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Egyptian Airs: The Life of Luxury in Roman Wall Painting

By

Stephanie Kelley Pearson

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History of Art

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Christopher H. Hallett, Chair Professor Andrew F. Stewart Professor J. Theodore Peña

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Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in History of Art

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Christopher H. Hallett, Chair

After Rome conquered Egypt, Egypt invaded Rome. Or so it would seem, judging from the explosion of Egyptian-inspired art in Rome beginning in the mid-first century BC—including a host of Egyptian motifs incorporated into Roman wall painting. These motifs are based on pharaonic art, the art of Egypt under the pharaohs until the Hellenistic period, and they carefully reproduce the iconography and even the artistic style of this tradition. Roman walls in this period thus depict for the first time miniature pharaonic figures, crowns, and animals, lined up in delicate friezes, framed in elaborate panels, and tucked among bushes in lush garden scenes. In these frescoes—an artistic genre that has been called "quintessentially Roman"—the Egyptian elements seem to produce a striking contrast to their surrounding Roman framework. This marked shift in domestic decoration prompts the question: Why would a Roman homeowner choose such foreign elements for his walls?

The present project proposes that the pharaonic subjects in Roman painting relate primarily not to the world of religion, politics, or fashion, as has been argued, but to the practice of collecting art and luxury goods; and that, in this respect, they act analogously to the *Greek* elements in Roman painting—elements which, until now, have been treated as a discrete and unrelated phenomenon. Investigating how Roman collections of art inform *both* sets of material, and what this means for our understanding of Egyptian and Greek elements in Roman wall painting, lies at the heart of this project.

Using diverse modes of inquiry and a wide range of evidence—close analysis of the paintings, comparison with archaeological material, and interpretation of literary sources—this study makes two major contributions to Roman painting studies. First, it encourages a revision of the widespread political readings of Roman domestic art, especially painting. Second, it drives home the importance of studying the manifold visual culture of the Roman house *as a unit*, rather than separating wall painting from the other materials with which it was clearly in dialogue. In so doing, this study casts new light on Roman collecting, artistic practice, and domestic life.

Zusammenfassung

Nachdem Rom Ägypten eroberte, überfiel Ägypten Rom. So scheint es zumindest gewesen zu sein, angesichts der Explosion ägyptisch-inspirierter Kunst in Rom ab der Mitte des 1. Jh. v. Chr., die auch eine Fülle von ägyptischen Motiven in der römischen Wandmalerei beinhaltet. Die Motive basieren auf pharaonischer Kunst, die Kunst Ägyptens in der Zeit der Pharaonen bis in die hellenistische Zeit, deren Ikonographie sowie Stil sie sorgfältig wiedergeben. Zum ersten Mal erscheinen winzige pharaonische Figuren, Kronen und Tiere in römischer Wanddekoration—auf raffinierten Friesen, prächtig umrahmten Tafeln und Gartenszenen mit üppiger Vegetation. Obwohl integriert in die als "wesentlich römisch" bezeichneten Fresken, scheinen sich die ägyptischen Elemente deutlich von ihrem römischen Rahmen zu unterscheiden. Dieser erstaunliche Dekorationswandel wirft die Frage auf: warum haben römische Hausbesitzer sich dafür entschieden, ihre Häuser mit solchen fremden Elementen schmücken zu lassen?

Die Arbeit vermag aufzuzeigen, dass die pharaonischen Motive in der römischen Wandmalerei hauptsächlich nicht mit Religion, Politik oder Mode zusammenhängen, wie oft behauptet wird, sondern vielmehr mit dem Sammeln von Kunst- und Luxusgütern. In diesem Sinne funktionieren sie analog zu den bisher als abgeschlossen und ohne Beziehung betrachteten griechischen Elementen in der römischen Wandmalerei. Im Zentrum der Arbeit stehen daher die Untersuchung römischer Kunstsammlungen als Quellenmaterial sowohl ägyptischer als auch griechischer Elemente, sowie der Vorschlag, wie wir diese in diesem Rahmen verstehen können.

Durch unterschiedlichste Forschungsmethoden und Befunde—genaue Analyse der Fresken, Vergleich mit vielfältigen archäologischen Befunden, Einbindung der literarischen Quellen—trägt das Projekt auf zwei Ebenen zur Weiterführung der römischen Wandmalereistudien bei: Zum einen fördert es die Revision politscher Deutungen der in römischen Häusern ausgestellten Kunst, vor allem der Fresken; zum anderen hebt es die Wichtigkeit hervor, das gesamte häusliche Material zusammen zu betrachten, statt die Fresken von den anderen, mit ihnen eigentlich im Dialog stehenden Gattungen zu trennen. Auf diese Weise vermag die vorliegende Untersuchung neue und weiterführende Einblicke in das römische Kunstsammeln, die Künstlermethoden und das häusliche Leben zu eröffnen.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iv
List of Figures	v
Introduction: Egypt in Roman Fresco "Egyptianizing" and Its Discontents Pharaonic, Nilotic, and Pygmy Egypt Three Ways Religious Political Exotica/Fashion New Direction	1 1 3 5 5 7 10 12
Chapter 1. The Princeps and the Paintings The House and Its Paintings Excavating the House on the Palatine The Painting Scheme Egyptian Crowns Monuments to the Egyptian Conquest Egyptian Spoils Spolia at Home	14 15 15 18 19 22 26 28
Chapter 2. Off-the-Wall Luxury Introduction Precious Objects in Second-Style Painting Vessels Candelabra Gems and Jewelry Glass Beads and Tiles Ivory and Stone Plaques Textiles Conclusion	32 32 33 35 37 38 40 41 43 46
Chapter 3. Egyptian Objects and Otium Collections of Greek Art in Rome The Villa Farnesina "Pinacothecae" Conversation Pieces Gardens and Leisure in the House of the Golden Bracelet	48 49 51 55 60
Conclusion: Un-Augustan Readings	69
Works Cited	72
Ancient Sources Cited	86
Appendix A: Augustan Triumphal Monuments A.1. The Actium Arch A.2. Temple of Apollo Sosianus A.3. Temple of Apollo Palatinus	87 87 88 90
Appendix B: Roman Responses to Egyptian Cult: Key Primary Texts from t Early Imperial Periods	the Republican and 92
Annendix C: Augustus Rejects the Role of Pharaoh	94

Figures 96

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List of Figures

- Fig. 1. House of the Golden Cupids, peristyle shrine: Egyptian cult instruments and divinities. Ca. AD 50–79. Pompeii.
- Fig. 2. House of the Vettii, Room v: lararium depicting household gods. Ca. AD 50–79. Pompeii.
- Fig. 3. Temple of Isis in Pompeii, inner shrine: Egyptian priest in boat, busts of Egyptian divinities, and Italic snakes. Ca. AD 50–79. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 8927.
- Fig. 4. Plan of "House of Augustus" on the Palatine Hill, Rome. Upper Cubiculum is on second floor, above Rooms 14/15. Image: Carettoni 1983, n. p.
- Fig. 5. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: overall view of walls (facing east) and ceiling. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome. Photo: Andersson 2010, n. p.
- Fig. 6. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: overall view of east wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.
- Fig. 7. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: aedicula with lunate pediment on east wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.
- Fig. 8. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: aedicula with volute pediment on north wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.
- Fig. 9. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: detail of aedicula with volute pediment and frieze of swans on north wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.
- Fig. 10. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: upper register with floriform candelabra on east wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.
- Fig. 11. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: ceiling (facing east). Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.
- Fig. 12. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: ceiling, north side. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.
- Fig. 13. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: ceiling detail (facing east). Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.
- Fig. 14. Villa Farnesina, Cubiculum B: late Second-Style painting scheme. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.
- Fig. 15. Villa at Portici: late Second-Style painting scheme. Ca. 40–20 BC. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 8593.

- Fig. 16. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: detail of white panel with cranes and black frieze with crowns on south wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.
- Fig. 17. Temple of Hathor, south outer wall: relief depicting Cleopatra and Caesarion. 47–30 BC. Dendera.
- Fig. 18. Statuette of Isis from Pompeii. Bronze. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 75620 (E 344).
- Fig. 19. Shuty crown from statuette of Isis found in Pompeii. Bronze. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 3501.
- Fig. 20. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: detail of black frieze with crowns and griffins on south wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.
- Fig. 21. Temple of Horus, pylon, western extent: relief depicting Ptolemy XII smiting enemies. 57 BC. Edfu.
- Fig. 22. Pilaster capital depicting head of Hathor with shrine and uraei wearing pharaonic crowns; found on the Palatine Hill in Rome. Marble. 1st c. AD. Rome, Museo Palatino. Photo: Christopher Hallett.
- Fig. 23. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: detail of black panel and black frieze with crowns on east wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.
- Fig. 24. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: shuty crown as acroterium on north wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome. Photo: Iacopi 2008, 39.
- Fig. 25. Aula Isiaca: fresco of shuty crowns and uraeus snakes on east wall (overall view and detail). Ca. 40–20 BC. Rome.
- Fig. 26. Coin depicting bust of Octavian and triumphal arch, possibly the Actium Arch. Silver. Ca. 29–27 BC. London, British Museum, inv. 1843,1024.244. Photo: British Museum Image Service.
- Fig. 27. Victory monument at Actium (now Nicopolis, Preveza, Greece): reconstruction drawing of sanctuary with ships' prows inserted into terrace wall. Ca. 29 BC. Photo: E.P.K.A.
- Fig. 28. Coin depicting bust of Octavian and columna rostrata. Silver. Ca. 29–27 BC. London, British Museum, inv. R6168. Photo: British Museum Image Service.
- Fig. 29. Reliefs depicting ships' prows, anchors, and sacral objects. Marble. Late 1st c. BC. Rome, Capitoline Museums. Photo: Hölscher 2009, figs. 10.1–10.2.

- Fig. 30. Coin depicting winged victory on a prow and a quadriga. Silver. Ca. 29–27 BC. London, British Museum, inv. R6164. Photo: British Museum Image Service.
- Fig. 31. Temple of Apollo Palatinus: herms of Danaids. Basalt. Ca. 36–28 BC. Rome, Palatine Museum, inv. 1056, 1053.
- Fig. 32. Temple of Apollo Palatinus: relief plaque depicting Isis and sphinxes. Terracotta. Ca. 36–28. Rome, Palatine Museum.
- Fig. 33. Villa of the Mysteries: elevation drawing and detail of atrium frescoes depicting spolia. Ca. 50 BC. Pompeii.
- Fig. 34. Villa of the Papyri: stucco ceiling decoration depicting spolia. Ca. AD 50–79. Herculaneum. Photo: Domenico Esposito.
- Fig. 35. House of the Ceii, garden: illusionistic paintings of shields and helmets "hung" on the wall. 1st c. AD. Pompeii.
- Fig. 36. Ash urn depicting spolia. Marble. First half of 1st c. AD. New York, The Metropolitan Museum, inv. 2002.297 and 2002.568. Photo: Picón et al. 2007, cat. no. 438.
- Fig. 37. Villa of the Mysteries: early Second-Style painting depicting stone columns. Ca. 70 BC. Pompeii.
- Fig. 38. House of the Labyrinth: "Corinthian oecus" with real columns standing in front of paintings of columns. Ca. 50 BC. Pompeii.
- Fig. 39. Villa of P. Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale, Exedra L: frescoes depicting garlands hung with mask and cista. Ca. 50–40 BC. New York, The Metropolitan Museum, inv. 03.14.4.
- Fig. 40. Villa A at Oplontis, Room 15: frescoes depicting architecture that houses pinakes with shutters (upper left), theater masks, and peacocks (center left and right). Ca. 50 BC. Oplontis. Photo: Schmidt 2010.
- Fig. 41. Villa A at Oplontis, Triclinium 14: frescoes on west wall. Ca. 50 BC. Oplontis. Photo: Mazzoleni 2004, interleaf.
- Fig. 42. Calyx crater from triclinium of House of Julius Polybius, Pompeii. Bronze. 1st c. BC or 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum. Photo: Barbanera 2013, fig. 1.
- Fig. 43. Cantharus from Meroe, Sudan. Silver. Late 1st c. BC–early 1st c. AD. Boston, Harvard University, Museum of Fine Arts Expedition, inv. 24.876. Photo: MFA Image Service.
- Fig. 44. Cantharus with cranes, found in Villa Pisanella, Boscoreale. Silver. 1st c. BC or 1st c. AD. Paris, Louvre Museum.

- Fig. 45. Borghese Crater. Marble. Ca. 40–30 BC. Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. Ma 86.
- Fig. 46. Villa Farnesina, Room L (garden): fragment of fresco depicting marble fountain. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.
- Fig. 47. Large basin used as fountain, found in the "Gardens of Agrippina," Rome. Marble. Early 1st c. BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo, inv. 113189.
- Fig. 48. Large basin used as fountain, found in the "Gardens of Agrippina," Rome: detail of holes for plumbing and drainage. Marble. Early 1st c. BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo, inv. 113189.
- Fig. 49. Villa A at Oplontis, viridarium: detail of fresco depicting marble fountain. 1st c. AD. Oplontis.
- Fig. 50. Crater found in east garden of Villa A at Oplontis. Marble. 1st c. AD. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei.
- Fig. 51. Mosaic floor depicting cantharus in "fresco cubiculum" of Villa di Castel di Guido. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.
- Fig. 52. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: detail of vegetal vessel on north wall. Ca. 45–20 BC. Rome. Photo: Ling 1991, pl. IVA.
- Fig. 53. "Egyed Hydria." Bronze inlaid with silver and gold. Found in Sopron, Hungary. 1st c. AD. Budapest, National Hungarian Museum, inv. MNM RR 10/1951.104. Photo: Hungarian National Museum (© MNM).
- Fig. 54. "Egyed Hydria:" detail of crowns on shoulder. Bronze inlaid with silver and gold. Found in Sopron, Hungary. 1st c. AD. Budapest, National Hungarian Museum, inv. MNM RR 10/1951.104. Photo: Hungarian National Museum (© MNM).
- Fig. 55. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: detail of vegetal candelabrum on south wall. Ca. 45–20 BC. Rome. Photo: Söldner 2000, fig. 4.
- Fig. 56. Fragment of Second-Style wall painting depicting floriform candelabrum. Unknown provenance. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 9762.
- Fig. 57. House of the Cryptoporticus, bath complex: frescoes depicting candelabrum (overall and detail view). Ca. AD 50–60. Pompeii.
- Fig. 58. Candelabrum found in shipwreck near Mahdia, Tunisia. Marble. 1st c. BC. Tunis, Bardo Museum, inv. C 1208. Photo: Hellenkemper Salies 1994, pl. 6.

- Fig. 59. Villa of Agrippa Postumus at Boscotrecase, Room 19: fresco depicting candelabrum and square black panel with Egyptian figure. Ca. 10 BC. New York, The Metropolitan Museum, 1920, 20.192.12, .14.
- Fig. 60. Pair of gold earrings with miniature amphorae made of emeralds. From tomb in el-Ashmunein, Egypt. 2nd c. BC. London, British Museum, inv. 1904,0706.1. Photo: British Museum Image Service.
- Fig. 61. Rock crystal alabastron with gold chain. Reportedly from tomb in Apameia, Syria. Ca. 30 BC–AD 20. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikensammlung, inv. 1981.17. Photo: Platz-Horster 2001, cat. no. 52.
- Fig. 62. Glass tiles presumed to be from Egypt. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 1977.861f, h–i.
- Fig. 63. Glass tile. Late 1st c. BC–1st c. AD. New York, The Metropolitan Museum, inv. 1917, 17.194.382. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum web catalog.
- Fig. 64. Glass tile with preserved ancient wooden frame. Purchased in Egypt. 1st c. BC. London, British Museum, inv. EA29396. Photo: British Museum Image Service.
- Fig. 65. Furniture leg in the shape of Horus wearing sun disc, inlaid with glass tiles (including name of Ptolemy V). Wood and glass. 204–181 BC. London, British Museum, inv. 71019. Photo: British Museum Image Service.
- Fig. 66. Glass tile depicting Apis bull. Found in Pompeii. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 151747. Photo: De Caro 2006, cat. no. III.99.
- Fig. 67. House of the Orchard: detail of wall painting depicting plaque with Apis bull. Ca. 10 BC–AD 40. Pompeii. Photo: De Caro 2006, 166.
- Fig. 68. House of the Orchard: fresco depicting garden and marble relief plaques with Greek and Egyptian subjects. Ca. 10 BC–AD 40. Pompeii. Photo: Mazzoleni 2004, 311.
- Fig. 69. Marble panel with painting of sphinx. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 152902.
- Fig. 70. "House of Augustus," Room 14: detail of frescoes depicting white relief figures on red ground. Ca. 45–20 BC. Rome.
- Fig. 71. Obsidian skyphos inlaid with stone, glass, and gold. Found in frigidarium of Villa San Marco, Stabia. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 294472. Photo: Jessica Sue Wiles.

- Fig. 72. Obsidian skyphos inlaid with stone, glass, and gold. Found in frigidarium of Villa San Marco, Stabia. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 294473. Photo: Ciarallo and de Carolis 1999.
- Fig. 73. Temple of Isis, portico: fragment of fresco with vegetal design. From Pompeii. Ca. AD 50–79. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 8554.
- Fig. 74. Villa of P. Fannius Synistor, Triclinium G: detail of fresco depicting black-ground frieze over door. From Boscoreale. Ca. 50–40 BC. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. n. n.
- Fig. 75. "Mensa Isiaca." Bronze inlaid with silver and niello. Turin, Egyptian Museum, inv. 7155. Photo: Arslan 1997, 28–9.
- Fig. 76. Villa Farnesina, Triclinium C: detail of fresco depicting Egyptian crowns with triangle border. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.
- Fig. 77. Mosaic depicting men in reed boats and Nilotic animals, surrounded by triangle border. From near Cellae Vinariae Nova et Arruntiana sul Lungotevere alla Lungara. Early 2nd c. AD. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.
- Fig. 78. Mosaic with Egyptian scenes, including lighthouse, surrounded by triangle border. From House of the Centenary, Pompeii. Ca. 1st c. BC–1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 112284.
- Fig. 79. Purple cloth woven with gold threads. From Tomb II at Vergina, Greece. 4th c. BC. Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki Archaeological Museum. Photo: Hallett 2015.
- Fig. 80. "Republican temple" of Brescia: fresco depicting cloth in dado. Ca. 75–40 BC. Brescia, Italy. Photo: Ardovino 2001, 51 fig. 4.
- Fig. 81. House of the Labyrinth, Oecus: fresco depicting curtain hung between columns. Ca. 50 BC. Pompeii.
- Fig. 82. House of the Great Altar: fresco depicting tapestry borders (left and right panels). Ca. AD 50–79. Pompeii.
- Fig. 83. House of Meleager: fresco depicting "Vorhänge" panels with curving edges (left and right panels). Ca. AD 50–79. Pompeii. Photo: Dane Lutes-Koths.
- Fig. 84. House of the Golden Cupids, Room I: fresco with tapestry-like pattern. Ca. AD 50–79. Pompeii.
- Fig. 85. Sarcophagus with philosopher scenes. Marble. 3rd c. AD. Rome, Vatican Museums (Pio-Clementino), inv. 17PO. Photo: Mont Allen.

- Fig. 86. Sarcophagus depicting Dionysiac procession. Marble. Rome, Capitoline Museums, inv. 1378. Photo: Mont Allen.
- Fig. 87. Mummy case of Taminis. From Akhmim, Egypt. 1st c. BC–1st c. AD. London, British Museum, inv. EA29586. Photo: British Museum Image Service.
- Fig. 88. Coptic textile fragment with triangle border. From Akhmim, Egypt. 4th c. AD (?). London, British Museum, inv. EA21631. Photo: British Museum Image Service.
- Fig. 89. Mummy mask with patterns including triangle borders. Cartonnage. Possibly from Tebtunis. Ca. 30 BC–AD 323. Berkeley, Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology, inv. 6-20109.
- Fig. 90. Opus sectile depicting Hylas (above) and Egyptian textile (below). Stone and glass. From Basilica of Junius Bassus, Rome. First half of 4th c. AD. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.
- Fig. 91. Villa Farnesina, Cubiculum B: detail of fresco depicting two white-ground pinakes on stands in the form of Sirens atop griffin feet. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.
- Fig. 92. Villa Farnesina, Cubiculum D: detail of fresco depicting two white-ground pinakes on bronze stands in the form of caryatids atop a bulbous ornamental shaft and griffin feet. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.
- Fig. 93. Villa Farnesina, Cubiculum B: detail of fresco depicting caryatid beside bronze statuette in aedicula. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.
- Fig. 94. Villa Farnesina, Cubiculum B: detail of fresco depicting erotic pinax, white-ground panel painting, and square yellow panel with vegetal motif and gemstone. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.
- Fig. 95. Gems in gold settings, gilded bronze leaves and tendrils. Presumed to be wall decoration in shrine for imperial cult. Found near Horti Lamiani on Esquiline Hill, Rome. Late 2nd–early 3rd c. AD? Rome, Capitoline Museums.
- Fig. 96. Villa of P. Fannius Synistor, Cubiculum M: detail of fresco depicting columns wrapped in gold tendrils with gemstones. From Boscoreale. Ca. 50–40 BC. New York, The Metropolitan Museum, inv. 03.14.13 a–g.
- Fig. 97. Domus Transitoria: detail of fresco with embedded glass hemisphere. From Palatine Hill, Rome. Ca. AD 54–68. Rome, Palatine Museum, inv. 381404-5-6.
- Fig. 98. Villa Farnesina, Cubiculum B: detail of fresco depicting hybrid vegetal figure with Isiac attributes. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.

- Fig. 99. Villa Farnesina, Cubiculum B: detail of fresco depicting hybrid vegetal figure with ram horns. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.
- Fig. 100. Candelabrum in the form of a male herm on a floriform base. Bronze. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum. Photo: Stefanelli 1990, figs. 187–8.
- Fig. 101. Table leg in form of a man. Basalt. From Pompeii. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 1095. Photo: De Caro 2006, cat. no. III.116.
- Fig. 102. Table leg or statuette in form of Egyptian god Bes. Bronze. From Herculaneum. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. coll. Egizia 184. Photo: De Caro 2006, cat. III.46.
- Fig. 103. Furnishing (likely a table leg) in the shape of the Egyptian god Tutu-Tithoes (sphinx with snake tail). Bronze. Late 1st c. BC–early 1st c. AD. New York, The Metropolitan Museum, inv. 2006.514.2. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum web catalog.
- Fig. 104. Statuette of Ihat, priest of Amun. Bronze with silver inlay. Ca. 610–589 BC. From Ephesus, Terrace Houses. Selçuk, Ephesus Museum inv. 1965. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.
- Fig. 105. Table support with sphinx statuette and head of Athena (overall and detail view). Bronze. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. n. n. Photo: Stefanelli 1990, fig. 113.
- Fig. 106. Candelabrum in form of ephebic Dionysus. Bronze. From House of Marcus Fabius Rufus, Pompeii. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 13112. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.
- Fig. 107. Silver hoard from Villa Pisanella, Boscoreale. End of 1st c. BC–first half of 1st c. AD. Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. Bj 1901–Bj 1970.
- Fig. 108. Silver hoard from Villa Pisanella, Boscoreale: drinking cup with skeletons and inscriptions. End of 1st c. BC–first half of 1st c. AD. Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. Bj 1923.
- Fig. 109. Plan of House of the Golden Bracelet, Pompeii (highlighted in green). Image: after PPM 6, 45.
- Fig. 110. Plan of House of the Golden Bracelet, Pompeii. Image: after Ciardiello 2012, figs. 1–3.
- Fig. 111. Seaward facade of House of the Golden Bracelet (rightmost two windows) and House of Marcus Fabius Rufus. Late 1st c. BC–1st c. AD. Pompeii. Photo: Michael Binns via Pompeii in Pictures.

- Fig. 112. House of the Golden Bracelet, Rooms 32 (left) and 31 (center). Late 1st c. BC–1st c. AD. Pompeii. Photo: Pompeii in Pictures.
- Fig. 113. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: apsidal fountain and marble clinae. 1st c. AD. Pompeii. Photo: Pompeii in Pictures.
- Fig. 114. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: Ω-shaped pool in front of triclinium. 1st c. AD. Pompeii. Photo: Pompeii in Pictures.
- Fig. 115. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: frescoes on southern wall. Ca. 20 BC–AD 79. Pompeii. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 59467. Photo: Pompeii in Pictures.
- Fig. 116. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: view of triclinium with mosaic and fresco decoration still in situ. Ca. 20 BC–AD 79. Pompeii. Photo: PPM 6, fig. 164.
- Fig. 117. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: garden fresco depicting sphinx on base. Ca. 20 BC–AD 79. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 87229. Photo: De Caro 2006, cat. no. III.59.
- Fig. 118. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: garden fresco depicting sphinxes flanking Apis bull plaque. Ca. 20 BC–AD 79. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 59467 a.
- Fig. 119. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: garden fresco depicting Egyptian figures beside birdbath. Ca. 20 BC–AD 79. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 59467 d.
- Fig. 120. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: detail of garden fresco depicting Egyptian figures beside birdbath. Ca. 20 BC–AD 79. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 59467 d.
- Fig. 121. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: apsidal fountain with mosaic decoration. Ca. 20 BC–AD 79. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 40690a–c, 40691a–c, 40692a–c, 40693, 40694. Photo: Ciardiello 2012, fig. 6.
- Fig. 122. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: detail of apsidal fountain with mosaic decoration. Ca. 20 BC–AD 79. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 40690a–c, 40691a–c, 40692a–c, 40693, 40694. Photo: PPM 6, fig. 173.
- Fig. 123. View towards Monte Faito and Bay of Naples from middle floor of House of the Golden Bracelet. Pompeii.
- Fig. 124. View of Bay of Naples through atrium of House of the Golden Bracelet. Pompeii.

- Fig. 125. Sphinx statue discovered along Canopus in garden of House of Octavius Quartio, Pompeii. Marble. 1st c. AD. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 2930. Photo: Gentili 2013, cat. no. 126.
- Fig. 126. Statuette of Horus discovered in House of the Golden Cupids, Pompeii. Alabaster. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 133230. Photo: Gentili 2013, cat. no. 144.
- Fig. 127. Fountain spout in the shape of a frog, discovered in House of the Silver Wedding, Pompeii, with matching spout in the shape of a crocodile. Faience. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 121323. Photo: Gentili 2013, cat. no. 8.
- Fig. 128. Villa of Agrippa Postumus at Boscotrecase, Room 16: fresco depicting pinax with sacro-idyllic landscape scene. Ca. 10 BC. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 147501. Photo: Kleiner 2007, fig. 5-24.
- Fig. 129. Villa Farnesina, Corridor F: detail of fresco depicting sacro-idyllic landscape with palm trees and statue of Isis, Anubis, and Harpocrates. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.
- Fig. 130. Anthemion Tomb: detail of ceiling fresco with vegetal motifs. 3rd c. BC. Lefkadia. Photo: Raddato 2012.
- Fig. 131. Temple of Apollo Sosianus: column capital with two snakes flanking tripod. Marble. Late 1st c. BC–early 1st c. AD. Photo: Viscogliosi 1996, fig. 69.
- Fig. 132. Temple of Apollo Sosianus: pilaster capital with trophy and date palms. Marble. Late 1st c. BC–early 1st c. AD. Photo: Viscogliosi 1988, cat. no. 33.

Introduction: Egypt in Roman Fresco

After Rome conquered Egypt, Egypt invaded Rome. Or so it would seem, judging from the explosion of Egyptian-inspired art in Rome beginning in the mid-first century BC—including a host of Egyptian motifs incorporated into Roman wall painting. These motifs are based on pharaonic art, the art of Egypt under the pharaohs until the Hellenistic period, and they carefully reproduce the iconography and even the artistic style of this tradition. Roman walls in this period thus depict for the first time miniature pharaonic figures, crowns, and animals, lined up in delicate friezes, framed in elaborate panels, and tucked among bushes in lush garden scenes. In these frescoes—an artistic genre that has been called "quintessentially Roman"—the Egyptian elements produce a striking contrast to their surrounding Roman framework. This marked shift in domestic decoration prompts the question: Why would a Roman homeowner choose such foreign elements for his walls?

In this project I propose that the pharaonic subjects in Roman painting are indebted to the practice of collecting art and luxury goods; and that, in this respect, they act analogously to the *Greek* elements in Roman painting—elements which, until now, have been treated as a discrete and unrelated phenomenon. Investigating how Roman collections of art inform *both* sets of material, and what this means for our understanding of Egyptian and Greek elements in Roman wall painting, lies at the heart of this project.

"Egyptianizing" and Its Discontents

Although Roman homeowners obviously prized Egyptian elements in their domestic decor—some of the finest preserved reception rooms contain superb examples—they have often been treated summarily or even disparagingly in the scholarship.² This is partly due to various developments in the western intellectual tradition, and particularly to three influential movements which over the past three centuries have preconditioned such a response. First, the Enlightenment engendered an esteem for originality over imitation that still defines our aesthetic values, encouraging us to dismiss the Egyptian motifs as wan Roman "imitations" of Egyptian art.³ The subsequent rise of Nationalism, meanwhile, leads us to reify our conceptions of cultural difference such that we perceive Egyptian material to be fundamentally different from Greek or Roman material; the "Egyptian" thus becomes an interloper in Roman walls.⁴ Finally, the art historical hierarchy of genres in which decorative arts have long been considered "minor" has led

¹ Ling 1991, 3; Thompson 1961, 58.

² Most vehemently, Roullet 1972, 20–2, 50; supported by Griffiths 1975, 294.

³ E.g., Roullet 1972, 18, Mania 2011, 356.

⁴ Davies points out the inconsistency in considering certain forms to have been adopted into Roman art "syncretistically" while at the same time relegating Egyptian art to a different sphere, never fully incorporated (Davies 2011, 359). Feldman addresses the concept of "dominant" cultural traits in "hybrid" artworks, showing that the modern notion of discrete nations and cultures does not map onto ancient art (Feldman 2011; Feldman 2006, esp. 3–5, 11–13).

to less regard for paintings perceived as "ornamental" than those that depict narratives, such as mythological panels.⁵

It is against this same background that the various Egyptian elements in Roman wall painting have been termed not Egyptian but "Egyptianizing." The term is used to describe various kinds of Roman (and sometimes Egyptian) artworks that somehow refer to Egypt, the majority of which can be classified into one of two modes: depictions of Egyptian subjects in a style considered non-Egyptian; and depictions of other subjects (usually but not necessarily Egyptian) in a style considered Egyptian. All of these types of object, the thinking goes, cannot properly be called "Egyptian," because often they have been made outside Egypt by artists presumed to be non-Egyptian, as is especially clear in the case of Roman wall painting, where there is no possibility that the object was crafted in Egypt by an Egyptian artist and subsequently imported to Rome. Calling these objects simply "Roman" is felt to be equally unsatisfactory because it conveys nothing of their Egyptian content. Thus the term "Egyptianizing" has come into common use, more by default than by careful consideration. Scholars rarely reflect or agree on what it means, instead uniformly applying it to a wide variety of images—Pygmy scenes; small landscapes featuring Egyptian flora or fauna; and even isolated figures in Egyptian dress—whose actual relationship to each other and to Egypt remains opaque.

The vagueness of the term "Egyptianizing" and its deprecating connotations would be sufficient motivation to abandon the term; yet there are still other, equally compelling reasons to do so. First, delineating such a category of objects presupposes that artists express their culture (however that may be defined) through their work—a modern concept that has already been handily dismantled when applied to ancient art production. Second, Roman patrons happily collected artworks of Egyptian subjects with apparently no regard for whether they were made in Italy or imported from Egypt. This suggests that the Romans did not differentiate Egyptian from

⁵ Helbig, for example, devotes 302 pages of his catalog to mythological scenes, twenty-eight to "ornamental figures not of mythological character," and ten to depictions of objects (masks, writing material, tripods, vessels, herms) (Helbig 1868).

⁶ The earliest appearance of the term, to my knowledge, arises not in connection with Roman painting but rather to describe "Jewish sepulchral architecture" in the Hellenistic period (Frothingham 1888, 184). The term was also used at that time to describe Phoenician and Mycenaean objects (respectively, Evans 1892 and Frothingham 1891). Winckelmann and Lafaye were among the first to define and employ the term in its now-standard realm of Roman sculpture (Winckelmann 1880, 190; Lafaye 1883, 243–4).

⁷ Although sometimes the artists are in fact thought to be Egyptian (e.g., Iacopi 2008, 76; Galinsky 1996, 190; Simon 1986, 183; Carettoni 1983, 417), in which case "Egyptianizing" can be defined only by having been made in Rome instead of Egypt, or by its "hybrid" appearance. On perceived hybridity in ancient art, see Feldman 2006, 5–11, 62.

⁸ The most important recent discussions of the terminology are Swetnam-Burland 2007 and Versluys 2002, which differ in their definitions (Swetnam-Burland 2004, 483).

⁹ Because art history has traditionally privileged "the artist," Marian Feldman explains, treatments of ancient art use the same paradigm as "the de facto explanation for a work of art. Thus, where *the* artist is unidentifiable as a named and known individual, *an* 'artist' has had to be imagined through a lens of abstractly conceived 'regional, 'national,' or 'ethnic' personas, which has led to the conflation of, for example, an 'Egyptian' style (as a regional denotation) with 'Egyptian' artists. The implication of this conflation posits that all 'Egyptian' artists will create Egyptian-looking works of art, and therefore anything appearing 'Egyptian' must have been produced by an 'Egyptian' artist" (Feldman 2006, 3–4; see also Feldman 2011).

"Egyptianizing" the way we do, and casts doubt on the utility of separating them. ¹⁰ The term, it seems, is based on a peculiarly modern set of assumptions.

That the Romans considered both locally-made and imported Egyptian imagery to occupy a single conceptual category is confirmed by evidence from the Temple of Isis in Pompeii. Here a slab of hieroglyphic text was thought to be just as suitable to the space as an archaistic marble statue of Isis, both erected in the temple precinct. The former was imported from Egypt, to judge from its textual content (dedicated to a priest of Horus, Sakhmet, and Amun-Re in Hnes, Egypt¹¹), while the latter could not have been, since Egypt has no source of marble; but clearly this did not matter.¹² The paintings in the temple portico confirm this pattern: they depict landscapes with Egyptian shrines and fauna, clearly felt to harmonize with the rest of the decor even though the landscapes themselves—given the suspiciously *Arcadian* mountains and trees—cannot possibly represent Egypt. Confronted with the sanctuary's decorative ensemble, a modern viewer may be inclined to see a certain heterogeneity of medium, style, and place of production; he might describe some pieces as Egyptian and others as "Egyptianizing." Indeed, the definitive publication of the sanctuary separates these categories and even comments in surprise on how few "actual" Egyptian objects it contained. 13 But the Romans did not distinguish among these objects in the outfitting of their sanctuary; they obviously felt that all elements in this ensemble were equally appropriate to the unqualifiedly Egyptian nature of the cult itself.

Pharaonic, Nilotic, and Pygmy

The present project therefore renounces the term "Egyptianizing" and instead seeks to use less fraught, more precise terminology. It makes frequent use of the term "pharaonic" to describe the imagery in the paintings. The word is meant simply to indicate that the iconography is typical of Egypt under the pharaohs, before the Roman conquest ended pharaonic rule. This term is distinct from the chimaeric "Alexandrian" designation that has been proposed as a hybrid of pharaonic and Hellenistic art, or as a special subset of Hellenistic art, but which remains as elusive as ever. "Pharaonic" is also distinct from "Nilotic," a term applied to a great wealth of paintings with vaguely riparian subjects: landscapes with rivers and, in some cases, Egyptian

¹⁰ Swetnam-Burland 2007, 119. Roullet structures her work around the two categories "1) Monuments Exported from Egypt to Imperial Rome," and "2) Monuments Created at Rome" (Roullet 1972, Ch. 2). As regards Roman Egyptianizing statuary she exhorts: "A careful distinction must be made between duplicates created to balance an isolated genuine monument, and mere imitations created after a genuine piece, but used independently of it" – where "duplicates" and "mere imitations" are understood to be Roman, "genuine" pieces Egyptian (Roullet 1972, 18). Similar if less derisive is Mania 2011, 356.

¹¹ Lichtheim 2006, 41–4.

¹² The same trend can be seen in two objects discovered next door to the temple, in the so-called Palaestra: an Eighteenth-Dynasty Egyptian statue in basalt (Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 77449; see De Caro 2006, cat. no. II.82)—in light of the inscription and material, unquestionably an import—and a small silver statue base inscribed with pseudo-hieroglyphics (Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 76384; see De Caro 2006, cat. no. II.83). This latter is the work of an artist who wanted to use hieroglyphics yet was illiterate in them, and so is very unlikely to have practiced in Egypt.

¹³ De Caro 1992, 77.

¹⁴ An important volume of conference proceedings on the topic still provides the best overview of the dilemmas; Hamma 1996.

flora and fauna; but also isolated figures like ducks and lilypads. While many of these paintings bear no particular reference to the Nile (as opposed to any other river, or indeed any other body of water in general), they tend nonetheless to be labeled Nilotic.¹⁵

Overlapping with this category are "Pygmy" paintings, often conflated with Nilotic scenes but actually worth separating: not only are they marked out by their caricatured dwarf figures, to my knowledge they appear *only* within the first century AD, long after Nilotic scenes of other types had become widespread; and they are largely limited to garden settings, while Nilotic scenes adorn all kinds of rooms.¹⁶

Although they are both important genres of Egyptian imagery in Roman painting, Nilotic and Pygmy scenes fall outside the purview of this study. My focus is rather on pharaonic motifs. This is partly due to the central importance of the paintings in the "House of Augustus" (examined in Chapter 1), which comprise pharaonic but not other Egyptian imagery; and partly due to the particular argument I make about the significance of these paintings. With this limited focus I do not mean to imply that pharaonic motifs operate in isolation from the other Egyptian subjects on Roman walls; after all, they all refer to Egypt in some way. But they do seem to operate differently: in both chronology and context, Nilotic and Pygmy scenes do not appreciably overlap with pharaonic imagery in Roman decoration.¹⁷ Nilotic scenes appear much earlier than pharaonic imagery does, cropping up in mosaics in the late second and early first century BC and thriving well into the Byzantine period;¹⁸ and Pygmy painting, as mentioned above, arises only in the mid-first century AD, far later than the Nilotic or pharaonic elements. An even more important distinction, as I argue below in Chapter 2, is that pharaonic motifs often seem to draw inspiration (in both iconography and style) from identifiable objects with which

¹⁵ The context of such paintings often either boosts or diminishes their potential Egyptian connotation: several watery scenes painted in the Praedia of Julia Felix, for instance, include ducks with a few lotus pads but also non-Nilotic vegetation; paired with marine thiasoi, the reference to Egypt is weak if not nonexistent. Yet the scenes are described as "picture with Nilotic landscape (ducks among marsh plants)" (PPM 3, 285). On the other hand, very similar scenes of waterbirds and lilypads in the Villa of the Mysteries tablinum are more likely meant to evoke Egypt because of their direct juxtaposition with pharaonic imagery (thus they appear in Versluys' catalog of Nilotic paintings: Versluys 2002, 155–8, cat. no. 167).

Meyboom, but they too conflate the genres (Versluys and Meyboom 2000, Versluys and Meyboom 2007). In wanting to separate them I agree with Tybout 2003. The placement of various Egyptian-themed paintings throughout Roman houses will be discussed in a forthcoming catalog and study by Anu Koponen.

¹⁷ Observed also by Elsner 2006, 290. Söldner construes this as a split between earlier Alexandrian motifs and later pharaonic ones (Söldner 2000, 387), but this cannot account for the later Pygmy paintings. As mentioned above, I am more inclined to see this as a difference in the type of objects that the wall painters used as models (which has a chronological component insofar as the available models change over time—discussed below).

¹⁸ The earliest Nilotic mosaics in Roman contexts are the famous Nile Mosaic at Palestrina (the definitive publication remains Steinmeyer-Schareika 1978; a second-century date is upheld by de Vos and de Vos 1980, 70 and Zevi and Bove 2008) and the friezelike mosaics in the House of the Faun, Pompeii (now Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 9990, n.n., and n.n.). Nilotic scenes are first attested in painting in the Villa of the Mysteries atrium (Söldner 2004, 202; Verlsuys dates them to "before 60 BC:" Versluys 2002, 157), and thrive throughout the first century AD and even the second century AD in Ostia (see Bocherens 2012). Fragaki argues that these scenes continue with such vigor in Christian contexts because they connote a paradisical existence (Fragaki 2008).

Roman wall painters were familiar—whereas Nilotic and Pygmy scenes do not betray such a clear connection to precious objects. ¹⁹ The painters, that is, conceived of and executed pharaonic paintings differently than they did other Egyptian subjects—so for the purposes of this study, it is reasonable to focus only on the pharaonic paintings.

Egypt Three Ways

Religious

The ways in which Egyptian (and particularly pharaonic) motifs in Roman painting have been interpreted roughly fall into three categories. The paintings are said to represent either religious devotion, political allegiance, or aspirations to high fashion—or some combination of these. The first of these, the religious interpretation, appeared even in the earliest analyses of Pompeian houses. Della Corte, for instance, proposed that the figure of an Isiac priest painted in the House of Octavius Quartio (then called the House of Loreius Tiburtinus) represented the homeowner, and so the dozens of large storage vessels in the garden must have held sacred Nile water for use in Isiac ritual. This proposal certainly tests the bounds of plausibility, but is by no means alone: in 1962, Karl Schefold suggested that the Egyptian motifs in the Villa of Agrippa Postumus at Boscotrecase were related to Isiac cult in Rome. This theory immediately caused him consternation, however, because he realized that the paintings were roughly contemporaneous with the ban on Isiac cult in Rome; thus they must have flouted imperial law, and could only have existed because "the artists could not do without them." While not impossible, this explanation seems less likely than one that does not require the emperor's son-in-law to defy imperial orders.

Attempts to connect Egyptian subjects in painting to religious devotion continue even today.²³ Most prominently, a magisterial exhibition by Stefano De Caro sought to trace an evolution in the Roman reception of Egypt across nine centuries, defined by the "new beliefs" adopted from Egyptian cult.²⁴ Thus in De Caro's view, religion is the backdrop against which we should understand all Egyptian material in Italy: he folds into his account everything from the earliest Egyptian trinkets found in eighth-century BC graves to the Pygmy paintings in late first-century AD houses.

¹⁹ Some have suggested that the landscapes in Roman fresco are inspired in some way by Alexandrian art (e.g., Rostowzew 1911, 26, 48, 54–72, 78, 83–4, 88–96, 98–137; Schefold 1960), but the particulars of the relationship remain vague.

²⁰ An early exceptional theory instead saw the Egyptian elements as evidence that the entire Third Style was created in Egypt and imported to Rome (Ippel 1910, 37–41)—part of the scholarly push to locate the origins of Roman art in the east (discussed by Brendel 1979, 42–7).

²¹ Della Corte 1931–1932.

²² "[D]ie Künstler nicht auf sie verzichten konnten" (Schefold 1962, 47 as well as 30, 32, 61).

²³ Although some now discredit it: de Vos recognizes that "even if [the paintings] figure Egyptian divinities, they are not strictly linked to Isiac cult" (de Vos and de Vos 1980, 75; affirmed by Clauss 2004, 273 and Lorenz 2005, 446–7). Grimm argues the same but proposes an unlikely alternative: the paintings in the villa at Boscotrecase were chosen by Julia perhaps as "conscious opposition to her traditionalist and moralist father" (Grimm 1997, 125).

²⁴ De Caro 2006, 15. The same view has been expressed by other great specialists, including Pappalardo 2004, 48 and Roullet 1972, 46–7.

But the assembled material, instead of presenting a unified picture, shows how *little* the overtly religious material relates to the paintings. For the first cultic imports arrive in Italy far earlier than any paintings depict Egyptian subjects—and even when the paintings *do* start to depict Egyptian subjects, they understandably avoid the paltry scarab stones, beads, and lumpy statuettes of demons that make up the imports, instead depicting landscapes, figures, and animals. Nor do the paintings show notable similarities with the contemporaneous bronze statuettes of divinities found in household shrines in Pompeii. The iconography simply is not shared between the cultic objects and the paintings. Thus there seems to be no compelling reason to read the paintings in terms of the cultic objects.²⁵

That Egyptian subjects in Roman painting should not all be read in religious terms is further confirmed by looking at those that *did* function religiously: those in household shrines. Domestic Pompeian shrines to Egyptian deities show that both the selection of subjects and the way in which they are rendered differ dramatically from the depictions of Egyptian subjects outside of shrines. A typical example comes from the shrine in the House of the Golden Cupids in Pompeii (Fig. 1), which features a rich golden-yellow main zone framed with wide red bands and delicate white borders. Slightly above the center of each yellow panel is a row of Egyptian ritual objects (east wall) and deities (south wall). Three of the objects—a silver *sistrum*, *patera*, and *situla* (that is, a rattle, libation dish, and bucket for sacred water)—hang from a tiny garland encircling the panel, while two wicker *cistae* (baskets for cultic instruments), a flower garland, and a coiled cobra sit on the ground line below. The southern panel, by contrast, depicts a row of four Egyptian gods: Anubis, Harpocrates, Isis, and Serapis. They are dressed not in pharaonic costume but in mantles, and Anubis sports a deep-red chlamys—that is, they wear emphatically *Greek* garb.

Several characteristics of this shrine painting differentiate it from Egyptian imagery in non-religious contexts. The careful illusionism that gives the bodies and drapery volume—a light source seems to illuminate them from the right, casting highlights and shadows over their bodies and clothes—strongly contrasts with the flattened Egyptian motifs embedded in decorative schemes. So does the unifying ground line that locates all the gods and cultic instruments within a cohesive pictorial space. Moreover, the figures' large size (some forty centimeters high) is unparalleled among Egyptian elements in non-cultic contexts. Nor are the gods rendered in the pharaonic idiom of composite perspective and blocks of color, but in a Greek idiom with naturalistic color modulation. And as we saw, they even wear Greek clothing instead of pharaonic skirts.

What accounts for these emphatically *non*-Egyptian pictorial elements? The answer is clear: these Egyptian gods have been assimilated to the Roman household gods—the Lares, Penates, and Genius—as depicted in countless domestic shrines (*lararia*; Fig. 2).²⁸ Even the poses of the Egyptian figures resembles the Lares', their raised arms now holding Egyptian sistra instead of the usual Roman drinking horns. To make the equivalence unmistakable, the Egyptian

²⁵ Many still assume a connection between the early imports and the paintings, even if they do not believe that the paintings are religious (e.g., Lorenz 2005, 446).

²⁶ On the iconography of Egyptian deities in lararia: Fröhlich 1991, 155–6.

²⁷ Similar depictions appear in the shrine to Isis, Harpocrates, and Serapis in the House of the Amazons (Jashemski 1979–1993, 122), and that in the Praedia of Julia Felix showing Anubis with various devotees (Parslow 1995, 50). All photos are by the author unless otherwise noted.

²⁸ The iconography of lararium paintings is masterfully addressed by Giacobello 2008, Ch. 3. On Egyptian deities depicted in household shrines, see Fröhlich 1991, 155–6.

deities are furthermore accompanied by the pair of beneficent (and native Italic) snakes typical of lararium paintings. Strikingly, even the paintings in the Pompeian Temple of Isis itself conform to this model: the inner shrine of the temple contained large naturalistic figures (two in bust format) and pair of coiling snakes against the usual white background (Fig. 3). Thus represented in the traditional household shrine format, these gods are clearly meant to be worshipped. The contrast to the miniature Egyptian figures in non-religious contexts could hardly be greater—let alone the contrast to pharaonic motifs that omit figures entirely, like the disembodied crowns examined in Chapter 1. This difference is reaffirmed by a striking fact: shrines to Egyptian deities have never yet been found in the same house as ornamental Egyptian paintings. Romans clearly felt that they served two separate purposes.²⁹

Political

Far more prevalent than the religious reading of Egyptian motifs on Roman walls, however, is the political reading. Specifically, the paintings are said to reflect Octavian's victory at Actium in 31 BC and Rome's annexation of Egypt in 30 BC—and sometimes even to *symbolize* "the victory of Rome over Alexandria." The hypothesis that homeowners throughout the Italian peninsula and beyond could have chosen decorative motifs for some putative reference to particular historical events or political ambitions is itself a claim that requires interrogation, but until today has been accepted without hesitation. This is even more disturbing in view of the fact that this peculiar reading derives from the analysis of a *single* example: the Egyptian motifs in a room of the so-called "House of Augustus" on the Palatine Hill in Rome, a house thought to have once been owned by the emperor. The foremost specialist of these paintings, Irene Iacopi, links their Egyptian motifs directly to the battle at Actium; and indeed, this reading has been widely accepted. This interpretation is typical of the general trend in studies of Roman painting to read the development of *domestic* frescoes in terms of *public* politics and especially individual emperors, above all Augustus—a reflex conditioned, one suspects, by the equally Augustus-centric interpretations of Roman *sculpture* featuring Egyptian

²⁹ Observed also by Söldner 2004, 206. In principle then I agree with Lorenz, who proposes that a religious function can be assumed only when the Egyptian imagery is found in conjunction with shrines (Lorenz 2005, 446–7); but the two paintings from unknown contexts in Herculaneum that she cites as supporting evidence seem to me unlikely to have served religiously, because they resemble typical still lifes and landscapes more than they do the usual shrine paintings described above.

³⁰ Baldassarre 2009, 85. Also Interdonato 2008; Mastroroberto 2006, 188–9 and cat. no. III.159; Cima 2006, cat. no. III.136; Galinsky 1996, 190; Mielsch 2001; and Ling 1991, 39.

³¹ The only concerted argument to this effect has been made by Söldner, shown below to be untenable (Söldner 2000).

³² The attribution of the house is discussed below, pp. 15–18.

³³ Söldner 1999, 97; others include Ling 1991, 39 and Iacopi 1997, 5.

styles and subjects.³⁴ While this approach is riddled with problems (further discussed below in the Conclusion), it remains surprisingly common in the scholarship.³⁵

Extrapolating from the widely accepted political reading of the "House of Augustus" frescoes, many have gone on to interpret the Egyptian motifs in *other* houses in the same way. Thus Gury, for example, reads the landscapes with Egyptian elements in the "House of Livia" as expressing "the ideology of the Principate." More worryingly, this reading is even applied to houses far from Rome and dated to nearly a century after the conquest of Egypt, most notably in first-century Pompeian houses. Here paintings of sphinxes are regularly deemed symbols of the Actian victory, 37 as are Nilotic scenes of all sorts. In the case of the Pompeian paintings, the political interpretation is not based on context—since, unlike the "House of Augustus" on the Palatine Hill in Rome, the Pompeian houses are not so situated as to suggest any connection with the imperial circle, and they are dated to significantly after the conquest. Rather, it relies on a chain of problematic assumptions: that Pompeian homeowners, when decorating their walls, imitated elite Roman ones, who in turn (so the theory goes) intended their wall paintings to bespeak their political allegiance—and thus that the Pompeian paintings must seek to do the same. Page 19 of the same.

However, presuming that Egyptian elements maintained the same significance in first-century AD Pompeii that they may have had in first-century BC Rome is a mistake. For even *if* the elite in Rome originally intended these elements as political references (a possibility refuted below), one cannot assume that Pompeian homeowners sought to preserve this significance a century later. ⁴⁰ Penelope Davies has even proposed that the Actian reading of Egyptian imagery reflects not the ancient Roman viewer's perspective but the effect of Augustan propaganda on

³⁴ E.g., Donadoni 2008, 17; Vittozzi 1990, 151. It is telling that Roullet begins her book on "Egyptianizing" imagery with a summary of each emperor's supposed role in spreading Egyptian religion and iconography (Roullet 1972, 1–5).

³⁵ Moormann has voiced the most eloquent rebuttal of these political readings, observing that "scholars have constructed their interpretations on the basis of their knowledge of the vicissitudes in the same way that Suetonius and other historians did: they have reconstructed *post eventum* and have suggested the importance of a particular stage" which actually may have been negligible (Moormann 2013, 233).

³⁶ Gury 2010, 181.

³⁷ E.g., Mastroroberto 2006, 188–9 and cat. no. III.159; Cima 2006, cat. no. III.136; Söldner 2004, 204; Swetnam-Burland 2002, 74 n. 52; Zanker 1988, 270. Sphinxes are universally regarded in the scholarship as Egyptian, but the Romans knew two varieties of sphinx and accorded each its own iconography: that of Greek myth sits on its haunches and often has dugs, while that of pharaonic iconography always reclines. Erroneously lumping together all sphinxes into a single category has additionally led to the mistaken idea that Augustus' seal ring with a sphinx relates to his conquest of Egypt—but the relevant passage in Pliny (Plin. *HN* 37.10) contravenes this: first of all, the ring (one of a matching set, in fact) is an inheritance from Augustus' mother, and thus not created by the emperor himself to reflect his conquest; and second, the emperor's circle apparently joked that the sphinx brings riddles (*aenigmata*), thus aligning it with the Greek sphinx rather than the Egyptian.

³⁸ Most concertedly, Söldner 2004.

³⁹ E.g., Vittozzi 1990, 22; also Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 358; Zanker 1988, 266–7; Zanker 1998, esp. 136–202. Wallace-Hadrill nuances the model of trickle-down aesthetics but also uses it inconsistently (Wallace-Hadrill 2008, Ch. 7).

⁴⁰ Or that preserving it would even be possible. See further in Davies 2011, 359.

scholars themselves, so taken in by Augustus' claims to domination that they see his victory reflected even in unrelated monuments.⁴¹

While I oppose a political reading of these paintings, then, I do not mean to suggest that they have no relation to the conquest of Egypt. Indeed, the fact that pharaonic motifs first appear in fresco around 45–20 BC strongly suggests that something happened at that time to spark this new type of decoration; for the appearance of these motifs represents a dramatic change from the Egyptian elements incorporated into earlier wall painting, which were limited to Nilotic elements and depictions of Alexandrian architecture. 42 Recognizing this, in Chapter 1 I argue that Octavian's conquest of Egypt and especially his triple triumph resulted in so much Egyptian material flooding into Rome that these events revolutionized the artistic landscape in Rome. 43 To my mind it is very probable that the triumph featured a great wealth of precious goods which, paraded with immense pomp before a Roman audience, became desirable and attainable as never before—and which Roman painters then incorporated into their compositions. As a result of the conquest of Egypt, that is, artists gained a vast new repertoire of motifs ripe for the picking.⁴⁴ Seen in this light, the conquest and triumph were pivotal to artistic production—not because they produced an iconography of triumph that was then taken up in Roman houses, but because Roman homeowners grew familiar with these objects, acquired them, and ultimately wanted them depicted in paint on their walls, just as they did Greek objects before 31 BC. So the wealth of Egyptian goods brought to Rome at this time *did* provide models for the wall paintings; but just because a political act enabled their arrival in Rome in unprecedented quantities does not mean that they bore a political reference when deployed in Roman houses thereafter.⁴⁵

A final word on the political reading concerns terminology. The personage central to this reading was known as Octavian until 27 BC, after which he adopted the honorific titles of *Augustus* ("the august one") and *Princeps* ("first citizen"). Scholarship generally refers to him by whichever name was current at the moment in question: before 27 we typically refer to him as Octavian; after that year, Augustus. A special problem in studying the paintings, however, is that they are not firmly dated; often we do not know whether they were made before or after 27. Throughout this study, therefore, I refer to "Augustus" or "the princeps" rather than "Octavian" merely for simplicity's sake, not because I mean to imply a date after 27 BC.

⁴¹ Davies 2011, 359.

⁴² Judith McKenzie has documented numerous Alexandrian architectural elements incorporated into Second-Style schemes (McKenzie 2007).

⁴³ While Rome's conquests resulted in vast wealth and power (engendering the concept of *mare nostrum* or "our sea," the term for Romans' proprietary feelings about the Mediterranean), not all Romans looked kindly upon them. Pliny voices his discontent: "So it is certainly true that as a result of our greatness, the traditional customs of the Roman people have been destroyed, that in conquering we have been conquered. We are subject to foreigners, and in one of the arts they have mastered the masters" (Plin. *HN* 24.25; translation and discussion by Carey 2003, 77).

⁴⁴ La Rocca has suggested that the Egyptian motifs in Roman wall painting are a reflection of Cleopatra's visits to Rome in the 40s BC (La Rocca 2008, 238), but there is no evidence of what sort of materials she may have brought to Rome in this context. That Cleopatra visited Rome on two occasions rather than once for two years is convincingly argued by Gruen 2003.

⁴⁵ Söldner sees the novelty of the "House of Augustus" pharaonic motifs as evidence that they refer to Actium, but this is to confuse the issue: just because they are new and even possibly introduced to Rome by the conquest does not mean that they then *refer* to the conquest (Söldner 2000, 383).

Exotica/Fashion

The latest attempt to make sense of Egyptian elements in wall painting diverges from both the religious and political readings, construing them instead as a product of fashion. John Clarke, for example, has argued that they are not "political propaganda" but "a new, elegant, and much-copied fashion in interior decoration." Although this view has found a ready audience, ⁴⁶ it is objectionable in several respects. Most troubling is that the term "fashion" is used without being seriously considered; it has become merely a convenient one-word substitute for the religious and political readings of Egyptian motifs now often found lacking. ⁴⁷ Included in this reading are frequent facile comparisons with modern European chinoiserie, a further disservice to the material: ⁴⁸ for chinoiserie too (objects that represent Chinese subjects and styles in European contexts, most commonly nineteenth-century household decor) has long been defined, and thus dismissed, as mere modishness. ⁴⁹ The comparison therefore frames both sets of material as simplistic fashion trends that require no further explanation.

Scholarship that invokes fashion as an explanation for the Egyptian motifs envisions it functioning in one of two ways: either as an autonomous force; or a purely personal preference. For instance, William C. Archer believes that wall painters were limited to repeating compositions already "favored by contemporary fashion," as if it were ineluctable. Jaś Elsner, on the other hand, regards fashion as a purely personal choice: in considering Egyptian motifs in Roman painting, he writes that they "have lost any sense of historicism, to become simply a matter of taste and whimsical artistic choices." Both of these perspectives regard fashion as the work of a single agent, one who acts *independently* from historical context. If fashion is an autonomous force, the thinking goes, its fluctuations are simply *sui generis* and require no further explanation; while if it is driven by personal preferences—and transient ones at that—it reflects nothing more than the whims of single individuals. In either case, no more can be said about the significance of the "fashion"—it is a closed hermeneutic loop, referring to nothing outside itself.

Both proposals are, however, misguided. Fashion is not itself an active agent but a series of choices made by *people*; and fashion cannot be the product of personal preferences free of

⁴⁶ Clarke 2005, 265; also Wallace-Hadrill 2008, esp. 357–8; de Vos and de Vos 1980; Vittozzi 1990, 22; Lembke 1994, 49, 87, 131; and Iacopi 2007, 76. Against the "fashion" reading: Söldner 1999; Lorenz 2005, 446.

⁴⁷ A notable counterexample, in which fashion is expertly integrated into a historical argument, is Borg 2004. Zanker proposed an extremely influential model that integrated politics with fashion (Zanker 1988, 266–7; Zanker 1998, esp. 136–202).

⁴⁸ E.g., Moormann 2011, 82; Smith 2010, 219; Leach 2004, 140; Balch 2003, 41; Versluys 2002, 440; Mielsch 2001, 73; Galinsky 1996, 189; Carettoni 1983, 417; Schefold 1962, 29; Rostowzew 1911, 71.

⁴⁹ Even recently, Porter felt the need to mount a vehement rebuttal of this entrenched view (Porter 2002).

⁵⁰ At least, until the Fourth Style, when he allows that other factors may have played a role (Archer 1990, 123).

⁵¹ Elsner 2006, 290. Hackworth Petersen also casts them in terms of taste (Hackworth Petersen 2006, 47).

historical conditioning.⁵² Because it is a phenomenon shaped by artists and patrons, fashion is just as historically contingent as any other aspect of material culture. It is molded by political, social, and ideological institutions,⁵³ and even acts *upon* these institutions—exactly as art does. Although "decoration" is still often arbitrarily classified separately from "art," and its shifts over time too often labeled "fashion" instead of "artistic change" or "development," it is an equally significant category of material culture that is just as inextricable from its historical context. To conceive of wall painting as "purely decorative"⁵⁴ is thus to trivialize this valuable visual medium; and "fashion," a term to describe the changes in this medium over time, must be understood to present not an answer but a series of questions: "How do successful fashions begin? Why do certain fashions emerge at the particular moment they do, while other potential fashions never emerge at all?"⁵⁵ Not only, then, does the concept of fashion lack explanatory power: it *itself* is the phenomenon requiring explanation.

Yet the problems with calling Egyptian elements in Roman painting a "fashion" run deeper still. I would argue that these elements do not constitute a fashion *at all*, because the term presupposes a short duration. Fashion has long been defined by transience: as Oscar Wilde wrote, "Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months." Even in the ancient world, fashion hairstyles in Roman women's portraiture last less than a generation, and sometimes even change markedly within a single woman's lifetime. But Egyptian subjects in Roman art are popular for so long that they must have resonated deeply with generations of Roman patrons, not to mention Late Antique and Byzantine patrons—for these subjects appear not only in Roman paintings of the first centuries BC and AD, nor just in an isolated revival under the Egyptophilic emperor Hadrian, but in both pagan and Christian art from the third to the sixth century AD. During these later centuries, Nilotic and other Egyptian subjects continue to appear in countless mosaics and Coptic textiles with the same vigor as in the earlier period. A category of imagery that thrives for more than seven centuries is no fashion trend.

If Egyptian elements so dramatically exceed the scope of "fashion," then they certainly rise above the accusation of being "uncomprehending distortions" of remote models.⁵⁹ What a modern viewer may see as a pastiche or weak imitation (a criticism leveled at chinoiserie as well⁶⁰), the Romans saw as a choate and highly respectable whole—just like Roman "archaistic"

⁵² Leach has explored how Roman wall painting reflects conscious choices made by patrons and painters (Leach 1982. The exploration of wall painting as a way for a homeowner to express his identity, especially his social status, similarly acknowledges the agency of the patron (see especially Clarke 1991, Clarke 1998, Clarke 2003, Clarke 2007) as well as Zanker 1998). For an assessment of this use of wall painting, with many references, see Tybout 2001.

⁵³ Rawson 2006, 387.

⁵⁴ Moormann 2010, 231 and Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 357.

⁵⁵ Porter 2002, 402.

⁵⁶ Wilde 1887.

⁵⁷ On the many changing hair fashions in female private portraiture, see Fejfer 2008, 352–3. Frel describes an example in the J. Paul Getty Museum in which the sitter seems to have had her portrait reworked in order to update the hairdo (Frel 1981, cat. no. 75).

⁵⁸ A prodigious number of examples are cited in Scranton et al. 1976, esp. 36, 139–140. For a recent iconographic study of Nilotic scenes in Byzantine art, with many further references, see Hachlili 2009, Ch. 5.

⁵⁹ Roullet delivers the harshest criticism (Roullet 1972, 20–2, 50), but she is not alone (Griffiths 1975, 294); the above quotation is from Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 358.

⁶⁰ On the "mixed" idiom of chinoiserie, see Gruber and Keller 1975, 33.

art, Roman adaptations of Greek artworks in furnishings, and the Roman preference for mounting aged portrait heads atop youthful idealized bodies. ⁶¹ The Roman use of Egyptian motifs in wall painting is another such artistic category that must be valued as earnest—and, given its popularity, wildly successful—despite our own modern aesthetic prejudices. Instead of trivializing it by facile references to fashion, we need to recognize it for its deep and long-lived significance to Roman culture.

New Direction

Focusing on the pharaonic motifs in wall painting of the first centuries BC and AD, the present project offers a new argument for what the appeal of this imagery might have been. It proposes that the motifs related primarily not to the world of religion, politics, or fashion, but that of luxury;⁶² and that they thereby paralleled the Greek motifs similarly found on Roman walls.⁶³ The argument is presented over the subsequent chapters as follows.

Chapter 1 presents the first-ever direct appraisal of the political reading of the "House of Augustus" paintings. Since these paintings serve as the foundation for the political interpretation of Egyptian motifs more broadly, this is a crucial first step to evaluating the significance of the whole corpus. Analysis of these paintings reveals that there is in fact no reason to think that the princeps himself commissioned them as an expression of his conquest of Egypt—particularly given that their pharaonic, semi-fantastical imagery appears nowhere in his victory monuments. Nor can the paintings symbolize spolia triumphantly brought back to Rome from Egypt, for their abstracted representation is unparalleled among depictions of spolia.

It is crucial to this argument to carefully analyze the Egyptian iconography—my analysis is the first for many of the "House of Augustus" motifs—but also to expand beyond the purely iconographical method that has been used until now. For although the iconography is certainly important to understanding the paintings, I argue that the *form* of these Egyptian motifs is just as critical: they are vegetalized, elongated, and sometimes even melded with animal parts. While some aspects of the traditional pharaonic iconography remain discernible, many others are transformed, sometimes to the brink of recognizability (despite scholars' best efforts to identify them). Acknowledging that these are virtuosic *reimaginings*, moreover, is vital for making sense of these paintings—for such fantastical renderings of Egyptian subjects appear in *no other media*, whether in Egypt or Rome. Here the painters recast the old iconography into something new. ⁶⁴ This emphatically separates these images from those used in the service of religion or politics: as

 $^{^{\}rm 61}$ Hallett addresses the modern prejudices that be devil analysis of this material (Hallett 2005, Ch.

<sup>8).

62</sup> Throughout this project, I use the term "luxury" to refer to desirable, expensive, inessential goods—without the connotation of depravity or excess that accompanies the Latin term *luxuria* (see below, n. 142).

⁶³ Both of these aspects have been acknowledged previously but rarely developed beyond a brief mention. In discussing the Egyptian collection in the Capitoline Museums, Vittozzi notes the influence of "a migration to Italy of Egyptian fabrics, materials, technologies, and motifs" (but nonetheless falls back on a religious interpretation for the Hadrianic material; Vittozzi 1990, 22). Swetnam-Burland takes up the issue of Egyptian imports to Rome in her new book, Swetnam-Burland 2015, 18–40. Donadoni has noted a parallel between the Egyptian and Greek material in Roman contexts (Donadoni 2008, 17).

⁶⁴ Nor are these fanciful reimaginings "mistakes" that attest to "the declining artistic standards of the monuments created in Rome in imitation of Egyptian religious art" (Griffiths 1975, 294 praising the argument of Roullet 1972, esp. 20–2).

we saw above, Egyptian subjects depicted in shrines are far from fantastical; and Chapter 1 shows the same for political monuments. The painterly flourishes instead point to what I believe is the primary significance of the motifs, addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter 2 proposes that the Egyptian motifs in the "House of Augustus," rather than being a unique commission of the princeps, are instead symptomatic of a widespread trend in Roman wall painting of this period: namely, they represent prized *collector's items*, translated from three dimensions into two. This artistic practice has already been recognized in the Greek objects depicted on Roman walls, ⁶⁵ and in closely analyzing the Egyptian motifs I show that for them too we can identify a host of luxury objects that served as models. These objects are attested both archaeologically and textually as collector's treasures, and counted among the most sought-after objects in the empire. Comparanda of the first centuries BC and AD from Rome, the Bay of Naples, and Egypt fill out the picture of what sorts of objects Roman collectors most highly prized, and were therefore likely to want in their wall paintings as well. ⁶⁶ The already extraordinary preciousness of these objects, I argue, is enhanced by the creative flourishes given them in their mural form, as painters augment the connoisseurial pleasure offered by luxury objects by adding another layer of artistry and elegance.

Chapter 3 addresses how viewers responded to these motifs in the context of the Roman house. It argues that the paintings, as depictions of luxury objects, contributed to an atmosphere of refined pleasure (*otium*) that aimed primarily to delight the Roman viewer. It achieved this goal in several ways, two of which are detailed here. On the one hand, pharaonic motifs derived from luxury goods were included in wall painting as part of illusionistic art collections that prompted conversation: the viewer was meant to entertain himself and his friends with erudite discussions of myth, art, legend, and love that drew on the surrounding decor. On the other hand, pharaonic motifs were employed in lavish garden spaces, harmonizing with displays of water and flora to create a space of sensorial pleasure. These points are buttressed by consideration of our surviving literary sources: ancient authors such as Pliny the Younger and Statius, writing about lavish villa gardens, make plain that the primary aim of such carefully curated garden decoration is to conjure an atmosphere not of politics or even religion, but of pleasure—explicitly predicating the enjoyment of otium on the *absence* of politics.

The Conclusion reflects on this new reading's contributions to Roman painting studies. First, it urges us to reconsider the widespread political readings of Roman domestic art, especially the paintings that have long been called "Augustan." Second, it encourages us to consider the manifold visual culture of the Roman house *as a unit*, rather than separating wall painting from the other materials—above all, luxury goods and other domestic furnishings—with which it was clearly in dialogue. Taken together, these two contributions open up a new perspective on Roman collecting, artistic practice, and domestic life.

⁶⁵ Yerkes 2005; Yerkes 2000.

⁶⁶ It is worth considering the possible effects of the geographical, social, and economic gap between the top-quality paintings on the Palatine in Rome and those in humbler Pompeian houses. The mechanisms described in this study, however, are common to both.

Chapter 1. The Princeps and the Paintings

The widespread claim that Egyptian motifs in Roman frescoes refer to the Roman conquest of Egypt in 31–30 BC ultimately rests on one example: the fresco program in an upstairs room of a house on the Palatine Hill in Rome, the so-called "House of Augustus." Many maintain that the paintings in this room were commissioned by the princeps to explicitly commemorate "the victory of Rome over Alexandria," and they extrapolate from this example to read other frescoes in the same way—even frescoes far outside of Rome and dated to nearly a century after the conquest.⁶⁷ Yet despite its currency in the scholarship, this interpretation of the "Upper Cubiculum" frescoes has never been properly formulated, let alone examined: rather, it has gained strength by repeated, cursory mentions of the same few iconographic features of the paintings. Because this fresco program is the central support for the traditional reading of Egyptian motifs in Roman painting at large, it is immensely important for our understanding of the whole corpus—and thus constitutes the deserving focus of the present chapter.

This chapter begins by scrutinizing the assumption that the frescoes in the Upper Cubiculum were commissioned by the princeps himself.⁶⁸ I show this claim to be tenuous, beginning as an assumption on the part of the excavator and coming to be repeated as if it were fact—in spite of, or perhaps because of, the lack of a definitive publication of the excavated material. We will see that the Upper Cubiculum can by no means be identified with the princeps' private study as has been assumed, and moreover that it is far from clear that the princeps had anything to do with conceiving its fresco program.

A close analysis of the paintings and their iconography occupies the second part of the chapter, with the aim of determining what elements can be identified as Egyptian and how they are deployed on the walls. Surprisingly this question has never been addressed, despite the profusion of scholarship on the frescoes; even a basic analysis of the Egyptian elements is still lacking. Yet this is crucial to show that these paintings cannot possibly have served the triumphal rhetoric that has been assumed: for the motifs are so abstracted from their pharaonic models that they are often rendered almost unrecognizable. This makes them an unlikely vehicle indeed for a statement of triumph. In fact, we will see that when the princeps did want to express his victory over Egypt, he did so through triumphal monuments whose imagery in no way parallels the painted Egyptian decoration. Even the goods that he brought back from Egypt and paraded in triumph do not compellingly relate to the paintings: for in both content and form, the motifs in the Upper Cubiculum have nothing in common with depictions of spolia. So although the victory and triumph over Egypt may have *indirectly* impacted Roman painting in certain ways—for instance, by introducing an unprecedented mass of Egyptian goods into Rome, the focus of Chapter 2—they absolutely did not constitute the primary referent of the paintings. Consequently, we must reconsider our interpretation of the entire corpus of Egyptian motifs in Roman fresco. starting with those in the Upper Cubiculum.

⁶⁷ Baldassarre 2009, 85. Also Interdonato 2008; Mastroroberto 2006, 188–9 and cat. no. III.159; Cima 2006, cat. no. III.136; Galinsky 1996, 190; Mielsch 2001; and Ling 1991, 39.

⁶⁸ Throughout this study I refer to Augustus or "the princeps" rather than Octavian merely for simplicity's sake, not because I mean to imply a date after 27 BC (see p. 9 above).

The House and Its Paintings

Excavating the House on the Palatine

Because the interpretation of the paintings in the Upper Cubiculum depends on the identification of the house with Augustus, it is worth reviewing the evidence for this attribution. The Upper Cubiculum is a room on the second floor of a house on the southwest side of the Palatine Hill in Rome. 69 It is one of a complex of rooms arranged around an atrium and a peristyle, as typical for Roman houses from the second century BC onward (Fig. 4). 70 This building and the area around it underwent "superficial examination" in 1865 and minor excavation in 1921 and 1937, but the first intensive excavations took place in the late 1950s. By 1960 the head excavator, Gianfilippo Carettoni, published a summary of the ongoing activities in this sector of the Palatine, including the "Area R" that contained the Upper Cubiculum. In 1960, however, excavation of this complex was only just beginning: Carettoni noted that "part of a large building has come to light; from its method of construction in large tufa blocks, and its decoration, consisting in painted walls and mosaic pavements with rectangular tesserae or of opus sectile in marble, it may be attributed to the Augustan age..." Yet Carettoni already recognized that "The exploration of this part of the Palatine is of great interest, since it involves the problem of identifying the temple of Apollo and the residence of the Emperor Augustus, whose property probably embraced the House of Livia."71 This suspicion came to define his work on the site.

In 1967 Carettoni published some of the findings of his excavation, as well as several interpretations that would mold scholarly perceptions of the complex to the present day.⁷² Particularly, he argued that the archaeological evidence could be linked with ancient textual descriptions of the princeps' residence. He cited three points in support of this reading: that the residential structure he had uncovered was aligned with the nearby Temple of Apollo; that it appeared to be divided into "public" and "private" quarters; and that its wall painting was relatively humble.⁷³ Carettoni was right to say that these features "recall" the textual sources, but they are so vague as to be far from conclusive. Perhaps aware of this, in this article Carettoni did not definitively claim to have found the House of Augustus.

In 1983 this changed. Carettoni expanded upon the same material he had published seventeen years earlier, but this time under the assertive title "The House of Augustus." By this time he felt no need to further justify the attribution, simply beginning his essay, "The house of Augustus represents the greatest complex of Second-Style paintings recovered in Rome for

⁶⁹ The most thorough publication of the house is Carettoni 1983, 388 n. 346, although this is essentially limited to the paintings. In lieu of a comprehensive publication of the excavations, see now Tomei 2014. The archaeological remains and larger context are summarized in *LTUR* 2, 46–8 and *LTUR* 4, 22–8.

⁷⁰ On the architectural development of Roman peristyle houses, see McKay 1998, esp. 44–6.

⁷¹ Carettoni 1960, 201–2.

⁷² Carettoni 1967.

⁷³ Carettoni 1983, 388 n. 346. Upon reading Carettoni's account, Wallace-Hadrill was convinced that the archaeological finds "illustrate Augustus' manipulation of the ambiguity of his position between public figure and private citizen. The literary accounts already indicate the way he turned his private property into public, giving house-space to Apollo and then as Pontifex Maximus to Vesta. We can now see on the ground how Actian Apollo is enmeshed within the house" (Wallace-Hadrill 1985, 248).

decades." The only nod to the attribution is a laconic footnote: "The excavations conducted in the twenty years since the first publication and still ongoing have permitted us to identify the various parts of the Augustan building complex and to verify its correspondence with that handed down in the literary tradition. The type of structure (*opera quadrata* and *opera reticulata*) is consonant with the protoaugustan period."⁷⁴ If this second sentence is meant to justify the first, it is one of the few pieces of archaeological evidence in Carettoni's essay that can be read in support of the attribution; the rest is taken for granted.

In this article, Carettoni even identified the Upper Cubiculum (Fig. 5) with a room mentioned by Suetonius as the princeps' private study (nicknamed "Syracuse") on the basis that both are "elevated" and "secluded." This attribution has been widely accepted despite its total reliance on a vague passage by Suetonius: Value of the second statement of the second state

In the other details of his life it is generally agreed that [the princeps] was most temperate and without even the suspicion of any fault. He lived at first near the Forum Romanum, above the Stairs of the Ringmakers, in a house which had belonged to the orator Calvus; afterwards, on the Palatine, but in the no less modest dwelling of Hortensius, which was remarkable neither for size nor elegance, having but short colonnades with columns of Alban stone, and rooms without any marble decorations or handsome pavements. For more than forty years too he used the same bedroom in winter and summer; although he found the city unfavorable to his health in the winter, yet continued to winter there. If ever he planned to do anything in private or without interruption, he had a retired place at the top of the house [erat illi locus in edito singularis], which he called

⁷⁴ Carettoni 1983, 373 n. 372.

⁷⁵ Carettoni 1983, 418.

⁷⁶ Tomei, a leading investigator of Palatine archaeology, notes that this "attributionism' at any cost seems to have become an ineliminable point of the current discussion of the residences on the Palatine" (Tomei 2013, 531); a magnum opus of attributionism is Carandini 2010. Carettoni's attribution of the house indeed convinced several influential scholars that he was able "to securely identify the building complex as the *palatium Augusti*" even though until this publication, Ehrhardt admits, the archaeological remains "corresponded in no way" to the written testimonies of, e.g., Ovid and Suetonius (Ehrhardt 1988, 641, referring to Carettoni 1967). Carettoni's attribution was reified by Paul Zanker's hugely influential book on Augustan art (Zanker 1988); Wiseman points out that Zanker accepted Carettoni's identification, but it is worth stressing that Zanker's book contributed substantially to its widespread approval (Wiseman 2013, 255). That the excavations were never fully published makes proper scrutiny of the attribution nearly impossible (Ehrhardt and Ling both mention that they await the full publication: Ehrhardt 1988, 641; Ling 1985, 218) although recently Tomei has stepped in to fill the void with her own investigations (Tomei 2000; Tomei 2013) and by publishing a volume of Carettoni's unedited excavation notes (Tomei 2014).

'Syracuse' and 'technyphion.' In this he used to take refuge, or else in the villa of one of his freedmen in the suburbs...⁷⁷

This passage points up the first of several difficulties in connecting the house currently called the "House of Augustus" with the textual sources. Suetonius calls the space *illi locus in edito singularis*, a vague denomination that by no means indicates a second-story room as has been assumed; Iacopi even suggests that it refers to an outdoor space in the portico itself. Identifying the Upper Cubiculum with the princeps' "Syracuse" is precarious moreover because this passage, it appears, does not in fact describe the extant "House of Augustus" at all: for Suetonius says that he slept in the same bedroom for forty years, but the bedroom in the "House of Augustus" was almost certainly destroyed in 36 BC when the temple of Apollo was constructed atop it. Therefore it cannot be the same house that Suetonius describes, and so the "Syracuse" too cannot refer to the Upper Cubiculum. Instead, Suetonius is probably referring to one of the princeps' other houses—for he acquired *numerous* properties on the Palatine after 43 BC, probably even greater in number than usually recognized. This makes it even less likely that the textual sources describe the Upper Cubiculum rather than other rooms in other houses that are no longer preserved (or not yet recovered).

The multiplicity of Palatine properties also reduces the likelihood that the princeps himself commissioned the extant wall paintings, including those in the Upper Cubiculum. Because his various properties consisted of individual houses that had been built and presumably decorated by their previous illustrious owners, their wall paintings cannot be attributed *a priori* to him;⁸² instead, the frescoes might be attributed to a previous owner such as Hortensius.⁸³ And insofar as the princeps never combined the properties into a single grandiose residence—they

^{77 &}quot;In ceteris partibus vitae continentissimum constat ac sine suspicione ullius vitii. Habitavit primo iuxta Romanum Forum supra Scalas anularias, in domo quae Calvi oratoris fuerat; postea in Palatio, sed nihilo minus aedibus modicis Hortensianis, et neque laxitate neque cultu conspicuis, ut in quibus porticus breves essent Albanarum columnarum et sine marmore ullo aut insigni pavimento conclavia. Ac per annos amplius quadraginta eodem cubiculo hieme et aestate mansit, quamvis parum salubrem valitudini suae urbem hieme experiretur assidueque in urbe hiemaret. Si quando quid secreto aut sine interpellatione agere proposuisset, erat illi locus in edito singularis, quem Syracusas et technyphion vocabat; huc transibat aut in alicuius libertorum suburbanum..." (Suet. *Aug.* 72, 71–2; trans. Rolfe 1914).

⁷⁸ Iacopi 2008, 29.

⁷⁹ La Rocca 2008.

⁸⁰ Wiseman 2013, 255, 257–60; Tomei 2000, 25; Meyboom 2005, 221–4.

⁸¹ This accords with Wiseman's analysis of the remains alongside the texts, in which he has shown that the house does not in fact connect to the Temple of Apollo as Carettoni believed, and that the textual evidence too cannot support Carettoni's attribution: for instance, the site is not the one later called the Domus Augustana by the Romans, and Ovid says that the forecourt to Augustus's house was north of the Temple of Apollo, while Carettoni's site lies to the west (Wiseman 2013, 256, 260). In view of these discrepancies, Wiseman fairly concludes "that the house of Augustus has *not* been found" (Wiseman 2014, 550–1).

⁸² The houses in question may have included those of Marc Antony, Q. Lutatius Catulus, and Tiberius Claudius Nero (Livia's first husband) (see respectively Dio Cass. 53.27.55, Plin. *HN* 17.11.12, and Dio Cass. 48.44.45). Tomei argues that Octavian accumulated so many houses on the Palatine (at the peak of the hill, no less) in order to solidify his self-identification with Romulus (Tomei 2000, 33).

⁸³ Leach 2004, 110.

always remained separated by streets⁸⁴—there is no moment of concerted renovation (with accompanying redecoration) in which we can discern his hand at work. Indeed, the fact that the same painting workshop seems to have decorated not only the "House of Augustus" but also the "House of Livia," the Aula Isiaca, and even the Villa Farnesina across the Tiber⁸⁵ argues against any special commission for the "House of Augustus," much less for the single Upper Cubiculum. Rather, this painter's workshop apparently moved among multiple elite residences to execute commissions for various members of the imperial circle.

So even if the Upper Cubiculum may have belonged to the princeps at some point—which is certainly possible, given his far-reaching acquisitions on the Palatine—the house is not that described by Suetonius, the Upper Cubiculum is not the "Syracuse," and there is no reason to believe that the paintings were commissioned by the princeps. ⁸⁶ Our best recourse to understanding the paintings, then, is to abandon the tenuous attribution of the "House of Augustus" and instead approach the paintings via an art-historical method grounded in analysis and comparanda. The following sections take on this task.

The Painting Scheme

The wall paintings in the Upper Cubiculum have been interpreted in light of the house's attribution: if the paintings belonged to the princeps, the thinking goes, then the Egyptian motifs in the program must express his triumph over Egypt.⁸⁷ But a satisfactory analysis of the Egyptian motifs has never been carried out; and if we give them due attention, we shall see that they cannot in fact function as the symbols of triumph that have been proposed: for such motifs never appear in the princeps' other victory monuments, and they have been adapted by the wall painters almost beyond recognition. The transformed nature of these motifs and their place in the overall program is the focus of the following analysis, which shows that although the motifs cleave closely enough to their Egyptian models to be recognizable to modern scholars trained in the iconography, their transformation into wall ornament robs them of any potential to express military victory.

The Upper Cubiculum paintings are superbly executed, the walls covered with fine details in delicate brushstrokes (Fig. 6–Fig. 13). They easily stand up to close scrutiny while simultaneously combining into a harmonious overall composition. Classified as Second Style, the scheme is characterized by the typical tripartite division of the walls and illusionistic architectural elements framing large panel paintings at the center of each wall. The dado appears deceptively simple, predominantly black with a white molding below and a yellow one above;

⁸⁴ Invoking Josephus on this point (Joseph. *AJ* 19.103, 104, 115–17, 212; 19.117), Wiseman notes, "it is very clear that the imperial complex the source described was one of separate houses with streets and alleys between them. And at one point he takes the trouble to explain to his readers how there could be several houses in the one domus" (Wiseman 2013, 258). The street between the "House of Augustus" and "House of Livia" is clearly shown on Carettoni's plan (Carettoni 1967, 59 fig. 51).

⁸⁵ Bragantini and de Vos 1982, 30; Meyboom 2005, 222 n. 212, with further references; and Moormann 2010, 229, 233.

⁸⁶ If La Rocca is right in claiming that the house and it paintings were buried by the neighboring temple in 36 BC (La Rocca 2008), meaning that they must predate the conquest of Egypt, the frescoes cannot have been commissioned to celebrate the victory; and although this theory has not been widely accepted, it is supported by my analysis of the paintings.

⁸⁷ This view is of course incompatible with La Rocca's proposal that the house was destroyed in 36 BC (see above, p. 17)—which no scholar who upholds the Actian reading has yet addressed.

but the black ground features a subtle geometric pattern delineated in white, and in an extra twist of illusionism the white molding abuts an illusionistic floor surface that appears to extend the real floor. The main zone consists of upright orthostates alternating in red and white, each framed by a dark purple band bearing a yellow double helix. In the middle of each wall (save the west wall, which is largely given over to the door) the orthostates are interrupted by an aedicula framing a large pinax that once depicted a sacro-idyllic landscape, now unfortunately rendered nearly illegible by losses and severe fading. The aediculae consist of sturdy white columns and an architrave that projects at the sides, and a floral frieze below a lunate pediment, on the back wall (Fig. 7), or volute pediments on the side walls (Fig. 8, Fig. 9). In the upper zone of the painting scheme, a yellow ground sets off floriform candelabra with outstretched tendrils—so vegetal that the underlying candelabrum shape is nearly obscured. To either side, segments of friezes and cornices sit atop red bases (Fig. 10). More candelabra stand upon the cornices and stretch up to the very top of the wall, as if holding up the thin green band that marks the transition to the stucco ceiling.

The saturated reds and yellows of the walls are complemented by a barrel vault above in refreshingly pale tones (Fig. 11). Despite its subdued palette, however, the ceiling is painted every bit as ornately as the walls and boasts details in stucco as well. The stuccowork subdivides the vault into a patchwork quilt of rectangles and other polygons. Long rectangles running the length of the vault hold vegetal candelabra, Victories, and eerily floating satyr heads (Fig. 12); smaller squares contain starbursts of flowers and leaves; and the tondo in the center shows a female figure riding on the back of a winged male (Fig. 13). The ceiling and walls (and certainly the floor, although it is no longer preserved) combine into a truly lush ensemble.

As we turn to the Egyptian details tucked into the painting, it is important to keep in mind that the scheme of this room as a whole perfectly conforms to the Second Style of wall painting described by Mau and Beyen, and known from many other examples; one of the finest is Cubiculum B in the Villa Farnesina in Rome (Fig. 14), and another is a wall from a villa at Portici (Fig. 15). Even if the Upper Cubiculum is one of the finest extant examples of its kind, it by no means breaks the mold; every aspect of the design finds parallels in other examples of Second Style. The Egyptian elements are cunningly transformed and deployed in an utterly standard mode, just like the other Second- and Third-Style examples we will see in the following chapter.

Egyptian Crowns

The Egyptian-themed elements woven into the decoration are numerous. Among the more noticeable are those based on pharaonic crowns, which have been eagerly identified and

⁸⁸ Overlooked in the definitive publication of the paintings, Carettoni 1983, 402.

⁸⁹ These volute pediments have been referred to as *appagineculi* following a passage of Vitruvius that mentions vegetalized architectural features (*pro columnis enim statuuntur calami, pro fastigiis appagineculi striati cum crispis foliis et volutis*, Vitr. *De arch.* 7.5.3). The term is, however, a hapax legomenon, so we cannot be sure what it in fact refers to. For this reason Judith McKenzie's term "volute pediment" is far preferable—as well as for the fact that she uses the term to describe Alexandrian architecture, and is therefore equally applicable to Roman wall painting insofar as the wall painting reproduces precisely this architecture (McKenzie 2007, fig. 145f).

⁹⁰ Mau 1882 and Beyen 1938–1960, each with numerous detailed examples.

labeled as symbols of victory over Egypt.⁹¹ But it must be stressed that these crown motifs are *not crowns*: they are decorative motifs, transformed into whimsical ornaments that often depart quite substantially from their models. This is crucial to understanding the painted program, as we will shortly see.

Several different crown motifs appear in the narrow black frieze that runs around the walls above the orthostates. The motifs vary from wall to wall as well as within the same wall: the back wall features the same set of motifs along its length, while the side walls are divided down the middle—the friezes along their eastern extents mirror each other, and on their western extents likewise. On the eastern extent the frieze contains a row of motifs vaguely modeled on the pharaonic "Horus feather crown" (Fig. 16). This type of double-feather (shuty) crown, depicted as an attribute of Egyptian pharaohs from the Fourth Dynasty onward, generally consists of two feathers standing on ram horns and flanked by cow horns. 92 Like all pharaonic crowns, the constitutive elements of the shuty can be variously recombined into an array of subtypes: other attributes can be added to the feathers and horns, such as a solar disc or diminutive pair of feathers at the front, and both sets of horns are not always present. Cleopatra is shown wearing the Horus feather crown in a relief on the outer wall of the Hathor temple in Dendera, Egypt (Fig. 17): standing behind the next pharaoh, Caesarion, she wears a crown with two pillarlike feathers overlain by a pair of upright curving cow horns. A large solar disc sits between the cow horns, which sprout not from ram's horns but from a modius (a blocklike base). The two tall, straight, smoothly tapering feathers—perhaps falcon feathers—distinguish the Horus feather crown from other types of double-feather crown which instead feature ostrich feathers. recognizable from their curved sides and lobes at the tips (which also occur in the wall paintings, discussed below).93

In the black frieze of the Upper Cubiculum, the whimsical reimagining of the Horus feather crown preserves the erect pair of feathers but reduces them to a skinny shaft with a groove down the center. He cow horns are recast as curlicues and playfully exaggerated, now more numerous (four instead of two), longer (nearly as tall as the feathers), and curlier (one pair twisting inward, the other outward!) than any cow horns. A vestigial solar disc sits at the base, now a gemlike red or green circle that enhances the jewelry-like effect of the golden "feathers" and "horns." A gold disc reduced to a near pinpoint sits atop the feathers. Blue wings spread gracefully upward to either side, perhaps a fully fledged version of the two additional sideswept feathers that in can be paired with this crown, as in several bronze examples from Pompeii that belonged to statuettes of Isis (Fig. 18, Fig. 19)—but such large wings are unprecedented in extant examples. The delicate jewelry-like appearance of the crown motifs is enhanced by the

⁹¹ E.g., Simon 1986, 183. Söldner refutes this reading, but substitutes an Isiac reading which to my mind is equally untenable (Söldner 1999, 105).

⁹² On this crown type, see Abubakr 1937, 38–46; Grumach-Shirun 1980; and Strauss 1980, 814–15. Abubakr notes that the crown is first seen in a depiction of Sneferu, founder of the Fourth Dynasty (Abubakr 1937, 38).

⁹³ Abubakr distinguishes the ostrich-feather crowns from the falcon-feather ones, although he notes that until the Ptolemaic period the Egyptians had only one word to describe both types (Abubakr 1937, 43).

⁹⁴ This shaftlike appearance of the feathers has led Carettoni to call them "obelisks," which they certainly are not (Carettoni 1983, 405; Carettoni 1988, 288). Even Carettoni's diagram of this frieze falsely squares the top edges of the feathers, making them look more like obelisks than they actually are (Carettoni 1983, fig. 10). Iacopi's repetition of this mistake surely derives from Carettoni's description (Iacopi 2008, 33).

whimsical baubles surrounding them, a line of inverted bells whose pearl-like clappers stretch skywards; these fantastical ornaments, it seems, can defy gravity. Like the crown motifs, they may be a recognizable reproduction of a real-world model, but they have been transposed to a purely fantastical realm.

Variations on the same Horus feather crown appear in other parts of the black frieze. Those on the western extent of the side walls feature a massively enlarged solar disc topped again by a shaft of "feathers" (Fig. 20). Two serpentine curves cling to the disc before branching out from its top, perhaps recalling cow horns but hardly recognizable as such. Further removing the crown motif from its pharaonic model and placing it instead in the realm of ornament is the arabesque tripod on which it stands, one leg formed by a dangling pendant, the other two by bombastic branching swirls as tall as the crown itself. Lion griffins to either side grasp the tendrils in their paws.

Two more variations of double-feather crown appear in the frescoes. One is the *atef* crown, the longest-lived crown in Egyptian art, appearing from the early Old Kingdom through the Ptolemaic period. In the New Kingdom it is embellished with further symbols that earn it a new name, the *anedtj* crown, which likewise appears in the paintings. The anedtj crown and the atef crown at its core are clearly illustrated in a relief depiction of Ptolemy XII on the pylon of the Horus Temple at Edfu (Fig. 21). The atef crown consists of a bundle of reeds cinched near the top, producing a flaring tip, and ostrich feathers with lobed tips that flank the reed bundle to either side. A careful rendering of the crown can be seen in a marble pilaster capital from the Palatine, where a head of the goddess Hathor is topped by a shrine and flanked by rearing cobras (royal insignia called *uraei*) wearing pharaonic crowns: the left-hand snake wears the "red crown" of Lower Egypt, the right-hand one the atef crown of Upper Egypt (Fig. 22). Here, as in many depictions from Egypt too, the reed core of the crown has been smoothed into a bowling pin shape neatly framed by the two ostrich feathers.

Like the Horus feather crown seen above, the basic framework of the atef crown can be enhanced with further recombinant elements. In the relief of Ptolemy XII, several additions transform it into the anedtj crown: solar discs at both the base and the top of the reed bundle, ram horns as a support, and to each side uraei topped by their own solar discs. ⁹⁷ A crown of this "enhanced atef" type—supplemented mainly by a solar disc—is thematized in the black-ground frieze on the Upper Cubiculum's back wall. This crown motif starts with an oversized solar disc at the base, topped by a tapering central core and two gently wilting feathers. They are painted in the same gold tone as the Horus feather crowns on the side walls, and also feature a jewel in the center of the solar disc, but they are rather stockier, and they alternate with not only bells but flowers too (Fig. 23). Just as on the side walls, the motifs are linked into a chain by looping stems that accentuate their elegance. ⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Abubakr 1937, 7. The atef crown and its components are discussed by Abubakr 1937, 7–24; Grumach-Shirun 1980; and Strauss 1980, 814.

⁹⁶ The smoothness of the crown may reflect a material shift from the original reed bundle to a leather sheath (Abubakr 1937, 13).

⁹⁷ On the *anedtj* crown: Abubakr 1937, 38–40; Grumach-Shirun 1980; and Strauss 1980, 814.

⁹⁸ The black triclinium in the Villa Farnesina features a similar chain of pharaonic crown motifs linked with looping stems, this time surrounded by a toothed border that resembles that around the black panels in the Upper Cubiculum (Fig. 23). This commonality may support the claim that the rooms were painted by the same workshop (e.g., Bragantini and de Vos 1982, 30).

Another variation on the anedtj crown appears not in the black-ground frieze but as an acroterium of sorts, surmounting the vegetal pediments of the aediculae and partial aediculae or *syzygiae* on the side walls (Fig. 24). Here the crown motif is so integrated into the twisting, organic ornament that it almost seems to be the head of a vegetalized creature, a swamp thing with winding tentacles. It is very plainly no longer a pharaonic headdress.⁹⁹

A final variation demonstrates how extensively the wall painters modified their pharaonic models (Fig. 23). The crown motif occupying the red podia in the upper register, because it lacks a solar disc, is closer to the basic atef crown than the anedtj; but even the simple shape of the crown is so distorted as to be nearly unrecognizable. The reed core is merely a rough triangle with a flaring tip, and the two ostrich feathers do not cleave to it but splay outwards. Two more protrusions below the "feathers" may imitate the uraei of the anedtj, but only vaguely. Supporting the whole ensemble, sweeping out in large arcs, are two arms that somewhat recall ram's horns—twisted, wide-set, and pointed, as in the Ptolemy XII relief—or perhaps uraei, as they widen at the upraised (head) end and wear a cluster of three recurving petals as uraei often do. Yet to even discern the crownlike elements within this vegetal concoction we have to turn to a comparandum in the Aula Isiaca, located on the Palatine relatively near the Upper Cubiculum and likely decorated around the same time. 100 A white-ground frieze encircling the tops of the walls features the familiar alternating crown motifs and flowers linked via a series of looping stems (Fig. 25). The feathers in the crown motifs are easier to discern, carefully detailed with lines indicating barbs, and the uraei flanking the crown are more recognizable as snakes, meticulously shaded and detailed. They adopt the same rearing pose and three-petaled head ornament as the spreading arms of the Upper Cubiculum example, and are similarly bound with towers of vegetation.

But in fact this last crown motif in the Upper Cubiculum has not only been vegetalized to the brink of recognition, it has been utterly transformed: for the painter has made this crown out of ibises. Their long beaks are so fine as to be nearly invisible, allowing their curving necks and head to more closely resemble uraei. Their tail feathers, pointing straight upward, form the core of the crown, their wings the ostrich feathers to each side. But the potential reference to pharaonic headgear is deeply buried within this formidable vegetal-animal hybrid.

Monuments to the Egyptian Conquest

Even though this extreme vegetalization of the crown motifs has been mentioned before, ¹⁰¹ scholars have glossed over it in order to focus on the pharaonic iconography as a supposedly triumphal or Isiac symbol. Yet even if we follow this line of thinking, ignoring the

⁹⁹ Yerkes rightly calls this form "feline" (Yerkes 2005, 156). It is possible that crown motifs sprouting from flowers figure in the dark purple frieze atop the red podia in the upper register—but the published photographs are not detailed enough to make this clear, and visitors to the house itself are kept at such a distance from this wall that closer observation is impossible.

¹⁰⁰ Iacopi has even suggested that both sets of painting were executed by command of the princeps (Iacopi 1997, 6).

¹⁰¹ Iacopi 2008, 33; Söldner 2000, esp. 384, 387; Söldner 1999, esp. 97, 101, 108; and Carettoni 1988, 288. Iacopi implicitly acknowledges how far these motifs are from their source material by proposing that they were painted not by an artist who had recently come to Rome, likely after the battle at Actium, but one who was there for a longer time—since Cleopatra's arrival in the 40s BC (Iacopi and Tedone 2005/6, 374).

transformation into hybrid decorative motifs, we still cannot accept these crown motifs as triumphal: for contemporary monuments that commemorate the conquest of Egypt *never use pharaonic imagery* like that in the Upper Cubiculum. This is astonishing, particularly because Octavian touted his war as a crusade against Egypt rather than his onetime brother Antony; ¹⁰² we might therefore expect to see a forceful use of Egyptian imagery on the monuments, intent on driving away any notion that the war was fought against another Roman citizen. Yet as far as we know, Octavian never erected a monument that specifically commemorated his conquest of Alexandria; instead, he erected numerous monuments to his victory at Actium. And even in the Actian monuments, Octavian chose not to deploy pharaonic iconography. As we will see below (and more thoroughly detailed in Appendix A), these victory monuments offer no parallels whatsoever to the frescoes in the Upper Cubiculum. ¹⁰³

The monument that was erected in Rome specifically to commemorate Octavian's victory over Antony and Cleopatra was a triumphal arch erected in the Forum, unfortunately recorded only in texts and coins (Fig. 26). ¹⁰⁴ But various other monuments explicitly tied to the Actian victory help to fill in this gap, starting with the gargantuan complex that Octavian built for himself at the city of Actium. This monument contains no pharaonic imagery—indeed, no reference to Egypt at all—from the row of ship's prows attached to a terrace wall to the architectural decoration of the sanctuary and altar (Fig. 27). Rather, the very self-consciously chosen models are Italic and Greek: all the sculpture and architecture is either "archaistic" or classicizing, apparently felt to elevate the status of the victory and properly frame it within a long history of greatness. ¹⁰⁵

This same obsession with ships' prows characterizes the Actian victory monuments in Rome. The Roman senate memorialized the victory by dedicating four *columnae rostratae*, columns studded with the prows of the defeated enemy ships (Fig. 28). ¹⁰⁶ On the same occasion, more ships' prows were added to the front of the Temple of Divus Julius. ¹⁰⁷ Two reliefs in the Capitoline Museums in Rome that depict anchors and prows may also commemorate the victory (Fig. 29). ¹⁰⁸ Finally, another coin honoring the victory shows a quadriga on one side, on the other

Wallace-Hadrill 1993, 1–9. The scholarly consensus on this point is cited in Lange 2009, 70 n. 30, who puts forth an unconvincing argument to the contrary (Lange 2009, 73–93).

¹⁰³ Söldner notices this as well, but uses the lack of overlap to argue for an Isiac reading of the frescoes (Söldner 2004, 384). Against this religious reading, see the discussion above in the Introduction.

 $^{^{104}}$ On the arch, see *LTUR* 1, 80–1 and the excellent overview by Horacek (Horacek 2014; my warm thanks to both Horacek and Susanne Muth for sharing the article with me in advance of its publication).

¹⁰⁵ Zachos discusses the finds at Nicopolis/Actium, including the archaistic "Nicopolis base" and the ideology behind its imagery (Zachos 2009, esp. 276–81). Early in his reign, the princeps regularly used such archaistic imagery to forward his political claims (Hallett 2012) and later looked to Athenian models to present his victory over eastern enemies (Hardie 1997).

¹⁰⁶ Servius writes that four rostral columns were dedicated to Agrippa and Augustus for their victory at Actium (and were moved to the Capitoline by Domitian, where Servius presumably saw them in the 4th c. AD) (Serv. 3.29). On the columns, including their attestation by Servius, see Sporleder 2014.

107 Muth 2014.

¹⁰⁸ Dio Cass. 51.19.52, discussed by Hölscher 2009, 314. Hölscher also places the pediment of the Curia within this group of triumphal post-Actium monuments, and it is true that its scene of the goddess Victory perched on a globe, flanked by figures holding an anchor and rudder, is very suggestive. But since Octavian dedicated the Curia only ten days after the battle at Actium, I doubt that this program was informed by his recent victory.

a winged Victory perched upon a ship's prow (Fig. 30). As a metonym for a naval battle, clearly it was the ship's prow—not the trappings of a foreign dynasty—that Octavian favored.

This paucity of Egyptian motifs is similarly evident in a temple that has been proposed to commemorate the Actian victory, the Temple of Apollo Sosianus (also called the Temple of Apollo Medicus, the Temple of Apollo in the Campus Martius, and the Temple of Apollo *in circo*). Although the evidence is slim, several leading scholars have argued that the temple was largely sponsored by the princeps shortly after the Actium victory and thus refers to his triumph. The argument is based partly on the location of the temple and partly on the sculptural decoration, primarily the frieze in the cella and the column capitals outside. Judging by the frieze—which depicts a battle scene between mounted warriors and barbarians in short tunics, and a triumphal procession with northern barbarian captives—the subject is likely the third of Octavian's triumphs celebrated in 29 BC, "over the Pannonians and Dalmatians, the Iapydes and their neighbors, and some Germans and Gauls." Because this victory was celebrated in the same triple triumph as those at Actium and Alexandria, one might expect to see something of Egypt represented in the battle or procession—but there is nothing. And more particularly, they contain no trace of the pharaonic iconography present in the Upper Cubiculum frescoes.

Even more tellingly, pharaonic iconography is absent in the temple that the princeps built with specific reference to his Egyptian conquest: the Temple of Apollo Palatinus. Although Octavian had vowed this temple before the conquest, by the time he dedicated it in 28 BC it was designed as a statement of victory tellities that in the Upper Cubiculum. Basalt herms of Danaids lining the portico refer to Egypt (the Danaids were mythical Egyptian princesses), but their iconography is not pharaonic

¹⁰⁹ The multiple phases of the temple are discussed in *LTUR* 1, 49–54, while Platner considers its probable location based on the ancient textual sources (Platner and Ashby 1929, 15). The long history of the temple is summarized (unfortunately without any sources cited) in La Rocca 1988.

Erika Simon stresses that the location was triumphal, occupying the starting point of the triumphal processions up the Capitoline, and points out that in the Republican period the predecessor temple on this site was where victorious generals were awarded their triumphs by the Senate (Simon 1986, 105). The architectural decoration is compiled in a catalog, Viscogliosi 1988.

¹¹¹ Dio Cass. 51.21.55, trans. Carey 1925.

The same goes for the column capitals: Viscogliosi proposes seeing a reference to Egypt in two snakes on one capital, which he reads these as uraeus snakes, and a cuirass decorated with palm fronds on another (Viscogliosi 1996, 63, 151–3)—but these more likely commemorate Sosius' Judaean victory. Regardless of which victory it memorializes, Sosius' or Octavian's, it does so without pharaonic imagery.

An overview of the archaeological remains is in *LTUR* 1, 54–7. Like the House of Augustus, the Temple of Apollo Palatinus has not been comprehensively published. Indeed, so far it has been published only as a secondary point across several articles (one of the most thorough is Iacopi and Tedone 2005/6).

<sup>2005/6).

114</sup> Hekster demonstrates that the temple was vowed long before the victory at Actium, even though it later gained a triumphal valence (Hekster and Rich 2006). Contemporary Romans certainly perceived it as triumphal: Vergil writes of Octavian sitting at the Temple of Apollo to gaze upon his triple triumph (Verg. *Aen.* 8.714–31), while Propertius writes "of Apollo's temple on the Palatine" and goes on to describe the harbor and battle at Actium (Prop. 4.6).

(Fig. 31). ¹¹⁵ A series of archaistic terracotta plaques that lined the walls of the temple or portico depict sphinxes facing each other across a bust of Isis, but again they have almost nothing in common with the Upper Cubiculum paintings (Fig. 32). The sphinxes rest their forelegs along the splaying acanthus leaves from which the Isis bust emerges, a sort of vegetal-figural hybrid used in the Upper Cubiculum as well; but the similarities end there: the paintings contain neither sphinxes nor Isis, and the plaque contains no pharaonic crowns. What's more, the plaque composes the Egyptian elements into a figurative scene, whereas the wall paintings abstract them into a border pattern and cunningly integrate them into the decorative framework. Among the princeps' arches and temples, then, Egyptian imagery is rare—and when it does appear, it finds no iconographic parallel with the pharaonic motifs in the Upper Cubiculum. ¹¹⁶

The one unmistakably pharaonic piece of imagery that the princeps appropriated for himself in Rome was the obelisk. In 10 BC he imported and erected two Egyptian obelisks in highly visible, symbolic locations: one in front of his own monumental tomb, serving as a grandiose visual marker of the ruler's eternal resting place (looming into view for any traveler on the nearby Via Flaminia); the other in the Circus Maximus to serve as a turning post for chariot races. Two more obelisks were erected at some point in front of Augustus's mausoleum, but whether Augustus or a successor did this is not known. Söldner proposes that these hulking monoliths can shed light on the Upper Cubiculum frescoes, saying that the obelisks and frescoes alike "reflect the princeps' claim to pharaonic rulership over Egypt"—and that even if the obelisks make a stronger statement than the paintings, this "new emphasis on Egyptian motifs is logical, twenty years after the decisive battle." Yet the "logic" of reading the later monuments as a consequence of the earlier ones is an advantage of hindsight; and the twenty-year gap between the Alexandrian conquest and the importation of obelisks remains unexplained. It

of these sculptures recalls Egyptian hardstone statues, underscoring their Egyptian connotation (even if their archaistic style alludes to Italic tradition; Hallett 2012, 97). Hallett also points out that the Danaids were known for slaying their Egyptian husbands, perhaps a reference to Octavian's slaughter of the Egyptian queen (Hallett forthcoming).

¹¹⁶ To my knowledge, the only other instance of the princeps using Egyptian imagery is not on any monument but on his "aegypto capta" coins (e.g., Gentili 2013, cat. nos. 106–8); and here too, as in the Temple of Apollo Palatinus decoration, the motif has no point of contact with the paintings: the reverse features the legend *aegypto capta* ("Egypt having been captured") with a crocodile, a motif unattested in wall painting beyond the satyric Pygmy scenes.

¹¹⁷ The archaeological remains of the Horologium Augusti are reviewed in *LTUR* 3, 35–7, while Heslin provides an excellent critical review of the scholarship on its obelisk (Heslin 2007). On the obelisk in the Circus Maximus, see *LTUR* 3, 355–6. Schneider offers a penetrating analysis of obelisk symbolism in Rome (Schneider 2004; see also Parker 2007).

Platner writes, "As they are not mentioned by Pliny (*HN* 36.69–73) nor by Strabo in his description of the mausoleum (5.3.8), they probably were not brought from Egypt before the time of Domitian" (Platner and Ashby 1929, 370). A piece of entablature depicting an atef crown found near Augustus' mausoleum has been invoked as evidence of the princeps' use of Egyptian iconography in architectural decoration and therefore as comparanda for the paintings in the Upper Cubiculum (Söldner 1999, 107; Söldner 2000, 388; Schneider 2004, 167)—but this fragment is entirely without context, and therefore cannot support these claims. The fragment could well originate from the temple of Isis or Serapis built in the later first century AD, both of which stood relatively near the mausoleum.

Söldner 1999, 107. That the princeps never claimed "pharaonic rulership over Egypt" poses a problem for this formulation. On Augustus' use of obelisks, see now Swetnam-Burland 2015, 65–104.

confounds Söldner's explanation of the Upper Cubiculum frescoes, since Augustus only brought the first obelisks to Rome roughly fifteen to thirty years after the room was painted.

The chronological gap is joined by other factors such as medium and viewership that further distance the obelisks from the paintings. While the obelisks are highly visible, hulking sculptures, the paintings are delicate decorations in a private room. ¹²⁰ Indeed, perhaps as a result of these vastly dissimilar visual media, obelisks never appear in wall painting, not even among the pharaonic motifs in the Upper Cubiculum. ¹²¹ So although we may tend to view the paintings and obelisks as essentially pharaonic and thus seek to group them together, the ways in which the Romans deployed them shows that they distinguished clearly between them. They were installed in different contexts, in different periods, and apparently for different purposes. This in turn suggests that even if obelisks were erected in Rome as a political statement rooted in pharaonic iconography, ¹²² this meaning does not automatically apply to the pharaonic motifs in frescoes. Rather, the obelisks continue the trend that we have already seen in the princeps' other monuments: they too do not compellingly relate to the paintings. ¹²³

Egyptian Spoils

The princeps deployed one final category of monument to commemorate his Egyptian conquest: spolia. When he came back to Rome after the battle for Alexandria, he brought with him an unprecedented cargo of goods from Egypt and erected some of it in temples as trophies. Erika Simon and Magdalene Söldner have suggested that the pharaonic crowns in the Upper Cubiculum function in the same way: that these painted versions of spolia are likewise meant to commemorate victory. This proposal requires a closer look than either author has accorded it. What do we know about the sorts of objects that Octavian brought back from Egypt as spolia?

The best source of evidence for the flood of Egyptian objects that inundated Rome after 30 BC is the literature on Octavian's triumph. In 29 BC over a three-day period, Cassius Dio tells us, Octavian was feted with a triple triumph. On the first day, Dio recounts, "Caesar celebrated his victories over the Pannonians and Dalmatians, the Iapydes and their neighbors, and some Germans and Gauls." He continues:

On the second day the naval victory at Actium was commemorated, and on the third the subjugation of Egypt. Now all the processions proved notable, thanks to

¹²⁰ I do not mean that the room was "private" in any modern sense but rather that its viewership was limited and determined by the homeowner. Wallace-Hadrill explains that our modern concepts of "public" and "private" cannot be mapped onto the Roman house (Wallace-Hadrill 1994, Ch.1, esp. 11–12).

¹²¹ Contra Carettoni and Iacopi; see n. 94.

¹²² Schneider 2004, 155–6; Roullet 1972, 43.

¹²³ Pyramids too are adopted in Rome only around 10 BC, although not by the princeps himself; and like obelisks, they do not overlap with the medium of fresco. This is true insofar as pyramids never appear in wall paintings, and neither does the best-preserved pyramid in Rome, the Pyramid of Caius Cestius, contain any Egyptian motifs in its own frescoed interior (also observed by Maderna 2005, 443). Therefore connecting wall paintings with the pyramid tomb monuments in and around Rome as Söldner does (Söldner 1999, 107) seems to me to require justification.

¹²⁴ Simon 1986, 105; Söldner 1999, esp. 106. Söldner further observes that the display of spolia from Egypt could have had a significance beyond simply victory, symbolizing also the end of the civil wars and the acquisition of an immense resource of grain for the empire (Söldner 2000, 387).

the spoils from Egypt,—in such quantities, indeed, had spoils been gathered there that they sufficed for all the processions,—but the Egyptian celebration surpassed them all in costliness and magnificence.¹²⁵

The "costliness and magnificence" of the triumph can hardly be overstated. According to Suetonius, the riches brought back to Rome were so immense that they impacted the economy: "by bringing the royal treasures to Rome in his Alexandrian triumph, [Octavian] made ready money so abundant that the rate of interest fell and the value of real estate rose greatly." Further support for the dazzling display is given by Vergil's famous description of the shield of Aeneas. A pointedly exultant conclusion to Book 8, this scene is no objective documentation but nonetheless gives an idea of the grandeur:

Next Augustus, entering the walls of Rome in triple triumph, is dedicating his immortal offering to Italy's gods, three hundred great shrines throughout the city.

The streets are ringing with joy, playfulness, applause: a band of women in every temple, altars in every one: before the altars sacrificial steers cover the ground.

He himself sits at the snow-white threshold of shining Apollo, examines the gifts of nations, and hangs them on the proud gates. 127

Virgil's passage also points up that the spolia remained on display long after the triumph. Vergil describes Octavian "dedicating his immortal offering" and hanging these "gifts of nations" on the gates—perfectly in keeping with the Republican tradition of dedicating spolia in temples and porticoes. ¹²⁸ Indeed, Octavian dedicated his Egyptian spolia in numerous buildings around the Forum. Cassius Dio describes:

After finishing this celebration, Caesar dedicated the temple of Minerva, called also the Chalcidicum, and the Curia Iulia, which had been built in honor of his father. In the latter he set up the statue of Victory that is still in existence, thus signifying that it was from her that he had received the empire. It had belonged to the people of Tarentum, whence it was now brought to Rome, placed in the senate-chamber, and decked with the spoils of Egypt. The same course was followed in the case of the shrine of Julius which was consecrated at this time, for many of these spoils were placed in it also; and others were dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus and to Juno and Minerva, after all the objects in these temples which were supposed to have been placed there previously as dedications, or were actually dedications, had by decree been taken down at this time as defiled. Thus Cleopatra, though defeated and captured, was nevertheless glorified, inasmuch as

¹²⁵ Dio Cass. 51.21.57–9, trans. Carey 1925.

¹²⁶ Suet. Aug. 41.41.

¹²⁷ Verg. Aen. 8.714–21, trans. Kline 2012.

¹²⁸ Gruen 1992, esp. Ch. 3. Davies situates the princeps' dedication of the temple and its presumed decoration with Egyptian spolia within the Republican tradition (Davies 2011, 357).

her adornments repose as dedications in our temples and she herself is seen in gold in the shrine of Venus. 129

By clearing out the previous dedications in these temples, Octavian created his own showplace for his Egyptian spoils. And they would remain on display there, it seems, for more than two centuries after the triumph, when Cassius Dio concluded with a rebuff pointedly in the present tense: that Cleopatra's erstwhile riches "repose as dedications in our temples and she herself is seen in gold in the shrine of Venus."

Despite the colorful picture painted by these texts, no account survives of the precise sort of objects exhibited in the triumph (beyond Cleopatra's effigy and children). One of the few concrete suggestions is that the statue of Cleopatra mentioned by Cassius Dio was itself a spolium, dedicated as such by Octavian rather than being an honorific statue erected by Julius Caesar (as in Appian's account). Certainly a large gold statue like this would accord with the purpose of objects paraded in triumph: namely, to impress viewers with their phenomenal richness, as emphasized above. A hint to some categories of object can at least be gleaned from literary accounts of Republican triumphs. Livy writes that the triumph of Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus (189 BC) included 224 military standards, 1,231 ivory tusks, 234 gold crowns, 137,420 pounds of silver, as well as gold, chased silver vases, coins, and prisoners. The booty that Pompey displayed in his triumph (61 BC) was so immense that he could not show it all in the course of two days. Julius Caesar's quadruple triumph in 46 BC apparently included not only forty elephants, but also ivory models of the towns he had conquered.

These descriptions give a sense of the wealth of precious items of all materials that could be brought to Rome in a triumph—particularly the ivory, gold crowns, and silver vases are worth holding in mind—but they do not help much in narrowing down what kind of objects we might expect to see in the Upper Cubiculum paintings if they do indeed represent spolia. For that, we have to turn to the visual evidence.

Spolia at Home

If the Egyptian imagery in the Upper Cubiculum was meant to celebrate the conquest of Egypt in visual form, as Söldner and Simon suggest, it would be in good company—because stacks of spolia do in fact appear in Roman wall painting with some frequency, in a period precisely coeval with the Upper Cubiculum paintings. What's more, these paintings of spolia have been convincingly shown to echo the Republican generals' actual practice of bringing

¹²⁹ Dio Cass. 51.22.51–3, trans. Carey 1925. This passage highlights the fact that spolia contain an inherent tension: they are meant to represent an inferior an defeated enemy but, in so doing, they fetishize their material vestiges and may in fact end up valorizing the enemy (also observed by Söldner 1999, 106). Moreover, Dio shows us how slippery the nature of spolia could be: for the golden statue mentioned was not originally a victory trophy but an honorific dedication on the part of Julius Caesar. The fact that Octavian left it standing means that he thought it served his rhetoric of conquest (just as he recast countless Republican monuments in the Roman Forum to better express his political ideology; see Muth 2012).

¹³⁰ Gruen 2003, 259. Gruen finds it unlikely that any statue of Cleopatra dedicated by Julius Caesar could have survived the following decade, with Octavian in charge and public opinion of the queen having transformed in the course of the 30s BC.

¹³¹ Livy 37.59.33–5 and Plut. Vit. *Pomp.* 14.45; discussed by Holliday 1997, 134.

¹³² Elephants: Suet. *Iul.* 37; ivory models: Quint. *Inst.* 6.3.61, discussed by Holliday 1997, 143.

trophies into their houses. Yet in what follows we shall see that these depictions of spolia are in fact quite different from the pharaonic motifs in the Upper Cubiculum, and thus cannot be understood as part of the same phenomenon. Even if the spolia in Octavian's triumph was spectacular, it is not represented as spolia in the frescoes.

The earliest example of spolia in a Roman fresco dates to around 50 BC and belongs to the atrium of the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii (Fig. 33). Forming a wide band in the upper register, sandwiched between the doorway and possibly a wooden panel inserted into the wall, is a frieze of shields, helmets, and weapons of all kinds. Among the swords and shields in multiple shapes, a pelta is recognizable; beside it, a helmet in a pointed eastern shape. Similar friezes of spolia appear in later houses as well, taking much the same form: one elegant example decorates the stuccoed ceiling in the Villa of the Papyri, dated to the later first century AD (Fig. 34). Here again the jumble includes shields of all sorts, overlapping and leaning against each other; axes, spears, and swords protrude willy-nilly; and miniature helmets, greaves, and a cuirass balance atop and beside the heap. Other frescoes in this period depict individual helmets and shields on the walls, particularly in gardens, as if they have been hung up on nails (Fig. 35).

These paintings of spolia, as it happens, reflect a real practice of hanging spolia in Roman houses. Katherine Welch has demonstrated this using a wealth of ancient textual sources, one of which is worth repeating here. In his description of the *imagines*, the ancestral portraits displayed in Roman houses, Pliny the Elder says that "images of those great souls [the ancestors] were affixed to the enemy spoils around open spaces and doorways, and not even a new owner was allowed to remove them; indeed, even as owners came and went, the houses celebrated an eternal triumph." Further testament to this practice comes from the Augustan period itself: Propertius praises Maecenas for remaining modest "though you pass through the fierce spears of the Medes, and burden your house with weapons on nails." The Romans, then, took pride in displays of spoils erected in their homes—as much as they did in the images of their revered ancestors, which they even hung upon the spoils—and looked upon them as expressions of triumph for the family. This is the practice we see reflected in the friezes and the individual pieces of spolia painted in Roman houses.

Roman wall painters, then, knew very well how to depict spolia. If the painters of the Upper Cubiculum had wanted to show Egyptian spolia, they would have painted the usual frieze

between the columns to either side, likely representing spolia dedicated in temple complexes (as recounted in Plin. *HN* 35.13). But this display of spolia is incorporated into the fictional world of the painted cityscape: it inhabits the pictorial world, not the world of the viewer, and therefore cannot stand for a victory in the viewer's world. This phenomenon is thus to be distinguished from the conceit of the spolia friezes in the Villa of the Mysteries and Villa of the Papyri, which, disembodied from any context, could potentially be understood to signify a victory within the viewer's own reality (yet likely did not; see n. 134).

¹³⁴ Esposito interprets this frieze as a sign that the homeowner was one of Sulla's veterans (Esposito 2008, 73). However, due to the spread of these motifs in both space and time (discussed below), I am inclined to see them as part of a common cultural phenomenon—stretching back to Greek precedents, like the frieze of spolia in the Propylaeum of Pergamon—rather than indicative of the homeowner's personal history; see n. 141.

¹³⁵ My thanks go to Domenico Esposito for the beautiful detail photograph.

¹³⁶ Welch 2006.

¹³⁷ Plin. *HN* 35.32.

¹³⁸ Prop. 3.9.

of weapons—interspersed perhaps with Egyptian objects, to make the referent clear—but they did not. Quite to the contrary: spolia rendered in fresco have nothing to do with the Upper Cubiculum paintings of pharaonic crown motifs. One of the most striking differences lies in the array of objects depicted. Paintings of spolia include weapons and armor; and Propertius, writing to Maecenas, refers specifically to weapons as well. Even if the repertoire of objects were expanded beyond weapons and armor—as in a small first-century AD ash urn that adds trophies, standards, and even the axle and wheels of a chariot (Fig. 36)—the objects remain strictly limited to the trappings of war. By contrast, the Upper Cubiculum depicts crowns. Crowns find no equivalent whatsoever in other representations of spolia: the only headgear represented at all among the spolia are helmets, but these are just more pieces of armor, not ceremonial headdresses and royal insignia. Pliny's text *could* accommodate genres of spolia beyond just weapons, since he himself uses the general term *spolium*, "the arms or armor stripped from a defeated enemy; hence, any thing taken from the enemy, booty, prey, spoil" but the wall paintings (like the monumental reliefs of spolia that likely inform the fresco friezes) the contain nothing that should tempt us to broaden the definition to include royal headgear.

The second major difference has to do with the translation of real objects into paintings of objects. That military spolia were translated from real objects in the Roman home to paintings of these objects on the walls is a remarkable phenomenon in itself that will be discussed at length in the next chapter. Certainly, the detail and precision of the pharaonic motifs in the Upper Cubiculum might suggest that the painters drew on some concrete source material to create their whimsical versions of pharaonic crowns. But as we saw above, other than the attention to detail, the crowns have very little basis in reality: they are hybridized with plants and even animals. abstracted into patterns, displaced into fantasy. What separates them from depictions of spolia, then, is not only what is depicted but how it is depicted. The spolia, for their part, are painted on garden walls in an illusionistic mode, meant to look like real shields and helmets; and the spolia in friezes, although arranged into long decorative bands not wholly unlike the dainty frieze in the Upper Cubiculum, are likewise portrayed as "real" objects with no hint of whimsy. They are solid, lying heavily atop one another. Moreover, they are deliberately jumbled, probably to create the impression of a great quantity: shields tip to the side and overlap as if thrown into a great heap, weapons and helmets tilt and balance precariously. This principle of composition relies on gravity as the Upper Cubiculum paintings do not: not only do the pharaonic crown motifs float in their black abyss, joined by bells whose clappers defy gravity, but they are arranged into a perfectly ordered pattern, each element precisely placed and highly stylized. There is no whiff of disorder to create a "reality effect" as in the spolia friezes. These are not simply depictions of crowns, but creative *reimaginings* of crowns. Paintings of spolia never attempt such creativity: they aim to depict real weapons, not fantasies.

¹³⁹ One might ask whether the Ptolemies in fact wore pharaonic crowns in life or whether their crowned depictions simply follow pharaonic tradition; for if they did not wear actual crowns, then even less could the crowns painted in the Upper Cubiculum represent actual spolia from Egypt. If, by contrast, they *did* wear real crowns, the paintings might refer in some vague way to this real headgear—but they are still so abstracted that they are unquestionably conceived as decoration, not spolia.

¹⁴⁰ Lewis and Short 1879, s.v. spolium.

¹⁴¹ The repertoire of objects depicted and the frieze-like arrangement of them is similar in monumental Hellenistic reliefs, such as that on Eumenes' propylaeum to the sanctuary of Athena in Pergamon (Kästner 2011). Kuttner explores how Rome consciously imitated Pergamene art and culture (Kuttner 1995).

In the stylized way that they are incorporated into the Upper Cubiculum's decorative program, the crown motifs are deployed just like the non-pharaonic objects, the bells and flowers. They are even literally bound to each other by looping stems and strings of pearls. That the pharaonic motifs are deployed like these others suggests that they should be understood somewhat like them, not as self-conscious symbols that require a special historical explanation linking them to the princeps. In the next chapter we will see that the depiction of these objects in the Upper Cubiculum—both pharaonic and otherwise—in fact follows a well-established precedent of covering the walls with precious imported objects from both Greece and Egypt.

Chapter 2. Off-the-Wall Luxury¹⁴²

Introduction

In the previous chapter we saw that the Upper Cubiculum paintings cannot be understood in light of Augustan political imagery as has been assumed. 143 If the Egyptian motifs are not typical of victory monuments or depictions of spolia, how then can we make sense of them? In this chapter, I argue that the paintings in fact closely conform to the corpus of late Second-Style decorative programs (ca. 45–20 BC¹⁴⁴) in which wall painters depict actual luxury objects. This mechanism of inter-generic imitation has not earned due attention, but can be convincingly demonstrated for the entire Second Style (and has been masterfully argued by Sara Yerkes for late Second- as well as Third-Style paintings). In this chapter I show that, just as this is a fundamental principle of the Second Style in general, so too it defines the Upper Cubiculum paintings, the Egyptian motifs included. Like the rest of the scheme, these can be demonstrated to derive from imported luxury goods. They are thus completely at home among the standard expressions of the leisured lifestyle enjoyed by wealthy Roman homeowners throughout Italy, and functionally equivalent to the Greek objects depicted on the walls. Therefore, just as we do not interpret the Greek furnishings on Roman walls as a reference, for instance, to Marcellus's conquest of Syracuse (even though the Romans themselves blamed this event for unleashing the flood of luxury goods to Rome¹⁴⁵), so too we should not read the Egyptian motifs as references to Octavian's conquest of Egypt.

This chapter begins by establishing that Second-Style schemes depict objects that actually existed in Rome and were highly prized by Roman collectors—objects that sometimes even stood within the same rooms that the painters were decorating. Painters reproduced these luxury objects on the walls as an essential component of the Second Style, and the Upper Cubiculum paintings are no exception. Here as elsewhere, furnishings such as large vessels and candelabra are translated into fresco along with other categories of prestige object: jewelry, metalware, statuettes, and textiles. The pharaonic motifs in the Upper Cubiculum belong to this same conceit. They too are demonstrably inspired by such luxury goods, each of which is addressed in turn below.

¹⁴² I purposely use the term "luxury" in English rather than the Latin *luxus* or *luxuria* because these latter have strongly negative connotations in the ancient literature. Roman views of luxury are immensely complex and have little bearing on the present argument concerning the appearance of luxury objects in fresco; for a discussion of the Latin term as well as Roman views of *luxus*, see the excellent Weeber 2003. In addition, Lapatin's book on Greek and Roman luxury goods will be a primary reference work on the topic but sadly was not published in time to be included in the present study (Lapatin 2015).

¹⁴³ As noted above (p. 9), I use the name Augustus or "the princeps" rather than Octavian, but do not mean to imply a date after 27 BC.

¹⁴⁴ This is a deliberately broad estimate for the late Second Style, as its dating—particularly of the Upper Cubiculum paintings—is contested: La Rocca argues for a *terminus ante quem* of 36 BC, while Tomei believes that the paintings are late Augustan (La Rocca 2008; Tomei 2013, 532–33).

¹⁴⁵ Gruen 1992, 84, with further literature.

Precious Objects in Second-Style Painting

The Second Style of Roman wall painting develops during an unprecedented burst of collecting activities in Rome during the mid-first century BC. Its representation of expensive stone architectural elements directly relates to the flow of precious marbles into Rome at the time. Particularly notable are the illusionistic columns that stand in the foregrounds of many early Second-Style walls (Fig. 37): while they serve a nominal weight-bearing function in the illusionistic scheme, more important is how they are highlighted as beautiful objects with fine fluting and elaborate composite capitals. It is no accident that they appear in Roman houses at the same time that the most outrageously acquisitive art collectors are acquiring real stone columns to install in their houses for their private enjoyment. Columns may have been precious goods of immense size, but precious goods they remained—and they were accordingly treated exactly like smaller goods, as markers of great wealth and taste. So it was that Lucius Crassus (consul in 95 BC) installed twelve-foot Hymettan marble columns in his atrium; Scaurus transported a number of immense columns from the backdrop of his theater to his Tusculan villa in 58 BC; and Mamurra (a contemporary of Julius Caesar) pioneered the use of columns exclusively in marble to adorn his house. 146 That the Second-Style painted columns look to such real-world models is obvious in cases where the real objects and the painted renditions of them are deliberately juxtaposed, as in the Corinthian oecus in the House of the Labyrinth in Pompeii (Fig. 38).147

Second-Style wall painters drew inspiration from other objects too in the world around them, particularly in the houses where they worked. Painted garlands are strung along the walls in perfect imitation of the real leafy garlands on household shrines and temples (Fig. 39),¹⁴⁸ and paintings of gardens line the walls of peristyle courts which themselves contain gardens.¹⁴⁹ The array of objects in these paintings reaches a new level of opulence in the high Second Style: now the illusionistic architectural framework is crowded with pinakes, theater masks, bowls of fruit, incense burners, and even peacocks (Fig. 40). The painters are doing their best to make these objects appear lifelike, drawing from real models likely among the lavish art collections displayed in Rome. One hint of this is the fact that many illusionistic pinakes are carefully framed with wooden shutters—a conceit taken from the real pinakes framed by shutters in Rome's numerous porticoes.¹⁵⁰

The Upper Cubiculum paintings perfectly conform to this precedent, presenting the viewer with an array of elegant objects: a large panel painting is hung at the center of each wall; canthari, hydriae, and candelabra perch on entablatures; and even the pharaonic crown motifs embedded in the friezes are rendered with highlights and shadows to give them the physical weight of real objects. Yet the real-world basis of these painted objects has not been recognized

¹⁴⁶ Plin. HN 36.34-8.

¹⁴⁷ Noted also by Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 376.

¹⁴⁸ Wilhelmina Jashemski suggests that the illusionistic garlands painted in household lararia reflect the practice of hanging actual garlands in the shrines (Jashemski 1979–1993, 118).

Wallace-Hadrill remarks on the pairing of real and painted gardens (Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 376). Relatedly, Moormann has argued that most depictions of figures in Roman wall painting, especially in the Fourth Style, are based on famous statue types (Moormann 1988).

¹⁵⁰ See further discussion below at pp. 49–50. On the many pinakes displayed in Roman porticoes, see Wallace-Hadrill 2009, 34 and Schefold 1962, 44–5. Papini has compiled a list of the porticoes in Rome that served as picture galleries (Papini 2009).

because of the painterly modifications typical of the late Second Style: while the objects and architecture in *high* Second-Style schemes are sizeable, firmly placed on solid ground, and often rendered so illusionistically that they appear to be real, 151 in the *late* Second Style the objects become miniaturized, less substantial, more fantastical. One of the predominant ways that this is achieved is by a sort of "vegetalization" whereby the objects are melded with tendrils and flowers. Vegetal and floral forms already characterize the luxury objects that inspire the paintings, as Yerkes has shown, 152 but the painters take this to a new level. Unencumbered by the laws of physics that might restrict a sculptor or metalworker in his attempt to add vegetation to a luxury object, the wall painters let their vines and tendrils run wild. Their creations stretch and creep and curl across the walls of the Upper Cubiculum as in many other examples.¹⁵³ The luxury objects, that is, so firmly serve as the basis for the painted motifs that they even inspire the ways the painters elaborate upon them. And these artistic elaborations in turn add value to the paintings by highlighting the artists' virtuosity. By transforming luxury goods into fanciful fresco versions, the objects are elevated from an already opulent subject to finely wrought confections of a second order. They become even richer and more refined than their models—a sort of "hyperluxury."

It is important to recognize this transformation of luxury objects in late Second-Style painting as a means of heightening their preciousness and, as seen at the end of the last chapter, distancing them from depictions of spolia; but despite this added artistry, the objects remain eminently recognizable. Let us now examine what kinds of luxury object appear on the walls of the Upper Cubiculum. We will begin with the two most ubiquitous categories of object, vessels and candelabra, before moving on to the other categories, including those that inspired the Egyptian motifs. Because the contents of the Upper Cubiculum are not preserved, ¹⁵⁴ we cannot know what sorts of luxury goods it may have contained that inspired the painters; but in looking closely at the paintings we can make a good guess at what sorts of objects the painters were drawing upon.

¹⁵¹ We can understand the appeal of this illusionism thanks to Philostratus the Elder, who says that painting "cleverly accomplishes more with this one means than [sculpture] with its many means" because it is able not only to give color to hair and clothes but to render "chambers too and houses and groves and mountains and springs and the air that envelops them all" (Philostr. Mai. *Imag.* 1.0). This view is presented even more strongly by Philostratus the Younger, who writes that "the deception inherent in [the painter's] work is pleasurable and involves no reproach; for to confront objects which do not exist as though they existed and to be influenced by them, to believe that they do exist: is not this, since no harm can come of it, a suitable and irreproachable means of providing entertainment" (Philostr. Iun. *Imag.* 1.5)? Thus the very fact of translating an object into a virtuosic representation of that object in paint was highly valued—indeed, it was considered entertaining.

¹⁵² Yerkes 2000.

¹⁵³ Because this is a standard feature of Second-Style painting, and occurs substantially before the rhetoric of an Augustan *aurea aetas* developed, the vegetal and floral elements in the Upper Cubiculum cannot be read as Augustan symbols. The vegetalization is not rampart across the walls but concentrated in the depictions of Hellenistic furnishings which were themselves already vegetal: the painters are not creating new forms to match some political rhetoric, but rather elaborating upon vegetal furnishings as they already had for decades. Nonetheless, enthusiastic readings of all sorts of vegetation as Augustan can be found in, e.g., Kellum 1994, 217, Platt 2009, and Sauron 2000.

¹⁵⁴ When and why the house was abandoned is still debated, but it is certain that its mid-first-century BC contents were lost either during later occupational phases (Tomei 2014, 292, 296–7) or when the Temple of Apollo Palatinus was built over part of the house, destroying it (La Rocca 2008, 234).

Vessels

One of the categories of luxury object commonly depicted in Second-Style schemes, including in the Upper Cubiculum, are precious vessels. These are a popular motif beginning in the high Second Style: Triclinium 14 in Villa A at Oplontis features two bulbous silver craters between the golden columns (Fig. 41), and the House of the Labyrinth in Pompeii (c. 50 BC) contains hefty bronze amphorae amidst the baroque architecture (Fig. 38). In the later Second Style, luxury vessels grow more delicate and proliferate across the walls (producing what Sara Yerkes calls a "preoccupation with vessels"): a gorgeous fresco fragment from the Villa at Portici depicts a dainty pale cantharus with volute handles as thin as thread, sitting atop the architrave (Fig. 15); and in the Upper Cubiculum, tiny white canthari perch atop the aediculae.

As usual, these paintings depict precisely the sort of objects that inhabited rich Roman houses. They are testament to the wealth of sumptuous metal vessels eagerly acquired by Roman art collectors. Collecting "Corinthian" bronze vessels became a mania, to the extent that Pliny the Younger even defends a friend's moral standing by averring that he *merely* uses antique plates of pure silver—because his complete service in Corinthian bronze is just "a curiosity, far from being his passion." Such an elaborate bronze crater was discovered on a pedestal in the very center of the dining room in the House of Julius Polybius in Pompeii (Fig. 42): at 62.5 cm tall, including its ornate base, this vessel was displayed as a great showpiece. The delicate handles and light color of the canthari in the Portici and Upper Cubiculum paintings, however, make clear reference to *silver* vessels, like the superb cantharus from Meroe dated to the first century BC or AD (Fig. 43). Another parallel can be found in the silver treasure from the Villa Pisanella in Boscoreale, which included two splendid matching silver canthari dated to the late first century BC (Fig. 44). That such precious vessels were found even in this fairly modest (albeit large) *villa rustica* indicates how widespread they were among Roman houses in the area. 157

Such metal vessels in turn inspired an immense series of imitations in marble that were imported to Rome on a massive scale in the first century BC. The Borghese Crater from Rome (Fig. 45) and the crater of the same type from the Mahdia shipwreck in Tunisia, ¹⁵⁸ near matches for the Julius Polybius bronze crater, attest how widely used these were. These vessels, like their metal models, prompted a response in the paintings: spurred by actual villa furnishings, wall painters took inspiration from the flood of three-dimensional marble vessels in creating their two-dimensional fresco versions.¹⁵⁹ The marble craters placed throughout Roman gardens thus

¹⁵⁵ "[S]unt in usu et Corinthia, quibus delectatur nec afficitur" (Plin. *Ep.* 3.1.9). Pliny the Elder even claims that the only true Corinthian bronzes are vessels (Plin. *HN* 34.37). On Corinthian bronze statuettes as the preeminent collector's item: Hallett 2015; on Corinthian bronze vessels, Giumlia-Mair and Mráv forthcoming.

¹⁵⁶ On two other matching silver cups from the villa: Kuttner 1995.

¹⁵⁷ A multitude of silver pieces from ancient houses on the Bay of Naples is collected in Guzzo 2006.

¹⁵⁸ Tunis, Bardo National Museum, inv. C 1202; photograph in Hellenkemper Salies et al. 1994, pl. 8.

¹⁵⁹ Yerkes 2005, 159. The same may well have happened in Etruscan tomb painting, thought to have been inspired by vase painting (and perhaps even executed by vase painters). See Steingräber 2006, 32–6.

inspired a dizzying number of wall paintings in Roman gardens that feature marble basins.¹⁶⁰ Some of the paintings even enlarge craters and canthari to the size of basins and place them in gardens to serve as fountains (Fig. 46), exactly like the immense marble basin from the "Gardens of Agrippina" in Rome that features holes at the bottom for plumbing and drainage (Fig. 47, Fig. 48). In Villa A at Oplontis, the paintings of marble craters in the *viridaria* (Fig. 49) closely correspond to an actual marble crater found in the garden nearby; the wall painters thus would have had a very convenient model for their paintings (Fig. 50).¹⁶¹

Indeed, the fact that vessels appear as a decorative motif in not only in painting but also mosaic too underscores how fluidly artists working in Roman houses adapted the material around them. In a Third-Style room from Castel di Guido, for instance, the mosaic that covered the floor features a small crater as a central ornament (Fig. 51). So it seems that mosaicists, like painters, looked to various media for inspiration, with the result that all the decorative materials in the Roman house were in dialogue with each other.

It is within this frame that we must also understand the silver pitcher and situla painted on the Upper Cubiculum walls. These vessels are commonly called "Isiac," and indeed, similar vessels appear in paintings of Isiac ritual (although these parallels have never been cited in the scholarship on the Upper Cubiculum¹⁶²): a spheroid situla with a peaked lid, simple curved handle, and minuscule foot sits on a ledge on the north wall (Fig. 52). On the south wall, analogously placed, are two identical beaked pitchers with flaring calyxes for feet and tall handles that terminate in uraei (Fig. 16, Fig. 20). Both the situla and the pitchers are sheathed in leaves and flanked by spiraling tendrils that emerge from either side, apparently not silver attachments but fantastical, gravity-defying vines. Yet here the vessels appear outside of any religious context: they are not held by Isiac priests but sit upon the architraves just like the canthari on the adjoining walls, in the usual fashion of vessels in Second Style. They inhabit this space not in their role as cult objects but as luxury objects. ¹⁶³

A world-class silver hydria from Hungary (Fig. 53) provides a close parallel for the shape of the painted Isiac hydria, but is rather more valuable for the present study by virtue of its inlaid surface decoration. This "Egyed Hydria" was discovered in Sopron, Hungary, in an Isiac

¹⁶⁰ The examples are too numerous to list; representative are those in the Villa Farnesina, viridarium L (Rome, Palazzo Massimo, inv. n. n.) and House of the Ephebe, garden H, west wall (PPM 1, p. 785 fig. 761).

¹⁶¹ A marble basin on a stand just like those in the paintings survives *in situ* in the House of the Stags in Herculaneum, in the southwest extent of the garden portico.

Isiac situla is oblong, with no lid and no foot; and the usual Isiac hydria is quite unlike the graceful and narrow-footed pitcher in the Upper Cubiculum, being instead squat and flat-bottomed. Although no other examples of situlae with lids are known to me, the footed type appears in at least one other painting (Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 8972). The more graceful pitcher type appears in connection with Egyptian cult in at least two cases, the Egyed Hydria (see Fig. 53) and a painting from the House of Livia in which a priestess holds such a pitcher (Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 9303). Söldner believes that the Isiac vessels in the Upper Cubiculum refer to Cleopatra as Isis, and that their pairing with a Silenus head thus refers to Antony (Söldner 2000, 386–7); but this abstruse reading is highly unlikely to have occurred to a Roman viewer.

¹⁶³ Iacopi correctly notes that the vessels are not religious in this context but does not say why (Iacopi 2008, 33). Egyptian imagery of all sorts in Roman art has been interpreted religiously, incorrectly in my view; see full discussion above in the Introduction.

sanctuary.¹⁶⁴ It is breathtaking, one of the extremely few metal luxury vessels to survive today but surely not unique in antiquity. Rather than being covered in vegetation like the hydria in the frescoes, its elegant bronze body is inlaid in silver with beautifully wrought Egyptian figures. The crowns they wear are recognizable from the Upper Cubiculum paintings; the vase, like the frescoes, reproduces the headgear in painstaking detail. But it is rather another feature that makes this hydria a superb example of the models that informed the Upper Cubiculum painting: the frieze of pharaonic crowns inlaid around the shoulder (Fig. 54). This abstraction of the crowns, removing them from the bodies of the gods and arranging them in a decorative frieze, represents a crucial step in which the artist deploys the crowns not as divine attributes but as a self-contained decorative border. It is precisely this that we see in the Upper Cubiculum frescoes: the crowns do not adorn figures but float in space, abstracted into a repeating pattern, no longer headdresses but ornament.

Candelabra

Another major category of luxury objects that appears in Second-Style painting is ornate candelabra and incense burners (often indistinguishable from each other and thus treated together¹⁶⁵). Indeed, as Andrew Wallace-Hadrill has pointed out, these furnishings are a perfect example of how Roman wall painting reflects the objects around it: they are so ubiquitous in Second Style, and so plainly draw on real-world counterparts preserved in good quantity, that early wall-painting scholarship even dubbed a sub-class of the Second Style as the "candelabrum style." Yerkes shows how closely the candelabra in the paintings cleave to the bronze and marble ones known from Pompeii and the Mahdia shipwreck. ¹⁶⁷ It is no coincidence that at just this time, marble candelabra reach the peak of their production and importation to Rome—and that, judging from their findspots, they primarily "belong to the luxurious decoration of Roman architecture, as much as marble craters and statuary;" it has even been proposed that "the genre emerged at the end of the second century BC to serve the great needs of Roman nobility for luxury artistic goods." ¹⁶⁸

The Upper Cubiculum is, as ever, no exception. On the back wall, two lush towers of vegetation in the yellow upper register are flowery riffs on candelabra (Fig. 10). In each case an upside-down calyx forms the foot, its flaring sides morphing into exuberant shoots that bend and curl before finally terminating in a cup-shaped capital fastened to the underside of the nearest architrave. Growing up from the base is a stem with vertical ridges. It is interrupted by a spreading ring that resembles an umbrella (called a *phial* in botanical terminology), itself topped by two more calyces and then two large flowers stacked atop one another. In the better-preserved of the two candelabra, the upper flower cups a calyx with two petals—or are they leaves?—sheathing a tiny monochrome shuty crown. Very similar (albeit smaller) candelabra appear

¹⁶⁴ It has been dated variously to the Ptolemaic, Roman, and Late Roman periods (Wessetzky 1961, 42–4).

¹⁶⁵ Cain and Dräger 1994, 239.

¹⁶⁶ Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 376. Mau speaks of a "candelabrum style" in both Second and Third Style (Mau 1873, 456).

¹⁶⁷ Yerkes 2000.

¹⁶⁸ Cain and Dräger 1994, 239. Cain further observes that "the vast majority [of marble candelabra] appear to have been carved in the Caesarian-Augustan period," which makes them perfectly contemporary with Second-Style painting.

against a black ground on the north and south walls (Fig. 55). Four more candelabra join the two largest ones in the yellow register, standing on the architrave segments nearby. They are sleeker and less flowery but nonetheless vegetal: each bell-shaped foot sprouts a perfectly fanned frond that perches on the corner of the architrave like a fragmentary palmette acroterium. The foot gives rise to a single tall, tapering stem with two simple curling shoots at the sides and a sole calyx and white bell-like flower at the top. More of these forms appear in the stucco ceiling, this time with female figures like caryatids inserted into the vegetation (Fig. 13).

However fantastically vegetal these structures are, they unmistakably draw upon contemporary marble and bronze candelabra. This is clear in other paintings of such "flower towers" that feature not a bloom or shuty crown at the top but a plate for burning incense, a pine cone, or an omphalos (Fig. 56). A Second-Style painting in the House of the Cryptoporticus, Pompeii, depicts candelabra with stacks of bells, calyces, and phials in what is obviously meant to be bronze (Fig. 57). The material and the omphalos at the top confirm that these are candelabra; that they even cast shadows on the wall behind them emphasizes they are illusionistic "real" objects. They also include female figures within the vegetal totem pole just like the candelabra on the Upper Cubiculum ceiling. As Yerkes has shown, these painted candelabra find very close parallels in bronze and marble candelabra from this period: the famous marble candelabrum from the Mahdia shipwreck is a good comparandum for the Upper Cubiculum paintings, as both feature phials with bulbous protrusions alternating with downturned leaves or petals (Fig. 58). Rosettes projecting from the base are also common to both.

That the candelabra in the Upper Cubiculum derive from real, highly vegetalized candelabra means that they stand in a long lineage of vegetal ornaments, predating Augustus and not visibly connected to Egypt in any way. This in turn speaks against Söldner's proposal that the vegetalization of the ornaments refers to the land of the Nile. 169 Certainly the candelabra appear alongside Egyptian motifs in the Upper Cubiculum, but so too do they elsewhere—as in Boscotrecase, where a delicate white candelabrum is paired with small black plaques of Egyptian figures (Fig. 59). And this is for a good reason: not for any embedded Nilotic symbolism, but because they are both types of imported luxury good (the black panels likely imitate panels of stone inlay, further discussed below). Vegetal candelabra are no expression of the Augustan *aurea aetas* but another common device by which wall painters transform the rich furnishings that they regularly encounter into semi-fantastical decorative motifs.

Gems and Jewelry

Along with vessels and candelabra, the two genres of object long recognized as transpositions into Second-Style painting, 170 the Upper Cubiculum contains fresco versions of other luxury objects too—among them gems and jewelry. As noted above, the double-feather crown motifs on the south wall of the Upper Cubiculum are crafted to resemble gold trinkets with gemstone centers (Fig. 16). In conceit they recall the magical sardonyx "set in a golden horn" that Pliny says Livia dedicated in the Temple of Concordia in Rome, 171 just one of a great number of such dedications: for gemstones and rings counted among the most lavish luxury goods collected and displayed in Rome in the mid-first century BC. Marc Antony apparently

¹⁶⁹ Söldner 2000, 384–5.

¹⁷⁰ The argument is beautifully formulated by Yerkes 2000 and Yerkes 2005, and cursorily noted by Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 376, Mau 1873, 456.

¹⁷¹ Plin. *HN* 37.34.

proscribed the senator Nonius in order to obtain his beryl ring,¹⁷² and many of the most prominent men in Rome owned hugely expensive, even kingly gem collections (*dactyliothecae*). Pompey got hold of Mithridates' *dactyliotheca* and dedicated it in the Capitol, but interestingly Pliny says that even this royal collection paled in comparison to Scaurus' private one! Julius Caesar dedicated an impressive six *dactyliothecae*—presumably acquired from six previous owners—in the Temple of Venus Genetrix, and Marcellus placed one in the Temple of Apollo Palatinus.¹⁷³ That gems and jewelry appear in fresco, then, just as candelabra and precious vessels do, is hardly surprising: for all these painted motifs were inspired by the same vigorous collecting activity, and given that the paintings were commissioned for the very finest houses in Rome,¹⁷⁴ they were created for the highest echelons of collectors.

Yet the Upper Cubiculum paintings do not depict isolated gemstones or rings: instead, the crown-like trinkets are joined to each other—and to the delicate upside-down bells—by concatenated curves. The same structuring device reappears on the back wall, where the architrave between the two columns of the aedicula contains dark purple canthari alternating with flowers along a chain of the same looping stems (Fig. 7). The looping stems create the impression that the vessels and flowers are strung on a chain like jewelry. This effect is reinforced by the depiction of the canthari: unlike that of the larger white canthari nearby, which stand on the architecture as if they were real vessels set on a shelf, the purple ones are made even smaller and more delicate, and their feet are replaced with flowers. The allusion to jewelry is made even more explicit in the black-ground frieze on the side walls, where tiny amphorae likewise cupped by flowers are strung together with swags of pearls held by swans (Fig. 9). It is a delightful play of incongruities: the amphorae are transformed from one of the largest and coarsest pottery types into a row of delicate pendants on a pearl necklace. They become jewelry. That the strands are borne aloft by swans underscores their place among the pleasures of Aphrodite, her token animal joining the personal adornments. More pearls appear in the frieze of winged shuty crowns, stretching up from the tiny bells (Fig. 16). Scholars have recognized a "jewel-like" quality to Third-Style painting without realizing that this is not just a poetic way to describe the aesthetic effect but in fact strikes to the heart of the method by which the paintings were made: the painters are explicitly copying jewelry. 175

¹⁷² Plin. *HN* 37.81–2. Pliny wonders not only at Antony's greed but Nonius' folly in trying to secret his ring away with him into exile—instead of leaving it behind as a wild animal chews off a limb as "ransom" (*redimere*) for the pursuing predator.

¹⁷³ Plin. *HN* 37.11.

¹⁷⁴ Most notably, the "House of Augustus" on the Palatine and the Villa Farnesina across the Tiber (possibly owned by Agrippa; see Moormann 2010).

vignettes floating in the center of the main-zone panels "emerge like jewels from the dark expanse that surrounds them, each a rich little island glittering in the vastness of a dark sea" (von Blanckenhagen et al. 1962, 20). These paintings allude to jewelry in numerous other ways as well: the gold color scheme, the cameo-like tondi, and again the swags of pearls held up by swans. It is possible that the uraeus snakes tied into knots in the Upper Cubiculum frieze are also inspired by jewelry, in line with the snake bracelets especially popular in Egypt, but their grey-green color and lack of other ornaments makes this reading difficult. Certainly cranes fighting snakes are an Egyptian trope (see below, n. 181), but what sort of object might have inspired the versions in this frieze is opaque. The mystery only deepens with the vegetal towers between the birds and snakes, their bases vaguely pelta-shaped and backed by a pair of crossed caducei.

In fact, as early as the Hellenistic period and continuing into the Roman period, jewelry itself played the same game of turning coarse clay amphorae into precious miniature gold trinkets. A pair of gold earrings from early Roman Egypt features tiny amphorae made of emerald spheres; they are covered with ruffles of gold and have handles made of dolphins (Fig. 60). The idea of turning vessels into jewelry may have been facilitated by alabastra, the ultimate miniature wearable vessels—and certainly conceived as jewelry in the case of a stunning rock-crystal alabastron strung on a gold chain, dated to c. 30–20 BC and thus contemporary with the Upper Cubiculum paintings (Fig. 61). Yet the jewel-like vessels in the frescoes do not only reproduce the clever conceit of recasting one sort of object as another, in this case vases into jewelry—they go one step further. Rendered in paint, the amphorae are refracted through two orders of representation: the frescoes imitate jewelry that itself reproduces vessels. Seen in this light, it is clear that the amphorae do not refer to the Nile, as Söldner proposes, ¹⁷⁶ but once again reflect a delight in luxury goods and artistic virtuosity.

Glass Beads and Tiles

These painted strings of pearls and amphorae may imitate more than simply jewelry, however. For jewelry was depicted in exactly this way on another luxury good from Egypt: exquisitely detailed glass tiles.¹⁷⁷ The correspondence between such glass tiles and the delicate Upper Cubiculum frieze is striking. Nearly identical tiles in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and The Metropolitan Museum in New York depict palmettes atop red bulbs (flower buds or vessels?) linked to matching white bulbs via chains of white and red pearls (Fig. 62, Fig. 63). Other tiles are white with a row of palmettes and flowers above volutes, a composition very similar to the flowers and vessels with looping stems in the Upper Cubiculum. Such tiny glass tiles may have been set into wooden frames for display: a glass tile from Egypt, now in the British Museum, is remarkably preserved along with a corner of its ancient wooden frame (Fig. 64); and an extraordinary wooden furniture leg remains remarkably intact with its glass inlay decoration (including the name of Ptolemy V; Fig. 65).¹⁷⁸ The frescoes thus may translate a design from glass tiles which itself may translate jewelry.

Whether these glass tiles were inlaid in furniture or used as amulets or jewelry themselves, they are eminently portable and thus a very likely source of artistic inspiration for artists far beyond Egypt. Indeed, glass tiles like this managed to make their way from Egypt into every corner of the Mediterranean and even inland. Glass tiles depicting the Apis bull are known from Pompeii (Fig. 66), and a glass bead of the same subject was found as far as Lahnau-Waldgirmes, in central Germany, from a context datable to AD 1–9. In Pompeii, just such a

¹⁷⁶ Söldner 2000, 384–5.

¹⁷⁷ The repeating patterns found on these glass tiles may lead one to wonder whether they draw from textile designs; but the similarity may rather lie in the fact that both media inherently encourage repeating patterns by virtue of their respective technical processes: weaving requires laying down weft in sequential rows, producing a paratactic pattern along the warp; and the millefiori glass technique (consisting of making a design in glass, rolling it long and thin, slicing it, and juxtaposing the resulting slices in a row) also produces a repeated sequence of motifs.

¹⁷⁸ The British Museum has numerous glass tiles in this technique, all said to have been found or acquired in Egypt: e.g., inv. EA29396 (theater mask), EA15720 (palmette border), EA64276 (Horus bird), EA64165 (millefiori).

¹⁷⁹ Schlick-Nolte 2004, 261 and figs. 223–4.

glass tile may have inspired the design for a marble panel in an illusionistic garden scene in the House of the Orchard, which depicts the Apis bull in very similar manner (Fig. 67). 180

Ivory and Stone Plaques

Although the pharaonic crowns in the two black panels in the Upper Cubiculum's upper register could have been drawn from the goods discussed above, the peculiar rendering of the crowns in an elaborately framed black panel suggests that the painting is meant to reproduce a different sort of object: a decorative panel in a fancy frame. This is perhaps clearest in the white panels beside the black ones, decorated with cranes (a bird that the Romans associated with Egypt¹⁸¹). Their subtle coloration suggests that they may represent reliefs in painted limestone or marble, as appear in the House of the Orchard (Fig. 68), or even paintings on stone, like the sphinx painted on a small marble panel in the Naples museum (Fig. 69). 182 While such marble panels can have simple frames—those in the House of the Orchard have plain red and white bands—the white panels in the Upper Cubiculum have much more intricate frames: first a green band with a line down the middle, then an off-white band dotted with small dark purple flowers, then finally a plain pinkish band. This extra elaboration suggests that the panel imitates a more precious substance than marble, perhaps ivory. Erika Simon has suggested that the square white panels depicted in the Villa Farnesina represent ivory plaques, precisely because of their ornate frames. 183 Ivory may have carried an Egyptian connotation itself, since following the Ptolemies' ivory exploitation Egypt was the Roman source of ivory par excellence. Athenaeus says that the doors on Ptolemy IV's barge were made of cedar panels affixed with ivory figures, 184 a type of decoration which may find a parallel in another room in the "House of Augustus" (Fig. 70): here a row of cavorting marine creatures are rendered in pure white against a claret ground, perhaps recalling the "panels of fragrant cedar nicely glued together, with ornamentation in ivory" mentioned by Athenaeus.

Just as extravagant as the white panels are the black panels with atef crowns (Fig. 23). They too are carefully, not to say excessively, framed. The frames begin first with a thin yellow line, then a thick band of white and purple triangles with flourishes at the corners, then a thick green band, then a thin black one, and a thin white one. These panels were apparently worth showing off! Given their geometric shapes and color palette, these panels may take after fine

¹⁸⁰ This motif is one of the most consistent in the repertoire. The Serapeum in Ostia (second century AD) also contained a panel depicting an Apis bull, here in the strange medium of pumice inlaid into a large brick (Mar 2001, 233, cat. no. 237).

¹⁸¹ Cranes appear in Roman art as a typically Egyptian animal, whether fighting Pygmies (as in the terracotta plaques in the Liebieghaus, Frankfurt, inv. no. 240 [Beck et al. 2005, cat. no. 355] and in the Roman National Museums, inv. no. 62662 [Beck et al. 2005, cat. no. 358]) or alongside cornucopiae representing Egypt's abundance (British Museum inv. no. 1814, 0704.1427).

¹⁸² A related category of luxury good that wall painters adopt but which does not appear in the Upper Cubiculum paintings is the oscillum (the discs of marble or terracotta that were carved in relief on both sides and hung between the columns of a peristyle). A marble oscillum from Pompeii (Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 6551), representative in the bucolic scenes it portrays, finds a very close comparandum in a Third-Style wall fragment from Pompeii (Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 9921): the painter has abstracted it from its garden context in order to fit it into the decorative scheme as an isolated motif, just like the other luxury goods discussed here.

¹⁸³ Simon 1986, 192.

¹⁸⁴ Ath. 5.205b.

obsidian ware like the spectacular obsidian skyphoi in the Naples museum (Fig. 71, Fig. 72). The panels strongly resemble the smaller of the two skyphoi in both the vegetal design and the color scheme typical for the medium, bright colors standing out against a black ground. The Temple of Isis paintings contain just such a panel (Fig. 73), perhaps underscoring the exotic connotation of inlaid obsidian. Another black-ground panel of colorful inlay appears among the Hellenistic furnishings depicted in the Villa of P. Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale, where a black-ground one with a complex figural scene serves as a lintel over an illusionistic doorway (Fig. 74); this likely represents a sophisticated inlaid panel in obsidian. It could also evoke inlaid ebony, a wood that was known to the Romans from Meroe as well as India, and is said by Lucan to have formed the doors of Cleopatra's palace—but I know of no evidence for it having been inlaid in the ancient world.¹⁸⁵

One further type of plaque that may inform the paintings is in precious metal, and finds a unique representative in the spectacular Mensa Isiaca (Fig. 75). This large, flat bronze slab inlaid with silver and niello may have served as a tabletop, perhaps on an altar in a sanctuary of Isis. ¹⁸⁶ Its meticulous renderings of the Egyptian pantheon and its manifold crowns exemplifies the extremely high quality artworks with Egyptian subjects that Roman artists encountered in Italy and possibly even created themselves, and would afford detailed models for a painter. Judging from the colors of the plaques depicted in the Upper Cubiculum, the paintings more likely refer to ivory and stone than metal; but such metal plaques were surely equally prized, even if today only very few survive.

The frames around the black and white panels confirm that the panels represent a precious material, but more importantly, they point to an Egyptian model: for the row of purple and white triangles in a toothed pattern is by no means typical of Roman art—and indeed, the Romans seem to have associated it with Egypt. Roman artists usually depict it alongside other Egyptian motifs: a similar toothed frame surrounds a panel of atef crowns in the Villa Farnesina triclinium (Fig. 76), and another one frames a large second-century mosaic of Pygmy scenes (Fig. 77). Triangles are also used in a first-century Roman mosaic to frame two small Egyptian landscapes, one of which depicts the Pharos of Alexandria and the other a palm tree (Fig. 78). So

¹⁸⁵ Luc. 2.117; on Roman knowledge and use of ebony, see Ulrich 2007, 251–2.

¹⁸⁶ Whether in Italy or Egypt is unknown, as the piece is first documented in an Italian collection in the early sixteenth century. Many doubt that the piece came from Egypt, citing "stylistic elements and aberrant figural details" or illegible hieroglyphs (Leospo 1997, 29; Spanedda 2008, 110).

¹⁸⁷ A small triangle border also appears by itself in a fragment from the Lago Argentina that de Vos classifies as Egyptianizing (de Vos and de Vos 1980, pl. I, 1 and p. 3). In the Third-Style painting in the villa at Isera, stylized Egyptian crown motifs and sphinxes adjoin borders of triangles (de Vos and Maurina 2011, figs. 107–9, 156–8, 167).

even though evidence for the triangle pattern in Egyptian art itself is slim, ¹⁸⁸ the Romans obviously considered the triangle motif to be Egyptian.

Textiles

Another type of toothed triangle border, however, may have a more definite referent. In the white panels on the Upper Cubiculum's stucco ceiling, triangle borders frame clusters of tendrils and vegetal candelabra with female figures (Fig. 13). In these curving trapezoidal panels, the sides of the triangles are stepped, almost as if they are woven. And indeed, the combination of this border pattern with the vegetal design in the center strongly recalls the gold and purple cloth discovered in Tomb II at Vergina (Fig. 79). Precisely such a textile is even reproduced "whole cloth" in the Second-Style wall paintings in a Republican temple at Brescia (c. 80 BC; Fig. 80). Here the addition of a wave pattern border again recalls the Upper Cubiculum ceiling, which features rectangular panels edged in the same pattern. These paintings thus seem to bear witness to an entire category of ephemeral imports once ubiquitous in Rome but now lost: textiles.

As a relatively fragile material, textiles do not survive in the archaeological record in the same numbers as hulking marble craters and candelabra, or even silver canthari and gold jewelry. For this reason we have to take a more investigative approach, with special attention to textual sources, to find out what sorts of textiles the Romans came into contact with and how they used them. If we do, we see that the Romans prized fabrics as much as the other precious objects that survive today. So much is clear from the records of spolia seized by triumphant Roman generals. Aemilius Paulus put on a show of spoils in Macedonia in 167 BC, of which Livy writes:

Those who came to watch were no more drawn to the stage spectacle, the contests of men, or the racing of horses than to the collected loot (*praeda*) of Macedonia that was exhibited: statues, paintings, fabrics (*textilium*), and vessels made of gold, silver, bronze and ivory, manufactured with such care in the palace at Pella as to

the Fayum, where they resemble a stack of black and white triangles (Smith 2010). The same type of columns are painted in the Second-Style scheme in the Villa EZ IV in Petra (see Kolb 2012, 238), a decorative program that fits perfectly into Judith McKenzie's argument that these schemes depict Alexandrian architecture (McKenzie 2007, 97–105 and McKenzie 1990, 85–100). Athenaeus refers to a similar type of column in his description of Ptolemy IV's barge, not triangular but nonetheless alternating in strong colors: "the drums differed, one being black and another white, placed alternately" (Ath. 5.206a–b). Strings of triangles also appear frequently in the large pectorals depicted on mummy cases (e.g., London, British Museum, inv. EA21810), and colorful glass triangles were probably inlaid in similar interlocking patterns in wooden shrines (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 98.1100). More relevant to the framed panels in the Upper Cubiculum is the triangle pattern used in Egypt too as a frame, as around the edges of mummy cases (London, British Museum, inv. EA29589). These genres of object do not indicate a clear origin for the toothed frame, but the Romans adopted it as indicative of Egypt.

That the imitation textiles should appear on the ceiling of the Upper Cubiculum is in line with the imitation of a cloth tent on the ceiling of the Garden Triclinium in the Villa of Livia, and perhaps, more distantly, in Etruscan tombs (possibly in imitation of hunting tents: see Holloway 1965, 344). A similar stepped design also appears in Near Eastern architecture, in the battlements atop buildings; but to my knowledge it is not used as a border design in textiles or other luxury goods (see, for instance, Thomason 2010).

serve not only for immediate show—like the objects with which the palace at Alexandria was crammed—but for continuous use. This booty was loaded on the fleet and given to Gnaeus Octavius to transport to Rome. 190

Beyond attesting the place of textiles among costly spoils, this passage provides crucial testimony that Alexandria was known for products, including textiles, so showy that they were not even made to last but simply to stun the beholder.

Marcellus's spoils from Syracuse in 211 BC similarly included a pretiosa vestis among the statues and the vessels in bronze and silver. 191 And, tellingly, Livy describes how this treasure trove led directly to Rome's decadence: these were very highly valued items indeed! Nor does Livy merely list textiles among the inventory of spoils, but specifies three different types of the treacherous stuff:

For the first time, [the returning troops] imported into Rome couches of bronze, valuable robes for coverlets, tapestries, and other products of the loom (vestem stragulam pretiosam, plagulas, et alia textilia), and what at that time was considered luxurious furniture—tables with one pedestal and sideboards. 192

Indeed, so precious were the products of the loom that the elder Cato felt compelled to revile them along with the other trappings of a luxurious lifestyle. As Plutarch writes,

[Cato himself] tells us that he never wore clothing worth more than a hundred drachmas; that he drank, even when he was practor or consul, the same wine as his slaves; that as for fish and meats, he would buy thirty asses' worth for his dinner from the public stalls, and even this for the city's sake, that he might not live on bread alone, but strengthen his body for military service; that he once fell heir to an embroidered Babylonian coverlet [ἐπίβλημα δὲ τῶν ποικίλων Βαβυλώνιον], but sold it at once; that not a single one of his cottages had plastered walls; ... also that he bought lands where crops were raised and cattle herded, not those where lawns were sprinkled and paths swept. 193

What is particularly important about this passage for our purposes is not only what it says about the value of textiles; for we already know that they were brought back to Rome as spoils equal to statues, paintings, and vessels in precious materials. But Cato's statement shows they occupied the same conceptual niche as the accouterments of a fine country villa. They were perceived to

¹⁹⁰ Livy 45.33.46, trans. after Schlesinger 1951. I agree not with Schlesinger but with William McDevitte that the Macedonian objects are listed in contrast, not comparison, with those in Alexandria (McDevitte 1850): the implication is that the items in Alexandria, capital of luxury, were made as transient show pieces.

¹⁹¹ Livy 26.21.26, trans. after Sage 1935, describing Gnaeus Manlius Volso's return from Asia in

¹⁸⁷ BC.

192 Livy 39.36.37, trans. Sage 1935. Although Roman authors said that Marcellus was responsible for introducing foreign art to Rome, in fact this practice was already established and growing quite familiar from the fourth and third centuries BC onward (Gruen 1992, esp. 84, 86, 93).

¹⁹³ Plut. Vit. Cat. Mai. 24, trans. Perrin 1914. I have replaced Perrin's translation of ἐπίβλημα as "robe" with "coverlet," which better captures both the literal Greek ("that which is thrown over") and the usage of the word in ancient texts (Liddell et al. 1940, s.v. ἐπίβλημα).

be trappings of luxury on par with plastered (presumably frescoed) walls, watered lawns, and garden paths.

And indeed, the evidence affirms that textiles were part and parcel of a rich Roman house. Vergil mentions lavish golden-threaded cloth as a typical feature of a grand home. 194 More striking still is the archaeological evidence: a painting in the House of the Labyrinth in Pompeii (c. 50 BC) depicts curtains strung on a thick cord spanning the intercolumniations in an illusionistic portico (Fig. 81), just as in the temple at Brescia (Fig. 80). Attachment points for actual cords like this have been found throughout Pompeii, and iron curtain rods in Herculaneum. 195 The continuing omnipresence of wall hangings in the Roman house is further confirmed by the wealth of forms in Fourth-Style painting that derive from them: the "embroidery borders" recall textile edging (Fig. 82); Vorhänge panels sag like cloth in their upper corners (Fig. 83); and the *Tapetenmuster* schemes derive not from "wallpaper," as the term is commonly translated into English, but again from tapestry—perhaps most obviously in the painted decoration of the House of the Golden Cupids in Pompeii (Fig. 84). The origins of these conceits are reflected in the textile terminology used for them, even if the connection between the media has not been investigated. 196 What is more, beyond simply hanging in Roman houses, curtains were in fact considered integral to the domestic space. This is attested by a convention in sculpture of indicating interiors by the presence of a curtain. Among Roman sarcophagi of the late imperial period, the deceased can be depicted in an interior space indicated by a hanging cloth called a *parapetasma* or *velum*. The cloth may be draped behind the deceased, as in the case of a Roman woman accompanied by her child (Fig. 85), or even behind reclining lovers (Fig. 86). In both cases, the cloth serves to locate the scene indoors—and, given the subjects of these scenes, the interior is very likely that of a Roman house.

Textiles were therefore luxury goods, imported to Rome with other such goods; they entered rich Roman houses; and they even came to define domestic space. Were any of these textiles identifiably Egyptian? Literary sources suggest that Egypt was a well-regarded center of cloth production. Pliny comments on the exorbitant prices paid for various kinds of cloth, including a many-colored embroidered cloth from Babylon, another from Phrygia, a gold-embroidered cloth from Asia, and some special sort of dual-weave cloth from Egypt. That the Egyptians were especially gifted in textile production might even be suggested by Pliny's claim that they invented weaving 197—or at least a technique of "two-thread" weaving. The high esteem for Egyptian textiles can also be inferred from Pliny's list, which culminates in Cato's renowned Babylonian cloth:

The method of weaving cloth with more than two threads was invented at Alexandria; these cloths are called *polymita*. It was in Gaul that they were first divided into checkers. Metellus Scipio, in the accusation which he brought against Cato, stated that even in his time Babylonian covers for couches were selling for

¹⁹⁴ Set in antithesis to a simple, natural lifestyle: "Si non ingentem foribus domus alta superbis/mane salutantum totis vomit aedibus undam,/nec varios inhiant pulchra testudine postis/inlusasque auro vestes Ephyreiaque aera…" (Verg. *G.* 2.461–4).

Ruggiero 1885, 545–6, 549. I am deeply grateful to Evan Proudfoot for these references.

¹⁹⁶ Ling relies on the terms in his introduction to Fourth Style painting (Ling 1991, respectively 71, 75, and 84).

¹⁹⁷ Plin. HN 7.196.191.

eight hundred thousand sesterces; and these of late, in the time of the Emperor Nero, had risen to four millions.¹⁹⁸

The richness of Egyptian textiles is further attested by archaeological finds. A gorgeous painted mummy case depicts a woman dressed in a spectacular striped dress and mantle (Fig. 87). The alternating wide and narrow bands of pink, green, white, and gold were obviously a source of great pride for the deceased—so much so that the cartonnage over her legs is gently ridged to imitate the folds of cloth. What is more, a light-colored band that runs down her front in a U-shape features scenes of men hunting animals and preparing food in large pots. This is surely meant to be understood as a figural frieze embroidered on the cloth.

Fourth-century AD Coptic textiles confirm that such figural borders would have been edged with triangles like those in the Upper Cubiculum borders (Fig. 88). Patterns of triangles also often appear on mummy wrappings to either side of the face, alternating with rows of figures and other patterns, imitating a headcloth descending from the head down to the chest (Fig. 89).¹⁹⁹ That a triangle border characterized textiles from Egypt is even more obvious in two impressive works of opus sectile. On the large obsidian skyphos from Stabia, just such a triangular border appears on the clothing of the Egyptian figures (Fig. 72). Here the toothed edge is joined by a confusing wealth of other geometric designs, but it reappears quite distinctly in the famous opus sectile fragments from the Basilica of Junius Bassus (Fig. 90). The triangles in this case line the edges of a swag of cloth, itself elaborated (likely embroidered) with a frieze of pharaonic figures. The toothed edge thus appears to be typical of Egyptian textiles, imitated on the ceiling of the Upper Cubiculum.

Conclusion

That the Egyptian motifs in the Upper Cubiculum (as in other examples) draw on luxury objects may also help to explain why Roman wall painters never replicate Egyptian wall paintings, either in whole or in part. Nowhere do Roman frescoes adopt the multiple registers of figures seen in Egyptian tombs and temples, or devote themselves wholly to an Egyptian subject or style. Instead, Roman painters select only a carefully curated set of Egyptian elements to incorporate into a standard—indeed, sometimes called quintessentially Roman wall composition. Further, the Egyptian elements they adopt are quite limited; numerous subjects that are ubiquitous on Egyptian walls *never* appear on Roman walls. The lack of sacrificial cattle slaughters and triumphant pharaohs stomping barbarians may not be surprising, but absent too are the bevies of dancing women and charming duck hunts. Hieroglyphics too appear

¹⁹⁸ Plin. HN 8.196.195–7.191, trans. after Bostock and Riley 1855.

¹⁹⁹ Nauerth says that the "stripes of various colors, zig-zags (which develop out of *Tropfenmotive*), [and] rows of flowers" on Egyptian sarcophagi are typical of Egyptian fabrics, although she does not adduce evidence for this (Nauerth 2004, 224).

²⁰⁰ Roullet suggests that Roman walls use "violent" colors like black, green, and yellow in imitation of an Egyptian palette, but does not support this claim (Roullet 1972, 20).

²⁰¹ Ling 1991, 3; Thompson 1961, 58.

Despite the currency of the "smiting" scene throughout the Ptolemaic and even Roman periods, when rulers were regularly shown on Egyptian monuments in the traditional Pharaonic pose of smiting their enemies: e.g., relief of Trajan smiting enemies, temple at Esna (Hölbl 2004, p. 528 fig. 526).

²⁰³ In the Neues Museum, Berlin: a tempera painted floor from Amarna, South Palace: ÄM 15335. Dancing women: Tomb of Nebamun, now in London, British Museum, inv. EA37981.

surprisingly infrequently.²⁰⁴ If Roman painters were drawing ideas from Egyptian wall painting, or if Roman patrons wanted a reproduction of such painting, they would have adopted these subjects and compositions. The fact that they did not affirms that they were more likely drawing inspiration from individual imported objects.

If the Upper Cubiculum pharaonic motifs are modeled on actual luxury objects, introduced into the wall painting repertoire in the same way as Greek objects, the question still remains: does the fact that they are Egyptian support, or even require, a special interpretation linking them to the princeps and the conquest of Egypt? For even if the Egyptian motifs fit comfortably into the familiar mechanisms of Second-Style wall painting, the fact that they are Egyptian may lead one to maintain that they nonetheless reference the conquest. Yet the fact that wall painters derive both Egyptian and Greek ones from luxury objects, and deploy them in entirely analogous ways on the walls, suggests that the significance of these motifs for a Roman viewer would also have been analogous—and we certainly do not tend to read the Greek elements as references to the Roman conquest of Greece. Indeed, building on what we already know about how the Romans viewed and used the decoration in their houses, we can mount a case that the painted Egyptian elements function just like the Greek ones. They are primarily meant to create a refined atmosphere of pleasure (otium). This is the argument of the next chapter.

²⁰⁴ Baines and Whitehouse 2005, 407. Pseudo-hieroglyphics appear in some Roman objects outside of painting, including the Mensa Isiaca (Fig. 75) and a small statuette base from Pompeii (De Caro 2006, cat. no. II.83).

Chapter 3. Egyptian Objects and Otium

In the previous two chapters I argued that the Egyptian motifs in the Upper Cubiculum can be better understood within the context of luxury goods in the Roman house than in the context of the princeps' political agenda. We saw that Egyptian motifs in the Upper Cubiculum are like non-Egyptian ones in the way that painters adopted and adapted them from real luxury objects; thus the same artistic process underlies the jewelry-like pharaonic crowns as it does the Hellenistic candelabra. In this chapter I argue that Egyptian and non-Egyptian motifs were adopted in the same manner in part because, as luxury objects, they were seen to serve the same function: namely, to create the atmosphere of refined *otium* appropriate to the Roman home. That Greek motifs function in this way has long been recognized; that Egyptian motifs should too may therefore seem a natural parallel, yet has not been explored. This parallel is particularly important for the present argument because scholarship treats the *Greek* motifs in Roman wall painting as markers of a luxurious lifestyle and *not* symbols of political conquests—quite the reverse of the consensus on Egyptian motifs. By pointing out the close parallels between Greek and Egyptian motifs on Roman walls, and by focusing on their context in Roman houses, I demonstrate that both corpora are deployed to create an atmosphere of leisure.

In addition, this chapter argues that this atmosphere of leisure comprises two different yet complementary modes of engaging with the decoration—illustrated here by two case studies. These are particularly well-preserved rooms that can be taken as representative of many similar cases (such as those adduced in the previous chapter). Both feature Egyptian motifs in spaces of otium, but they differ in the specific effect that was sought and the way in which it was achieved. In the first example, the "pinacotheca" paintings of Cubiculum B in the Villa Farnesina, we see Egyptian motifs integrated into an illusionistic "art collection" displayed on the walls. They join Greek elements to create an elegant interior space that anticipates an erudite viewer attuned to various artistic traditions. The scheme thus appeals to a somewhat "cerebral" side of otium: displaying a variety of fine objects, it invites the viewer to engage in learned and connoisseurial discourses with friends. Texts by Petronius and the elder and younger Philostratus shed light on these conversations: they illustrate how conversation is prompted by the collection of objects in a dining room, and how the viewer is expected to deliver eloquent exegeses that connect painted depictions of objects to real-world ones.

The second case study, centered on the garden triclinium in the House of the Golden Bracelet, shows how Egyptian motifs are deployed in a space similarly characterized by otium and elegance but here geared toward more sensorial pleasures. Egyptian motifs stand alongside Greek ones to create a rich sensory experience like that described by Roman authors, particularly Statius and Pliny the Younger, who recount their rapture at the sound of flowing water, the feel of the sea breeze, and the sight of an ideal combination of art and nature. These desirable qualities are reflected in the Golden Bracelet garden triclinium, its paintings of Egyptian and

²⁰⁵ I use the name Augustus or "the princeps" rather than Octavian only for simplicity, without meaning to imply a date after 27 BC (see above, p. 9). "Luxury goods" in this project are desirable, expensive, inessential items; the English term is used to avoid the strongly negative connotations of the Latin terms *luxus* or *luxuria* (see above, n. 142).

²⁰⁶ Noticed but not discussed by Versluys 2002, 382.

Greek motifs adding to the effect. The texts make plain that the primary aim of such carefully curated garden decor is to conjure an atmosphere not of politics or even religion, but of pleasure.

Collections of Greek Art in Rome

The Egyptian and Greek motifs in Cubiculum B of the Villa Farnesina are meant to appeal to the connoisseur. They are part of a "pinacotheca" scheme which itself aims to reproduce in fresco a top-quality art collection. ²⁰⁷ The scheme gets its name from the illusionistic panel paintings that are "hung" on the wall in imitation of a real assemblage of paintings, for instance those displayed in Roman porticoes and temples. 208 Indeed, an enormous number of paintings were exhibited in the public buildings of Rome: Pliny names among them the Porticus of Pompey and Porticus Philippi, and cites the "famous" paintings in the Temple of Salus and Temple of Hercules in the Forum Boarium;²⁰⁹ he says that Augustus himself even placed two paintings in his own Forum, two in the Temple of Caesar, and two in the Curia. Attentive to the fact that the pictures were imported, he also names the first example of a "foreign painting exhibited in Rome" as one displayed in the Temple of Ceres, and says that since the mid-second century BC "it has become common to exhibit [foreign pictures] in the Forum as well."²¹⁰

Yet to call the fresco scheme that echoes these displays a "pinacotheca" is misleading, for the displays included not only paintings but other objects, especially sculpture. Varro, writing around 37 BC, describes a small group of magistrates taking a break from their labors by sitting in one such great public complex in Rome, the Villa Publica, which one character observes is "more extravagantly arrayed with objects of art than all of Reate put together, so bedizened is it with pictures and garnished with statues." Specifically he notices statues by Lysippus and paintings by Antiphilus, an Egyptian artist.²¹¹ Indeed, when it comes to statues and paintings, Cicero says, "we have great numbers of them displayed publicly in our city." The paintings displayed in temples also would have been accompanied by other sorts of precious objects, most notably candelabra. Indeed, Eric Moormann has shown that the Third-Style fresco decoration of numerous Roman temples usually included candelabra²¹³—another example of wall paintings depicting the same sorts of luxury furnishings as those that stood nearby, as described in the previous chapter.

²⁰⁷ On the pinacotheca as a decorative form, see Jones 2014a and Jones 2014b. Another instance of the collecting mentality in Roman painting can be seen in the marine "landscapes" of fish and other sea creatures. The meticulous rendering of the animals hints that they are meant to be read as encyclopaedic displays; and, judging from the fall of their shadows, they are not swimming but lying on a blue-green table, perfectly evenly spaced, awaiting inspection. One has the impression that only their object tags are missing.

208 For a list of the porticoes in Rome that held paintings, see n. 150.

Rome that held paintings, see n. 150.

²⁰⁹ Plin. HN 35.114. On the Portico of Pompey, see Kuttner 1999; on the Porticus Philippi,

²¹⁰ Plin. HN 35.27.

²¹¹ "[N]on deliciis sumptuosior quam omnes omnium universae Reatinae, tua enim oblita tabulis pictis nec minus signis" (Varro, Rust. 3.2). Pliny says that Antiphilus was Egyptian and had many paintings on display in Rome (Plin. HN 35.114).

²¹² "Est enim carum rerum omnium <in> nostra urbe summa in publico copia" (Cic. *Tusc.* 5.102), discussed by Hartswick 2004, 17.

²¹³ Moormann 2011, e.g., 92, 94, 97, 99, 100, 102, 104, 107, 110, 204.

The assemblages of objects enshrined in porticoes and temples were extraordinary in both quality and quantity. They were largely spolia from Greece and the East, and so impressive that the victorious generals who won them were eager to bring them back to Rome, parade them in triumph, and put them on display. 214 When Marcus Fulvius Nobilior raided the temples of Ambracia in northwest Greece in 189 BC, he so thoroughly emptied them of their statues that the Ambracians complained to the Roman senate that "their goods [had been] carried away, and what they felt most bitterly of all, the temples in the city stripped of their adornments, the statues of their gods, or rather the gods themselves, torn from their shrines and carried away. All that was left to the Ambracians were the naked walls and the columns to receive their worship or hear their supplications and prayers." Fulvius was naturally expected to display this incredible haul in Rome: one consul is said to have speculated, "[Fulvius] is going to demand a triumph just because he has done all this, and will carry in front of his chariot and fasten on the pillars of his house the captured Ambracia and the statues which he is alleged to have criminally removed." Nor indeed was Fulvius alone in acquiring such a wealth of booty and displaying it in Rome with such gusto. Livy writes that the same consul "pointed out that the Ambracians had taken an old and outworn course; in just in the same way M. Marcellus had been accused by the Syracusans, and Q. Fulvius by the Campanians. Why might not the senate allow charges to be brought on similar grounds against T. Quinctius by Philip, against Manius Acilius and L. Scipio by Antiochus, against Cn. Manlius by the Gauls, against M. Fulvius himself by the Aetolians and Cephallanians?"²¹⁵ Nor were such spolia only used for public displays: they would also serve private pleasure, as evidenced by the fact that Fulvius was expected to fasten the booty "on the pillars of his house." His contemporary Scaurus moved so much of his publicly displayed spolia into his private villa, a cache worth 30 million sesterces, that his slaves grew wrathful and burned it all to the ground. 216 The private appropriation of such Greek goods is exemplified by the infamous case of Gaius Verres, which in addition details the rapacious connoisseurship that drove these acquisitions; and numerous sources attest the astronomical prices that Romans paid for Greek artworks considered "old masters." Greek artworks, that is, were prized among leading Romans as the ultimate prestige items.

Given the extremely high valuation of Greek artworks in these scenarios, as well as the fact that they were as prized in domestic settings as in public porticoes and temples, it is unsurprising that we find the same sorts of objects repeated in the "pinacotheca" frescoes in Roman houses. The frescoes in Cubiculum B of the Villa Farnesina, for example (Fig. 14), feature two Egyptian candelabra that fit perfectly into the longstanding tradition of displaying precious objects in a costly collection. By virtue of their Egyptian subjects, they align with Pliny's mention of paintings by an Egyptian artist and other "foreign" paintings imported to

²¹⁴ On the storied tradition of triumphant Roman generals displaying Greek spolia in Rome, see Gruen 1992, Ch. 3.

²¹⁵ Livy 38.43. On Fulvius' construction of the Temple of Hercules Musarum, perhaps intended to hold his spoils, see Heslin 2015, esp. 203–4. Gruen's interpretation of Marcellus' use of spolia can stand synecdochically for the many other Roman generals who did the same: through such dedications, "Marcellus delivered a message to the Mediterranean world: Hellenic culture would serve to highlight the character, religion, and power of Rome" (Gruen 1992, 101).

²¹⁶ Plin. *HN* 36.115.

²¹⁷ Miles extensively treats Verres and Roman collecting culture (Miles 2008). For the high prices of great Greek artworks, see Stewart 2014, Appendix A.

Rome;²¹⁸ and in their placement within a pinacotheca scheme, they recall the juxtaposition of candelabra and paintings, both real and illusionistic, in Roman temples. But here again, as in the Upper Cubiculum frescoes, the paintings are emphatically *not* to be read as spolia. That Roman homeowners wanted their frescoes to refer foremost to Greek collectibles and not conquest²¹⁹ is plain from the fact that they choose to reproduce Greek paintings, and *never* the triumphal paintings depicting Roman generals' conquests of Greece, which also stood in the porticoes and therefore just as easily could have been adopted in pinacotheca frescoes.²²⁰ Further, the painterly flourishes and whimsical touches remove the depicted objects from the sphere of spolia just as they did in the Upper Cubiculum (see p. 37). Finally, the textual sources demonstrate how Roman viewers reacted to such domestic ensembles: as we will see below, they considered these paintings first and foremost as displays of beautiful art objects.

The Villa Farnesina "Pinacothecae"

These points will be sharpened by examining the Farnesina pinacotheca paintings. The Villa Farnesina was a lavish residence on the right bank of the Tiber dating to the mid-first century BC.²²¹ While most of the villa was demolished during the nineteenth-century canalization of the Tiber, a handful of its reception rooms were removed and preserved—among them the celebrated Cubiculum B, a superlative example of an art collection rendered in paint. This room's fresco program is a feat of illusionism in the service of exhibiting a wide variety of objects. It is masterfully designed to show off its *faux* collection as if it is actually displayed in the room, and is even framed as such: the entire painted program is set back from the viewer by a stripe of green dado or floor at the bottom of the wall; this stripe and the thinner red band above it act as a plinth of sorts upon which the floor of the depicted architecture rests. Even the architecture in this scheme, therefore, is literally placed on a pedestal: it is meant to be admired as one of the objects on show among the host of others.

Among the most striking objects on display in this scheme are the panel paintings, indeed the namesake for the "pinacotheca" scheme. On the side walls, pinakes with vaguely erotic subjects are depicted with shutters that further stress their connection to real panel paintings. The

²¹⁸ Plin. HN 35.27.

²¹⁹ Contra Bergmann 1995, 104–6; see further at pp. 38, 49.

²²⁰ Holliday 1997. Schefold proposes that many of the pinakes in pinacotheca fresco programs likely copy pinakes dedicated as votive offerings in Greek sanctuaries (and presumably brought to Rome as spolia; Schefold 1962, 45).

The villa is sometimes called "the Villa under the Farnesina" to distinguish it from the Renaissance Villa Farnesina. That the remains of the ancient villa are no longer available for analysis today hinders inquiries into the owner and date of the building. The villa is widely believed to have belonged to a member of Augustus's inner circle, but the judgment rests predominantly on the quality and style of the paintings as well as weak circumstantial evidence (for instance, relating the painted caryatids in the villa decor to Agrippa's use of caryatids in his buildings on the Campus Martius: Moormann 2010, 233–4). As to when the villa was constructed and decorated, the proposed dates rely too heavily on the style of the paintings to be of much help. Some have tried to connect the villa to various known historical events between 30 and 19 BC—a compromise between the period suggested by Beyen for the construction techniques used in the villa (ca. 35–25 BC) and the stylistic chronology derived from Pompeian examples, which would place these late Second-Style frescoes closer to 20–15 BC. While the consensus currently favors a date of 20/19 BC (e.g., Bergmann 1995, 102; Kleiner 2007, fig. 5-23), Moormann recently argued for 28 BC (Moormann 2010).

composition of the back wall centers on a large mythological panel painting, its importance heightened by the hefty aedicula serving as a frame (Fig. 91). Two square pinakes to either side of the central aedicula are especially notable, their delicate lines and white ground clearly meant to reproduce the style of Greek master paintings. Fred Kleiner calls the paintings "another example of the conscious evocation of the Golden Age of Athens in Augustan Rome,"222 but their reference to fifth-century Greece must be interpreted in light of the rest of the painted program: they seek not to divert the viewer's attention toward Athenian history but rather to draw attention to themselves as collector's items. For each panel painting is set upon a stand which is itself meant to be admired: tiny Sirens bear up the white-ground panels with their arms bent at perfectly right angles and their heads topped with kalathoi. Their geometrical poses and the special headpiece deliberately designed to act as a support (for the iconography has no precedent among depictions of Sirens) indicate that the Sirens are not living creatures but rather objects: they are pinax stands. This is confirmed by the fact that they stand on elaborately carved marble bases—and by the fact that in the pendant room to this one, Cubiculum D, two white pinakes in analogous positions on the wall are supported by stands with similar caryatid figures that are clearly meant to be bronze (Fig. 92): the griffin foot at the bottom of the stand leads upward into a series of metallic bulbs and rings before culminating in the tiny figure. The Sirens in Cubiculum B pick up the same idea of setting a figure atop a knobby griffin foot; and although the paintings here dispense with the non-figurative segment in the bronze stand, they nevertheless clearly represent the same kind of semi-animate pinax support.²²³ As in the Upper Cubiculum on the Palatine, the objects are rendered with a twist of fantasy: not only do the Sirens appear nearly alive, but the semicircular tops of their bases meld with the architecture, supporting a semicircular protrusion in the ledge above the dado. Whether we are to imagine that the whole base is semicylindrical or somehow expands into a fully cylindrical shaft, as seems to be indicated by the shading to either side of the vegetalized middle, is unclear, and deliberately so: as ever, the painters have deliberately blurred the boundaries between the believable and the fantastical.

More caryatids and more bronze statuettes appear in the upper register of the back wall, underscoring the fact that the figures here are not simply fantasy but meant to represent precious items. At the extreme left and right sides of the upper register are small aediculae that each house a small yellow female figure holding two torches symmetrically (Fig. 93). Her color indicates that she should be read as a gilded bronze statuette, while her strange pointed hat and the shape of the aedicula—with a lunate pediment, uraeus-like acroteria at each end, and architrave like a cavetto cornice—suggest a vaguely Egyptian flair.²²⁴ Beside the aedicula is a caryatid whose pose and color contrast sharply with the stiff statuette, so fluid and lifelike are they; yet she is unquestionably an object and not merely a female figure, judging from the delicate purple column emerging from her head and the flower-bud of a base under her feet.

So this "pinacotheca" scheme presents not only paintings but also precious goods of other kinds, transformed by the painter's ingenuity; and it even contains the same sorts of precious items we already saw in the Upper Cubiculum: two rectangular white-ground panels resemble those in the Upper Cubiculum in their color, their placement on the wall, and their border design

²²² Kleiner 2007, 75.

²²³ A very close parallel can be found in the bronze feet supporting the base of the calyx crater discussed above (see p. 35 and Fig. 42).

²²⁴ McKenzie demonstrates that the lunate pediment is typical of Alexandrian architecture (McKenzie 2007, 90–1).

(Fig. 94); perhaps they too represent painted panels of stone or ivory. Nearby are yellow rectangles filled with floral designs, their centers inset with brilliant red gemstones glinting in the light. These illusionistic stones framed by stylized golden vegetation are imaginative but they are not sheer artifice concocted by the painter: they imitate actual gemstones that were nestled among gilded bronze leaves and tendrils, such as those discovered in a cult chamber near the Horti Lamiani in Rome, where they probably served as wall decoration (Fig. 95). Precisely this sort of twisting metalwork with ovoid jewels is depicted in fresco not only in the Farnesina cubiculum but in Oplontis and Boscoreale, where they are shown adorning opulent columns (Fig. 41, Fig. 96). The connection between these motifs and real objects is playfully confirmed by hybrid cases which mix three-dimensional objects and two-dimensional representations of them: large glass hemispheres (without the surrounding gilding) were inset directly into the frescoes in the Domus Transitoria on the Palatine (Fig. 97), and in Pompeii real stone slabs and glass were put to the same use: in the reception room of the House of the Golden Cupids, for instance, Hellenistic marble reliefs were set into the east wall to join the eponymous gilded glass tondi depicting cupids. The properties of the general stone slabs and glass tondidepicting cupids.

Among the precious items on display in the Farnesina cubiculum are six large figures that occupy the red panels of the main zone. Because of their attributes they have been recognized as "Egyptianizing,"²²⁷ but it is crucial to note that—contrary to most scholarship—they do not represent living figures. Rather, they too are intended to represent objects. One figure wears a towering double-feather crown and gradually fades into a vegetal and animal folie below: her legs conjoin into a shaft like a herm, and her feet are entirely replaced by a bud (Fig. 98). Two curving tendrils emerge from the leafy base, while two buds above them each spit out the front half of a griffin. The two cornucopiae carried by the figure likely identify her as Isis, but they also make clear her inanimate status: she is shown here not as a goddess but a *furnishing*—for otherwise she would never hold a second cornucopia in perfect symmetry with the first (cult statues and statuettes of the goddess show her holding both in one arm). Further, the curve of both cornucopiae reverses the normal formula (usually the point of the cornucopia is hugged close to the body, leaving the top to curve away at the shoulder). A closer look reveals the reason for this reversed curvature: the cornucopiae are conflated with rhyta, their tips aiming straight down at the expectant mouths of the griffins below. Clearly these cornucopiae are not simply attributes meant to identify the female figure, but are part of the playful imagery in which the goddess is depicted as a precious object—probably a candelabrum. Just such a candelabrum with a figure in the stem is seen in the painting from the House of the Cryptoporticus (Fig. 57).

In the same room, another figure with Egyptian attributes gets similar treatment. Here a male figure is even more clearly depicted as a fancy furnishing (Fig. 99). His ram's horns have led scholars to label him Zeus Ammon, but again the god appears not in an epiphany of divine presence but as a candelabrum: like the Isis figure, his legs meld into a hermlike shaft and terminate in a blossom rather than feet. Supporting the figure is a slender floriform stem of the type already seen among numerous candelabra; it not only props up the figure from below but continues upward from his head to support a cornice in the upper register. The Naples museum houses a real bronze example of just such a candelabrum from the same period: a floriform base

²²⁷ E.g., Bragantini and de Vos 1982, 32, 64; de Vos and de Vos 1980, 77; Wyler 2006, 227.

²²⁵ Recall the discussion of gemstones above, pp. 38–40.

²²⁶ The house further contains a slab of obsidian inset into a wall facing the peristyle. The House of the Ephebe also includes a slab of obsidian inset into a wall, here facing the atrium. To my knowledge, the only treatment of these fascinating multimedia programs was a conference paper (Powers 2011).

supports a male herm (here Dionysus) with a shaft emerging from his head (Fig. 100). Egyptian figures too were used as supports in such furnishings, as shown by a basalt table leg from Pompeii in the form of a standing male figure, his kalathos-like headdress serving as a solid surface for the tabletop (Fig. 101). A bronze statuette of the Egyptian god Bes wearing an unusually blocklike headdress probably served a similar purpose (Fig. 102), as did a gorgeous bronze statuette of the Egyptian god Tutu-Tithoes (a sphinx with a uraeus tail) surmounted by a large bulb and floriform support (Fig. 103).

This last stunning example shows that bronze furnishings in Roman houses did in fact take the form of pharaonic figures, and were so finely wrought as to approach true collector's items. Just such a prize piece was discovered in a Roman house in Ephesus, a very finely worked bronze statuette of an Egyptian priest (Fig. 104) that was made in Late-Period Egypt and apparently imported to Asia Minor to serve as a showpiece in one of the lavish "terrace houses." The incredibly fine details covering the surface of the statue, as well as its eyes inlaid in silver, strongly recall the beautiful surface treatment of the Tutu-Tithoes table leg: both pieces would have been considered top-quality treasures by their Roman owners, like the "Corinthian" bronze figurines that obsessed many Roman collectors. Indeed, Pliny even observed that "Many people are so charmed with the statuettes which they call 'Corinthian' that they carry them around with them!" The statuettes which they call 'Corinthian' that they carry them around with them!

What's more, these elegant pharaonic figures were incorporated into furnishings very like the candelabra figures in the Farnesina paintings: they partake in a common trend of blending Egyptian elements with non-Egyptian ones. A bronze table support now in Naples (Fig. 105), just like the pinax supports painted in the Farnesina, rests on griffin feet, while a male sphinx wearing a pharaonic *nemes* headdress reclines on the base and extends his arms to grasp a vase (now lost). The arched support above him is incised with vegetal spirals that rise up to meet a bust of Athena, smoothly incorporating the rigid pharaonic figure with a swirling vegetal pattern and bust of a Greek goddess. Just so, in the Farnesina paintings the two Egyptian figures are vegetalized and joined by two others who bear no Egyptian attributes: one female figure on the same wall as the Isis wears a crown that is similarly tall and ornate but definitely not Egyptian, and she feeds two lions from paterae—probably meant to identify her as Cybele. On the opposite wall is a female wearing a pointy hat more like the Roman Arval Brethren's cap than anything Egyptian. In this variety of figures, we see how seamlessly Egyptian and non-Egyptian elements are incorporated together into the scheme. As argued above for the Upper Cubiculum, both this assimilation and the fact that the figures are in fact luxury goods refutes the claim that the Egyptian elements here "estheticized Roman conquest," and that "Egyptian subjects like the supporting hybrid Zeus-Ammon . . . suggest one workshop, possibly one patron, intent on celebrating the Augustan triumph over Egypt."²³⁰ Instead, we should understand the room to display a collection of precious goods—and, while it has been recognized that this room uses

²²⁸ Winter 1971.

As an example Pliny cites the bronze sphinx that Hortensius carried around with him, but we should note that this sphinx was of the Greek rather than Egyptian variety (see discussion at n. 37)—as made clear by the concluding quip that it should make Hortensius good at solving riddles (Plin. *HN* 34.48). For a historical overview of Corinthian bronze—where it was made, how ancient authors speak of it—see Murphy-O'Connor 2002, 200–18; on the Roman mania for so-called Corinthian bronzes, Hallett 2015.

²³⁰ Bergmann 1995, 104–6.

Greek objects from a range of periods and styles to create a pleasingly varied collection,²³¹ to this picture we now need to add Egyptian objects.

Conversation Pieces

How the viewer was expected to respond to this illusionistic collection of objects on the walls is evident in Petronius's story about Trimalchio in the Satyricon. At the same time, this story shows how such a collection was particularly appropriate for a reception room like that in the Villa Farnesina: it offered a prompt for the elevated discourse expected at a social gathering. A Roman host was expected to "steer" the conversation at his social gatherings, 232 and the paintings offered him one way to do so. Trimalchio provides one (gauche) example. At his lavish dinner party, he takes pleasure in regaling his guests with stories about his own life as well as nuggets of wisdom that are in fact quite wrong. In one such moment he brags that he owns the only true Corinthian bronzes, signed by Corinthus himself; then he reveals this to be a joke and explains that Corinthian bronzes in fact were first made when Hannibal captured Troy: "he collected together all the statues of bronze and gold and silver into one great heap, and firing the pile, melted down the different metals into one alloy. This mass of metal the smiths utilized to make into platters and dishes and statuettes. Such was the origin of Corinthian metal, neither one thing nor the other, but an amalgam of all."233 He continues to prattle on about glass drinking cups, claiming that the one man who knew how to make unbreakable glass was killed by Caesar. He concludes his reflections on tableware by bragging about his vast silver service decorated with mythological depictions (probably in relief):

I'm quite a connoisseur in silver plate. I've got cups as big as waterpots, a hundred of them more or less, representing how Cassandra slew her sons, and there lie the lads dead, as natural as life! I've got a thousand bowls Mummius bequeathed to my patron, on which Daedalus is shown shutting Niobe up in the Trojan horse. Why! I've got the fights of Hermeros and Petraites on a series of cups all of massive metal. I wouldn't sell my savvy in these things for any money.²³⁴

That the uncultured freedman tries to show off to his guests by demonstrating his knowledge of history and mythology is familiar from earlier scenes of the *Satyricon*. This particular instance, however, is important for our study because luxury goods are the medium by which he seeks to do so. Moreover, the goods he takes as inspiration are those *physically present* in his dining room: it is when a cook receives a prize of "a silver wreath and a drinking cup on a

²³¹ Wyler 2006, 213–15.

²³² Slater 2008.

²³³ "[O]mnes statuas aeneas et aureas et argenteas in unum rogum congessit et eas incendit; factae sunt in unum aera miscellanea. Ita ex hac massa fabri sustulerunt et fecerunt catilla et paropsides <et> statuncula. Sic Corinthea nata sunt, ex omnibus in unum, nec hoc nec illud" (Petron. *Sat.* 50, trans. Allinson 1930).

²³⁴ "In argento plane studiosus sum. Habeo scyphos urnales plus minus C <... videtur> quemadmodum Cassandra occidit filios suos, et pueri mortui iacent sic uti vivere putes. Habeo capidem quam <mi> reliquit patronorum <meorum> unus, ubi Daedalus Niobam in equum Troianum includit. Nam Hermerotis pugnas et Petraitis in poculis habeo, omnia ponderosa; meum enim intelligere nulla pecunia vendo" (Petron. *Sat.* 52.51–7, trans. Allinson 1930).

salver of Corinthian metal" (*argentea corona poculumque in lance accepit Corinthia*) that Trimalchio launches into his tale of bronze, before continuing on to glass and silver. The host takes another cue from his luxurious furnishings later in the evening, when he recounts his life story. He recalls, "When I came from Asia, I was only as big as this candelabrum." Presumably we are to imagine him gesturing to a fine candelabrum standing nearby, throwing its warm light over the banqueters. He could be gesturing to a simple candelabrum whose bronze stalk, affixed with plastic appliqués and holding a multiple-spouted lamp, reminds him of his own height and build as a scrawny youth. But more likely he is pointing to a bronze candelabrum of a special type: one in the form of an ephebe. We can imagine him gesturing to one like that from the House of the Ephebe, or the comparable candelabrum of Dionysus from the House of Marcus Fabius Rufus (Fig. 106); indeed, these impressive pieces were deliberately situated so as to be visible from the finest reception rooms. At Trimalchio's dinner party, therefore, such furnishings prompt lengthy, historically minded conversations among the assembled banqueters.

There are numerous indications that this same dynamic characterized not only Trimalchio's fictional banquet but real ones as well. For one thing, the fact that Trimalchio's foolhardy display is written into the Satyricon as comedy indicates that Roman readers would have been familiar enough with this sort of learned (or pseudo-learned) discourse on luxury goods to find the humor in the satyric version. What's more, bronze candelabra and elaborate tableware like those described in the Satyricon have been found in many houses around the Bay of Naples and thus could have fed such interactions on a large scale. The bronze ephebe candelabra found in Pompeii were already mentioned above; and many glass vessels, including drinking cups, have also been recovered from Pompeii. Trimalchio's silver service with mythological scenes finds a very close parallel in the famous Boscoreale silver hoard, its cups and bowls decorated with mythological scenes in high relief (Fig. 107). That Roman diners confronted with these pieces were expected to notice and even comment on them is apparent from an epigram written for L. Calpurnius Piso, the probable owner of the famous Villa of the Papyri, urging him to accept a gift of silver drinking cups and to "drink double measure from the pair, and behold all the Phaenomena."²³⁷ Targeted directives to the drinker also appear on the memento mori silver cups from the Boscoreale hoard, which exhort the viewer to enjoy the good life while he can (Fig. 108). This finds a parallel in Trimalchio's dinner with the silver skeletons staged on the dining table, further suggesting that the fictional banquet, with its elaborate attention to luxury objects, directly parodies real ones.²³⁸

In Cubiculum B of the Villa Farnesina, the luxury goods are not standing in the room but painted on the walls. This simultaneously adds a layer of complexity to the viewing and aligns it

²³⁵ Petron. *Sat.* 75.10.

²³⁶ The candelabrum in the House of the Ephebe occupied the sightline from the atrium to the immense garden peristyle (Allison 2004); that in the House of Marcus Fabius Rufus stood in the large apsidal triclinium (Conticello 1990, 257). Smaller statuettes and other luxury goods would have been displayed on furniture pieces which, primarily made of wood, do not survive today: the paintings in the Pompeian tomb of C. Vestorius Priscus provide a good example of how a silver service would have been arrayed on a table (see Tuck 2014, 13, fig. 1.12). Cova points out that masonry niches in Pompeian houses often held wooden shelves which would serve to display precious objects (as well as store practical ones; Cova 382–3, 386–8).

²³⁷ "δοιὰ δ'ἐν ἀμφοῖν/μέτρα πιὼν ἄθρει πάντα τά Φαινόμενα" Antip. Thess. 44.44–5. Kuttner counts this passage as an example of silverware's role in the "taste for serious learning as an adornment of leisure and pleasure" (Kuttner 1995, 11).

²³⁸ Petron. *Sat.* 34.38–35.10.

with the paintings that we know Romans to have prided themselves on explaining to their attentive companions. Philostratus the Younger demonstrates the proper technique of responding to panel paintings in his *Imagines* (third century AD), an imaginative set of essays in which the narrator strolls through a gallery of paintings using them as the basis for evocative tales. Presumably the narrator addresses an audience comprised of one or more elite young men who are supposed to learn from him the art of speaking about a painting—just as the reader of the *Imagines* would learn the same by reading Philostratus' book. It is a handbook disguised as a narrative, all for the purpose of holding forth on paintings in front of an audience.²³⁹

In these lessons we see the Roman narrator interpret painted objects in light of their real-world referents. At times the narrator even imagines the objects to leap out of the painting and become real, as he does when inspecting a scene of two boys playing with a ball (one of the "genre" scenes among the largely mythological subjects). In describing the boys at play the narrator asks,

Do you see the clever art of the painting? The ball itself is of gold; the stitching on it is such as to be assumed by the mind rather than seen by the eye, and spirals of blue encircle it; and very likely, when it is tossed in the air, the radiance emanating from it will lead us to compare it with the twinkling of stars.²⁴⁰

The narrator thus imagines the painted object becoming a real one, and uses his past experience of the real object to inform his reading of the painted one: he writes that the blue lines "encircle" the ball, although of course he cannot see the back side, and he anticipates that its shininess will increase once it has left the boy's hand and catches light from all sides. These qualities are not possible to depict in two dimensions, but the viewer compensates for this with inferences based on his experience of similar objects in the real world.²⁴¹ Indeed, the Romans' widespread acclaim for illusionism in art is a sign that they were practiced in this mode of "seeing as," of recognizing and even being convinced by the reality of the referent in a painting; precisely this habituation underlines the famous story about Zeuxis and Parrhasius competing to produce the most illusionistic painting, the former tricking crows into thinking his painted grapes were real, the latter tricking his adversary into thinking a curtain was.²⁴²

Two generations prior, the Elder Philostratus' own *Imagines* follows a narrator who similarly imagines painted objects emerging from the two-dimensional surface to become real. He describes a cult statue depicted in a painting, writing that "[t]he type of the goddess is that of

²³⁹ Squire situates Philostratus' text within the tradition of ecphrasis in rhetorical education (Squire 2013, 99–104).

²⁴⁰ "ὁρᾶς καὶ τὴν τέχνην ἐν τῇ γραφῇ; χρυσοῦ μὲν αὕτη, ῥαφὴ δὲ αὐτῇ οἵα νοεῖσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ ὁρᾶσθαι, ἕλικάς τε κυανοῦ ἐφ' ἑαυτῆς ἑλίττουσα καὶ ἀναρριφεῖσα τάχα που τὸ ἀποχωροῦν σέλας μαρμαρυγαῖς ἀστέρων εἰκάζειν αὐτῇ δώσει" (Philostr. Iun. *Imag.* 8.5, trans. Fairbanks 1931).

²⁴¹ Similarly, Squire has argued that still life paintings intentionally "complicate...this boundary between the painted and the real," expecting the viewer to reflect on the real-world referents of foodstuffs and their associated discourse of luxury (Squire 2009, 383 and Ch. 385 passim). On a broader level, Squire has demonstrated that active, imaginative engagement with images was in fact common among ancient viewers (e.g., Squire 2011).

²⁴² Pollitt observes that Pliny particularly values illusionism in art (Pollitt 1990). The formulation "seeing as" versus "seeing in" was originated by Wollheim 1980, esp. 204–5. Pliny relates the Zeuxis and Parrhasius story (Plin. *HN* 35.65) while Kris and Kurz analyze it as a paradigm of artistic virtuosity (Kris and Kurz 1981, esp. 61–70).

Aphrodite goddess of Modesty, unclothed and decorous, and the material is ivory, closely joined. However, the goddess is unwilling to seem painted, but she stands out as though one could take hold of her."²⁴³ In this painting, then, the narrator recognizes that the painting represents a precious material, namely ivory; and more than that, he gushes that the ivory statue (apparently a Knidia, Capitoline, or Medici type) appears so like a real one that the viewer could almost grasp it. Just so, the ivory or marble pinakes in Cubiculum B of the Villa Farnesina are rendered so realistically as to appear tangible; and the goddess statuette that forms part of a candelabrum seems to stand proud of the wall "as though one could take hold of her" (Fig. 98) Like Philostratus' narrator, a viewer standing before these frescoes would have guessed at the intended material of the pinakes and candelabrum, thinking of ivory, marble, and bronze. He may also have imagined the golden, jewel-studded leaves on the yellow panels transforming into their real-world metallic counterparts—just as for the jewelry-like frieze of crowns in the Upper Cubiculum on the Palatine. And he may even have voiced his interpretations to the assembled company, comparing the gleaming gems to twinkling stars.

Throughout the above conversations sparked by real luxury objects and their depictions in paint, the speakers focus on connoisseurship, historical legend, and myth. Given this pattern, we should surmise that the same focus would have characterized the discussions triggered by our Egyptian subjects. Just as looking at a painting of an ivory statuette of Aphrodite prompts Philostratus' narrator to connoisseurial and religio-mythological reflections, so would the painting of a statuette of Isis built into a candelabrum in the Villa Farnesina. A viewer faced with this Egyptian subject in paint first might comment on the candelabrum, as Trimalchio did at the start of his autobiographical account, or perhaps on the statuette as a desirable collector's object like a Corinthian bronze. Shifting his attention to the Egyptian subject itself, he might then meditate on the mythology of this foreign goddess. A Roman viewer of the 30s and 20s BC would have been familiar enough with Egyptian culture to bring it to bear on the paintings, as hinted at by the poetry of this time. Tibullus, for instance, beyond being in love with an Isiac devotee, writes an ode to Messala of 27 BC that richly recounts the mythological origins of the Nile as born from Osiris.²⁴⁴ In fact, many great poets of this period incorporate Egyptian themes into their work—so we can assume that many elite Romans would be familiar enough with these themes to bring them to bear on visual material like contemporary wall paintings. ²⁴⁵

By the mid-second century AD, Romans were familiar enough with Egyptian mythology that Lucian could claim Egyptian mythology to be just as important to a pantomime dancer's repertoire as Greek mythology: "Egyptian mythology, although mysterious, cannot be omitted; but it does call for a more symbolical exposition—the legend of Epaphus, for instance, and that of Osiris, and the conversion of the gods into animals; and, in particular, their love adventures,

58

²⁴³ "Άφροδίτην έλεφαντίνην ἐν ἀπαλοῖς μυρρινῶσιν ἁιδουσιν ἁπαλαὶ κόραι... Καὶ τὸ μὲν σχῆμα τῆς Ἀφροδίτην Αἰδοῦς, γυμνὴ καὶ εὐσχὴμων, ἡ δὲ ὕλη συνθήκη μεμυκότος ἐλέφαντος. Άλλ' οὐ βούλεται γεγράφθαι δοκεῖν ἡ θεός, ἒκκειται δὲ οἵα λαβέσθαι" (Philostr. Mai. *Imag.* 2.1.1, trans. Fairbanks 1931).

²⁴⁴ The patron in this case, Messala, had himself been to Egypt (Koenen 1976, 135)—but this is not the only reason that Tibullus focuses on the Nile: like many elite Romans of his day, Messala also loved Alexandrian poetry (Gaisser 1971, 222).

²⁴⁵ Zetzel 1983.

including those of Zeus himself, with his various transformations." ²⁴⁶ With this last line he is presumably referring to Io, who was kidnapped by Zeus in bull form and brought to Egypt. Lucian mentions Egyptian gods transforming into animals in another text too, here relying on this to be common knowledge in order to make a joke: in a discussion about the ideal qualities to be sought in a woman, two men bemoan the case of a woman beautiful on the surface but lacking moral character. "Such women," says one, "are like Egyptian temples: the shrine is fair and stately, wrought of costly marble, decked out with gilding and painting. But seek the God within, and you find an ape—an ibis—a goat—a cat. Of how many women is the same thing true!"²⁴⁷ This passage too suggests that Lucian's readership enjoyed a basic familiarity with the Egyptian pantheon and perhaps even their myths.

We must therefore imagine Roman viewers to bring such knowledge to bear on the wall paintings in reception rooms like the Villa Farnesina's. A viewer might take a cue from the Zeus Ammon candelabrum to speculate on the god's animal form as a ram or even as the bull that carried off Io. Alternatively, he might select the Isis statuette-candelabrum to tell a story about the goddess that particularly relates to the leisure activities unfolding in the room. One such is recorded by Plutarch. In it, Isis is accompanying the coffin carrying Osiris's body when a child approaches. The child, Maneros, see Isis's angry face and is so stricken by her wrath that he falls down dead. Plutarch pauses to consider the etymology of the name Maneros:

But some say that the word is not the name of any person, but an expression belonging to the vocabulary of drinking and feasting—'good luck be ours in things like this!'—and that this is really the idea expressed by the exclamation 'maneros' whenever the Egyptians use it. In the same way we may be sure that the likeness of a corpse which, as it is exhibited to them, is carried around in a chest, is not a reminder of what happened to Osiris, as some assume; but it is to urge them, as they contemplate it, to use and to enjoy the present, since all very soon must be what *it* is now. And this is their purpose in introducing it into the midst of merry-making.²⁴⁸

One could hardly ask for a closer parallel to the silver skeleton on Trimalchio's table, the *memento mori*, than this purported Egyptian tradition of contemplating coffins. Indeed, Plutarch's account is likely colored by the widespread Roman tradition, and shows a supreme

²⁴⁶ "τὰ γὰρ Αἰγυπτίων, μυστικώτερα ὄντα, εἴσεται μέν, συμβολικώτερον δὲ ἐπιδείξεται: τὸν Ἐπαφον λέγω καὶ τὸν Ὅσιριν καὶ τὰς τῶν θεῶν εἰς τὰ ζῷα μεταβολάς. πρὸ πάντων δὲ τὰ περὶ τοὺς ἔρωτας αὐτῶν καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Διὸς καὶ εἰς ὅσα ἑαυτὸν μετεσκεύασεν." (Lucian, *Salt.* 59, trans. after Fowler and Fowler 2012). On the genre of pantomime dancing, and on Lucian's text as a source for reconstructing it, see Lada-Richards 2007.

²⁴⁷ "αἵ γε τοιαῦται ὅμοιαί μοι δοκοῦσιν τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις ἱεροῖς: κἀκεῖ γὰρ αὐτὸς μὲν ὁ νεὼς κάλλιστός τε καὶ μέγιστος, λίθοις τοῖς πολυτελέσιν ἠσκημένος καὶ χρυσῷ καὶ γραφαῖς διηνθισμένος, ἔνδον δὲ ἢν ζητῆς τὸν θεόν, ἢ πίθηκός ἐστιν ἢ ἶβις ἢ τράγος ἢ αἴλουρος. τοιαύτας πολλὰς ἰδεῖν ἔνεστιν" (Lucian, *Salt.* 60, trans. after Fowler and Fowler 2012).

²⁴⁸ "ἕνιοι δέ φασιν ὄνομα μὲν οὐδενὸς εἶναι, διάλεκτον δὲ πίνουσιν ἀνθρώποις καὶ θαλειάζουσι πρέπουσαν 'αἴσιμα τὰ τοιαῦτα παρείη.' τοῦτο γὰρ τῷ Μανερῶτι φραζόμενον ἀναφωνεῖν ἑκάστοτε τοὺς Αἰγυπτίους: ἄσπερ ἀμέλει καὶ τὸ δεικνύμενον αὐτοῖς εἴδωλον ἀνθρώπου τεθνηκότος ἐν κιβωτίῳ περιφερόμενον οὐκ ἔστιν ὑπόμνημα τοῦ περὶ Ὀσίριδος πάθους, τινες ὑπολαμβάνουσιν, ἀλλ' οἰνωμένους παρακαλεῖν αὑτοὺς χρῆσθαι τοῖς παροῦσι καὶ ἀπολαύειν, ὡς πάντας αὐτίκα μάλα τοιούτους ἐσομένους, ἄχαριν ἐπίκωμον ἐπεισάγουσι" Plut. *Mor*. 357E–F, trans. after Babbitt 1936.

ability and willingness to juxtapose Egyptian myth with Roman practice. Because most Roman viewers would not have been as familiar with Egyptian myth and culture as with Greek, they may not have been able to produce such a knowledgeable response as Plutarch's; but his story models one possible response to the paintings in light of the way they deploy Egyptian subjects: aligned with the Greek subjects, they too are meant to encourage the viewer to delve into the world not of politics but of romance, religion, and myth.

Gardens and Leisure in the House of the Golden Bracelet

Egyptian motifs enhance not only the depth and variety of art collections but the luxurious pleasures of the villa garden as well. In studies of Egyptian imagery in the Roman house, it has already been observed that Nilotic scenes are particularly suited to garden spaces because their watery imagery echoes the real running water in the garden's fountains and water courses.²⁴⁹ But the garden triclinium in the House of the Golden Bracelet shows that Egyptian subjects of all sorts, not only Nilotic scenes, were thought to be well suited to gardens²⁵⁰—and this is because, I argue, they were primarily considered luxury goods and thus appropriate to spaces of leisure. A comparison with the villas extolled by Pliny the Younger and Statius reveals that the Pompeian house embodies the same set of desirable qualities as these villas: they are all carefully constructed spaces of otium. The authors make clear that these spaces are consciously created as retreats from city life, far from *negotium*; politics have no place here—they are in fact explicitly said to be anothema to villa life, as we will see below. 251 The many parallels between the literary villas and the House of the Golden Bracelet suggests that the Pompeian house, particularly its garden triclinium, was intended to serve the same ideal of otium.²⁵² Its decor, therefore, was not primed to speak to politics, as has been claimed of the Egyptian motifs in the frescoes. Rather, it is designed to enhance a relaxed, cultivated atmosphere, filled with objects in various media to delight all the senses, and rich in references to art, myth, and culture.

The House of the Golden Bracelet (known by the address 6.17.42, following common convention) occupies the *Insula Occidentalis* at the extreme west side of Pompeii, neighboring the enormous House of Marcus Fabius Rufus (Fig. 109).²⁵³ It extends over three levels on a plan rendered somewhat curious by its location: it was built into the city wall facing the sea, and in fact spills down over the wall's seaward face as well (Fig. 110, Fig. 111). Thus the house's main

²⁴⁹ E.g., Versluys 2002, 256–8; Maderna 2005, 440). This impulse clearly informs the Egyptian-themed sculptural assemblage arranged around the "Canopus" in the House of Octavius Quartio (Tronchin 2011; Zanker 1998, esp. 155). The same connection between the Nile and real water is evoked in a small marble fountain depicting the personified Nile, likely once placed in the garden of a Roman house (Museum of Fine Arts Boston, inv. no. 2002.21). Nilotic and Pygmy scenes adorn numerous outdoor spaces in Pompeii, including the outdoor triclinium in the garden of the House of the Ephebe (on Pygmy scenes, see Tybout 2003 and Clarke 2007).

²⁵⁰ Also mentioned by Swetnam-Burland 2002, 73 and Söldner 2004, 202. It is possible that the entire genre of garden painting was inspired by Alexandrian prototypes, as De Vos and others have argued (de Vos and de Vos 1980, 17 n. 33)—certainly, a garden painting on a scrap of linen surely from Egypt (now in The Metropolitan Museum, inv. 1984.178) is a tantalizing hint—but the evidence is not sufficient to be able to establish a connection.

²⁵¹ Allen too points out that politics are anothema to villa life (Allen 2014, 53 and 54 n. 233).

²⁵² Zanker has argued forcefully that Pompeian houses in general are modeled on large villas (Zanker 1979; Zanker 1998, 142–89).

²⁵³ On the house, see Ciardiello 2012 and Ciardiello 2006.

entrance, at street level, is on the top floor. Flights of stairs lead down to the lower levels hugging the scarp, first a large set of rooms on the middle level and then a garden with two adjoining rooms on the bottom level.

These bottom two rooms form a very special suite (Fig. 112). They are marked off as such by the architecture, occupying an entire floor of the house by themselves—their own isolated world. Triclinium 31 enjoys the more privileged position of the two rooms, being centrally located and thus looking down the main axis of the garden. Two water features further underscore its centrality and importance: a stepped fountain leads from a niche in the back wall to a pool at the center of the dining couches (Fig. 113), then proceeds into a large Ω -shaped pool in the garden directly in front of the triclinium (Fig. 114). Brick columns to either side of the pool (each was surely encrusted with mosaic, like the eponymous columns from the Villa of Mosaic Columns) would have supported a pergola, another visual marker to highlight the dining area. The smooth, creamy white marble of the grandiose clinae also signals a special space.

The wall painting (dated to ca. 20–1 BC and thus relatively close to the date of the Upper Cubiculum frescoes on the Palatine) and mosaic in the triclinium are crafted to visually extend the garden, and are important here because of their Egyptian motifs. All three walls of the triclinium are painted with garden scenes of a type known throughout Pompeii, featuring a variety of plants, birds, and sculptures framed by blue sky and yellow lattice fencing (Fig. 115). 255 The walls do not constitute an unbroken garden-scape like that in the adjoining Room 30 (similar to the famous Livia's Garden frescoes from Primaporta) but rather are sectioned into panels: one on either side of the apsidal fountain on the back wall, and three on the southern side wall.²⁵⁶ Each panel features a different sculptural accent tucked within this illusionistic greenery: in the two tall, narrow panels beside the fountain, the sculptures are pendant sphinxes perched on pink and vaguely prow-shaped pedestals (Fig. 116, Fig. 117). 257 More sphinxes on pink bases appear on the side wall to the south, here facing each other across a marble relief panel of an Apis bull (Fig. 118). On the same wall, another panel depicts a marble bird bath in the center joined by a pharaonic figure wearing the so-called "blue crown" and a yellow garment with a geometric design (including a triangle border like that discussed in the last chapter (Fig. 119). Another such figure originally stood on the other side of the bird bath, filling out the symmetrical composition like the facing sphinxes on the opposite wall; but damage to the right-hand side of the panel has rendered it invisible except for its base (Fig. 120).

Egyptian motifs are also present in the room's mosaic decoration. On the back wall was a large apsidal fountain resplendent with glass tesserae, now preserved in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples (Fig. 121). At the center of the fountain is a rectangular

²⁵⁴ Roman dining rooms were often positioned to take best advantage of the view onto the garden; see Clarke 1991, 16–17.

²⁵⁵ Similar paintings appear in the garden of House 1.7.19 (the House of P. Cornelius Tages, annexed to the House of the Ephebe; see PPM 1, 765 fig. 26) and House 7.6.28 (the House of Tyrannus Secundus; see PPM 7, 186 fig. 5).

²⁵⁶ The northern wall almost surely reflected the composition of the southern wall, but this must remain conjectural because the frescoes on the northern wall were preserved only as high as the dado (Ciardiello 2012, 181).

²⁵⁷ These bases are an unusual shape; Alexandra van Lieven suggests that they reproduce the Egyptian cavetto cornice (van Lieven, 11 November 2013). A similar pair of sphinxes on such bases appears in the "studiolo" of the House of Julius Polybius.

opening for a stepped niche where water flowed out of the wall into a pool at the center of the marble clinae. In the curving mosaic panels to either side are garden scenes very like those painted on the walls: a yellow fence below, blue sky above, and greenery in the middle, accented with sculpture—here again birdbaths. The white borders of these panels contain a pattern of Egyptian crowns: a large blue sun disc is topped by a yellow triangular variation on the two central ostrich feathers, and flanked by two curving horns (Fig. 122). This abstraction of Egyptian crowns into a decorative border recalls the friezes of crowns in the Upper Cubiculum of the Palatine House. Just as in that example and in the neighboring frescoes, the Egyptian elements in the fountain are effortlessly paired with the non-Egyptian: in this case, the distinctly local plants and the marble birdbaths typical of Hellenistic villa furnishings.²⁵⁸

Just as the mode of depicting Egyptian luxury goods on the walls in decorative borders and as illusionistic objects is familiar from the Upper Cubiculum and Villa Farnesina, so is its standard interpretation: for in this case too, the Egyptian elements have been read as political. Mastroroberto, for example, has argued that those in the House of the Golden Bracelet ventriloquize Augustan "propaganda." But this reading is untenable for several reasons. One problem is that the triclinium was renovated after the earthquake in AD 62, at which point the homeowner was free to choose an entirely new painted program—yet he maintained the old one. He was so committed to it, in fact, that he even had the sphinxes restored! Why would he have preserved tokens of Augustan propaganda (if they were such tokens at all) nearly fifty years after the emperor's death, when he was almost certainly too young to have remembered his reign? A political valence seems even more improbable if we consider how the garden triclinium was used: for the House of the Golden Bracelet, including its triclinium, conforms to the villa design described by Pliny and Statius—and those villas are explicitly figured as *retreats* from politics. This is what the Pompeian homeowner wanted of his garden triclinium as well. Let us see how he constructed this space of ultimate leisure.

Among the qualities that Pliny and Statius swoon over and which also appear in the House of the Golden Bracelet are the sweeping views and sea breezes. Pliny's Laurentine villa is designed to take best possible advantage of these features, as he repeatedly boasts, and Statius praises the same qualities of the villas he visits.²⁶¹ The House of the Golden Bracelet does the same, if on a smaller scale than Pliny's large villa complex: as we already saw, the Pompeian house enjoyed the best sea breezes and views in the whole city because it was built atop the city wall and along the wall's seaward face as well—turning what was once the ideal defensive position into the ideal panorama point. From this location, the owner of the house could easily see over any other buildings that stood between his house and the sea (although there may have

²⁵⁸ The plants in Roman garden painting have been meticulously studied and identified with numerous native Italian species (e.g., Gabriel 1955). On imported Hellenistic villa furnishings, see Yerkes 2005. At the bottom of the fountain, below the stepped niche, is a mosaic panel of ducks among lilypads—perhaps another reference to Egypt, although the figures would have been distorted beyond recognition by the water flowing over it from the niche above.

²⁵⁹ Mastroroberto 2006. She simultaneously claims that they symbolize Egyptian cult practice, which to my mind is not compatible with the first claim.

²⁶⁰ Ciardiello 2012, 181.

²⁶¹ Plin. *Ep.* 5.17 and passim. Of the Tiburtine villa Statius gushes, "How soft the landscape, what beauty of that fair site,/Before art touched it! Nowhere has Nature indulged/Herself so freely" ("ingenium quam mite solo, quae forma beatis/ante manus artemque locis! non largius usquam/indulsit natura sibi;" Stat. *Silv.* 1.3.15–17, trans. Kline 2012). He repeatedly praises the views both there (Stat. *Silv.* 1.3.39–40) and at Pollius Felix's villa (Stat. *Silv.* 2.2.13–17, 72–3).

been none, as the ancient coastline likely ran just on the far side of the garden) (Fig. 123, Fig. 124).²⁶² Depending on how high the garden wall was, the lowest floor too may have enjoyed a view of the sea; if so, it would recall Pliny's "dining-room commanding a very extensive lookout on to the sea, the coast, and the beautiful villas scattered along the shore line." If not, it would resemble Pliny's garden triclinium which, he assures us, "though it stands away from the sea, enjoys the garden view which is just as pleasant." 263

Water is another important element in creating a space of otium. Pliny describes his own garden triclinium with a series of fountains, astonishingly similar to that in the House of the Golden Bracelet: "At the upper end is an alcove of white marble, shaded with vines and supported by four small Carystian columns. From this semicircular couch, the water, gushing up through several little pipes, as though pressed out by the weight of the persons who recline themselves upon it, falls into a stone cistern underneath, whence it is received into a fine polished marble basin, so skillfully contrived that it is always full without ever overflowing."²⁶⁴ In the Pompeian house, the triclinium contains just such an impressive system of waterworks: water once gushed from the stepped niche in the back wall into a semicircular basin below, then into the large pool lined by white marble clinae; and from there, the water flowed underground to the Ω -shaped pool. Although other houses in Pompeii feature such Ω -shaped pools, ²⁶⁵ none incorporates it into such an extensive and animated ensemble: the pool in the House of the Golden Bracelet featured a fountain at its center that sprayed straight up into the air, while no fewer than twenty-eight smaller spouts lining the perimeter shot streams of water into the pool.²⁶⁶ The effect of this liquid spectacle must have been breathtaking: from the stepped ribbon of water descending from the niche, splashing into the cool stone pool just an arm's reach away from the diners, and finally disappearing from sight only to reemerge in an extravaganza of spouting and spraying.

Nor was water a mere visual delight. Pliny admires the "most pleasant murmur" (*iucundissimum murmur*) of water plunging into a marble basin in one of his rooms, and remarks that another room looks onto a pool "which entertains at once both the eye and the ear; for the water, dashing from a great height, foams over the marble basin which receives it below."²⁶⁷ Precisely this effect is achieved in the Pompeian triclinium by the water running into the marble-lined pool below. What is more, from a functional standpoint the waterworks would have cooled the entire triclinium—the splashing water at every step producing a mist that, as it evaporated, cooled the air. Perhaps most important of all, the Romans connected water itself with a life of pleasure explicitly framed by mythology. For a Roman viewer, the waterworks would elevate the atmosphere of the triclinium by association with a great many mythic topoi of love, lust, and

²⁶² Stefani and Maio 2003.

²⁶³ "Praeterea Chianti quae latissimum mare longissimum litus villas amoenissimas possidet;" "hac non deteriore quam maris facie Chianti remota a mari fruitur" (Plin. *Ep.* 2.17.15, trans. Kline 2012).

²⁶⁴ "In capite stibadium candido marmore vite protegitur; vitem quattuor columellae Carystiae subeunt. Ex stibadio aqua velut expressa cubantium pondere sipunculis effluit, cavato lapide suscipitur, gracili marmore continetur atque ita occulte temperatur, ut impleat nec redundet" (Plin. *Ep.* 5.6.22–3, trans. Kline 2012).

²⁶⁵ E.g., the House of the Centenary (see Clarke 1991, 18 fig. 17) and House of the Vestals (see Robinson and Jones 2005).

²⁶⁶ Jashemski 1979–1993, 379. The real fountains are echoed in the paintings of fountains—a fluidity between media that we have seen in the previous chapters.

²⁶⁷ "[P]iscinam...strepitu visuque iucunda; nam ex edito desiliens aqua suscepta marmore albescit" (Plin. *Ep.* 5.6.23–4, trans. Kline 2012).

voluptas which thematize water.²⁶⁸ Egyptian motifs would further play on the theme of water by association with the Nile, which was explicitly referenced in the Canopus water canals of Roman villas and which loomed large in the Roman perception of Egypt.²⁶⁹

In addition to such mastery of natural elements, Pliny and Statius attest that the perfect villa is further defined by a juxtaposition of nature with art. Far from the Romantic notion of untamed nature, the Romans seem to have most appreciated nature when it was presented within a manmade frame. Pliny's topiaries are one such way to refine nature: he describes a sort of terrace, edged with box and shrubs cut into different shapes. You descend, from the terrace, by an easy slope adorned with the figures of animals in box, facing each other, to a lawn overspread with the soft, I had almost said the liquid, acanthus: this is surrounded by a walk enclosed with evergreens, shaped into a variety of forms. Pliny even explicitly delights in the juxtaposition of nature with artifice: "the box is cut in a thousand different forms, sometimes into letters, expressing the master's name, sometimes the artificer's, whilst here and there rise little obelisks with fruit-trees alternately intermixed; and then of a sudden, in the midst of this elegant regularity, you are surprised with an imitation of the negligent beauties of rural nature." Pliny even expression of rural nature.

Not only is nature made to imitate art, but also art imitates—and enhances—nature. One of Pliny's rooms features paintings of greenery and birds, a marble dado, and a fountain, forming an ensemble that perfectly matches the House of the Golden Bracelet's. Pliny's walls "are encrusted with carved marble as far as the dado, while above the marble a foliage is painted with birds among the branches, which has an effect altogether as agreeable as that of the carving, at the foot of which a little fountain, playing through several small pipes into a vase it encloses, produces a most pleasing murmur."²⁷³ In the frescoes from the House of the Golden Bracelet, the scenes of nature are framed not only by the colorful stone dado (rendered in fresco) but by the

²⁶⁸ Griffin 1986a, Ch. 5; Griffin 1986b, esp. 63–8; and Zanker and Ewald 2012, 111–73.

²⁶⁹ The most grandiose example is of course the Canopus at Hadrian's Villa (Adembri 2006, esp. 15–20). On the Canopus in the House of Octavius Quartio, see Tronchin 2006. Roman villas contained "Niles" as early as ca. 51 BC, earning Cicero's scorn: "Ductus vero aquarum, quos isti Nilos et Euripos vocant, quis non cum haec videat inriserit?" (Cic. *Leg.* 2.1.2). Swetnam-Burland and Versluys discuss the Nile as a lens for Roman views of Egypt (Swetnam-Burland 2009; Versluys 2002, 40).

²⁷⁰ Bergmann 1994, esp. 55–9.

²⁷¹ "Ante porticum xystus in plurimas species distinctus concisusque buxo; demissus inde pronusque pulvinus, cui bestiarum effigies invicem adversas buxus inscripsit; acanthus in plano, mollis et paene dixerim liquidus. Ambit hunc ambulatio pressis varieque tonsis viridibus inclusa" (Plin. *Ep.* 5.6.16–17, trans. Kline 2012).

²⁷² "Alibi ipsa buxus intervenit in formas mille descripta, litteras interdum, quae modo nomen domini dicunt modo artificis: alternis metulae surgunt, alternis inserta sunt poma, et in opere urbanissimo subita velut illati ruris imitatio" (Plin. *Ep.* 5.6.35, trans. Kline 2012). He repeats the sentiment in the same letter: "on the outside of the wall lies a meadow that owes as many beauties to nature as all I have been describing within does to art;" "pratum inde non minus natura quam superiora illa arte visendum" (Plin. *Ep.* 5.6.18, trans. Kline 2012).

²⁷³ "[M]armore excultum podio tenus, nec cedit gratiae marmoris ramos insidentesque ramis aves imitata pictura. Fonticulus in hoc, in fonte crater; circa sipunculi plures miscent iucundissimum murmur" (Plin. *Ep.* 5.6.22–3, trans. Kline 2012). How little attention Pliny devotes to the statuary and other manmade decorative elements in his villa compared to the natural ones may be due to an ongoing taboo on filling one's private home with expensive artworks; see Weeber 2003, 99–104 (I am grateful to Ted Peña for raising this point).

red borders and yellow reed fences, which not only cross the bottom of the panels but improbably make their way up the sides and over the top as well. Finally, such framing is also accomplished by works of sculpture. The marble sculptures depicted at the center of each fresco panel further the effect of looking upon a neatly curated scene. The symmetrical sphinxes form a sort of gateway through which one glimpses the vegetation beyond, while the Apis bull relief acts as an anchor at the center of its panel, on axis with the oscillum above. That is to say, the Egyptian objects enhance the gardenscape by virtue of being, first and foremost, *objets d'art* that complement their natural setting.²⁷⁴

And indeed, the Egyptian elements here are clearly intended to be read as *objets d'art* themselves, luxury goods within the house. As we have seen, the Egyptian figures are portrayed not as divine epiphanies, nor as living beings, but as *statues*. This is obvious from the statue bases on which they stand: the pharaonic figure beside the bird bath surmounts a base made of a thin gray slab balanced atop a short gray pillar—more easily visible on the righthand side of the panel, where the figure itself is missing. The sphinxes too are statues, made obvious by their pink cavetto bases, and underscored in the case of one sphinx by a bird that perches on its back (Fig. 118). That these paintings draw from actual objects is confirmed by the discovery of very similar statues in Pompeian gardens: for instance, precisely such a marble reclining sphinx was found along the "Canopus" waterway in the House of Octavius Quartio, one of the profusion of sculptures used to heighten the atmosphere of luxury in this garden (Fig. 125).²⁷⁵ We might also imagine a garden setting for the pharaonic statuette of Horus carved in alabaster and found in the House of the Golden Cupids, its form quite like that of the Egyptian deities in the Golden Bracelet wall paintings (Fig. 126). Although frogs and crocodiles do not appear in the above paintings, faience figurines of these animals were found in the garden of the House of the Silver Wedding (Fig. 127); their material and subject directly refer to Egypt, while the spouts in their mouths make them the perfect embodiment of playful garden waterworks. Just like the sphinxes and pharaonic figures in the Golden Bracelet and Farnesina paintings, these sculptures inhabited their Pompeian gardens not as numinous apparitions but as sculptural elements that augmented the surrounding scenery.

This is further confirmed by the fact that, again as in Farnesina, the Egyptian elements are deployed analogously to the Greek sculptures. The equivalence is made obvious by the repeated compositions throughout the frescoes and the mosaic fountain, everywhere the same blue sky, green plants, yellow fence, and marble sculpture in the center. That the *faux* sculptural ensemble consists of a bird bath in several panels, sphinxes with an Apis relief in another, and pharaonic figures beside a bird bath in another shows that these elements operate analogously. The gardenscape cubiculum in the House of the Orchard similarly features showy marble vessels alongside marble plaques of Egyptian figures, a close parallel to the garden ornaments in the

²⁷⁴ In addition, the ideal villa should not only use art to refine nature but also contain art objects worthy of admiration outside a natural context. Statius again is emblematic, listing some of the riches in the villa of Pollius Felix—colored stones, gold, ivory statues—and even displaying a connoisseurial bent: he knows the famous "unswept floor" mosaic from Pergamon (mentioned in Plin. *HN* 36.184), and extols this villa's floor as surpassing it; he even hates to walk on it ("varias ubi picta per artes/gaudet humus superatque novis asarota figuris/expavere gradus, " Stat. *Silv.* 1.3.55–7). Bergmann argues that the objects in a Roman garden combine into a "multimedia collection" (Bergmann 2008).

²⁷⁵ Tronchin's dissertation is the definitive study of this sculptural ensemble (Tronchin 2006). Although Zanker finds the ensemble tasteless, the homeowner obviously was striving for a rich and refined atmosphere (Zanker 1998, 150–5).

House of the Golden Bracelet (Fig. 67). Indeed, many other paintings in Pompeian gardens feature Greek sculptures in precisely the same place as the Egyptian ones here. Illusionistic statues of nymphs appear in the gardens of the House of Romulus and Remus, House of Sallust, and House of the Venus in Bikini,²⁷⁶ while statues of Mars and Venus figure in this latter as well as the House of the Marine Venus.²⁷⁷ Whether sphinxes, pharaohs, birdbaths, oscilla, nymphs, or gods, the function of these objects in the garden scenes is the same: they are man-made *agalmata* meant to heighten the beauty of the garden.

If the Egyptian sculpture depicted in garden frescoes functions so similarly to the Greek, why opt to include it at all? Seen as art objects, Egyptian objects in fact offer little that Greek ones do not: both represent precious imports that spark conversation and signify otium. In addition to this, one might think that Egyptian motifs evoked the Nile and thus, in garden settings, harmonized with the nearby waterworks; but it seems that an allusion to a great eastern waterway could also be fulfilled by the Greek strait Euripus, to judge from Cicero's remark that Roman homeowners too gladly outfit their gardens with either one.²⁷⁸ This is confirmed by watery landscape paintings on Roman walls, which attest that a large body of water was always appealing but that its particular location in Egypt or Greece was not important; the usual mixture of rocky cliffs and shrines cannot locate the scenes with any accuracy, and seem as often to exclude Egypt (mountains!) as to suggest it (ibises). Another suggestion that has been repeatedly put forth is that Egyptian motifs in Roman houses evoke the fertility of the Nile. This would indeed fit remarkably well within the context of a fruiting and flowering garden, but abundance is highlighted just as well without Egyptian motifs: the garden paintings in the Villa of Livia depict many species of tree impossibly fruiting all at once, with no sign of Egypt, while the House of the Golden Bracelet paintings contain a hoard of Egyptian sculpture without a single fruiting tree. ²⁷⁹ A third suggestion is that Egyptian motifs evoked Egyptian *tryphe*, a lifestyle of extreme luxury practiced by the Ptolemies, but the ancient authors name Sybaris and Syracuse as hotbeds of luxury on par with Alexandria.

A fourth possibility, often argued to act at the same time as one or more of the associations above, is that Egyptian iconography acts as a political reference²⁸⁰—but again our ancient sources can guide us to a better understanding of how Egyptian motifs operated in Roman homes. The point is worth stressing: when Pliny and Statius recount their villa visits, politics and work rarely enter the picture; and tellingly, when they do, they are explicitly described as *anathema* to villa life. Pliny even calls his Laurentine villa a place of retreat (*secessus*), asking Gallus, "Tell me, now, have I not good reason for living in, staying in, loving, such a retreat, which, if you feel no appetite for, you must be morbidly attached to town?"²⁸¹ Indeed, Pliny prefers this villa to his others because "I enjoy here a greater, quieter, and more

²⁷⁶ PPM 7, 271–4 figs. 26–31; PPM 4, 131–3 figs. 76–80b; PPM 2, 554 fig. 44.

²⁷⁷ Venus in Bikini: PPM 2, 553 fig. 41.

²⁷⁸ "Ductus vero aquarum, quos isti Nilos et Euripos vocant, quis non cum haec videat inriserit?" (Cic. *Leg.* 2.1.2).

²⁷⁹ The connotations of Nilotic fertility in Roman decor have to my mind been overstressed; for one thing, the discussion centers almost exclusively on Pygmy paintings and cannot account for other Roman representations of Egypt (e.g., Versluys and Meyboom 2007).

²⁸⁰ Mastroroberto 2006; see n. 259. Söldner argues that the connection between Egypt and gardens is one of abundance and fertility and simultaneously represents the Augustan aurea aetas (Söldner 2000).

²⁸¹ "Iustisne de causis iam tibi videor incolere inhabitare diligere secessum? quem tu nimis urbanus es nisi concupiscis" (Plin. *Ep.* 2.17.29).

undisturbed retirement [*otium*] than anywhere else: there is no need for a toga, and no one nearby to summon me. All is peaceful and quiet."²⁸² Such "matters of the toga" are again set in distinct contrast to otium in another of Pliny's letters, in which he exalts Spurinna's retirement at his villa as an enviable retreat (*receptus*) that rewards him for his earlier labors.²⁸³ Statius too figures the villa as a retreat from city life and specifically, again, from politics: according to him, even the happy distinction of two Italian cities competing for Felix's attentions as a magistrate is unpleasant compared to retirement at his Sorrentine villa. Statius portrays the villa as a literal haven, a safe harbor, from the earlier, strenuous period of Felix's career. Now that those trials are past, he writes,

You see the truth. Others are still tossed about on those deeps, But your ship has found safe harbor, and a tranquil calm, Where it remains unshaken. Continue so, and never send Your ship among our tempests, her weary journey over.²⁸⁴

In fact, the realm of pleasure in these villas is so removed from the real world that it is displaced into the realm of *myth*. The villa and its landscape setting are repeatedly situated in relation to mythical forebears and are even said to be inhabited by gods and mythical beings. Hence Statius begins his poem about Manilius Vopiscus's villa at Tibur by claiming it to be so peaceful that even "the burning dog-star fails/to howl, nor leafy Nemea's lion cub, Leo, to frown" (Silvae 1.3.5–6). Hereafter the mythological imagery never slackens: Venus has sprinkled unguents on the villa's roof (10); rivers gods, dryads, and nymphs are everywhere (45–6, 62–3, 70–8); the mythical Italic founding fathers Telegonus, Turnus, and Aeneas once occupied this landscape, as did Circe (83–6). The only appearance in the whole poem of anything like recent Roman history is the mention of the Aqua Marcia aqueduct (built in 144–140 BC); and even this is displaced from the "here and now" by its comparison to a river in Elis, Greece (66–8). The same pattern repeats in Statius's poem about Pollius Felix's villa, which sets the stage with a temple of Minerva and fields dear to Dionysus (*Bromio dilectus ager*) (Silv. 2.2.4) and concludes with a Siren swooping down to the villa to hear music better than her own (116–17). Indeed, the only historical personages to figure in the poem are Epicurus, who would have traded his garden for this one (90–4), and Pindar, whose odes, we are told, are rivaled by the villa owner's (101). As monumental cultural figures, the philosopher and poet both fit into the rhetoric of erudite leisure. Egyptian objects, we now see, could effortlessly find their place in this milieu, enhancing the religio-mythical atmosphere by themselves adding another touch of ancient religion: Romans held Egyptians in high esteem for the antiquity of their cults and the Egyptians' extreme devotion to them;²⁸⁵ for the connotations of tryphe and fertile land; and as we have seen, some Romans even had a passing familiarity with Egyptian myth. 286

²⁸⁶ See above p. 59.

²⁸² "Nam super illa quae rettuli, altius ibi otium et pinguius eoque securius: nulla necessitas togae, nemo accersitor ex proximo, placida omnia et quiescentia" (Plin. *Ep.* 5.6.45).

²⁸³ "[M]ultoque labore hoc otium meruit" (Plin. Ep. 3.1.12).

²⁸⁴ "At nunc discussa rerum caligine verum/aspicis. illo alii rursus iactantur in alto,/et tua securos portus placidamque quietem/intravit non quassa ratis. sic perge, nec umquam/emeritam in nostras puppem demitte procellas" (Stat. *Silv.* 2.2.138–42, trans. Kline 2012).

²⁸⁵ Like Herodotus, Lucian calls the Egyptians the most religious people in the world: "...τοὺς Αἰγυπτίους, οἴπερ καὶ δεισιδαιμονέστατοὶ εἰσιν πάντων,..." (Lucian, *Pro imag.* 27).

Their total assimilation into standard Roman decorative systems shows that the Egyptian elements in the Pompeian triclinium served the same role within the sphere of art, culture, and myth as did the Greek elements: all belong to the sphere of otium, the life of luxury. Not only, then, do Egyptian motifs not broadcast any particular political allegiance, they also do not stand as symbols for the fertility of the Nile or Egyptian cult practice, although these potential readings of course may have occurred to some viewers. The scholarly expectation that Egyptian elements should have a *specific* thematic resonance arises from our own modern preconceptions of cultural difference—hence we assume that they must differ in message and intent from the Greek elements beside them. Attending to actual patterns of use on Roman walls, however, reveals that Romans felt Egyptian and Greek motifs to be functionally similar, even fungible elements by which to realize the main goal of wall painting: creating an atmosphere of luxurious living. Egyptian imagery was not mere "exotica" or "fashion," not any more than Greek imagery was. Both sets of images were fundamental building blocks in the Roman construction of spaces of otium—hence their survival, side by side, for centuries.

Conclusion: Un-Augustan Readings

In this project I set out to show that the commonly accepted political reading of Egyptian motifs in Roman wall painting is unsatisfactory, and that these motifs are better understood as painterly transformations of collector's items. Challenging the standard political interpretation is worthwhile not only for this set of material for the entire corpus of Roman wall painting: for Roman painting scholarship in general has embraced political readings which, to my mind, require revision. Indeed, I believe that the argument presented above for pharaonic imagery can supplant the political—and particularly the Augustan—readings of *other* imagery as well. Two examples serve to illustrate this point, both types of painted motifs that have long been claimed to symbolize Augustan politics but which I argue once again point to the central importance of luxury objects.²⁸⁷

"Sacro-idyllic" landscapes (Fig. 128) constitute an entire genre whose emergence has been attributed to Augustus. These paintings are named for the sacred character of the rustic shrines included in them, and for their idealized, peaceful countryside setting. Due to their religious subject, the landscapes have been said to reflect the emperor's call for renewed religiosity; 288 yet this claim ignores the fact that any Augustan campaign to resurrect traditional *Italian* worship would not be well served by the imaginary or sometimes distinctly *foreign* setting of the scenes. Many of these paintings depict surreal architecture that locates them in fantastical or faraway places, including mysterious "wind towers" of uncertain function and origin²⁸⁹ and sacral columns which have been argued to be everything from Greek to Syrian to Roman.²⁹⁰ Moreover, the topography is not at all clearly evocative of Italy, but features craggy mountains more reminiscent of Greece and parched flatlands that evoke Egypt. In fact, at times the paintings even explicitly represent Egyptian landscapes by including palm trees and statues of Egyptian deities (Fig. 129). This may reflect the fact that Alexandria played a pioneering role in the very development of the landscape genre: a new type of panel painting, the cityscape, emerged in Alexandria as part of the revolution in mapping and geography.²⁹¹ It seems that that the Roman landscape genre follows Alexandrian precedent not only in painting but also literature: Alexandrian poetry, like the *Idylls* by Theocritus, describes romanticized pastoral vignettes very like those in Roman houses—where peasants banter, herd their flocks, and fish in a beautiful natural setting.²⁹² Because Hellenistic bucolic poetry is usually set in Arcadia and

²⁸⁷ The term "luxury" is used in this project to avoid the strongly negative connotations of the Latin terms *luxus* or *luxuria* (see above, n. 142).

²⁸⁸ E.g., Baldassarre 2009, 85; Romizzi 2006, 24; Kotsidu 1998/1999; Fehrentz 1991; Simon 1986, 206–10. Even more improbably, Borda sees the paintings as reflections of religion in the Republican period (Borda 1958, 206). Wrede presents a similarly Augustan reading of mythological landscape paintings (Wrede 1991).

²⁸⁹ Knauer 2009.

²⁹⁰ Nilsson and Rostowzew are not entirely convinced but do not present convincing alternatives (Nilsson 1925; Rostowzew 1911, 127–37).

²⁹¹ La Rocca presents the most concerted argument (La Rocca 2008), but the idea has often been repeated (e.g., Sampaolo 1992, cat. no. 1.63; Steinmeyer-Schareika 1978, Chs. 1–2; Schefold 1960). Schmidt remains unconvinced (Schmidt 2004, 512).

²⁹² Stanzel 1995.

Alexandria, one of these places—not Italy—should be expected in the Roman paintings too.²⁹³ These landscapes therefore would not at all suit the princeps' promotion of Italic religion, especially if he intended to increase Roman piety toward indigenous deities in the face of imported popular cults from, most notably, Egypt.²⁹⁴

That the sacro-idyllic genre predates Augustus by several centuries and contains strong links to Alexandria suggests that the appearance of such landscapes on Roman walls, rather than being motivated by the princeps' promulgation of Italic religion, is once again indebted to the Roman esteem for Hellenistic art discussed in the previous chapters. In particular it speaks to the acquisition of pinakes as collector's items;²⁹⁵ indeed, landscape pinakes appear among the prized objects in illusionistic art collections in Roman houses (Fig. 40). Thus these pinakes too should be understood to represent imports from Egypt, prized examples of the Greek artistic idiom of Alexandria, fit for display alongside the Greek and pharaonic Egyptian objects also depicted on the walls.²⁹⁶

Vegetal ornament too has been suggested to symbolize Augustan politics, this time in relation to the princeps' claim to have established a new age of abundance.²⁹⁷ On Augustus' public monuments like the Ara Pacis, the overflowing vegetation has been said to support this tenet of his political image;²⁹⁸ but when applied to wall painting, this reading runs into obstacles. Leafy decoration characterized mural decoration long before Augustus, as spectacularly demonstrated by the Hellenistic "Anthemion Tomb" in Lefkadia (Fig. 130). It did not first appear or even increase in connection with Augustus' rise to power. What is more, the proliferation of flowers and vines in Roman wall painting do not arise with a sudden regime change but through a protracted process: that of importing luxurious furnishings throughout the Republican period. As we saw above (especially p. 37), the vegetal forms in wall painting are clearly identifiable in the candelabra and precious vessels that were displayed in elite Roman homes. Like the sacroidyllic landscapes, that is, vegetal forms in Roman wall painting clearly follow Hellenistic models and thus reveal a debt not to a political ideology but a desire for ornate imports.

The need to revise such political interpretations of wall painting becomes still clearer if we consider the process by which they became prevalent. Roman art history as a whole is marked by a certain predisposition toward political readings, in part because, ever since Giorgio Vasari and the Renaissance, we prize innovation in art and therefore have approached Roman art looking for its especial innovations. True, this runs counter to the ancient Roman attitude: while the Romans appreciated ingenuity in certain intellectual endeavors—one might think of Pliny's preoccupation with historical "firsts", including pioneering Greek artists²⁹⁹—the Romans seem to have believed that their own art was not the proper venue for radical expression. Certain

²⁹³ Leach 1988, Ch. 5.

²⁹⁴ On the spread of Isiac cult to Rome, see Bricault 2004 and Appendix B.

²⁹⁵ See especially p. 49.

²⁹⁶ Since in most respects the Greek artistic tradition in Alexandria differed little from the Hellenistic art of other regions (as Stewart has convincingly argued: Stewart 1996), the landscape pinakes in Roman wall painting that do not contain Alexandrian features may represent imports from other parts of the Hellenistic world that picked up the genre after it was developed in Alexandria.

²⁹⁷ E.g., Kellum 1994; Simon 1986, 213. Söldner believes that the Augustan *aurea aetas* ("Golden Age") is symbolized in another sort of vegetation, garden paintings (Söldner 2000, esp. 388).

²⁹⁸ Caneva 2010; Sauron 2000 (qualified by Platt 2003); Castriota 1995.

²⁹⁹ The emphasis on ingenuity fits Pliny's project to frame greatness of all sorts as a product of empire (see Carey 2003, 17–40).

formulae were successful and therefore best repeated; hence the great copying industry of the Roman world.³⁰⁰ But nevertheless, when the modern study of Roman art began, it gravitated toward what made Roman art *distinct*, what made it different from Greek art and therefore worthy of study. Two genres showed striking innovation: state relief and portraiture. Both of these genres, being inherently political, respond very well to a method connecting political events and figures with the material evidence; this is clearly a productive approach for this material. But the temptation is to take this mode, so fruitful for political art, and to apply it to the study of *all* Roman art—including the decorative arts that had not yet received much attention by the time the procedures of the field were codified. This urge is so strong that it continues to mold textbooks of Roman art, which are still almost always organized by political dynasty rather than by theme or geographic region.³⁰¹

Political readings of wall painting are not objectionable because the Roman house, as a relatively "private" space, was hermetically isolated from the public sphere—for it certainly was not. Indeed, the Roman house was far from a "private" space as we would now define it, and in fact was the venue for frequent meetings with business and political partners.³⁰² But the Romans clearly presented themselves differently in their own homes than they did in public areas like the forum: the whimsical pharaonic motifs and bucolic landscapes that they display in their homes appear nowhere in the marble world of veristic portraiture and battle reliefs. Zanker has observed that in wall paintings, "politics and the problems of everyday life were evidently not meant to be evoked—at least not directly." Instead, domestic decoration was above all supposed to "[invite] the viewer to enjoy life and be happy...to create positive mental associations that would enrich both everyday life and special occasions."303 So although the Roman homeowner would not recognize our peculiar modern definition of "private" space, he certainly did recognize a difference between his home and the public sphere. There was a palpable divide between, if not public and private, civic and domestic. Roman wall painting helps us to see this, and to realize that our method of studying the public may not be entirely appropriate for the domestic. After all, if the Romans thought them different enough to demand distinct styles of decoration, perhaps we should think them different enough to demand distinct styles of interpretation.

³⁰⁰ Hallett 2005, contra Perry 2005 and Gazda 2002.

³⁰¹ E.g., Kleiner 2007.

³⁰² Wallace-Hadrill discusses how our modern concepts of "public" and "private" differ from the Roman ones (Wallace-Hadrill 1994, Ch.1, esp. 11–12).

³⁰³ Zanker 2010, 143. Versluys too remarks on the difference between "the public political sphere" and the private sphere of the Roman house (Versluys 2002, 22–3).

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Ath. Cic. *Leg*. Cic. *Tusc*. Dio Cass.

Antip. Thess.

Joseph. AJ

Livy

Luc.

Lucian, Salt.

Lucian, Imag.

Lucian, Pro imag.

Petron. Sat.

Plin. HN

Plin. Ep.

Philostr. Mai. Imag.

Philostr. Iun. Imag.

Plut. Mor.

Plut. Vit. Cat. Mai.

Plut. Vit. Pomp.

Prop.

Quint. Inst.

Serv.

Stat. Silv.

Suet. Aug.

Suet. Iul.

Varro, Rust.

Verg. Aen.

Verg. G.

Vitr. *De arch*.

Appendix A: Augustan Triumphal Monuments

A.1. The Actium Arch

The monument that was erected in Rome specifically to commemorate Octavian's victory over Antony and Cleopatra was a triumphal arch erected in the Forum. 304 This "Actium Arch" sadly does not survive today beyond its textual documentation and one image on a contemporary coin (Fig. 26). Because no archaeological remains of the arch have been identified, both its location and its decoration remain entirely unknown; and its depiction on the coinage is detailed enough only to reveal that it had one portal and a quadriga group on top. 305 That it may have eschewed all reference to Egypt, however, is extremely probable in view of the comparanda. Most notable among these is the gargantuan victory monument that Octavian built for himself at the city of Actium—a very close analogue to the Actium Arch in having been dedicated soon after the battle in order to glorify the princeps' conquest—also contains no reference to Egypt. From the row of ship's prows attached to a monumental wall of marble to the architectural decoration of the sanctuary and altar, there is no trace of Egypt in either subject or style (Fig. 27). The sculptural decoration in fact draws not from the Egyptian repertoire but from a very selfconsciously *Italic* one: on the "Nicopolis Base," a semi-cylindrical base of uncertain function, a row of gods are carved in the "archaistic" style apparently felt to elevate the status of the victory and properly frame it within a long history of Roman greatness. 306 The iconography and style of the immense altar as well as the architectural decoration in the sanctuary is classicizing—again deliberately conjuring the great Greek past that Octavian appropriated as his own.³⁰⁷

Indeed, the iconography on the Actium Arch was quite similar to that on the many other monuments erected in Rome to commemorate the same conquest. All of them are marked by a feature common to the memorial at Actium as well, namely an obsession with ships' prows. Four *columnae rostratae*, columns studded with the prows of the defeated enemy ships, were erected by the Roman senate to memorialize Octavian's victory at Actium; a contemporary coin likely shows one of them (Fig. 28). Another coin honoring the victory shows a quadriga on one side, on the other a winged Victory perched upon a ship's prow (Fig. 30). On the same occasion, more ships' prows were added to the front of the Temple of Divus Julius. Finally, two reliefs in the

³⁰⁴ On the arch, see *LTUR* 1, 80–1. I follow common opinion in believing that Octavian could only frame the Actium battle as a victory over Cleopatra and the foreign land of Egypt rather than one over fellow Roman Marc Antony (the scholarly consensus on this point is cited by Lange 2009, 70 n. 30, who puts forth an unconvincing argument to the contrary [Lange 2009, 73–93]).

³⁰⁵ An excellent overview of the Actium Arch is Horacek 2014 (very kindly given me by Susanne Muth in advance of its publication; my warm thanks go to both her and Horacek).

³⁰⁶ On the finds at Nicopolis, with detailed discussion of the "Nicopolis base" and the ideology behind its imagery, see Zachos 2009, esp. 276–81. On the princeps' cunning use of such "archaistic" imagery, see Hallett 2012.

³⁰⁷ A very good reference work for how Augustus used Athenian models in his own art depicting victory over eastern enemies is Hardie 1997.

³⁰⁸ Servius writes that four rostral columns were dedicated to Agrippa and Augustus for their victory at Actium (and were moved to the Capitoline by Domitian, where Servius presumably saw them in the 4th c. AD) (Serv. 3.29). On the columns, including their attestation by Servius, see Sporleder 2014.

³⁰⁹ Muth 2014.

Capitoline Museums in Rome that depict anchors and prows may also commemorate the victory (Fig. 29).³¹⁰ As a metonym for a naval battle, clearly it was the ship's prow—not the trappings of a foreign queen—that Octavian favored as a symbol of the conquest.

A.2. Temple of Apollo Sosianus

This paucity of pharaonic motifs is similarly evident in a temple that has been proposed to commemorate the Actian victory. The Temple of Apollo Sosianus (also called the Temple of Apollo Medicus, the Temple of Apollo in the Campus Martius, and the Temple of Apollo *in circo*) was dedicated on the princeps' birthday in the late 30s or early 20s BC. It is said by ancient literary sources to have stood near the Theater of Marcellus, and has now been identified with the ruins of a temple in that area. Alessandro Viscogliosi, the foremost expert on the building, believes that it was sponsored to a large extent by the princeps and dates it to shortly after the victory at Actium. As we shall see, there are several obstacles to accepting Viscogliosi's thesis; but because his views on the temple are authoritative in the field, we need to examine his claims to better understand the use—or lack thereof—of Egyptian imagery in the princeps' triumphal monuments in this period.

That Viscogliosi proposes a connection to Actium based largely on the decorative program is understandable in view of how little other evidence exists. The temple was unearthed in the 1930s, but the excavators did not record any firmly datable evidence associated with it; and the temple's very long, convoluted history of rebuilding and renovation makes it difficult to determine quite which elements (particularly in the architectural decoration) were present at what time. Lacking external evidence for a date, we cannot know for sure whether the decoration of the temple followed upon the battle at Actium and thus may have referred to it. Moreover, we cannot know to what extent the princeps was responsible for the decorative program. Judging from the name that Pliny gives the temple, a certain Caius Sosius presumably had a hand in restoring it. Viscogliosi places this restoration around the time that Sosius was consul, in 32 BC. It is possible, as La Rocca and others would have it, that the restoration was in fact completed by Octavian under Sosius' name. This would follow a general pattern among buildings in Rome at this time to be strongly influenced by Octavian even if dedicated in the name of another, as attested by Suetonius. But just as much is it possible that the Temple of

³¹⁰ Dio Cass. 51.19.52, discussed by Hölscher 2009, 314. Hölscher also places the pediment of the Curia within this group of triumphal post-Actium monuments, and it is true that its scene of the goddess Victory perched on a globe, flanked by figures holding an anchor and rudder, is very suggestive. But since Octavian dedicated the Curia only ten days after the battle at Actium, I doubt that this program was informed by his recent victory.

The multiple phases of the temple are discussed in *LTUR* 1, 49–54.

³¹² Platner and Ashby 1929, 15. Platner takes this temple to be the same one mentioned in Livy 4.29.27, 27.20.29, 34.43.22, 37.58.23, 39.24.21., 40.51.26, and 41.17.24, presumably on the basis that "This was the only temple of Apollo in Rome until Augustus built that on the Palatine" (Platner and Ashby 1929, 15).

³¹³ The long history of the temple is summarized (unfortunately without any sources cited) in La Rocca 1988

³¹⁴ Plin. *HN* 13.53, 36.28. On Sosius and his probable connection to the present-day ruins, see Platner and Ashby 1929, 15–16.

Apollo Sosianus falls into the next category named by Suetonius, of more "independent" endeavors apparently not dictated by the princeps.³¹⁵

The best extant evidence for understanding the temple's architecture and decoration is therefore not textual but archaeological. Greatly expanding upon the work of his forebear Eugenio La Rocca, Viscogliosi assembled the remains into a masterful narrative about the princeps' assumption of power in 30 BC. Several aspects of the temple led him to conclude that the building refers to Octavian's recent triumphs. First of these is the location of the temple itself. Erika Simon and Viscogliosi both stress that the location was triumphal, occupying the starting point of the triumphal processions up the Capitoline. What's more, Simon points out that in the Republican period the predecessor temple on this site was where victorious generals were awarded their triumphs by the Senate.³¹⁶

But the most blatant expression of triumph is found in the frieze ringing the interior of the cella.³¹⁷ It illustrates two subjects, a battle scene and a triumphal procession.³¹⁸ The battle segment of the frieze is heavily damaged, but seems to show a fight on horseback against barbarians in short tunics. The triumphal procession, on the other hand, is very well-preserved, and clearly shows northern barbarians being put on display beside a trophy on a ferculum about to be hoisted. Sacrificial bulls form another part of the procession, along with a pile of bread and pork carried on another ferculum. Judging from the northern barbarians depicted in the frieze, Sosius' Judaean victory was not the subject of honor. Rather, it likely portrays the third of Octavian's triumphs celebrated in 29 BC—as Cassius Dio recounts, the triumph "over the Pannonians and Dalmatians, the Iapydes and their neighbors, and some Germans and Gauls."³¹⁹ This victory was celebrated in the same triple triumph as those at Actium and Alexandria—so here, if anywhere, we might expect to see something of Egypt represented in the battle or procession; but there is none.

Outside the cella, Viscogliosi proposes seeing a reference to Egypt in the ornate column capitals featuring two snakes (Fig. 131). He reads these as uraeus snakes,³²⁰ but they resemble uraei in neither shape nor pose, and their proximity to the tripod in the center makes it seem more likely that they are simply symbols of Apollo. Yet a hint of triumphal imagery appears on another capital (Fig. 132). A cuirass decorated with a palm frond on each shoulder probably represents a trophy, although the trunk that would have been its backbone and the helmet its head

³¹⁵ The princeps' dedications in the names of others was recently addressed by Hölscher 2014. Suetonius notes that Augustus "constructed some works too in the name of others, his grandsons and nephew to wit, his wife and his sister, such as the colonnade and basilica of Gaius and Lucius; also the colonnades of Livia and Octavia, and the theatre of Marcellus. More than that, he often urged other prominent men to adorn the city with new monuments or to restore and embellish old ones, each according to his means." But he goes on to mention the independent projects: "And many such works were built at that time by many men; for example, the temple of Hercules and the Muses..." (Suetonius, 29.24–5).

³¹⁶ Simon 1986, 105; Viscogliosi 2009, 138. That this temple was dedicated to Apollo may have inspired Octavian to renovate it after the battle at Actium, when he claimed Apollo as his patron god (see Hekster and Rich 2006).

³¹⁷ See the catalog by Viscogliosi 1988. Viscogliosi believes that the columns in African marble were likely seen as booty and therefore also triumphant, but they were almost certainly added in a subsequent renovation (Viscogliosi 1996, 193).

³¹⁸ Viscogliosi 1988, cat. nos. 41–4.

³¹⁹ Dio Cass. 51.21.55, trans. Carey 1925.

³²⁰ Viscogliosi 1996, 63, 151–3.

do not survive. To either side of the cuirass, level with the skirt, a pendulous bunch of dates sags under its own weight. Two fronds of the date tree on the left are also preserved. Date palms certainly had an Egyptian connotation in Roman art at this time, as evident in a painting from the Villa Farnesina (c. 20 BC) that depicts two date palms beside a cult statue of Isis, Anubis, and Harpocrates (Fig. 129). But the date palm was also a symbol of Judaea—the governor of Judaea, Marcus Ambibulus, minted coins in AD 11 with a date palm stamped on one side 322—so it would have been appropriate to Sosius' Judaean victory as well. Regardless, even if this imagery is meant to evoke Egypt, it is important for our purposes is that it does so without a trace of the pharaonic iconography present in the Upper Cubiculum frescoes.

A.3. Temple of Apollo Palatinus

Even more tellingly, pharaonic iconography is absent in the temple that the princeps built with specific reference to his Egyptian conquest: the Temple of Apollo Palatinus.³²³ Although Octavian had vowed this temple before the conquest, by the time he dedicated it in 28 BC it was designed as a statement of victory;³²⁴ contemporary Romans certainly viewed the sanctuary as an expression of the victory at Actium.³²⁵ But while the temple sanctuary may have gestured toward the victory in its elaborate multimedia decorative program, it did so without imagery like that in the Upper Cubiculum: an antefix decorated with an elephant head might refer to the animal's appearance in many Roman triumphs, such as Julius Caesar's triumph over Alexandria,³²⁶ but the iconography is in no way pharaonic. Similarly, basalt herms of Danaids lining the portico have been posited to refer to Octavian's conquest of Egypt by virtue of their mythology (the Danaid sisters slew their Egyptian husbands); but even if this is the case, the iconography is still not pharaonic (Fig. 31).³²⁷ The same can be said of a series of archaistic terracotta plaques that would have lined the walls of the temple or portico. Most of the plaques depict Apolline imagery—Hercules and Apollo wrestling over the tripod; two worshipers at a baetyl; and griffins, the

³²¹ Despite the minute size of this painting, it is so finely crafted that one can clearly see Anubis's dog head, Isis's rudder, and Harpocrates' trademark gesture of putting his finger to his lips.

³²² Berlin, Münzkabinett, inv. 1906 Löbbke, object no. 18200815.

 $^{^{323}}$ An overview of the archaeological remains is in *LTUR* 1, 54–7. Like the House of Augustus, the Temple of Apollo Palatinus has not been comprehensively published. Indeed, so far it has been published only as a secondary point across several articles (one of the most thorough is Iacopi and Tedone 2005/6).

<sup>2005/6).

324</sup> The temple was not erected to Apollo for the victory at Actium but was rather vowed in 36 BC, five years before the battle, on the occasion of a strike of lightning on the Palatine that was taken as a sign from Apollo about where he wanted a temple built (Hekster and Rich 2006, esp. 156–60). In fact, even when Octavian dedicated the temple in 28 BC, he was still conscious of the original reason he had vowed the temple (however much it may have come to symbolize his Actian victory)—for inside it he dedicated an Etruscan manual for reading lightning (Hekster and Rich 2006, 160 with references at n. 168). I am indebted to Christopher Hallett for this point.

³²⁵ Contemporary Romans certainly perceived it as triumphal: Vergil writes of Octavian sitting at the Temple of Apollo to gaze upon his triple triumph (Verg. *Aen.* 8.714–31), while Propertius writes "of Apollo's temple on the Palatine" and goes on to describe the harbor and battle at Actium (Prop. 4.6).

³²⁶ Suet. Aug. 37.

³²⁷ Hekster and Rich 2006, 164 and references at 149 n. 163. Hallett shows that the Danaids are rendered in a deliberately archaizing style meant to ground Octavian's rule in an esteemed Italic tradition (Hallett 2012, 97), so it is highly unlikely that they were seen as Egyptian.

animal of Apollo—which some have read specifically in terms of the Actium victory.³²⁸ But whether or not the plaques refer to the Actian victory through symbolism and mythology, they do so without reference to Egypt.

Egyptian subjects appear only in one of the shorter panels from the temple, where two sphinxes face each other across a bust of Isis (Fig. 32). Isis holds a sistrum in one hand and a dish of fruits in her other. Her usual corkscrew locks project downward from the back of her head, while atop it she wears a miniature crown of the sort that the Romans often set atop their Egyptian figures.³²⁹ Another tiny crown appears on the male sphinx to the right, who additionally sports a diadem with its ends fluttering out the back. The female sphinx to the left wears the same corkscrew curls as Isis, 330 a crown or perhaps a uraeus snake projecting above. The sphinxes rest their forelegs along the splaying acanthus leaves from which the Isis bust emerges. This sort of vegetal-figural hybrid is used in the Upper Cubiculum as well, but the similarities end there: in all other respects, this plaque uses Egyptian imagery very differently from the paintings in the Upper Cubiculum. The paintings contain neither sphinxes, nor Isis, nor even a sistrum, while the plaque contains no pharaonic crowns. What's more, the plaque composes the Egyptian elements into a figurative scene, whereas the wall paintings abstract them into a border pattern and cunningly integrate them into the decorative framework. Among the princeps' arches and temples, then, Egyptian imagery is rare; and even when it does appear, it finds no iconographic parallel with the pharaonic motifs in the Upper Cubiculum.³³¹

³²⁸ Unconvincingly, in my opinion: Strazzulla 1990, esp. 17–18 (with further literature), 34–9.

This miniature, somewhat lotiform crown is ubiquitous in Roman depictions of Egyptian figures, appearing for instance in the paintings of the Temple of Isis at Pompeii. To my mind it probably draws on the miniature pharaonic crowns already deployed in Hellenistic art (e.g., Schönert 1965, no. 150,151 pl. 156) and later it morphs into a extremely simplified three- or five-petaled fleur-de-lis, as in the Temple of Isis paintings (e.g., De Caro 1992, 1.57–51.60).

⁵³⁰ Corkscrew locks seem to have been a Hellenistic import to Alexandria, whence they became commonly understood as an Egyptian trait (Bothmer 1996, 225). Söldner identifies the Isis in the plaque with Cleopatra (Söldner 2000, 386), but Strazzulla calls this "inaccettabile" (Strazzulla 1990, 84 n. 163).

To my knowledge, the only other instance of the princeps using Egyptian imagery is not on any monument but on his "aegypto capta" ("Egypt having been captured") coins (e.g., Gentili 2013, cat. nos. 106–8). Here too, as in the Temple of Apollo Palatinus decoration, the motif has no point of contact with the paintings: the reverse features the legend aegypto capta and a crocodile, a motif unattested in wall painting beyond the satyric Pygmy scenes.

Appendix B: Roman Responses to Egyptian Cult: Key Primary Texts from the Republican and Early Imperial Periods

Date of Event	Event	Source	Secondary Literature (Linking Event to Archaeological Evidence)
c. 219-216	L. Aemilius Paulus	Val. Max. 1.3.3	Lafaye 1883, 39-51
or 182-168	condemns temples of Isis		
BC? (Or	and Serapis		
rather 50			
BC?)			
213 BC	Regulus suppresses foreign cults	Livy 25.1.6-8	Ciceroni 1992, 103-107
c. 200-150	Mention of Isiaci coniectores	Cic. Div. 1.58	Lafaye 1883, 39-51;
BC	("Isiac soothsayers")		Ciceroni 1992, 103-107
	reportedly by Ennius		
186 BC 165 BC	Bacchic cult suppressed Demetrios Topographos	Livy 39.8 Diod. Sic. 31.18	Ciceroni 1992, 103-107 Ciceroni 1992, 103-107
	hosts Ptolemy VI in Rome		, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,
105 BC	Officials in Pozzuoli allow work on Serapeum	CIL I, 577	Lafaye 1883, 39-51
c. 80 BC	Priestess belonging to gens	CIL I, 1034 and VI, 2247	Lafaye 1883, 39-51
•. 00 20	Caecilia serving Isis	012 1, 100 1 wild 11, 22 17	Zuiuj v 1002, 29 01
	Capitolina		
c. 72-64 BC	Consul P. Cecilius Metellus	Hist. Aug. 25.4	Ciceroni 1992, 103-107
	Pius erects Iseum	_	
	Metellinum near his domus		
	Tetricorum		
58 BC	Consul A. Gabinius and Piso	Tert. Apol. 6.8	Lafaye 1883, 39-51;
	orders the destruction of		Ciceroni 1992, 103-107
	statues and altars of Isis and		
	Serapis in Rome		
58 BC	Order to destroy temples of Isis and Serapis in Rome	Dio Cass. 40.47	Lafaye 1883, 39-51

54/53 BC	Senate orders the destruction of all buildings, even private, consecrated to Isis and Serapis	Dio Cass. 40.47	Lafaye 1883, 39-51; Ciceroni 1992, 103-107
50 BC	Consul L. Aemilius Paulus orders and begins destruction of temples of Isis in Rome	Val. Max. 1.3.3-4	Lafaye 1883, 39-51; Ciceroni 1992, 103-107
48 BC	Isis and Serapis receive honors on the Capitol	Dio Cass. 42.26.2	Lafaye 1883, 39-51
43 BC	Second Triumvirate votes on a temple of Isis, perhaps never constructed, to replace that destroyed in 48 BC	Dio Cass. 42.15	Ciceroni 1992, 103-107; Vittozzi 1990, 21
43 BC	Aedile M. Volusius, proscribed, flees Rome dressed as Anubis	Val. Max. 7.3.8; App. <i>B Civ.</i> 4.47	Ciceroni 1992, 103-107
c. 45? BC	Caesar houses Cleopatra at Rome	Dio Cass. 43.27; Suet. <i>Iul.</i> 52	Lafaye 1883, 39-51
c. 45? BC	Caesar erects a gold statue of Cleopatra/Isis in the Temple of Venus Genetrix	Suet. Iul. 61	Lafaye 1883, 39-51
??	Alexandrian reforms the Roman calendar to follow the Egyptian calendar	Dio Cass. 43.26	Lafaye 1883, 39-51
28 BC	Augustus (through Agrippa) relegates the cult of Isis outside the Pomerium; Augustus restores Egyptian temples	Dio Cass. 53.2	Lafaye 1883, 39-51; Ciceroni 1992, 103-107; Vittozzi 1990, 21
21 BC	Augustus (through Agrippa) relegates the cult of Isis outside the Pomerium	Dio Cass. 54.6.6	Ciceroni 1992, 103-107; Vittozzi 1990, 21
19 AD	Tiberius abolishes all foreign cults in Rome, stressing Isis and Serapis	Suet. <i>Tib.</i> 36	Yehya 1992.
19 AD	Tiberius demolishes shrines and persecutes priests of Isis and Serapis	Joseph. AJ 18.3.4; Tac. Ann. 2.85	Yehya 1992.
37-39 AD	Caligula erects the first state temple of Isis	Apul. Met. 9.26	Yehya 1992.

Appendix C: Augustus Rejects the Role of Pharaoh

Contrary to the argument that construes the pharaonic crowns in the Upper Cubiculum as symbols of triumph, this would be a very strange choice of iconography for the princeps to adopt for this purpose—because he had no interest in maintaining a semblance of continuity with the Ptolemaic dynasty. His disregard for perpetuating the Egyptian line is apparent in numerous ways. After conquering Alexandria, he refused to perform the usual animal sacrifice to Apis that was required of the pharaoh, and likewise refused to accept the traditional pharaonic titles: when he is depicted in relief on temples, his cartouches are often empty—a sign of the Egyptians' uncertainty about what to do with a ruler who refused to be crowned pharaoh.³³² He also seems not to have received the dynastic cult that was practiced under the Ptolemies; no priests were assigned to his worship, again indicating that "the Roman state wanted to remove itself markedly from the dynasty cult of the Ptolemaic period."333 In fact, that the princeps did not merely disregard the Ptolemaic dynasty but actively disdained it is suggested by Cassius Dio's account of Augustus visiting the tomb of Alexander the Great in Alexandria. After viewing and even touching the body of Alexander, Augustus "declined to view the remains of the Ptolemies, though the Alexandrians were extremely eager to show them, remarking, 'I wished to see a king, not corpses.",334

Instead, when the princeps decided to represent himself as the conqueror of Egypt, he chose not a pharaonic king as his model but Alexander the Great.³³⁵ His admiring visit to Alexander's tomb reflects his desire to model himself on the Hellenistic ruler, as does his use of a signet ring incised with Alexander's image.³³⁶ In artistic representations too the princeps distanced himself from the Ptolemies and assimilated himself to Alexander. In Egypt "there are only extremely few portraits that show the Roman emperor in the guise of the pharaoh;" instead, he is often depicted wearing the diadem as a reference to Alexander.³³⁷ Thus the princeps rejected

³³² Refusing the Apis sacrifice: Minas-Nerpel 2011, 132. The empty cartouches are very unlikely to represent "errors" made by the priests (suggested by Herklotz 2007, 400) or rebellion on their part (Minas-Nerpel 2011, 138–40). On the princeps refusing the pharaonic titles: Minas-Nerpel 2011, 134–6, Dundas 2002, 442–6.

³³³ Herklotz 2007, 400–1.

 $^{^{334}}$ "τὰ δὲ δὴ τῶν Πτολεμαίων, καίτοι τῶν Ἀλεξανδρέων σπουδῆ Βουληθέντων αὐτῷ δεῖξαι, οὐκ ἐθεάσατο, εἰπὼν ὅτι Βασιλέα ἀλλ' οὐ νεκροὺς ἰδεῖν ἐπεθύμησα" (Dio Cass. 51.16.55). Dio's account repeats that of Suet. Aug.~18.11.

³³⁵ I am indebted to Christopher Hallett for this point. On the multiple ways in which Octavian's takeover of Egypt differed from Alexander's, see Minas-Nerpel 2011, 132, with further references.

³³⁶ Visit to the mausoleum: Suet. *Aug.* 18.11; Dio Cas. 51.16.55. Seal ring: Suet. *Aug.* 50.51.

³³⁷ Herklotz assumes that the princeps' diademed portraits "were reworked from Ptolemaic portraits and the complete removal of the diadem was not possible" (Herklotz 2007, 381), but in view of the overwhelming evidence for the princeps modeling himself on Alexander, that scenario is much less likely than the conscious use of the diadem to recall Alexander. The Ptolemies wore the diadem as well as pharaonic crowns in their depictions in Egypt, although to what extent they wore the latter in real life (and in their artistic representations outside of Egypt) is unclear; see further at n. 139.

not only the traditional pharaonic honors but also the traditional pharaonic iconography in favor of his personal Hellenistic hero.³³⁸

If the princeps had reason to spurn pharaonic crowns even in Egypt, in Rome the motivation was even stronger. There he did not even wear the diadem of Alexander, perhaps aware of the fact that Romans were predisposed to revile monarchy as signified by royal headgear—illustrated by the uproar when Julius Caesar was crowned.³³⁹ Further, the potential threat of assuming the Egyptian trappings of the just-defeated enemy queen must have been stark: Octavian had so strenuously vilified Cleopatra that assimilating himself to her in any way was simply out of the question.³⁴⁰ In view of this potential hazard, as well as the princeps' total rejection of the Egyptian kingship and Ptolemaic dynasty, it would be absurd for him to use pharaonic iconography in his house as a sign of his triumph over Egypt.

³³⁸ Two surviving examples depict the princeps wearing the atef and double crowns (on the Kalabsha Gate and the Buchis Stele, respectively; see Minas-Nerpel 2011, 135–6), but it is no accident that they come from the first two years of the princeps' rule: at that time the Egyptian population was still hopeful that he would perform the expected pharaonic functions. Indeed, the Egyptians *needed* to portray their ruler with these attributes in order for him to fulfill his role as guarantor of order, so it is not surprising that they sought to represent him so; but just so, it must be stressed that in Rome there was no such pressure to follow these prescriptions.

³³⁹ Suet. Aug. 79.

³⁴⁰ Wyke 2009.

Figures



Fig. 1. House of the Golden Cupids, peristyle shrine: Egyptian cult instruments and divinities. Ca. AD 50–79. Pompeii.



Fig. 2. House of the Vettii, Room v: lararium depicting household gods. Ca. AD 50–79. Pompeii.



Fig. 3. Temple of Isis in Pompeii, inner shrine: Egyptian priest in boat, busts of Egyptian divinities, and Italic snakes. Ca. AD 50–79. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 8927.



Fig. 4. Plan of "House of Augustus" on the Palatine Hill, Rome. Upper Cubiculum is on second floor, above Rooms 14/15. Image: Carettoni 1983, n. p.



Fig. 5. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: overall view of walls (facing east) and ceiling. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome. Photo: Andersson 2010, n. p.



Fig. 6. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: overall view of east wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.

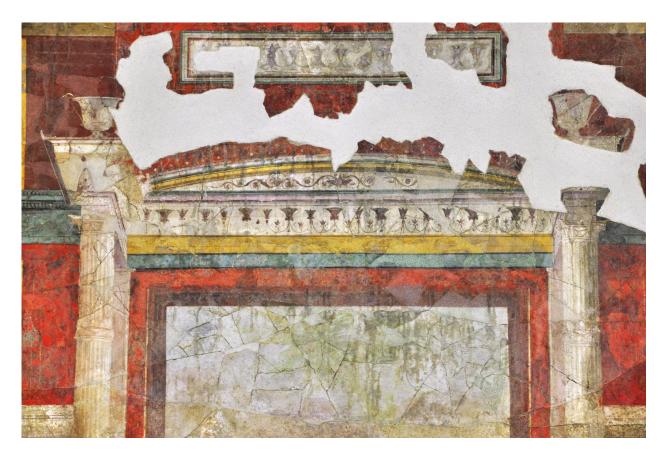


Fig. 7. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: aedicula with lunate pediment on east wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.



Fig. 8. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: aedicula with volute pediment on north wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.



Fig. 9. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: detail of aedicula with volute pediment and frieze of swans on north wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.



Fig. 10. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: upper register with floriform candelabra on east wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.



Fig. 11. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: ceiling (facing east). Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.



Fig. 12. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: ceiling, north side. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.



Fig. 13. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: ceiling detail (facing east). Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.



Fig. 14. Villa Farnesina, Cubiculum B: late Second-Style painting scheme. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.



Fig. 15. Villa at Portici: late Second-Style painting scheme. Ca. 40–20 BC. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 8593.

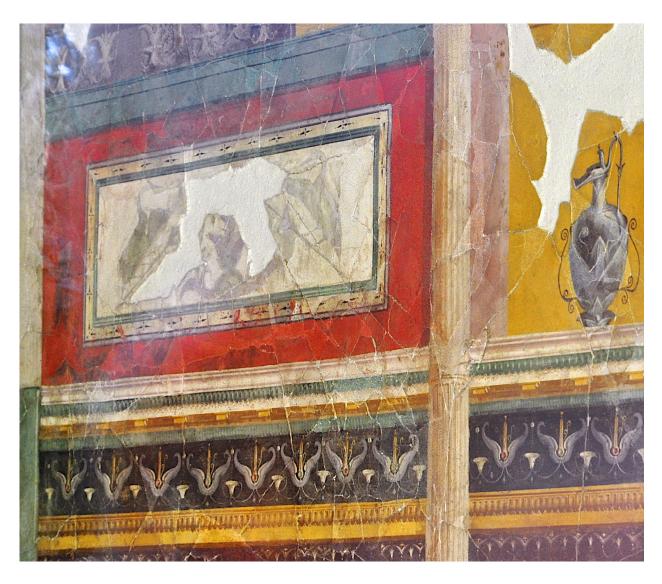


Fig. 16. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: detail of white panel with cranes and black frieze with crowns on south wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.

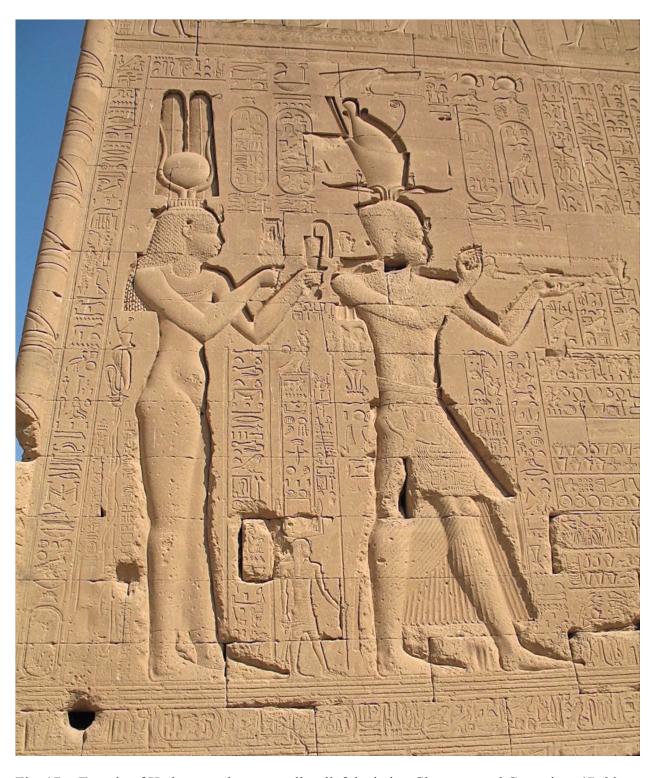


Fig. 17. Temple of Hathor, south outer wall: relief depicting Cleopatra and Caesarion. 47–30 BC. Dendera.



Fig. 18. Statuette of Isis from Pompeii. Bronze. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 75620 (E 344).



Fig. 19. Shuty crown from statuette of Isis found in Pompeii. Bronze. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 3501.

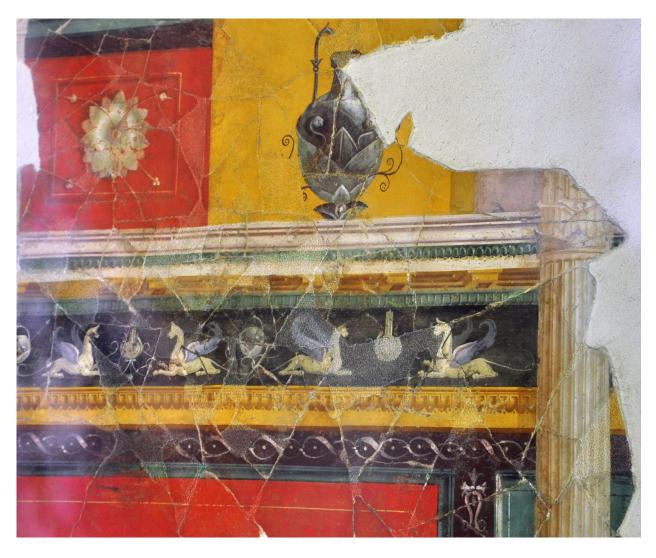


Fig. 20. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: detail of black frieze with crowns and griffins on south wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.

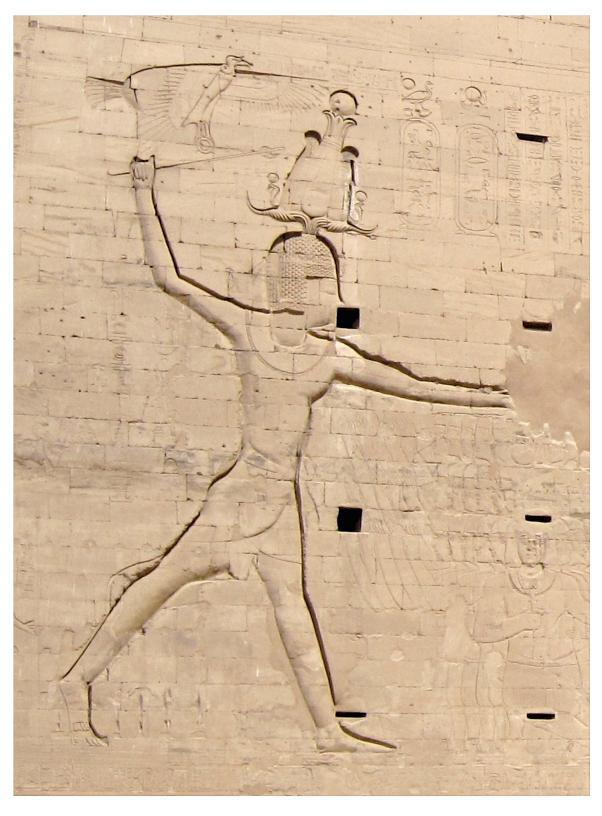


Fig. 21. Temple of Horus, pylon, western extent: relief depicting Ptolemy XII smiting enemies. 57 BC. Edfu.



Fig. 22. Pilaster capital depicting head of Hathor with shrine and uraei wearing pharaonic crowns; found on the Palatine Hill in Rome. Marble. 1st c. AD. Rome, Museo Palatino. Photo: Christopher Hallett.



Fig. 23. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: detail of black panel and black frieze with crowns on east wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome.

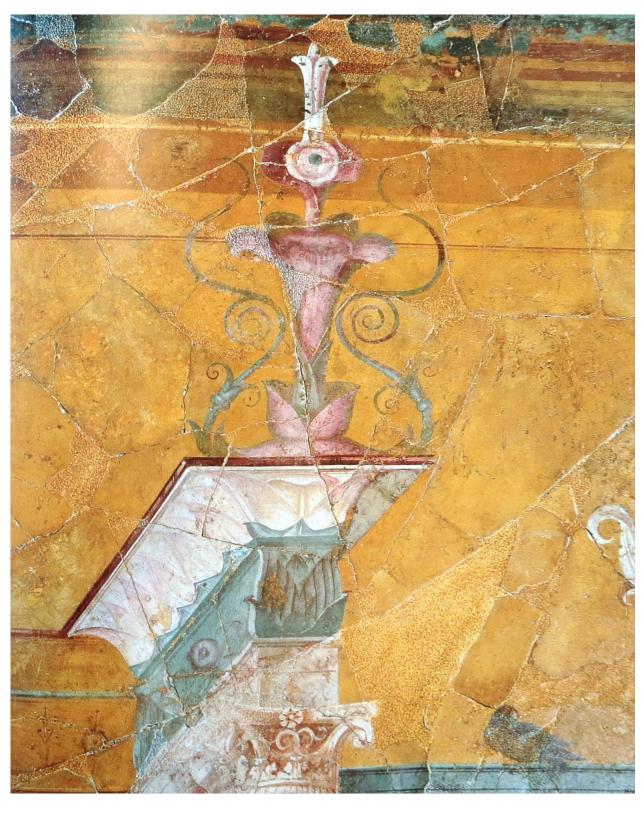


Fig. 24. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: shuty crown as acroterium on north wall. Ca. 42–20 BC. Rome. Photo: Iacopi 2008, 39.



Fig. 25. Aula Isiaca: fresco of shuty crowns and uraeus snakes on east wall (overall view and detail). Ca. 40–20 BC. Rome.



Fig. 26. Coin depicting bust of Octavian and triumphal arch, possibly the Actium Arch. Silver. Ca. 29–27 BC. London, British Museum, inv. 1843,1024.244. Photo: British Museum Image Service.

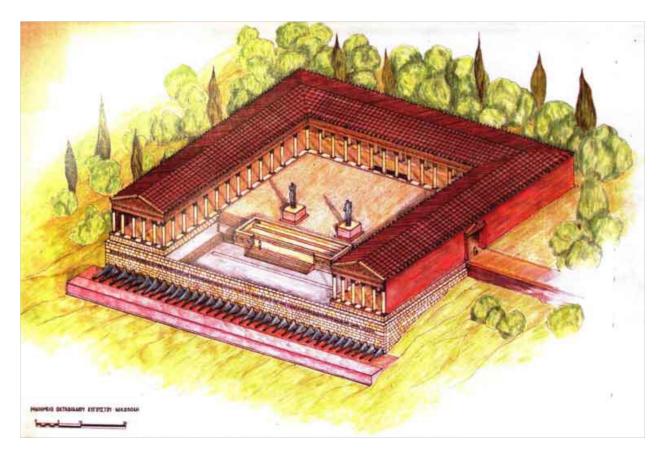


Fig. 27. Victory monument at Actium (now Nicopolis, Preveza, Greece): reconstruction drawing of sanctuary with ships' prows inserted into terrace wall. Ca. 29 BC. Photo: E.P.K.A.



Fig. 28. Coin depicting bust of Octavian and columna rostrata. Silver. Ca. 29–27 BC. London, British Museum, inv. R6168. Photo: British Museum Image Service.

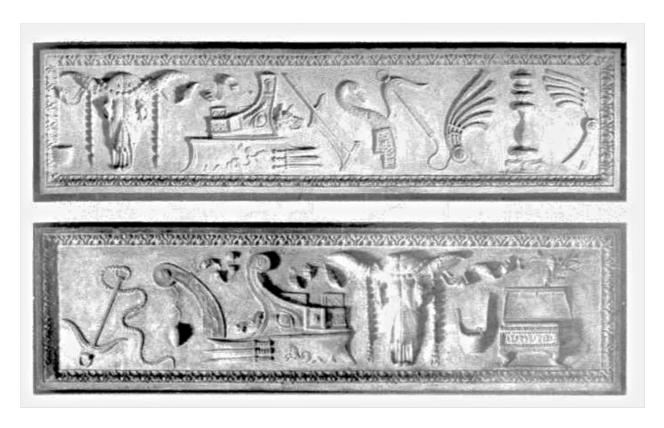


Fig. 29. Reliefs depicting ships' prows, anchors, and sacral objects. Marble. Late 1st c. BC. Rome, Capitoline Museums. Photo: Hölscher 2009, figs. 10.1–10.2.



Fig. 30. Coin depicting winged victory on a prow and a quadriga. Silver. Ca. 29–27 BC. London, British Museum, inv. R6164. Photo: British Museum Image Service.





Fig. 31. Temple of Apollo Palatinus: herms of Danaids. Basalt. Ca. 36–28 BC. Rome, Palatine Museum, inv. 1056, 1053.



Fig. 32. Temple of Apollo Palatinus: relief plaque depicting Isis and sphinxes. Terracotta. Ca. 36–28. Rome, Palatine Museum.





Fig. 33. Villa of the Mysteries: elevation drawing and detail of atrium frescoes depicting spolia. Ca. 50 BC. Pompeii.



Fig. 34. Villa of the Papyri: stucco ceiling decoration depicting spolia. Ca. AD 50–79. Herculaneum. Photo: Domenico Esposito.

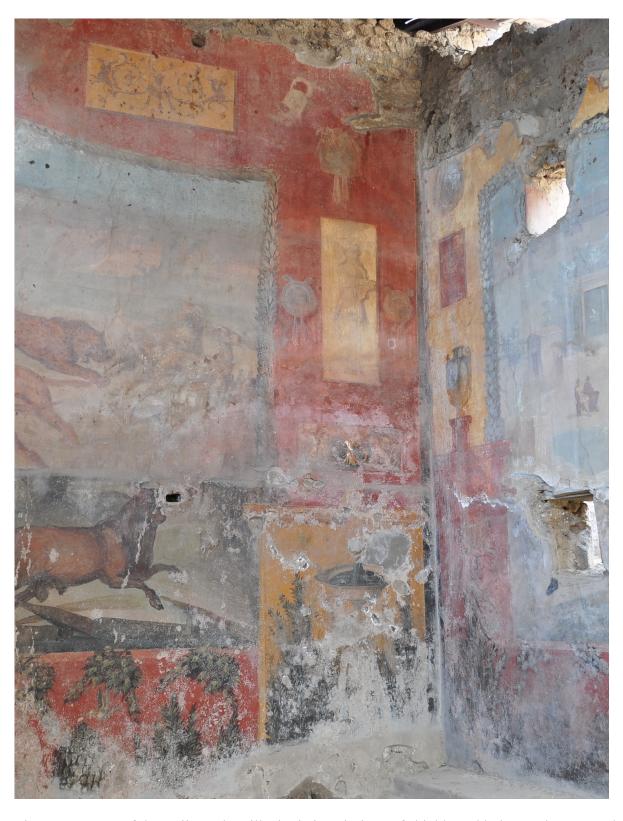


Fig. 35. House of the Ceii, garden: illusionistic paintings of shields and helmets "hung" on the wall. 1st c. AD. Pompeii.



Fig. 36. Ash urn depicting spolia. Marble. First half of 1st c. AD. New York, The Metropolitan Museum, inv. 2002.297 and 2002.568. Photo: Picón et al. 2007, cat. no. 438.

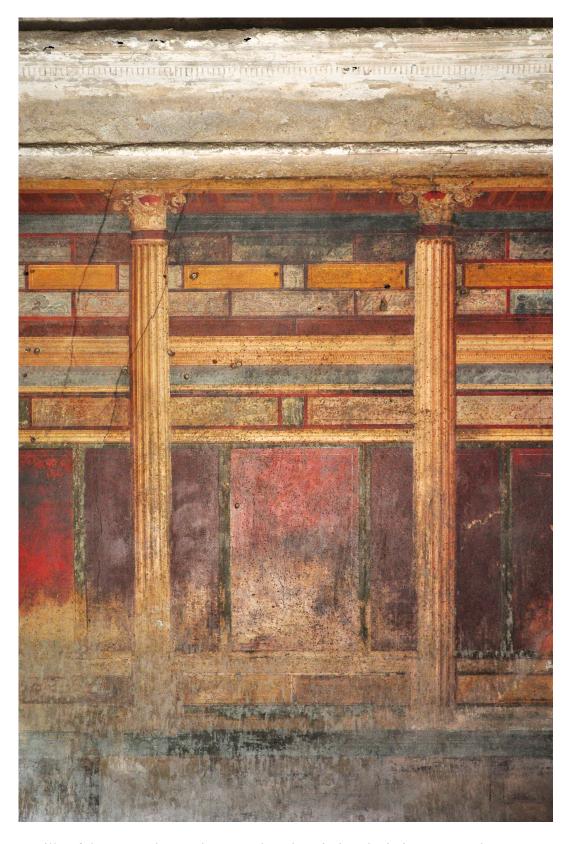


Fig. 37. Villa of the Mysteries: early Second-Style painting depicting stone columns. Ca. 70 BC. Pompeii.

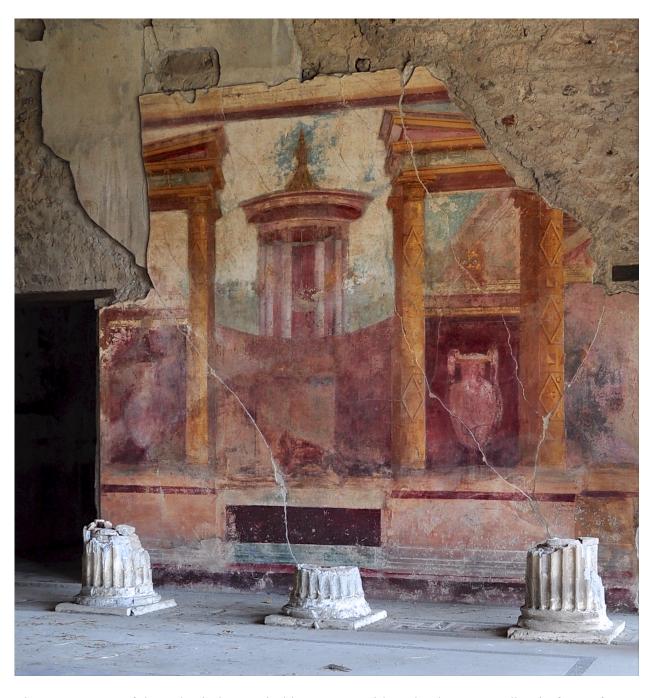


Fig. 38. House of the Labyrinth: "Corinthian oecus" with real columns standing in front of paintings of columns. Ca. 50 BC. Pompeii.

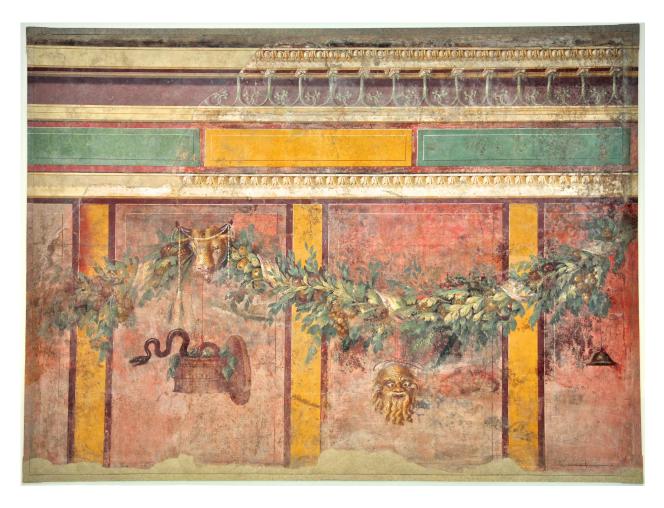


Fig. 39. Villa of P. Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale, Exedra L: frescoes depicting garlands hung with mask and cista. Ca. 50–40 BC. New York, The Metropolitan Museum, inv. 03.14.4.



Fig. 40. Villa A at Oplontis, Room 15: frescoes depicting architecture that houses pinakes with shutters (upper left), theater masks, and peacocks (center left and right). Ca. 50 BC. Oplontis. Photo: Schmidt 2010.

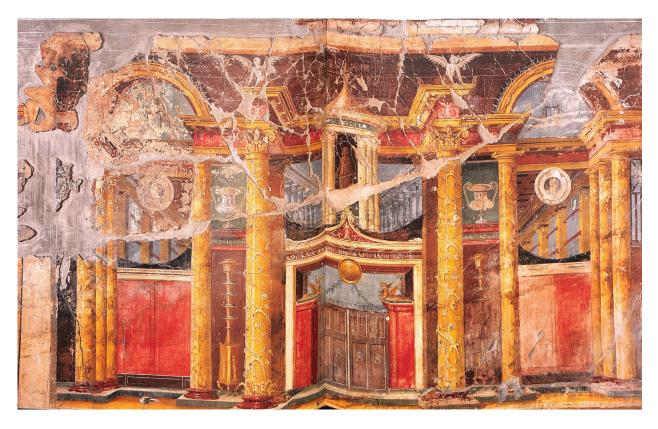


Fig. 41. Villa A at Oplontis, Triclinium 14: frescoes on west wall. Ca. 50 BC. Oplontis. Photo: Mazzoleni 2004, interleaf.



Fig. 42. Calyx crater from triclinium of House of Julius Polybius, Pompeii. Bronze. 1st c. BC or 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum. Photo: Barbanera 2013, fig. 1.



Fig. 43. Cantharus from Meroe, Sudan. Silver. Late 1st c. BC–early 1st c. AD. Boston, Harvard University, Museum of Fine Arts Expedition, inv. 24.876. Photo: MFA Image Service.



Fig. 44. Cantharus with cranes, found in Villa Pisanella, Boscoreale. Silver. 1st c. BC or 1st c. AD. Paris, Louvre Museum.

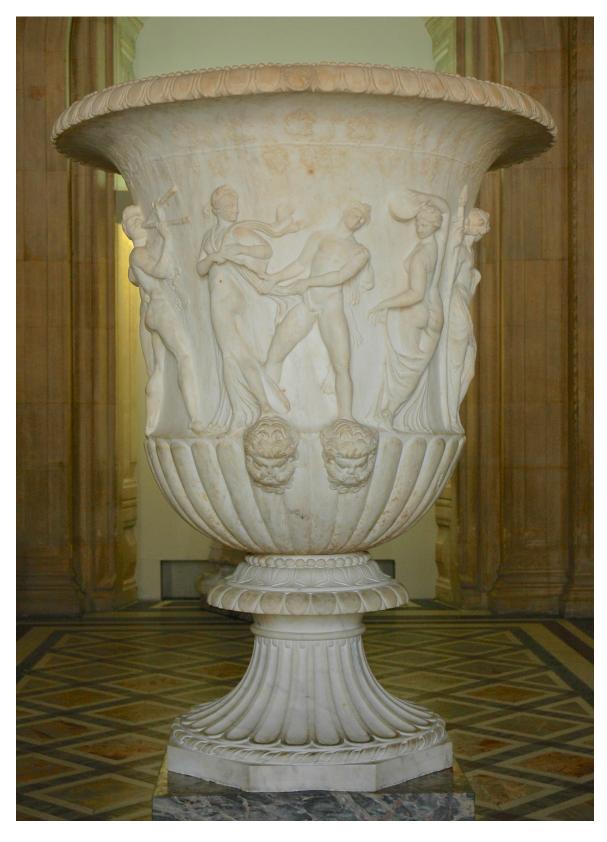


Fig. 45. Borghese Crater. Marble. Ca. 40–30 BC. Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. Ma 86.

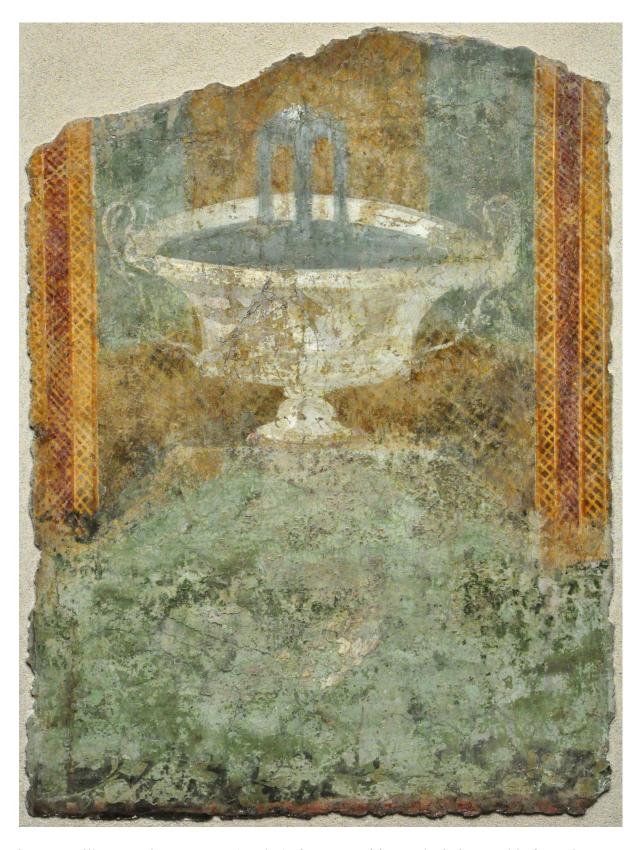


Fig. 46. Villa Farnesina, Room L (garden): fragment of fresco depicting marble fountain. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.



Fig. 47. Large basin used as fountain, found in the "Gardens of Agrippina," Rome. Marble. Early 1st c. BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo, inv. 113189.



Fig. 48. Large basin used as fountain, found in the "Gardens of Agrippina," Rome: detail of holes for plumbing and drainage. Marble. Early 1st c. BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo, inv. 113189.



Fig. 49. Villa A at Oplontis, viridarium: detail of fresco depicting marble fountain. 1st c. AD. Oplontis.



Fig. 50. Crater found in east garden of Villa A at Oplontis. Marble. 1st c. AD. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei.



Fig. 51. Mosaic floor depicting cantharus in "fresco cubiculum" of Villa di Castel di Guido. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.

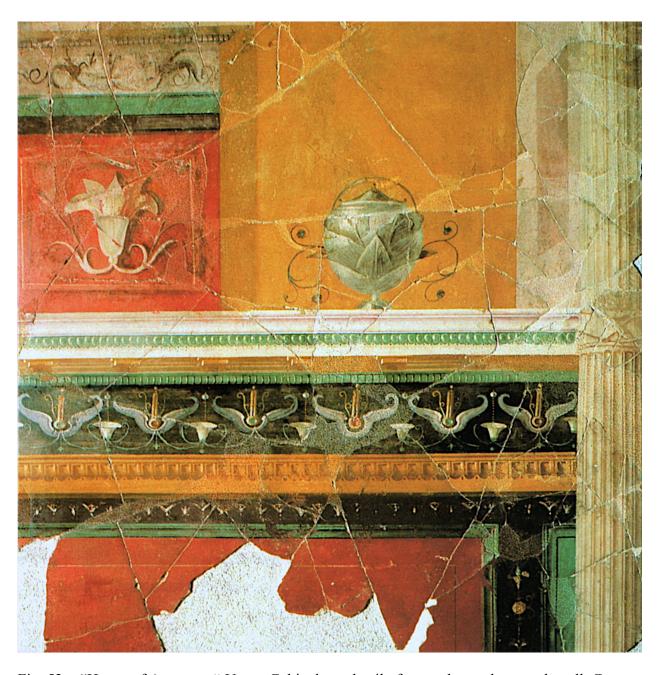


Fig. 52. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: detail of vegetal vessel on north wall. Ca. 45–20 BC. Rome. Photo: Ling 1991, pl. IVA.



Fig. 53. "Egyed Hydria." Bronze inlaid with silver and gold. Found in Sopron, Hungary. 1st c. AD. Budapest, National Hungarian Museum, inv. MNM RR 10/1951.104. Photo: Hungarian National Museum (© MNM).



Fig. 54. "Egyed Hydria:" detail of crowns on shoulder. Bronze inlaid with silver and gold. Found in Sopron, Hungary. 1st c. AD. Budapest, National Hungarian Museum, inv. MNM RR 10/1951.104. Photo: Hungarian National Museum (© MNM).



Fig. 55. "House of Augustus," Upper Cubiculum: detail of vegetal candelabrum on south wall. Ca. 45–20 BC. Rome. Photo: Söldner 2000, fig. 4.



Fig. 56. Fragment of Second-Style wall painting depicting floriform candelabrum. Unknown provenance. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 9762.





Fig. 57. House of the Cryptoporticus, bath complex: frescoes depicting candelabrum (overall and detail view). Ca. AD 50–60. Pompeii.



Fig. 58. Candelabrum found in shipwreck near Mahdia, Tunisia. Marble. 1st c. BC. Tunis, Bardo Museum, inv. C 1208. Photo: Hellenkemper Salies 1994, pl. 6.



Fig. 59. Villa of Agrippa Postumus at Boscotrecase, Room 19: fresco depicting candelabrum and square black panel with Egyptian figure. Ca. 10 BC. New York, The Metropolitan Museum, 1920, 20.192.12, .14.



Fig. 60. Pair of gold earrings with miniature amphorae made of emeralds. From tomb in el-Ashmunein, Egypt. 2nd c. BC. London, British Museum, inv. 1904,0706.1. Photo: British Museum Image Service.



Fig. 61. Rock crystal alabastron with gold chain. Reportedly from tomb in Apameia, Syria. Ca. 30 BC–AD 20. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikensammlung, inv. 1981.17. Photo: Platz-Horster 2001, cat. no. 52.



Fig. 62. Glass tiles presumed to be from Egypt. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 1977.861f, h-i.



Fig. 63. Glass tile. Late 1st c. BC–1st c. AD. New York, The Metropolitan Museum, inv. 1917, 17.194.382. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum web catalog.



Fig. 64. Glass tile with preserved ancient wooden frame. Purchased in Egypt. 1st c. BC. London, British Museum, inv. EA29396. Photo: British Museum Image Service.



Fig. 65. Furniture leg in the shape of Horus wearing sun disc, inlaid with glass tiles (including name of Ptolemy V). Wood and glass. 204–181 BC. London, British Museum, inv. 71019. Photo: British Museum Image Service.



Fig. 66. Glass tile depicting Apis bull. Found in Pompeii. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 151747. Photo: De Caro 2006, cat. no. III.99.

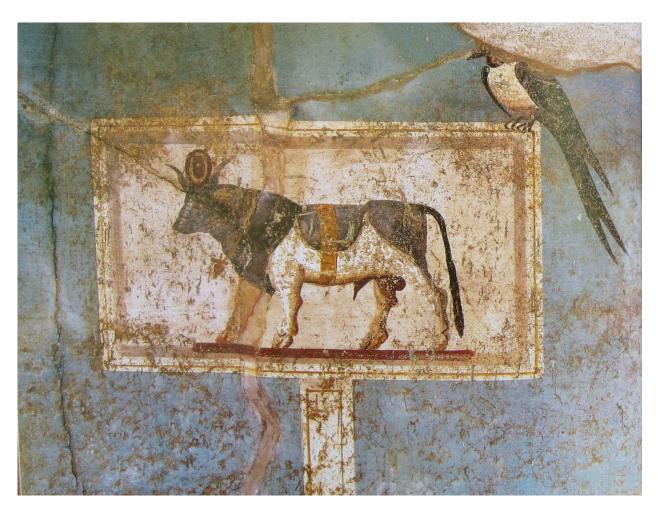


Fig. 67. House of the Orchard: detail of wall painting depicting plaque with Apis bull. Ca. 10 BC–AD 40. Pompeii. Photo: De Caro 2006, 166.



Fig. 68. House of the Orchard: fresco depicting garden and marble relief plaques with Greek and Egyptian subjects. Ca. 10 BC–AD 40. Pompeii. Photo: Mazzoleni 2004, 311.



Fig. 69. Marble panel with painting of sphinx. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 152902.



Fig. 70. "House of Augustus," Room 14: detail of frescoes depicting white relief figures on red ground. Ca. 45–20 BC. Rome.



Fig. 71. Obsidian skyphos inlaid with stone, glass, and gold. Found in frigidarium of Villa San Marco, Stabia. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 294472. Photo: Jessica Sue Wiles.

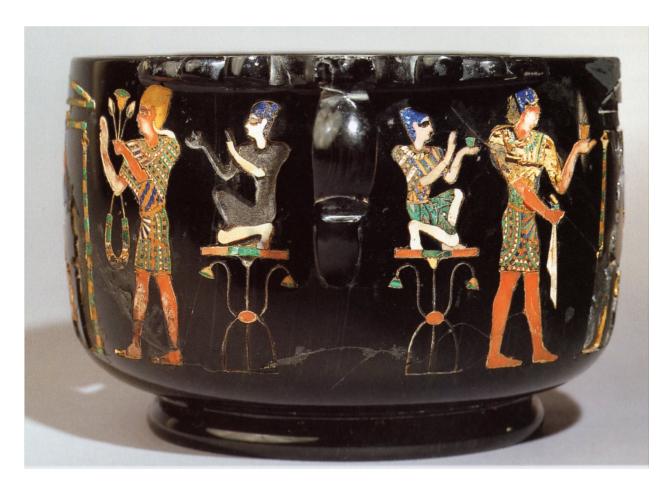


Fig. 72. Obsidian skyphos inlaid with stone, glass, and gold. Found in frigidarium of Villa San Marco, Stabia. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 294473. Photo: Ciarallo and de Carolis 1999.



Fig. 73. Temple of Isis, portico: fragment of fresco with vegetal design. From Pompeii. Ca. AD 50–79. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 8554.

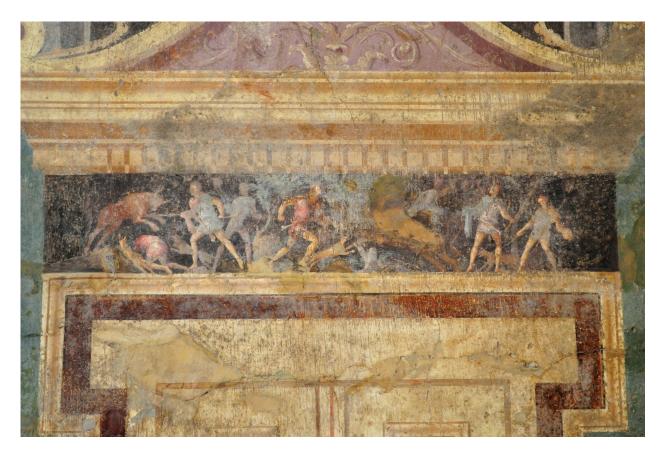


Fig. 74. Villa of P. Fannius Synistor, Triclinium G: detail of fresco depicting black-ground frieze over door. From Boscoreale. Ca. 50–40 BC. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. n. n.



Fig. 75. "Mensa Isiaca." Bronze inlaid with silver and niello. Turin, Egyptian Museum, inv. 7155. Photo: Arslan 1997, 28–9.



Fig. 76. Villa Farnesina, Triclinium C: detail of fresco depicting Egyptian crowns with triangle border. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.



Fig. 77. Mosaic depicting men in reed boats and Nilotic animals, surrounded by triangle border. From near Cellae Vinariae Nova et Arruntiana sul Lungotevere alla Lungara. Early 2nd c. AD. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.

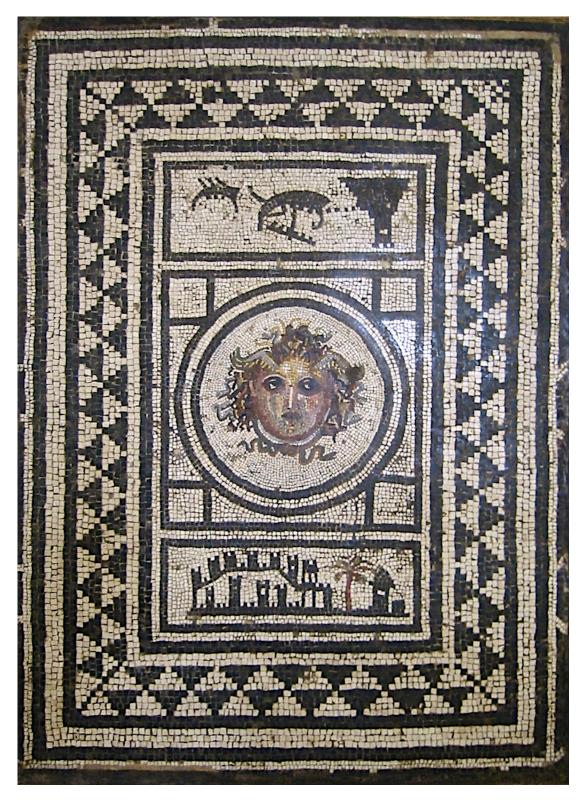


Fig. 78. Mosaic with Egyptian scenes, including lighthouse, surrounded by triangle border. From House of the Centenary, Pompeii. Ca. 1st c. BC–1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 112284.



Fig. 79. Purple cloth woven with gold threads. From Tomb II at Vergina, Greece. 4th c. BC. Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki Archaeological Museum. Photo: Hallett 2015.



Fig. 80. "Republican temple" of Brescia: fresco depicting cloth in dado. Ca. 75–40 BC. Brescia, Italy. Photo: Ardovino 2001, 51 fig. 4.

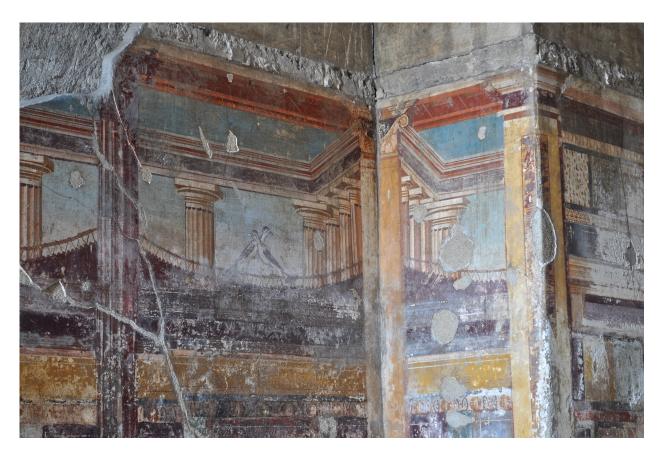


Fig. 81. House of the Labyrinth, Oecus: fresco depicting curtain hung between columns. Ca. 50 BC. Pompeii.

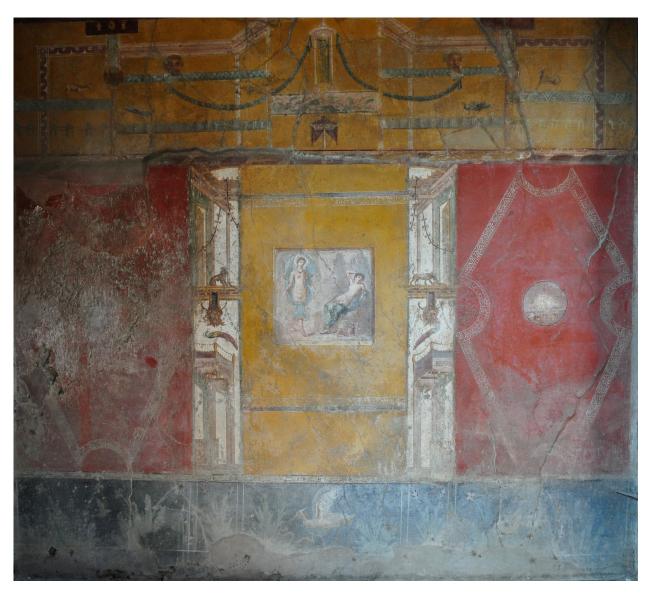


Fig. 82. House of the Great Altar: fresco depicting tapestry borders (left and right panels). Ca. AD 50–79. Pompeii.



Fig. 83. House of Meleager: fresco depicting "Vorhänge" panels with curving edges (left and right panels). Ca. AD 50–79. Pompeii. Photo: Dane Lutes-Koths.



Fig. 84. House of the Golden Cupids, Room I: fresco with tapestry-like pattern. Ca. AD 50–79. Pompeii.



Fig. 85. Sarcophagus with philosopher scenes. Marble. 3rd c. AD. Rome, Vatican Museums (Pio-Clementino), inv. 17PO. Photo: Mont Allen.



Fig. 86. Sarcophagus depicting Dionysiac procession. Marble. Rome, Capitoline Museums, inv. 1378. Photo: Mont Allen.



Fig. 87. Mummy case of Taminis. From Akhmim, Egypt. 1st c. BC–1st c. AD. London, British Museum, inv. EA29586. Photo: British Museum Image Service.



Fig. 88. Coptic textile fragment with triangle border. From Akhmim, Egypt. 4th c. AD (?). London, British Museum, inv. EA21631. Photo: British Museum Image Service.



Fig. 89. Mummy mask with patterns including triangle borders. Cartonnage. Possibly from Tebtunis. Ca. 30 BC–AD 323. Berkeley, Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology, inv. 6-20109.

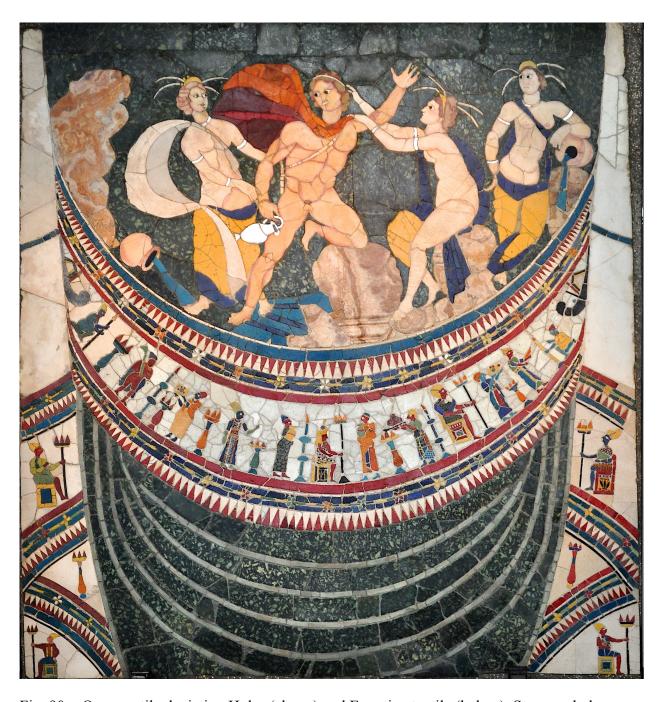


Fig. 90. Opus sectile depicting Hylas (above) and Egyptian textile (below). Stone and glass. From Basilica of Junius Bassus, Rome. First half of 4th c. AD. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.



Fig. 91. Villa Farnesina, Cubiculum B: detail of fresco depicting two white-ground pinakes on stands in the form of Sirens atop griffin feet. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.

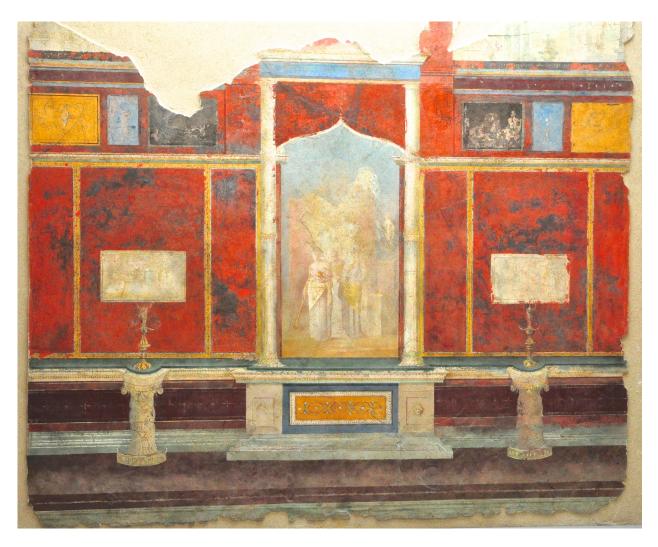


Fig. 92. Villa Farnesina, Cubiculum D: detail of fresco depicting two white-ground pinakes on bronze stands in the form of caryatids atop a bulbous ornamental shaft and griffin feet. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.

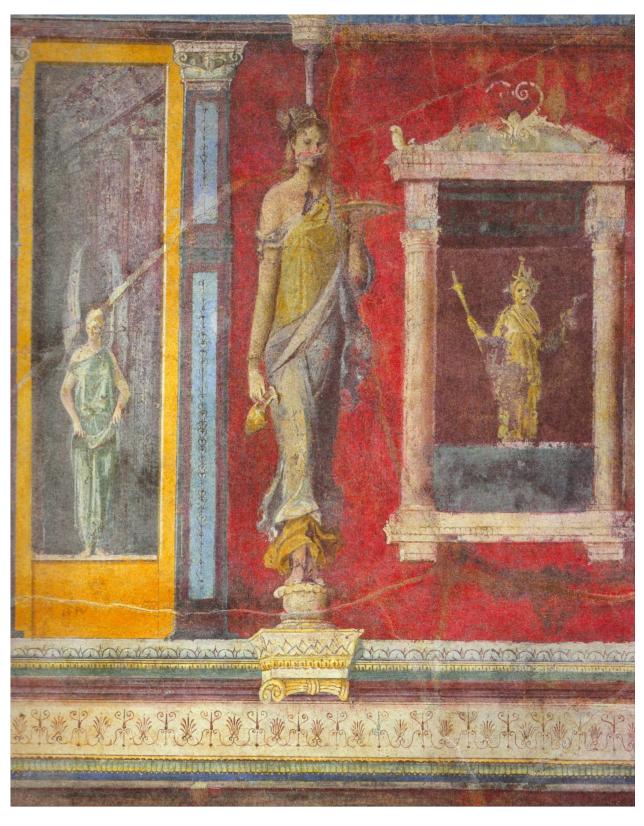


Fig. 93. Villa Farnesina, Cubiculum B: detail of fresco depicting caryatid beside bronze statuette in aedicula. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.

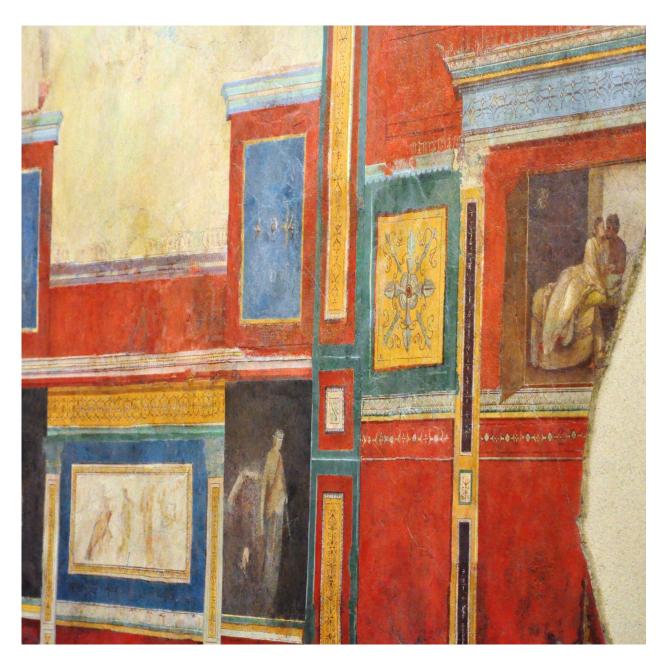


Fig. 94. Villa Farnesina, Cubiculum B: detail of fresco depicting erotic pinax, white-ground panel painting, and square yellow panel with vegetal motif and gemstone. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.



Fig. 95. Gems in gold settings, gilded bronze leaves and tendrils. Presumed to be wall decoration in shrine for imperial cult. Found near Horti Lamiani on Esquiline Hill, Rome. Late 2nd–early 3rd c. AD? Rome, Capitoline Museums.

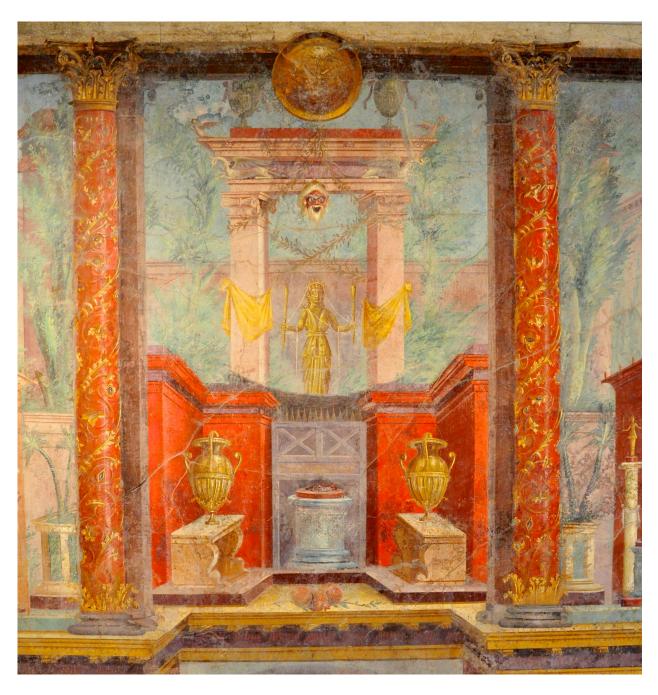


Fig. 96. Villa of P. Fannius Synistor, Cubiculum M: detail of fresco depicting columns wrapped in gold tendrils with gemstones. From Boscoreale. Ca. 50–40 BC. New York, The Metropolitan Museum, inv. 03.14.13 a–g.



Fig. 97. Domus Transitoria: detail of fresco with embedded glass hemisphere. From Palatine Hill, Rome. Ca. AD 54–68. Rome, Palatine Museum, inv. 381404-5-6.

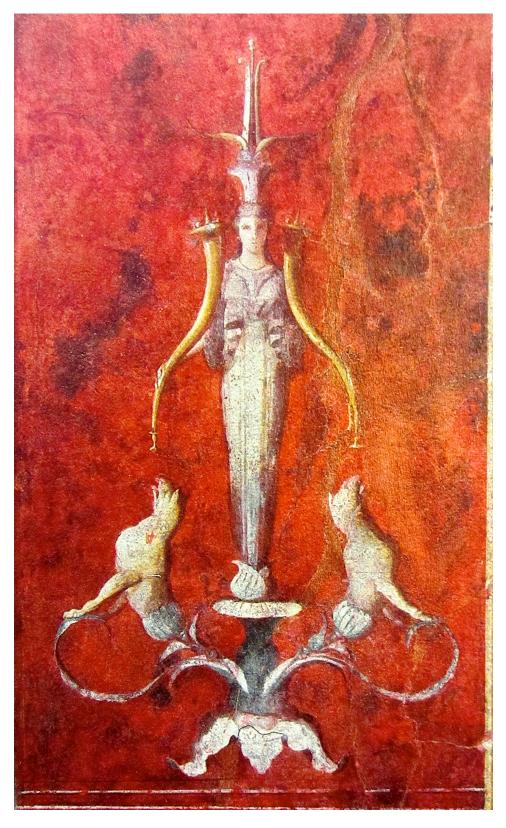


Fig. 98. Villa Farnesina, Cubiculum B: detail of fresco depicting hybrid vegetal figure with Isiac attributes. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.

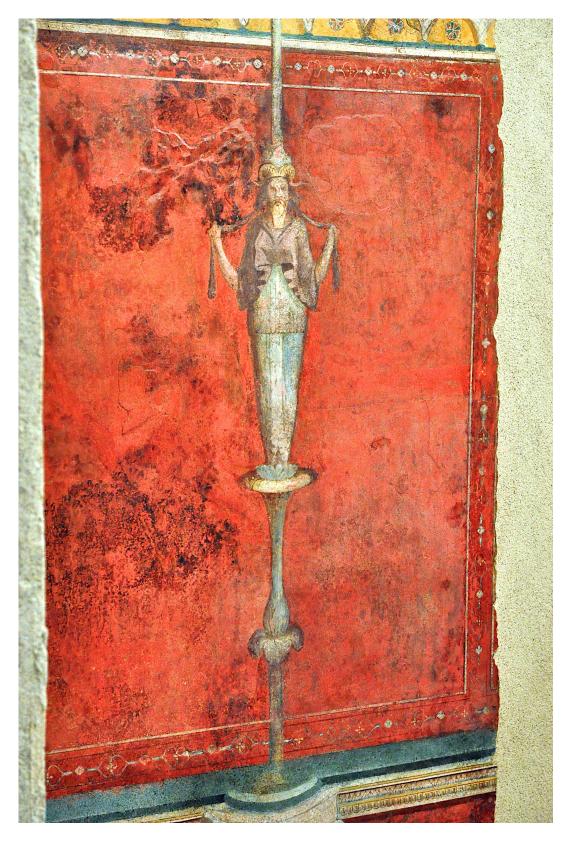


Fig. 99. Villa Farnesina, Cubiculum B: detail of fresco depicting hybrid vegetal figure with ram horns. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.

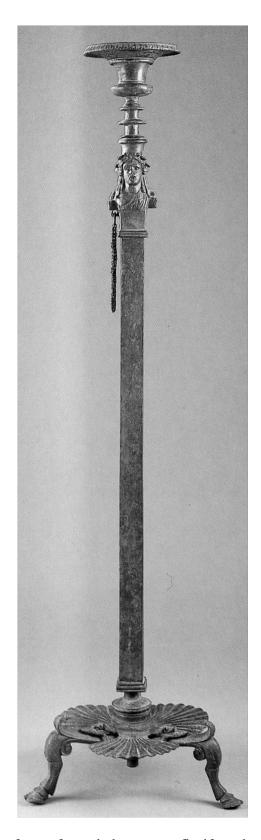


Fig. 100. Candelabrum in the form of a male herm on a floriform base. Bronze. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum. Photo: Stefanelli 1990, figs. 187–8.

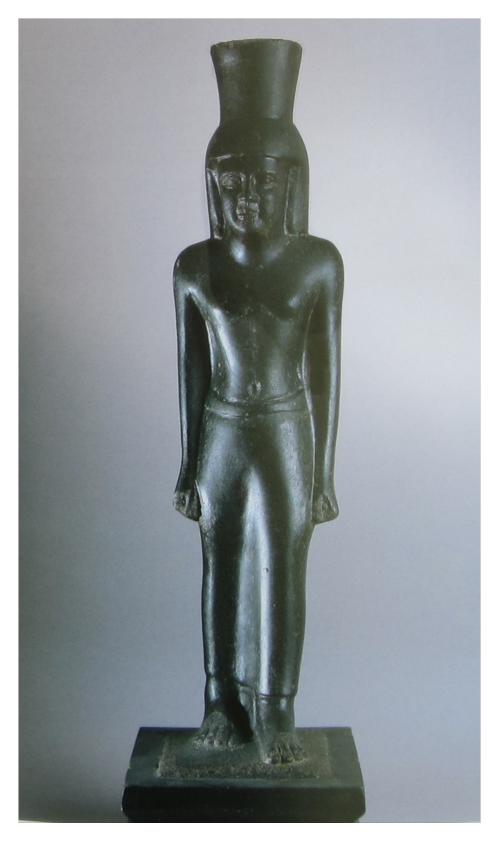


Fig. 101. Table leg in form of a man. Basalt. From Pompeii. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 1095. Photo: De Caro 2006, cat. no. III.116.



Fig. 102. Table leg or statuette in form of Egyptian god Bes. Bronze. From Herculaneum. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. coll. Egizia 184. Photo: De Caro 2006, cat. III.46.

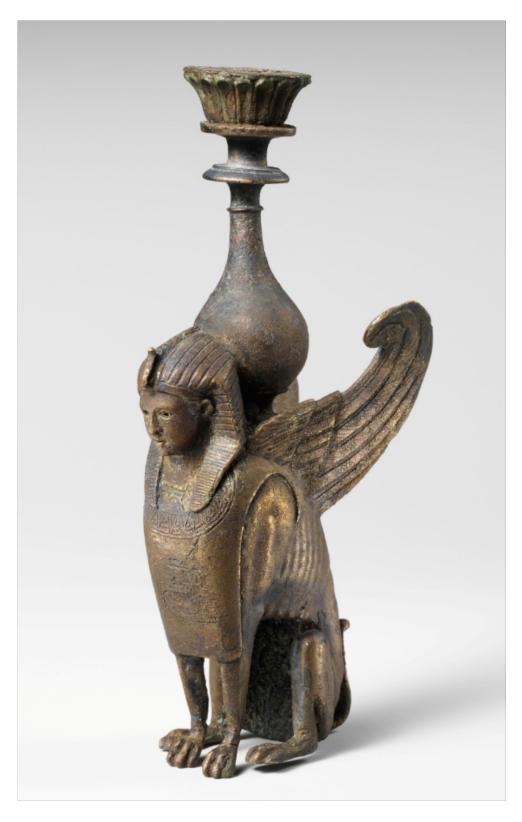


Fig. 103. Furnishing (likely a table leg) in the shape of the Egyptian god Tutu-Tithoes (sphinx with snake tail). Bronze. Late 1st c. BC–early 1st c. AD. New York, The Metropolitan Museum, inv. 2006.514.2. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum web catalog.



Fig. 104. Statuette of Ihat, priest of Amun. Bronze with silver inlay. Ca. 610–589 BC. From Ephesus, Terrace Houses. Selçuk, Ephesus Museum inv. 1965. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.





Fig. 105. Table support with sphinx statuette and head of Athena (overall and detail view). Bronze. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. n. n. Photo: Stefanelli 1990, fig. 113.

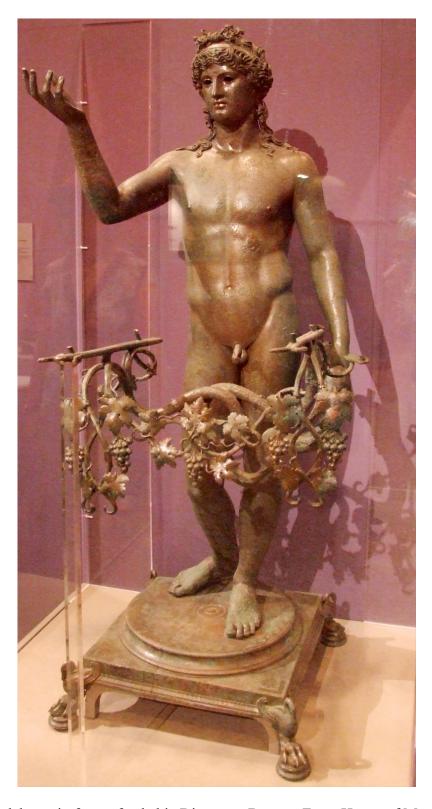


Fig. 106. Candelabrum in form of ephebic Dionysus. Bronze. From House of Marcus Fabius Rufus, Pompeii. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 13112. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 107. Silver hoard from Villa Pisanella, Boscoreale. End of 1st c. BC–first half of 1st c. AD. Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. Bj 1901–Bj 1970.

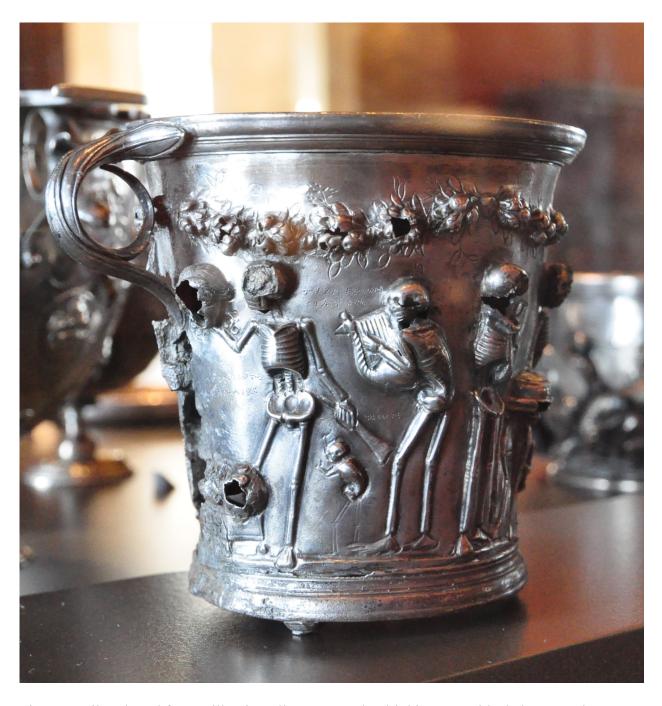


Fig. 108. Silver hoard from Villa Pisanella, Boscoreale: drinking cup with skeletons and inscriptions. End of 1st c. BC–first half of 1st c. AD. Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. Bj 1923.

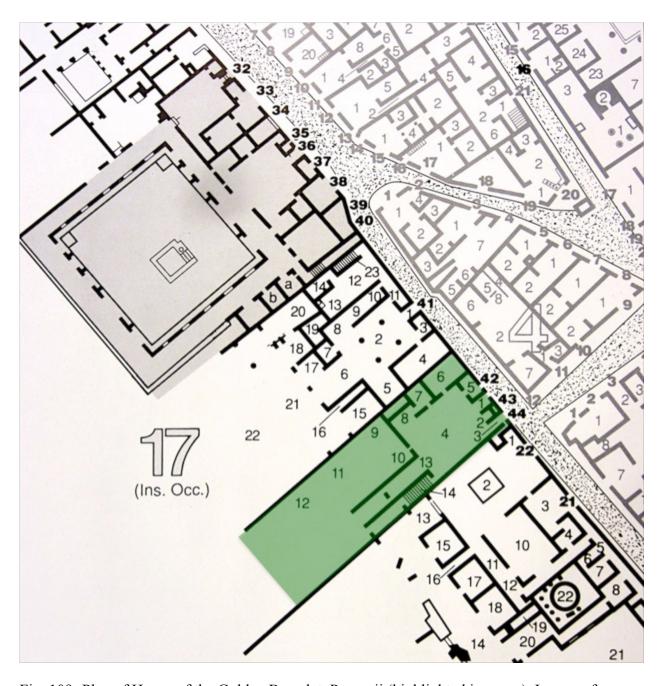


Fig. 109. Plan of House of the Golden Bracelet, Pompeii (highlighted in green). Image: after PPM 6, 45.



Fig. 110. Plan of House of the Golden Bracelet, Pompeii. Image: after Ciardiello 2012, figs. 1–3.

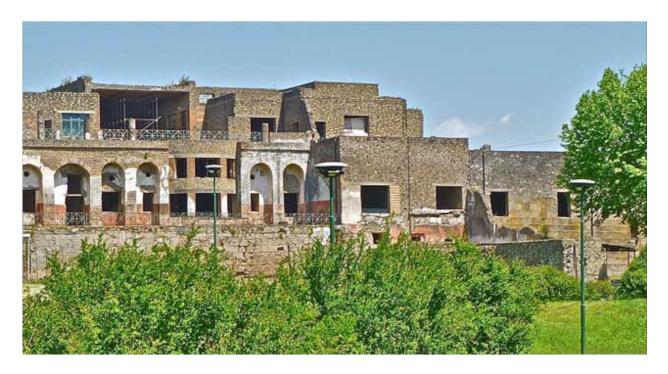


Fig. 111. Seaward facade of House of the Golden Bracelet (rightmost two windows) and House of Marcus Fabius Rufus. Late 1st c. BC–1st c. AD. Pompeii. Photo: Michael Binns via Pompeii in Pictures.



Fig. 112. House of the Golden Bracelet, Rooms 32 (left) and 31 (center). Late 1st c. BC–1st c. AD. Pompeii. Photo: Pompeii in Pictures.



Fig. 113. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: apsidal fountain and marble clinae. 1st c. AD. Pompeii. Photo: Pompeii in Pictures.



Fig. 114. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: Ω -shaped pool in front of triclinium. 1st c. AD. Pompeii. Photo: Pompeii in Pictures.

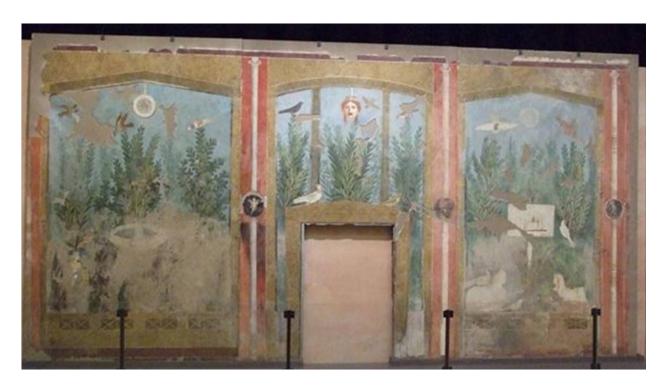


Fig. 115. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: frescoes on southern wall. Ca. 20 BC–AD 79. Pompeii. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 59467. Photo: Pompeii in Pictures.



Fig. 116. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: view of triclinium with mosaic and fresco decoration still in situ. Ca. 20 BC–AD 79. Pompeii. Photo: PPM 6, fig. 164.

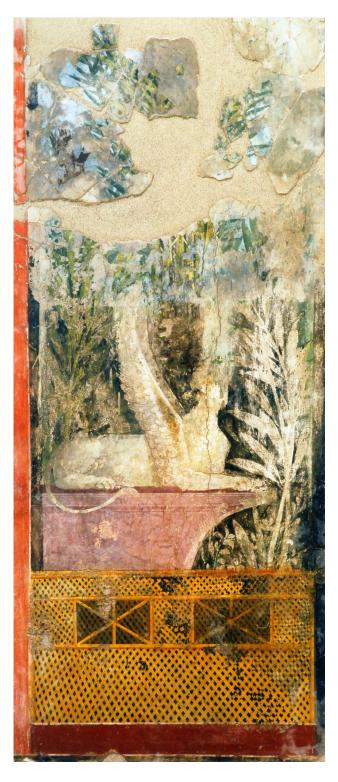


Fig. 117. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: garden fresco depicting sphinx on base. Ca. 20 BC–AD 79. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 87229. Photo: De Caro 2006, cat. no. III.59.



Fig. 118. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: garden fresco depicting sphinxes flanking Apis bull plaque. Ca. 20 BC-AD 79. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 59467 a.

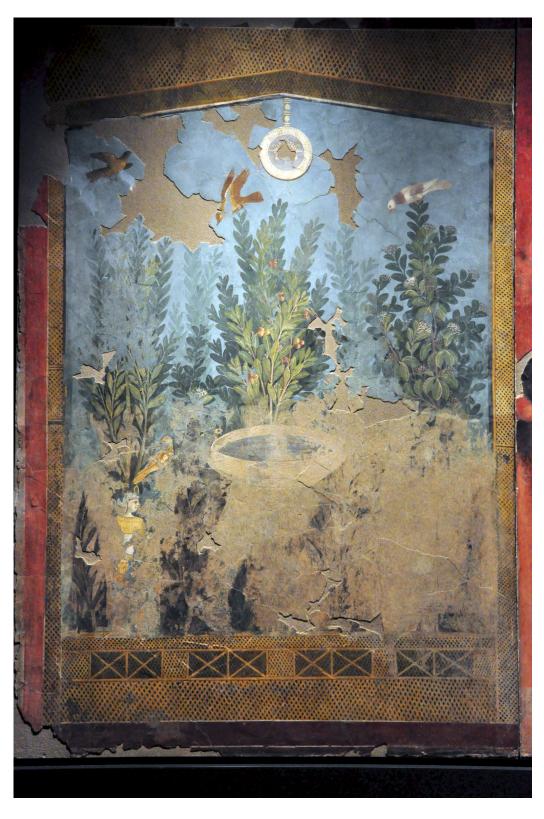


Fig. 119. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: garden fresco depicting Egyptian figures beside birdbath. Ca. 20 BC–AD 79. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 59467 d.



Fig. 120. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: detail of garden fresco depicting Egyptian figures beside birdbath. Ca. 20 BC-AD 79. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 59467 d.

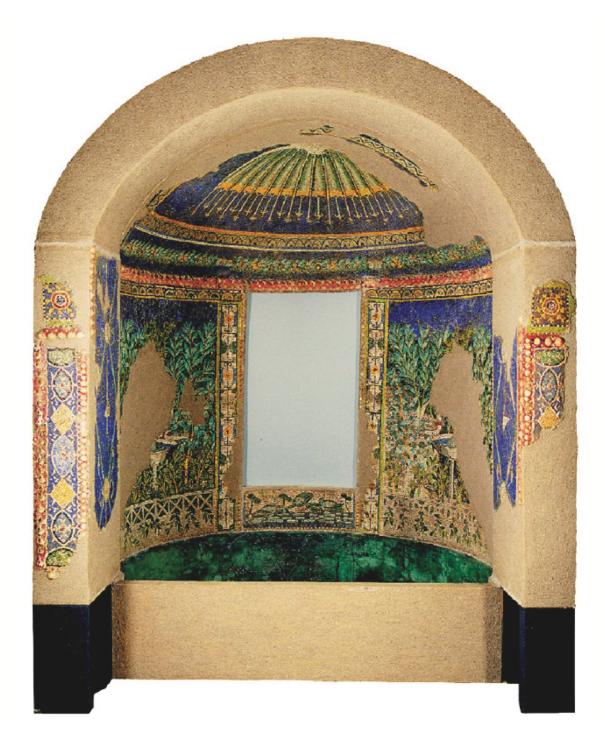


Fig. 121. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: apsidal fountain with mosaic decoration. Ca. 20 BC-AD 79. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 40690a-c, 40691a-c, 40692a-c, 40693, 40694. Photo: Ciardiello 2012, fig. 6.



Fig. 122. House of the Golden Bracelet, Room 31: detail of apsidal fountain with mosaic decoration. Ca. 20 BC–AD 79. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 40690a–c, 40691a–c, 40692a–c, 40693, 40694. Photo: PPM 6, fig. 173.

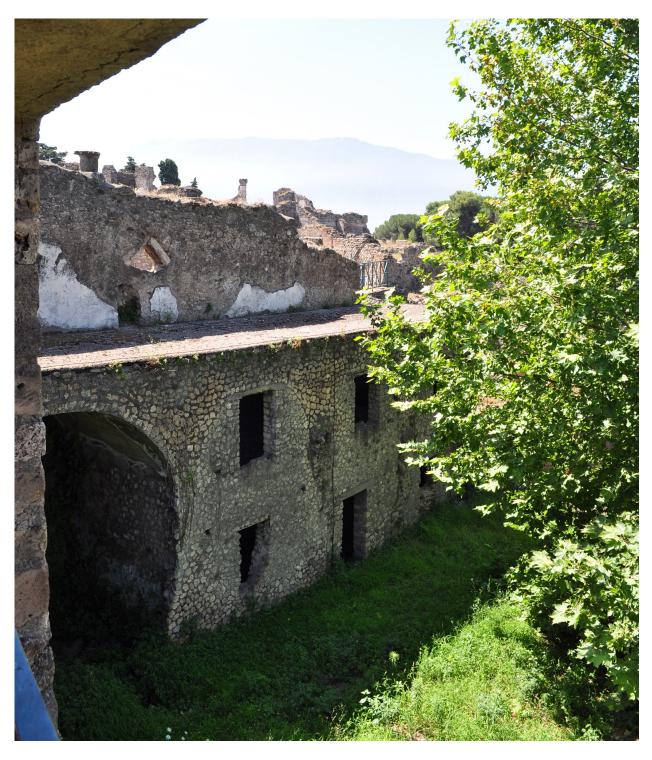


Fig. 123. View towards Monte Faito and Bay of Naples from middle floor of House of the Golden Bracelet. Pompeii.



Fig. 124. View of Bay of Naples through atrium of House of the Golden Bracelet. Pompeii.

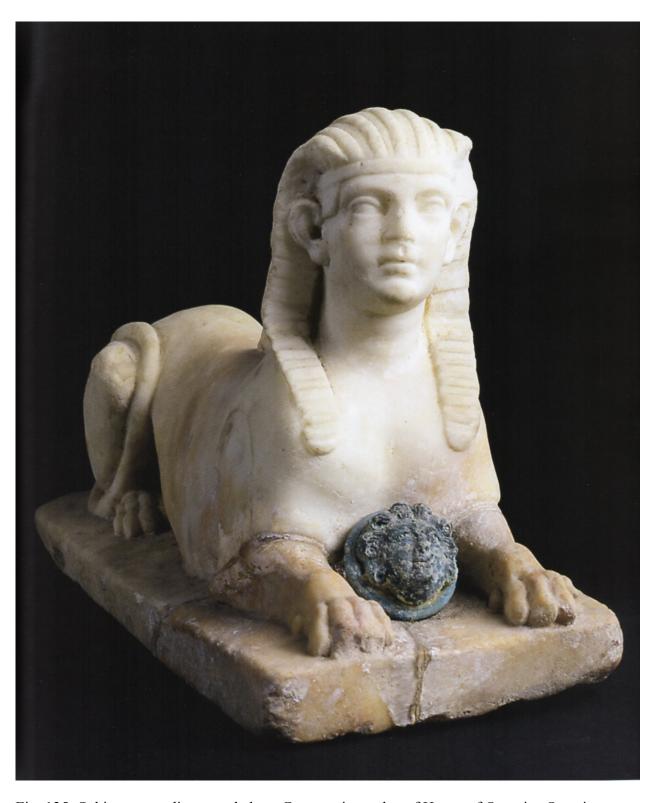


Fig. 125. Sphinx statue discovered along Canopus in garden of House of Octavius Quartio, Pompeii. Marble. 1st c. AD. Pompeii, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei, inv. 2930. Photo: Gentili 2013, cat. no. 126.



Fig. 126. Statuette of Horus discovered in House of the Golden Cupids, Pompeii. Alabaster. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 133230. Photo: Gentili 2013, cat. no. 144.



Fig. 127. Fountain spout in the shape of a frog, discovered in House of the Silver Wedding, Pompeii, with matching spout in the shape of a crocodile. Faience. 1st c. AD. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 121323. Photo: Gentili 2013, cat. no. 8.



Fig. 128. Villa of Agrippa Postumus at Boscotrecase, Room 16: fresco depicting pinax with sacro-idyllic landscape scene. Ca. 10 BC. Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 147501. Photo: Kleiner 2007, fig. 5-24.

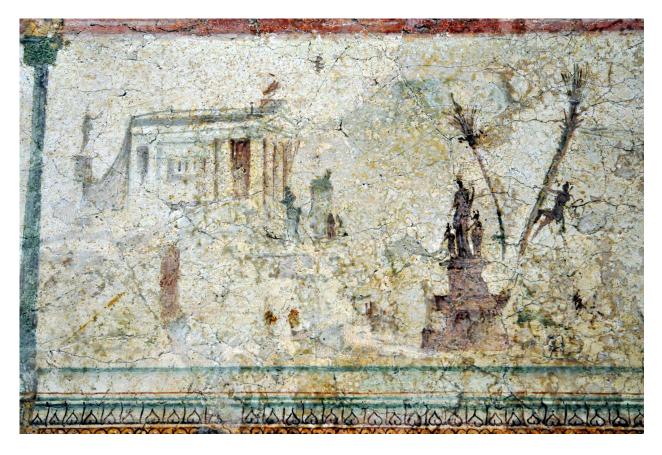


Fig. 129. Villa Farnesina, Corridor F: detail of fresco depicting sacro-idyllic landscape with palm trees and statue of Isis, Anubis, and Harpocrates. Ca. 35–25 BC. Rome, Palazzo Massimo.



Fig. 130. Anthemion Tomb: detail of ceiling fresco with vegetal motifs. 3rd c. BC. Lefkadia. Photo: Raddato 2012.



Fig. 131. Temple of Apollo Sosianus: column capital with two snakes flanking tripod. Marble. Late 1st c. BC–early 1st c. AD. Photo: Viscogliosi 1996, fig. 69.



Fig. 132. Temple of Apollo Sosianus: pilaster capital with trophy and date palms. Marble. Late 1st c. BC–early 1st c. AD. Photo: Viscogliosi 1988, cat. no. 33.