

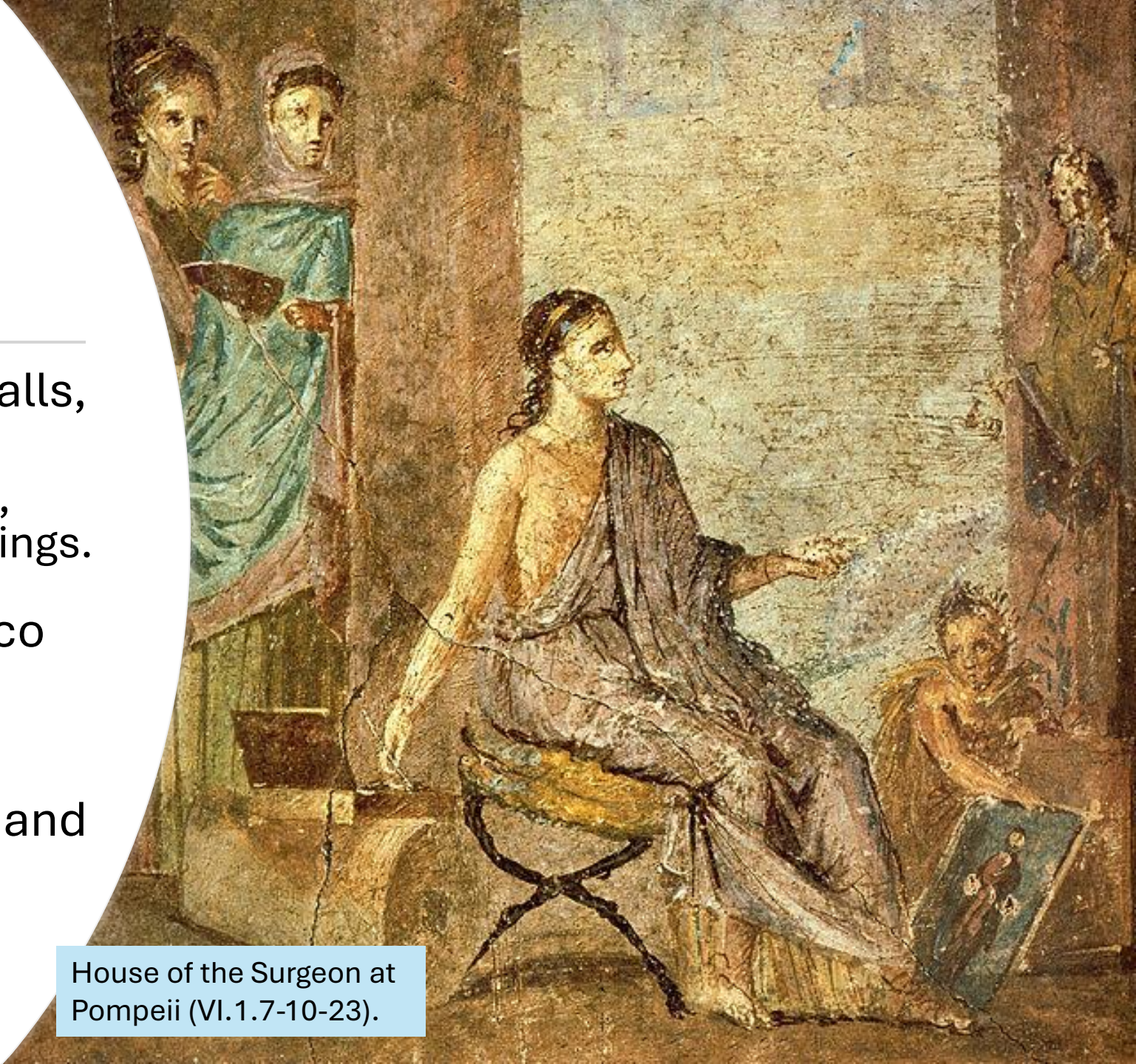
Roman art and the so-called Four Styles

Pompeii: The life, death and
rediscovery of a Roman town
(HPAH5078/HPAH6078)



Roman painting

- Media and contexts: statues, walls, friezes, wooden panels.
 - Best evidence from Campania, and a skew towards wall-paintings.
- Use of tempera painting or fresco painting techniques for wall-painting.
- Greek panel paintings as booty and inspiration.
 - Picture galleries (Petronius *Satyrিকা* 83.1-6; Philostratus *Imagines*).



House of the Surgeon at Pompeii (VI.1.7-10-23).



Art history and modern prejudices

- Contentious and contradictory assessments.
 - “cheap copies” of Greek “masterpieces” vs. a rich source for Roman cultural history.
- *copy criticism, genre-immanent scholarship, and cultural history*
- August Mau and the influence of Vitruvius (*On Architecture* 7.5.1-4).
 - Problem of 4 styles as distinctive chronological phases, e.g., House of the Ancient Hunt (VII.4.48).

The First Style

- “structural”, “masonry” or “incrustation” style
 - Imitating marble blocks and features like pediments, capitals and doorframes.
 - Supposed dating: ca. 150-90 BC.
- House of Sallust (VI.2.4)
 - Tuscan style atrium (with impluvium), the entrance to the house and the large opening of the tablinum.
- Featuring on public buildings.
 - e.g., Temple of Isis.





Painting by Walter Klinkert, is based on the original fresco from the north wall.



The Second Style

- “Architectural style” (Serapion – Pliny *HN* 35.37.113).
 - Realistically painted features like columns, ledges, and doors, with a sense of depth.
 - Supposedly dating to around 90-25 BC.
- Examples, include Villa of the Mysteries and the House of the Cryptoporticus (I.6.2).
- ‘distinct conceptions of technical and metaphorical space’ (Lorenz 2015: 260)?

The Third Style

- “Ornate style”
 - Loss of perspective, more focus on discreetly defined “picture panels”.
 - On Mau’s dating, ca. late 1st century BC.
- Similarities and contrasts in the “picture panels” within a space?
- House of the Priest Amandus (I.7.7).
 - Four-scene display: Hercules with the Hesperides (east), Daedalus and Icarus (south), Polyphemus and Galatea (west), and Perseus and Andromeda (north).



House of the Vestals

The Fourth Style

- “Intricate style”
 - Dismissed as decline by August Mau.
 - Mixture of the preceding three styles, with elaborate motifs like garlands and grotesques, either free floating in panels or atop of “architectural” features.
 - Ca. AD 20s to 30s onwards.
- Examples: House of the Vettii (VI.15.1) and House of the Vestals / House of Ione (VI.1.6, 8, 24-26).
- More elaborate examples a visual assault?



House of the Vettii

Art, *otium* and *humanitas* (παιδεία)

Wall painting from Room H of the Villa of P.
Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale





Being educated and cultural coding

- Cultural code of sophisticated among the elite.
 - Shared practices, conventions and knowledge.
 - *humanitas* – importance of being well-versed in Classical literature and poetry.
 - Need to be able to decode paintings and to engage in sophisticated conversations at *convivia*.
- Intersections between art, literature and mythological scenes.
- Short cuts for the upwardly mobile?
 - Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* (ca. 2nd century AD).
 - Compendium of Greek myths, heavily drawing upon epic and drama.

Reading narratives in paintings

“[Encolpius see the paintings on the wall when entering Trimalchio’s *domus*] There was a painting of a slave-market, with the person’s names, and Trimalchio was pictured holding a caduceus, Mercury’s wand, Minerva holding his hand and leading him into Rome. Then the artist had painstakingly rendered his whole career with titles, showing exactly how he had learnt to do the books, and become in the end a treasurer. At the point, in fact, where the portico wall gave out, Mercury had him by the chin and was raising him to his seat in the tribunal. Nearby stood Fortune with a horn of plenty, and the three Fates spinning a golden thread. ... **So I asked the house manager what pictures they had in the hall. ‘The Iliad, and the Odyssey,’ he said, ‘and the gladiator show that Laenas gave.’ I was unable to take it all in at once...**” – **Petronius *Satyrica* 29.**

What errors can you see in Trimachlio's explanations?

“[A fight was about to break out between Ascyrtos and Hermeros, calmed down by Trimachlio] ‘Let’s do better by watching the first fruits of comedy and these reciters of Homer.’

The troupe entered at once, and spear clashed on shield. Trimalchio himself perched on a cushion and, while the reciters conversed, in their usual conceited fashion, in Greek verse, he intoned Latin from a book. Soon silence fell and he said: **‘You know the tale they’re reciting? Diomedes and Ganymedes were brothers. Their sister was Helen. Agamemnon carried her off, and substituted Diana’s deer for her. So Homer is now telling how Troy and Taranto fought each other. Of course Agamemnon won, and married his daughter, Iphigenia, to Achilles. That drove Ajax mad, and the theme will now unfold.’** As Trimalchio concluded, the reciters raised a clamour, the servants ran about and a boiled calf on a ceremonial dish was brought in, a helmet on its head. Ajax followed with drawn sword, and attacked it as if in madness, and after hacking away with the flat of the blade and the edge, collected slices on the point, and divided the calf among the astonished guests.” – **Petronius *Satyricon* 59.**