New Classicists

'The popular in Classical Antiquity'
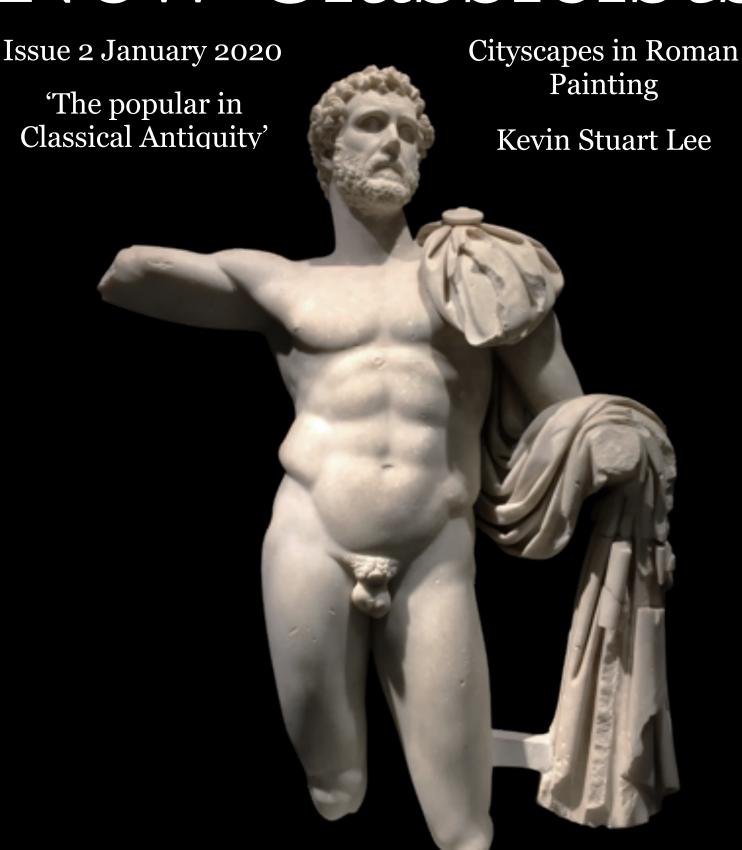
Cityscapes in Roman Painting

Kevin Stuart Lee

Cityscapes in Roman Painting:
The Amphitheater Riot Fresco as a Piece of "Popular Art"

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Fig. 1. The Amphitheater Riot Fresco from House I.3.23, now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples, inv. 112222 (Image in the public domain, available on Wikimedia Commons)

In 1869 excavators of House I.3.23 at Pompeii unearthed the Amphitheater Riot Fresco (Fig. 1).[1] Giulio de Petra and the elder Friedrich Matz, authors of the first reports, commented on both its detailed depiction of southeastern Pompeii and its illustration of the AD59 brawl between rival Pompeians and Nucerians known from Tacitus.[2] While Matz thought the fresco's intersection with history more remarkable than its topographical correspondence,[3] de Petra emphasized the piece's "fidelity" to the real urban setting.[4] To my knowledge de Petra's observation is relatively unexplored. The fresco has often been studied as a social document revealing either aspects of "popular" art or the patron's identity and attitudes.[5] I aim to unite the two by first examining the Riot Fresco as a cityscape that suggests the patron's perception of his city, then comparing it to painted cityscapes from contexts across the Roman status spectrum.

I have divided this article into three sections. The first defines the core terms: popular, elite, non-elite, and cityscape. The second studies the Riot Fresco as a cityscape. It compares the depicted space to its real-life counterpart, then reflects on the relationship established between the setting and the figural groups. The third section surveys Roman cityscapes painted between AD59 and 79. It will answer the following questions: What relationships do they establish between architecture, human figures, and nature? Do they present patterns the Riot Fresco departs from? The article concludes with a discussion of different attitudes patrons may have held towards depicting cities on walls and their connection to social status. We will see that Roman

patrons and painters centered cityscapes either around architecture to convey an ideal, or human figures to portray the drama of life.

Prolegomena to Cityscapes as Social Documents

A welcome aspect of "The Popular in Classical Antiquity" conference was the organizers' invitation to reflect critically on the meaning of the terms "popular", "elite", and "non-elite." Bianchi Bandinelli classed the Riot Fresco, on stylistic grounds, as "popular art" in his well-known division between Greek-inspired aristocratic art and "popular" art animated by native Italic traditions.[6] While this framework's fortunes fell with those of its Marxist premises, consideration of the fresco's relationship to Roman society runs straight into presently popular nomenclature: elite and non-elite.[7] "Popular" and "non-elite," while related, are not coterminous. "Popular" has two senses: something with mass appeal, and something associated with the masses. The Riot Fresco is decidedly not the former, its subject having no traction outside House I.3.23. It is popular in the second sense, however, if scholars are correct in positing from its content, style, and unimpressive house[8] a patron from the vast social mass that Imperial literary sources dub the *plebs*. House size and decorative quality are not foolproof identifiers of social standing, but likely reflect it often enough to furnish a useful heuristic. Acknowledging the tentativeness, this article assumes that, in the main, the owner of a small, sparsely decorated house is lower down the social ladder than that of a small well-appointed house, and both are non-elite relative to the owner of a large, lavishly decorated *domus*. In this sense "popular" and "non-elite" are synonymous and we may study the fresco as popular art commissioned by a non-elite.

This raises further questions of definition. What is "non-elite" or "elite" in the Roman world? The Romans of the Riot Fresco's day had a clear sense of who their elites were: the emperor and his house, and families currently in the Senatorial, Equestrian, and Decurial *ordines*.[9] We might call this an aristocracy. This ties eliteness primarily to social esteem, yet "elite" inescapably connotes for us the ability to greatly influence

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[6] Bianchi Bandinelli 1970, 64-66
[7] For the origins and current applications of elite theory see the pieces collected in Best and Higley 2018.
[8] De Petra (ibid.) characterized the house as "a crummy inhabitation," and neither he nor Matz had much to say about the décor other than the Riot Fresco. For the house, see Sampaolo 1990a, 77-79 and figs. 1-5.
[9] Clarke 2003, 4-7.

society's course, regardless of how (dis)respected one is. This is important when considering Roman painting, as similar high-caliber decorative programs are found in the houses of grandees and former slaves alike, as the Houses of the Menander and the Vettii demonstrate. As such, I define the Roman "elite" as those who possesses:

> *influence* exerted across a broad social stage, at minimum a city. While this includes politics, we are more interested in artistic influence: patronizing a particular image that inspires imitation or rejection.

> *esteem*, the respect their comportment affords from social superiors. Conferred honors such as adlection to the Senate suggest this.

> *affluence*, income from properties and appropriately contracted trade. Large, lavishly decorated houses and villas indicate this.

Each elite possesses individually varying combinations of the above. Juvenal's freedman who lives like an Equestrian on rental income[10] has (3) and may parlay that into (1), but definitely lacks (2). "Elite" then can be a broader term than aristocracy, as it includes disdained Imperial slaves and wealthy ex-slaves who were still movers and shakers in Roman society.[11]

"Non-elite," as the negation of "elite," covers both those who lack the above and those who possess them at lower orders of magnitude. It includes the truly indigent, the aspirers, and all in between. A non-elite's influence and esteem may not extend beyond neighborhood, *collegium,* or friend group. His income may be comfortable, but not enough to move mountains. Regarding House I.3.23's owner, scholars – judging from his house's size and the subject of his fresco – have proposed various unsavory characters. Fiorelli and della Corte posited a gladiator while Fröhlich and Clarke see a local partisan celebrating the riot.[12] Such a person potentially enjoyed a handsome income yet would not have merited esteem from those above him nor exercise broad influence. He certainly fell far short of his near neighbors who owned the opulent House of the Menander (I.10.4). Since the Riot Fresco's cityscape contrasts with the usual ways Roman frescoists depicted urban expanses in houses across the social spectrum, it may shed light on different attitudes towards cities across social strata.

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[10] Juvenal, *Satires* 1.102-106
[11] My thanks to Prof. Rabun Taylor for this suggestion.
[12] Fiorelli 1875, 56; della Corte 1965, 267-268; Fröhlich 1991, 247; Clarke 2003, 157-158. More recently, Torelli (2012, 64) proposed the patron was a *lanista*, a trainer of gladiators.

Fig. 2. Depictions of cities on the Peutinger map. Left to right: personifications of Constantinople and Antioch, metonym of Ravenna (Images in the public domain, available on Wikimedia Commons)

First, we must contextualize and define "cityscape." Cityscapes form a subset of what I call "depictions of cities," a broader universe that includes personifications and metonyms.[13] The Peutinger map, a medieval copy of a Roman original dated between the third and fifth centuries AD, furnishes examples (Fig. 2).[14] Three of the Empire's greatest cities – Constantinople, Antioch, and Rome – are personified as enthroned goddesses, while turreted walls enclosing smatterings of buildings denote six others. Personifications may express the highest urban ideal of antiquity by divinizing the embodied city,[15] while metonyms quickly impress the idea of "city" on the viewer. We would not call these cityscapes: personifications are too human, metonyms too small.

Cityscapes are distinguished by architectural focus and breadth. They are the metonyms' more detailed relatives. Had the Peutinger mapmaker "blown up" Ravenna to depict a host of intramural buildings, as the mosaicists behind the sixth-century AD Madaba Mosaic Map portrayed Jerusalem (Fig. 3), he would have crafted a cityscape. As such, I define "cityscape" as a broad vista in which architecture is arranged in an urban manner.[16]

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[13] Favro 2006, 23-30
[14] Talbert 2010, 117-119 and 124
[15] Gardner 1888
[16] Cf. the broader definition given by de Vries (2003) for "Townscape" in Grove Art Online.

Fig. 3. Bird's-eye view of Jerusalem on the mosaic map laid c. AD542-570 on the floor of the Church of St. George in Madaba, in modern-day Jordan (Image in the public domain, available on Wikimedia Commons).

I have identified three ways Roman artists arranged architecture urbanistically (Fig. 4). One is a simple concentration of buildings. The famed architectural prospects in *cubiculum* M from the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor[17] are the poster children, with their carefully arranged groupings of balconies, towers, and porticoes. Yet density alone is ambiguous, as Lehmann's strongly argued objections to the urban character of these frescoes demonstrate.[18]

The second method depicts a city wall in conjunction with buildings. Where density alone is insufficient, a tower-studded circuit is virtually incontestable.[19] Artists achieved this in at least two ways. The sculptor of Scene XXXIII on Trajan's Column took a frontal approach, depicting the walls head-on with buildings poking up behind.[20]

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[17] Beyen 1938, 149-179 esp. 149-162 and *Tafelband* 23 pls. 60, 61a-c, and 62a-c; Lehmann 1953, 82-87, 90-92, 192-204 and pls. 11-17; Peters 1963, 15-19 and pl. 2 fig. 7; Engemann 1967, 126-134 and pls 37 and 38.1; Bergmann 2010, 30-32

[18] Lehmann 1953, 90-114. For responses, Beyen (1957) and his student Peters (1963, 15-19 esp. 18-19).

[19] Literary attestations from all periods prove the Romans understood a very close relationship between cities and walls. It is no accident that Livy (1.7.3) has the fortification of the Palatine be Romulus' first action as Rome's founder. At the opposite end of Roman history, St. Isidore of Seville (*Etymologies* 25.2.1) wrote that cities were identified with their walls.

[20] Wolfram Thill 2010, 38-39; Stefan 2015, 121-122 and 142

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By contrast the carver of the Augustan-era Iliac tablet now in the Capitoline Museums employed a bird's-eye perspective to depict more of the city of Troy within its walls.[21]

Fig. 4. Methods Roman artists employed to create cityscapes. Left: One of the four near-mirror architectural prospects (c. 50-40BC) from *cubiculum* M of the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor near Boscoreale, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, no. 03.14.13 (Image in the public domain, courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art). Top right: Part of Scene XXXIII on the Column of Trajan at Rome, dedicated AD112 (Image provided by and used with the gracious permission of Prof. Roger B. Ulrich). Middle right: A portion of the sack of Troy on the *Tabula Iliaca Capitolina* (1st century BC) now in the Musei Capitolini in Rome, inv. MC 0316 (Image in the public domain, available on Wikimedia Commons). Bottom right: Excerpt from the Forum Cycle (c. AD62-79) from the atrium of the Praedia of Julia Felix at Pompeii, now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples, inv. 9062 (Image in the public domain, available on Wikimedia Commons).

This second method achieves a cityscape yet separates the viewer from the urban space; he is either stranded outside the walls or surveying the city like a distant god. The third method places him inside. Though related to the simple concentration of buildings, it avoids the ambiguity by depicting an obviously urban locale such as a forum, as in the Forum Cycle from the Praedia of Julia Felix at Pompeii.[22] The painter of the

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[21] For the most recent scholarly study of the Iliac tables, see the comprehensive reappraisal in Squire 2011.
[22] Sampaolo 1991a, 248, 249 and figs. 108-109, 252-257 and figs. 113-124; Clarke 2003, 96-98; see also Olivito 2013

Amphitheater Riot Fresco interestingly combined the second and third methods, depicting southeastern Pompeii from the air, yet from *within* the walls. Let us now turn to this piece in earnest.

Fig. 5. Top: Riot Fresco (Image in the public domain, available on Wikimedia Commons). Bottom: southeastern Pompeii as seen in Google Earth (Screencapture the author's own).

Fig. 6. Top: House I.3.23 within the urban fabric of Pompeii. The house is outlined in blue, and the location of the fresco and its pendants in red (Map ©Pompeii Bibliography and Mapping Project, used with permission of Prof. Eric Poehler. Highlights are the author's own). Bottom: Author's reconstruction of the original arrangement of the Riot Fresco and its pendants. Individual elements not to scale (Images of the pendants courtesy of Prof. John R. Clarke).

Framing a Riot: The Amphitheater Riot Fresco as a Cityscape

The Riot Fresco dominated House I.3.23's garden. Along with flanking paintings of gladiators it filled a good portion of the wall overlooking the garden (Fig. 6).[23] Clarke posits this was the house's main entertaining space, and as such the fresco was the preserve of the patron and his friends who could gather to reminisce and celebrate the

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[23] Sogliano 1873, 138 nos. 665 and 666; Clarke 2003, 154-155 and figs. 91-92

riot's brief overturning of the social order.[24] I think this is only one potential. As the main circulation space, the garden and fresco intersected with the life of the entire household. The fresco would be the patron's conversation piece, the companion of the slave drawing water from the well, and the plaything of children as they imagined stories around the gladiators and figures clashing in a setting they knew.[25] The Riot Fresco represented the city to a slice of its people, and each would receive it in his or her own way. To understand how the patron and artist may have intended it, we will first compare its reproduction of southeastern Pompeii to the real place. Second, we will characterize the relationship the artist established between urban space and human figures.

The frescoist is faithful to the setting's topographical outlines while taking a freer hand towards details. Comparing the fresco with a Google Earth screenshot (Fig. 5) we see the same urban structure: tree-lined open space before the neighboring Amphitheater and Palaestra, all embraced by the curving wall.[26] Yet the screenshot shows more. To achieve the fresco's vantage, we are posted above the Praedia of Julia Felix (II.4.6). Portions of the four semi-rural blocks north of the Via di Castriccio become visible below the tree line.[27] While the trees in the fresco may remind us of these properties, direct representation of them is suppressed. The artist has also occluded the extramural cemeteries behind an impenetrable cloud of color. He excludes extraneous detail to focus us on the Amphitheater and environs. This has the same effect as the Praedia's Forum Cycle, zeroing viewers in on a specific setting and events in it.

The Palaestra further exemplifies the artist's fidelity to outlines and conditional attitude towards details. He preserved the structure – porticus, pool, campus – but omitted the latter's trees,[28] saving himself work while emphasizing the open space. He portrayed a taller Amphitheater-facing façade than actually exists and reduced the entrances from five to two, omitting their pediments and columnar frames.[29] However,

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[24] Clarke 2003, 157-159

[25] Though we cannot know for certain if the patron had slaves or children, the number of rooms in the house and the presence of a second story raises the probability of this being a family home. Another possibility, not explored in this article, is that it was an older home repurposed as a clubhouse.

[26] Archaeological investigation has also recovered the root cavities of the plane trees depicted in the fresco, including two between the Amphitheater and Palaestra, just as depicted in the Riot Fresco. See Sampaolo 1990a, 81. The umbrella pines that today shade this widening of the Via di Castriccio recreate the effect.

[27] From left to right/east to west, the great intramural vineyard still occasionally called the Foro Boario, the Praedia of Julia Felix, the gardens south of the House of Venus in the Shell, and below the Palaestra's westernmost edge the long palaestra-esque garden of the town villa of Decimus Octavius Quartio.

[28] Zanker 1998, 114-116

[29] It is possible that this reflects the Palaestra's appearance prior to the AD62 earthquake. For damage sustained by the Palaestra in that event see Bragantini 1991, 311-312.

he painted them as arches, highlighting a distinct feature of their real-life counterparts easily obscured by their handsome framing. On the north wall he faithfully reproduced the pediment-crowned entrances visitors encounter today. The white coloration reproduces the original stucco, a graffiti-laden portion of which was preserved on the north wall.[30] Perhaps the fresco's painted inscriptions pithily hailing the Satrii Valentes[31] monumentalize real messages the patron and his friends scrawled on this wall for their favorite *editores*.

Monuments alone do not make a cityscape, still less a complete city. For that one needs people and nature.[32] While some aforementioned cityscapes blocked or omitted views of inhabitants or trees, the Riot Fresco is replete with both. In establishing the relationship between the rioters, nature, and monuments the artist again departed from strict fidelity to the setting, shaping urban space to frame the rioters and set different moods. Let us examine this through three figural groups (Fig. 7).

Our first group consists of seven figures left of the Amphitheater (Fig. 7, top left). They brawl in a spacious interstice running up to the tower and apparently continuing around the back of the Amphitheater. No such space actually exists, as the Amphitheater directly abuts the wall. There is in reality, however, a shark's fin-shaped spit below the Amphitheater's northeastern curve that rises to meet Tower VI, partially visible in figure 5.[33] The artist has evidently depicted this space, yet imaginatively expanded it to better accommodate the action. As he suppresses the spaces beyond the riot, so he blows up the engulfed area for emphasis.

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[30] Bragantini 1991, 312 and fig. 1

[31] *CIL* IV 2993x and y. For transcription and context, see de Petra 1869, 185-186; Matz 1869, 241; Sampaolo 1990a, 80-81. For the Satrii Valentes as givers of games, see Sabbatini Tumolesi 1980, 27-32.

[32] We must remember that from the air ancient Pompeii would present quite a green profile, with many gardens of varying sizes and functions. See Jashemski 2009.

[33] See also van der Graaf 2013, fig. 87

Fig. 7. Groupings of figures in the Amphitheater Riot Fresco. Top left: Rioters between Amphitheater and wall. Top right: Rioters between Palaestra and wall. Bottom: Rioters above the trees and non-rioters among them (Excerpts from image in the public domain, available on Wikimedia Commons).

He achieves a similar effect with the group of rioters above the Palaestra. This is his most brutal scene, with assailants pulverizing prone figures while others heckle and cheer from the Amphitheater's parapet and the city wall. All attention is focused on a slender space corresponding to the real alley between the Palaestra and wall. The frescoist nonetheless expands it by bowing the wall outwards, as if the energy of the riot thrusts it back. Simultaneously the wall embraces the rioters framed by it and the Palaestra. This repeats the architectural framing achieved for the first group by the Amphitheater and wall. The artist uses the real arrangement of monuments as a base around which to mold the urban space like clay, stretching and warping it to create specific fields for action.

Our third group reveals the artist and patron's interests beyond the riot. At left we see two juxtaposed figures by a tree. One dashes towards the low-slung brick building. The other, closer to the tree, has his back turned to the riot. He outlines the tawny ground with a long tool, evidently marking furrows for a garden or temporary stall. His

peaceful activity is repeated among the trees below. Here we see figures strolling or gathering in small groups. All poses suggest untroubled calm.[34] The artist sets aside this strip of curated nature to create a contrasting mood with the riot-engulfed interstices around the monuments. Notably, another park-like space – the Palaestra's *campus* – is spared, its lawns empty in contrast with the Amphitheater's arena where rioters supplant gladiators. In the Riot Fresco trees are not infallibly connected with serenity, as the two between Amphitheater and Palaestra frame rioters apparently beating down the latter's doors. Overall, however, as trees multiply the mood calms. The fresco's division into chaotic and quiescent spaces produces a dynamic tension: are the greenway and *campus* safe, or will they be engulfed next? While the answer is lost to us, the choice of this particular moment suggests an interest in the city as more than a flexible container for local upheaval. It is also a container of contrasts, of the active and passive, passionate and dispassionate, violence and peace. The Riot Fresco potentially generated deeper conversation than simple reminiscence.

Ideals and Myths: Cityscapes of Neronian and Early Flavian Date

We now turn to other cityscapes painted c. AD54-79. In contrast to the Riot Fresco's earthy temporality these frescoes commonly depict pristine urban ideals or mythological settings. Those of known provenance came either from the elite contexts of palace, villa, and grand townhouse, or non-elite houses with respectable decorative programs. We will examine the relationships between architecture, human figures, and the natural world in these pieces and the attitudes towards cities those may reveal.

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[34] One possible exception is a figure at the bottom-middle, striding rightwards. He could be read as carrying a heavy load. However, the box-like object above his head is rendered in the sketch published with de Petra's account (de Petra 1869, pl. 8) as a small roofed structure reminiscent of a shed. The watercolor in *Monumenta Pompeiani* (1905, pl. 25) also distinguishes the object from the moving figure. It is disproportionately diminutive to be a shack. It may be a covered well. Another possibility is that it could be a model shrine the figure is carrying for a procession. This reading gains plausibility if the group of figures to the left carry a *ferculum*, such as that depicted in the Procession of the Carpenters from shop VI.7.8-11. See *Mon. Pomp.*1905, pl. 75 and Clarke 2003, 85-87 and pl. 3. The lower portion of the Riot Fresco may in part depict the staging area for a procession scheduled to conclude the games.

Fig. 8. *Città Dipinta* (c. AD64-104) beneath the Baths of Trajan in Rome (Image courtesy of Prof. Eugenio la Rocca, with whose kind permission it is reproduced here)

In 1998 excavations beneath the Baths of Trajan in Rome discovered a monumental edifice and its remarkable city fresco, dubbed the *Città Dipinta* (Fig. 8).[35] It was likely an Imperial commission, perhaps for the urban prefect[36] or Nero's Golden House.[37] Like the Riot Fresco it was meant for outdoor display, but whereas the latter overlooked a garden accessible to a chosen few, the *Città Dipinta* perched high above an open plaza with mixed traffic. More minds would encounter this cityscape, elevated

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[35] For the building, Caruso and Volpe 2000, 43 n. 1, 50, 55; Volpe 2016, 61. For the progress of the excavations and reconstructions of the façade and environs, see Volpe 2000 (esp. 545-546 figs. 7-9); Volpe 2010; Volpe 2016. For the fresco, la Rocca 2000 and 2001.
[36] As tentatively proposed by la Rocca 2000, 69-70; 2001, 123, and Volpe 2000, 519-520.
[37] Torelli 2006, 176-177

above them and visualizing an elevated form of the city. While sharing some features with the Riot Fresco, it ultimately looks quite different. It too depicts a city from the air yet locates the viewer far above and outside the walls, allowing for a broader sweep than the Riot Fresco's focused vista. It features a broader array of monumental and quotidian architecture, for instance a theater or *odeum*, sanctuaries,[38] defended harbor channels, and blocks of densely packed houses within turreted walls.[39] While the Riot Fresco is local and particular, the *Città Dipinta* is universal and idealizing.[40]

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[38] In addition to the Greek-style temple adjacent to the theater or *odeum*, la Rocca (2000, 58-59) identified the stand of buildings at the far right as an old acropolis with Tuscan-style temples. The giant cryptoporticus in the *Città Dipinta* also bears a striking resemblance to Vespasian's Temple of Peace at Rome.

[39] La Rocca 2000, 57-59

[40] It could have depicted a real Roman city, as numerous newspaper articles attempted to identify in the wake of its discovery (Volpe 2000, 511-512). All, however, lacked sufficient evidence, and la Rocca (2000, 61) denies it depicts any real city, but rather the general impression of one in the Imperial period. If it did render a real city, the passage of time has made it as anonymous to us as a depiction of Vancouver or Austin to future archaeologists should all memory of their skylines and geography be lost.

Fig. 9. Harborscape (c. AD 54-79) from Stabiae, now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples, inv. 9514 (Image in the public domain, available on Wikimedia Commons)

The *Città Dipinta* also evinces a very different attitude towards human figures and nature. In the Riot Fresco monuments and trees outline spaces the artist enhanced to emphasize the figures and their actions. The streets and harbors of the *Città Dipinta*, however, are empty.[41] The *Città Dipinta* depicts something of the sea outside the city, yet walls it off. The only water allowed in is safely channeled through the harbors. Unlike the Riot Fresco where trees formed a crucial part of the cityscape, those here are

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[41] The only exceptions are two statues, for which see la Rocca 2000, 57-58. Cf. the architectural vistas of *cubiculum* M in the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale, where human figures appear only on friezes, triptychs, and statues within the paintings.

sidelined.[42] These differences grow from each fresco's unique focus. While the Riot Fresco shapes the city to illustrate a local event, the *Città Dipinta* displays the city as an architectural monument. Trimming human figures and nature sharpens that focus.

If the famous harborscape from Stabiae (Fig. 9) indeed graced a villa's walls,[43] it too was an elite commission. We do not know its display context, but presumably it was in a place where interested family members and visitors could discuss it, and slaves contemplate it as they cleaned. While the *Città Dipinta* idealizes a pristine architectural monument, the Stabiae Harborscape idealizes an active port. We see two somewhat amorphous fishermen in the foreground. Others row by in boats. Four anchored ships are tended by another shadowy figure. This city is also more visually integrated with the natural world, as no wall strictly demarcates town from sea.

The Stabiae Harborscape may depict a real city, as it bears a striking resemblance to the great seaport of Puteoli. In the Harborscape, arches carry a breakwater adorned with statue-bearing columns and trumpeting Triton atop an arch.[44] The same jetty appears on late antique "souvenir flasks" depicting Puteolan landmarks,[45] as well as the Bellori drawing of a now-lost fresco from Rome's Esquiline Hill.[46] Furthermore, the Harborscape depicts numerous portico-embraced courtyards. The Bellori drawing depicts several such porticoes, while the souvenir bottles use them as space-fillers.[47] Though the Stabiae Harborscape differs in certain details, its striking correspondence to known images of Puteoli suggests the great seaport directly inspired it.

Human figures and the impression of a real city make the Stabiae Harborscape an important comparandum for the Riot Fresco. Both integrate nature and leisure yet differ in their figural dispositions. The Riot Fresco fills the urban space with figures,

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[42] La Rocca 2000, 57 and fig. 3. They are inconspicuously located to the right of the city gate.

[43] Popkin 2018, 455

[44] Peters 1963, 152; Hanfmann 1975, 284

[45] Popkin 2018, 430-444. The major difference is that these glass flasks depict the *Pilae*, the Puteolans' name for their breakwater, with a second arch topped by hippocamps. It is possible this arch was added between the first-century AD date of the Harborscape and the third and fourth centuries when the flasks were manufactured. It is just as likely that the Harborscape's painter, like the Riot Fresco's, was unconcerned with exacting verisimilitude. Alternatively, the hippocamp arch may be depicted at the head of the inner harbor pier at top left, where Hanfmann (1975, 284) notes an arch crowned by a chariot group.

[46] Popkin 2018, 455-456 and fig. 27. The fresco is usually dated to the third century AD, while the Bellori drawing was made in the seventeenth.

[47] Popkin 2018, 432

while the Harborscape limits them to the sea and immediate shore.[48] While the Riot Fresco warps urban space to depict the riot, the Harborscape, like the *Città Dipinta*, is structured by well-organized architectural vistas. The Harborscape combines this with idealized work[49] while the Riot Fresco contrasts commotion and calm. We begin to see an elite taste for urban idylls in which rougher sides of urban life have no place.

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[48] Hanfmann (1975, 284) writes that the dots in the porticoed street to the viewer's right may represent crowds. This is unlikely, as elsewhere in the fresco the same dots are located closer to ceilings and suggest lamps. Furthermore, all clear human figures in the Harborscape are shadowy shapes, not pinpricks of light.

[49] As Clarke observes regarding the Forum Cycle in the Praedia of Julia Felix (2003: 97), the purpose of depicting workaday activities in an elite space is amusement. Similarly, the depiction of fishing in the Harborscape is not an endorsement of such demanding toil, but an idealization of it, similar to the depictions of villa workers in the late first-century BC sacral-idyllic landscapes of *triclinium* C from beneath the Villa Farnesina at Rome, now in the Museo Nazionale Romano - Palazzo Massimo alle Terme.

Fig. 10. Cnossus, detail from *Daedalus and Icarus* (c. AD50-79) in the House of the Priest Amandus (I.7.7) at Pompeii (Image an undated photograph kindly provided by Jackie and Bob Dunn, with whose permission it is reproduced here. ©Jackie and Bob Dunn, www.pompeiiinpictures.com. Su concessione del MiBACT - Parco Archeologico di Pompei.)

While cityscapes are rare on the walls of Herculaneum and Pompeii they occasionally appear in paintings of myths. We will study two prominent examples: Cnossus in paintings of Daedalus and Icarus, and Troy in those of the Trojan Horse.[50]

While sea and shore recur across the *Daedalus and Icarus* variants, a city – presumably Cnossus, given Daedalus' association with Minos – is an optional backdrop, appearing in four of ten *Daedalus and Icarus* paintings described by Peters. Each city, though a background ornament, displays remarkable individuality. What was once the most striking *Daedalus and Icarus* cityscape remains on the east wall of the *triclinium* in the House of the Priest Amandus (I.7.7) at Pompeii (Fig. 10).[51] Its context was similar to the Riot Fresco's, adorning a space in which meals, lessons, discussions, and tasks could be conducted. Its individuality comes from the wealth of detail. The painter took care to delineate both ashlars and buildings. The gargantuan size of the former relative to the latter corresponds with the Riot Fresco and the *Città Dipinta*, suggesting that oversized ashlars were a visual trope for city walls.[52] The artist likely adapted the buildings from pattern books.[53] For instance, the building farthest left looks like a *tholos* with projecting colonnade.[54] This is the same sort of villa architecture that Lehmann used to undermine the urban reading of the panels from *cubiculum* M. Yet in the Amandus *Daedalus and Icarus* the same porticoes and towers depict monumental townhouses and temples. Indeed, the slant-roofed building to the right of the *tholos* shares a profile with the towers Lehmann identified as silos.[55] The architectural vocabulary expresses one setting as well as another. This may suggest that Campanian workshops had not developed a distinct way of painting the city. This is plausible, given the apparent low demand for cityscapes. At the same time, this blurring of "urban" and "rural" architecture, acknowledged by Lehmann for *cubiculum*

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[50] There are five other Neronian or early Flavian painted cityscapes from Pompeii and Herculaneum I do not have the space to discuss. I simply mention them here, in the hopes of treating them more fully in the future: Troy in the possible *Achilles, Phoenix, and Penthesilea* from the House of Jason (IX.5.18) and the sketch of a now-lost *Hercules and Hesione* from the House of Bread (VIII.3.31); nameless walled cities in *Theseus Abandons Ariadne* from the House of the Colored Capitals (VIII.4.31/51) and *Polyphemus and Galatea* from the House of the Mariner (VII.15.2); Thebes in the *Punishment of Dirce* from the House of Aristides in Herculaneum. In addition there is a *Hercules and Hesione* from an unknown house in Pompeii and the *Theseus Victorious* from the Villa Imperiale (VIII.1.a), both of which I have had opportunity to mention in the footnotes below.

[51] Dawson 1944, 99 and pl. 14 no. 39; Peters 1963, 93-94, 206 n. 343 and pl. 21 fig. 79; Hanfmann 1975, 282; Sampaolo 1990b, 593-597 and figs. 9-13; la Rocca 2008, 51. Sadly, it has now faded almost beyond recognition.

[52] Cf. van der Graaff 2013, 240-242

[53] Clarke (2003, 307 n. 75) for bibliography on the use of pattern books in Roman fresco painting, particularly as regards mythological scenes.

[54] A common architectural feature in Pompeiian wall painting. The villa landscape from the House of the Small Fountain (VI.8.23) and a *Polyphemus and Galatea* from that of the Ancient Hunt (VII.4.48) are but two examples. For House of the Small Fountain, la Rocca 2008, 63 and 117 fig. 44. For *Polyphemus and Galatea*, Dawson 1944, 111 and pl. 24 no. 64

[55] Lehmann 1953, 99-103

M and known in the architecture of real villas,[56] may reflect the taste of the owner of the House of the Priest Amandus. His townhouse was small but well-appointed, suggesting a well-to-do and aspirational patron.[57] If he and his usual guests could not afford villas, the architectural translation into the city painted for his dining room could be compensation.

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[56] At the conclusion of her argument Lehmann (1953, 114) writes "City and country were fused in this microcosm where the intellectual tastes of the capital might be grafted onto the agricultural realities of suburb and province. The urban aspect of Roman villas is well known alike from monuments and literary sources." This was explored in Torelli 2006, 174-176. The blurry line between villa and city is apparent in Pompeian frescoes such as a *Hercules and Hesione* of unknown provenance which Helbig (1868, 227 no. 1129), Dawson (1944, 108), and Peters (1963, 130, 208 nn. 450-454 and pl. 27 fig. 109) agree depicts a city, yet the architecture – an exedra, a pagoda-like tower, etc. – is that of villas and tombs. Cf. Dawson 1944, 109-110 and pl. 24 no. 61 for another potential *Hercules and Hesione* with a similar villa-like background, and Squire 2011, 44 fig. 12 for the urban aspect of Circe's palace on the *Tabula Rondanini*.
[57] Wallace-Hadrill 1994, 169-174

Fig. 11. *Daedalus and Icarus* (c. AD50-75) from Pompeii, now in the British Museum, no. 1867,0508.1355. (©Trustees of the British Museum, use permitted under <u>CC-BY-SA-NC 4.0</u> license, courtesy of the British Museum)

Another noteworthy aspect of this Cnossus is its separation. The story is foregrounded while the city stands silently behind. It is also separated from nature, open to but walled off from the sea. It is an even more distant, self-contained architectural vista than the *Città Dipinta*. This recurs in the unprovenanced *Daedalus and Icarus* in the

British Museum (Fig. 11),[58] another in the *triclinium* of the House of Aulus Virnius Modestus (IX.7.16)[59] (Fig. 12), and a third from a *cubiculum* in the House of Paccia (V.2.10)[60] (Fig. 13). The known display contexts are, again, limited to the patron's household and intimate guests.[61] These paintings could be read during dinner parties, meetings, and story times for children. All their cityscapes comprise a wall encompassing buildings, yet the details are as individual as each artist and patron. Those behind the British Museum piece appeared interested in a characteristically Roman city with an amphitheater.[62] "Virnius Modestus" and his painter seemed intrigued by tiered architecture,[63] "Paccia" by buildings that appear to emerge from the cliffs. Like the *Città Dipinta* and Stabiae Harborscape these pieces contrast with the Riot Fresco by depicting cities unsullied by human fallibility.

These frescoes hailed from houses of similar scale and decoration as that of the Priest Amandus, with the possible exception of the British Museum's. While its quality tempts one to think further down the social ladder, we must resist this. Sketchy architecture is no sure sign of a lower-end patron, as we will see with the *Trojan Horse* from the House of the Menander, nor are sketchy figures, as the Stabiae Harborscape proves. It could fall anywhere on the social continua. The House of Paccia had atrium and garden suites like House I.3.23, yet was larger and possessed a more notable decorative program.[64] The partially excavated House of Virnius Modestus possessed an atrium suite with similarly respectable paintings. Including the House of the Priest Amandus, we see idealized cities on the walls of at least three houses of moderate to above-average social standing. If the *Città Dipinta* and Stabiae Harborscape reflect a high taste for harmonious and well-ordered cities, we see its spread among Pompeii's well-to-do non-elite.

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[58] Helbig 1868, 253 no. 1210 (omits mention of the cityscape); Dawson 1944, 109 and pl. 22 no. 58; Peters 1963, 131-132, 208 n. 459, and pl. 28 fig. 111.

[59] Sogliano 1873, 93-94 no. 523; Dawson 1944, 84 and pl. 3 no. 9; Peters 1963, 78-80; Sampaolo 1999, 796 fig. 24 and 797. See especially Leach 1988, pl. 30.

[60] Sampaolo 1991b, 839 and fig. 19

[61] See for instance Riggsby 1997 on Romans uses of and associations with the *cubiculum*.

[62] The open space around an amphitheater may recall southeastern Pompeii, as Peters (1963, 132) observed.

[63] Perhaps inspired by the composition of a very indistinct cityscape in *oecus* A of the Villa Imperiale (VIII.1.a) at Pompeii. See Peters 1963, 108-110 and 206, n. 345. In this piece, which depicts Theseus after the defeat of the Minotaur, a wall with square battlements rises behind the figures, protecting two tiers of buildings with both flat and peaked roofs. While this mythological cityscape is similar to ones we have already encountered in its separation of the city from the figures, the artist has included stands of spire-like cypresses among the buildings.

[64] 492.38 square meters to the House of the Riot Fresco's 334.97, by the measurements found in the Pompeii Bibliography and Mapping Project's most recent (at the time of writing) online navigation map (https://digitalhumanities.umass.edu/pbmp/?p=1565). For V.2.10's decoration, see Sampaolo 1991b.

Fig 12. Aurelio Aureli's sketch (DAIR 83.304) of the now-lost *Daedalus and Icarus* (c. AD50-79) in the House of Aulus Virnius Modestus (IX.7.16) at Pompeii (© Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Römische Abteilung, use permitted under CC-BY-NC-ND license. Original at http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/buchseite/1026593)
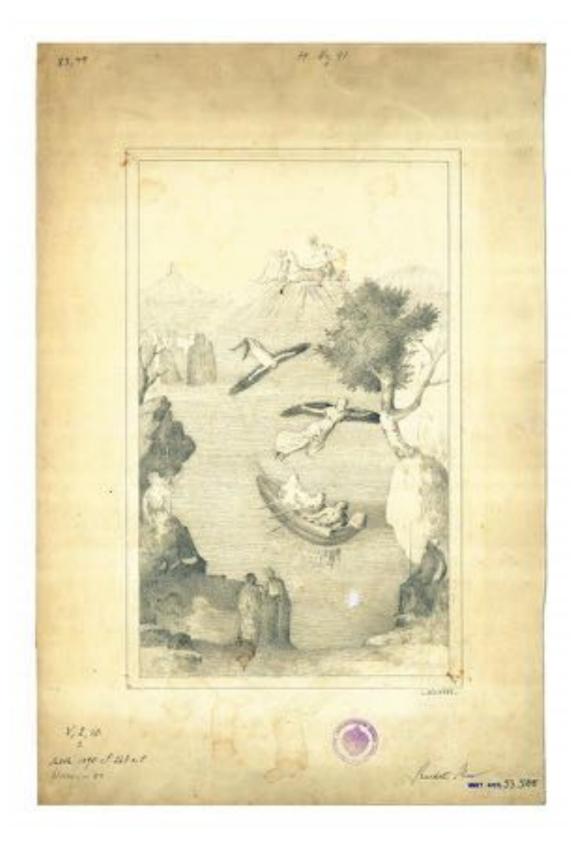
Fig. 13. Geremia Discanno's sketch (DAIR 83.49) of the *Daedalus and Icarus* (c. AD50-79) from the House of Paccia (V.2.10) at Pompeii ((© Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Römische Abteilung, use permitted under CC-BY-NC-ND license. Original at http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/buchseite/949032)
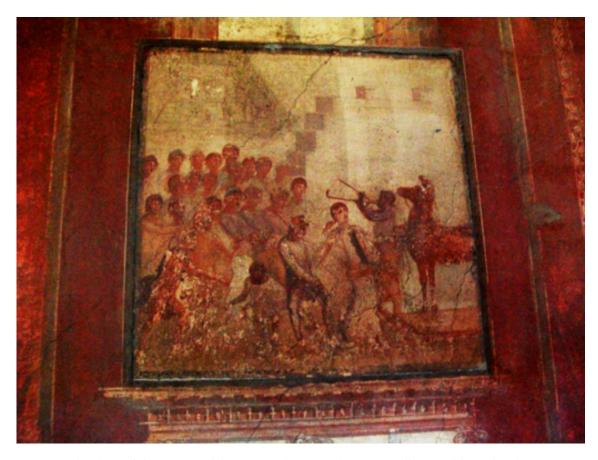
Fig. 14. *Trojan Horse* in *ala* 4 of the House of the Menander (I.10.4) at Pompeii (©Jackie and Bob Dunn, www.pompeiiinpictures.com. Su concessione del MiBACT - Parco Archeologico di Pompei. Image kindly provided by the Dunns, with whose permission it is presented here)

We see a departure from the serene cityscape in renditions of the Trojan Horse. Three instances from Pompeii render Troy with a wall, sanctuary, and human figures, whose arrangement changes from painting to painting. In these depictions of Troy human figures come to dominate over the built environment. They present a contrasting pattern with the urban ideals, for instead of unaffected architectural worlds the artists portray a city in varying states of dissolution.

The simplest arrangement is from *ala* 4 of the House of the Menander, where the cityscape is narrowed to the circuit, sanctuary, and citizens (Fig. 14).[65] Located in a wing off the atrium, it was meant not only for the household and select guests, but also to occupy the owner's clients as they waited to salute him. Its warning of rash behavior leading to civic downfall could reinforce what his dependents had imbibed from the poems they were raised on. Trojans stream through the rather neatly deconstructed section of the wall to greet the Horse. Behind them stands a grainy portico surrounding several figures and a Roman-style temple accessed by prominent front stairs. The artist depicted the city wall frontally and the sanctuary aerially, as if the latter were in a low valley we look down into. Were it not for the suggested distance we would have difficulty classifying this as a cityscape. The blank, understated wall and outline-like sanctuary emphasize that the focus is not on architecture. It is rather on the citizens unknowingly destroying their city. Unlike the Riot Fresco, where the figures are distant and anonymous, we can read the emotions on these faces. With its focus on the populace, the Menander *Trojan Horse* is perhaps our most humanistic cityscape.

Fig. 15. Detail from *Trojan Horse* from the House of Aulus Virnius Modestus (IX.7.16) at Pompeii, now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples, inv. 120176 (Image in the public domain, available on Wikimedia Commons)

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[65] Maiuri 1933, 44-48 and fig. 18; Ling and Badoni 1990, 280-281 and figs. 60-62; Ling and Ling 2005, 74 and pl. 76, 194-195, 343 fig. 18

This emphasis on the people and the telescoping of the urban environment recur in the *Trojan Horse* (Fig. 15) from a *cubiculum* the House of Aulus Virnius Modestus.[66] Here Troy appears more of a pearlescent pen for people than a city. Within its tower-bearing walls we see only packed masses of torch-bearing Trojans pouring out to greet the Horse. In this panel figures banish architecture from the city in a singular reversal of what we have previously seen. They have even pushed the temple to the outer edge. This cityscape is unique for its near-total focus on the people who comprise the city. Given the great distance, however, we do not see their faces. They are as anonymous as the Riot Fresco's hooligans and flanneurs.

A *Trojan Horse* from an unknown house in Pompeii depicts the same scene with a lateral view (Fig. 16).[67] The battlemented enceinte with two towers extends across the background. At the right the Horse emerges from behind a structure with three rows of openings (windows?) and draped in an X of black curtains.[68] This may be the demolished section of the wall. Given the direction the men are hauling the Horse, we are evidently inside the city.[69] However, it looks nothing like we would expect. We see no houses or monuments, only a green cloud behind the torchbearers. The sacred area at left has no grand temple, only a ghostly shrine accompanied by a statue of Minerva, a sacred tree, and an urn-topped column. The architecture is that of the isolated rural shrines common to sacral-idyllic landscapes, as Peters acknowledges while still identifying them as "the sanctuaries of the city."[70] The decidedly rural appearance of Troy perhaps presages what it will soon become. The Trojans have broken their wall, admitted their destruction, and for all intents and purposes no longer have a city. While an air of tenuous tranquility hangs over the park-like areas of the Riot Fresco, the *rus in urbe* of this *Trojan Horse* is deeply disturbing.[71] A city can survive upheaval, but there is no coming back from the Trojans' fatally misplaced hope that danger had passed.

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[66] Dawson 1944, 85 and pl. 4 no. 12; Peters 1963, 78; 205 n. 296; pl. 17 fig. 62
[67] Dawson 1944, 86 and pl. 5 no. 13; Peters 1963, 134-135; 208 n. 472; pl. 28 fig. 115
[68] Hanfmann (1975, 280) refers to it only as "a towering, Roman-looking, many-storied structure."
[69] Dawson 1944, 86 specifies the torchbearers as inside the city.
[70] Peters 1963, 134. Likewise Hanfmann 1975, 280.
[71] Hanfmann (1975, 280) also perceives this mood, and brings it out through his description of the figures and their actions.

Fig. 16. *Trojan Horse* from Pompeii, now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples, inv. 9010 (Image credit: Sailko, made available on Wikimedia Commons as "Troiani che tirano cavallo in città, da pompei, 9010.JPG." Re-use permitted under <u>CC-BY-SA 3.0</u> license, which requires attribution under the creator's original title and a report of alterations made. Changes made by author: image cropped and contrast increased 25%)

Conclusion

This article has considered the Amphitheater Riot Fresco from Pompeii as a cityscape alongside others of Neronian and early Flavian date. The *Città Dipinta*, Stabiae Harborscape, and four renditions of *Daedalus and Icarus* from Pompeii exhibited a tendency to separate the city from nature, human figures, and the action of particular myths. This emphasized the city as an architectural monument. A countervailing tendency, suggested by the depictions of the Trojan Horse, downplayed architecture in favor of human figures. In depicting a local event, the Riot Fresco split the different between these tendencies, fully integrating figures, architecture, and natural elements into the city. In the surviving paintings of the Bay of Naples, only the Forum Cycle from the Praedia of Julia Felix matches the Riot Fresco in its integration of city-dwellers with their built environment. While I have had regretfully little to say about the Forum Cycle here, the comparison of it with the Riot Fresco holds rich promise for future work.

This brings us to a consideration of cityscapes and the social standings of their patrons. Based on the sorts of buildings they were found in or on, we can class the *Città Dipinta*, the Stabiae Harborscape, and the *Trojan Horse* from the House of the Menander as

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elite. These were financed by the affluent who commanded a great deal of social respect. The other two *Trojan Horses* and the *Daedalus and Icarus* renditions likely came from well-to-do homes whose owners followed or adapted elite tastes. One possible taste is a preference for well-ordered settings free of strife. One need only recall the quiet prospects of *cubiculum* M from the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor, whose example continues in the *Città Dipinta*, the Stabiae Harborscape, and the Cnossus-inclusive *Daedalus and Icarus* compositions. Such a taste renders the Riot Fresco all the more of an outlier and makes attractive Clarke's reading of the patron as a contrarian thumbing his nose at what is socially respectable.

However, the *Trojan Horse* from the House of the Menander strikes a different note. Foreboding of Troy's violent fall fills this scene, and is fulfilled in the pendant piece across the same room depicting Cassandra being ripped away from Minerva's statue.[72] Violence also enters the city in elite decor. Troy, however, is quite a special case. It is the doomed city *par excellence*, the legendary type for every city ever sacked in the Greco-Roman world, whose very human story could soothe traumatic fears of violence entering one's walls. Viewers who appreciate the violent death a city can die will appreciate much more the well-ordered city at peace.

The Riot Fresco occupies an interesting place here. It depicts violence engulfing the spaces around the monuments, but renders placid scenes within the Palaestra and beneath the shade-giving trees. It is tempting to read a violent city/peaceful country dichotomy over this, but both the monuments and the curated trees are part of the same city. The manifold opportunities for strife and relaxation that can be found in any city are here splendidly juxtaposed.

We began with a mention of the garden the Riot Fresco originally decorated. It seems appropriate to end there. The large garden at the back of House I.3.23, as Clarke noted, was a private space the patron could retire to with his friends. A gigantic fresco depicting their city torn apart is a wholly idiosyncratic choice for a backyard. It seems all the more jarring when we remember that it was flanked by two pendant images of gladiatorial pairs, one of whom is about to die. These give the Riot Fresco a gladiatorial cast, whereby the wild, unchoreographed mauling of rivals from the next town is elevated into the revered world of the games.[73] Indeed, the cityscape of Pompeii itself in the Riot Fresco could be subsumed into this world: the wall curves around the scene like a *podium*, and both the *arena* of the painted Amphitheater and the streets outside

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[72] Ling and Badoni 1990, 276-279 and figs. 55-59.
[73] Clarke 2003, 157-159

share the same sandy color. The city itself becomes allusive of the arena, its monuments made stage scenery for the fight. Instead of a city ruled by peaceful order, we have a city ruled by the order of competition: an urban arena where chance and skill whirl together and clash, determining winners and losers through the cut and thrust of life. Yet the frenetic energy of this combat dissipates as we approach the parks. These are apparently still part of the arena, yet in them is silence, or people strolling and building in peace. The tension is unresolvable, and thus greatly nuances the overall composition. The Riot Fresco may present Pompeii primarily in an agonistic light. Nonetheless, it makes room for the quieter activities of the garden. The patron and his artist have created a visual story in which provincial violence is sublimated into a competition that, however brutal, leaves a quiet place for retreat. They have created a tale of the city as human as that of Troy. Not bad for a piece of "popular art."

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