

## **HIMINO, Natsuko. The Garden Frescoes in the “House of the Golden Bracelet” in Pompeii: Workshop and Iconography**

This paper discusses the frescoes of garden scenes in the House of the Golden Bracelet (VI.17.42) and the House of the Orchard (I.9.5) in Pompeii, whose quality is particularly high among Pompeian garden paintings.

The paper consists of two parts. First, I will discuss the issue of the workshop that created the paintings. Eric Moormann (1995) attributed these garden paintings in the two Pompeian houses to a single painters' workshop because they have similar execution techniques. Although he aptly points out the resemblances between these works, as Ernesto De Carolis (2007) has stated, further examination of technique and style will be useful in order to identify the painters. Basing my argument on this analysis, as well as on comparisons of birds motifs and overall composition, I propose that in fact two painters' workshops can be distinguished: the workshop which decorated room 32 of the House of the Golden Bracelet shows higher competence in the depiction of the details as well as overall composition, while the other workshop, which decorated room 31 of the same house as well as the garden rooms of the House of the Orchard, betrays the tendency of repeating fixed patterns both in the depiction of motifs as well as in the overall composition. I conclude that the latter workshop studied the decoration of the former while working in room 31, and borrowed the motifs of birds as well as elements of composition from room 32.

Second, I conduct an iconographical analysis of the frescoes of room 32, which shows higher quality of execution and more complex composition compared to other garden frescoes. While past studies have focused on the symbolic meanings of the trees and flowers, the intriguing motifs of the pinakes depicting reclining women supported by herms have not been investigated in detail. I point out the similarities between these women and the iconography of sleeping Ariadne and Maenad figures in Pompeian mythological paintings. Whereas in these mythological scenes both Ariadne and Maenad are depicted together with their male partners, namely Theseus, Dionysus and Satyr, the pinakes of room 32 show only the women, rendering their identity ambiguous. Similar juxtaposition of images of solitary women sleeping can be found in Propertius 1, 3, where the sleeping figure of Cynthia, the poet's lover, evokes a series of sleeping mythological heroines, namely Ariadne, Andromeda and Maenad. I suggest that the women depicted in the pinakes, without partners and outside their narrative context, offered the viewer a more open interpretation, evoking Ariadne as well as Maenad, just as Cynthia allows a projection of images of various heroines.

In conclusion I will consider the entire fresco program with reference to Anna Maria Ciarallo and Lello Capaldo (1991) who identified the species of plants and birds in the paintings, but while Ciarallo interpreted the composition as the allegory of life and death, I will rather argue that the frescoes evoke an image of the garden as an ideal place for love, in accord with the images of pinakes evoking lovelorn Ariadne and sensuous Maenad.