

Workshop: Houses and Society in the City of Rome and in Athens

1. Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.5.1-3. The social function of houses

The aspects proper for each part being appropriated, we must determine the situation of the private rooms for the master of the house, and those which are for general use, and for the guests. Into those which are private no one enters, except invited; such are bed chambers, triclinia, baths, and others of a similar nature. The common rooms, on the contrary, are those entered by any one, even unasked. Such are the vestibule, the cavædium, the peristylia, and those which are for similar uses. Hence, for a person of middling condition in life, magnificent vestibules are not necessary, nor tablinæ, nor atria, because persons of that description are those who seek favours which are granted by the higher ranks. Those, however, who have to lay up stores that are the produce of the country, should have stalls and shops in their vestibules: under their houses they should have vaults (cryptæ), granaries (horrea), store rooms (apothecæ), and other apartments, suited rather to preserve such produce, than to exhibit a magnificent appearance. The houses of bankers and receivers of the revenue may be more commodious and elegant, and well secured from the attacks of thieves. For advocates, and men of literature, houses ought to be still handsomer and more spacious, to allow the reception of persons on consultations. But for nobles, who in bearing honours, and discharging the duties of the magistracy, must have much intercourse with the citizens, princely vestibules must be provided, lofty atria, and spacious peristylia, groves, and extensive walks, finished in a magnificent style. In addition to these, libraries, pinacothecæ, and basilicæ, of similar form to those which are made for public use, are to be provided; for in the houses of the noble, the affairs of the public, and the decision and judgment of private causes are often determined. If, therefore, houses are erected, thus adapted to the different classes of society, as directed in the first book under the head of propriety, there will be nothing to reprehend, for they will be suitable to their destination.

2. Plutarch, *Life of Lucullus* 39. Gardens of Lucullus on the Pincian Hill (today partially occupied by the Villa Borghese). Gustave Boulanger, *Pleasant Hours in the House of Lucullus* 1877.



And it is true that in the life of Lucullus, as in an ancient comedy, one reads in the first part of political measures and military commands, and in the latter part of drinking bouts, and banquets, and what might pass for revel-routs, and torch-races, and all manner of frivolity. For I must count as frivolity his costly edifices, his ambulatories and baths, and still more his paintings and statues (not to speak of his devotion to these arts), which he collected at enormous outlays, pouring out into such channels the vast and splendid wealth which he accumulated from his campaigns. Even

now, when luxury has increased so much, the gardens of Lucullus are counted among the most costly of the imperial gardens.

3.Plutarch, *Cicero* 8 3. Houses and politics

6 The house which had been his father's he made over to his brother, and dwelt himself near the Palatine hill, in order that those who came to pay their court to him might not have the trouble of a long walk. And men came to his house every day to pay him court, no fewer than came to Crassus for his wealth or to Pompey because of his influence with the soldiery, and these were the two greatest men among the Romans and the most admired. 7 Nay, Pompey actually paid court to Cicero, and Cicero's political efforts contributed much towards Pompey's power and fame.

4.Juvenal, *Satires* 3, 223-225. Prices of houses in Rome

If you can tear yourself away from the chariot races in Rome, the finest home in Sora or Fabrateria or Frusino can be bought outright for as much as you now pay in a year's rent for your dark hovel.

5.Martial, *Epigrams* 3, 52. Fire insurance

Tongilianus, you paid two hundred for your house;
An accident much common in this city destroyed it.
You collected ten times more. Doesn't it seem, I pray,
That you set fire to your own house, Tongilianus?

6.Juvenal, *Satires* 3, 193-202. The dangers of living in a block house

We live in a city which is, to a great extent, propped up by flimsy boards. The manager of your apartment building stands in front of the collapsing structure and, while he conceals a gaping crack (a crack many years old), he tells you to "sleep well" – even though a total cave-in is imminent! It's best, of course, to live where there are no fires and no panics in the dead of night. Here, one neighbour discovers a fire and shouts for water, another neighbour moves out his shabby possessions. The third floor, where you live, is already smoking-but you don't even know! Downstairs there is panic, but you, upstairs, where the gentle pigeons nest, where only thin tiles protect you from the rain, you will be the last to burn."

7.Martial, *Epigrams* 8, 14, 5-6. Poor houses

I live in a little cell, with one window which doesn't even fit properly. Boreas [the North Wind] himself would not want to live here.

For tomorrow: Athenian houses. What do we know about them? Read the following two articles

Walter Graham, J. Houses of Classical Athens, *Phoenix*, Vol. 28, No. 1, Studies Presented to Mary E. White on the Occasion of Her Sixty-Fifth Birthday (Spring, 1974), pp. 45-54.
Nevett, L., Greek houses as a source of evidence for social relations, *British School at Athens Studies*, Vol. 15, BUILDING COMMUNITIES: House, Settlement and Society in the Aegean and Beyond (2007), pp. 5-10. Both in JSTOR

Complementary reading: Westgate, R.C., Space and Decoration in Hellenistic Houses, *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, Vol. 95, (2000), pp. 391-426.