern of nine hexagons in a box about three feet square in the center of the floor and a smaller pattern at the entrance; both designs were delineated by black *tesserae* (tiles).

The north wall of the Black Room (fig. 48) was visible from the terrace outside the bedroom. It was the central wall of the bedroom; the east (fig. 50) and west walls are essentially mirrors of one another. A deep red socle runs along the bottom of the wall on all sides of the room.

46. The west wall (top) of Bedroom 15, the Black Room, was on the left as one entered the room from the south. At the far left was a doorway connecting with Bedroom 16. The preference for delicate patterns rather than fixed points of interest in the painted scheme signals the new taste of the Third Style. The north wall (center) could be seen from the terrace outside the bedroom. It was the central wall of the bedroom, while the east and west walls mirror one another. On the east wall (bottom), a landscape in the center recalls those of the north and west walls, and the entablatures and decorative friezes on the three walls are almost identical as well. Unlike the decoration on the west wall, however, that on the east wall is totally symmetrical since it is uninterrupted by a doorway. The central canopy of the north wall is connected to the candelabra to its left and right by a series of horizontal lines and short friezes. Like the socle, these continued around the entire room, linking the three walls. The effect, in this pitch black room, was that of a colorful but ethereal cage.

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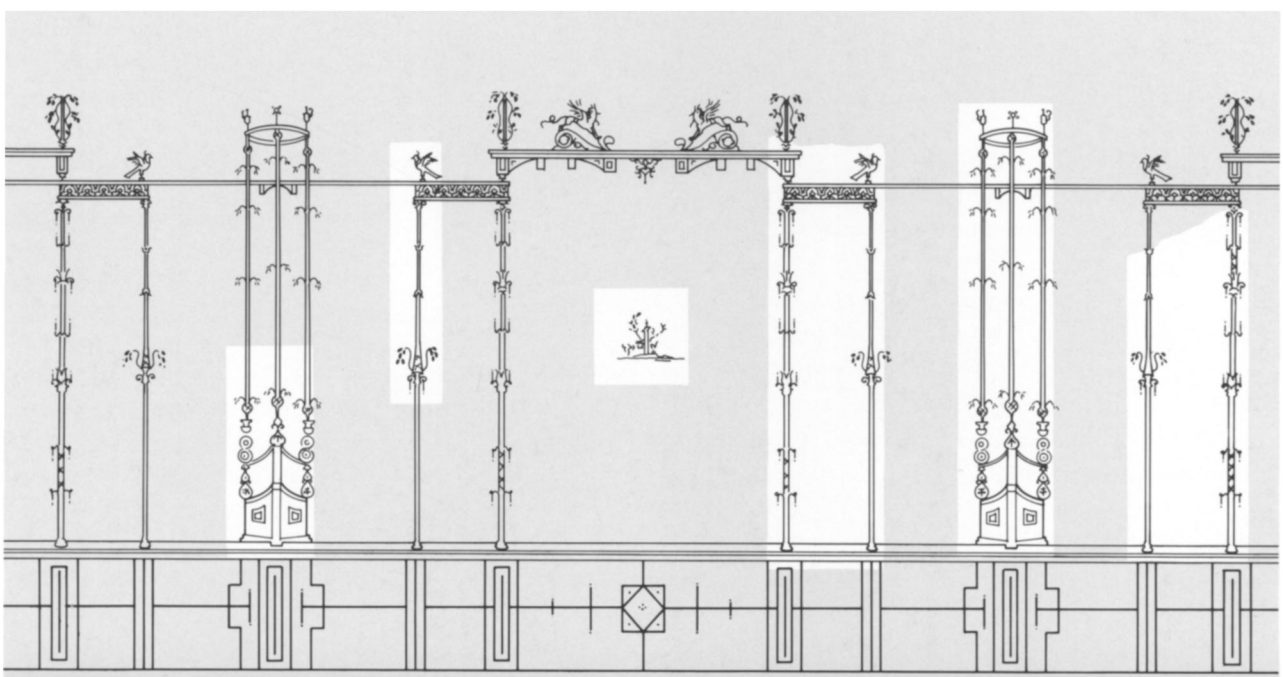
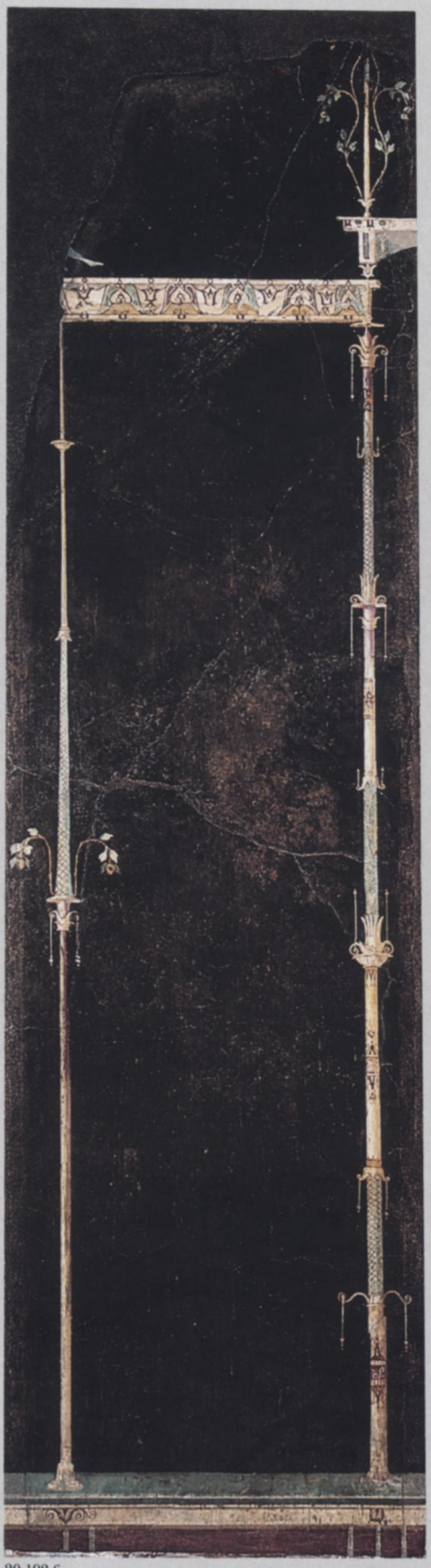


Naples



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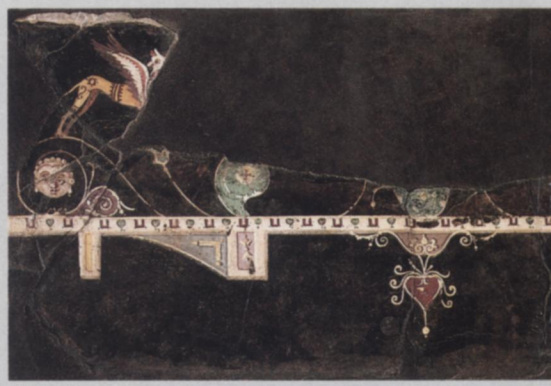
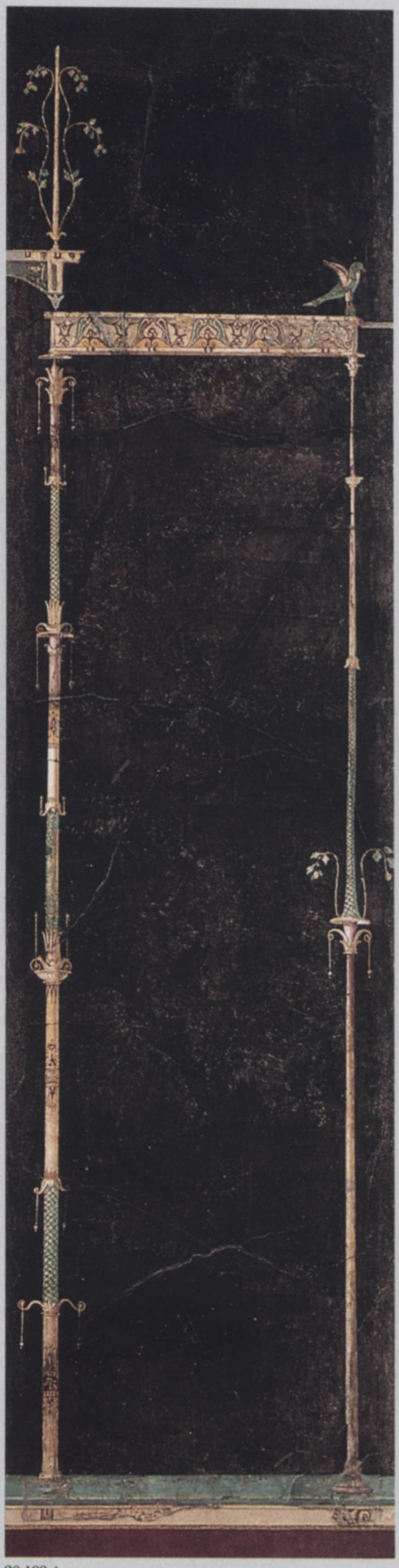


20.192.11

47. Six sections of the Black Room's west wall survive, three of which are in the Metropolitan Museum. A seventh, the landscape scene illustrated in black and white on this page, is now lost but was once in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. The panels at the far left and right, published here for the first time, are in the storerooms of the Naples museum. That on the left shows the lower part of a tripod. The wall has a cornice in the center, which is supported by thin stalklike supports with a slim entablature. The cornice features griffins and masks of Medusa at the ends. A parakeet is perched at the outer edge of each entablature. The tripods, close to the ends of the walls, are deliberately depicted without any sense of depth; the preference for shallow decoration is characteristic of this Third Style interior. Like the swans on the north wall (fig. 49), the tripods may be a reference to Apollo, who was linked to Augustus during this period.



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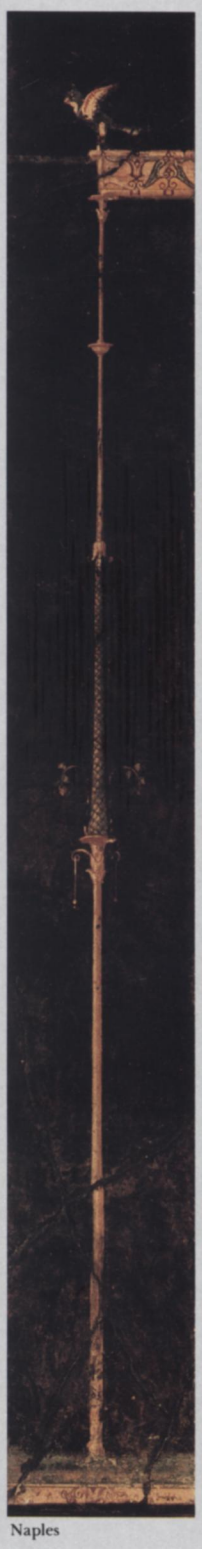
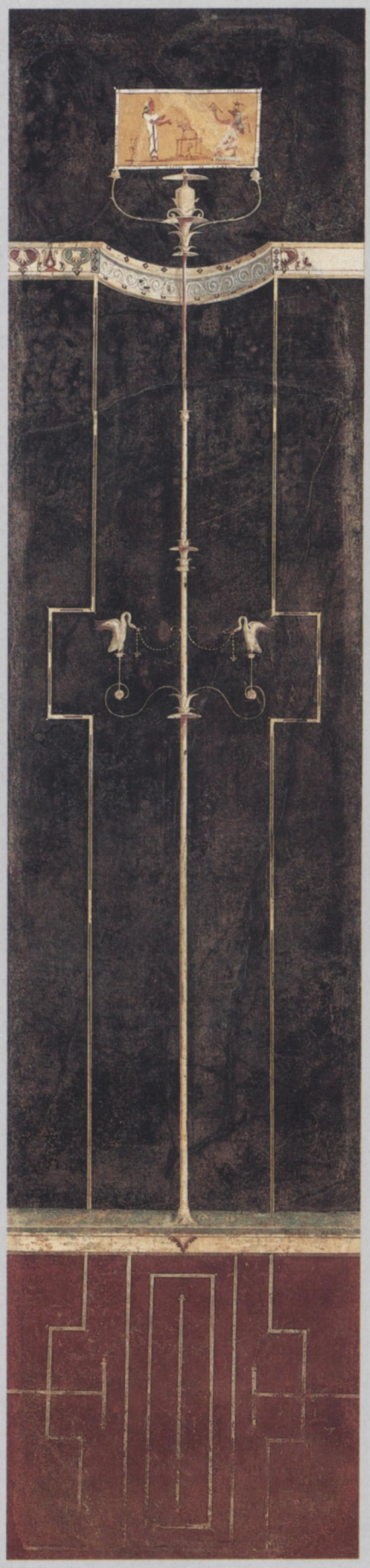


Naples

48. The three sections of the north wall have been preserved to their original height. The miniature figurative images are silhouetted against the expanse of black wall. The Egyptianizing scene in the left panel shows the divinity Apis, the bull, being propitiated by two figures; the figure at the right is Anubis. A cobra uncoils under the table. The small landscape in the center of the main panel shows a religious ceremony taking place before a tower (see detail, back cover). Closer to us in the picture plane is a pair of slim columns supporting an ornate pediment. The pediment appears to be made out of metal or wood, while the column drums alternate between metal and vegetal sections. Above each column and below the pediment is a portrait enclosed in a medallion. It seems likely that the portrait on the left is of Julia, the daughter of the emperor Augustus, and that on the right is of Livia, the emperor's wife (see also figs. 56,57). There are no other images of imperial subjects known in Roman painting.



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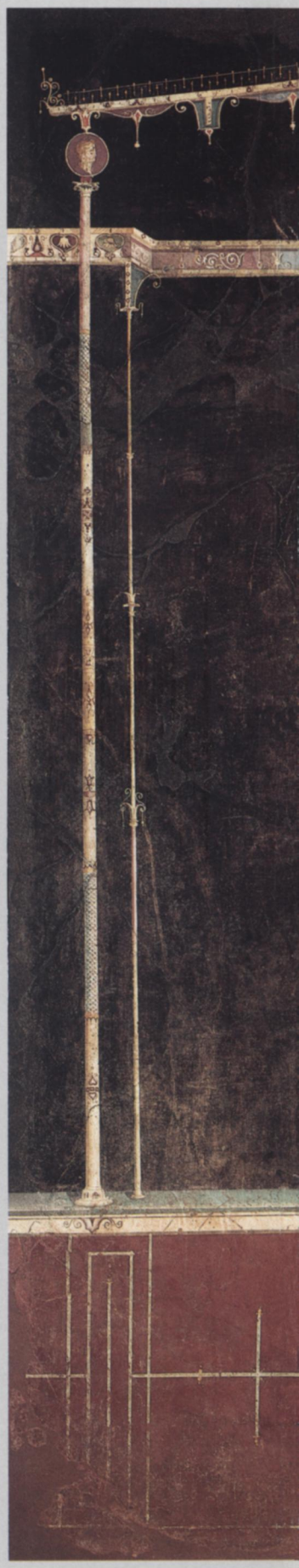

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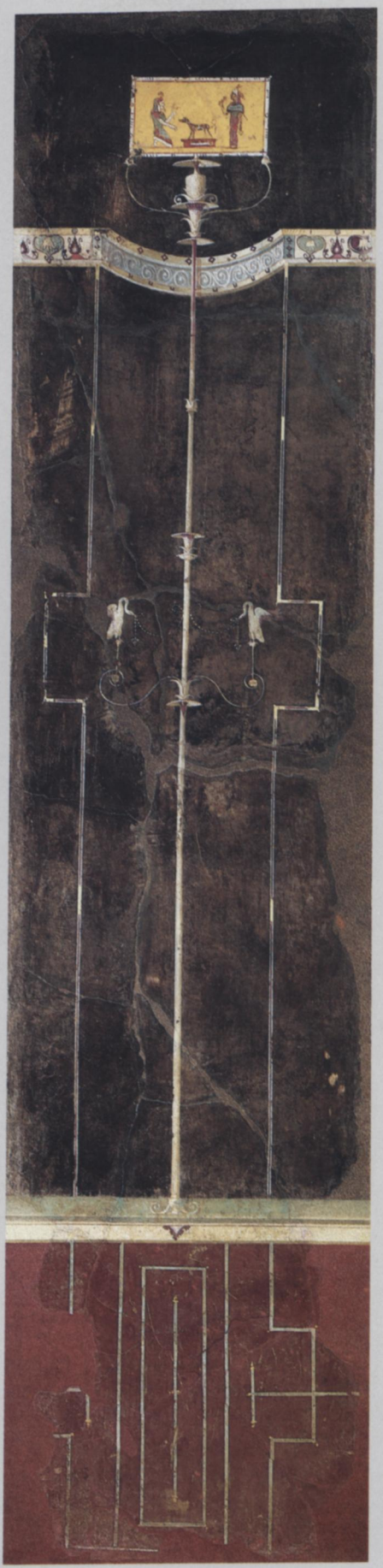

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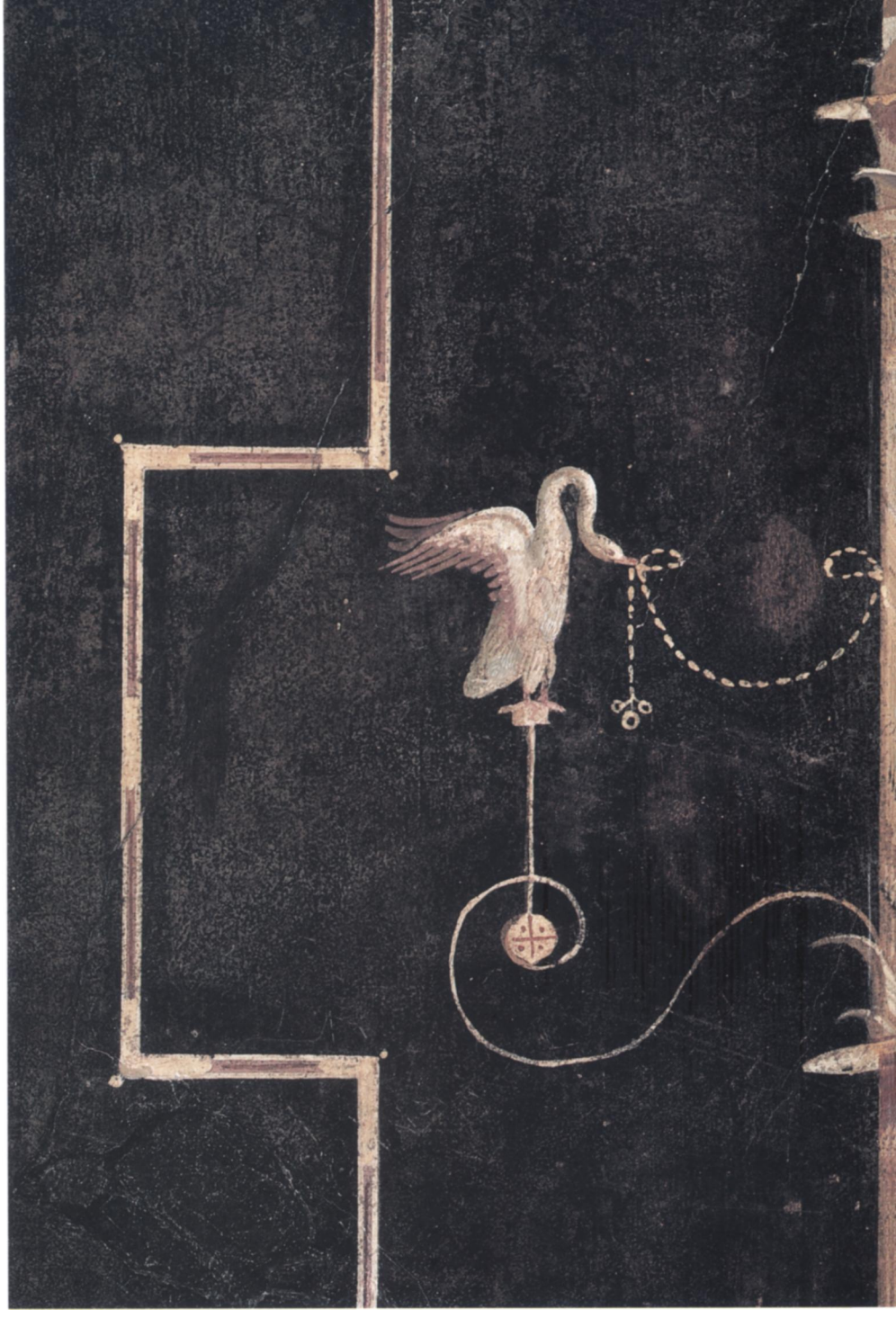
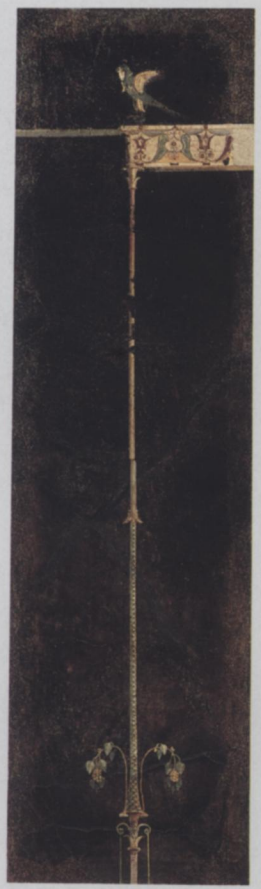


The panels to the left and right of the main panel on the north wall are almost the same, showing a central candelabrum surmounted by a yellow panel with an Egyptianizing scene. Halfway up each candelabrum, a pair of swans holds up a fillet that stretches from their beaks. The yellow panels are loose evocations of motifs inspired by Egyptian art, whereas the swans may symbolize Augustus and his family. Swans appear in a very similar arrangement on the principal sculptural monument of this time, the Ara Pacis in Rome (constructed between 13 B.C. and 9 B.C.). The Ara Pacis, which was built to commemorate Augustus's pacification of the known world, was methodically designed with symbols and imagery associating Augustus with Aeneas, the founder of the Latin race. The large main panel has a small

49. In this detail from the left side of the north wall of the Black Room (see p. 42), two swans, sacred to Apollo, hold a fillet in their beaks. Since Augustus asked for Apollo's help to win his subsequent victory over Mark Antony at the Battle of Actium (31 B.C.), the swans are symbols of this victory. The swans, then, may be linked to the apparently imperial portrait medallions on the same wall and suggest that the occupant of this bedroom was an important member of the imperial family.

landscape in its center that apparently shows a religious ceremony taking place before a tower. On a plane nearer to us in the picture is a pair of slim columns supporting an ornate pediment; above each column and below the pediment is a cameolike portrait set in a medallion.

One can make out both here and on the other panels the artists' subtle differentiation of one wall from another by the use of shadows. Since the unique source of natural light for the room was at the south end—from the Bay of Naples—the decorative elements of the room cast shadows in directions consistent with their situation relative to the sunlight; on the east wall, the wall on the right as one entered the room, the light raked across the surface from right to left, and the shadows are painted accordingly.



20.192.8

50. Six panels of the Black Room's east wall survive. The panel at the far left (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples) is published here for the first time, and must be imagined to have reached the height of the tripod opposite, center (also in Naples). The other four panels are in the Metropolitan Museum.

20.192.10

Naples

Although the paintings of the tripods are identical in almost every detail, including the direction of the shadows from right to left, it was possible to determine the position of each by the cracks in the three panels at the right. The missing cornice above the central landscape would have closely resembled that on the west wall (fig. 47). The colorful frieze, surmounted by parakeets, appears to draw upon the same traditions of late Archaic Greek architecture that are echoed in the Forum of Augustus (19 B.C.) in Rome. The historicism of Augustan architecture and its consciousness of classical forms separates it from the baroque, Hellenistic tendencies of late Republican architecture, such as that in Bedroom M of Boscoreale (fig. 23).

20.192.5

Naples

20.192.7

20.192.9

20.192.15

On the west wall, the shadows fall in the opposite direction, and on the north wall, they fall in both directions away from the center. This system of intimating the direction of light is fairly common in Pompeian frescoes.

Of the White Room only two panels survive, and these are in fragmentary condition. Enough remains to show that the walls were painted off-white, with a red socle and black predella, and that the room included elaborate *thymiateria*, or incense burners, which were probably situated on the left and right door jambs of the room's southern entrance. The White Room was the bedroom to the left of the Mythological Room, Bedroom 19. It had a doorway at the right of the entrance, just as the Mythological Room had a doorway to the left of its entrance; these side doors opened to a common corridor.

In Bedroom 19, the Mythological Room, ornamental patterns are admixed with mythological scenes and Egyptianizing panels; the ensemble is colorful and complex (figs. 54, 55). Large red panels with sirens supporting spindly garlands frame a central painting on each long wall. Above the panels are yellow friezes with small plaques similar to those found in the Black Room.

The central panel of the west wall shows the cyclops Polyphemus seated in the center of a rocky outcropping, which he shares with some of his goats. Polyphemus has stopped playing the *syrinx* (panpipe) held in his right hand, perhaps because he has noticed the sea nymph Galatea seated on a dolphin at the lower left. In the version of this story told by Augustus's court poet —Ovid—based upon that by the Hellenistic poet Theocritus, Galatea was listening to Polyphemus's song professing his desire for her while she hid with her lover, Acis, the son of Pan. Acis is nowhere visible in the painting; this fact indicates that the artists may have been relying in part on Theocritus's version of the story. Even though Acis does not appear, his father Pan may be at the lower right, in the form of a statue on a tall base; this figure apparently cradles a *pedum* (shepherd's crook) in the left hand, mirroring the pedum next to Polyphemus.

At the top right of the painting there is a reference to the tale of Odysseus, most likely at the point when Polyphemus, blinded by Odysseus and his companions, hurled a boulder at them. This is probably its intended significance rather than the tragic end of the story of Galatea and Acis, when Polyphemus rose in rage and threw a boulder at Acis as he tried to escape after being discovered. A connection between the scenes may be implied, however, since in Ovid's version of the story Galatea does mention that Polyphemus was happy when thinking tenderly of her, and that he then permitted ships to come and go safely.

The scene depicted on the center of this bedroom's east wall is even more dramatic than that of the west wall. Here the story of Perseus and Andromeda is told. The mother of Andromeda, Cassiope, had boasted of her own great beauty. The Nereids complained to Poseidon, who flooded her homeland of Ethiopia and dispatched a sea monster there. Andromeda's father, Cepheus, consulted the oracle Ammon and learned that the only way to avert the land's desolation was by chaining Andromeda to a rock and exposing her to the sea monster. Perseus, fresh from having killed Medusa, flies in from the left to rescue Andromeda from the approaching sea monster at the painting's lower left.

In the next sequence, Perseus is shown at the top right of the painting being received and thanked by Andromeda's parents, Cassiope and Cepheus.

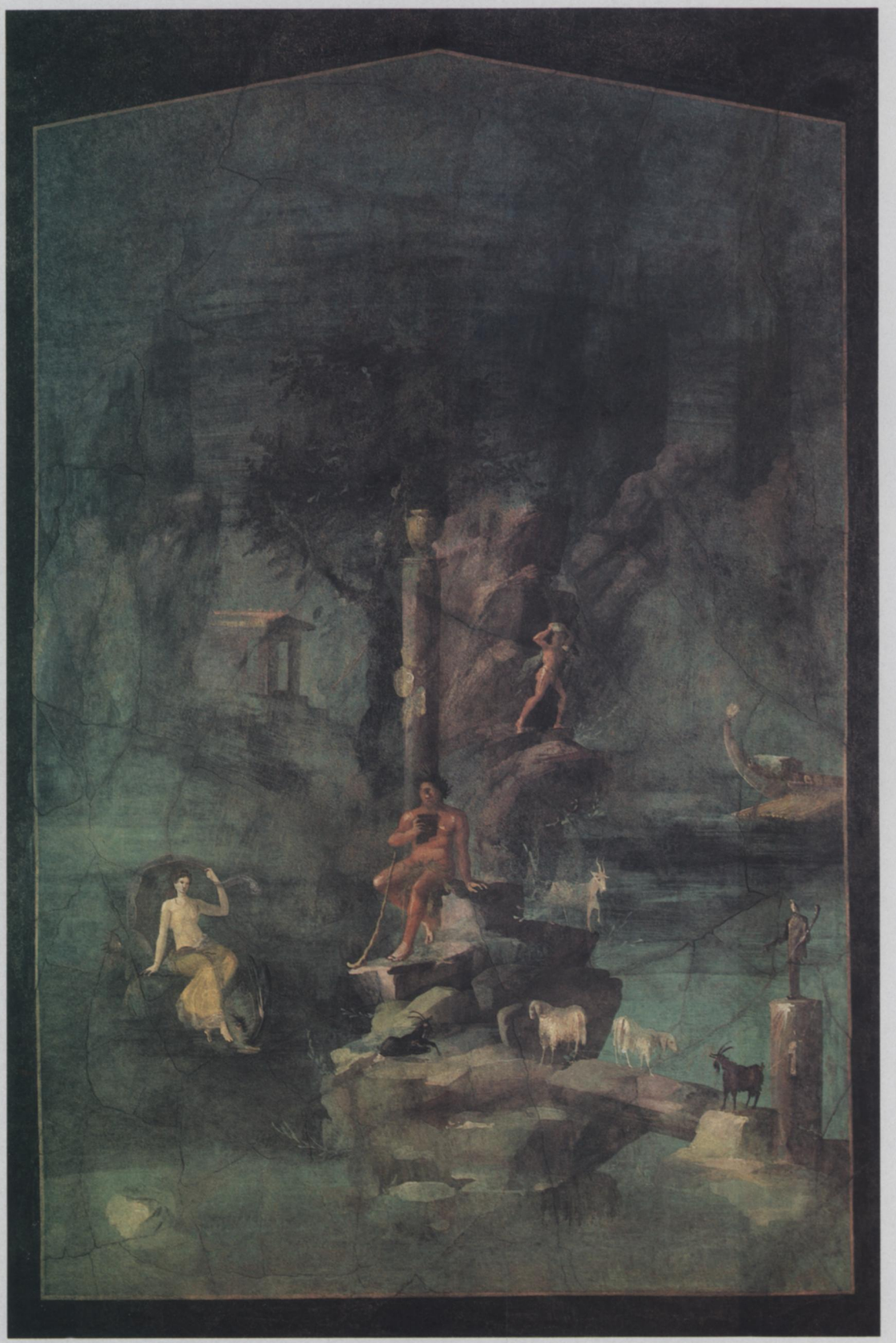
The woman at the lower right of the panel may be a local nymph or Andromeda's mother.

Like the painting showing Polyphemus and Galatea, this panel, cast in a blue-green hue recalling the sea, alludes to the fortunes of love. The missing landscape from the bedroom's north wall must have depicted a scene from mythology as well, perhaps that of the Death of Actaeon or the Fall of Icarus, two popular themes in Third Style painting.

Room 16 of Boscotrecase is preserved almost in its entirety in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. There all three paintings survive, but they depict landscapes with bucolic figures rather than scenes from mythology.

Returning to the history of the villa's ownership, we must consider in some detail the two portrait medallions mentioned in the description of the Black Room's north wall. As was long ago established, Julia's connection to Boscotrecase continued after her husband's death in 12 B.C. It seems logical that the decoration was occasioned by her remarriage to Tiberius, which took place in 11 B.C., the year in which the paintings appear to have been done. With this in mind, the identification of the two portrait medallions in the main panel of the Black Room as Agrippa or Augustus was recently challenged. Even though the second marriage of Julia was not a happy one, it would have been unusual to include images of her past husband in the villa meant to be a home for the new couple.

51–53. Opposite: The direction of the shadows in each of the two panels from Bedroom 20, the White Room, suggests that the panel with the lower portion preserved is from the west side of the room and that with the upper portion is from the east side. They are coincidentally broken in such a way that they would almost fit together; from their measurements we can determine that the minimum height of the room was almost twelve feet. Above: In the black predella is a small bird about to peck at some fruit; a frieze above the predella shows a leafy vine, which may also be seen as a series of birds' heads. The White Room, according to the description of the excavator, was very similar in its decorative scheme to the Mythological Room, Bedroom 19, and included three large paintings on the west, north, and east walls.



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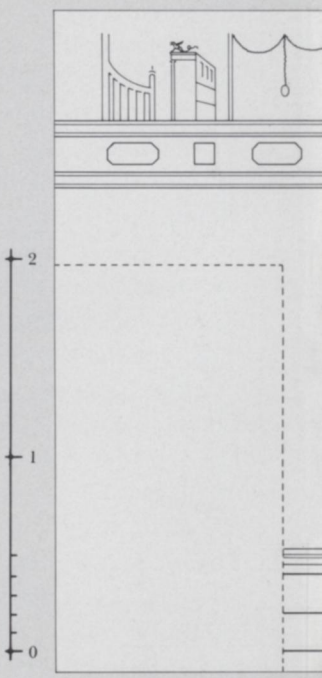
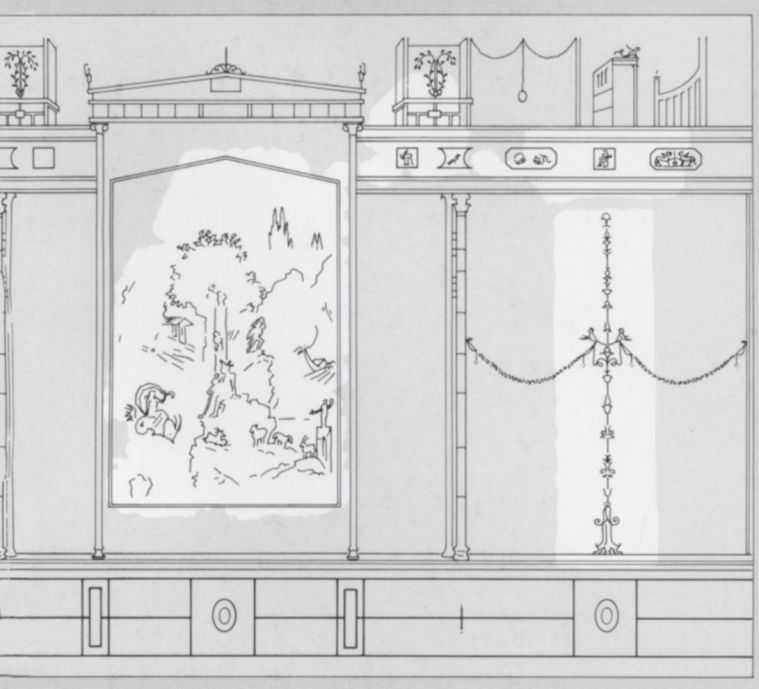


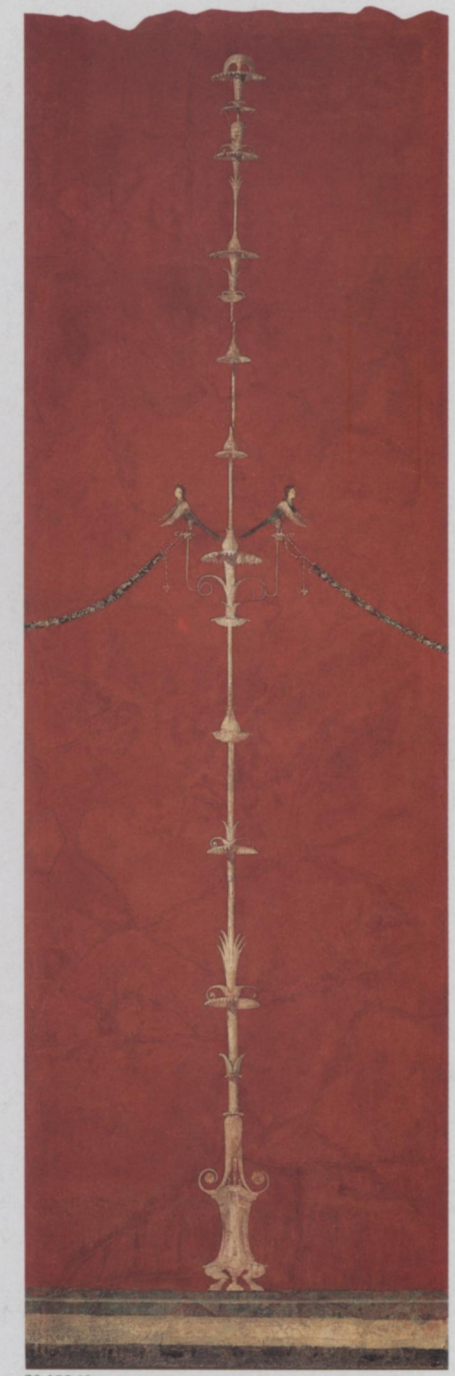
Scale in Meters

20.192.14

20.192.13

54. In the drawing below of the west wall of Bedroom 19, the Mythological Room, the upper zone has been reconstructed on the example of that from the Casa dei Cubicoli Floreali (fig. 9). The drawing indicates the doorway at the far left opening to the corridor shared by the White Room as well as the position of the four painted sections that survive from the wall. The panel with Polyphemus and Galatea (opposite) was in the center, and the yellow frieze may have been interrupted by the top of the painting. In the drawing an attempt has been made to link the two panels sharing a yellow frieze. A large red panel was at the right of the wall, and only the center portion with the thymiaterion *has survived (lower right). The excavation report of 1922 describes a socle with paintings of offering dishes, or* paterae*; these have been added in the reconstruction drawing.*

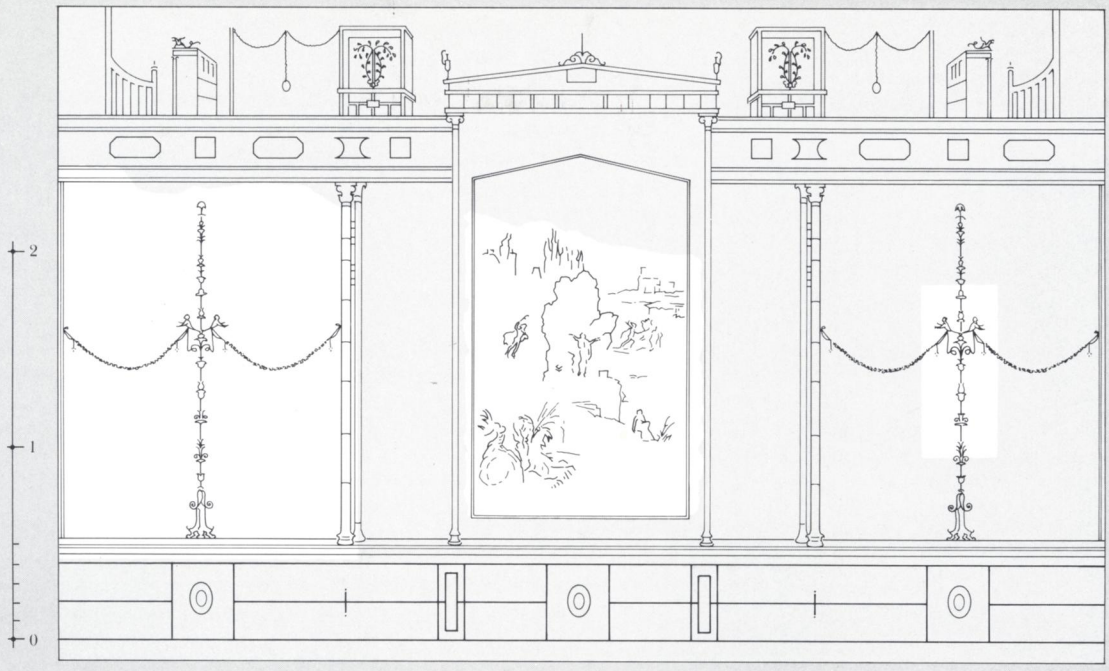




20.192.12

55. The Mythological Room's east wall mirrors the west wall except that it is not interrupted by a doorway, so that two red panels flank the central painting depicting Andromeda and Perseus (opposite). The entire red panel from the left end (below) survives; upon its excavation it was wrongly joined with the portion of yellow frieze from the right end of the west wall (see p. 51, upper right), but these have been reproduced here as separate panels. The center of the right red panel (opposite) is preserved in the storerooms of the Naples museum and is here published for the first time. In describing the walls of the Mythological Room, the excavator suggests that the central paintings had a large white surround, which could have been to either side of the putative columns restored in the drawing, although no evidence of white pigment has been found. As in the reconstruction of the east wall, all features other than those of the surviving sections are hypothetical.

20.192.13



Scale in Meters

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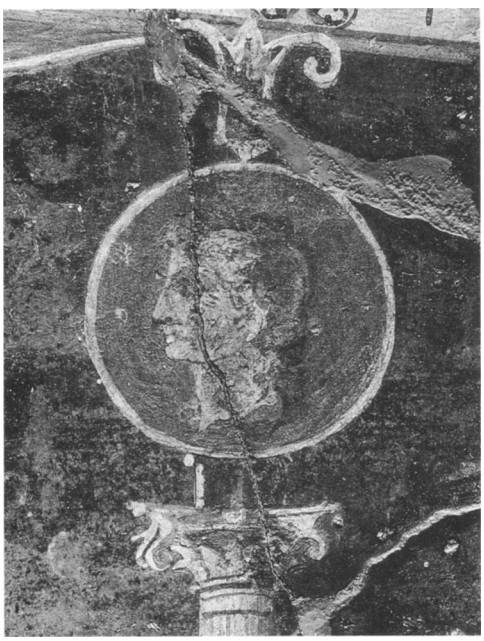
Naples



56,57. Above: The portrait medallions of the Black Room are shown prior to their restoration and overpainting. Each medallion appears to be a cameo portrait; the purple color of the backgrounds (as seen in fig. 48) was reserved for imperial subjects in the Roman world during this period.

*58. Opposite: The sea monster (*ketos*) from the painting with Andromeda and Perseus (see p. 53, lower left) is among the most accomplished passages of the Mythological Room.*

Until recently both medallions were assumed to be identical portraits of one man. A closer look at the two portrait medallions revealed a startling fact: in the medallion on the left (above), a restorer had inadvertently altered the sitter's features, transforming the original portrait from that of a young woman into that of a man, despite the fact that photographs taken in 1929, before restoration, clearly show the left-hand portrait to be that of a woman. On the basis of comparisons with other portraits of women from the Augustan period, it seems likely that the portrait on the left represents Julia, the mistress of the villa, and the portrait on the right (below) is a woman as well, and represents Livia, the wife of the emperor Augustus and Julia's stepmother and new mother-in-law.

This new identification of the portrait medallions provides fascinating insight into the private lives of the imperial family, since there are no other imperial residences known with painted images of the owners. It should not surprise us that Julia's portrait was not removed when she was exiled in 2 B.C.; by then the villa may have passed into the hands of the villa manager and would not have attracted much attention. This is not an official portrait for public display, but a small private image. We may speculate about the intended occupant of the room on the basis of these identifications, along with other evidence: the room's spare aspect, somewhat out of character with the other cubicula and reminiscent of the house of Augustus in Rome; its use of a distinctive decorative emblem—the swan—thought to symbolize Augustus and his family and featured in the principal official monument of the day, the Ara Pacis; its important location as the easternmost bedroom; and the fact that the emperor was a close friend of the villa's former owner, the doting father of that owner's wife, and the grandfather of the subsequent infant owner. One is obliged to ask whether Cubiculum 15 was decorated to acknowledge the taste and interests of the fifty-two-year-old emperor of Rome, who might, when rising and retiring on a visit to the villa, glance at unostentatiously situated portraits, displayed like photographs in bedrooms today, of his beloved daughter and wife. Other members of the imperial family, like Tiberius or Agrippa Postumus, should also be considered as possible occupants.

Whoever the intended occupant may have been, the spare decoration of the Black Room is instructive about the decorative devices appealing to Augustus and his entourage. The first emperor of Rome encouraged the creation of a new style that abandoned the imposing displays of wealth and erudition common in the Second Style and took a different view of the painted wall. The occupants and those who visited the villa at Boscotrecase were not greeted by vistas of architectural splendor, but shallow architectural elements and slender, elegant decorative forms, playfully allusive to contemporary cultural and political concerns. The ornamental restraint governing the decoration of the cubicula is especially noteworthy in light of what had preceded it in the villa at Boscoreale, and it speaks volumes about the aesthetically sophisticated imagination of the age of Ovid, as opposed to the somewhat indiscriminate appetites of prominent Republicans such as Cicero, who ordered large quantities of statues for his villa garden. It was at this moment in Western culture that art began to look back on itself with humor and intelligence rather than awe and that a native Roman secularism produced a culture tied to the forms of the past but also wedded to the great future of the Empire.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude for the very helpful suggestions of Professors Peter von Blanckenhagen, Eugenio La Rocca, Bernard Andreae, and Mariette de Vos. I am also grateful to Elizabeth Wahle, who executed the reconstruction drawings, Mary Ann Joulwan, who designed this volume, and Joan Holt, Editor in Chief of the *Bulletin*, who produced and edited it with the able assistance of a former staff member, Joanna Ekman. Any errors are my own. This publication is dedicated to the late Professor George M. A. Hanfmann, my teacher and mentor.

CREDITS

First Style fragment: Acquired in 1930 (30.142.5). Gorgon mask: Gift of Henry G. Marquand, 1892 (92.11.8). Boscoreale frescoes: Rogers Fund, 1903 (03.14.1–13 A–G); Gift of C. & E. Canessa, 1908 (08.264). Boscotrecase frescoes: Rogers Fund, 1920 (20.192.1–17).

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Drawings by Elizabeth Wahle. Map by Irmgard Lochner. Photographs of the Boscoreale and Boscotrecase frescoes by Walter J. F. Yee, Chief Photographer, Metropolitan Museum of Art Photograph Studio. Other photographs as noted: Figs. 1, 31: Scala/Art Resource. Figs. 4, 10, 12, 14, 19, 20, 26: Maxwell L. Anderson. Figs. 5, 16, 56–57: Metropolitan Museum of Art Photograph Studio. Fig. 6: Interdipress, Naples. Fig. 7: Courtesy of the author. Fig 9: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome. Fig. 17: Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design. Fig. 23: Schecter Lee. Fig. 32: Bernard Andreae. Figs. 33, 41; and Naples frescoes in figs. 47, 50, 55: Foto Foglia, Naples. Fig. 47: Monochrome courtesy of Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples

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INSIDE BACK COVER: Detail from a section (20.192.6) of the west wall of the Black Room from Boscotrecase. BACK COVER: Landscape from the center panel (20.192.1) of the north wall of the Black Room