

Illusion and Allusion: Pilasters, Portals, and Pictorial Play in Campanian Wall Painting

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Unassuming and seemingly unremarkable, two painted panels decorate the doorway of the fauces in the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia [II.3.3] in Pompeii. The panels are ornamented with a simple geometric design and are notable for both their simplicity, and their ambiguous function within the decorative program of the house. This paper considers these enigmatic panels to investigate their meaning and function within the context of transitional and domestic spaces in the city of Pompeii. Expanding my focus beyond the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia, I examine broad range of comparanda from around the Bay of Naples, including painting and architectural embellishment, to suggest that the panels were intended to represent and enhance the appearance of monumental domestic architecture, while also functioning as a visual game. As a result, these painted doorway panels are a dynamic, if schematic, element of Campanian wall painting that engages viewers visually and physically as a multifaceted symbol.

Introduction

At the end of the *fauces* of the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia [II.3.3], two near-identical painted panels appear on either side of the inner doorway.¹ Consisting of a series of four concentric rectangles and a central vertical line on a monochromatic red background, the panels are simple, yet enigmatic, and have rarely been addressed in extant scholarship (Fig.1).² Based on their location at the end of an entryway and independence from the surrounding painted scheme of the *fauces*, conventional wisdom indicates the panels are meant to represent fictive pilasters. Yet, the painted panels also appear remarkably similar to painted and cast representations of ancient Roman



Fig. 1. Painted panel from the *fauces* of the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia [II.3.3]. Fresco, 1st century C.E. Pompeii, Italy (photograph by author, su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali e per il turismo- Parco Archeologico di Pompei).

door leaves. Rather than championing the identification of the panels in question as either faux supports or fictive door leaves, I suggest both facets exist in conjunction with one another. By appearing as both faux pilaster and fictive door leaf, the panels draw on the charged significance and pictorial qualities of each, while offering viewers a visual game. Considering Roman penchant for pictorial play,³ I examine the illusive and allusive qualities of the painted panels, as a motif that invites comparisons to grand architecture, while concurrently functioning as a form of visual entertainment.

Painted Doorway Panels in the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia

The first century B.C.E. Casa della Venere in Conchiglia⁴ is a private residence in the southeastern sector of the city of Pompeii.⁵ Named for the famous painting of the goddess Venus that adorns the rear wall of the garden,⁶ the home is decorated throughout with Third and Fourth Style frescoes. The walls of the entryway, or *fauces*, are painted in Third Style and composed of red panels with black vertical bands and central medallions. Notable for their simple and unremarkable design, the painted panels with which this paper is concerned, henceforth called painted doorway panels, decorate the inner doorway between the *fauces* and atrium. The panel motif is repeated on the northwest wall of the atrium, which meets the inner doorway panel at a ninety-degree angle. In the atrium, the walls are faded, yet faint red and yellow fresco panels can still be discerned. Based on the nature of the *fauces* and atrium paintings, it is apparent that the painted doorway panels do not align with the decorative programs of either space. Rather, they represent a break in the otherwise harmonious decorative schemes of the *fauces* and atrium, and thus must serve a specific function.

It is notable that the painted doorway motif is singular neither within the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia, nor in other houses in Pompeii. In fact, the motif appears twice more in the

Casa della Venere in Conchiglia, once within the doorway of the *triclinium*, and again at the rear of the house in the garden (Fig.2).⁷ In both examples the pattern ornaments the

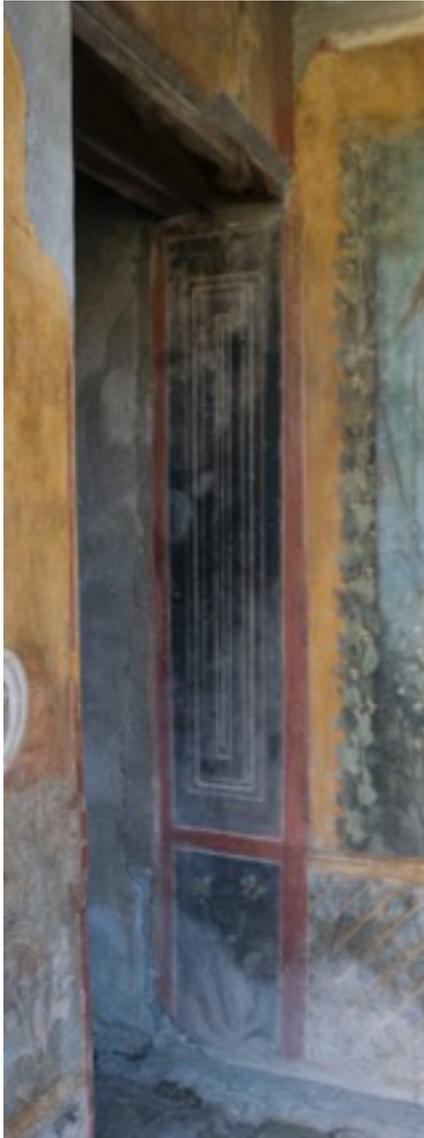


Fig. 2. Painted panel from the rear garden of the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia [II.3.3]. Fresco, 1st century C.E. Pompeii, Italy (photograph by author, su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali e per il turismo- Parco Archeologico di Pompei).

interior of a doorway in white and yellow on a black background, with vegetation in the lowermost zone. Like the entryway examples, the panels are situated so that they face visitors moving through the doorway and are neither visually nor thematically linked to the Third and Fourth Style frescoes that surround them.⁸

Considering all three examples of this motif within the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia, a few key patterns emerge. Most significant is the location of doorway panels as, in every case, the motif is situated within, or surrounding, a doorway, hallway, or other space of passage. This is important not only for identifying the pattern, but also for deciphering the meaning and function of the panels. As these examples demonstrate, the pattern is clearly linked to the space in and around doorways. The regularity of the pattern is also striking. Each of the painted panels is decorated with exactly four rectangles and a central vertical line on a monochrome background. While there is certainly a coherent pattern for the panels within the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia, extant examples from other homes in the city support these observations, and suggest the panels constitute a motif within Pompeian painting.

In addition to the three sets of painted doorway panels from the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia, the motif appears in a handful other houses in Pompeii, all of which adhere to the patterns discussed above. Other known examples come from the Casa dei Ceii [I.6.15], the Casa del Menandro [I.10.4], the Casa di Paquius Proculus [I.7.2], the Casa del Larario Fiorito [II.9.4], the Casa degli Amorini Dorati [VI.16.7, 38], and the Casa dell'Ara Massima [VI.16.15]. Similar to the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia, the panels in these houses appear within doorways and closely follow the pattern of the motif. The appearance of the doorway panel motif within all the aforementioned houses in a more or less standardized manner further indicates that it was a location-specific

decorative element.⁹ This association with doorways, as we will see, is a central factor in understanding the painted doorway panels.

ALLUSION: The Case for Faux Pilasters and Aspirational Architecture

The observations just discussed have important implications for the meaning and function of the doorway panels. In particular, the location of the painted panels within and around doorways is significant. Comparisons of the entryway of the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia and those of similar houses in Pompeii reveal that pilasters or other supports appear frequently in and around domestic doorways. It would stand to reason, then, that the motif represents faux supports. Considering the pilaster's long and celebrated associations with monumentalizing and aspirational architecture, this identification seems appropriate.

From Egyptian tombs to monumental Greek temples, columns, pilasters, and other supports served as an important component of post-and-lintel construction throughout the ancient world. Beginning as a strictly structural element, columns themselves soon became a focus of decorative efforts.¹⁰ Embellishments such as flutes, capitals, and bases offered space for decorative detail, and could range from simple to highly ornate. The same is true of pilasters, which William MacDonald observes, "help increase the impression of directionality,"¹¹ and indeed, pilasters communicate a sense of solidity and monumentality while offering space for decoration. Alone, such columns and pilasters are impressive, but together, rows of columns further enhance the appearance of a structure. As is well known, colonnades were often associated with grand monumental buildings,¹² such as the Stoa of Attalos in Athens or the colonnaded Apadana at ancient Persepolis, and this tradition continued on the Italic peninsula.

In Republican Rome, as a result of close contact with Greece and Etruria, columns

grew increasingly popular and ornate.¹³ Although not pioneered in Rome, engaged columns became incredibly popular amongst the Romans, nearly always more decorative than functional. Republican temples in the city of Rome, including the well-known Temple of Portunus, incorporated engaged columns as an essential component of the exterior design of the structure. The same is true of private edifices, the owners of which enthusiastically opted to include engaged columns in their architectural schemes.

In the domestic realm, homeowners often aimed to visually align their private residences with elite structures through allusions to monumental supports and colonnades. In

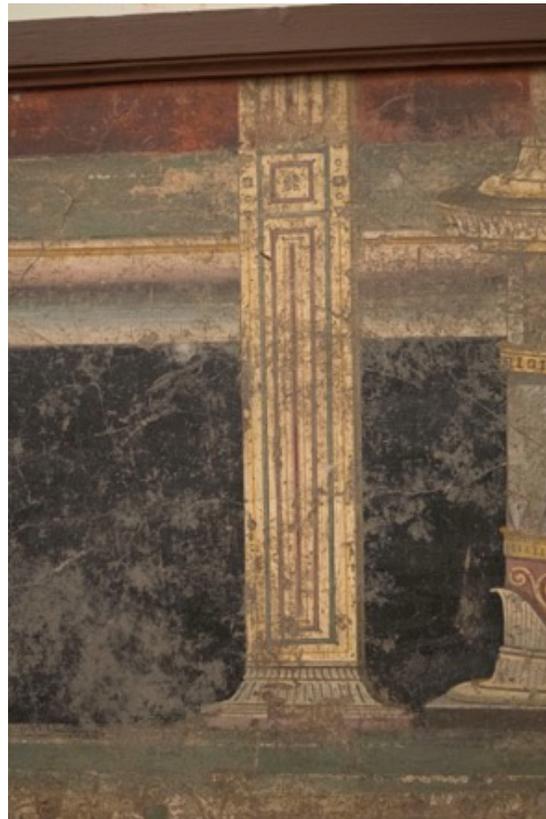


Fig. 3. Detail of pilaster, fresco fragment from Herculaneum, structure VII.6.28. Fresco, 1st century C.E. Now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. Inv. 9733 (photograph by author).

doing so, Roman homeowners could attempt to harness some of the grandeur of imposing architectural supports to lend their homes a sense of monumentality. The famous Casa Sannitica in Herculaneum [V, 1-2], which is decorated with engaged columns on its façade and second story, is an instructive example of this convention. In the case of the Casa Sannitica, specifically, the columns on the façade function as *antae*, a type of column or pilaster that appears on either side of a doorway. Such *antae* delineate the spaces they flank as entrances, function as key markers of spatial transition, and provide extra opportunities for architectural elaboration. Add to this the associations between architectural supports and elite monumental structures, and it is no wonder that *antae*, columns, and pilasters appear frequently in ancient Campanian homes.

Keeping in mind the popularity of columns and colonnades within Roman structures, both domestic and monumental, the painted doorway panels that appear at the end of the *fauces* of the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia naturally recall pilasters or *antae*. Not only does their placement encourage this interpretation, but also the use of stucco-modeled pilasters in houses, such as the Casa di Sallust [VI.2.4], which flank the doorway of the *tablinum*.¹⁴ If indeed representing faux pilasters, the painted doorway panels in the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia incorporate the motif into the interior decoration of the home as part of visual convention, and additionally lend the structure and its entryway a sense of monumentality.

At the same time, the pattern of the painted doorway panel motif does not appear an exact match for extant examples of Campanian architectural supports. Whereas typical pilasters, columns, and *antae* tend to be embellished with a series of vertical lines to give the appearance of a fluted column, the painted doorway panels are defined by a series of concentric rectangles on a monochromatic background. What does this discrepancy mean for our identification of the

panels as fictive *antae* or pilasters? In fact, a definitive clue appears in a painting from Herculaneum, currently in the collection of the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli. On the fresco fragment are depicted a pair of birds and fruit on the left, and a column and pilaster on the right.

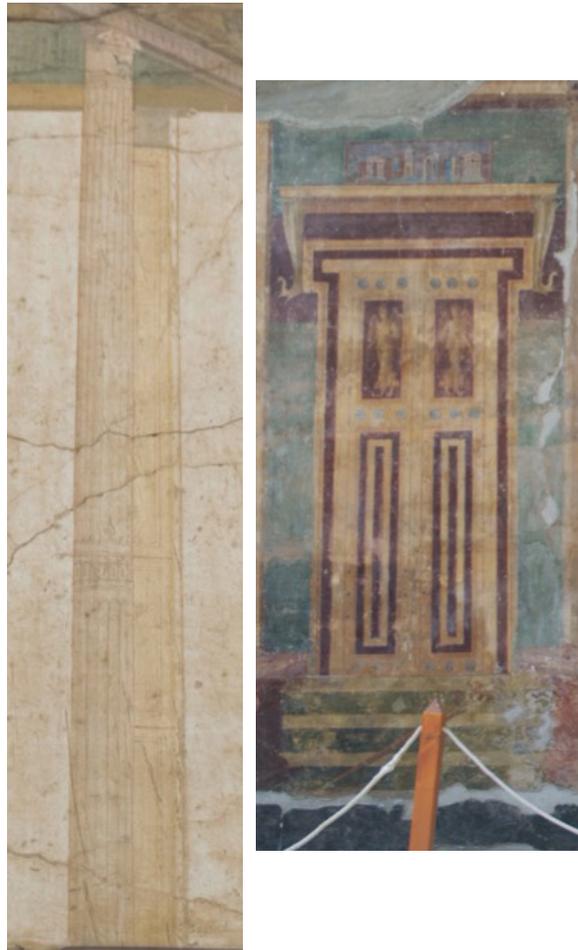


Fig. 4. (Left) Detail of pilaster, fresco fragment from Herculaneum. Fresco, 1st century C.E. Now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. Inv. 9183 (photograph by author).

Fig. 5. (Right) Detail of door, Second Style fresco from the Villa of Poppaea. Fresco, 1st century B.C.E. Torre Annunziata, Italy (photograph by author, su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali e per il turismo- Parco Archeologico di Pompei).



Fig. 6. Door cast from the Villa of Poppaea. Cast plaster, ca. 1st century C.E. Torre Annunziata, Italy (photograph by author, su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali e per il turismo- Parco Archeologico di Pompei).

Significantly, close study of the pilaster reveals a pattern nearly identical to the painted doorway panels (Fig.3). Four rectangles of different colors surround a vertical line on the pilaster, with a central square pattern and decorative base. Although the central square pattern of the pilaster and sloping foot are not represented in the painted doorway panels, this depiction seems a very close match.

A second painting, also in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, confirms this identification (Fig.4). Much like the first example, a series of four columns decorates the far-right side of the fresco fragment from Herculaneum.¹⁵ Behind these columns, just half of a decorated pilaster is visible. It, too, is decorated with three groupings of concentric rectangles. Although schematized, this image also seems a match for the painted doorway panels we have been examining.

Further inspection of other pilasters that appear within Roman frescoes demonstrate the existence of squared supports decorated with series of recessed or concentric rectangular panels. The illusionistic pilasters with similar recessed panel decorations in the *Odyssey Landscape* frescoes, now in the Musei Vaticani,¹⁶ are just one example of this element of painted architecture. It is, however, important to note that so far as I am

aware such pilasters have no parallel in extant Roman architecture.¹⁷ While it is possible that such decoration could have once embellished now bare supports, it is equally as likely to be a fabrication of Roman painting.¹⁸

Nevertheless, it would appear that the painted doorway panels under study are indeed intended to represent pilasters and *antae* at critical junctures in the house. In mimicking such supports, the painted doorway panels attempt to aggrandize private homes through their allusion to monumental and large-scale architecture, well known throughout the ancient world for its imposing columns, pilasters, and colonnades. By alluding to both actual architectural elements and the ideologies of grandeur aligned with monumental columns and colonnades, those homeowners who elected to decorate their doorways with painted doorway panels were able to efficiently and schematically augment the splendor of private, and comparatively modest, structures.



Fig. 7. Detail of interior door panel from the Casa degli Amorini Dorati [VI.16.7, 38]. Fresco, ca. 1st century C.E. Pompeii, Italy (Photograph: ©Jackie and Bob Dunn www.pompeiiinpictures.com, su concessione del MiBAC - Parco Archeologico di Pompei).

ILLUSION: Painted Doorway Panels as Fictive Door Leaves

Together, the location of the painted doorway panels, the importance of architectural supports in aspirational architecture, and the comparative fresco fragments in the Naples museum, indicate that the motif was intended to represent fictive pilasters in domestic space. Yet, the appearance and decoration of Roman door leaves complicates the picture. Indeed, when comparing the two, the similarity of the painted panels to Roman door leaves is remarkable. Both representations of doors in ancient Campanian fresco and casts of ancient door leaves find many parallels with the painted panel motif. In painted and cast examples the familiar pattern of recessed rectangles can be augmented with embellishment ranging from bosses and lion's head knockers, to figural panels and inlay of precious materials. However, even the simplest door leaves are decorated with recessed rectangular panels.

The so-called Villa of Poppaea from Oplontis¹⁹ in Campania provides comparative examples of both real door casts and painted images of door leaves. In the atrium of the villa is a large and detailed Second Style fresco, part of which illustrates a closed door with two leaves (Fig.5). The leaves are divided into two panels, with bosses appearing in rows at the top, bottom, and middle sections of the leaf. In the upper panel there are winged Victories, and in the lower a pattern of rectangles. These door leaves are richly embellished, and possibly fanciful, but the recessed rectangles, division into panels, and the central vertical line in the lower panel all recall elements of the painted doorway panel motif.²⁰

A set of cast doors, also from the villa, corroborates the basic shape and appearance of door leaves in painted representations. Composed of four leaves, the cast doors are preserved to roughly three-quarters of their original height (Fig.6). Each leaf is divided into two vertical recessed panels, and a large

crossbar spans all four leaves to secure the door. As with the frescoed doors from the atrium, the pattern of these door leaves appears quite similar to the painted doorway panel motif. Although they are not an exact match for the pattern, lacking a central vertical line, the many echoes between door leaves and the painted panel motif are notable.

Two panels from the inner doorway of Room I in the Casa degli Amorini Dorati in Pompeii further support the identification of the painted doorway panels as door leaves (Fig.7). The paintings are decorated with three concentric rectangles and a central bar and broad strokes of red and yellow pigment are utilized to mimic the appearance of cast shadows. These paintings are not a precise match for the painted doorway panels, but they do appear strikingly similar to real door panels, and thus may bridge the gap between the motif and real door leaves.

The visual parallels between real and represented door leaves and the painted doorway panels are striking, especially upon first glance. When cursorily observing the painted panels, it almost appears as if two leaves of a door have been opened on either side of a doorway,²¹ an illusion heightened by the placement of the panels within doorway openings. These similarities, and the resulting illusion of opened door leaves, I contend, is no accident. Instead, it is an intentional pictorial play that exploits the many parallels between faux pilasters, door leaves, and the painted panels. Rather than invalidating the identification of the painted doorway panels as fictive supports, the appearance of the panels reveals an attempt to intentionally align door leaves and faux pilasters, which share schematic details, shape, and location, to create a play of visual illusion.²² Appearing as a pilaster in one moment, and a door leaf in the next, it eventually becomes clear that the panels are in fact neither. This moment of visual illusion and confusion, rather than frustrating, would have been amusing to a contemporary

Roman viewer.²³ Such intentional polysemy, as described by Karl Gakinsky, was not uncommon in early Imperial art, the Ara Pacis Augustae being a notable example.²⁴ The polysemy of the painted doorway panel motif, then, fits nicely within contemporary visual convention.

Visual games and optical illusion are a common feature of Roman domestic decoration,²⁵ especially in Second Style painting which favors perspectival play and fictive vistas or landscapes.²⁶ In its attempt to deceive a viewer into thinking a flat surface is three-dimensional,²⁷ Roman illusionistic painting employs a variety of perspectival techniques²⁸ including orthogonals,²⁹ atmospheric perspective, and a play of light and shadow. Ancient texts celebrate pictorial illusion wherein virtuoso artists are commended for their ability to fool humans or animals with painted representations of objects.³⁰ By engaging with illusionistic imagery, ancient viewers could partake in

a visual game in which an onlooker could compare a visual approximation to an actual object.³¹ This blurring between reality and artifice could amuse viewers, especially when unexpected.³² Like the creation of fictive space and vistas in Second Style painting, and even Roman fondness for meta-images,³³ the panels engage viewers physically and visually, changing as one moves, a delightful yet disorienting experience.³⁴

A famous scene from Petronius's *Satyricon* is instructive when considering how such illusionistic images may have functioned in a Roman house.³⁵ When the narrator Encolpius and his companions enter the home of the infamous freedman Trimalchio for a dinner party, the protagonist explains how he is startled by the painting of a dog on the wall of the atrium and accompanied by the warning, "Beware of the Dog."³⁶ Of course, this encounter is intended to be humorous, made evident when Encolpius's companions laugh at his terror. This brief scene indicates



Fig. 8. Painted and recessed panels flanking the *tablinum* (on either side of room opening), Casa di Marcus Lucretius Fronto [V.4.A, 11]. Fresco and stucco, 1st century C.E. Pompeii, Italy (Photograph: Scala/ Art Resource, NY).

that illusionistic painting could be amusing to both the viewer, when realizing the deceit of the image, as well as to those observing the viewer. Similar to the experience of modern optical illusions, Roman illusionistic painting, real and literary, could create a memorable experience for spectators through visual engagement with the image.

In fact, the illusion of the painted doorway panels may have been more than a pleasing visual game for human visitors. In Roman thought, doors and doorways were considered vulnerable spaces and regarded with some anxiety.³⁷ Various visual techniques were employed to keep malign forces from crossing the threshold, including decorating hallways with images of animals, various deities, and even inscriptions. Drawing on the illusion of the painted doorway panels, the motif may have been intended to confuse the malignant spirits that might follow a visitor into the house by suggesting a door where there was none.³⁸ The visual play of the motif would have been just as efficacious on spirits as it was on humans,³⁹ and the homeowner may have hoped this visual confusion would repel such forces. As a motif that appears as two distinct objects at once, the painted panels offer a visual game to viewers while confusing, and possibly trapping, unwanted forces. Therefore, as both pilaster and door leaf, the painted doorway panels function as a potent yet efficient image, one that simultaneously offers grandeur, visual play, and protection.

Painted Doorway Panels and the Casa di Marcus Lucretius Fronto

A final example both corroborates and complicates our understanding of the painted doorway panels. The Casa di Marcus Lucretius Fronto [V.4.A, 11] in Pompeii is located in the west sector of the city.⁴⁰ Visible from the entryway of the home is the front of the *tablinum*.⁴¹ On either side of the doorway of the *tablinum* are tall white panels decorated with a central vertical pattern, recessed concentric panels, and alternating colors



Fig. 9. Detail of painted supports, from the north wall of the *tablinum*, Casa di Marcus Lucretius Fronto [V.4.A, 11]. Fresco and stucco, 1st century C.E. Pompeii, Italy (Photo: akg-images/ De Agostini Picture Lib./ A. Dagli Orti).

(Fig.8). This motif also decorates the space within the doorway of the room, meeting the other panels at ninety-degree angles, and is unmistakably similar to the pattern and location of the painted doorway panels. Two explanations for this feature emerge.⁴² On the one hand, they could be meant to represent two sides of faux supports, as Roman *tablina* were often flanked by pilasters.⁴³ On the other, the panels could represent four leaves of a moveable partition. Portable partitions with sliding or folding doors were commonly placed in front of Campanian *tablina*, as demonstrated by the famous carbonized example from Herculaneum.⁴⁴ Such wooden partitions could be set up in front of a *tablinum* to provide temporary and customizable privacy, and thus, the *tablinum* panels from the Casa di Marcus Lucretius Fronto may alternately represent folded leaves of a moveable partition.

Here too, I believe the motif is multivalent. Once again, the panels are pilasters, but the many similarities between the panels and door leaves visually align the pattern of the *tablinum* pilasters with an open partition or door. The reflexivity of the motif, vacillating between fictive support and partition leaves is analogous to that of the painted doorway panels. Key to this visual game is the idea that the panels are at once either pilaster or door leaves, both, and neither. The fact that the artist took time to model the panel in stucco demonstrates a clear intentionality in creating this illusion.

What is more, the multifaceted nature of the *tablinum* panels is reinforced by the paintings that appear within the *tablinum* itself. Flanking the central scene in the middle zone of the painted north wall of the room are two tall pedimented structures supported by thin pilasters. Although it is difficult to tell from far away, these pilasters are decorated with a pattern very similar to both the painted

doorway panels, and the panels that decorate the entryway of this *tablinum* (Fig.9). The inclusion of this detail reveals a clear familiarity with this style of pilaster on the part of the artist, and likely also the patron. It also suggests another attempt at pictorial illusion by mimicking an architectural and decorative feature of the space in which it appears.

In the uppermost painted zone of the same wall a second detail is also reminiscent of the *tablinum* panels. On either side of a central scene featuring a tripod are two half-opened folding doors (Fig.10). The concentric rectangles and decorative middle line are visually similar to the *tablinum* panels, again no doubt intentional on the part of the artist.⁴⁵ Here too, it seems the artist is drawing a direct parallel between the painted folding doors and the panels decorating the entryway of the room. The appearance of both pilasters and folding doors that mimic the appearance of the *tablinum* panels may indicate another



Fig. 10. Detail of painted folding doors, from the north wall in the *tablinum*, Casa di Marcus Lucretius Fronto [V.4.A, 11]. Fresco and stucco, 1st century C.E. Pompeii, Italy (Photograph: akg-images /Bildarchiv Steffens).

intentional play with visual illusion, an acknowledgement of the many similarities between the pilasters and door leaves.

Consequently, the *tablinum* panels in the Casa di Marcus Lucretius Fronto represent another example of not only visual play, but also visual ambiguity. Such visual uncertainty, a common feature of Roman painting, is fitting within the space of a doorway. In incorporating a motif that carries multiple meanings into the decorative scheme of the home, the artists and homeowners offer guests a visual game. In this way, both the panels from Casa di Marcus Lucretius Fronto and the painted doorway panels are multifaceted, not only in what they represent, but also in how they function within the transitional space of the doorway.

Conclusions

Allusive and illusive, the painted doorway panels from *fauces* of the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia are deceptively simple, yet multivalent in significance, function, and experience. The unassuming design of concentric rectangles on a monochromatic background allow the motif both flexibility and a depth of meaning. Appearing simultaneously as faux pilasters and fictive door leaves as a result of their design and location, the painted panels align the doorways they decorate with the grandeur of monumental architecture and the illusion of pictorial play. By populating a transitional space with a motif that is itself transitional and transformative, homeowners who employed the motif appropriately address spatial ambiguity with its visual counterpart. The *tablinum* panels from the Casa di Marcus Lucretius Fronto reaffirm the multifaceted nature of the motif as both pilaster and folding partition leaves, itself supported by the painted details that decorate the interior of the *tablinum*. Together, the features of allusion and illusion within painted doorway panels create a motif that is at once aggrandizing, amusing, and inextricably tied to the intermediary space of the doorway.

Endnotes:

1 I thank the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei for allowing me to study these painted panels in Pompeii, as well as the editorial team at *Chronika* and three anonymous reviewers for their hard work and valuable comments. A Cosmos Scholars grant from the Cosmos Club Foundation and a University of Maryland Graduate Summer Research Fellowship helped make this research possible, for which I am grateful.

2 When acknowledged, these panels are called a pilaster, or “lesena” (or lesene referring to a shallow pilaster), Caratelli and Baldassarre 1991, 718. While these examples would appear to characterize the panels solely as pilasters, they refer to the architectural element on which the design is painted, not the motif itself. In terms of the painted pattern, Caratelli and Baldassarre describe the motif as a “semplice decorazione” (simple decoration), Caratelli and Baldassarre 1991, 718.

3 Examples of pictorial play abound in Roman wall painting, particularly in Second Style programs, from ancient Campanian cities. For more on visual illusion and perspectival play in Roman painting, see Ling 1991, 61; Leach 2004, 61, 81-89; Leach 1982, 158-64; Wesenberg 2002 477-99; Beyen 1938; Mazzoleni et al. 2005; Scagliarini 1974-76, 3-44; Drerup 1959, 145-174. On the optical game between real and represented gardens, Pappaladro and Mazzoleni 2009, 70; Jashemski 1979, 55-6; Bergmann 2018, 286-93, 315-6.

4 Excavated in 1933-1935 and 1951-1953.

5 For an overview of the Casa della Venere in Conchiglia, also called the House of Marine Venus, see de Carolis et al. 2012, 9-12; Nappo 2007, 364-367; Caratelli and Baldassarre 1991, 112-71; Della Corte 1965, 384-6.

6 On the flora and fauna that populate the garden fresco, see Ciarallo 2012, 25-8; Tammisto 2012, 29-38.

7 The panels in this case decorate the interior of an opening thought to lead to a small *sacellum*, de Carolis et al. 2012, 8.

8 Third Style frescoes decorated the interior of the *triclinium*, while the area around the garden room is embellished with Fourth Style painting.

9 It is further important to note that in seven of the nine examples discussed above, the painted doorway panels appear within Third Style decorative schemes. It is too early to definitively say whether or not the motif is a hitherto unremarked on element of Third Style ensembles, but as far as my research has indicated, it does not appear in conjunction with any First or Second Style painting. These preliminary numbers do seem to suggest that the motif is indeed an element of Third Style decoration, but this will need to be borne out fully through further research. For a discussion of Third Style wall painting see Bastet and De Vos 1979.

10 Boëthius et al. 1978, 185.

11 MacDonald 1986, 185.

12 Thomas 2007, 17-23; Frey 2015, 149, Morvillez 2018, 33.

13 For example, the first recorded porticus was constructed in 193 B.C.E., Burns 2017, 11.

14 In fact, in the Casa dei Ceii, the bottom of one of the painted doorway panel appears to have later been covered in stucco modeled to resemble a fluted pilaster.

15 This fragment comes from structure [VII.6.28] in Herculaneum.

16 *Landscapes with scenes from the Odyssey*, from Rome (Via Cavour). Mid-first century B.C.E. Fresco, in eight panels. Musei Vaticani, Rome, Italy. Inv. 41013, 41016, 41024, 41026.

17 The closest example of which I am aware are the marble pilasters in the courtyard of the *Praedia* of Julia Felix [II. 4. 3-12], which, unlike the panels, are fluted.

18 This is true of many other elements of Roman painting, such as the impossibly tall and thin columns popular in Third Style painting, which are not representative of real Roman objects or architectural practices.

19 Also called Villa A, excavated 1839-1840, and 1960s-1980s. Gazda, 2014, 152-5.

20 A second example of a faux painted door from the Casa del Bracciale d'oro [VI.17.42] displays many of the same characteristics as the Oplontis example, however the pattern of recessed panels in this example is more pronounced and demonstrates the variety within painted representations of door leaves.

21 Evan Proudfoot has demonstrated that secondary doors, screens, curtains, and movable partitions were common within Pompeian houses, especially within the doorway between the *fauces* and atrium. Proudfoot, 2013, 199-200.

22 The “surprise and delight” of visual games was also created by the sculptural decoration of private structures, Bartman, 1988, 224-5.

23 Visual games could be an amusing aspect of wall painting for Roman spectators. On the popularity of visual play, see Gensheimer, 2015, 93; Jones, 2018, 19. In some circumstances, such illusionistic images could be considered dangerous or even a trap, Platt, 2002, 106.

24 Galinsky, 1992, 468-474. I thank Reviewer 2 for this suggestion.

25 Scholars have long debated the nature of Roman illusionistic perspective, some arguing there are errors in Roman perspective (Sinisgalli, 2012, 115), and others that multiple types of perspective were used within Roman painting to achieve the desired effect (Stinson, 2011, 403-5). Panofsky argues that ancient Romans and Greeks were interested in forms of perspectival representation other than linear perspective, such as angles versus distance, Panofsky, 1991, 34-43. On the rejection of Panofsky see Sinisgalli, 2012, 72-4. See also Jones, 2018, 12, 19-21; Bek, 1980, 172-80; Netz and Squire, 2016, 68-84; Gombrich, 2000.

26 Faux architecture and views are widely held to have been inspired by the Roman stage backdrop, or *scaenae frons*. Maiuri, 1953, 49; Leach, 2004, 94-100; Little, 1937, 492-5; Little, 1971; Beyen, 1938. Roger Ling, however, believes references to the theater in Roman painting are indirect, Ling, 1991, 77.

27 Dars, 1979, 7-9.

28 de Santis, 2009, 222.

29 Scholars have rightly observed that while Roman illusionistic painting does include orthogonals, the lines

never converge at a single point. Little, 1937, 491-2.

30 See, for instance, the stories about Zeuxis, who painted grapes so naturalistically they fooled birds, or the illusionistic curtain of Parrhasius (Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, 35.29). See also stories such as the horse of Apelles that looked so real it caused other horses to neigh (Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, 35. 37), and Myron's cow which fooled other cows (*Anthologia Palatina*, 9.713-42, 793-98). For more on ancient ekphrasis see Elsner, 2007; Garcia, 2018, 325-38; Elsner, 1996; Elsner, 1995, esp. Part I; Koortbojian, 2005; Elsner and Squire, 2016, 180-204. On Roman vision and optics see Bartsch, 2006, 3-4.

31 Gensheimer, 2014, 85-90.

32 Jones, 2018, 10. Jones also observes that visual play could be the result of inner versus outer images, reality versus imagination, animating the work of art. Jones, 2018, 24, 26-9. Eleanor Winsor Leach rightfully points out that such reactions to visual trickery would have been immediate, yet momentary. Leach, 2004, 82. Michael Square characterizes mimetic images as liminal. Squire, 2010, 616.

33 See Gensheimer, 2014, 84-104.

34 Such illusionistic experiences such as fictive vistas could make the space in which the painting appears feel larger. Leach, 2004, 84.

35 While the *Satyricon* is indeed a useful resource, as satire it should be used with caution when reconstructing Roman lived experience. In this case, however, the practice of decorating the entryway of one's home with the image of a ferocious dog is well documented within Pompeii, including the mosaics of the Casa del Poeta Tragico [VI.8.3, 5]; Casa di Paquius Proculus; Casa di Orfeo [VI.14.20]; and Casa di Caecilius Iucundus [V.1.26].

36 Petronius *Satyricon*, 29. “*Ceterum ego dum omnia stupeo, paene resupinatus crura mea fregi. Ad sinistram enim intrantibus non longe ab ostiarii cella canis ingens, catena vinculus, in pariete erat pictus superque quadrata littera scriptum ‘Cave canem’. Et collegae quidem mei riserunt, ego autem collecto spiritu non destiti totum parietem persequi.*” “I was gazing at all this, when I nearly fell backwards and broke my leg. For on the left hand as you went in, not far from the porter's office, a great dog on a chain was painted on the wall, and over him was written in block capitals ‘beware of the dog’. My friends laughed at me, but I plucked up courage and went on to examine the whole wall.” Translation Heseltine and Rouse, 1913, 49. In a humorous turn of events, Enclopius and his companions are met by an actual dog in the atrium as they exit the house. Petronius *Satyricon*, 72.

37 Barton, 1992, 172; Swift, 2009, 41.

38 It is also possible the motif is meant to represent an extended, albeit schematized, hallway stretching beyond the space of the wall. I thank Dr. Sarah Glenn for this observation.

39 Ellen Swift discusses how certain mosaic symbols on thresholds were oriented toward those entering the room to protect those within. These symbols, she suggests, were used to keep unwanted forces out of certain spaces,

Swift, 2009, 41-3.

40 For a comprehensive discussion of the Casa di Marcus Lucretius Fronto, see Peters and Moorman, 1993.

41 John Clarke dates the *tablinum* to ca. 40-45 CE. Clarke, 1991, 61.

42 W. J. Peters and Eric M. Moorman call this feature an *antepagmentum*, meaning a door or window frame. While this identification is no doubt accurate, as the panels do frame the doorway of the *tablinum*, it does not explain the meaning or function of the painted motif or recessed panels. Peters and Moorman, 1993, 161, 235. They further state that, "L'imitazione di un tavolato è evidente." Peters and Moorman, 1993, 161.

43 Leach, 2004, 22.

44 Mols, 1999, 105; Dickman, 2007, 426.

45 Significantly, the paintings in the *tablinum* with perfectly within the space of the room, suggesting the decorations were custom-made for the space. The many examples of painted schemes abruptly ending on walls throughout Pompeii, a result of the pattern books used by artists, highlight the custom nature of this painting. Ling, 1991, 217-8.

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