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Roman viewers in context: displaying, enjoying, and explaining Roman art

Anna Anguissola

University of Pisa <anna.anguissola@unipi.it>

LONGFELLOW, B., and PERRY, E., eds. 2017. *Roman Artists, Patrons, and Public Consumption: Familiar Works Reconsidered*. Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press.

In her landmark 1995 treatment of the Roman *Idealplastik*, Elaine K. Gazda identified a Roman "ethos of emulation," epitomizing a profoundly entrenched reliance on the

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techniques of repetition in both visual and literary communication.[1] As Gazda has argued, the cycle of Roman artistic emulation of earlier Greek prototypes is founded on a pair of mutually interdependent constituent premises: the availability of a large corpus of selected individual elements and an habitus of creative engagement with the source material. That Roman artists and their patrons had a high appreciation of Greek artistic models insufficiently explains the complex motivation and intentionality behind the redeployment of earlier models in contemporary works. Recent scholarship has highlighted the inextricable nexus of technological, economic, and religious factors informing the Roman taste for imitation and the reuse of familiar topoi. Gazda's characterization of the "ethos of emulation" as a consequential and considered aesthetic stance has become the "new orthodoxy."[2] Yet to the extent that Gazda's analysis pits itself against the traditional account of Roman art, it has not failed to fracture contemporary scholarship just as it gains itself enthusiastic new adherents. As Luca Giuliani eloquently observes, the study of *Idealplastik* has gradually turned into a "transatlantic dissent."[3] Central to the conceptual coherence of Gazda's proposal is the feasibility of identifying the individual agencies operating within the intricate network jointly contributing to the creation of an artwork or a monumental complex – the craftsman, the patron, specific commercial intermediaries, providers, and producers of materials and working instruments.[4] To compound the analytical difficulty, the portmanteau notion of the "Roman viewer," a somewhat elusive theoretical posit located within the problematic nexus, is intended to capture the notional construct of a private or public audience, reflecting individual faculties as well as collective cultural memory.

Given the centrality of these debates, it seems eminently apt that the volume honoring Gazda's illustrious career as a prominent art historian, mentor, and curator at the University of Michigan should center on the multiplicity of agencies shaping Roman visual culture – those of the artists, their patrons, and the public. Within this framework, engagement with thematic, iconographic, and stylistic decisions within the culturally determined boundaries of creativity acquires theoretical predominance.[5] A common thread running

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1 Gazda 1995. More recently, Elaine K. Gazda edited a programmatic collection of essays under the title *The Ancient Art of Emulation* (Gazda 2002). The anthology went on to determine the character of the debate for the next couple of decades. Together with Miranda Marvin's *The Language of the Muses* (Marvin 2008) and Ellen Perry's *The Aesthetics of Emulation in the Visual Arts of Ancient Rome* (Perry 2005), it forms a pivotal reference in the scholarship on imitation in the Roman visual arts. A richly annotated bibliography on the genesis, formulation, consequences, and deconstruction of the problematic concept of "Roman copies after Greek originals" may be found in Anguissola 2012b; see also Anguissola 2012a, 25–66; Anguissola 2015, and, more recently, the excellent studies by Rebaudo (2016 and 2020) and Platt (2019).

2 Stewart 2003, 234.

3 Giuliani 2020.

4 Anguissola 2018a, 213–16. The passage comments on the relationship between conventional sculptural types and the idiosyncratic systems of supports and *puntelli* required by the individual project and the block of stone. On the notion of "agency" in archaeology and art history, see the broad-scope accounts in Dobres and Robb 2000; Osborne and Tanner 2007; Knappett and Malafouris 2008.

5 In her distinguished career as professor of Classical Art and Archeology in the Department of the History of Art and curator of Hellenistic and Roman Collections in the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology at the University of Michigan (now emerita), Gazda has authored a wealth of influential publications. These are listed in this volume's opening section (7–12).

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throughout this collection of essays is the notion of context – characterized in terms of architectural setting, object assemblage, and cultural milieu – which reflects Gazda's ground-breaking insights into the significant reuse of visual schemata and Roman domestic displays.[6] The book's structure mirrors Gazda's own trajectory across the art-historical disciplines, presenting five case-study-based chapters on the Roman *Idealskulptur* and historical relief, partnered with four chapters dedicated to decorative environments in Pompeii. While the first part of the volume examines well-known pieces in light of iconographic and stylistic features instrumental to the investigation of the broader context, the second part addresses larger decorative ensembles and highlights the impact of object assemblages on both the overarching program and the individual artwork. Under the aegis of a broader thematic narrative, the scholarship presented in this volume seeks to illustrate the community-building forms of interaction between viewer and artwork, forming the complex network containing the work of art with its specific decorative or aesthetic properties, the producer and the observer, and the natural and architectural landscape in which it is situated.[7]

Framing Roman eclecticism

The diversity of perspectives and methods explored in the present volume may indeed mark the beginning of the transition from "transatlantic dissent" to a conciliatory approach to Roman material culture that recognizes and seeks to account for both stylistic retrospection and creative engagement with the past, in a balanced and nuanced treatment of these themes.

To begin with, regions in which native sources of statuary marble are absent, such as the Levant, provide an ideal testing ground for exploring vernacular responses to the formation and spread of a shared visual language founded upon the repetition of familiar types. Elise Friedland's persuasive study of the statue of Apollo from the sanctuary of Kore at Samaria-Sebaste in Chapter 5 ("The Sebaste Apollo: Form, function, and local meaning") challenges its conventional interpretation as a version of Praxiteles's *Sauroctonos* by observing the profound differences between the Apollo statue of the 2nd or 3rd c. CE and other items in the series to which it is thought to belong. By contrast, the Sebaste Apollo's rigid pose and austere early classical traits recall compositions from the second quarter of the 5th c. BCE, seen for instance in the Kassel Apollo. Friedland argues that the Sebaste Apollo may have been an eclectic Roman creation that drew on multiple Greek prototypes and styles. Uniquely in the present collection, Friedland's essay includes a detailed discussion of the statue's material properties and the techniques that engendered it. The blue-gray veining of the marble (attested in quarries such as Aphrodisias, Prokonnesos, and Dokimeion) and structural elements such as the "neck strut" (structural stone support for the nape of the neck) permit Friedland reliably to establish the work's origin in Asia Minor.[8] Moreover, the misalignment between the spine and the cleft of the buttocks, as well as the unfinished character of the posterior parts, indicate

6 Gazda 1994; Gazda and Clarke 2016.

7 For the archaeological study of the relationships between human and non-human entities, or the "entanglement" between the living and material participants in the artistic process, see Hodder 2012.

8 A recent survey of neck struts and their role in defining the chronology and geography of sculptural artifacts is provided in Anguissola 2018a, 88–90, 187–90 (with earlier bibliography).

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that the Sebaste Apollo was not the primary cult image of the sanctuary; rather, it belonged to its *ornamenta*.[9]

The Sebaste Apollo – arguably exemplary of a large corpus of conventional figures – can be examined in terms of "causal factors" and related agencies. To illustrate the Stoic, Aristotelian, and Platonic principles of causality, Seneca invokes the sphere of art, in particular the highly recognizable *opera nobilia*, such as the *Doryphoros* and the *Diadoumenos*.[10] According to the Aristotelian model, the factors causing a material statue (such as the Sebaste Apollo) to exist are the material (*materia*, e.g., its gray-veined marble), the artist (*artifex*, *opifex*), the form (*forma*, e.g., the individual *facies* of a given sculptural type) and the purpose (*faciendi propositum*). To these, Seneca adds a fifth "Platonic" cause: the model (*exemplar*, a term translating Plato's *idea*), potentially accounting for both the statue's tangible *bozzetto* and the iconographic and stylistic prototypes that inspired its maker. Consequently, a work of art is the result of multiple factors securing its individuality and situating it in a network of references: that from which (*id ex quo*, the material), that by which (*id a quo*, the maker), that in which (*id in quo*, the form), that because of which (*id propter quod*, the purpose), and that in reference to which (*id ad quo*, the model). Thus itemized, the causal factors combine to create the statue itself (*id quod ex his est*). The plethora of agencies identified by Seneca variously enact their influence and in doing so affect other agents' actions, interacting with the recipient and other elements of the display.

Melanie Grunow Sobocinski and Elizabeth Wolfram Thill (Chapter 2, "Dismembering a sacred cow: The Extispicium Relief in the Louvre") and Jessica Powers (Chapter 9, "The votive relief from House V.3.10 in Pompeii: A sculpture and its context reexamined") take a common point of departure in the interplay between tradition and innovation to examine two relatively neglected reliefs that depict religious rituals, the so-called Extispicium Relief in the Louvre and a piece from Domus V 3, 10 at Pompeii. The Louvre relief[11] has been dated to the Trajanic era on the basis of the inscribed signature, "M. V[LPIVS] ORE[S]TES"– an exceptional epigraphic document traced to an artist of the Roman Imperial period.[12] The slab depicts the ritual of *extispicium* (divination through the examination of entrails) against a monumental backdrop dominated by the pediment of the Capitoline Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus in Rome. Through close scrutiny of iconographic elements and stylistic features, unparalleled in the corpus of early 2nd-c. CE sculpture, Grunow Sobocinski and Wolfram Thill argue that the relief should instead be dated to the 3rd c. CE. The authors demonstrate that the artist's signature, conventionally read as "Ulpius," might with equal justice be interpreted as "Vibius," adding additional weight to their thesis. The location of the archaeological findings in the Forum

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9 The concept of *ornamentum* has been explored by Bravi 2012 who draws on Tonio Hölscher's idea of Roman art as a "semantic system." See also the comments in Rutledge 2012.

10 Sen. *Ep.* 65.5–7. For an excellent commentary on the passage, see Inwood 2007, 139–42. See also Stewart 2003, 238 and Anguissola 2019, 28–29.

11 Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. nos. 978 and 1089. See Table 2.1 for the restorations.

12 *CIL* VI 29800. On artists' signatures in Hellenistic and Roman sculpture, excellent discussion is found in Donderer 2011, Kreikenbom 2013, and Rebaudo 2016. While all three studies focus specifically on freestanding sculptures and replica series, the question of how to frame authorship in the Roman visual culture is fruitfully addressed. See also Squire 2013.

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of Trajan is, moreover, inconclusive, because it appears impossible to connect the relief to any documented building.

As long as the display context of the Extispicium Relief remains an open historical question, formal analysis provides the sole viable interpretive strategy. This is where the essay by Jessica Powers provides considerable explanatory force. It is notable that historical sculptures found in the houses of Roman Pompeii are often part of larger, richly decorative ensembles. On the votive relief from House V 3, 10, a large-scale goddess figure (perhaps Aphrodite or Demeter) receives a group of smaller-size worshippers bringing along a sacrificial ram.[13] In this case, the relief's find-spot and its display context (more precisely, its *final* display context in antiquity) happen to coincide. Notwithstanding its small size and irregular layout on the northern periphery of Pompeii, Domus V 3, 10 boasted an elegant collection of artworks, including the above-mentioned votive relief, a herm of Bacchus in yellow marble, and a bronze statuette of Hermes.[14] Opposing the identification of the relief as a Greek work from the 4th c. BCE later reused in Pompeii, Powers argues for a much later date, between the turn of the 1st c. BCE and the 1st c. CE. She argues that the relief's iconographic and stylistic eclecticism is characteristic of the "Neoattic" production of the Late Republican and Early Imperial periods, an art world geared towards supplying elegant sculptures to Roman customers – a consequence of the Roman "ethos of emulation" and creative engagement with the Greek tradition.[15] The relief may well have been manufactured in Italy and, in all likelihood, was never displayed in a religious context. Whereas other scholars concentrated exclusively on the sculptural display inside the domus with a view to emphasizing the reuse of putatively Classical artworks imported from Greece,[16] Powers engages with the context and its inventory of objects as a whole, in line with current scholarship on Pompeii and ancient dwellings.[17] Significantly, in her discussion of this relatively modest house, Powers takes its Third-Style painted decoration to demonstrate the usefulness of a combined art-historical and contextual approach to the study of ancient sculpture. Like other, more lavish, dwellings of Roman Pompeii (such as the House of the Ephebe at I 7, 10–12.19 and the House of the Gilded Cupids at VI 16, 7.38), Domus V 3, 10 exploited a range of Classical references and charming exotic images, such as the Egyptian frieze painted in a well-appointed room on the atrium. The choice of yellow marble for the Bacchic herm accords well with a taste for the orchestration of a variety of materials, an arrangement amplified in the colorful checkered pattern on the surrounding garden walls, which must have bestowed a "jewel-box quality" to the domestic environment (233).[18] In opting to focus on these unjustly neglected aspects, Powers makes good

13 Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 126174.

14 Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. nos. 126175 (Herm of Bacchus) and 126170 (Hermes, previously identified as "Perseus").

15 The broadest accessible surveys of "Neoatticism," providing also extensive surveys of earlier literature, remain Cain 1995 and Cain and Dräger 1994. Significant recent advancements on this topic are carried out in the two monographs by Di Franco (2017) and Reinhardt (2019).

16 See A. Carrella in Carrella et al. 2008, 77–79 and Cirucci 2009, 59–60.

17 Allison 2005 sets out new criteria to examine the relationship between objects, room types, and functions, abandoning traditional nomenclature derived from Latin literary sources in favor of open definitions based on the topography and layout of a space. For an exemplary approach to Classical housing in Olynthus, see Cahill 2002.

18 For an interesting discussion of diverse-material ensembles in the Roman visual culture of the early Imperial period, see the relevant chapters in Haug et al. 2022.

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on one of the most understudied types of painted décor in Pompeii. Checkered patterns are characteristic of outside spaces, both in garden contexts and on the façade towards the street.[19] Together with the "zebra stripes" and the "wallpaper motifs" (*Tapetenmuster*),[20] these decorative elements constitute a set of decorative solutions playing upon repetition and illusion, techniques that seem to have enjoyed wide popularity in 1st-c. CE Roman painting. Powers explores the arrangement of House V 3, 10 in terms of the sensory effects it was intended to convey, rehearsing an earlier, successful interpretative strategy carried out in relation to the House of the Gilded Cupids (VI 16, 7.38).[21] Inside the sumptuous domus, the preference for material variety is manifested in its white and colored marble, black glass panels, and the gilded medallions depicting flying cupids from which the house famously draws its name. Additionally, repetitive, re-echoing wallpaper patterns, as well as the combination of Greek "original" antiquities with more recent "classicizing" creations and exotic (Egyptian) imagery, are brought together in a compelling confluence of media to create an intellectual and sensual, immersive "elsewhere."[22] The multifarious orchestration of materials, sensory qualities, and the reinforcing, counterpoint properties of repetition and variability must have constructed a rich network of sensation and information around the viewer.

Environments and responses

In her exquisite reading of a group of bronze animal sculptures found in the House of the Citharist (I 4, 5.25), Barbara Kellum takes a similar approach (Chapter 8, "Beyond high and low: The beauty of beasts at the House of the Citharist in Pompeii"). While the architectural and social context – as one of Pompeii's largest dwellings, with three peristyles and an array of spaces dedicated to leisure and the reception of guests – is markedly different from the modest Domus V 3, 10, it is clear that a common aesthetic preference in relation to the natural world and material heterogeneity is evinced in both displays. Roman viewers would have responded to the statues in the House of the Citharist in a variety of ways, as reminders of amphitheater fauna[23] and as allusions to the protagonists (exempla) of popular fables. The motif of the snake might have hinted at the house's sacred dimension due to its connection with lararium paintings.

Kellum also examines the broader narratives that might be constructed around representations of fauna on the basis of the frequently encountered reverberations of mythical hunts – a subject that is copiously attested in Pompeian gardens.[24] Imagery in the peristyle

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19 Checkered patterns appear, for instance, on the walls of the garden of the House of M. Lucretius Fronto at V 4, a and the façade of the House of M. Fabius Ululitremulus at IX 13, 5 on the north side of Via dell'Abbondanza. See Lauritsen 2021, 131–35.

20 For "zebra stripes" patterns, see Goulet 2001–2; Laken 2003; Cline 2014; Rauws 2015–16; see also Lauritsen 2021, 131–35. For "wallpaper motifs" appearing on Pompeian façades, see Laken 2001.

21 See Powers 2006 and 2011.

22 Anguissola et al. 2021.

23 The amphitheater of Pompeii is almost directly connected to House of the Citharist through Via di Castricio and is a mere 500 m distant from it.

24 Examples of such "immersive tableaux" include the gardens in the House of Sallust (VI 2, 4) and the House of the Ephebe (I 7, 10-12.19). The latter exhibits a rich sculptural display in multiple materials, glass appliques, numerous mythological pictures, and a lively Nilotic landscape on the walls of the open-air triclinium (see Anguissola et al. 2021, 68, 73–74). On the aesthetics of violence in Roman domestic landscapes, see Newby 2012.

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of the House of the Stags at Herculaneum (IV 21), for instance, revolves around unexpected epiphanies: the imminent arrival of the gods is adumbrated by empty thrones embellished with attributes distinctive of their Olympian occupants, while Hercules and a satyr drunkenly disport themselves and hounds harry a pair of stags.[25] Glossy monochrome black walls, opulent opus sectile floors, and glass-paste mosaics create a habitation in which nature, the built environment, and the décor must have encouraged its denizens to discover alternative, overlapping realities.[26] Moreover, together with the miniature villas that decorate the courtyards, the animals in both the House of the Citharist and the House of the Stags might well evoke the exotic allurements associated with luxury architecture. A final avenue of interpretation considers the sensory dimension of the arrangement, which works upon the observer's private, experience-formed sensibility to generate a nexus of associations. The statues in the House of the Citharist were arranged around an elegant central fountain (the deer alone was not plumbed in); in sunlight, moonlight, or when the courtyard was brightly illuminated with lamps, the bronze animals "must have been luminous and so vividly alive" (194). Thanks to their carefully considered materiality and placement in relation to other objects, the bronze animals acquired a special animation as elements in an architectural and natural landscape in which myth blended with the quotidian life.

Although it is impossible to establish a direct one-to-one correspondence between Classical literary sources (e.g., Aesop's fables) and specific iconographical groups such as the statues in the House of the Citharist discussed by Kellum, Greek and Latin texts nevertheless provide essential clues to unpacking the content of an image and, in particular, to elucidating the significance of repeated visual schemata. No less than the *Idealskulptur*, the corpus of Pompeian paintings largely comprises scenes that emulate artistic models enjoying a broad circulation in Roman art. Yet even in the case of popular compositions with recognizable protagonists, it is often impossible to pinpoint the exact narrative moment illustrated by the work. Beyond portraying a happy couple, for instance, the abundant pictures of Mars and Venus that grace the houses of Pompeii remain enigmatic.[27] Despite the aura of familiarity attending such imagery, it is impossible to determine whether any instantiation of the amorous motif captures the gods' courtship, nuptials, or simply a generic state of satisfactory matrimony. Correspondingly, Molly Swetnam-Burland argues that subtle variations bring about a unique emphasis on specific interpretative strands among the many afforded by the composition (Chapter 7, "Marriage divine? Narratives of the courtship of Mars and Venus in Roman painting and poetry").

As observed above, the interpretation of compositions with a view to determining their reliance on a model appears to fall short of its aims because it lacks fine-grained discrimination. Additionally, it fails to observe the instrumentality of interpretative ambiguity in the hands of artists and their patrons. By exploring the full panoply of literary references identifiable in the House of Marcus Lucretius Fronto (V 4, a), Swetnam-Burland argues that the ambivalent scene of Mars and Venus was chosen for the tablinum – an essentially

[25] On the iconography and meaning of the "empty throne" motif, see Vollmer 2014.

[26] Eristov and Burlot 2017 and Anguissola 2022 examine the production and meaning of monochrome black walls in the houses of Roman Campania. See Barker 2021, 115–38 for the marble floors of the House of the Stags.

[27] See, for example, the almost identical versions in the House of Marcus Lucretius Fronto (V 4, a) and in a dwelling connected to the House of the Ephebe (entrance at I 7, 19).

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multipurpose space – precisely because it depicted a moment open to interpretation.[28] The image itself was highly recognizable, since it formed part of a series in the widely disseminated amorous iconography. As such, it was apt to frame multiple discourses addressing social roles and the forms taken by love (desire, courtship, marriage, and adultery) within accessible, shared frameworks, easily understood by broader audiences. Individual visitors making their way through the series of images inside the house would have contributed a highly personal perspective informed by their own artistic competencies as well as by the viewing order determined by the functional uses of the space and their own itinerary (186). Swetnam-Burland's insightful exploration has the merit of acknowledging the dimension of ephemerality in the discussion of elements that are, per se, immovable or fixed in place, such as wall paintings. Depending on which activity took place in which part of the house, a room might be appointed with different items of furniture, ready to receive a diverse host of visitors, each responding to aspects of the shifting décor according to the nature of the occasion.

The recognition that Roman houses served as a palimpsest of multiple epochs and functions, and that their domestic use entailed a degree of mutability and ephemerality within fixed confines virtually unknown to modern living is key to Bettina Bergmann's explanation of works such as the vivid mosaic portrait of a woman in House VI 15, 14 in Pompeii (Chapter 6, "At face value: Painted ladies on Pompeian walls").[29] The panel in opus vermiculatum once ornamented the tablinum of a modest Republican dwelling. When the construction was apparently refurbished as a taberna in the last period of Pompeii, it is likely that the room served as a dining area and was outfitted with comfortable seating and bright lamplights, casting an animating cone of illumination on the portrait mosaic. "From below, in the flickering lamplight, the animated face must have caught the eye, inviting an exchange of glances, competing, in a sense, with the gaze of a live companion" (146). The challenge posed by the proliferation of female portraits that grace the walls (and, less often, the floors) of Pompeii, transfixing the observer with an enigmatic expression, lies in the tension between repetition and individuality, as well as in the elusive relationship to the mythological subjects appearing in the same room. These portraits may have strengthened the connection between the concepts and values expressed by the myth and their application in the sphere of human life. In the triclinium of the House of L. Cornelius Diadumenus (VII 12, 26), for instance, mythological pictures (Venus and Adonis, Ariadne, and Jupiter transforming into Diana to seduce Callisto) articulate a comprehensive narrative about the many conceivable aspects of love attributable to the couple on the wall. The intermingling of divine and human storylines had the effect of "charging the space with myriad intersecting gazes among gods, mortals, demigods, heroes, and the living spectator(s)" (153). The overlapping of spheres becomes even more conspicuous in, for instance, room R on the peristyle of the House of the Gilded Cupids – a building that often serves as a comparative reference point for domestic aesthetic preferences in the 1st c. CE – where the painted program included scenes illustrating the myth, as well as medallions with female busts invested with Bacchic attributes. Judging from the corpus of Pompeian décor, it appears that the occasional obstacle to differentiating divine from

[28] On the literary dimension of the House of Marcus Lucretius Fronto, focusing in particular on the picture of Micon and Pero and the related epigram, see Piazzi 2007. For a general discussion of the literary texts adorning the walls of Pompeian dwellings, see Bergmann 2007.

[29] Now in Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 124666.

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human actors did not puzzle the Roman viewer as much as it would perplex us today. Bergmann argues that the first priority of those who commissioned, produced, and viewed these "portraits" was not to demand verisimilitude, but rather the recognition of well-established visual genealogies. Far from effacing individual identities, these genealogies would enhance them through a network of associations linking them to mythical characters, tales, and the values embodied by certain narratives and styles (144–45).

Bergmann identifies the mechanism of enhancing identities through assimilation to the mythological sphere in two intriguing artifacts from an earlier phase of Pompeii, the tufa capitals placed at the entrance of the House of the Figural Capitals on Via della Fortuna (VII 4, 57).[30] Bergmann's argument may be expanded still further to demonstrate that since the late Samnitic period, the blending of human and divine identities provided the patron with an efficient strategy to broadcast his worldview and cultural references. On each of the two capitals, dating to the second half of the 2nd c. BCE, two couples emerge from the abundant foliage. The frontal image visible to the street depicts the sensual embrace of an inebriated satyr and a maenad. Facing the vestibulum, the capitals featured the mortal counterpart of the fabled frolic, a man in heroic nudity and his sumptuously garbed consort. As counterpoints to each other, the images visualized the patrons' participation in manifold forms of social life, as members of the local elite and of Dionysus's retinue, the owners of a home that was both a locale for public engagements and the theater of munificent hospitality. In their mutual resonance, the images demonstrate how deeply ingrained the habit of self-presentation through the medium of mythological Greek incarnations truly was in late-Samnitic society. The story of Pompeii's figural capitals is all the more compelling considering that the entrance to the nearby House of the Colored Capitals or House of Ariadne (VII 4, 31.51) featured similar pieces.[31] Interestingly, in this case, the figural capitals decorated the house's rear entrance, which opened directly onto a large peristyle. At that time, peristyles were a novelty in Italic domestic architecture, reflecting the pervasive process of Hellenization and the desire to enjoy (and boast) spaces inspired by the architecture of Greek public buildings.[32] The arrangement of both vestibula remained unchanged until the eruption that destroyed Pompeii, a fact which might have been explained by the owners' wish to vaunt their property's venerable past, as well as by the abiding relevance of Greek Dionysian imagery. At a short distance on the opposite side of the Via della Fortuna, the House of the Faun (VI 12, 2) also retained its late-Samnitic arrangement into the Flavian period, with monumental First-Style stuccowork adorning the fauces. The mosaics in opus vermiculatum, produced towards the end of the 2nd c. BCE, combined history (the battle of Alexander), culture (theatrical masks), exoticism (Nilotic landscapes), and allusions to a banquet (still lives with fish and poultry) and to the pleasures of Dionysiac entertainment (a wine-drinking genius straddling a feline and, close to the entrance, the symplegma of a satyr and a maenad).[33] Some two centuries

30 Pompeii, Archaeological Park, Antiquarium, inv. nos. 25905, 25906. See Staub Gierow 1994, 48–49 and von Mercklin 1962, 74–75 nos. 188 a–b.

31 von Mercklin 1962, 75–76 nos. 190 a–b.

32 On the introduction of peristyles to the house architecture of Pompeii, see Dickmann 1997.

33 The splendid houses along the Via della Fortuna apparently subscribed to a set of shared decorative strategies. The closely similar mosaic emblemata featuring marine creatures from the House of the Faun and the House of the Colored Capitals provide an insightful instance of imitation in the urban vicinity (*PPM*, vol. V, 106–7 no. 30 and vol. VI, 1030–31 nos. 47–49).

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later, these images not only attested to a house's antiquity, but also to the self-conceptions and self-representations of the contemporary Roman inhabitants of Pompeii and the means they chose to advertise themselves, their values and expectations, in the social arena.

Scale and ritual

In recent years, honorific and funerary female sculptural portraits from the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial periods have provided art historians with a valuable repository of social practices and precepts of collective morality, thanks to the standardized selection of body types in conventional poses of modesty.[34] However, in the case of large replica series, such as the 39 items belonging to the "Aspasia type," the conceptual differences between instances of physiognomic portraiture and versions with idealized facial features, as well as between full-scale replicas and miniatures, remain intractable questions. Yet even in the absence of a representation of the sitter's head, inscriptions might establish a direct association with a specific female patron. Lea Stirling, the author of a landmark book on the acquisition, collection, and use of mythological statuettes in Late Antiquity, approaches the artistic fortunes of the Aspasia type by comparing it with other Severe-style series, such as those of the Omphalos Apollo and the *Discobolus* (Chapter 4, "From mystery masterpiece to Roman artwork: The journey of the Aspasia statue type in the Roman Empire").[35] Like the *Discobolus*, the Aspasia statue does not permit a definitive identification of its subject. Stirling argues that small-scale instantiations were instrumental in securing the dissemination and acknowledgment of the larger prototype, and, moreover, that they provide evidence for the widespread appreciation of the Aspasia type.[36] Although these observations align with the general trend characterizing Roman ideal sculpture, which saw a surge in popularity in the age of Hadrian and archeological findspots located mostly in Italy and in the Eastern Mediterranean, miniature versions of the Aspasia type cluster in mainland Greece.

An elaborate inscription found in the Great Theater of Ephesus, recording the donation by C. Vibius Salutaris of gilded and silver statuettes in 103/104 CE, provides an exceptional insight into the uses and signification of small-scale images. The donation lot included figurines of various gods, the Roman Emperors Augustus and Trajan, Trajan's wife Plotina, and other rulers, heroes, and mythical personifications. The statuettes were to be paraded through the city on numerous occasions (scholars have estimated that the procession would have taken place approximately twice a month), along a circular route that started and ended at the Artemision. The procession has been studied from the perspective of its invocation of the collective Ephesian identity and its stimulation of civic pride by circumnavigating the city's historic monuments and landmarks. While most scholars dismiss the dedication of small-scale statuary as a less effective method of identity-presentation compared with the erection of monumental architecture, Diana Ng highlights the impact of recurring rituals on individual cognitive processes and the formation and retention of memory (Chapter 3, "The Salutaris foundation: Monumentality through periodic

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[34] E.g., Trimble 2011 on the "Large Herculaneum Woman" type and Colzani 2014 on the *Pudicitia* type.

[35] For Stirling's method and perspective on Late Antique miniature sculpture, see Stirling 2005.

[36] On the relationship between miniaturization and replica series, the most significant reference remains Bartman 1992. See also Colzani 2021.

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rehearsal"). The "synergy between periodic rehearsals, representational objects, and textual display" (81) must have cemented in the collective psyche the remembrance of Salutaris and his position within the Ephesian elite. The procession route through the familiar civic landmarks would have served as a visual reminder of his status and contribution to the city's history. The patron's message would have been effectively delivered via the sensory impact of the shiny objects, repeatedly paraded along the known routes, and thus instantly recognizable by the city's inhabitants.[37]

Exploration of the role of repetition as a mnemonic aid may deliver fresh insight not only in the context of rituals, as Ng has persuasively demonstrated, but also in relation to *Idealskulptur*. Versions of an illustrious type in wide circulation may in time become unmoored from the original prototype, engendering an independent set of significations and references as they become broadly known (as was the case with the Aspasia statues). At the same time, replicas established references not only – and perhaps not even primarily – to their remote prototype, but also to other replicas, thus increasing the type's recognizability through its repetition. As the Roman *ars memorativa* insisted, the success of mnemonic devices is based essentially on manifestation and repetition – properties that replicas comprehensively possess.[38]

Bodies of entanglement

The foundational relationships between artworks and their putative originals, the classical literary tradition, and the display context are examined in the opening chapter by Jennifer Trimble (Chapter 1, "Beyond surprise: Looking again at the Sleeping Hermaphrodite in the Palazzo Massimo"). Trimble takes up the investigation of the statue of Sleeping Hermaphroditus now at the Museo Nazionale Romano, which decorated the peristyle garden of a mid-2nd-c. CE house on the Viminal. Trimble focuses her analysis on the impact of Roman accounts of hermaphroditism and on the modes of viewing the Viminal statue in its architectural context. As Trimble demonstrates, the scene does not depict an episode attested in any single identifiable literary source; yet the statue does seem to entertain a more subtle narrative link to texts of heterogenous dates and genres. The antagonistic tension described by Ovid in his famous passage of the *Metamorphoses* (IV.285–388), which presents the character of Hermaphroditus as the fusion of a restless youth and a sexually aggressive nymph, is epitomized in the figure of the sleeping Hermaphroditus. The creature's sensual, feminine curves appear to be animated by masculine appetites – a synthetic dualism recorded by Diodorus Siculus (IV.6.5). Hellenistic epigrams stage playful encounters between Hermaphroditus and other characters in Dionysus's retinue, echoed in the corpus of Pompeian painting, as well as in sculptural compositions like the Dresden symplegma and the Berlin-Torlonia group. In turn, Hermaphroditus's sleep seems to bear out these encounters either as prelude or after-effect. Texts and images are thus gathered into an overarching narrative, to which Ovid's poem is key. Hermaphroditus's erotic exchanges, exuberance, and sleep are explained and indeed

[37] In addition to the canonical treatment in Squire 2016 of Roman miniature art as a genre that encouraged an active engagement with the artifact, see the contributions collected in Martin and Langin-Hooper 2018 and Elsner 2020.

[38] The seminal work on memory in the Roman world, with a special emphasis on the monumental landscape and artistic production, is the collective volume edited by Galinsky 2014.

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engendered by this central episode, in which Ovid unfolds the mental and spiritual worlds in which the youth dwells, granting him an extraordinary metamorphic biography.[39] In the plural registers characterizing the passage, Ovid brings inspired innovation to existing mythographic material, which miscellaneously included legends about a *fons enervans* named Salmacis and the obscure tale of the "Pride of Halicarnassus."[40] This epigraphic source, dated to the late 2nd or early 1st c. BCE, presents Hermaphroditus as a *kouros*, the son of Hermes and Aphrodite, raised by the nymph Salmacis in the vicinity of Halicarnassus. According to the inscription – the sole source prior to the *Metamorphoses* to mention a relationship between the boy and the nymph – Hermaphroditus was the inventor of marriage. This detail connects the Ovidian myth to an earlier mythical androgynous figure associated with health and fertility to which a substantial body of evidence refers.[41]

According to their exposure to kindred iconography or knowledge of the Ovidian poem, viewers might contribute to the Sleeping Hermaphroditus a sufficiently well-versed yet singular construal. The sculpture – much like the Dresden symplegma – invites viewers to continue their imaginative exploration in a flux of interpretative dynamics. It "moves its viewers around, attracting and pushing away" (20). We do not know how the statue now at Palazzo Massimo was presented in the peristyle on the Viminal, specifically whether it was placed in a niche, thus inhibiting the movement of people around it. Inhabited by members of Dionysus's retinue, the natural environment framed within the peristyle became the locale of unexpected – and potentially dangerous – interactions. In their association with the imagery of villas dedicated to pleasure, peristyles provided suitable locations for the presentation of attractive young male figures ("sexy boys") that became commonplace in Roman times as the epitome of a luxury lifestyle.[42] Exotic ethnicity and rich hairstyles are central to this imagery, as corroborated in several passages from the *Cena Trimalchionis*, where Trimalchio's own baldness is presented as the reigning emblem of his adulthood, denoting freedom and power over a raft of enslaved *pueri capillati*.[43]

The nexus of references occasioned by the statue of Hermaphroditus epitomizes the complexity of the volume as a whole, with its manifold connections between individual chapters and case studies. Together, these perspectives provide a nuanced understanding of Roman decorative aesthetics. As Cicero's requests to his friend Atticus for the provision of statues (220) demonstrate,[44] context emerges as the primary concern and key element in the determination of an artwork's identity and meaning. Yet, if we take Cicero's famous remarks concerning appropriateness (*decor*) to be the only insight relevant to interpreting Roman public and private displays, we miss out on other mechanisms that exploit mutual

[39] In recent years, the relationship between pictorial images and written sources in the story of Hermaphroditus has been discussed extensively also in Cadario 2009, Cadario 2012, Zuchtriegel 2013–14, Anguissola 2018b.

[40] Ragone 2001, Romano 2009, and Santini 2016 comment specifically on the episode of Salmacis in the "Pride of Halicarnassus."

[41] On the iconography and narratives of Hermaphroditus, beginning with the myth's earliest attestations, see the essential Oehmke 2004.

[42] The definition of "sexy boys" for certain sculptural types is taken from Bartman 2002.

[43] *Sat.* 27.1; 27.6; 29.3; 34.4; 57.9; 63.3; 70.7. For Petronius's rhetoric of youth and beauty, as exemplified by the *pueri capillati*, see Panayotakis 2019.

[44] Cic. *Att.* 1.1.5; 1.4.3; 1.6.2; 1.8.2; 1.9.2; 1.10.3.

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reverberation between different constructed and pictorial elements. The function of a space could alter the role and even the identity of the objects displayed. In turn, objects could be given new meanings as befits their novel combination. An object's individual history is itself a rich inferential source, especially with respect to the activities carried out around it. As the essays collected in this volume demonstrate, detailed engagement with each artwork is essential to recover the rich networks of relationships and references that go beyond the immediate architectural context – recovering, in a sense, the part of the conversation (Atticus's considerations and descriptions, one may imagine) lost to us in Cicero's *Letters*.

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