

HANDCOLORED ENGRAVINGS OF POMPEII WALL DECORATIONS

This series of seven hand-colored engravings, Pompeian Frescoes from In Casa Pseudourbana, late 18th c., features the frescoes that decorated the walls of a Pompeiian villa in Roman antiquity. The engravings were designed by Giuseppe Chiantarelli (Italian, active 18th-19th c.) and collaborating draftsmen Giuseppe Io Manto and Francesco Morell. The suite was subsequently printed by Dom. Casanoca, F. Giomignani, Nico. Cesarano, Aniello Catanco, Guis. Guerra for the visual album Casa Pseudourbana di Pompei.

Located along the Bay of Napoli on the west coast of Italy, the Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum were buried by the eruption of the somma-stratovolcano Mt. Vesuvius in 79 C.E. While artifacts had been discretely unearthed from the cities as early as the fifteenth century, it wasn't until 1758 that archaeologists began systematically excavating the two sites. In doing so, they discovered that the geological particularities of the eruption had left the cities intact: the volcanic ash had effectively preserved the cities' inhabitants and their environments, including the wall frescoes that decorated Roman villas. Such discoveries made possible a more thorough public knowledge of the cultural practices and social structures of Roman antiquity.

These hand-colored engravings sought to represent the frescoes in a stately Pompeiian villa as they were uncovered during the excavations in the 18th century. Documentation reveals that Chiantarelli began this suite as early as 1798. Chiantarelli's engravings delineate and make visible the design of a Roman villa's ornate wall paintings, thus illuminating the centrality of rich visual decoration to elite Roman culture in 79 C.E. Roman domestic interiors were claustrophobic spaces; often windowless and dark, wall frescoes illuminated the rooms, offering vibrant respite to the villa's inhabitants and laborers.

At the center of each engraving in this suite is a flattened perspective of an individual wall, with the structural features, decorative motifs and patterning etched and hand-colored in fine detail. Below, the key indicates that Chiantarelli modeled the engravings off the palmi napoletani (Neapolitan palm) sizing system, in which the length of a human palm (palmi – palm) was utilized as a tool for measurement. The titles of each engraving provide descriptive architectural wayfinding. Parete di sito in continuazione del portico in giro del Giardino (Site wall in continuation of the portico around the Garden), for example, emphasizes this frescoed wall's location in relation to the garden and portico – architectural features that held a central role in moderating airflow and sunlight in the Roman villa.

Florentine scientists have noted that the red pigmentation in the frescoes (now referred to as "Pompeian" red), as documented in these hand-colored engravings and through anecdotal evidence, began first as a yellow pigment. The transformation of the color is attributed to a chemical reaction produced by the gasses released from the eruption.

The visual albums Casa Pseudourbana di Pompei were frequently purchased as souvenirs for libraries, patrons, and travelers passing along the European Grand Tour throughout the 19th century. The form – as a contained collection of prints – and its capacity for mobility both reciprocated and precipitated an immense popular interest in ancient Roman art and culture among throughout Europe, reflected in the neoclassical architecture and decorative arts of the 19th century.

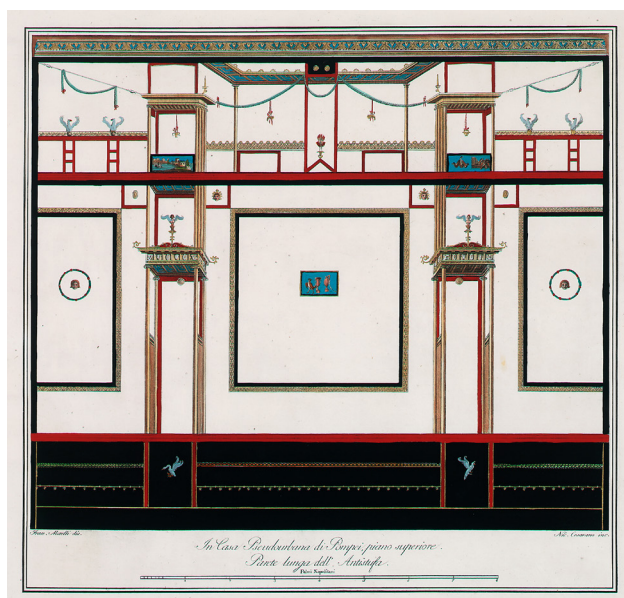
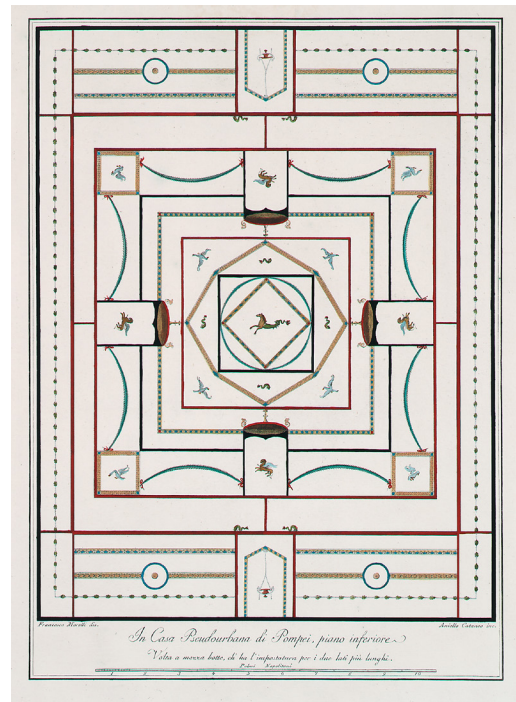
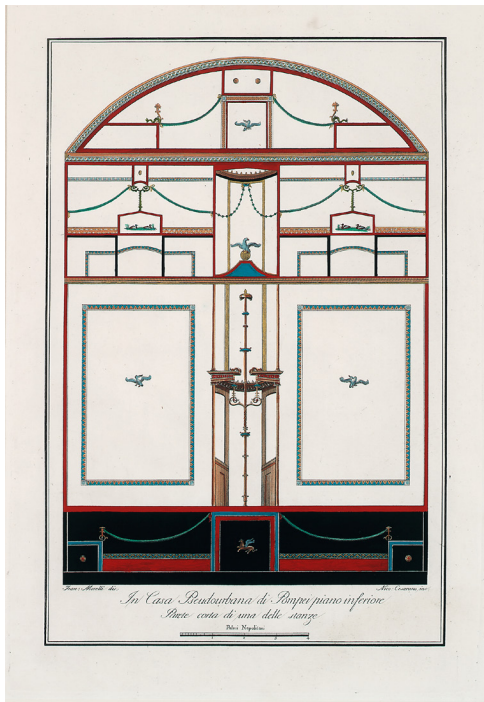
SELECTED REFERENCES

CHRISTIE'S. "Giuseppe Chiantarelli – Casa Pseudourbana." Christie's. <https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/giuseppe-chiantarelli-fl-1795-casa-pseudourbana-wall-5970575-details.aspx>.

E.S. "Colouring Pompeii." Art Newspaper, Vol. 16, (Nov. 2011): p. 38-38.

GEORGE GLAZER GALLERY. "Pompeian Frescoes: Rome, 18th Century." George Glazer Gallery: Antiquarian Globes, Maps & Prints. <https://www.georgeglazer.com/archives/prints/interiors/casapompeii.html>.

ROBERT SCHREUDER ANTIQUAIR. "In Casa Pseudourbana di Pompei." Robert Schreuder Antiquair. <https://www.robertschreuder.com/Paintings-Prints/In-Casa-Pseudorbana-di-Pompei>.



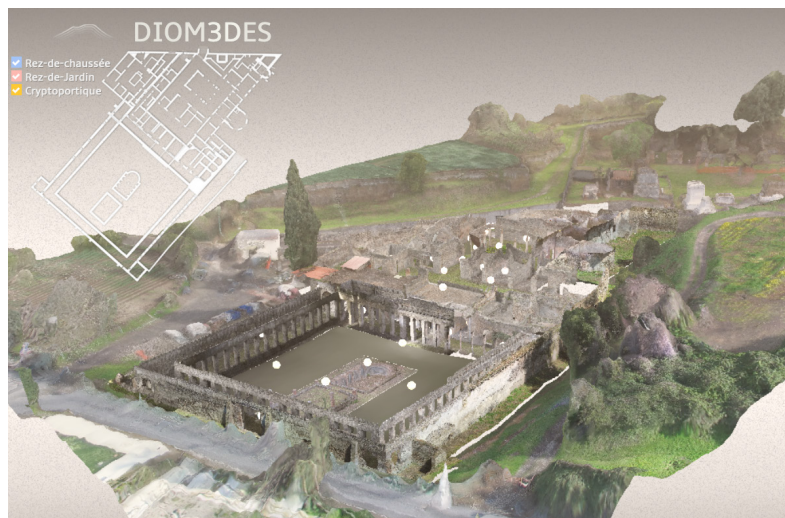
THE VILLA OF DIOMEDE

The Villa of Diomede is a grand Pompeian structure situated on the northwestern edge of the archaeological site. Measuring approximately 37,500 square feet, this sprawling three story private residence is one of the largest structures excavated in Pompeii. Among the three floors, there were a variety of styles and types of rooms; private rooms, greeting and visiting areas, dining rooms, bath complexes, storage and cloak rooms, and, along the lowest floor, the household staff areas. An extensive garden with a pergola and pools surrounded by a square peristyle faces towards a panoramic view of the Gulf of Naples. The name derives from a tomb located on the property; near the entrance of the villa houses the remains of Marcus Arrius Diomedes.

After the site's re-discovery in the mid-18th century, excavation on the Villa of Diomede began in 1771 and lasted for four years. Thorough documentation of the site was collected, and the excavated villa became a popular tourist attraction and an important stop for young men of means on The Grand Tour; some of whom left initials or names as graffiti on the villa walls. The well-preserved and elaborately decorated rooms of this palatial villa served as subject to passing artists and as inspiration for 19th century architectural and decorative styles.

Although the Villa of Diomede was thoroughly studied during the 18th century excavation with high standards for the time, a modern archaeological study was not conducted until 2012. A multidisciplinary team under the Villa Diomedes Project took on the rigorous work of both archaeological study and archival research to create a three-dimensional rendering of the villa as it stands today and illustrated with the original 1st century CE decoration.

Through the Villa Diomedes Project, we have identified the rooms and wall locations of six engravings in this collection as representations of frescos of the grand Villa of Diomede. The colors represented in these engravings, and indeed in other 18th and 19th century depictions, differ from the realized Villa Diomedes Project model. However, the decorative detail, seen even within border scrolls and other minute elements, are accurate to the three-dimensional generated model.



©Villa Diomedes Project

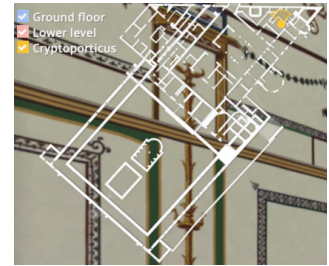
SELECTED REFERENCES

"Villa of Diomede." Pompeii Sites, 3 Dec. 2018, pompeiiisites.org/en/archaeological-site/villa-of-diomede/.

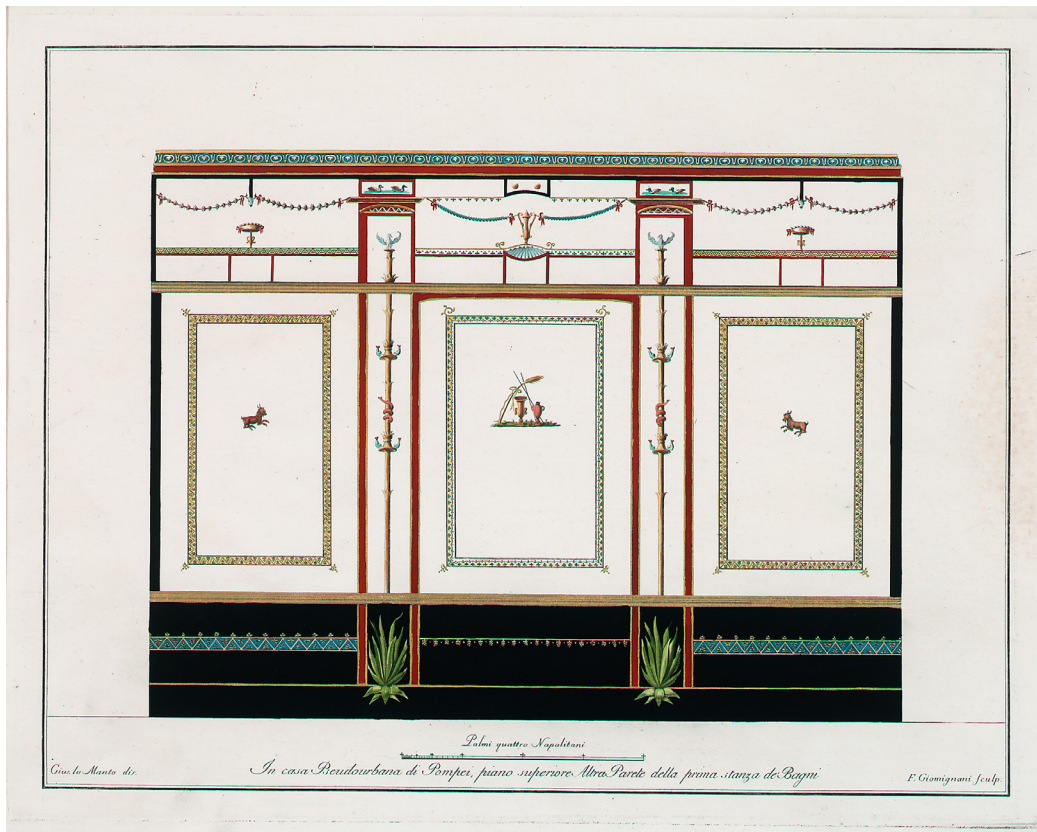
"Research." Research - Villa Diomedes Project, villadiomede.huma-num.fr/3dproject/?Research.

ROOM 9:

"This first room without any windows was probably used as a cloakroom. The delicately decorated black-cross patterned mosaic on the white ground makes it more luminous." ©Villa Diomedes Project



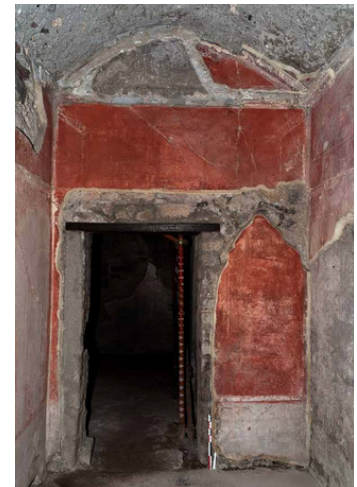
©Villa Diomedes Project, base de données Images, <http://villadiomedes.humanum.fr/bdd/images/1925>. Consultée le 26/03/2021.



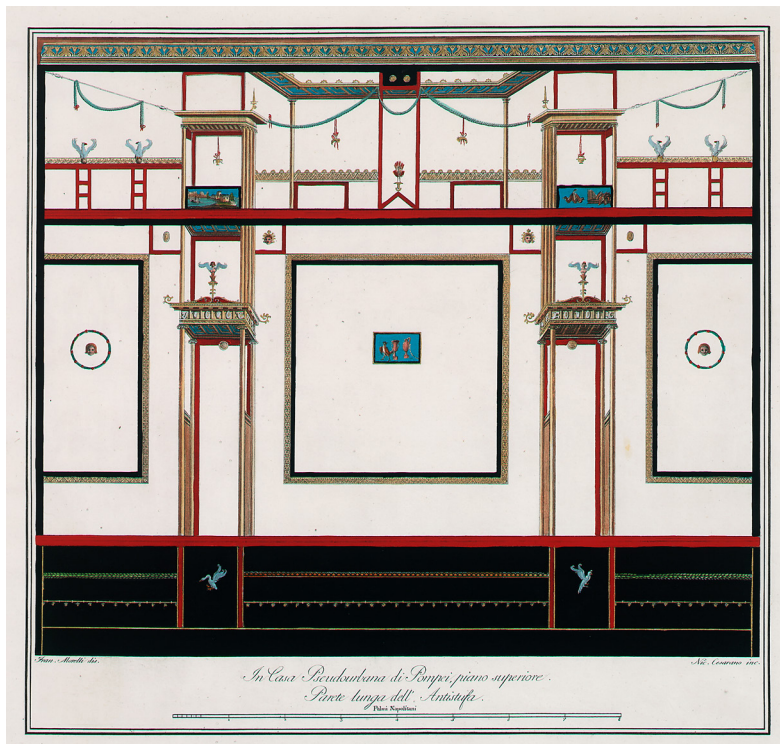
Guis. Io Manto dis - F. Giomignani sculp., *In Casa Pseudourbana di Pompeii piano superiore. Alta Parete della prima stanza de' Bagni*, 18th century, handcolored engraving, 17 7/8 x 21 1/2"

ROOM 10:

"The tepidarium (a warm room of the baths) is largely lit by a glazed window from the south. The painted decorations of the walls and the vault combine architectural outlines, garlands, small pictures of landscapes, birds and masks on a mainly red background." ©Villa Diomedes Project



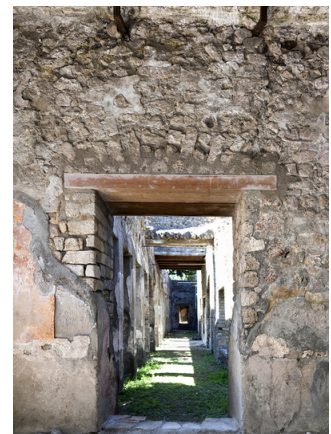
©Villa Diomedes Project, base de données Images, <http://villadiomede.huma-num.fr/bdd/images/134>. Consultée le 26/03/2021.



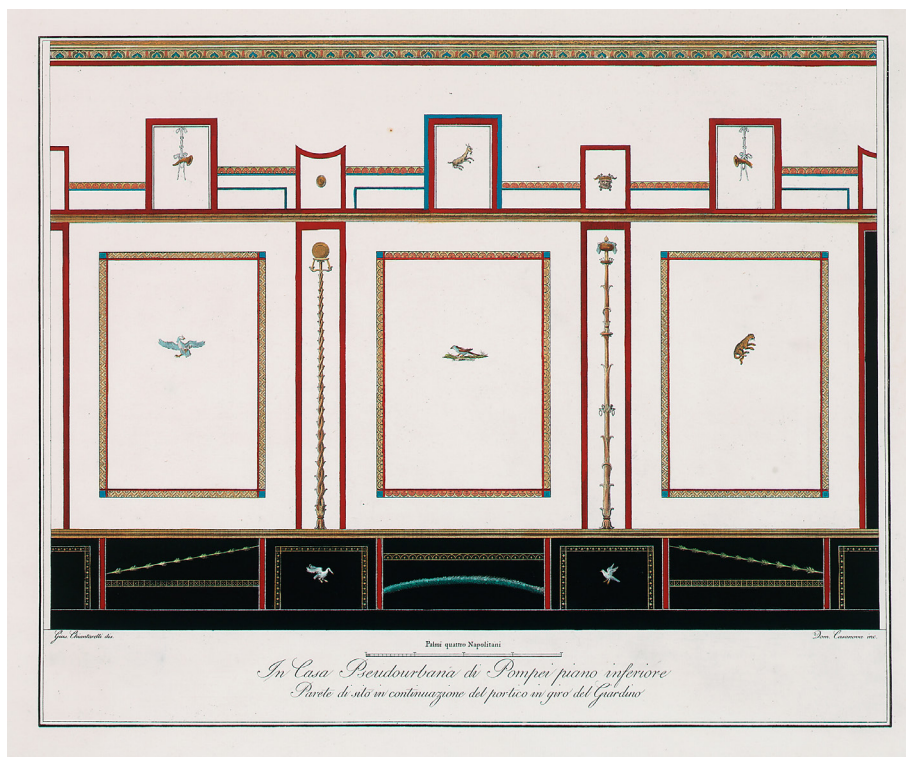
Francesco Morelli dis - Nic. Cesarano inc., *In Casa Pseudourbana di Pompeii piano superiore Parete lunga dell' Antistufa*, 18th century, handcolored engraving, 18 1/2 x 20"

ROOM 45:

"The painted walls feature a black background on the lower region, a white background on the upper part, and alternating of red, yellow and black panels in the middle part. These are characteristic of the fourth Pompeian style and continue on the walls of the portico in the garden." ©Villa Diomedes Project



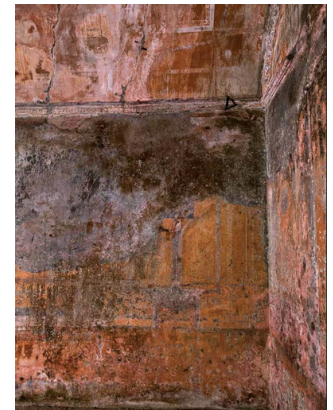
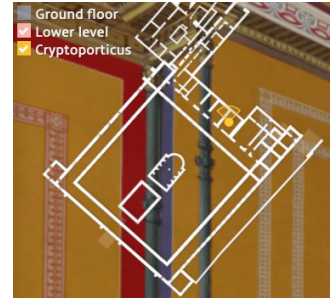
©Villa Diomedes Project, base de données Images, <http://villadiomede.huma-num.fr/bdd/images/2473>. Consultée le 26/03/2021.



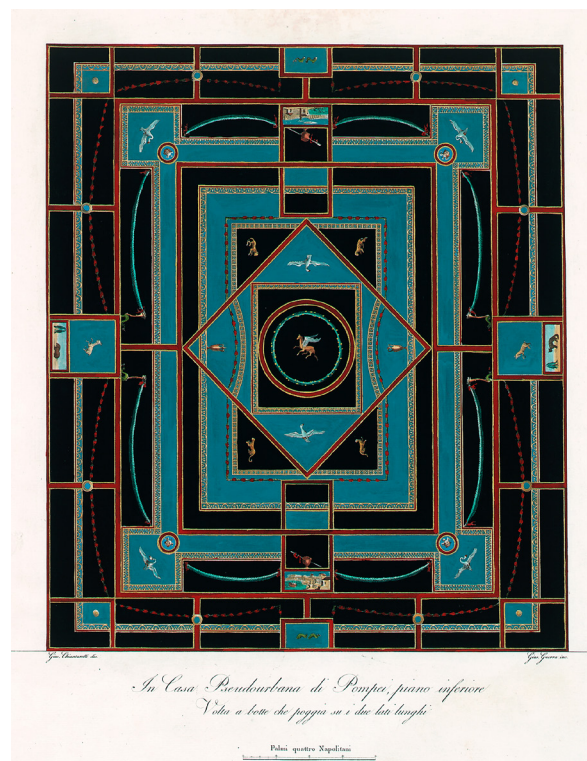
Guis. Chiantarelli dis - Dom. Casanoca inc., *In Casa Pseudourbana di Pompeii piano inferiore - Parete di sito in continuazione del portico in giro del Giardino*, 18th century, handcolored engraving, 18 1/4 x 21 3/4"

ROOM 54:

“Architectural features in this perspective have been painted on this beautiful yellow wall and the vault. They depict landscapes, still lifes, and signs of nourishment such as fishes, apples, figs and a beautiful cockerel. The question of the function of this room is still open even if it seems likely it was used as a triclinium, (dining room). After the discovery of this villa, many visitors have left their mark on the wall with graffiti still visible today.” ©Villa Diomedes Project



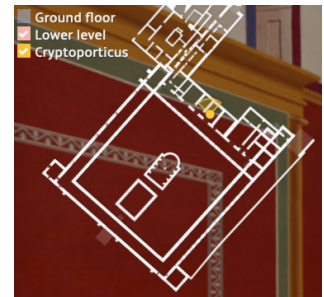
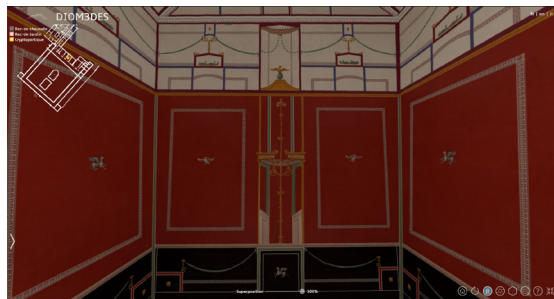
©Villa Diomedes Project, base de données Images, <http://villadiomede.huma-num.fr/bdd/images/476>. Consultée le 26/03/2021.



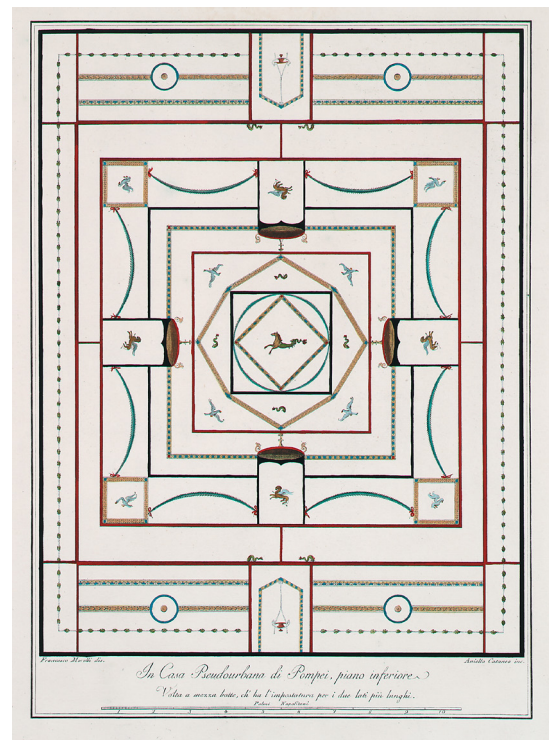
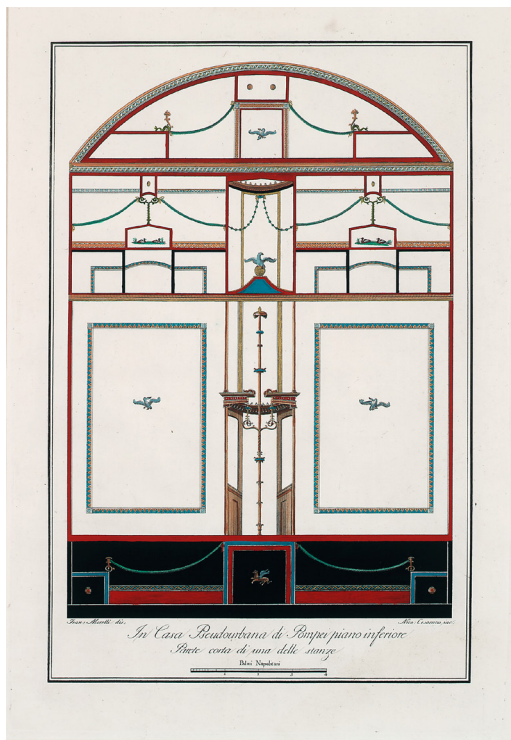
Guis. Chiantarelli dis - Guis. Guerra inc., *In Casa Pseudourbana di Pompeii piano inferiore - Volta a botte che poggia su i due lati lunghi*, 18th century, handcolored engraving, 22 3/8 x 17 5/8"

ROOM 54:

"These three adjoining rooms are empty of any furniture. They are decorated with the same illusionistic architectural features on red, black and white backgrounds." ©Villa Diomedes Project



©Villa Diomedes Project, base de données Images, <http://villadiomede.huma-num.fr/bdd/images/4704>. Consultée le 26/03/2021.



Left: Francesco Morelli dis - Nico. Cesarano inc., *In Casa Pseudourbana di Pompeii piano inferiore - Parete carta di una delle stanze*, 18th century, handcolored engraving, 23 1/4 x 18 1/2"

Right: Francesco Morelli dis - Aniello Catanco inc., *In Casa Pseudourbana di Pompeii piano inferiore - Volta a mezza botte ch'ha l'impostatura per i due lati più lunghi*, 18th century, handcolored engraving, 21 5/8 x 18 3/8"