I, Helen A. Turner, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Architecture in Architecture.

It is entitled:
Designing the Domus:
enhancing the history, theory and practice of contemporary interior design through analysis of ancient Roman domestic space(s)

Student's name: Helen A. Turner

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee chair: Edson Caballin, MSArch

Committee chair: Patrick Snadon, PhD
Designing the Domus:
enhancing the history, theory and practice of contemporary interior design
through analysis of ancient Roman domestic space(s)

A Thesis submitted to the
Division of Research and Advanced Studies
of the University of Cincinnati

In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

In the School of Architecture and Interior Design
of the College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning

2011

by

Helen A. Turner
BSHCS in Interior Architecture, Ohio University, 2005

Committee Chair:
Patrick Snadon, PhD – Architecture and Interior Design

Committee Members:
Edson Cabalfin – Architecture and Interior Design
Adrian Parr, PhD – Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Advisor:
Steven Ellis, PhD – Classics
ABSTRACT

Designing the Domus:
enhancing the history, theory and practice of contemporary interior design through analysis of ancient Roman domestic space(s)

This thesis attempts to enhance the connection between interior design and ancient Roman domestic space by establishing a continuous, reflective and reciprocal relationship, through which their similarities might be strengthened and incongruities mutually illuminating. Though the topics of contemporary interior design and ancient Roman domestic decoration may seem disparate, the information presented throughout this thesis indicates they are, in fact, contingent. What is more, exploring them simultaneously is imperative to enriching, not only the history and theory of interior design but also augmenting the knowledge concerning ancient Roman domestic space as a holistic environment. When experiencing an ancient Roman domestic interior, it becomes very apparent that all aspects of decoration, including walls, floors, ceilings and even furniture, coalesce to evoke the sense of a ‘coordinated interior’, or a space in which all design elements work in harmony and correspondence with one another.

Though an abundance of literature and research exists concerning ancient Rome and its domestic interiors, it is often segmented according to scholarly discipline, like architecture, art history or archaeology, as well as fragmented by decorative elements, such as wall paintings or floor mosaics. Such disparate research results in the divorce of decoration from context, which eliminates the possibility of understanding how it may have fit into an organized scheme or even how it functioned within the space. Thus, it is difficult to discuss or study a holistic ancient Roman interior environment when, conceptually, the scholarship does not acknowledge its existence. What is more, such elements have occasionally also been physically removed from their context and intended viewing position to be framed and displayed as components of museum exhibits where they are viewed or studied as such. Regrettably, in my opinion, this has led to numerous history of interior design courses that introduce the mere aesthetic qualities of ancient spaces rather than reasons why such spaces were decorated, who designed them, or how they were implemented.

In an effort to remedy these difficulties, my lens as an educated and practiced interior designer combined with related methodologies, ancient Roman domestic space and decoration is to be explored through literature and field research. Next, because decoration is influenced, and sometimes determined, by the space within which it is created, ancient Roman domestic decoration is considered relative to a broader organizing system progressively involving: the layout of a house, the situation of a house within a city block, the block as formed by planning of city streets and finally, the organization of streets according to the city’s site and orientation. Ideal prescriptions of ancient authors, like Vitruvius, compared to the real manifestations visible in the cities like Pompeii and Herculaneum, discovered through this systematic study, converge in a discussion of domestic decoration expressed by the House of the Ceii in Pompeii. Lastly, because interior design is a practice characterized by its process, rather than focus solely on completed decoration, the implementation of the ancient Roman domestic interiors will be considered alongside a design methodology utilized in contemporary interior design practice and education.
Acknowledgements

In loving memory of and dedication to ‘Daddy’: my biggest enthusiast yet toughest editor

Also, the utmost appreciation and adoration to my husband and my family without the support and encouragement of whom this thesis would not have been possible.

Finally, an immense amount of gratitude is extended to my committee for imparting their knowledge and offering continuous guidance which truly enhanced the quality and outcome of this thesis.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures  vii

**Prologue**  1

Chapter 1:  
**HISTORIOGRAPHY of ancient Roman Domestic Space and Decoration**  19

Ancient  20
Recent  28
Contemporary  36
Conclusion  41

Chapter 2:  
**IDEALIZED -vs- REALIZED**  42

the IDEALIZED city  45
the REALIZED city  47
the IDEALIZED domus  56
the REALIZED domus  61

Chapter 3:  
**IDEALIZED concepts REALIZED through decoration**  74

Chapter 4:  
**Design PROCESS & IMPLEMENTATION**  117

Pre-Design  121
Design PROCESS  125
Design IMPLEMENTATION  145
Conclusion  151

**Epilogue**  159

Bibliography  171
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gridded tile floor and column within Hadrian’s Villa at Tivoli</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Diagram of a ‘groma’</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Map of Pompeii</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Orientation of Pompeii within the landscape</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Plan of the insulae containing the House of the Ceii</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>‘Ideal’ domus plan</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Typical klinae arrangement</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>House of the Ceii plan</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>House of the Wooden Partition plan</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Ancient Roman construction materials and techniques</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>Compluviat roof construction</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>House of the Ceii façade</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>House of the Ceii fauces</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>House of the Ceii atrium</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Stripe wall painting within the Villa of Oplontis, Boscoreale</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Stripe wall painting in the House of Julius Polibius, Pompeii</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>House of the Ceii animal hunt wall painting as seen through the tablinum</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>House of the Ceii path to the tablinum</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>House of the Ceii path to the triclinium</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>House of the Ceii triclinium</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>House of the Ceii triclinium wall painting, median zone and upper zone</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>House of the Ceii triclinium wall painting, socle and median zone</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>House of the Ceii corridor looking from the rear hortus to the atrium</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>House of the Ceii animal hunt wall painting as seen through the hortus</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>House of the Ceii hortus wall painting</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>House of the Wooden Partition atrium</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>House of the Wooden Partition atrium furniture grouping</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>House of the Wooden Partition atrium table</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>House of the Wooden Partition compluvium</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>Partition within the House of the Wooden Partition</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>House of the Wooden Partition detail</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>House of the Wooden Partition view from the tablinum to the atrium</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>House of the Wooden Partition bed remnants</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>House of the Wooden Partition cubiculum</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>First Style in the House of the Sallust, Pompeii</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Emblemata within the House of Menander, Pompeii</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Second Style in the Villa of the Mysteries, Pompeii</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Late Second Style in the Villa of Oplontis, Boscoreale</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Third Style in the House of Julius Polibius, Pompeii</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Fourth Style in the House of Lucretius Fronto, Pompeii</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Scaenographia</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Illustration of a team of decorators at work</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Villa Imperiale, Pompeii</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Example of scored wall painting plaster, Pompeii</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>House of Marcus Fabius Rufus, Pompeii</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Page of designs from Robert Adam’s <em>Works in Architecture</em>, 1773-78</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Etruscan Room at Osterly Park, designed by Robert Adam ca.1775-77</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Entrance of a modern day house compared to the House of the Ceii</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Foyer of a modern day house compared to the House of the Ceii</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Dining room of a modern day house compared to the triclinium in the House of Julius Polibius</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Architectural theory and history have traditionally been concerned with the study of monuments. They emphasized the work of men of genius, the unusual, the rare.

- Amos Rapoport
  In “House Form and Culture”

...then interior design is something less grandiose but something considerably more human, a monument not to the eternal but to the transient, a celebration of a very particular time, place and situation, commemorating the presence not of man but of specific men and women.

- Stanley Abercrombie
  In “A Philosophy of Interior Design”

PROLOGUE

A comparison of two class lectures: this seemingly simple event served as a catalyst for the ideas and research behind this thesis. The curriculum of the two courses involved in this association both concentrated on history, one of architecture and the other of interior design. The basis for the comparison began with the course, History/Theory/Criticism: Sources of Modern Architectural Theory, taught by Professor Gordon Simmons. During the initial class session I began to take the following notes:
Classical Architecture

Greek & Roman

one theorist survived:

Vitruvius “Ten Books on Architecture”

- comes from Hellenistic world, 23 BCE – 30 CE
- written at change from Republic to Empire
- the knowledge of the architect:
  craftsmanship  technology
  (Greek) ‘poiesis’, creative skill  ‘techne’, way of preceding (know-how)
  * “art” and “craft” meant same thing
  - architects were craftsman
- architecture considered work done by hand
- Vitruvius argued it must also be explained
  - ‘utilitas’ (utility)
  - ‘firmitas’ (strength)    “Vitruvian Triad”
  - ‘venustas’ (grace)

Book 2 – Invention of Arts of building (according to Vitruvius)
- to capture ideas you must go back to origin
- fire = warmth, cooking = more people = language =
  society = structure for shelter = imitated each
  other/competition = civilization = rarity of craft =
  different houses/materials = reasoning of symmetry
  - i.e. hut    →    temple
  * art not from necessity but from reflection 1

Coming from an undergraduate education in Interior Architecture, as well as multiple years of professional practice as an interior designer, these notes sparked an interest because, until this point, I had not been taught a considerable amount of architectural history or theory. As I listened and fervently jotted notes, I also began to notice an incongruity. According to my knowledge, the history and theory of architecture was perceived and being taught very differently than the history and theory of interior design. Nevertheless, this realization was only the impetus for my thoughts concerning the history, theory and practice of interior design

because I was simultaneously acting as a teaching assistant for the History of Interior Design I course. During one particular lecture, my interest in the history of interior design piqued and collided with my observations of architectural history and theory. When discussing ancient Rome, Professor Patrick Snadon displayed a photograph depicting an ancient Roman interior from Hadrian’s Villa at Tivoli which was cropped around a gridded tile floor and a column. [Fig.1] Initially, this photograph seemed mundane but it evoked interest and intrigue when I noticed the interaction occurring between the two prominent elements. The tile has a seemingly uniform, geometric grid pattern until the point at which it meets the column, where the grid expands to mimic and incorporate the dimensions of the column base. After a brief description, Professor Snadon raised an interesting question concerning this phenomenon: During the design and construction process, which came first, the column, the floor, or were the two considered and created at the same time? Similarly, can this be considered a dialogue between architecture and interiors even if it is evidence of a “designer” or “craftsman” reacting to the “architecture”?

Juxtaposition of this against the class notes of the History/Theory/Criticism: Sources of Modern Architectural Theory course, caused me to continue this method of questioning in respect to the history, theory and practice of interior design as compared to architecture. As is discernable from the class notes above, Vitruvius, a man who wrote around 30-20 B.C.E., is thought to be the founder and authority on the history, theory and often the practice of architecture. Interior design, however, accepts and teaches a less lengthy and, by association, a less sophisticated body of material. While most interior design history courses mention ancient civilizations, such as Greece or Rome, they often merely only indicate the decorative styles or aesthetic values of the period rather than entering into the theory and/or reasoning behind such
Figure 1
Girded tile floor and column within Hadrian’s Villa at Tivoli
[Source: digital slide provided by Patrick Snadon]
design decisions. There is also rarely, if ever, discussion of how or by whom such designs were implemented. In response to this realization, I then began to question the design and construction process: Who initiated the design of an interior? Who paid for it? (patronage), Who made the design decisions? (designer/s), and Who constructed it? (artists/craftspeople/creators). Because my inspiration evolved from a picture of an ancient Roman interior and a lecture concerning Vitruvius, I chose ancient Rome as the focus of and basis for this thesis. Then, to effectively compare the practices of ancient Rome with the processes and practice of contemporary interior design, the focus of domestic space and decoration eventually emerged as an imperative vehicle and guide for research. While it is important to note, when analyzing the process of interior design, any spatial type is equally relevant, however, domestic space is one that is inherently connected to the interior design profession. This thesis, however, will attempt to embrace and invert this distancing in an effort to provide validation for the education and profession of interior design by focusing on domestic interiors and associated decoration. Unfortunately, the current tendency of interior design education and practice is to reject its connection to domestic space when, in effect, this distancing removes interior design from a significant portion of its history. Though the ancient Romans did not use the term ‘interior design’ or ‘interior designer’ this thesis is interested in the design processes and practices that created the decorative domestic interiors as well as the ways in which these correspond to current interior design theories and methods. Through exploration of these notions the motivating questions of this thesis developed: Through analysis of ancient Roman domestic space, can the history, theory and practice of contemporary interior design be expanded and enhanced?
In addition to denying its residential background, interior design has also attempted to modify certain terminology associated with it; first and foremost of which is ‘decoration’. Lucinda Kaukas Havenhand determines that interior designers of the 1930s and ‘40s attempted to identify and legitimize the profession by “differentiating interior design from interior decoration.”² An explanation of this may correspond to the connotations which are often associated to the term ‘decoration’ that imply unnecessary embellishment. Clarifying the key term ‘decoration’, however, is important to justify its use in the history of interior design as well as its use throughout this thesis regarding ancient Roman domestic interiors. Surprisingly, the term is not defined or even discussed in various design related dictionaries such as The Dictionary of Interior Design (1966) or the Studio Dictionary of Design and Decoration (1973). Compiled in 1990, however, The Concise Dictionary of Interior Design defines ‘decorate’ as:

\[
\text{to make beautiful or interesting to the eye, whether by the proper arrangement, shaping, and coloring of essential part of by the addition of ornament, or in both ways.}³
\]

While briefly informative, the term ‘decoration’ is not included. So, why is the profession and related scholarly discourse unable or hesitant to define a term that seems so intrinsic to its practice? Moreover, is it possible to define? Though recent scholarship like, Rethinking Decoration: Pleasure & Ideology in the Visual Arts, by David Brett (2005), has been written the term ‘decoration’ is imbued with negative connotations, especially within the field of interior design. The lack of inclusion of the term in the design related dictionaries mentioned above,


however, is only one symptom of the stigma associated with the term as it is also discussed theoretically. For example, in 1908 Adolf Loos wrote ‘Ornament and Crime’, which condemns decoration as the practice of criminals, degenerates and the uncivilized. He substantiates such accusations by comparing decoration of interior surfaces and furniture to bodily tattoos of convicts as well as graffiti on lavatory walls.\(^4\) Loos continues to impetuously claim:

\[\ldots\text{not only is ornament produced by criminals but also a crime is committed through the fact that ornament inflicts serious injury on people’s health, on the national budget and hence on cultural evolution.}\]\(^5\)

Thus, the stigma associated with ‘decoration’ as secondary to form and structure is entrenched and consequently avoided by the interior design discipline. Because I believe this conception of ‘decoration’ to be inaccurate and another means by which interior design is marginalized, I hope to revitalize its reputation via this thesis.

In its most basic form, ‘decoration’ can be understood as an application of design to interiors which expresses one’s personality via various implementations chosen by that person. According to Stanley Abercrombie, interior design can be traced back to the paintings of cavemen as well as their application of animal pelts to the interior of cave dwellings.\(^6\) To this I wonder, might these cave paintings and pelts also be considered decoration? If so, a concurrent argument could be made that decoration is an enduring practice evident throughout history that transgresses cultures. Additionally, it is thought that this type of decoration served to communicate ideas, which is interesting considering they were created on interior walls rather

---


\(^5\) Ibid., 21.

than rocks, tablets or the exterior of structures. This unique and communicative aspect of
decoration allows it to express and even represent the personality of those who select it. To give
an example, an apartment complex is typically constructed of multiple units of the same form,
layout, features and interior finishes. When a unit is rented or sold, however, the appearance
changes as residents modify the generic space to reflect their personality, via furniture, pictures,
paint, rugs, etc. So, while ‘decoration’ might consist of many different elements it involves
specifically selected embellishment that expresses or represents the perceived character of the
person choosing and enveloping themselves with it. The decoration and interior space becomes
a physical manifestation of their imagined identity. Claire Cooper Marcus confirms: “Indeed our
very identity and discrete ‘self’ is confirmed by the objects we use and with which we surround
ourselves.”7 In understanding the domestic interior decoration chosen by the ancient Romans we
not only learn more about their culture but also the history of interior design.

To determine the influence of ancient Roman domestic interiors on contemporary interior
design and vice versa, a majority of the thesis will rest on primary and secondary literature as
well as surviving physical evidence. I conducted field research in Italy during the summer of
2010 while acting as the project architect for an archaeological excavation in the ancient city of
Pompeii. In addition to participating in the five-week project I was able to develop studies of
multiple ancient Roman sites, including Pompeii, Herculaneum, Ostia, Oplontis and Rome. The
evidence and experience gathered not only encouraged a focus on Pompeii and Herculaneum but
it simultaneously provided houses suitable for analysis and case study. Though these cities are
not directly in Rome, they existed as part of the early Roman Empire and are the best surviving

7 Clare Cooper. Marcus, *House as a Mirror of Self: Exploring the Deeper Meaning of Home* (Berkeley,
Calif.: Conari Press, 1995), 63.
examples of largely intact ancient Roman domestic interiors. Accordingly, I accept Shelley Hales’ statement concerning Rome and Pompeii, in that, “…both cities developed their houses through exposure to similar ideals and influences and in response to similar practical and social needs.” 8 What is more, in regard to houses more in the periphery than Pompeii, she believes: “The creation of the correct ambience was essential; ritual and its setting are interdependent…” 9

Due to the 79 B.C.E. eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, Pompeii and Herculaneum were essentially left frozen in time and, as such, demonstrate signs of transition and change occurring in ancient Roman society as well as the general attitude toward decoration. The House of the Ceii in Pompeii and the House of the Wooden Partition in Herculaneum will be utilized as case studies due to surviving decoration as well as experiential quality. In addition, each house offers a diversity of information that corresponds to the intent of this thesis. The House of the Ceii exemplifies decoration and its purpose within domestic interiors, whereas the House of the Wooden Partition reveals the form, position and function of furniture.

As mentioned, supplemental to field research, primary and secondary resources will comprise the remaining research. A thesis concentrating on ancient Roman domestic interior space and decoration, however, is faced with a vast amount of literature from varying areas of study, including architecture, archaeology, art history and anthropology, to name a few. Though an abundance of prior research exists, this abundance also creates limitations in that resources are often segmented based on scholarly discipline or fragmented according to decorative elements, such as wall paintings, floor mosaics or ceiling stucco. Additionally, when studied as decoration, these elements are conceptually removed from their original context and grouped

---

8 Shelley Hales, _The Roman House and Social Identity_ (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 99.
9 Ibid., 172.
with similar elements for comparative analysis. What is more, such elements have occasionally also been physically removed from their context and intended viewing position to be framed and displayed as ‘art’. As a result, they become components of museum exhibits and are viewed or studied as such. I use and apply the term ‘art’ tentatively as its connotations tend to convey an extraordinary work worthy of special attention and reverence. For the ancient Romans, however, the domestic floor mosaics, wall paintings and ceiling stucco were encountered on a daily basis, like modern day slate flooring or patterned wall covering, and may not have been perceived as ‘art’. While this is not to say that ‘artists’ did not create these decorative elements or that the decorations are not ‘artistic’, I feel it is more pedantic to be conscientious of the cultural constructs certain terminology might infer. So, though studies comparing decorative elements devoid of context such as this might be extremely useful in some instances, divorcing decoration from its original environment all but eliminates the possibility of understanding how it may have fit into an interior design scheme or even how it possibly functioned within the space. Because I question the study of ancient Roman domestic interior decoration as separate entities in a vacuum, I hope this thesis serves as an initial step toward mitigation by encouraging the discipline of interior design to participate in the discourse. Moreover, synthesis of the disparate literary evidence may prove to be a challenge for this thesis, but I believe my lens as an educated and practiced interior designer, will achieve this while also contributing an innovative perspective to the study of ancient Roman domestic interiors.

To further illuminate the benefits and deficiencies of existing literature, Chapter 1: Historiography of ancient Roman Domestic Space and Decoration, chronologically explores

---

10 Such studies can be found in books such as Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World by Katherine Dunbabin M. D.
pivotal texts and defining studies, from Pliny the Elder to modern day, concerning ancient Roman domestic space and decoration. Due to the vast time period under consideration, the pertinent sources are delineated into three categories: ‘Ancient’, which consists of primary sources from ancient Rome, ‘Recent’, consisting of secondary sources from the Renaissance to the 18th century, and ‘Contemporary’, which encompasses material from the mid 18th century to the present. Each text will be examined beyond formal analysis to determine who wrote it, the background or discipline of the author, when the text was written and what was occurring at the time it was written which may have caused concern for, or interest in, the topic. Such assessment reveals a progression and development of scholarship on ancient Roman domestic space and decoration to afford a reader a basic understanding of what exists as well as what may have neglected. The issue of language and my abilities as a researcher unfortunately, compounds the limitations presented by the disparate and discipline-centric literature. This is observable in that all sources listed in the bibliography of this thesis are either written in or translated into the English language. While I realize there is a breadth of information that exists in other languages, I believe the sources compiled are more than sufficient for research of this topic as well as production of this thesis document.

Being that one of the main concerns of the first chapter involves removal of decoration from its original setting, Chapter 2: IDEALIZED -vs- REALIZED, attempts to understand decoration according to context. Like contemporary interior decoration, ancient Roman domestic decoration was influenced, and sometimes determined, by the space within which it was created. Similarly, the form of these interior spaces are also influenced by a much broader organizing system that progressively involves: the layout of the house, the situation of the house
within and density of a city block, the block as formed by the planning of city streets and finally, the organization of streets according to the site of the city. So, in order to determine the ways in which the decoration of ancient Rome was designed specifically for certain domestic spaces, Chapter 2 first examines this system. The chapter begins with the very broad concept of site selection through the planning of city blocks and streets, to the layout of houses within the city block and then progresses to the ways in which these contributed to domestic decoration. In utilizing ancient sources alongside contemporary sources and field research, however, I quickly observed a discrepancy between the ideal prescriptions of ancient authors, like Vitruvius, compared to the real manifestations visible in the cities like Pompeii and Herculaneum. To elucidate the ideals presented and determine how these concepts were adapted to real conditions, the various stages of the organizing system, discussed above, are examined both in terms of ‘idealized’ and ‘realized’.

Decoration, however, presents a unique situation in that the ancient Romans used it to overcome reality in favor of presenting an ideal identity. Hence, Chapter 3: IDEALIZED concepts REALIZED through decoration, analyzes the case study houses along with their associated decoration in order to determine how the ideal prescriptions and real conditions coalesce. With this, a parallel research question emerges: Can contemporary interior design theory and practice further illuminate the process of design and creation of these ancient interiors? In response to this question, the interpretations of the House of the Cei as well as the House of the Wooden Partition are formed solely by my perception as an educated and practiced interior designer. Thus the narrative created by experiencing and engaging with the domestic spaces not only provides a new perspective on the study of ancient Roman domestic space, but
simultaneously opens the door to a possible dialogue between interior design and previous research conducted by other disciplines, like archaeology or art history.

Until Chapter 4, most discussion concentrates on decoration in its completed form, but to create an accurate comparison of ancient Roman domestic interiors and the contemporary practice of interior design it is necessary to determine if these elements were designed and, if so, how they were implemented. As such, Chapter 4: *Design PROCESS and IMPLEMENTATION* enters a discussion concerning a possible process of design utilized by the ancient Romans in the creation of their domestic interiors. To evoke a stronger connection to contemporary interior design and further explore the parallel research question above, these ancient practices are linked to a design methodology. This methodology usually consists of seven phases, including: Programming, Schematic Design, Design Development, Construction Documents, Bidding/Tendering, Contract Administration, as well as Feedback and Post-Occupancy Evaluation. Because each phase represents a point of progression and completion of the design process, Chapter 4 examines the individual phases separately and in sequence while relating them to the practices of ancient Romans. My choice to apply this specific methodology stems from the fact that it is often taught to interior design students to succinctly express the process of an interior design project as well as one that is often employed by interior design professionals. It is the basis for many educational studio courses as well as an systematizing principle for the phases of a project within professional firms. Because of its inherent linearity this methodology served as a tool for organizing and understanding the practices involved in implementing ancient Roman domestic decoration. In contrast to the benefits, however, its limitations must also be acknowledged. Like most contemporary interior design projects, those of the ancient Romans
were rarely completed in such a methodical fashion. Instead, the process was more organic in that the various phases were sometimes unnecessary or had to be revisited according to the scope and needs. Because of this, Chapter 4 concludes with an examination of permanency and change. Interior design is an ephemeral medium in that throughout the lifetime of a structure, it is the interior that typically changes in response to a change in popular taste or inhabitant. The materials used, like paint or flooring, while durable are also easily changed. Hence, the life expectancy of an interior is often, or at least should be, a concern of any interior designer. In response, this chapter focuses on temporality, or the amount of time that ancient Roman interior decoration was meant to, or was able to, remain intact. In addition to the question of permanence comes the question of redecoration. Again, in reference to contemporary interior design practice, redecoration or renovation is relevant in that it comprises a majority of interior design commissions. Thus, the findings throughout this chapter do not imply finality but rather implications for future studies concerning the practice of interior design as it relates to ancient Rome.

Moreover, the conclusion of this thesis hopes to emphasize the coordination of disciplines and decorative elements present in the ancient Roman domestic interiors. The practice of interior design is unique in that the success of its creations relies heavily on the cooperation and coordination of multiple disciplines, such as painters, cabinetmakers or furniture vendors, etc. Though this reliance contributes to come criticism of the profession, this process and even some of the same practices are evident in the practices of the ancient Romans. Such coordination in ancient Rome produced highly sophisticated and harmonized interiors the likes of which have arguably not been achieved since. From an understanding of the coordinated
ancient Roman domestic interior it is possible for the contemporary practice of interior design to improve but for also the history of interior design to enhance and gain validation. Furthermore, I hope to emphasize the importance of ancient Roman domestic spaces for the history of interior design on account of their focus on the interior environment, design sophistication, expression of symbolic meaning, number of surviving examples and, finally, their influence on later styles.

My intent and focus on the history of interior design emerged on account of comparing a lecture from an architectural history and theory course with that of a history of interior design course. Throughout the research for this thesis, however, it became increasingly evident, the history and theory of interior design has been an area of study and practice that is often marginalized or underrepresented and needs to be addressed. This might partially be due to the fact that trying to develop a history of interior design in the face of associated histories, such as architecture or art history, which have undergone an intricate and scholarly climax of methodologies is a daunting task. To this, some might argue that interior design and architecture are interrelated areas of study and practice often contingent on one another and, as such, the history, theory and practice of interior design need not be studied or researched as a separate entity. I would venture to say, however, the two areas do, in fact, differ in title, definition, history, theory, education, practice and certification which reveals interior design and architecture are, more often than not, treated independently. To further express this position, included below are the Oxford English Dictionary entries for both ‘architect’ and ‘interior
designer’.11 ‘Interior designer’, however, is referenced as a combination of ‘interior’ and ‘designer’ because a sole entry does not exist.12

architect, n.
1. A master-builder. spec. A skilled professor of the art of building, whose business it is to prepare the plans of edifices, and exercise a general superintendence over the course of their erection.
2. One who designs and frames any complex structure; esp. the Creator; one who arranges elementary materials on a comprehensive plan.
3. One who so plans, devises, contrives, or constructs, as to achieve a desired result (especially when the result may be viewed figuratively as an edifice); a builder-up.13

interior, a. and n.
B. n.
1. a. The interior part of anything; the inside
c. The inside of a building or room, esp. in reference to the artistic effect; also, a picture or representation of the inside of a building or room. Also, in a theatre, a ‘set’ consisting of the inside of a building or room. (Usually with an or in pl.).14

designer
One who designs.
1. One who originates a plan or plans.
3. a. One who makes an artistic design or plan of construction; a draughtsman; spec. one whose business is to invent or prepare designs or patterns for the manufacturer or constructor.15

---

11 The Oxford English Dictionary was used because it is an unbiased source for basic information
http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50119129/50119129se1?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=interior+designer&first=1&max_to_show=10&hilite=50119129se1. When searched in the Oxford English Dictionary online database, the term “interior designer” only appears as a bold and highlighted term in the definition for “interior design”.
http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50011561?query_type=word&queryword=architect&first=1&max_to_show=10 &sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=BEyy-gExJ7g-7193&hilite=50011561.
14 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "Interior a and N.,” definition B1 A,c, 1989, accessed November 2, 2010,
http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50119127?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=interior&first=1&max_to_s how=10.
15 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "Designer," definition 1, 3a, 1989, accessed November 02, 2010,
What is more, when searching the University of Cincinnati library database, ‘architecture’ produces 29788 results, whereas ‘interior design’ only generates 342, which only hints at the total disproportion of literature available and research conducted between the two fields. Also, in my experience, professional offices often give titles to their employees as either ‘architect’ or ‘interior designer’. The people comprising these positions are then physically segregated as such within the office and/or their pay is allocated accordingly. Finally, of note is the current and ongoing controversy concerning professional certification for interior designers. Lucinda Kaukas Havenhand in her article, “A View from the Margin: Interior Design”, synthesizes this, along with the previous notions, in the following statement:

> The boundary between architecture and interior design remains in place held there by a persistent idea of difference between the two fields: male vs. female, structure vs. decoration, superior vs. inferior. Ironically at a time when interior design has become more like architecture because of its consistent emulation of its practice and education, the field of architecture seems even more intent on keeping this idea of difference in place. The American Institute of Architects’ and the National Council of Architectural Registration Board’s lobbying effort to prevent further interior design licensing and titling acts, regardless of what I may also be, serves this purpose.

So, regarding the significance of a study and research focusing specifically on interior design history, while I do believe architecture and interior design must be congruent in practice to produce a harmonious final product, only by celebrating itself as an entity separate and unique from architecture can interior design truly understand or embrace its history. As Havenhand determines: “Therefore, as long as interior design tries to gain legitimacy by comparing itself to and emulating architecture, it inadvertently supports the system that ensures it supplemental

---

position.” It is because of this, the extent of my personal knowledge and experience, as well as the scope of this thesis, that I believe there should be an emphasis on researching interior design history, theory and practice. I would like to stress, however, that by no means do I wish to denigrate the importance of or advances in architectural history and theory in education. My intent is to address an evident lack of attention to the history of interior design. With this, I hope to expand and enhance the basis for pedagogy and practice while also inspiring a wider field of thoughts, questions debates and research.

Overall, the existing resources and physical evidence concerning ancient Roman domestic space and decoration is as vast as the Roman Empire itself, but there is little that exists concerning the possible practice of interior design. With this notion as a catalyst, this thesis hopes to synthesize the available texts in conjunction with field research to bring an illuminated and holistic understanding of ancient Roman domestic interiors into contemporary history, theory and practice of interior design. Ultimately, however, this study intends to produce a thesis document along with scholarship worthy of publication while also attempting to stimulate interest in the history and theory of interior design which will, optimistically, lead to further research. Such research holds the promise of inevitably improving the history and theory of interior design; providing further legitimacy for the profession, and enhancing the foundation upon which students learn, teachers educate and professionals practice.

---

It was a wise and useful provision of the ancients to transmit their thoughts to posterity by recording them in treatises, so that they should not be lost, but, being developed in succeeding generations through publication in books, should gradually attain in later times, to the highest refinement of learning. And so the ancients deserve no ordinary, but unending thanks….Drawing from them as it were water from springs, and converting them to our own purposes, we find our powers of writing rendered more fluent and easy, and, relying upon such authorities, we venture to produce new systems of instruction.

- Pollio Vitruvius
In “Ten Books on Architecture”, Book VII

CHAPTER 1:

HISTORIOGRAPHY
of ancient Roman Domestic Space and Decoration

Because the references necessary to engage a topic such as ancient Roman domestic space encompass ancient writers alongside present-day scholars, this historiography finds it necessary to categorize the sources. The three classifications used consist of ‘Ancient’, primary sources written by ancient Roman authors, followed ‘Recent’, which incorporates secondary sources that were written between the 1900 and 2000, then ‘Contemporary’, dating from the year 2000 to the present. Within these broad categories, I will distinguish and examine select texts
based on: the specific date they were written, the author’s background as well as intention for writing it, any apparent events or reasons that may have drawn attention to the topic, the major contributions of the writing to the overall field and, finally, any lacunas of the work which this thesis will attempt to address. To chronologically present the information available on ancient Roman domestic space and decoration will give a reader, regardless of discipline, a background while also alluding to the lacunas which the remainder of the thesis hopes to address.

ANCIENT

To begin any dialogue concerning domestic architecture, interiors or decoration of the ancient Romans one must undoubtedly begin with De architectura, or ‘Ten Books on Architecture’, by Pollio Vitruvius. Vitruvius, as he is more commonly known, was an ancient Roman who wrote this book as a précis on classical architecture. Though the exact date it was written is unknown, it is estimated at around 30-20 B.C.E., under the rule of the Emperor Augustus. As Vitruvius explains to the Emperor in the Preface, “I have drawn up definite rules to enable you, by observing them, to have personal knowledge of the quality both of existing buildings and those of which are yet to be constructed.”\textsuperscript{19} Furthermore, though it is possible the book may not have been considered an architectural authority at the time it was written, Ingrid D. Rowland posits, “[Vitruvius] certainly must have hoped it would become so.”\textsuperscript{20} Even Vitruvius himself states: “I have never been eager to make money by my art…but still my hope is that,

\textsuperscript{19} Pollio Vitruvius and Morris Hicky Morgan, \textit{The Ten Books on Architecture} (Elibron Classics, 2004), 4.
with the publication of these books, I shall become known even to posterity.”\textsuperscript{21} The fact that Vitruvius, his book and the ideas presented within are still being utilized as precedents in architecture and design, would indicate his success. This is also partly due to the accident that his treatises survive while those of other ancient authors on architecture do not. Moreover, I believe this fact reiterates the importance of highlighting this book in a historiography of ancient Roman domestic space, especially when employing Books I, VI and VII.

Book I begins with information concerning the proper training of an architect as well as the numerous qualities and extensive knowledge one should possess to be successful, such as history, philosophy, music, medicine and law. Much of Book I, however, is devoted to defining ‘architecture’ based on its principles and the departments that constitute it. It is from this portion that contemporary architectural design and practice derives many of its fundamentals, including: order, arrangement, eurythmy, symmetry, propriety, and economy. Finally, Book I concludes with various discussions concerned primarily with city planning as well as suitable sites for public buildings, most of which are not a concern for this thesis topic. The chapter is of interest because in describing the profession of architects, Vitruvius discusses the process of design and creation. His work invites modern day practitioners and scholars to compare and contrast the system of values, beliefs and practices of the ancient Romans with their own in order to learn and, one hopes, improve.

Following the concepts and principles of architecture, Book VI specifically discusses private buildings. The overarching philosophies offered by Vitruvius concern: the proper location of a house within the landscape, ideal room proportions, appropriate room orientation

\textsuperscript{21} Vitruvius, \textit{The Ten Books on Architecture},168.
and the ways in which these elements, along with decoration, should directly reflect the owner’s social status. In the beginning of this section Vitruvius outlines the order and process by which an architect should conduct a project, beginning with ‘standard of symmetry’, followed by ‘ground lines’, then ‘nature of the site’, ‘questions of use or beauty’, and finally ‘modification of the plan’.\textsuperscript{22} Next, he transitions to a dialogue regarding spaces within an ancient Roman house, including prescriptions for proper room proportions, followed by appropriate exposures for various room types according to function. Prior to concluding this section he enters a brief description of how a house should cater to and express the social status of its owner:

For capitalists and farmers of the revenue, somewhat comfortable and showy apartments must be constructed, secure against robbery; for advocates and public speakers, handsomer and more roomy, to accommodate meetings; for men of rank who, from holding offices and magistrates, have social obligations to their fellow-citizens, lofty entrance courts in regal style, and most spacious atriums and peristyles, with plantations and walks of some extent in them, appropriate to their dignity.\textsuperscript{23}

The significance of this chapter arises in that it outlines the specific rules to which a private residence should adhere. Unfortunately, in my opinion, this also constitutes its limit in that Vitruvius caters his prescriptions to wealthy homeowners as well as ideal site conditions, yet disregards a large portion of the ancient Roman population, making this source extremely biased. This distinction, unfortunately, is not far removed from the modern practice of architecture and interior design in that it is typically the middle to upper classes that can afford the services.

Finally, Vitruvius begins Book VII by examining the correct applications and techniques for creating the spaces and surfaces within a house, such as floors and ceilings or stucco and

\textsuperscript{22} Vitruvius, \textit{The Ten Books on Architecture}, 174-175.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 182.
fresco painting. In the section dedicated to fresco painting he offers his general opinion and view of the changes in wall painting style that had occurred and were occurring at the time.24 To conclude Book VII, Vitruvius then explains the pigments used in the wall paintings in regard to the various pigments used and the locations in which they were applied, how the pigment was acquired from nature or artificially created, as well as the appropriate application process. As might be obvious, Book VII is useful for this thesis because it not only discusses ancient Roman domestic decoration but also because it mentions specific locations for these decorations as well as the thought process that preceded the creation of them.

Overall, *Ten Books on Architecture*, by Pollio Vitruvius is a highly useful source for any scholar concerned with the history of ancient Roman architecture and domestic space. However, one must be aware of its limitations. In an introduction, Ingrid D. Rowland makes reference to a problem of translating the ancient text.25 According to her, Vitruvius was not a strong writer and was often grammatically incorrect.26 This notion is also expressed in the preface of another edition wherein the author characterizes Vitruvius’ writing style as: “…a lack of confidence in his ability to express himself in unmistakable language.”27 In addition, he is said to have used Latin words incorrectly and sometimes interchangeably.28 More worrisome, is the fact that various translators have determined the text to be insufficient in relaying Vitruvius’ ideas and, as

---

24 Interestingly, the themes and pictorial images he describes can be identifiably linked to the Four Styles created by August Mau, in 1899 and mentioned by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, John R. Clark, Donatella Mazzoleni and various other authors mentioned in this chapter. Unlike contemporary scholars, however, he does not mention a chronological shift between the styles “First”, “Second”, “Third” and “Fourth” but rather mentions certain scenes as being reserved for specific rooms.24 This discrepancy brings about an interesting question, though unfortunately outside the scope of this thesis, concerning the chronological Four Styles outlined by August Mau and the descriptions given by Vitruvius in which the wall paintings were chosen and implemented based on room and function rather than the fashion of the times.

25 Though there are various editions of the Ten Books on Architecture, this one was selected due to the fact that it was recently translated and the preface adds insight to the study.

26 Rowland, "Introduction", xiii.


28 Rowland, xiii.
a response, have includes sketches as supplemental references. So, while the book may be problematic, it is simultaneously one of the single most important sources regarding ancient Roman domestic space because of the time during which it was written and the topics it encompasses. In addition, *Ten Books on Architecture* begins to illuminate how the ancient Romans represented themselves via domestic spaces as well as when and how various techniques for creating these spaces were utilized.

Vitruvius’ significance is furthered by the extent to which he is referenced by subsequent ancient authors. One such writer is Gaius Plinius Secundus, better known as Pliny the Elder, who, following the précis of Vitruvius, wrote *Naturalis Historia*, or ‘*Natural History*’. The specific date of this piece is often debated but the most agreed upon period is around the mid 1st century B.C.E.29 Pliny writes on a variety of topics, from agriculture to metals as well as painting, which creates a collection of 10 volumes, giving *Natural History* the semblance of an encyclopedia. Within this assortment of topics those associated with ancient Roman domestic space are Volume IX, “Book XXXIV” and “Book XXXV” as well as Volume XX, “Book XXXVI”. Volume IX, “Book XXXIV”, is primarily concerned with metals, ores, and bronze. While this does not initially seem useful, some discussion pertains specifically to furniture and the application of metals to interior architectural surfaces. “Book XXXV”, on the other hand, alludes to painting and the history of art.30 Finally, Pliny concludes “Book XXXV” with a discussion of colors, including how pigments were extracted from the earth, the ways in which they were manufactured and the appropriate applications for each.

---

30 Pliny’s views of painting styles at the time, gain interesting comparisons when one compares those given by Vitruvius but also considers the Four Styles designated by August Mau.
Within Volume X, “Book XXXVI”, the main topic is stone. Throughout this section, Pliny discusses various types of stone, of which his primary interest lies in marble. Along with each type of stone, however, he also mentions its various applications, from statuary to building construction. As a comparison to the information presented by Vitruvius *Natural History* is revealing but I also notice the emergence of some flaws. For instance, Pliny’s descriptions tend to be lengthy, yet they are often broken by superfluous stories or a long list of names which, at times makes his main points hard to decipher. That being said, however, his listing of names is also beneficial for identifying specific artist/craftspeople responsible for the creation of certain works. So, like Vitruvius, the inclusion of this source in research concerning ancient Roman domestic space may be hindered by a difference in language structure or translation, but this is far outweighed by its favorable qualities.

The final book of interest amongst the ancient authors is *Satyricon*, written by Petronius. While this piece is not an instruction manual or an encyclopedia specifically targeting architecture or interior decoration, the chapter, “Trimalchio’s Dinner Party”, is helpful in illuminating ancient Roman domestic space. Told as a story, the plot unfolds as the main character is invited to a dinner party at Trimalchio’s house. Trimalchio, a freed slave who earned immeasurable wealth is known from the outset to be ostentatious. As the reader slowly discovers, this also translates into extravagant parties as well as highly decorative and embellished domestic space. An opportunity to experience such a display entices the main character to attend a dinner party of Trimalchio’s. As he is led through the house readers are invited to experience the ebb and flow of spaces and decorations just as an ancient Roman would have. Though this book is thought to be fictitious, it is nonetheless an informative description of
the decoration, layout, inner workings and activities of an ancient Roman house.

The next major source on ancient Roman domestic space and decoration is, *Pompeii, Its Life and Art*, written by August Mau in 1899. As this book is categorized in the ‘Recent’ category, one might ask: Why does such a vast interval between sources exist? The answer to this question is twofold and involves both government regulations as well as the excavation processes of Pompeii and Herculaneum. As Victoria C. Gardner Coates states in the introduction of *Antiquity Recovered: the Legacy of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, “the sites have been in constant flux, from the moment in 1709 when the first antiquities were removed from a well shaft in Resina [or Herculaneum] to the present-day excavations.”

Following the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 B.C.E., it is thought that Herculaneum was first discovered in 1709 by a laborer who accidentally found marble statuary in a well shaft. This man then showed his discovery to Prince d’Elbeuf who bought the land and continued tunnel excavation of the area from 1709 – 1716 with the sole purpose of extracting valuable antiques. In 1734, Charles of Bourbon (Charles VII) came to rule Naples. Interestingly, it was Charles’ wife who was curious about the site of Herculaneum, so the king granted her and a small team the opportunity to explore. When antiquities were found, however, the king too gained interest but, like Prince d’Elbeuf, was more concerned with extracting finds rather than preserving archaeological context. “Charles didn’t see the site as a historical phenomenon opening a window onto ancient life. Instead, he considered the dig a mine from which royal treasure could be extracted.”

Moreover, he decided: “Naples must retain exclusive rights to the possession, knowledge, and

---

32 Ibid., 37.
34 Gardner, 39.
publication of the finds, thus excluding foreigners from any access to the riches hidden beneath Bourbon soil.\textsuperscript{35} In an effort to maintain this secrecy and reduce theft and subsequent sale of antiquities on the black market, the king tightened control and supervision of the finds. This eventually led to restrictions for anyone touring the site as they were not permitted to write about or sketch any details.

In the 1740’s, however, interest in the site, coupled with disdain for Bourbon policies, led to leaking of information and publication of letters which increased popular awareness and interest in the site.\textsuperscript{36} Around this same time, excavations of Pompeii began, though its reputation and intrigue did not equal that of Herculaneum until numerous wall paintings, temples and bodies were found.\textsuperscript{37} From 1808 – 1815, the Murat family came into power and, again, it was the queen, Catherine Murat, Napoleon’s sister, who was interested in the excavations and, “she was said to have wanted to see the whole of Pompeii cleared within three or four years”.\textsuperscript{38} This fervor ended when the Murat family was exiled after Napoleon’s defeat in 1815. Finally, in 1860, Giuseppe Fiorelli was appointed director of excavations and, it is thought, was responsible for improving the process of archaeological excavations in Italy.\textsuperscript{39} He ended the previous method of disorganized and reckless digging by introducing a new mode of meticulous excavation which led to better preservation of both objects and buildings. In addition, he implemented a systematic clearing of unexcavated portions followed by an excavation of Pompeii moving from the west to east.\textsuperscript{40} Today, most of the city and much of Herculaneum have

\textsuperscript{35} Gardner, Antiquity Recovered: the Legacy of Pompeii and Herculaneum, 38.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 40-44.
\textsuperscript{37} Cooley, Pompeii, 74.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 81.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 83.
\textsuperscript{40} August Mau, Pompeii, Its Life and Art, trans. Francis W. Kelsey (New York: Macmillan, 1902), 28.
been excavated to the 79 B.C.E. surface, though some areas remain unexcavated to demonstrate the extent of the volcano’s damage. Hence, the turbulent history of excavations in both Pompeii and Herculaneum cause the gap of almost 100 years between the ‘Ancient’ category and the ‘Recent’ which commences in 1899 with the writing of August Mau.

**RECENT**

_Pompeii, Its Life and Art_, by August Mau, an art historian and archaeologist, in 1899 is an important source because it was written after he spent nearly 25 years studying the excavations of Pompeii. As may be expected, some limitations arise because it was written over one hundred years ago when only a portion of Pompeii had been excavated and archaeology was less developed as a discipline. Mau himself states: “The ruins, deprived of the interest arising from historical associations, must be interpreted with little help from literary sources, and repeopled with aggregate rather than individual life.”

The contributions of the book, however, cannot be denied as I discovered that many of the categorizations and descriptions given by Mau, especially concerning painting, are still utilized by modern scholars. He gives an overview of Pompeii, public buildings, private residences, trades and occupations of the Pompeians, Pompeian art, and finally, inscriptions. While the topics may seem broad, Mau’s observations and descriptions are concise and informative. Most useful for this thesis are Chapter 2 and Chapter 6 of Part I as well as Part II: the Houses, and Part IV: Pompeian Art.

---

41 Mau, _Pompeii, Its Life and Art_, v.
Within Chapter 2 of *Pompeii, Its Life and Art*, Mau begins by discussing the city of Pompeii from its inception through its climax at the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 B.C.E. Chapter 6, on the other hand, is concerned primarily with architecture, building materials and construction techniques employed by the Pompeians. The most beneficial portion of this chapter, however, arises with Mau’s description and categorization of the six periods of architecture apparent in Pompeii. In this he chronologically determines the phases of architectural development according to material and construction techniques. While materials and construction have implications on domestic interiors with these descriptions Mau also begins to allude to styles and transitions of wall decoration occurring in conjunction with the phases of architecture. This comparison allows a better understanding of the ways in which the ancient Romans transitioned from one style to the next, be it architecture or wall decoration, and the effects these may have had on one another.

In “Part II: the Houses”, Mau is able to decipher a general layout of specific spaces and functions of what he determines to be a typical Pompeian house. He discusses each room, from the vestibule and the atrium to the bath and storerooms, with great detail according to their placement, adjacencies, and procession from one space to the next, as well as their functions. He then alludes to this typical plan through case studies in Pompeii, such as the House of the Surgeon or the House of the Tragic Poet. The final chapter of this section is dedicated to household furniture and, similar to the generic house plan, Mau outlines the typical furniture in a Pompeian house in relation to specific pieces found during excavation.
Finally, in “Part V: Pompeian Art”, Mau creates separate chapters dedicated to architecture, sculpture, wall decoration, and paintings. In the chapter on architecture he reintroduces the periods of Pompeian architecture but also incorporates information regarding the transitions between these periods, in addition to any historical occurrences which he believes may have contributed to a change in taste or style. He continues this formula into the discussion of sculpture and eventually applies it to the chapter regarding painting and wall decoration. In Chapter LIV: Painting – Wall Decoration, he introduces the four styles of wall paintings and amongst the descriptions of each speculates about the origin as well as the transition between them. Additionally, he goes into detail concerning the elements, like motifs, color, or wall proportioning, that exemplify each style. To illustrate the styles further he utilizes specific examples of domestic wall paintings along with visual representations, mostly from Pompeii. On account of his careful descriptions, these wall painting styles have been referenced and utilized by most scholars following him. So, in order to aptly understand research concerning ancient Roman domestic decoration, this chapter is a necessity.

Subsequent to Mau’s study of ancient Roman wall paintings, the scholarship on ancient Rome narrows and begins to focus on topics of specific interest as with Gisela Richter’s book, *Ancient Furniture; a History of Greek, Etruscan and Roman Furniture*. Written in 1926, from the viewpoint of art history and archaeology, this study appears to be the first dedicated solely to the furniture of ancient Rome and, I believe, might represent an initial intersection of scholarship on ancient Rome and interior design. While a majority of the book concerns Greek culture and furniture, it is also useful in presenting various pieces of furniture used by the ancient Romans. Richter’s descriptions of these include form and function as well as corresponding illustrations.
Most of her analysis and information, however, is gathered from frescos, paintings and sarcophagi. Because these are thought to have symbolized and represented the ideal, this source, if not verified with more reliable, later studies, might be problematic. In addition, she references a ‘copying’ of Greek furniture but contradicts herself by saying: “There are clearly behind [Roman furniture] the best traditions of Greek craftsmanship – as is natural since it was produced in the city of Athens.” More than her theory of copying, this statement finds relevance because it is now known that Romans often commissioned works by Greek artists and craftsmen. So, while Gisela Richter’s opinion of ancient Roman furniture may include some bias, her book is important to this study. It is one of the few sources which attempts to discuss ancient Roman furniture in detail and her illustrations, photographs and verbal descriptions are extremely informative.

Though there are numerous sources concerning ancient Rome or domestic decoration succeeding Gisela Richter, the next significant source that considers the two topics simultaneously emerges in 1991 with art historian John R. Clarke’s book, *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250: Ritual, Space, and Decoration*. This book is the first to compile information presented by writers like Mau and specialists like Richter while adding new ideas pertaining to Roman domestic space. It is organized around a select period of study, 100 B.C. – 250 B.C.E., and discusses not only the broad spectrum of housing types but also reiterates and elaborates the styles of decoration described by Mau. In addition, it focuses on the analysis of wall paintings and mosaics in multiple houses to gain an understanding of the owners' tastes and beliefs.

Clarke begins by discussing house types and styles apparent in ancient Rome but frequently begins the description of each with a modern day example to create a basis for understanding. He then elaborates on who a typical inhabitant might be and why, followed by a narrative concerning the layout, construction and relation to the surrounding area. Finally, he describes the various rooms within a typical house and their functions. In relation to the purpose of the room, he proceeds further to illustrate types of furniture and decoration which may have aided in the functioning of the room. In regard to interior decoration, Clarke discusses painting styles, with obvious attention to the Four Styles delineated by August Mau, and how these were implemented. Clarke then carefully considers the execution of decoration in addition to who might have crafted it while giving possible scenarios as to why certain aspects of decoration vary according to location. For example, wall paintings often consisted of idyllic but unattainable views through window-like frames to compensate for the fact that houses often had concrete walls with few exterior windows. Clarke then commences discussion of specific houses based on decorative style and the year in which they were decorated. This section of the book is very detailed and relevant to specific periods, along with the decoration that occurred as a response to social constructs. This book is useful in the study of ancient Roman domestic space for its depth of research and description of multiple types and styles of decoration. Clarke’s book probes further into the still elusive topic of ancient Roman domestic decoration.

Also in 1991, Roger Ling, an art historian, authored the book *Roman Painting*, which primarily studies and reiterates information concerning the four styles of painting and the subjects of those paintings. The usefulness of this book, however, derives from the chapters:

---


44 Ibid., 78-362.
“Technique” as well as “Painters and Patrons”. In these two chapters, Ling discusses the making and application of plaster on which pigment would be applied, the fresco technique, tools used by the craftsmen, the techniques of these craftsmen and even the repairing of damaged wall paintings. A criticism of this selection is that the author relies heavily on Vitruvius, which means his focus is primarily on 30-20 B.C.E., thus, even though he presents unique information it neglects previous eras as well as the process by which painting techniques or patronage developed. To counteract this criticism one may argue that, aside from the writing of Vitruvius, little information or research exists on such a topic. As such, I find it evident that research concerning the technique and process of painting and decoration is generally disregarded and needs to be addressed further.

Andrew Wallace-Hadrill’s book, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, written in 1994 from the perspective of a historian, is especially worthy of consideration as he expounds upon information presented by previous authors by asking the question: How can the expression of a Roman house be understood and what does it communicate about the ancient society of Rome? As Wallace-Hadrill states in the book’s Preface: “The purpose of this book is to make some tentative steps toward unlocking the memories of the social language of the Roman house.” While attempting to translate this language he reveals a broad understanding of the ancient Roman people, how they interacted socially, their houses and the ways in which these houses are symbolic. In so doing, he succeeds in bridging the gap between modern society and the ancient Romans.

*Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* is divided into two parts: “The Social Structure of the Roman House” and “Sampling Pompeii and Herculaneum”. Within Part I, Wallace-Hadrill introduces chapters titled: “Reading the Roman House”, “The Language of Public and Private”, and “The Articulation of the House”. In these he discusses the symbolic language of an ancient Roman house, how it related to social and familial status, and how the house functioned. In addition, Wallace-Hadrill examines and reinterprets the four styles of wall painting and decoration categorized by August Mau. Finally, he relates the decoration of a house to the Roman family via a description of how the house was utilized in daily life. Wallace-Hadrill then narrows his investigation by observing the ways in which modern day scholars or students can read and interpret the language of a Roman house; how a home expresses its public and private spaces and how each of these individual characteristics is articulated. Thus, the status of individuals living in any particular house was based on the magnificence and grandeur of decoration and space. Roman houses were a direct representation of their inhabitants and served simultaneously as competition for peers and inspiration for those of a lower class.

Part II of the book contains: “Houses and Urban Texture”, “Houses and Households”, “Houses and Trade”, and “Luxury and Status”. The later part of the book delves further into examination of a select sampling of houses within the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum for which Wallace-Hadrill devises four categories to define different types of housing: size, function, architecture and decoration. This strategy is interesting because rather than focusing primarily on the well preserved and highly decorated homes of the elite, he focuses on specific town blocks within which he observes and analyses all houses, shops, etc. Such an approach

---

proves fruitful because he finds that multiple classes are often represented in each block with little segregation.

Wallace-Hadrill’s book efficiently and chronologically reveals important data and visual material collected from a series of excavations. Furthermore, he relates this data to interpretations and understandings of how the Roman people lived. Although the book is abundant with information concerning ancient Roman domestic space, it tends to be subsumed, especially in the latter part, by the massive amount of categorization, data analysis and graphs. While such a representation of information may be helpful for scientific or analytic scholars, it muddies research concerning art, design or anthropology. Overall, however, this is one of the most relevant resources I have encountered and is essential for research on the ancient Roman house and its decoration. In addition to this book, Wallace-Hadrill has authored, co-authored and edited many other works such as, *Domestic space in the Roman world: Pompeii and beyond*, which makes his name synonymous with the topic of ancient Roman houses and domestic space.

In 1998, Roger Ling revisited the topic of decoration in his book, *Ancient Mosaics*. Overall, the book covers ancient mosaics from Greece through Roman Africa and follows the information presented in his previous book, *Roman Painting* (1991), to discuss the styles of mosaic decoration in conjunction with those of painting. In the chapter, *Roman Italy*, Ling examines how mosaics were created, the people who created them, and the different forms of mosaic from ‘opus sectile’ to ‘tessaræ’, as well as the most common materials, colors and even motifs. In addition, he considers the transitions and changes occurring in the Roman Empire during the wars with Carthage through the time of Augustus and how these affected taste in
mosaic decoration. In the final chapters: “Wall and Vault Mosaics” and “Context and Meaning”, however, Ling discusses the interior context, such as floors, walls or other locations, in conjunction with the meanings such mosaics might reveal. As in his book on painting, the topics of technique and patronage seem to be sparse relative to floor mosaics and are ones which this thesis hopes to address.

The books published between 1900 and 2000 seem to be primarily concerned with specific and condensed topics, such as furniture, decoration, painting, or mosaics. Though these works are useful, their narrow focus underscores the fact that they were written by scholars from different fields of research and without cross-disciplinary collaboration. On account of this, one goal of this thesis is to integrate these various disciplines and studies into a more holistic appreciation of the ancient Roman domestic interior. Hence, my contribution to the study of the Roman domus will hinge on a survey of pertinent scholarly sources, along with onsite observations, and subjection of this material to new interpretation and analysis of the interiors via an interior design sensibility.

**CONTEMPORARY**

The ‘Contemporary’ sources for ancient Roman domestic interiors and decoration begins with, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, written by Shelley Hales, an art historian and archaeologist, in 2003. The insight provided by this book concerning the ancient Roman house, its inhabitants and the general social and cultural context, is most useful for this study. As Hales
states in the introduction: The domus, “was a visual, architectural construct of the familia’s identity and proof of participation in Roman society.” Further, Hales looks critically at the traditional and widely accepted accounts of previous authors, like Vitruvius or August Mau, concerning the ancient Roman house. In fact, the first part of this two-part book is titled, “The Houses of Rome in Ancient Literature”, in which she explores the writings of Cicero, Pliny, and others as they relate to the issues of: “The Ideal Home”, “The House and the Construction of Memory” and “The Imperial Palace”. Throughout the first chapter, it appears as if Hales’ main concern is identifying the beliefs which helped structure the ancient Roman culture and how this was expressed, either realistically or idealistically, via the house. In addition to describing the importance of the ‘familia’, or family, in the Roman culture, the author repetitiously emphasizes the concept of ‘Romanitas’, or what it meant to be an archetypal Roman. According to Hales, this “Roman self-preservation”, was expressed through various modes, especially visual and literary arts the most important of which was the domus. As she states:

It played an active role in promoting an impression of Romanitas by delineating the space within which the chief domestic rituals of Roman life could be enacted...A recognizably Roman house, that is a house whose appearance seemed to conform to rhetorical ideals of Romanitas and whose space made room for familiar ritual activity, was enough to guarantee the homeowner’s acceptance as a Roman.

Hales then proceeds to describe the reasons why she believes this notion began to morph with the reign of Augustus, which she exemplifies via the writing of Virtuvius. According to her, in 31 BC, under Augustus, there was “an attempt to redefine the proper limits of domestic presentation...a new emphasis on simplicity and publicness [and]...a new sense of order and

---

48 Hales, The Roman House and Social Identity, 2.
49 Ibid., 13-14.
50 Ibid., 18-19.
restriction in domestic display,”51 which was severely different from the previous display of ostentation. She smartly concludes this introductory chapter with the statement:

That houses figure prominently in that literature is a sure sign, in itself, of their important role in Roman society…However, it also played an ideological role…..The domus, as the very centre of Roman life and thought, had to deal with and resolve all the tensions of being Roman on a daily basis.52

The following chapters then enter a discussion concerning the ways in which people outside the Roman family experienced a household. Later, in the chapter titled, “Finding a Way into the Pompeian House”, Hales further illuminates specific Pompeian houses, while also cautioning readers and scholars against applying ideal notions to real situations. Initially she discusses general information regarding the houses. For instance, she mentions two types of façade decoration, the location of windows, as well as the entrance and a passerby’s view of the central axis through the house. From here, she continues her description of elements within the interior of the house, such as the ways in which floor mosaics communicated proper movement throughout the house. Finally, she brings specific houses into the discussion, like the House of Paquius Proculus or the House of the Small Fountain.

The final chapter of Part Two, “The Art of Impression in the Houses of Pompeii”, sheds even more light on the topic of ancient Roman domestic space. In this chapter, Hales begins by expressing her opinion concerning the limitations of the Four Styles of painting presented by August Mau in that: few houses are consistently decorated in one style, themes are often adopted or generalities, paintings are easy to replace and some houses indicate refurbishment at the time

51 Hales, The Roman House and Social Identity, 24.
52 Ibid., 38-39.
of Vesuvius’ eruption, similarities in choice and rendering suggest creation by the same artist, and the competitive nature and openness of homes aided in the transmission of trends or repetition of designs.\footnote{Hales, \textit{The Roman House and Social Identity}, 136-137.} From this point she continues to explore the notion of design along with examples apparent in the houses of Pompeii. She concludes that:

…the houses of Pompeii would seem to suggest that there was no simple domestic package that made a house Roman. Instead a successful Roman house was a house that was seen to wrestle with the different tensions inherent in Romanitas. It was the house that provided an arena for combining and layering personal, familial, and civic identities.\footnote{Ibid., 163.}

Finally, Shelley Hales concludes the book \textit{The Roman House and Social Identity} by looking at and interpreting ‘Houses on the Periphery’ which include houses that lie in the Roman provinces. She believes that the best way to appreciate the ways in which Roman identity was constructed is to examine the provinces of Rome in order to distinguish how these compare to Rome itself along with cities such as Pompeii or Herculaneum, which are relatively close to Rome. Her final statement is a wonderful summation of the information presented in the book and has also been an inspiration and driving force behind this thesis:

The remains of houses across the empire are our biggest resource for the investigating how people living within the Roman world thought of themselves and how they communicated this self-image to the world. Their houses could be read by contemporaries as a dialogue between the individual and his environment and today provide us with a rich data for exploring roman self-image at both a communal and individual level.\footnote{Ibid., 247.}
Style and Function in Roman Decoration: Living with Objects and Interiors, written in 2009 by Ellen Swift is the last book under review. To produce a book that more accurately describes the artistic trends present in ancient Rome, the author focuses her attention on various forms of art including, the decoration of domestic interiors, drinking and toiletry vessels, as well as various elements related to dress, such as jewelry and accessories. In the introduction, Swift confirms thoughts presented in the introductory chapter of this thesis concerning lack of cross-disciplinary studies. She states:

…there has been a proliferation of studies which investigate different aspects of decoration, though in general it seems there has been little exchange of ideas between anthropologists and art-historians, despite their similar preoccupations (albeit exemplified in very different material).56

With this statement compromising a portion of her argument, Swift then ventures to understand the decoration of ancient Romans on the basis of combined fields which include art-history, archaeology and anthropology. The main portion of the introduction is comprised by the author’s definition of key terms to be utilized in the remainder of the book, foremost of which are: art, symbol/ism, style, visual effects and decoration. While the entirety of this book seems beneficial to any topic concerned with art in ancient Rome, the most useful for this thesis is: “Interiors: Non-figurative Floor Mosaics and Other Domestic Decoration”. In this chapter, as one might be able to discern from the title, the main concern is mosaics, which also includes: their thresholds, borders, placement within the room and patterns. Swift has an interesting interpretation of these mosaics as she studies statistical analysis of the placement of mosaics combined with the patterns in order to discern if there is a correlation. In conjunction with this she explores the borders, as they not only represent a nostalgic expression of carpets but that they

56 Ellen Swift, Style and Function in Roman Decoration: Living with Objects and Interiors (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 2.
might also act as hierarchical elements between rooms. To conclude this chapter, Ellen Swift sums her thoughts on interior decoration with the remark: “The primary purpose of the floors, it might be suggested, was not the aesthetic enjoyment of the guests, but their subordination: the consequent expression of the dominance and status of the owner.”

Conclusion

The sources mentioned throughout this historiography, as well as those included in the bibliography, have clearly enhanced the knowledge of ancient Roman domestic interior decoration but I have found that some lacunas persist. For instance, while they begin to address the lack of cross-disciplinary research, I believe incorporating additional and diverse disciplines can only benefit the discourse. Through synthesis and combination of previous research into the content of this thesis via the perspective of an interior designer, the canon of ancient Roman domestic interior decoration will gain a fresh view, especially since the discipline of interior design has not yet been a major contributor. Furthermore, being that interior design is a very process based profession, there will be more of an opportunity to discover or interpret how decoration was designed and created. Though the topic of implementation has begun to be researched by various authors such as Roger Ling, these studies rarely take into consideration the whole of the interior space but rather focus on the implementation of various surfaces. Hence it appears as if the removal of decoration from its context persists as the most prominent issue faced in the study of ancient Roman domestic interior decoration.

57 Swift, Style and Function in Roman Decoration: Living with Objects and Interiors, 102.
Decoration is arguably often determined or planned according to the space within which it is located. As the previous historiography shows, studies often treat decorative surfaces like floor mosaics, wall paintings or ceiling stucco, as separate entities, rather than holistic environments which negates context. In an attempt to remedy such an omission throughout this chapter I will explore a progressive system of contexts within which ancient Roman domestic decoration is situated. It begins by examining the ways in which the ancient Romans selected
the sites for their cities, followed by the planning of the city blocks and streets. On a smaller scale, the layout of houses within the city blocks will be examined as well as how these forms relate to the planning of their houses and finally, how the decoration corresponded to the shape and function of the space.

Compilation of research necessary to illuminate the context of decoration revealed two ways of understanding such things: literary evidence as well as physical evidence. As such, this chapter aims to compare and contrast both. Yet, in attempting to do so, I quickly realized the notion of ‘idealized’ perceptions as opposed to ‘realized’ manifestations which permeate the study of ancient Roman society, from the broad concept of city planning to the ways in which private domestic interior spaces were decorated. Joseph Rykwert alludes to an intrinsic connection between these two constructs in stating:

...some consideration must be given to the model, to the conceptual prototype of the town which its inhabitants construct mentally, and which is often exemplified in their homes. So often the home is felt to be a miniature of the city: not as it is, but as we want it.58

Along the same line of thought, Amos Rapoport believes:

...the house cannot be seen in isolation from the settlement....Man lives in the whole settlement of which the house is only a part, and the way in which he uses the settlement affects house form...the house conveys little sense outside its setting and context.59

This chapter then aims to incorporate such opinions on the context of the house and its decoration by discussing the idealistic prescriptions and the ways in which these were adapted to,

or possibly even denied by, realistic conditions. The *domus*, or house, however, will be the main focus, along with the ways in which it was planned and decorated. By conducting a study of the broad framework from which the house originates we might better understand the various forces that control or inspire the decoration within. If this can be achieved, it may be possible to better answer the main question of the thesis: Through analysis of ancient Roman domestic space, can an understanding of the history, theory and practice of interior design be expanded and enhanced?

The ideal perceptions discussed throughout originate primarily with ancient writers who offer instruction and advice concerning proper actions and behavior. To inform and illuminate this specific chapter, however, I will rely mostly on Vitruvius as he writes specifically about city planning and the proper layout of a house as well as its decoration. Vitruvius sets a tone for the ideal thoughts of the ancient Romans because it is believed he wrote for and about wealthy and elite Roman citizens. While this may be biased, it is important to recognize that the ideas generated by the elite citizens and expressed by Vitruvius are ones to which all classes probably aspired. Ellen Swift enhances this concept, as she believes style and the acculturation of can be understood as an expression of ideology, ethnicity or even a way to maintain or emulate elite culture. Furthermore, she confirms that, “.....elite homes and smaller *domus* throughout Pompeii alike partook of a common cultural language…..” As such, it is plausible to consider the idealized prescriptions of Vitruvius as representative of cross-societal thoughts and beliefs.

---

60 Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, 27.
61 Indications of, especially in regard to decoration can be found in: Clarke, 21; Hales, 136 & Zanker, 21
In response to the ideal notions presented by Vitruvius, the realistic determinants and manifestations will be based on theories presented by modern scholarship as well as my personal interpretation and analysis of field research as an interior designer. To further illuminate these inquiries the Casa di Ceii (reg. I/ ins. VI), or House of the Ceii, in Pompeii and the Casa del Tramezzo di Legno (ins. III), also known as the House of the Wooden Partition, in Herculaneum will serve as case studies.

the IDEALIZED city

In choosing a suitable site for a city, health appears as the main concern of the ancient Romans. In his ‘Ten Books on Architecture’, Chapter IV of Book 1, Vitruvius points to certain features which might lead to an ‘unhealthy’ site, consisting of: exposure to extreme heat, nearness to a marsh, or severe wind. He states, “…..we must take great care to select a very temperate climate for the site of our city, since healthfulness is, as we have said, the first requisite.”64 This concern was imperative for the ancient Romans due to a high mortality rate which directly corresponds to a low life expectancy.65 Anything that could be done to improve health was vital as it ensured continued existence of the society and the culture. Vitruvius then suggests a technique to ensure the healthfulness of the site which entails a “return to the method of old times.”66 The method to which he refers was practiced by many ancient civilizations and involved sacrificing cattle after allowing them to graze on a possible site. The purpose of such a

66 Vitruvius, 20.
ritual was to examine the cattle’s livers for abnormalities, like discoloration. If such abnormalities were discovered, those conducting the site selection would simply continue to sacrifice more cattle to examine livers until satisfied the site was acceptable or not. Vitruvius adds further clarification:

If they continued to find it abnormal, they argued from this that the food and water supply found in such a place would be just as unhealthy for man, and so they moved away and changed to another neighborhood, healthfulness being their chief object.67

After declaring a site to be healthy, Vitruvius recommends the ancient Romans then determine if the selected site was capable of supplying enough food for the entire community, whether there were sufficient roads or other means of transportation for these supplies, and whether fortification walls could be erected. Vitruvius’ final prescriptions in the planning of an ideal city again indicate the ancient Romans’ desire for health. In this instance, however, he believes it could be achieved via the orientation of streets:

They will be properly laid out if foresight is employed to exclude the winds from the alleys…By shutting out the winds from our dwellings, therefore, we shall not only make the place healthful for people who are well, but also in the case of diseases…the patients…will here be more quickly cured by the mildness that comes from shutting out the winds.68

Because winds were thought to be unhealthy and the cause of unhealthy conditions, Vitruvius describes their characteristics and effects in detail. According to him, the ancient Romans believed there were eight winds, each from a different direction and identified through personifications like those of mythological beings. It is in avoidance of these eight winds that

68 Ibid., 24-25.
Vitruvius delineates the layout and directionality of streets, and eventually the correct placement of a *domus*. From the explanation of wind directions given by Vitruvius, a surveyor was meant to locate himself at the city’s center and was then expected to determine the direction and layout of the streets using the tool referred to as a ‘*groma*’. [Fig. 2.1] In locating the houses within the *insulae* formed by these streets, Vitruvius recommends:

> The lines of houses must therefore be directed away from the quarters from which the winds blow, so that as they come in they may strike against the angles of the blocks and their force the be broken and dispersed.\(^{69}\)

These prescriptions may be used as a guide to analyze existing cities like Pompeii or Herculaneum. As one might expect, Vitruvius’ methods are not infallibly implemented but they are not disregarded either.

**the REALIZED city**

Regardless of the real city or site one chooses to substantiate the thoughts of Vitruvius against realistic conditions, Joseph Rykwart determines that many people utilized similar practices and rituals, making them a widespread phenomenon not merely restricted to Roman society:

> …long before they were codified most of these ceremonies must have formed an important part of the religious life of Italy, antedating perhaps even the beginning of urban settlement in the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.\(^{70}\)


Figure 2.1
Diagram of a ‘groma’
[Source: Rykwert, 
*The Idea of a Town*, 51]

Figure 2.2
Map of Pompeii
[Source: created by author with reference to http://web.mit.edu/course/21/21h.405/www/vettii/images/cityplan.jpg]
Because parallel evidence can be identified in various cities like Ostia or even Roman Africa, as well as cities beyond the Roman Empire, this section will focus specifically on a comprehensive examination of Pompeii and Herculaneum in regard to founding and planning.

It is essential to recognize, the principles of city planning, outside of constructing a new city, were more commonly employed during Roman colonization of an existing city or the reconstruction of a city after disaster, such as a fire. All of these instances play a role in the final form of Pompeii. It is believed that Pompeii was settled by the Etruscans around the end of the 7th or 6th century B.C. It was not until 80 B.C. it was subsumed by the Roman Empire after a defeat of the Oscans during the Social Wars. It is apparent, however, that the city of Pompeii had a unique character prior to coming under Roman rule and being subjected to new Roman ideals. When reviewing a map of Pompeii, the Oscan settlement can still be distinguished in the lower, southwest corner near the ‘Porta Marina’. [Fig. 2.2] I believe it is telling that the pre-existing city was incorporated into a corner of the ancient Roman city rather than serving as a guide and located at the center. The streets and insulae within the Oscan settlement seem more haphazard and irregular, whereas those that emanate from it become more regular and grid like. Pompeii’s integration into the Roman Empire in 80 B.C. might also have affected the gridded pattern of the city because this time period also corresponds to the point at which Rome was subject to Hellenistic influence. As such, the grid might relate to the city planning techniques exemplified by the ancient Greeks. E.J. Owens, however, attributes the regular pattern of streets

---

73 Hales, The Roman House and Social Identity, 97-98.
and insulae dimensions to the fact that all colonists during the process of Roman colonization were allotted a 0.5 hectare (8000 square meters) piece of land.\textsuperscript{74}

Whether developing a new city or incorporating an old one, it is thought that the Romans planned their cities based on observations of and connections to natural surroundings as well as a reliance on divine intervention. Similar to Vitruvius’ description concerning the practices of ‘old times’, Joseph Rykwert refers to such practices as ‘rites’ or ‘rituals’ and believes these rites were not only used as a guide but actually aided in determining the physical shape and characteristics of towns.\textsuperscript{75} For instance, Rykwert believes that, when selecting a site, and possibly the location of a major city center or building,\textsuperscript{76} the ancient Romans would enlist the divine talents of an ‘augur’, who analyzed birds and the meaning behind their flight patterns or droppings.\textsuperscript{77} What is more, he describes the process of ‘haruspication’, or liver divination, in a manner similar to Vitruvius. Through extended research and interpretation, however, he is able to add additional detail concerning the analysis of a sacrificial animal’s liver which he determines was based on sixteen compartments related to the Roman belief that the sky was divided into sixteen segments.\textsuperscript{78} This reliance on ritual and divination continues throughout the diagramming and planning of the city, performing surveys to apportion property, as well as plowing a furrow to designate the location of fortification walls.\textsuperscript{79} In studying such rituals we become better informed not only about the layout of the city but also about the culture that created it. Furthermore, when these ideas are taken into consideration, along with Vitruvius’ fixation on

\textsuperscript{74} Barton, \textit{Roman Domestic Buildings}, 14 & 20.
\textsuperscript{75} Rykwert, \textit{The Idea of a Town: the Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World}, 30.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 57, discusses the possibility of certain rituals determining the layout and features of a site
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 44-45.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 29.
natural occurrences, the planning practices of ancient Roman cities begins to become evident. Unfortunately, while there is literary evidence that practices such as these were utilized, it is unsure how or to what extent they were employed at Pompeii. To understand the foundation of Pompeii as a city, the best analysis emerges from examining its position in the landscape, the layout and directionality of the streets and the shapes of buildings within the *insulae*, or city block.

First and foremost, Pompeii’s orientation within the landscape reveals a site selection process which was clearly concerned with natural surroundings. For instance, the prominent and looming peak of Mt. Vesuvius sits directly to the North of the city, whereas the vast and equally significant ocean appears to the West. [Fig. 2.3] What is more, the directionality of the streets reveals a distinct connection with these major natural features and also mimics celestial occurrences like the rising and setting of the sun. Those who planned the streets of Pompeii noticeably understood the orientation of these roads as their titles, ‘Via del Vesuvio’ and ‘Via del Marina’, indicate a connection to the volcano and the ocean. Gridded Roman towns are usually based around two main streets which run perpendicular to one another and intersect at right angles near the center of the town. In Pompeii, the street that runs North and South is referred to as the ‘*cardo*’, whereas the street that runs from East and West is known as the ‘*decumanus*’.80

In addition, similar to the description given by Vitruvius, the streets were arranged according to a meticulous process involving the *groma*, which was set at the center of the town and, at certain

---

Figure 2.3
Orientation of Pompeii within the landscape
[Source: created by author with reference to Mazzoleni, Domus: Wall Painting in the Roman House, 17]
periods of the day, analyzed for the shadows it created. The recording of these shadows then indicated the proper placement and direction of each street.\textsuperscript{81}

Though less of Herculaneum has been excavated than Pompeii, the plan that it exhibits indicates the inclusion of similar planning concepts and techniques. Most of all, it is situated within the landscape in a very similar manner. The ocean is located to the West, but rather than Vesuvius being to its North, the volcano is located to the East. This variation in placement, however, further indicates the concepts and rituals on which the streets and \textit{insulae} were planned. For instance, the directionality of the \textit{cardo} corresponds to the location of Vesuvius, just as it does in Pompeii, but it also oriented toward the ocean. The \textit{decumanus}, on the other hand, does not have a specific or prominent landmark to designate its direction but, like Pompeii, it still intersects the \textit{cardo} perpendicularly at a right angle.

Amongst the many \textit{insulae} in Pompeii it is apparent that the main entertainment and political centers received prominent positions near the city’s fortification wall and along, or near, the wide \textit{cardo} and \textit{decumanus} streets. In the more densely populated \textit{insulae}, beyond the large and open public spaces, it becomes difficult to distinguish between what might be considered public realms as opposed to private domains. For example, one block may exhibit a row of shops along the street, each of which may be situated in front of a \textit{domus}, which is adjacent to a brothel or a workshop. As E.J. Owens states, “…..the layout and organization of the residential districts and the integration of the buildings of different types reveals a complexity of

\textsuperscript{81} More detailed and precise information concerning this process can be found in Rykwert, \textit{The Idea of a Town: the Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World}, 60-65 and Vitruvius, \textit{Ten Books on Architecture}, Book 1/Chapter VI
relationships, which reflects the complexity of urban life."\textsuperscript{82} There existed an extreme blending of functions which seems very foreign to modern city planning and zoning codes. The notion of integration and lack of distinction between uses becomes ever more apparent when examining the individual houses and buildings within the \textit{insulae} of Pompeii. For example, when analyzing the \textit{insulae} within which the House of the Ceii is located, the building sizes, layouts and functions are neither uniform nor standardized. [Fig. 2.4] While the clustering of uses alludes to a facet of Roman culture that is very different from our own, Andrew Wallace-Hadrill recommends:

\begin{quote}
We must start by thinking away the assumptions of the industrial city of the modern Western world, with its patterns of social contact and interaction. We must reconstruct a world in which the rich frequently lived in close contiguity with their dependents, slaves and freedmen, clients and tenants, the sources of their economic and social power.\textsuperscript{83}
\end{quote}

Though the various types and uses of buildings that may occur within an \textit{insulae} is fascinating, the primary type with which this thesis is concerned is the \textit{domus}. Even amongst domestic buildings there is a lack of segregation by class. Hence, a single Roman city block may accommodate both the poorest shop owner as well as the wealthiest homeowner of the city. It might seem logical to assume the smaller houses belonged to less wealthy citizens and the larger to someone of greater wealth; however, Andrew Wallace-Hadrill warns against conjectures such as this. According to his study, which systematically explores most, if not all, the houses in Pompeii based on the criteria of size, function, architecture and decoration,\textsuperscript{84} to determine if these factors do, in fact, relate to the social standing of the inhabitants:

\textsuperscript{82} Barton, \textit{Roman Domestic Buildings}, 20.
\textsuperscript{83} Wallace-Hadrill, \textit{Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum}, 141.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 71-72.
Figure 2.4
Plan of the insulae containing the House of the Cei
[Source: created by author with reference to Pompeii Geo-Ref model]
…not every large house necessarily contained, or even belonged to, wealthy people, and that not every small shop belonged to, or was inhabited by poor people…..Nor is it likely that the poorest lived exclusively in the smaller houses, they may equally have lived in the large houses, as slaves, dependents, tenants, and lodgers of the rich….The usage of space has an obvious bearing on the analysis of luxury in housing….  

With this understanding, it is now possible to turn to the *domus* to explore not only the ways in which the space within was ideally conceptualized but also how it was translated into actual houses.

**the IDEALIZED domus**

Vitruvius does not indicate the process by which houses were formed within an *insulae*. Instead, it appears to me as if he wrote under the assumption or perception that houses should be built anew or that those reading his book would have the financial means and power to buy or sell portions of their existing property as necessary to achieve an ideal layout. Because of his target market, this section will also incorporate modern scholarship to determine an ideal construct most readily accepted by all levels of ancient Roman society. Mixing primary and secondary resources is valid for this thesis because scholars have used the ideas of Vitruvius as well as information from specific case studies to determine an ideal house plan. Through these resources it appears as if the layout and sequential progression of an ideal *domus* is based on a desire for geometry, symmetry and an axial arrangement of space. [Fig. 2.5] As such, I find it possible to infer that the *domus* was an extension of the planning techniques of the city, as the axis and cross-axis of the *domus* resembles the *cardo* and *decumanus*.

---

The axis of such a plan began with the ‘fauces’, or vestibule, continued through the ‘atrium’ and terminated with either the ‘tablinum’ or the ‘peristyle’. Radiating off this axis were secondary and ancillary rooms of diverse functions. The secondary spaces included ‘cubiculae’, which were used for conducting meetings with clients or friends as well as sleeping, and the ‘alae’, for which the function is unknown. One of the most important of these secondary spaces was the ‘triclinium’. In this space the Romans typically entertained friends and important clients. It is referred to as the triclinium because of the three ‘klinae’, or couches on which people reclined, arranged in these rooms. [Fig. 2.6] This space is also fairly identifiable due to its unique shape, required for the klinae and their precise arrangement, as well as the remnants of particular types of furniture, hardware or decoration. Some domus also included ancillary rooms, like a kitchen, storeroom or a ‘latrine’ (bathroom). It is thought that spaces such as these should be located away from rooms meant for entertaining to ensure noises or smells emanating from them would not disturb or infiltrate a gathering.

To return to the primary axis, the fauces served as its point of inception as well as the main entrance into the domus. It could either remain open to the street and passersby or be closed off by the use of doors. Next in succession, the atrium was one of the main spaces within the domus. While it did not have one specific function it was the hub of much activity throughout different times of the day for the various inhabitants. 86 Within the atrium also existed two very important features, the first of which was the ‘compluvium’, or an expansive opening in the center of an inward sloping roof. The other was the ‘impluvium’, a shallow basin in the floor located directly below that collected rain water and mimicked the shape of the compluvium. Continuing along the axis the next space of importance was the tablinum, typically used by the

86 Mau, Pompeii, Its Life and Art, 253.
Figure 2.5
‘Ideal’ domus plan
[Source: created by author with reference to Mau, *Pompeii, Its Life and Art*, 241]

Figure 2.6
Typical klinae arrangement
[Source: created by author]
male, the ‘paterfamilias’, or owner of the house while conducting business. He would occupy this space especially during the morning hours when he would perform a ‘salutatio’. This event consisted of greeting and conferring with his ‘cruent’, or clients, as well as his ‘amici’, or friends. Prior to the 3rd or 2nd century B.C., this space was either located at the rear of the domus or situated in front of a ‘hortus’ (garden). Around the 3rd and 2nd century B.C., however, when the ancient Romans became influenced by Hellenistic traditions and styles, another terminal space was introduced, the peristyle. The importance placed on the atrium and the tablinum decreased in favor of the peristyle and these two spaces came to serve more for circulation and as ante-rooms rather than integral spaces along the axis. The shape and layout of the peristyle, however, was similar to the atrium in that it was rectilinear, spacious and topped by an open roof structure. In addition, the function mimicked that of the atrium in that secondary and ancillary spaces often radiated from it. In another alteration, an opposite axis to that of the symmetrical axial arrangement of the atrium style home was also introduced which created secondary and tertiary views.

In addition to the proper axial sequence and arrangement of space, Vitruvius ventures to describe the ideal qualities of a domus by identifying proper room proportions and the correct exposure to natural elements. Thus, in keeping with recommendations regarding the sequence of the spaces in the ideal domus, Vitruvius begins by explaining the exact proportions for five types of atria: ‘Tuscan’, ‘Corinthian’, ‘tetrastyle’, ‘displuviate’, and ‘testudinate’ and the features, like columns, each should contain. He then proceeds to delineate the appropriate proportions for

---

87 Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and society in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, 12; also discussed in “Doomsday Pompeii”.
88 Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250: ritual, space, and decoration*, 12.
the alae, tablinum, peristyle, and triclinium in terms of precise mathematical ratios which correspond to length, width and height of the space. Tricliniae, for instance:

…ought to be twice as long as they are wide. The height of all oblong rooms should be calculated by adding together their measured length and width, taking one half of this total, and using the result for the height.\(^{90}\)

With proper dimensions determined, Chapter IV of Book VI then discusses the ways in which these spaces should be situated to make use of, or disallow, natural light and heat during various seasons. Furthermore, Vitruvius concludes that these orientations should act in concordance with the function of the space, such as: Bedrooms and libraries ought to have an eastern exposure, because their purposes require the morning light, and also because books in such libraries will not decay.\(^{91}\) Throughout his prescriptions, Vitruvius is adamant that the style of spaces should not only coincide with one another, but should also express the owner’s status and occupation. Finally, while the layout of spaces, room proportions and proper exposure pertain to the idealized domus, Vitruvius now alludes to the fact that it is only ideal for a select group of ancient Roman citizens:

Hence, men of everyday fortune do not need entrance courts, tablina, or atriums built in grand style, because such men are more apt to discharge their social obligations by going round to others than to have others come to them…for men of rank who, from holding offices and magistracies, have social obligations to their fellow-citizens, lofty entrance courts in regal style, and most spacious atriums and peristyles…appropriate to their dignity.\(^{92}\)

This quote reiterates the audience for whom Vitruvius was writing in that the ideal domus he describes was only intended for a select group of citizens. This realization leads one to question

---

\(^{91}\) Ibid., 181.
\(^{92}\) Ibid., 182.
how these ideal layouts and proportions were actually translated to real conditions for the various citizens of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

the REALIZED domus

What exactly is a domus? To begin, it is important to answer this question based on understanding gleaned from modern research as well as information provided by city plans, like that of Pompeii. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill defines the domus as, “...a unit of habitation (which may also be used for nonresidential purposes) that is inaccessible from any other unit; one may only gain access via the public street.”93 When translated, domus literally means ‘house’; however, as deciphered by the discussion concerning the layout of buildings within an insulae, this concept is not always so discernable. As such, Amos Rapoport’s definition of ‘house’ may add some illumination:

A house is a ‘human’ fact, and even with the most severe physical constraints and limited technology man has built in ways so diverse that they can be attributed only to ‘choice’, which involves cultural values.94

Shelley Hales then expounds upon this notion as it pertains to the ancient Romans: “The house, then, served a double role as a medium through which the family constructed it place in Rome and the Roman populace experienced the family within.”95 In summation, this thesis will understand a domus as an enclosed space constructed and expressive of cultural ideals through which its inhabitants are able to convey their identity.

93 Wallace-Hadrill, Houses and society in Pompeii and Herculaneum, 72.
94 Rapoport, House Form and Culture, 48.
95 Hales, The Roman House and Social Identity, 44.
While a multitude of possible case studies exist through which comparisons to the ideal domus could be made, the House of the Ceii in Pompeii [Fig. 2.7] and the House of the Wooden Partition (ins. III) will be utilized throughout this section. [Fig. 2.8] These domus were chosen first and foremost because they appear to have belonged to citizens commensurate with those addressed by Vitruvius’ prescriptions, making them a good basis for comparison. In addition, these houses not only exemplify some of Vitruvius’ ideals but also represent the antithesis, which reveals important and telling details about ancient Roman society and culture. Hence, they can serve as representations of the ways in which real houses of Pompeii came to exist within an insulae under actual conditions.

Before examining the sequences of their spaces it is important to first identify the locations and layouts of these houses within their respective insulae. At first glance, they seem to consist of an amalgam of units. Ironically, however, it is thought that following the planning of city streets, surveyors measured property lots, distributed them and recorded ownership on a map. As E.J. Owens confirms: “When the Romans began the process of colonization in Italy, equality of ownership was central to land distribution within the settlements.” So, if the properties were originally of equal proportion how did house plans like those under consideration come to exhibit this current fragmentary form? A.J. Brothers is able to provide some insight concerning the varying layouts:

The sprawling ‘atrium’/peristyle house was extremely wasteful of space, and, as land values rose, the population increased and a merchant class arose to challenge
Figure 2.7
House of the Cells plan
[Source: created by author with reference to Guzzo, Pompeii: Guide to the Site, 130]
Figure 2.8
House of the Wooden Partition plan
[Source: created by author with reference to http://academic.reed.edu/humanities/110tech/romanafrica2/map2.jpg]
the dominance of the local aristocracy more and more, the old style of house could not remain unaltered.99

E.J. Owens adds further clarification:

Subsequent levels within the housing blocks reveal that houses changed, increasing or diminishing in size at the expense of neighboring plots. These changes undoubtedly reflect the changing fortunes of the owners.100

One distinct and definite example of this phenomenon can be found in the conversions of domestic spaces facing streets into mercantile shops. Where once they were part of the domus, it is apparent that, in various locations throughout the city, shops were opened to the street and closed off from the domus. A similar transformation in the Casa del Bicentenario of Herculaneum illuminates this circumstance:

Built by a rich and noble family in the early Julio-Claudian period, with its magnificent atrium and richly decorated tablinum, it suffered toward the late fifties A.D. from the major social changes of the rise of commercial fortunes and the collapse of the old landowning aristocracy. The rooms fronting the forum were opened up as shops under freedmen or tenants. Ownership passed from the hands of a patrician to a rich freedman, and the house was split up into shabby flats.101

It is then plausible to imagine that similar instances may have transpired in Pompeii as well as other cities within the Roman Empire. Vitruvius even mentions the destruction of party walls in saying

…when arbitrators are chosen to set a valuation on party walls, they do not value them at what they cost to build, but look up the written contract in each case and

99 Barton, Roman Domestic Buildings, 48.
100 Ibid., 13.
101 Wallace-Hadrill, Houses and society in Pompeii and Herculaneum, 126.
then, after deducting from the cost one eightieth for each year that the wall has been standing, decide that the remainder is the sum to be paid.\textsuperscript{102}

What is more, my field research indicates that domestic construction techniques can also augment understanding to this phenomenon. Most, if not all, houses within Pompeii and Herculaneum were constructed around or within party walls, or walls shared by neighboring properties, and merely looking at these walls reveals change. The primary indication of this that I found is the mixture of construction techniques and materials that comprise a single wall. [Fig. 2.9] These variances might indicate the filling in of a door or the destruction of another followed by the subsequent patching of corners. Furthermore, the fact that instances such as this occur throughout property walls, not just property walls, hints at the fact that houses may have changed in layout and size multiple times between the founding of the city and the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius.

Through the research mentioned above, as well as surviving physical evidence, the reasons for the irregular shapes of many houses in Pompeii, including the House of the Cei and the House of the Wooden Partition, become clearer. One must ask, however, whether the sale of property was the best option for someone in financial trouble and similarly, why someone of financial means would be interested in the purchase of neighboring spaces. In an attempt to clarify questions such as this Hadrill looks to the documentation of legal disputes and discovers that, “legal disputes centered on property and wealth, and the productive capacity of a house was of crucial importance in disputes over ownership, inheritance, and liability.”\textsuperscript{103} It becomes evident that property constituted a valuable as well as measurable form of wealth and, as a result,

\textsuperscript{102} Vitruvius, \textit{The Ten Books on Architecture}, 53.

\textsuperscript{103} Wallace-Hadrill, \textit{Houses and society in Pompeii and Herculaneum}, 132.
Figure 2.9

Ancient Roman construction materials and techniques
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
of social status. With this, the notion that the *domus* was an expression of social standing appears to be emerging as a theme.

Prior to discussing the rooms comprising a Roman *domus*, a basic understanding of terminology and how it will be utilized throughout this section is necessary. Because the names of rooms and/or spaces carry certain connotations it is difficult to translate or label the rooms of a *domus* according to those which are familiar to contemporary society. For instance, if ‘dining room’ were used as the label for a particular space, one might begin to imbue it with certain characteristics or functions such as: a formal table and chairs, nice dishes and flatware, family gatherings combined with the eating of a meal, etc. As study of the Roman *domus* has progressed labels such as this have been applied to particular spaces but I believe restraint and caution must be applied. This is a concern because the actual functions bear little resemblance to the implied modern constructs, and the labels become misleading because the characteristics and functions of spaces within the *domus* may not have been fixed or static. As David L. Balch believes, it is difficult to identify the specific function of spaces within a *domus* due to the fact that furniture was moveable and could also vary depending on the changing needs of the inhabitants or even the season. In addition, it is thought that much of the furniture utilized in houses within Pompeii was either moved from the original location by inhabitants as they fled the eruption, destroyed by the volcanic eruption, was or was looted. According to Alison E. Cooley there is even evidence of such looting:

> It is far from uncommon for modern excavators to come across tunnels leading from house to house and large holes cut into the walls of houses. These holes have sometimes been interpreted as evidence for the return of survivors soon after

---

the eruption, who dug down beneath the volcanic material in order to salvage what they could of their own property, and that of others.\textsuperscript{105}

In addition to refraining from placing modern labels and constructs on spaces of the ancient world, Stanley Abercrombie offers advice against viewing an ‘unpeopled’ room as we tend to project ourselves into the space.\textsuperscript{106} This is also a major concern for the Pompeian \textit{domus} because in projecting ourselves one also tends to project one’s culture and concepts. That being the case, labels given throughout this thesis will attempt to avoid classifying the spaces of a \textit{domus} according to modern terminology but rather will describe them via their perceived functions. Correct Latin vocabulary will be utilized unless translation enhances comprehension or is pertinent to the discussion.

If these \textit{domus} were to follow Vitruvius’ prescriptions the primary rooms, consisting of the \textit{fauces}, \textit{atrium}, \textit{tablinum} and \textit{peristyle}, would align axially and sequentially. In conducting field research, I discovered that this fact remains primarily consistent in the House of the Ceii, in that the \textit{fauces} aligns with the \textit{impluvium} in the atrium. Because this house does not include a \textit{peristyle} it would more than likely be considered an atrium style house. Interestingly, however, the \textit{impluvium} is not centered in the atrium but rather tends toward the west, leaving a larger space to the east of the \textit{impluvium}. Similarly, the \textit{tablinum} is not central but situated on the western-most wall of the \textit{domus} which allows the corridor to the rear \textit{hortus} to align with the \textit{fauces} and the \textit{impluvium}. I then question, could this be an indication of the owner’s personal preference and, if so, what is this layout attempting to express? Just as Vitruvius recommends, though, the ancillary space of the kitchen is located in the front western corner of the property.

\textsuperscript{105} Cooley, \textit{Pompeii}, 53.
\textsuperscript{106} Abercrombie, \textit{A Philosophy of Interior Design}, 164.
away from the *tricliniae* and *cubiculae*, which are situated near the back of the *domus*. As a practiced interior designer, however, I recognize that though the plan of the House of the Cei appears to be asymmetrical, this does not necessarily mean that it would experienced in this manner. Is it possible then that the architecture and layout of the *domus* might compensate for the real ways in which buildings formed within an *insulae*?

In moving from the two-dimensional qualities of the *domus* plan to the three dimensional proportions of spaces, a discontinuity with Vitruvius’ prescriptions continues to appear. According to August Mau, who studied various houses of Pompeii in the late 1890’s, most room proportions do not coincide with those given by Vitruvius. By comparing the dimensions of spaces within real houses to Vitruvius’ ideal proportions, Mau observes: “The Pompeian houses present many variations from the plan described by the Roman architect; yet in essential particulars there is no disagreement…”\(^{107}\) Though Mau’s study encompasses most rooms of a typical *domus*, I will focus primarily on those along the axis as they will give a good indication of the findings and may be considered as consistent with the entirety of the *domus*. First, in regard to the *fauces*, he states: “According to Vitruvius the width of it in the case of large atriums should be half, in smaller atriums two thirds, that of the *tablinum*; at Pompeii the width is generally less than half.”\(^{108}\) As for the *atrium*, he mentions that of the five styles mentioned by Vitruvius, only three exist in Pompeii: the ‘Tuscan’, ‘tetrastyle’ and ‘Corinthian’.\(^{109}\)

In regard to length and breadth the proportions harmonize fairly well with those recommended by Virtuvius; but the height, in the cases in which it can be ascertained, is often greater than that contemplated by the rules of the architect.\(^{110}\)

---

\(^{107}\) Mau, *Pompeii, Its Life and Art*, 245.
\(^{108}\) Ibid., 248.
\(^{109}\) Ibid., 250.
\(^{110}\) Ibid., 252.
In regard to the incongruity between prescribed and actual atrium proportions he offers a practical reason which corresponds to limitations of materials used to construct the compluvium style roof structure.\textsuperscript{111} [Fig. 2.10] In his estimation, the cross-beams which serve to support the structure may have only been available in certain lengths and/or may have had limited structural capabilities. The incongruities between Vitruvius’ ideal prescriptions and real spaces continue, however, with both the tablinum and the alae, which in the actual examples tend to be narrower and higher.\textsuperscript{112} In reference to the triclinium, Mau discovers that:

> For convenience in serving, the length of a dining room, according to Vitruvius, should be twice the width. At Pompeii, however, the dimensions are less generous; with an average width of 12 or 13 feet the length rarely exceeds 20 feet.\textsuperscript{113}

Stanley Abercrombie offers a modern perspective on such a notion as he believes that the first thing perceived instinctively by a person when entering a room is its volume, as they have a perfect frame of reference in themselves. That being said, it is possible that the ancient Romans had similar intuitions and, rather than following Vitruvius’ recommendations based on mathematical ratios, they chose to use their bodily perceptions as a guide.

While the House of the Ceii and the House of the Wooden Partition contradict many of the instruction given by Vitruvius, they also simultaneously exemplify some. One consistency between the two is the location of specific rooms in relation to the amount of sun or heat received. This is apparent due to the fact that rooms which might require sun and heat during the winter are located accordingly as are those which might repel heat during the summer. For

\textsuperscript{111} Mau, \textit{Pompeii, Its Life and Art}, 251.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., refer to page 256 for information regarding the measurements of a tablinum and page 258 for alae.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 263.
Figure 2.10
Compluvial roof construction
[Source: Mau, *Pompeii, Its Life and Art*, 251]
instance, I interpret the spaces on the western or northern side of the house as used primarily during winter months to take advantage of light and capture heat from the lower path of the sun through the *compluvium*. It appears that this delineation of space also takes into account the function of the room and the time of day it might be utilized. For example, the *atrium* is centrally located within the *domus*, which indicates that it would receive natural light throughout the morning and afternoon; the hours during which the *salutatio* and other important events occurred within this space. With an understanding of the broader context within which ancient Roman domestic decoration was situated it is now advantageous to address it relative to the typical sequential and axial layout discussed above along with the experience one might have as they progressed through the *domus*. 
Quality in decoration and ornament is often (though not always) similar to good manners; at its best we hardly need to notice either because they are wholly absorbed into the total environment they help to create.

- David Brett
In “Rethinking Decoration: Pleasure & Ideology in the Visual Arts”

CHAPTER 3:

IDEALIZED concepts REALIZED through decoration

Just as the construction or layout may have enhanced the practical and functional needs of the domus, so too did decoration. In an attempt to add a new perspective to the understanding and study of ancient Roman domestic space and its decoration, this chapter will incorporate my background as a practiced and educated interior designer to elucidate the experience of a domus and its holistic interior environment. As a continuation of the previous chapter, the House of the Ceii and the House of the Wooden Partition will remain the case studies through which the interpretations I gained during first hand field research will be exemplified.
To ask or answer questions concerning domestic decoration it is important to first recall clarification of the term ‘decoration’ given in the introduction. In regard to this thesis, as discussed in the introduction, ‘decoration’ is considered an application of design to interiors which express one’s personality via various implementations chosen by that person. Unfortunately, what is known about the ancient Romans’ perceptions of decoration stems from very few resources. As Paul Zanker discovers: “Even in the days of the Empire, when one might expect otherwise, detailed discussion of the appearance and decoration of rooms in fine houses is rare.”\(^{114}\) As before, then the most prominent source is Vitruvius’ *Ten Books on Architecture*. Most of the information supplied by Vitruvius, however, is given in the form of instructions on proper ways to implement decoration, but within these it is apparent that Vitruvius writes with a bias. This is further clarified in his statement: “We now have fresco paintings of monstrosities, rather than truthful representations of definite things.”\(^{115}\) As such, this section will sparingly utilize the information provided by Vitruvius while referencing the research and perceptions provided by more recent scholars to present a general understanding of domestic decoration.

In terms of modern scholarship reflecting on the decoration of the ancient Romans, most studies categorize the types of decoration into four styles. These are chronologically organized and distinguished based on composition, representation and technique.\(^{116}\) Because the type (i.e. floor mosaic, wall painting or furniture) and placement of decoration is more pertinent to this thesis than style, I will not attempt to reiterate or synthesize such comprehensive research. Rather, through examining and interpreting the case studies through the lens of an interior

\(^{115}\) Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, 211.
\(^{116}\) Mau, 456-471; Clarke, 39-65; Wallace-Hadrill, 23-36; Balch, 12 but divides the decoration into 3 forms based on types of depiction; Boethius, 74,189;
designer, along with the background knowledge granted by previous scholarship this section attempts to offer a new way of seeing and experiencing the decoration of a Roman domus. The domus is viewed as a holistic environment and all of its decoration in context. In so doing, it becomes apparent that the decoration of ancient Roman domestic space mediates between the dichotomies of idealistic concepts apparent in city planning as well as house layouts and realistic manifestations. It cannot be as succinctly delineated into such categories because the ancient Romans employed real decoration as a manifestation of their ideal concepts. This notion, however, is not too far removed from theories of modern society. As Claire Cooper Marcus believes:

…most of us do create some space in the world that is ours and, whether consciously or unconsciously, we shape and decorate it to express our values. The colors we choose, the objects we select, the pictures and posters we put on the walls – all of these have aesthetic or functional meanings of which we are aware…the messages implicit in the dwelling – its form, location, decoration, state of order – and our feelings about those messages can be rich sources of insight.117

In line with this understanding, one concept that continues to present itself, in regard to the decoration of the Roman domus is the creation of identity. As such, decoration was utilized as a medium through which the owner of a domus could invent an idealistic existence in order to supplement or surpass reality.118 Again, this continues to resonate with contemporary theories of interior design as is exemplified by Stanley Abercrombie’s statement:

These intimate spaces are the screens on which we project our inner visions; they are the shells from within which we view the world beyond, their windows our eyes, their walls and ceilings our security, their furniture and décor our convictions and our fancies.119

---

118 Studied in depth and discussed in detail in Hales, The Roman House and Social Identity
119 Abercrombie, A Philosophy of Interior Design, 166.
Upon approaching the House of the Ceii its mass and importance is apparent and enhanced as the afternoon sun throws shadows across the façade. [Fig. 3.1] Seen from a distance or in a photograph, the impact cannot fully be realized because the decoration, the benches and the openings serve to visually reduce its scale and impact.\textsuperscript{120} Hence, the House of the Ceii appears unassuming until one is standing at the doorway waiting to enter and a sense of intimidating scale coupled with insignificance is evoked. The façade initially appears to be constructed of large masonry blocks, but closer inspection reveals an ancient building technique known as ‘\textit{opus incertum}’\textsuperscript{121} hidden under layers of plaster and paint. Though the decorative paint appears to be in decay one can imagine the brilliance it must once have had. Through a combination of stuccowork and fresco paint it evokes expensive and white colored masonry units. In the center of this striking façade appears a large and somewhat pretentious door, the sole opening through which the house may be entered. This entrance is encased by monumental, column-like elements and topped with a grandiose, three-dimensional cornice which serves to indicate the importance of this passage but is created of stucco. Via these elements; the stucco architectural elements and painted stone masonry that the importance and purpose of ancient Roman decoration begins to express itself. As Stanley Abercrombie states: “The design of an entrance also serves in providing specific identification...its role as introduction to the spaces beyond. It is the entrant’s first impression of those spaces.”\textsuperscript{122} Decoration on the interior of the \textit{domus}, however, was perceived and treated much differently than that on the exterior though its

\textsuperscript{120} To attain a better understanding of the scale of this domestic façade notice the bottle of water sitting on the bench directly to the right of the entrance.
\textsuperscript{121} Mau, \textit{Pompeii, Its Life and Art}, 36-38; for more information regarding ‘opus incertum’ and other forms of building and masonry
\textsuperscript{122} Abercrombie, \textit{A Philosophy of Interior Design}, 10.
Figure 3.1

House of the Cæli façade
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
detail, quality and quantity. According to Shelly Hales: “The opulence of the house is ultimately the preserve of the inside.”

Prior to entering the *domus*, however, one first visually glimpses the space along the main axis. Possibly more important than the experience of the *domus*, was the view through the *domus*. Because the doors to a Roman *domus* typically remained open, this view was not only visible to those invited into the space but also those merely walking by. Carefully framed by the entrance and the *fauces*, this view then became a medium though which the owner could create a view of decoration within the *domus* which expressed his desired status and perceived identity. As Shelly Hales believes, the central view gives an outsider the impression that the *domus* and the view were designed for them; however, the “view does not reflect the reality of the space beyond the door.” From the street, the view into the House of the Cei allows one to see the major spaces along the axis, including the *fauces*, *atrium*, *tablinum* and rear *hortus*, all of which are illuminated by the glow of light permeating through the *compluvium*. So, from an exterior position one has the ability to view the most important rooms of the house but does not necessarily have the physical access to them. Here, the notion of power expressed by the owner through the *domus* begins to surface. Not only does the owner control one’s view into the space, but also their ability to experience it. With this discovery another function of domestic decoration is revealed. For those passing by the *domus*, decoration was meant to attract attention and initiate a desire to enter, though uninvited. For those special enough to be invited in, however, it served a much larger purpose.

---
124 Ibid., 107.
When entering the fauces, one crosses an actual and somewhat imperceptible threshold. This again evokes a comparison with contemporary interior design because Stanley Abercrombie believes: “When we enter a building, we cease being merely its observer; we become its content.” At the peak of this house’s existence the wall paintings would have been vibrant in color and probably would have been highly polished which would have made it appear glossy, with a slight sheen. Similarly, the floors would have expressed a heightened sense of contrast between the black cement and the white tesserae. These floors would have also served as the perfect backdrop against which special areas of patterned or colored floor mosaics could exist. Sounds of water in the impluvium and people moving about would have echoed throughout and all senses would be heightened by the natural breezes and light that seeped in through the strategically placed compluvium. The house remains an echo of its former self, but still has a story to tell.

The gradual incline of the floor within the fauces serves to progressively introduce a visitor to the impressive decoration of the domus. [Fig. 3.2] Comprising the floor surface, a discrete inclusion of the white ‘tesserae’, or small chips, in the black cement offers a sense substance and stability, yet fades in visual importance. The ceiling decoration also encourages movement from the fauces to the atrium via its directional composition and motifs as well as the way in which it is placed between the longitudinal beams. As this upward progression occurs, all decorated surfaces of the floor, walls and ceiling work in concert to enhance the experience. The wall painting, rather than giving emphasis to the ‘median zone’, or central portion, is painted solid red and reserves the more intricate and detailed elements for the ‘upper zone’, or the top

---

Figure 3.2

**House of the Cell fauces**
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
portion. Atop each side panel is an indication of nature in the form of a small bird. This not only serves to elevate one’s attention and physical posture but also corresponds to the ceiling in color and allows the ‘socle’, or bottom portion of the wall, to fade into the floor surface. In addition, it is not uniform in height but rather decreases in size as the floor rises so the base of the median zone remains level. While this aids in visually ushering a visitor into the atrium, the steady level of the band separating the median zone and the socle coincides in height and color to the décor in the atrium.

Upon entering the atrium, one of the numerous functions expected of ancient Roman domestic decoration; to reflect the social status of the paterfamilias is obvious. As Lauren Peterson speculates: “We might even say that Romans were obsessed with conveying their social status to their peers and dependents given that they created visual codes and indices for reading social and legal identities.” Decoration then coincides with Vitruvius’ prescriptions concerning spaces that should express and enhance the occupation and status of the owner as well as related activities. For example, if the paterfamilias was a magistrate who saw many clients during a salutatio he was expected to have spaces and decoration which were suitable and would aid in the receiving of clients. In this regard, because the fauces, atrium and tablinum were the main spaces in which his business would be transacted, Vitruvius recommends these rooms be tall, like a public space, decorated fashionably and of the highest quality. On the other hand, if the homeowner was a merchant, his house did not require spaces or decoration suitable for meeting clients. As one might assume, this constant regard and desire for social position, as expressed by the domus and its decoration, may have also been the catalyst for competition

128 For more information regarding the terms used in wall painting refer to John R. Clarke, The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250: Ritual, Space, and Decoration, 39-41.  
129 Petersen, The Freedman in Roman Art and Art History, 124.
between neighbors and friends. It is via this competition that the parade of trends and transitioning of styles emerges. This, however, should receive particular consideration as Claire Cooper-Marcus discovers: “While the house as symbol of our place in society has been discussed and researched by social scientists, the house interior and its contents as a mirror of our inner psychological self have received much less attention.” Though the occupation of the owner of the House of the Cei is unknown, one thing can be deciphered from the atrium: either he was a powerful man who expressed it readily or he was not a powerful man but aspired to be. This, combined with the idea that decoration could create identity, is interesting, in that a homeowner was not necessarily expressing his realistic position in society but rather a position to which he might have aspired.

Just as the socle height of the wall painting remains consistent moving from the fauces into the atrium, so too does the color scheme and the motif. The median zone of the four atrium walls is painted mostly with bright red panels which are then subdivided by thinner yellow panels, both colors which are thought to have been reserved for exceptional spaces. Furthermore, when considering color choice within an ancient Roman domus, Andrew Wallace-Hadrill recommends, “…one needs to take into account the richness of the palette applied in the walls as a whole; rich polychromies lend distinctive prestige.” At the center of the east and west walls, which are also the walls that do not articulate openings to secondary spaces, the red paint is replaced with black, considered to be a more rare color which was applied to spaces of

---

Figure 3.3
House of the Cell atrium
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Interestingly, these black panels also correspond to the location at which a cross axis would have intersected the atrium with the introduction of the peristyle plan. Hence, the wall decoration might indicate a desired floor plan though architectural limitations made it impossible to achieve. Similar to the socle, the upper zone of the atrium coincides with that of the fauces in that architectural elements are depicted on a white ground but they gain more mass and detail as well as the illusion of perspective depth. This type of depiction may convey some information about the owner because, according to Bettina Bergmann, decoration may have mimicked theatre stage decoration in that it became the backdrop against which certain activities were enacted. Interestingly, this concept also corresponds to contemporary society as Claire Cooper-Marcus uses a theatrical analogy when stating:

In our own lives, we select the sets and props of different ‘acts’ (or periods of life) in order- often unconsciously – to display images of ourselves and to learn by reflection of the environment around us.

Additionally, it is often thought that the inclusion of certain elements like columns might be an emulation of public space, hence further signifying the public quality of a space within a home. In conjunction with the columns depicted in the wall paintings physical columns are located at the four corners of the impluvium which support the compluvium. If the atrium in the House of the Cei resembles an open public space or forum, where a central open area is surrounded by architectural edifices, then we might infer that this atrium was in fact used for similar purposes.

---

134 Not only do these black portions coincide with the cross axis of the axial arrangement of spaces with the compluvium and impluvium as the intersection, but I question whether they indicate the location in which an entrance into an adjoining space would be, if the size and layout of the house would have allowed. Was decoration used as a method to compensate for the unusual and imperfect plans of reality?


Being that the atrium was a hub of various activities performed by the multiple inhabitants throughout all hours of the day, I would say the decoration is fitting.

This gives rise to yet another feature and responsibility of decoration which involved guiding visitors through the *domus*. Because the *domus* was essentially open to many visitors, the delineation between public and private space was a major consideration. Though some scholars may determine that the terms ‘public’ and ‘private’ are not sufficient\(^{137}\) or alter their description to ‘open’ versus ‘closed’\(^{138}\). Shelley Hales succinctly clarifies that the distinction lay between those invited into the house and those excluded. As such, decoration was employed to visually distinguish spaces that were open to clients from those spaces that were only to be entered by invited guests and family. A similar system, often referred to as ‘way-finding’, is still utilized in modern design practice. For the ancient Romans, however, this constituted using simple decoration in public areas while displaying more intricately detailed and expensive decoration in the private\(^{139}\). By utilizing simple decoration in the public areas guests would not be encouraged to linger, yet important guests within the private spaces would be engaged by the dynamic decoration and, hence, more likely to extend their stay. In contemporary interior design practice tactics such as this are referred to as ‘environmental psychology’ which utilize various amounts of visual stimuli to achieve simple or complex scenarios within a space\(^{140}\). In the same regard, decoration was meant to overtly warn a client if they were entering a space within the *domus* which was prohibited. It is believed that a similar method was employed to caution important guests against entering the service quarters of a *domus*, which were distinguished by

\(^{138}\) Swift, *Style and Function in Roman Decoration: Living with Objects and Interiors*, 31.
\(^{139}\) Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, 130.
\(^{140}\) Abercrombie, *A Philosophy of Interior Design*, 16.
painted, contrasting, black and white stripes covering the entirety of wall surfaces in the space. [Fig. 3.4] I, however, question this theory because few instances of this are visible in Pompeii or Herculaneum and one of such instances occurs in the atrium of an elite citizen, Julius Polybius. As an elite citizen, it is highly unlikely that a man would locate service quarters amongst the main axis of his domus, let alone in the atrium. [Fig. 3.5]

Like the view from the entrance, the atrium of the House of the Cei allows views to the spaces beyond without giving direct physical access. At the rear of the atrium, a triclinium is visible to the right, along with a corridor leading to the hortus in the center and a tablinum to the left. It is in viewing the tablinum that one realizes and senses the power which the owner had or aspired to gain. Standing in the atrium peering through a large window into the tablinum one’s view continues into the hortus and terminates with the most expressive decoration encountered in the House of the Cei. [Fig. 3.6] Thus, a client about to meet with the paterfamilias in the tablinum, would notice him poised in front of a wall painting depicting a graphic animal hunt in which a lion is preparing to attack a bovine creature. It doesn’t take long to decipher this metaphor and to realize the powerful and intimidating identity which the owner has constructed for himself. His power is further expressed by the fact that the tablinum is raised two steps above the height of the atrium, which affords him a prominent position to view and oversee anyone entering his domus. What is more, because the fauces is set on an incline, anyone visiting the paterfamilias is consequently placed at a lower level, which only amplifies feelings of intimidation and insignificance. Even more indicative of the owner’s power, however, is the path a client must take to merely approach the tablinum. During a salutatio the light from the sun entering the compluvium would naturally illuminate a route around the left, or west, side of
Figure 3.4
*Stripe wall painting within the Villa at Oplontis, Boscoreale*
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]

Figure 3.5
*Stripe wall painting within the House of Julius Polibius, Pompeii*
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Figure 3.6  
*House of the Celi animal hunt wall painting as seen through the tablinum*  
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
the *impluvium* which is probably the path a client would have traversed. Interestingly, in comparing the left side of the *impluvium* with the right it is apparent that the left side is thinner and is impeded by a stairwell to a second story. So, while walking this path a client would have to somewhat genuflect or divert his attention from the *paterfamilias* in order to navigate these obstacles and avoid the *impluvium*. [Fig. 3.7]

The experience of decoration within the House of the Ceii, however, must have been extremely different and probably more pleasurable for the inhabitants and invited guests. After emerging from the *fauxes*, the atrium feels much more inviting and open as these individuals would be encouraged to walk around the right side of the *impluvium* because special guests invited into the *triclinium* for an evening feast would be subtly guided around the eastern side by the light of the setting sun radiating through the *comluvium*. Hence, just as Stanley Abercrombie observes of more contemporary interiors, the general perception of a room can fluctuate with a modification in lighting.\(^{141}\) In addition to the lighting, movement toward the eastern portion of the atrium would be encouraged by the wider and more inviting promenade created by the carpet-like floor decoration. [Fig. 3.8] The entrance to the *triclinium* in the northeast corner of the atrium is unmarked, but upon entrance into it, one is overcome by the decoration. [Fig. 3.9] A majority of the floor is decorated with a field of black cement within which white *tesserae* form a grid-like pattern. This grid like pattern, however, stops shy of the entrance to allow for ante-space. The ante-space enables servants to bring food and exchange the tables with ease in addition to providing an open area in which entertainment could occur. In the center of the gridded white *tesserae* appears a square insert of color stone. The ancient Roman meal typically consisted of multiple ‘*mensa*’, or courses, so termed because of the different tables on which

\[^{141}\text{Abercrombie, *A Philosophy of Interior Design*, 111.}\]
Figure 3.7
House of the Cei path to the tablinum
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]

Figure 3.8
House of the Cei path to the triclinium
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Figure 3.9

House of the Celi triclinium
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
they were served.\textsuperscript{142} Between courses, the table would be removed, at which point the colored mosaic would also serve as a point of visual interest between these courses. It is around this special motif that three \textit{klinae} would be arranged.\textsuperscript{143} Katherine Dunbabin offers further clarification:

> Often it is identified clearly as a dining room by a mosaic pavement laid out in a scheme known as the T + U plan: a plainer area around the three sides of the room where the couches are intended to be placed (the U), and a more highly decorated area in the centre and at the entrance, which would be left unimpeded, for service and entertainment.\textsuperscript{144}

With such an arrangement, the \textit{klinae} would not cover the special instances of floor decoration. This idea is still present in contemporary interior design practice as Stanley Abercrombie indicates: \textquotedblleft The intended function of a room will naturally dictate the relationship between the room and the furniture in it and, at a later stage, also dictate the appropriate furniture choices.	extquotedblright\textsuperscript{145}

Acting in concert with the floor decoration, the wall painting also indicates the function of the space as a \textit{triclinium} along with the use of \textit{klinae}. As August Mau discovers:

> The inner part of the dining room, designed for the table and couches, was often distinguished from the free space in the same way that the place for the bed was indicated in the bedrooms, sometimes by a difference in the design of the mosaic floor, more frequently by the division of the wall decoration and the arrangement of the ceiling.\textsuperscript{146}

In line with his observation, the furniture placement and function is then reinforced further the wall painting. The median zone, for example, incorporates panels that divide the wall

\textsuperscript{143} Wallace-Hadrill, \textit{Houses and society in Pompeii and Herculaneum}, xvi.
\textsuperscript{144} Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, \textit{Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 41.
\textsuperscript{145} Abercrombie, \textit{A Philosophy of Interior Design}, 13.
\textsuperscript{146} Mau, \textit{Pompeii, Its Life and Art}, 264.
horizontally, but not symmetrically, as if in response to the klinae situated in front of it. [Fig. 3.10] While these serve to add visual interest for those engaged in dining within this space, it is also intriguing to relate them to the klinae below, on each of which three people would have reclined. Furthermore, the central panel of these wall divisions, which would occur above the middle of the klinae, contrasts both in color and the illusionistic figural illustrations as if to bring attention to the furniture. It also, however, gives any guests something to admire through the evening meal. The upper zone of each wall then depicts three main elements which coincide with the panel divisions of the median zone below. [Fig. 3.11] The upper zone also incorporates architectural elements on a white ground which correspond to those in the atrium. In the triclinium, however, these elements reveal the only instance of perspective illusion but serve as further indication of the furniture and function of the space because the perspective appears to take into account the position and angle from which it would have most often have been viewed; reclining on a klinae. The height of the socle in this space also directly communicates with the height of a klinae because when they were placed along the walls and were being used during a meal, views of intricate decoration would not be impeded.

The decoration of this triclinium also coincides with Vitruvius’ recommendation concerning room exposure. The location of the space in conjunction with the colors of the wall painting suggest that it was primarily used in the winter. Because it is located in the northern corner of the atrium, during these months it would receive the most direct light and, as a result, heat emitted through the compluvium. So, the decoration would have aided in the capture of heat as well as the diffusion of light. The upper zone of the wall painting is thin and

---

147 Dunbabin, Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World, 39-40.
149 For more information/discussion refer to Mazzoleni, Domus: Wall Painting in the Roman House, 22
Figure 3.11
House of the Ceti triclinium wall painting, median zone and upper zone
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]

Figure 3.10
House of the Ceti triclinium wall painting, socle and median zone
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
white in color and, as such, would have reflected only a small amount light which would then create an ambient glow rather than a glare that might make the room uncomfortable. The lower portions of the wall and the floor, however, are dark in color which would not only diffuse any bright light entering the room but, would capture the heat from this light and continue to emit it throughout the evening as well as the duration of a gathering. Instances such as this might seem coincidental, but the same considerations are exhibited in the corridor leading from the atrium to the hortus adjacent to the triclinium. [Fig. 3.12] This narrow hall, with a lofty ceiling, boasts a wall of white decoration on the east but black decoration on the west wall. Hence, during the morning hours, the black wall might absorb the heat of the sun which it would then emit during the cooler evening hours. On the other hand, the white wall would act as a secondary light source because it would refract the light of the setting sun through the hall and possibly into the atrium during the evening hours when more light was needed.

As one reaches the rear hortus via this dual colored corridor, the painted mural on the northern wall, which during the salutatio served to intimidate a client, gains new perception and meaning. [Fig. 3.13] When seen as a complete composition it appears as a stage scene. The connection to stage scenery that began in the atrium thus becomes a theme throughout the house. The socle serves as the stage on which the scene of animals above it takes place. Reinforcing the stage metaphor, red panels surround the scene on either side like theatre curtains that appear to be drawn open while the red panel of the upper zone takes the form of a fabric swag draped with vines. Similar to the socle of the triclinium, which indicated the function and furniture of the room, the socle of this fresco hortus is painted to resemble plant life. Due to the space within which it is located and its position on the wall, one can only assume it would have blended with
Figure 3.12
House of the Cei corridor looking from the rear hortus to the atrium
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]

Figure 3.13
House of the Cei animal hunt wall painting as seen through the hortus
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
actual plant life during months conducive to growth or acted as a substitute during the months not suitable. In addition to the illusionistic integration of nature, the wall painting incorporates the depiction of water and fountains that merge with a shallow trough which wraps around the eastern and southern portions of the hortus. According to Shelley Hales, this corresponds to the expression of wealth and status throughout the domus: “The training of water is typical of the Roman’s interest in inverting nature as a form of display, a typical luxury.”\(^{150}\) Lauren Peterson adds:

> It would thus seem that painting (that is imitating) nature was not necessarily about aping villa owners, but rather it was about making ideals more realistically livable, if paradoxically, primarily through representation itself.\(^{151}\)

The controlled whimsy occurs at the points in which the water trough meets the wall painting where it is greeted by scenes indicating the water’s source, the direction of its flow and its point of termination. The starting point of the trough occurs on the western wall where a human figure, sheathed in a white cloth, is depicted pouring water from a wide golden vessel. [Fig. 3.14] Interestingly, however, the water does not appear to fall directly into the trough but rather stops in mid air. In front of this figure exists the remains of a cement block which may indicate the placement of a fountain or a receptacle into which the figure’s water may have been poured. From this, actual water might have flowed and, hence, transformed the scene from imaginary to real. As the water-filled trough meanders along the outer edge of the painted hortus it finds its termination on the northern wall in the painted depiction of a fountain set atop a pedestal.

---

\(^{150}\) Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, 125.

\(^{151}\) Petersen, *The Freedman in Roman Art and Art History*, 159.
Figure 3.14
House of the Cei hortus wall painting
Left: water feature inception  Right: water feature termination
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Decoration in the House of the Wooden Partition, for the most part, corresponds with that of the House of the Cei. In this domus, however, the indication and placement of furniture adds another element to the understanding of ancient Roman domestic decoration. After entering the atrium through the fauces one is struck by the vision of furniture which is illuminated, as if with a spotlight, by the natural light entering the compluvium. [Fig. 3.15] Situated in front of the impluvium is a marble table, possibly a ‘gartibulum’, or specific type of table, through which can be seen a pedestal. August Mau postulates that groupings such as this served as furniture:

…on which vessels of bronze were placed…. [which] may symbolize the ancient hearth with the cooking utensils…. [or] it represents the kitchen table near the hearth on which the dishes were washed; that it may have served a similar purpose in later times is evident from the fact that in front of it a marble pedestal was often placed for a statuette which threw a jet of water into a marble basin at the edge of the impluvium.152

In addition to its possible function, closer inspection reveals a connection between the floor mosaic decoration and the way in which it interacts with the table as well as the pedestal. [Fig. 3.16] Similar to the House of the Cei, the main floor of the atrium is comprised of a field of black cement inlaid with white tesserae. Around the impluvium, however, it is apparent that the placement and pattern of these tesserae deviates to create a more intricate and geometric border which visually signifies an importance. Where this border meets the base of the table, however, the design disappears, as if to indicate the proper placement of this piece of furniture. As such, this indication provides relevance to the discussion concerning the placement of klinae within the triclinium of the House of the Cei. To further enhance the notion of decoration coinciding with furniture, one need only look to the pedestal within the impluvium. Here a pattern created by white tesserae becomes more elaborate as it focuses attention on the center of the impluvium.

152 Mau, Pompeii, Its Life and Art, 255.
Figure 3.15
House of the Wooden Partition atrium
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Figure 3.16
House of the Wooden Partition atrium furniture grouping
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Diagonal lines emanating from the four corners converge on a central circular element, which corresponds to the placement and shape of the columnar marble pedestal.

In addition to working in harmony with the decoration of surfaces, ancient Roman furniture also helped to promote the perceived identity of the domus owner. The most prominent way in which this was accomplished is evident via the motifs or representations incorporated into the style and design of the furniture. For instance, when looking toward the tablinum from the atrium in the House of the Wooden Partition a visitor would be greeted by a table base that incorporates the form of animal legs, resembling those of a lion. Though an indication such as this is more subtle than that of the wall painting of the animal hunt in the House of the Cei it succeeds in evoking a similar feeling; that of power and status through recognized conventions of the animal kingdom. Interestingly, the opposite side of this table takes a slightly different form as the face of the table, directed toward the tablinum, incorporates lions’ heads that appear as if they could be roaring above each base. [Fig. 3.17] So, while one side of the table serves to possibly intimidate a client or impress a visitor, the other might give the owner of the house a reminder of his position is society or his perceived identity. What is more, this lion representation is transposed to the ceiling surface via spouts surrounding the compluvium, which aided in directing rainwater into the impluvium. [Fig. 3.18] This implies a personalized zoomorphism through which the owner’s character and identity is expressed by reference to the attributes of certain animals.

Due to the way Herculaneum experienced the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius some pieces of furniture, such as those constructed of wood, remain intact and, more importantly, in position
Figure 3.17
House of the Wooden Partition atrium table
Top: side facing the fauces       Bottom: side facing the tablinum
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Figure 3.18
House of the Wooden Partition compluvium
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
within their interiors. Two such pieces survive in the House of the Wooden Partition which now enhance understanding of the way furniture appeared, was constructed and used during the daily lives of ancient Romans within a domestic setting. As might be obvious, the first of these pieces is a wooden partition that appears situated between the atrium and the tablinum. [Fig. 3.19] The partition stands supported by brackets which attach to the wall and two sections of panels on either end are suspended from an overhead, horizontal beam which runs the width of the tablinum. When inspecting this partition it becomes evident that, in addition to functioning as a partition of space, it was also intended as a major aesthetic feature, decipherable on account of the detail with which it was constructed. [Fig. 3.20] The panels comprising the partition are not merely planks of wood but, like contemporary kitchen cabinets or entrance doors, incorporate panels of varying shapes and depths to add visual interest. The functional aspects of the partition, like the handles/knobs are also ornamental while stylistically complement the small metallic objects flanking either side of the opening into the tablinum created by the partition. It is unclear what these objects functioned as but it appears as if they are broken so it is possible they once existed as a hanging lamp fixture or an arm to hold a lamp. In either instance, the functional elements are once again treated similar to decoration. Finally, in determining the functional aspects of the wooden partition, an interesting feature emerges, in that it does not have the capability to fully close the tablinum off from the atrium. Recalling the discussion of the transition between house styles with the rise in Hellenistic influence, is it possible that the owner of the House of the Wooden Partition was dissatisfied without an enclosed tablinum, a type of space which disappeared in the transition from the atrium to the peristyle house? If so, the wooden partition might have operated as a physical separation by which the owner was able to maintain the sense of the traditional and enclosed tablinum. Furthermore, when looking from the
Figure 3.19
Partition within the House of the Wooden Partition
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Figure 3.20

House of the Wooden Partition detail
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Figure 3.21
House of the Wooden Partition view from the tablinum to the atrium
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
tablinum toward the fauces, the incorporation of this wooden partition acts as a frame through which the axial view and arrangement of the spatial sequence is accentuated. [Fig. 3.21]

The other furniture piece of interest is the vestige of a bed which is located in one of the cubiculae off the atrium in the House of the Wooden Partition. [Fig. 3.22] Like the triclinium of the House of the Ceii, it is possible to notice the ways in which wall decoration coordinates with this piece of furniture as well as the function of the room. The socle of the cubiculum is tall in order to allow the intricate and more visually active decoration in the median zone to remain unimpeded by the klinae or anyone reclining on it. While this decoration is consistent with ideas presented previously, the other cubiculum off this atrium, which is adjacent to the fauces, should also be considered on account of the complete inclusion and coordination of its decoration. [Fig. 3.23] In line with Andrew Wallace-Hadrill’s belief, this cubiculum, “…is confirmed by the typical presence of a bed niche, marked either architecturally or by contrasts in the decoration of walls and floor.”

In addition to the ceiling articulation indicating the location, it also works with the wall painting to denote ante space. Thus, in the space below the vaulted ceiling, which probably corresponds to the width of the bed and indicates its placement, the median zone of the wall painting becomes more detailed and incorporates detailed figural motifs. Unlike the decoration of the House of the Ceii’s triclinium, the floor mosaic in this cubiculum does not alter in response to the furniture or ante-space. Being that its pattern is consistent throughout the space, however, furniture would not impede or detract from it. Hence, it is in this room that the decoration of all surfaces and pieces of furniture would have coalesced to create a true sense of the ‘coordinated interior’.

---

Figure 3.22
House of the Wooden Partition bed remnants
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Figure 3.23
House of the Wooden Partition cubiculum
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Conclusion

In the introduction of his book, Vitruvius states that his writing is dedicated to Augustus so the Emperor might increase his knowledge of architecture and be able to speak more knowledgably on the subject. Cause for such a book may be due to the fact that the reign of Augustus was, most notably characterized by a widespread peace, but also an ambitious building campaign. As he states:

…I began to write this work for you, because I saw that you have built and are now building extensively…I have drawn up definite rules to enable you, by observing them, to have personal knowledge of the quality both of existing buildings and of those which are yet to be constructed.\textsuperscript{154}

What is often less discussed, however, is that many influential writers like Cicero, and conceivably Vitruvius, received their higher education in Athens.\textsuperscript{155} This indicates a strong inclination toward Hellenistic practices in the ideal prescriptions of Vitruvius, like the gridded city planning or the attention to architecture over decoration because the Greeks were undeniably more concerned with the edifice of a building. As such, one might consider the training and influences received in Athens not only muddled Vitruvius’ perception of Roman ideal concepts but also the domestic interiors. I believe this consideration is possible and valid because only a small portion of Book VI and Book VII in, \textit{Ten Books on Architecture}, are dedicated to the appearance and style of decoration (of which he only mentions wall painting) but the entirety of Chapter VII is dedicated to ‘The Greek House’. Because of this discrepancy, Vitruvius disregards interior decoration completely and, in doing so, disregards any design process integral to the creation of such decoration. Instead, he discusses the proper proportions or exposure for

\textsuperscript{154} Vitruvius, \textit{The Ten Books on Architecture}, 4.
\textsuperscript{155} Strong, \textit{Roman Art}, 60.
interior spaces created via architectural construction as well as the proper substrate for fresco wall paintings but belabors the notion that the primary function of decoration is to agree with or mimic architecture. Furthermore, his main critique of wall painting is, in later phases, the depiction of architectural elements defy structural possibility. As such, he praises the First Style discussed by August Mau which mimics architectural elements through the use of masonry blocks or columns and pediments but bemoans the later decorative styles which he determines:

But those subjects which were copied from actual realities are scorned in these days of bad taste. We now have fresco paintings of monstrosities, rather than truthful representations of definite things...Hence, it is the new taste that has caused bad judges of poor art to prevail over true artistic excellence.156

Millennia later this critique, presented by Vitruvius, persists in regard to interior design because decoration of an interior has the ability to enhance or deny its architectural confines. As a practiced interior designer, however, I would argue that this ability is one of the many strengths and significance of the profession.

Through analysis of the House of the Ceiì and the House of the Wooden Partition as well as interior spaces it becomes evident that the subversion of architectural limitations via interior decoration may have originated with the ancient Romans. From the exterior and within the context of the city, each house appears to conform to the ideal prescriptions of Vitruvius on account of the fairly regular location of entrances along an expanse of a shared flat façade. The insulae, however, reveals a matrix of party walls and domestic spaces which deny such regularity. This external assimilation to the ideal could also explain the emphasis placed on axial arrangement of the fauces, atrium and tablinum, because even when looking into the domus from

156 Vitruvius, The Ten Books on Architecture, 211.
the street the regularity and structure of the city would appear to continue. Hence, the interior of the *domus* may have served as relief from and denial of such constructs. Through layout and decoration the paterfamilias was able to express himself as an individual according to status and perceived identity within the broader society. Decoration aided in this expression via the color and motifs utilized. Furthermore, the floor, wall and ceiling surfaces indicated not only the function of the space but also the designated location of particular furniture pieces or accessories as well as human interaction and attention. In order for all these expressions and functions to operate properly, however, it was imperative that they act in concert and harmony with one another; they had to coordinate. Within domestic interiors like those of the House of the Cei or the House of the Wooden Partition, then the notion of the ‘coordinated interior’ is truly exemplified. These ancient Roman domestic interiors indicate a highly evolved practice of coordinating and customizing each decorative element, including floors, walls, ceilings and furnishings, into an integrated whole.

In order for such sophisticated spaces to exist, though, one must question how such spaces were designed and implemented. So, how were such coordinated interiors achieved? Based on my professional knowledge of interior design practice combined with my understanding of ancient Roman domestic interiors I posit five conceptual models: owner as coordinator, designer as coordinator, teams of artist/crafts people, sequential response of artist/crafts people, artist/crafts people conventions. To further explain, in the ‘owner as coordinator’ model an owner would act as the driving force behind not only the design decisions, in regard to color, motif, placement, etc., but also as the project manager and director of the artist/crafts people. If there was a ‘designer as coordinator’, however, one might assume that
there was a professional who worked in concert with the owner to decipher the details of the design and decoration then acted as a liaison and coordinator on their behalf. In this scenario, the ‘designer’ might also have an understanding of all disciplines involved with the project to present the owner with recommendations concerning the design, artist/crafts people and the implementation process. If ‘teams of artist/crafts people’ completed the design and decoration they might work individually to implement their specialty but as a unified whole to complete the space. The model ‘sequential response of artist/crafts people’ assumes an organized process in which one artist/crafts person would implement an element of decoration, i.e. fresco or mosaic, then another artist/crafts person would respond to the colors, motifs, composition, etc. within their portion. Finally, with the ‘artist/crafts people conventions’ scenario, the designer reacted to societal norms and because the houses as well as the interiors were so standardized, the artist/crafts people merely implemented the proper decoration in the proper room without regard for the other disciplines involved. In each conceptual model, however, the coordination of the decoration rests on a different person(s), but the implication of design as well as integration and dependence on a team is consistent. That being said, even in contemporary interior design practice, the ability to work harmoniously with other disciplines is very important to the success of any project. For example, an office renovation would not be successful without the coordination of the interior designer, the furniture vendor(s) or the millworkers, etc. To further unpack the possibilities of a practice resembling interior design in ancient Rome, the next chapter will then explore how and by what process their interiors and corresponding decoration were created.
Despite an understanding of the context and motivations of ancient Roman domestic decoration, the question of How? remains. In the practice of interior design, the end product is only a small facet of the design process, which consists of interaction with clients, creating a concept to fit their particular needs, planning and implementation. In an attempt to create a stronger connection between the practices of ancient Romans and those of contemporary interior design, throughout this chapter I will endeavor to understand the theory of design processes as
well as the ways in which designs are implemented. In attempting to understand these two facets, a connection may be made to the ancients, as Vitruvius believed, “the arts are each composed of two things, the actual work and the theory of it.”

Yet, to determine a design theory and process, one must first establish: What is ‘design’? Research into this word reveals its possible use as either a noun or a verb. I have chosen to unpack the verb form due to its apparent indication of a tangible product created by a professional and its reference to an act or practice. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the verb form of ‘design’ finds roots in the Latin word ‘designare’ or ‘dissignare’, meaning: to mark out, trace out, denote, designate, appoint, contrive. This term is formed by the prefix ‘de’- and/or ‘dis’-, meaning ‘out’, and the suffix -‘sign’ from the word ‘signare’, which means ‘to mark’, or ‘signum’, meaning ‘mark’. It was incorporated into the English language around 1548 via the term, ‘desseigner’, meaning: To plan, purpose, intend. As the list of sixteen Oxford English Dictionary entries progresses so too does the possible meaning of the term. The definitions vary from ‘nominating’ or ‘appointing’, to ‘mental planning’ or ‘contriving’, and finally, to ‘the devising of artistic patterns’. The meaning I believe is most representative of ‘design’ in connection to interior design and the practices of the ancient Romans, however, is:

15. To plan and execute (a structure, work of art, etc.); to fashion with artistic skill or decorative device; to furnish or adorn with a design.

Such a definition is important due to its specific relation to an action or practice in addition to its mention of planning, execution, artistic skill and decoration. That being said, when researching

the practices of the ancient Romans, it is also necessary to understand the similarities and differences between ‘craft’ and ‘art’. According to Alison Burford:

…the modern distinction between the arts and the crafts, between the artist and the craftsman, was unknown in antiquity, the most obvious indication of this conceptual difference being given by language. In Greek, ‘technē’ and, in Latin, ‘ars’ were used indiscriminately of painting and cobbling alike…. 159

Furthermore, when the terms ‘artist’ and ‘craftsman’ are translated into Latin, both reveal the term, ‘artifex’. So, in an effort to avoid interjecting modern connotations, from this point forward, I will refer to the various artist/craftspeople involved with the implementation of decoration as artifex.

Vitruvius gives an indication of the emergence of such artifex in his account of the ‘Origin of the Dwelling House’. 160 In his opinion, the process of building and craft began with primitive societies of men inhabiting wooded areas. As storms blew through these forests, he believed the strong winds would cause dry branches to rub together and create fire. 161 Initially, the men were frightened of this new element but eventually realized the benefits of its warmth and began to gather around it. He determines that this assembly naturally caused conversation and social intercourse, which then instigated the construction of shelters that imitated natural elements, like birds’ nests, to accommodate them. In seeing the skill and innovations with which others constructed their lodgings, neighbors were then compelled to improve their own shelters and: “…from habit they attained to considerable skill, their intelligence was enlarged by their

161 Interesting that winds become such a prevalent and repetitive theme in Vitruvius’ stories as creators of dangerous fires and unhealthy sites.
industry until the more proficient adopted the trade of carpenters...[and] they next gradually advanced from the construction of buildings to the other arts and sciences....”162

To further understand the ways in which the practices of ancient Roman artifex might be illuminated by or, in contrast, might elucidate contemporary interior design practices, this chapter will attempt to synthesize the available information according to a design methodology. The specific methodology being utilized is one that is typically taught to interior design students for the purpose of expressing the process of an interior design project and it is often also employed by interior design professionals. Sam Kubba believes:

Design methodology is a structured process that outlines the parameters of general accepted sequences of tasks that occur from the point at which a designer or space planner begins to work on a project to the point at which the project is completed and occupied.163

This methodology usually consists of seven phases, including: Programming, Schematic Design, Design Development, Construction Documents, Bidding/Tendering, Contract Administration, and finally Feedback and Post-Occupancy Evaluation, and each phase represents a point in the progression and completion of the design process. Before a comprehensive comparison of the contemporary design methodology and ancient Roman practices can occur, however, it is advantageous to first examine the steps preceding the design process. For example, if the design methodology does not commence until a designer has been added to a project, then there must be some exploration of who initiated the project, other constituents

---

involved in the planning and implementation of a design and how such people were chosen to participate in the project.

Pre-Design

Of initial concern in this stage is discerning the individual responsible for initiating the project. Through exploration of domestic interiors in the previous chapter it is apparent that decoration was suited to displaying various ideal characteristics of the owner. As such, one might conclude that the owner must have been the instigator as well as the patron of decoration projects and, in fact, this appears to be true. According to Rabun M. Taylor: “The foremost claimants to the act of making are the patrons, those with the initial generative urge and the resources to realize the project.”\textsuperscript{164} So, because the decoration was specifically tailored to the owner of the \textit{domus} and he had the financial means, it was he who commissioned any decoration.\textsuperscript{165} There is even evidence of such an occurrence in a letter written by Pliny the Younger who mentions commissioning the decorating of a specific space within his \textit{domus}.\textsuperscript{166}

In addition to the owner as patron of a decoration project, who then were the other constituents? On a fundamental level it is not possible to determine the typical contributors to a specific project because, like modern times, these varied in size and scope as well as over a

\textsuperscript{165} Ling, \textit{Ancient Mosaics}, 113.
broad distance and time.\textsuperscript{167} So, while some projects may have employed multiple teams of various \textit{artifex}, others may have been completed by one person. An indication of this arises from the fact that crafts in ancient Rome tended to incorporate family traditions and secrets that were handed down from one generation to the next but, what is more, each family may have excelled at more than one skill.\textsuperscript{168} According to Alison Burford: “The really first-rate craftsman could generally master two or three related crafts, such as sculpture, bronze-casting, architecture and painting.”\textsuperscript{169} One thing is certain, however, in the creation of ancient Roman domestic interiors, whether as a whole or sequentially, there appears to be a coordination of various craft disciplines. This method remains prevalent in the contemporary practice of interior design and one might argue that it is this interdisciplinary character that makes interior design unique from architecture.

It is possible to gain more insight into the specific trades that may have been integral to the creation of interiors through ‘Diocletian’s edict of AD 301’.\textsuperscript{170} This edict was created during a time of inflation in an effort to limit day wages for professional services. It declares that stonemasons, cabinetmakers, carpenters and mosaic workers were valued at 50 ‘\textit{denarii}’ per day. Workers of marble floors and wall-mosaic artists were to receive 60 \textit{denarii} a day. Wall-painters and plaster model-makers received 75 \textit{denarii} per day, whereas figure-painters were valued at 150.\textsuperscript{171} Though this document precedes the period of interest for this thesis, it nevertheless enables an understanding of the people and trades in existence. Furthermore, one can only

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{167} Taylor, \textit{Roman Builders: a Study in Architectural Process}, 13.
\item \textsuperscript{168} Burford, \textit{Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society}, 82.
\item \textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 86.
\item \textsuperscript{170} Louis, 266; Also referred to as ‘Tariff of Diocletian’; Taylor, R, 224; refers to it as Price Edict of 301; Ling, 213; referred to as the Edict of Diocletion A.D. 301
\item \textsuperscript{171} Burford, 143.
\end{itemize}
assume that if such professionals had garnered enough status in 301 B.C.E. to be included in such an edict, they must have been practicing for some time, possibly even 100 to 200 years prior. In addition, this edict may indicate the various disciplines involved in the building and decoration process of ancient Rome as well as the amount a patron would be expected to spend on their services.

Interestingly, at no point in this ancient document is there mention of an ‘architect’ and Burford wonders: “Was there then an economic hierarchy of craftsmanship based on a scale of skills, in which architects always stood well below the painters, and were paid correspondingly less?”172 While she does not come to a definite conclusion, one must question if the roles of interior designer or architect, as they are so prevalent in contemporary practice, existed in the practices of ancient Rome. According to Vitruvius, an architect:

…should be equipped with knowledge of many branches of study and varied kinds of learning…skillful with the pencil, instructed in geometry, know much history, have followed the philosophers with attention, understand music, have some knowledge of medicine, know the opinions of the jurists, and be acquainted with astronomy and the theory of the heavens.173

Luckily, more specific requirements for the position of an architect gain clarity in Alison Burford’s statement:

…the architect’s role as designer, and if he chose, innovator in his craft was recognized in the title architekton…The prefix archi-, ‘chief’ or leading carpenter or builder as distinct from the ordinary tekton, does not in its root sense imply any kind of overall supremacy in craftsmanship…The architekton was so designated for the purely practical reason that the building of temples, fortresses or ships

172 Burford, Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society, 138.
required a larger number and a greater variety of workers than any other project.174

Hence, it is believed that the architect functioned as a director or coordinator. Interestingly, the only mention of an ‘architect’ I found during research for this thesis was in relation to monumental or civic projects. Thus, because the *domus* was initially constructed as part of an *insulae* then subsequently modified through demolition or creation of interior party walls, it may be assumed that architects were not integral to the domestic design process. Though there is also no mention of an ‘interior designer’ in the edict, Burford does indicate the inclusion of a ‘decorator’: “The architect of the Asklepios temple at Epidauros, Theodotos, must have worked in close consultation with Thrsymedes, the sculptor of the cult statue and decorator of the temple cella.”175

A necessary step in illustrating this phase is to determine how the patron selected these *artifex*. According to Vitruvius an architect should not pursue jobs but rather be offered them as a favor given by a patron who hopes to enhance his architectural education.176 Andrew Wallace-Hadrill adds: “An architect is entrusted with the expenditure of a family’s capital (*patrimonium*); thus our ancestors selected architects on the grounds of birth, respectable upbringing, and a sense of social tact (*ingenuo pudori*).” In conjunction, it might be advantageous to assume that patrons chose other contributors on a similar basis. When commissioning art, however, they were also inclined to review and hire on the basis of previous works. Lawrence Richardson clarifies:

One can imagine such painters would appear on market day, the *nundinae*, and set up booths or barrows in the market displaying the range of work they were prepared to execute, possibly in the form of a copybook or books that the

174 Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society*, 93-94.
175 Ibid., 95.
potential client could thumb through, and possibly some specimens of work, pictures on panels or pinakes.177

To this notion Ellen Swift adds: “The commissioner, or patron, of art would have judged works of art produced for them by Roman cultural conventions such as the appropriateness of style to subject matter to context.”178 Such a selection, once again, underscores the fact that the interior of a domus was meant to reflect the idealized status of the owner. This method can also be compared to contemporary interior design practice, in which previous works are advertised on a company website to allow possible clients to determine if the style of the firm fits their wants and needs.

Design PROCESS

The next phase, both in contemporary interior design practice and that of the ancient Romans, consists of determining the clients’ needs against their financial limits and creating a basis upon which the remainder of the project will progress, then establishing an agreement concerning these decisions between the client and the designer. The ancient Romans appear to have considered the wants and needs of the client in respect to financial limits by categorizing spaces according to a system of importance. This grading is most evident in wall paintings, “…where it has been recognized as representing a sliding scale of prices charged to the client by the firm of decorators.”179 According to Roger Ling: “The patron would obviously fix the

177 Lawrence Richardson, A Catalog of Identifiable Figure Painters of Ancient Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabiae (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 15.
178 Swift, Style and Function in Roman Decoration: Living with Objects and Interiors, 18.
179 Ling, Ancient Mosaics, 115-116.
position of each room on the hierarchical scale and select from the appropriate price-range."^{180}

This method also informed the implementation of floor mosaics, in which the most costly level incorporated expensive materials, rich colors or mythological scenes and took the longest to create; this then decreased successively to the lowest grade, which consisted of plain tessellation.

After agreements were made concerning the desire of the client and their financial limitations, the design and decoration of interiors commenced. When applying design methodology to the practices of the ancient Romans, though, it becomes apparent that the style of decoration or design, as well as the ways in which it was implemented, was affected by the advancement in technology as well as social and political forces. This is evident during the period being examined, 100 BC to 200 B.C.E., because it is at this point that Rome transitioned from the Republic to the Empire and simultaneously experienced what might be considered an industrial revolution. Shelley Hales confirms: “At this time, the expanding empire was forcing redefinitions of what it was to be Roman in the face of the incursion of more and more alien territories, races, and cults within the Roman world.”^{181} As such, the Schematic Design/Design Development Phase and the Construction Administration Phase are inextricably linked to societal and political ideologies that need to be explored.

Andrew Wallace-Hadrill produces interesting information regarding the possible influences on style and design in what he terms, ‘the social diffusion of luxury.’^{182} In this study he determines that trends are determined by the socially elite and are then emulated, quite

---

possibly at a lower quality, by citizens of lesser status. As the elite notice this occurrence, however, they are, “…driven to further innovation to maintain distance from the poor.”[183] Interestingly, this notion is not far removed from theories of modern society. Specifically in regard to interior design, Stanley Abercrombie believes: “…because it is unfortunately commonplace for us to want more than we can afford, it has been commonplace throughout the history of interior design for humble materials to imitate grand ones.”[184]

As may be expected, this dissemination of style not only created a division amongst social classes but it also created dissention and competition amongst neighbors. The general openness and visibility of the Roman *domus* not only contributed to trends but also, as one citizen tried to outdo or imitate the next, they also generated the repetition of various decorative schemes and motifs.[185] It is even possible to detect this phenomenon in the writings of Vitruvius and Pliny as evidence that such competition was active in ancient Roman society. When Vitruvius expresses the ‘Origin of the Dwelling House’, he determines the enhancement of craft arose with innovations of men who had seen the accomplishments of their neighbors and attempted to outdo them. Pliny, on the other hand, perceives this assimilation of style negatively and in respect to the colors selected for wall paintings:

> Nowadays when purple finds its way even on to party-walls…there is no such thing as high-class painting. Everything in fact was superior in the days when resources were scantier. The reason for this is that, as we said before, it is values of material and not of genius that people are now on the look-out for.[186]

---

Hence, it was not the *artifex* who guided Roman trends and styles in decoration, but the patron.\(^{187}\)

Further exploration into the various decorative Styles, originally presented by August Mau, as well as the transitions that occurred between them will also illuminate the influences affecting decoration and design. Prior to the First Style, during the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C., Rome’s conquest of the East exposed citizens to diverse cultures and ways of life. With these conquests, however, also came an influx of wealth, the conjunction of which led to new ideas of luxury, rituals of leisure, a desire for embellishment and an emergence of architects and *artifex* to fulfill them.\(^{188}\) The First Style of decoration then emerged in 200 B.C. and extended through 80 B.C.\(^{189}\) Initially, the style was very simple in that only stucco and mosaic were utilized to achieve a style that mimicked masonry, especially marble, and architectural elements, like pilasters or pediments. [Fig. 4.1] With the introduction of Eastern influences around the 1st century B.C. this style experienced some changes. Previously, simple geometric floor patterns of black or red began to incorporate illusionistic pictures, known as ‘*emblematta*’. [Fig. 4.2] Interestingly, it is also at this point in time when the traditional building style of the atrium *domus* transferred to a focus and interest in the peristyle type *domus*.

Evident from 80 B.C.E. to 20 B.C.E.\(^{190}\) the Second Style, similar to the First, was characterized by the representation of public architecture, like columns and temples, that adhere to proper structural proportions. [Fig. 4.3] More specifically, the wall paintings are often


\(^{189}\) Ibid., 324.

\(^{190}\) Ibid., 325.
Figure 4.1
First Style in the House of the Sallust, Pompeii
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Figure 4.2
Emblemata within the House of Menander, Pompeii
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Figure 4.3
Second Style in the Villa of the Mysteries, Pompeii
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
compared to theatre-like scenes due to their extravagance and the implementation of one-point perspectives that became centered on the main entry into the space. This new application was accomplished by a painting technique known as tromp l’oeil, which creates illusionistic perspectives or views on a flat surface. It is also during the beginning of this period that figural stuccos develop and are able to express themselves as individual elements, separate from architectural framing.¹⁹¹

During the Late Second Style, between 40–20 B.C.E., decoration began to see major transformations coinciding with political influence and changes. It is at this point that Augustus became emperor and Rome transitioned from the Republic to the Empire. The conditions of this era are summarized by Shelly Hales: “At this point in time, the expanding empire was forcing redefinitions of what it was to be Roman in the face of the incursion of more and more alien territories, races and cults within the Roman world.”¹⁹² Augustus, however, made “…an attempt to redefine the proper limits of domestic presentation…a new emphasis on simplicity and publicness…[as well as] a new sense of order and restriction in domestic display.”¹⁹³ He was able to accomplish this through the creation and enactment of the ‘Sumptuary Laws’. The Sumptuary Laws, in addition to dictating the daily lives of Roman people, restricted the amount and nature of decoration allowable.¹⁹⁴ As such, because lower classes tended to emulate, as best they could, the elite class (in this sense, Augustus and his court). The Emperor not only set the standard for decoration but also controlled it. This late period also abandoned the one-point perspective in favor of the depiction of the aediculae, or framed painting. [Fig. 4.4] These

¹⁹¹ Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250: ritual, space, and decoration*, 328.
¹⁹³ Ibid., 24.
¹⁹⁴ Swift, *Style and Function in Roman Decoration: Living with Objects and Interiors*, 4.
Figure 4.4
Late Second Style in the Villa of Oplontis, Boscoreale
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
aedicular units became the center and focus of each wall and were further emphasized by a new vertical proportioning system that divided the wall. Furthermore, the mosaics underwent a disappearance of figural motifs and polychrome mosaics for two-dimensional bichrome patterns which gained popularity due to their simplicity and low cost.195

The Third Style, which began in 20 B.C.E., is characterized by a further flattening of perspective, along with the reduction of tromp l’oeil, in an avoidance of illusionary depth. [Fig. 4.5] This is most evident in miniaturized architectural elements that appear in wall paintings, along with stucco decoration, and the attempt to deny that they are structural elements. 196 In fact, the columns and pediments, etc. are even diminished to mere bands of color that divide the walls. Hence, the framework becomes more of a decorative grid and, in response, there seems to be a free use of ornamentation. This is believed to have some relation to the Egyptianizing influences occurring during this time because many of the motifs used were of acanthus leaves or other symbols related to Egypt. What is more, mythological scenes begin to appear at the center of some schemes. The transition from the Late Third Style to the Early Fourth Style is, unfortunately, inadequately understood due to the earthquake that occurred in 62 AD and the consequent loss of surviving examples.197

The period known as the Fourth Style appears to be almost an amalgam of the previous decorative styles. [Fig. 4.6] For instance, it utilizes the wall divisions prevalent in the Second

---

197 Ibid, 331.
Figure 4.5
Third Style in the House of Julius Polibius, Pompeii
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Figure 4.6
Fourth Style in the House of Lucretius Fronto, Pompeii
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Style, while maintaining a sense of architectural elements, but also includes intricate as well as fantastic designs and motifs. According to Mau,

> The fourth style cannot have been derived from the third. It is organically related with the second, out of which it was developed by laying stress on precisely that element, the architectural, the suppression of which gave rise to the third style of decoration.198

In this period stucco also abounds with an increase in complexity as well as the surfaces on which it is incorporated. It begins to extend onto the walls and even to become incorporated into wall paintings while taking on natural forms, like free-flowing grape vines.199

All of these styles then effect both the Schematic Design and Design Development Phase because it is during this phase that a concept, as well as an interpretation of the concept, is produced, including preliminary ideas for materials, finishes and furnishings. The Design Development Phase, however, is merely an extension of the Schematic Design Phase during which the concept is further developed and refined in order to gain approval of the client before proceeding to the Construction Document phase, where official plans and specifications are created and coordinated with consultants. Consideration of the concept is important when comparing ancient Rome to contemporary interior design because, according to Stanley Abercrombie: “…the most critical design work is totally abstract: the designer’s role is not to build the design, to assemble it, to select it or purchase it, but, first and primarily, to think it.”200

The ancient Romans appear to have felt similarly about their interiors, though there exist a variety of ways in which a concept may have been evolved.

---

199 Clarke, "Domestic Decoration", 331.
One rationale, given by John R. Clarke, assumes that the logic behind the coordination of the interior decoration stems from “domestic construction techniques”. This is plausible and finds reinforcement in descriptions given by August Mau in which he determines that the available construction materials influenced the size and shape of various spaces. He specifically mentions the atrium as being derived from the timber and its structural capabilities and limitations in the *compluviat* roof form. Eve D’Ambra, on the other hand, offers another possibility: “Rooms were decorated in a manner thematically appropriate to their use...” In reviewing the decoration of the House of the Ceii, discussed in the previous chapter, it appears as if this theory is also valid due to the fact that the *triclinium* decoration seems to be specifically suited to the function and purpose of the space in regard to lighting, heating, and furniture placement. An idea offered by Stanley Abercrombie, though concerning contemporary interior design, might be another possibility. He believes: “At times the character of the room itself will be the chief design determinant of its plan. A spectacular view through one particular window will draw comfortable seating around it....” What appears to be most evident, however, is that the designs were driven by societal and political determinants mentioned earlier.

Throughout the discussion of decoration in Chapter 2, it becomes obvious that decoration served a number of primary purposes, including guiding views as well as visitors into and out of the *domus*, expressing power, indicating use and function, and aiding in heating and lighting. The most important of these functions, however, was the creation of the owner’s identity and reflection of his status. As such, one might expect that any design decisions would be made...

---

201 Clarke "Domestic Decoration", 323.
202 Mau, *Pompeii, Its Life and Art*, 251. – also discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis
solely by him; not least of all because he provided financial provision but also because he, after
the design process, had to live with and within the end result. Furthermore, it is also the patron
who would have chosen the material for the various installations in regard to the amount of
money he wanted to spend. Vitruvius mentions the decisions regarding materials used to
construct a *domus* were those of the patron, as it depended on, “…whether he desires to build in
brick, or rubble work, or dimension stone.” While the patron ultimately chose the decoration
to be implemented, Rabun Taylor also believes that:

> The architect and patron would not have worked out every detail of the
decoration; that was left to the specialists. But they would certainly have
envisioned the types of decoration they wanted and the ways in which each
enhanced the form and responded to light.  

So, the patron made the final decision concerning the decoration of his rooms; however, he was
most certainly guided by the *artifex* painter and the choices given to him by the *artifex* painter.

No doubt the particular arrangements used in any room were chosen by the master
craftsman in consultation with the client, who would have been shown a pattern-
book with more or less detailed drawings of firms standard selection. Alternatively, the patron may have issued specifications like those recorded on the
Hellenistic papyrus from Egypt…all that the mosaicist needed to know was the
type of ornaments, their arrangement and measurement. The rest was left to his
knowledge of standard motifs and procedures.

While it appears as if the *artifex* were guided by and possibly limited by the patron, it is
possible that the patron did not always get what he wanted or expected. This is due to the
societal and political forces, like tradition or kingship, within which the *artifex* were also

---

208 Ling, *Ancient Mosaics*, 133-134.
imbued. Not to mention, if *artifex* were selected based on their previous works and how these displayed, “cultural conventions such as the appropriateness of style to subject matter to context,” one might assume they would adhere to these rather than succumbing to whims of a client. Furthermore, the “…designers recognized that harmony between walls and floors required that the functional nature of these surfaces be acknowledged,” which may have been accomplished regardless of the patron’s wishes or in a manner unbeknownst to him. As Alison Burford believes:

…there was still a little room within these limits for the great craftsman to use his own initiative and make his own adjustments, so producing something that was truly distinctive – and it is here that what we would call artistic inventiveness or genius made itself apparent.

Inspiration of the *artifex/painter* then, “…drew upon the creations of the past as suited his fancy, and contented himself with copying or imitating.” Roger Ling, in discussing mosaics, adds, “…some of them borrowed from other media, such as stucco relief work which was now emerging as a major decorative art form on ceilings and vaults.” Hence, from this collection of copies and imitations the *artifex* was able to create a sketchbook of motifs and illustrations displaying their specialties, from which the patron could choose. Though the patron’s choice in motifs was equally restricted by the abilities of the *artifex*, there were many variations in scale and color that enabled him to design a space indicative of his taste.

---

209 Strong, *Roman Art*, 12.
210 Swift, *Style and Function in Roman Decoration: Living with Objects and Interiors*, 18.
211 Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250: ritual, space, and decoration*, 63.
212 Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society*, 184.
215 Clarke, 63.
216 Ling, *Roman Painting*, 220.
choices in mosaics was dependent on available material, but as Vitruvius indicates in descriptions of pigment extraction and manufacture, those available for wall painting were much greater. 217 What is more, the decorations were often individualized and adapted to the size and shape of the spaces within which they were implemented. 218

Finally, as in contemporary interior design practice, the ancient Roman artifex found ways to express their ideas to the patrons. For interior design professionals this usually occurs at a client meeting during which ideas and concepts are presented via inspirational images, rendered drawings, models or preliminary material selections. In the instance of the ancient Romans, Rabun Taylor mentions ‘scaenographia’, which correspond to perspective drawings that, “probably had two functions, as an aid in the design process and as a means of presenting a concept to the client.”219 [Fig. 4.7] In addition, there is evidence of a Graeco-Egyptian papyrus of c. 255 B.C., which contains a description of, “…the painter gives verbal specifications of decorative elements to be carried out in four rooms, and at one point refers to a ‘model’ (‘paradeigma’) of a vault-decoration which the client has seen and approved.”220

Plans and specifications are then created in preparation for execution of the design and/or decoration. Unfortunately, like literary references, evidence of building or decorative plans are scarce, especially for private buildings. One might, however, refer to the ‘Marble Plan of Rome’ discussed in Chapter 2 to examine a domus plan because while this map’s primary purpose was to distinguish individual plots, it is from these original plots that the surviving houses grew.

217 Ling, Ancient Mosaics, 11.
218 Ibid., 13.
220 Ling, Roman Painting, 217.
Figure 4.7

Scaenographia
[Source: Ling, *Roman Painting*, 203]
Hence, the *domus* as they exist now were not planned but rather morphed from the original plots due to the sale or purchase of various spaces within. In regard to monumental buildings, however, drawings such as plans, maps and even elevations, have been found etched in stone or drawn on papyrus. What is more, according to Rabun M. Taylor: “At both Greek and Roman sites full-scale drawings of architectural features in elevation have been found etched onto stone or plaster surfaces, where they served as templates for preassembly of building features.”221

Unlike the building trades, it seems as if those involved with decoration did not utilize drawings or plans, at least not in the same manner. In talking about the definition of ‘vernacular’, Amos Rapoport suggests a possible reason:

Since knowledge of the model is shared by all, there is no need for drawings…The construction is simple, clear, and easy to grasp, and since everyone knows the rules, the craftsman is called in only because he has more ‘detailed’ knowledge of these rules.222

This is not to say, however, that the *artifex* did not plan. On the contrary, many instances of planning have been discovered, such as remnants of drawings sketched at a small scale onto walls to test schemes prior to full-sized paintings, as in the Villa of Oplontis.223 Similarly, mosaicists utilized pattern books, known via literary evidence and repetition of patterns throughout the Roman empire, that some think may have served as, “annotated drawings like those that have survived for buildings plans.”224

---

In contemporary interior design practice, once the construction documents and specifications are completed, they are distributed to interested contractors during the Bidding/Tendering Phase. The contractors then supply the designer and client with cost estimates for the project and one of them is awarded the job. Interestingly, various forms of contracts were similarly employed by the ancient Romans to ensure both the patron and the artifex upheld their terms of agreement. In regard to buildings, it is thought that such contracts, or ‘stipulatio’, were based on the number of roof tiles and that they were established by a bidding process.225 “But in highly specialized and exacting genres such as stone carving, mosaic, painting, and stucco-work, cost estimates most likely were established only after discussions among the architect, patron, and master craftsmen.”226 The most information seems to be available for contracts involving painting, possibly because the materials were so costly or due to fees for the specialist. According Roger Ling, the patron would have hired painter(s) under a contract known as ‘locatio operis faciendi’, or ‘hire of work to be carried out’. Within this contract, the cost of the project was fixed in advance and a time frame was agreed upon, during which the artifex/painter was paid in installments or in full after the work was completed.227 In regard to the expense of materials involved in painting, especially colors and pigments of high value, Vitruvius adds: “… as they are costly, they are made exceptions in contracts, to be furnished by the employer, not by the contractor.”228

---

226 Ibid., 17.
Finally, when the construction documents and specifications have been completed, the Construction Administration Phase commences. Customarily, it is from this point forward that the designer acts as the project supervisor to ensure proper implementation of the design. According to Sam Kubba:

…the planner/designer acts as the owner’s representative and advises and consults with the owner. Instructions to the contractors are forwarded through the designer, who has the authority to act on behalf of the owner, but only to the extent provided in the contract documents.229

In order to gain a better understanding of this phase of the design process in relation to the practices of the ancient Romans, however, one must again turn to the social and political influences. In the Schematic and Design Development stages, these influences determined the styles but in this phase, they instigate technological advancement and, hence, new techniques execution. Comprehension is even more significant due to the lack of literary evidence provided by ancient authors. As Rabun Taylor notes: “Vitruvius shows minimal interest in the sequential logic of design and construction, such as the allocation of labor or the overlapping of tasks to ensure timely convergence.”230

To begin, it is important to note that evidence of artisan guilds in Rome date to c. 715-648 B.C., which indicates a substantial history of development even prior to the dates considered

229 Kubba, Space Planning for Commercial and Residential Interiors, 97.
in this thesis. The first instances of industrial development arose around the time of the Punic Wars via three main influences: the Etruscans, who introduced metal-work, dress and building, the Greeks, who initiated weaving, pottery and metal-working, as well as Eastern cultures, which contributed to glass and the chemical dying process. Following the Punic Wars, and in conjunction with the emergence of the First Style, Paul Louis determines:

Manufacture was revolutionized by the conquests, which, whilst they led to the putting into circulation of adequate supplies of currency and were accompanied by an ever-increasing contingent of captive workers, initiated the Romans into the technical processes of Greece and Asia and engendered new standards of comfort and luxury.

As the First Style of decoration transitioned into the Second, the influx of population, wealth and desire for luxury continued and intensified. This also became the cause of an uneven distribution of the newfound wealth, both between the metropolis and the provinces as well as the bourgeoisie and the working class. With wealth there was a rise in opulence and, for this reason, an increased demand for products and services. As these amplified, then production had to follow in order to supply the demand; hence, trades and labor increased while also becoming more specialized in order to monopolize the market.

---

232 Ibid., 65.
233 Ibid., 184.
234 Ibid.
Interestingly, there was a shift from the Second Style to the Third Style just prior to the transition of Rome from the Late Republic to the Empire.\textsuperscript{235} Ultimately, this period in Roman history is synonymous with luxury. “Senators and freedmen lavished money on their households, their villas and their furniture, paying as much as £40,000 for a single carpet and striving after rare materials.”\textsuperscript{236} In contrast, I believe it should also be known for its dichotomies. While the elite citizens indulged in leisure and luxury the \textit{artifex} continued to increase their specialization in order to compete with one another for jobs.\textsuperscript{237} Hence, a division of labor was created which made it possible for less skilled workers to bring decorations to near completion before more expensive and, hence, more skilled craftsmen would finish them.\textsuperscript{238} To this, Roger Ling mentions that, due to the size of certain towns and the demand for certain decorations, “metropolitan workshops were responsible for some painted wall-decoration in the Pompeii area...[and] the occasional presence of artists from, say, Naples or Puteoli may well be suspected.”\textsuperscript{239} In concordance with these town workshops, more specialties and competition developed along with a hierarchy of quality. This is exemplified by “the work of one main workshop which was charged with the commissions by Augustus and Agrippa...”\textsuperscript{240} So, with these various forms of hierarchy certain \textit{artifex} or workshops were able to create a brand identity which the clients would not only seek out but also pay considerably for or even use exclusively. What is more, some patrons may even have had \textit{artifex} on staff. For instance, in speaking about the owner of the Faresina House, Donald Strong states: “His artists were versatile, capable of

\textsuperscript{235} Due to the fact that the time periods for these styles primarily came from the decoration of Pompeii, one might wonder if, in fact, the Second Style transitioned to the Third at an earlier point which was more in line with the transition in government and that the fashions merely took longer to emanate to the provinces. On the other hand, this may be an indication of the time it takes to implement decoration, in that the style may have changed with the new emperor but did not trickle to the lower classes / provinces for a few years.

\textsuperscript{236} Louis, \textit{Ancient Rome at Work: an Economic History of Rome from the Origins to the Empire}, 235.

\textsuperscript{237} D’Ambra, \textit{Roman Art in Context: an Anthology}, 149.

\textsuperscript{238} Clarke, \textit{The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250: ritual, space, and decoration}, 60.

\textsuperscript{239} Ling, \textit{Ancient Mosaics}, 215.

\textsuperscript{240} Ibid., 216.
suiting all his tastes, and one of them, Seleukos, was clearly an Asiatic Greek and signed his work in Greek.”

Though there was noticeable competition amongst specialties within the same industry, the interdependence of various disciplines is apparent in the Schematic Design and Design Development Phase and was still present through the Contract Administration. “In antiquity too it benefited the architect, planner, and builder to be intimately aware of one another’s responsibilities and thought processes.” John R. Clarke enhances this notion through mention of participants in the design process. He believes the painter must have collaborated with the architect “…since his work would modify the perception of the house’s space.” But the architect also would have worked closely with the mosaicist and stuccoist, “for they provided and articulated the decorated surfaces that he had to incorporate into the design of the painted walls and ceilings.” There is even surviving evidence of such collaboration in the form of “inscriptions on pavements which distinguish between an artist who ‘painted’ and a craftsman who laid the tesserae.”

Substantial research has been conducted concerning the ways in which each of the decorative surfaces, including stucco ceilings, wall paintings and floor mosaics, were created. In exploring how the interior design ‘industry’ worked in ancient Rome, however, the significance does not arise from understanding how the artifex implemented these decorations but how the trades come together to create a coordinated interior. For this, the ancient Romans relied on

---

241 Strong, Roman Art, 96.
243 Clarke, The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250: ritual, space, and decoration, 45.
244 Ling, Ancient Mosaics, 130.
collaboration as well as conventional methods for the implementation of decoration. According to Rabun Taylor:

As a general rule, noncolumnar surface decoration tends to be applied from the top downward. Scaffolding erected for the construction phase could be used by the decorators and then dismantled level by level as they complete their tasks.  

So, similar to contemporary interior design, decoration of the ceiling would be executed first, followed by the walls, then the floor, with the placement of furniture as the final step. This order of implementation serves a very practical purpose in contemporary practice, just as it did in ancient Rome: to protect newly installed materials. Today, this order functions to avoid dirting or destroying new flooring and furniture with various elements, like drywall debris, splattered paint, etc. In ancient Rome, however, it was due to the fragile quality of the floor mosaics in conjunction with the scaffolding needed to create the ceiling and wall decoration. [Fig. 4.8] To create a floor mosaic prior to erecting scaffolding for stucco or wall paint would be detrimental, as the weight of the timber would surely damage the fragile tesserae. Some believe that this may even be the reason for the intricate patterns in the center of some floors because attention could be given to this area while scaffolding was being used around the perimeter of the room; then, once it was removed, the remainder of the field could be completed with a more simple and time-efficient pattern. This also coincides with Taylor’s idea that the wall paintings took precedence over the mosaics because completion of the later required permanent removal of the scaffolding. Furthermore, the scaffolding would have to be removed in order for any holes created in the walls by anchoring the timber frame to be filled in and painted over. These

---

246 Ibid., 217.
247 An interesting continuation of this observation might be to questions whether the central and more intricate scenes of the wall paintings coincide with or avoid placement of timber scaffolding.
Figure 4.8
Illustration of a team of decorators at work
[Source: Ling, Roman Painting, 215]
facts, however, might be a further indication of the idea of the coordinated interior in ancient Rome in that, not only was the implementation of the decoration coordinated, but the function was also considered and possibly generated appropriate decor for the space created.

Conclusion

For the decoration of the ancient Roman domestic interiors to function on so many levels, from inception to implementation, and with such sophistication it is evident they were planned. Hence, the original hypothesis of a ‘coordinated interior’ as expressed by the domus is extremely valid and has possibly revealed more about the connection between ancient Rome and contemporary interior design than expected. Though the term ‘interior designer’ was not used in reference to any artifex, these spaces were clearly created with a concern for an overarching design or scheme and implemented via the coordination of crafts, in a manner similar to the contemporary practice of interior design. Further indication of a connection is generated by applying the design methodology which reveals planning and implementation methods employed by both. A major concern with this comparison, however, is that it seems to assume every interior space or the decorative elements within were simultaneously created anew. According to Lawrence Richardson, thought, such instances were, “seldom, if ever, the case.”248 Clare Cooper Marcus, however, offers insight via the notion of permanence and change typical of a house:

248 Richardson, A Catalog of Identifiable Figure Painters of Ancient Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabiae, 21.
The house interior for most people – unlike the structure itself – is rarely wholly fixed or finished. Like the exploration of the self, the arrangement of the domestic interior is often in the process of becoming.249

With this statement she introduces the strong theoretical concept, attributed to Gilles Deleuze, of ‘becoming’. In essence, “becoming” references a change or transition which leads to defining the world differently. According to Cliff Stagoll in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, it is, “the pure movement evident in changes between particular events…tending towards no particular goal or end-state.”250 The change that occurs is not linear or merely study of a static and definable beginning in comparison with an end, but rather a continual process and transformation of events woven together without a perceptible conclusion. The process is imperceptible because while perceiving occurs, simultaneously, so too does change.251 Hence, the notion of ‘becoming’ suggests a change which, in the ephemeral interior environment, could resemble renovation and/or redecoration. This perception finds immediate confirmation in Richardson’s declaration:

A house that, like the Casa di Melagro or the Casa del Manandro, shows extensive consistency of style, evidently the work of a team of decorators working over a comparatively short period is an anomaly. Even when the whole house is well decorated in the last Pompeian style, one can expect to find striking differences from room to room….252

Study of this ever-present occurrence in contemporary practice as compared to ancient Roman domestic interiors, then will have major implications for enhanced understanding of both. To fully comprehend such permanence and change, however, there should be an indication of how long the decorative elements within an ancient Roman domestic interior were expected to last, if

---

252 Richardson, *A Catalog of Identifiable Figure Painters of Ancient Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabiae*, 2.
the *domus* owners were more prone to renovation or redecoration and also how these scenarios may have been executed.

Regarding the permanence of ancient Roman domestic decoration, many authors, both ancient and contemporary, offer information regarding the durability of various materials employed. Pliny the elder, for instance, mentions a particular painting that withstood elements and even the collapse of a building.²⁵³ In another account he describes one *artifex’* attempt to create a durable wall painting: “For this picture he used four coats of paint, to serve as three protections against injury and old age, so that when the upper coat disappeared the one below it would take its place.”²⁵⁴ Vitruvius also alludes to the steadfastness of decoration as he mentions paintings being cut from walls then framed for reuse.²⁵⁵ Roger Ling verifies this notion of reclamation through a subsequent observation:

> The most spectacular evidence was afforded by the discovery in 1761 of seven figured panels of the Third Style stacked at the foot of a wall in Herculaneum; they had evidently been cut from damaged decorations and were waiting for a new home.²⁵⁶

In addition to evidence of wall paintings being removed and preserved for later use, portions of mosaic flooring were also recycled. Donald Strong believes this occurred because, “Mosaic ‘emblemata’ were highly prized and sometimes lifted and moved from place to place; as they have only one good viewpoint, they tend to be carefully sited to give the maximum effect.”²⁵⁷

²⁵³ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 273.
²⁵⁴ Ibid., 337.
²⁵⁶ Ling, *Roman Painting*, 207.
²⁵⁷ Strong, *Roman Art*, 55.
With these few indications it is apparent that certain decorative elements were created with care and for endurance. Due to the affects of time and various natural disasters, like earthquakes, however, they also occasionally required repair and/or renovation. Roger Ling, for example, considers repair to damaged frescoes is signified by: “…the surface surrounding the area which was to be made good was chipped away, generally as far as some convenient decorative division which would help to make the reworking less conspicuous.” Most often, though, he determines that a new layer of plaster was merely spread over the old, but if it was completed by a different workshop, “…attempts were usually made to reproduce the earlier manner.…”

The convention of property inheritance, as discussed in Chapter 2, might indicate why, “Most modest houses were added to and remodeled.…” Being that the same domus remained in the same family for a period of time, however, is beneficial to the study of ancient Roman domestic interiors because, as Ellen Swift determines: “Houses which were, individually, occupied for several centuries also provide an opportunity to examine Roman attitudes to decorative art of previous periods.” As an example of such thoughts, John R. Clarke, mentions the Villa Imperiale, in Pompeii, which contains a space fashioned with a socle and median zone in the Third Style yet an upper zone and stucco ceiling resembling the early Fourth Style. [Fig. 4.9] Domestic environments like this reveal the general importance placed on various rooms within a domus according to which were renovated to maintain existing decorative styles or those that were redecorated to remain constant with changing trends. In addition,

258 Ling, Roman Painting, 204-205.
259 Zanker, Pompeii: Public and Private Life, 144.
260 Swift, Style and Function in Roman Decoration: Living with Objects and Interiors, 98.
261 Clarke, "Domestic Decoration", 331.
Figure 4.9
Villa Imperiale, Pompeii
[Source: Mazoleni, Domus: Wall Painting in the Roman House, 245]
domus such as these indicate the extent to which decoration was imperative in expressing such status.

Evidence of the redecoration process and end result within the ancient Roman domus has been identified primarily through the process of archaeological excavation and indications like, “Piles of lime, pieces of mosaic, and sand [that] indicate preparation for re-walling and re-flooring.”

Recent excavation in the ‘House of the Chaste Lovers’ (IX.xii.6-7), on the northern side of the ‘Street of Abundance’, has even revealed preliminary work in progress on wall decoration, and the ancient equivalent of paint posts standing on the floor – [along with] ‘amphora’ bases containing remnants of pigment.

Further evidence of redecoration arises in the appearance of wall paintings that have been scored, or notched, in preparation for adhering a new layer of wall painting. [Fig. 4.10] The implementation of similar new wall paintings is indicated to in the documentary, ‘Doomsday Pompeii’, through the mention of a bucket of plaster that was spilled as the artifex hastened to escape the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. The most interesting indication of redecoration, however, occurs within the House of Marcus Fabius Rufus, in Pompeii, where, rather than layering a new style on top of a previous wall painting, entirely new walls were merely constructed in front of one another. [Fig. 4.11]

---

262 Cooley, Pompeii, 22.
263 Ibid.
264 "Doomsday Pompeii," in When Rome Ruled, National Geographic, December 13, 2010. - Interestingly, the spill occurs at a substantial height above the floor level, which not only adds proof to the theory of scaffolding being used during the implementation of wall paintings, but also raises another question concerning redecoration. If the ancient Roman artifex created the wall paintings first, for fear that the necessary heavy wooden scaffolding might damage the mosaic floor material, how might one be implemented during a renovation/redecoration? Would the scaffolding not have had the same effect? Hence, is there any archaeological/physical evidence possibly signifying marks or indentations on existing mosaic floors that would have been created by scaffolding when a wall was repainted?
Figure 4.10
Example of scored wall painting plaster, Pompeii
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]
Figure 4.11
House of Marcus Fabius Rufus, Pompeii
[Source: Mazoleni, *Domus: Wall Painting in the Roman House*, 389]
The assumption behind any historical approach is that one can learn from the past; that study of the past is of value philosophically as well as in making us aware of the complexity and overlapping of things. It can also clarify those elements that are constant and those which change....Hence, we cannot assume a sudden break with all that went before, or that we and our problems are so different that the past has no lessons for us.

- Amos Rapoport
  In “House Form and Culture”

EPILOGUE

Through analysis of ancient Roman domestic space, can the history, theory and practice of contemporary interior design be expanded and enhanced? In an attempt to answer this motivating question, many possible interpretations and observations are revealed, most prominent of which is the importance of ancient Roman domestic space and decoration to the history of interior design. One indication of this is the fact that, unlike their Greek counterparts, ancient Romans were at least as concerned with the expression of interior
environments than the articulation of architecture. This is especially true for Roman domestic architecture, as the exterior of most, if not all, *domus* were minimally decorated. In fact, the House of the Cei could be considered one of the more highly decorated domestic facades evident throughout Pompeii and Herculaneum. Most often exterior surfaces throughout the ancient Roman city were whitewashed with arbitrary instances of graffiti and/or political propaganda. Thus, the decoration was reserved for the interior and, due to the importance the Romans placed on their interior environments, it even aided in capturing and transferring the view of a passerby inside and away from the external façade. Similarly, because a *domus* within an *insulae* was formed by the successive sale and/or purchase of neighboring space, any creation and renovation was probably small in scale and would not have required the participation of an architect. In fact, my research shows that architects are usually referenced in conjunction with monumental or civic projects. Thus, *artifex* would be more pertinent to the renovation of domestic space since their abilities were more suited to the repair or creation of decoration needed during the loss or acquisition of new space.

The *domus* introduces another aspect of ancient Roman domestic decoration significant to the history of interior design in that it compensates for architectural limitations and deficiencies. In this sense, decoration is utilized to create an illusion consistent with aesthetics, functions or the desires of inhabitants which is unachievable through architecture. Similar to the rejection of the term ‘decoration’, discussed in the introduction, this creation of artifice represents yet another struggle of the interior design profession. Because interiors exist within an architectural shell, it is commonly believed that the interior and its decoration should neither enhance, nor subvert, the architecture, but rather should blend consistently with it. Interestingly,
this prejudice against artifice did not begin in the Modern Movement with essays like ‘Ornament and Crime’ (1908), by Adolf Loos, but found an even earlier voice in the ancient writing of Vitruvius. As he states in Chapter V, ‘The Decadence of Fresco Painting’, of Book VII:

The fact is that pictures which are unlike reality ought not to be approved, and even if they are technically fine, this is no reason why they should offhand be judged to be correct, if their subject is lacking in the principles of reality carried out with no violations.265

To counter this longstanding attitude, I would argue that the creation of artifice through decoration is, in fact, one of interior design’s major attributes because it allows for the formation of space within space. It enables a transformation within structural confines to best suit the function or achieve the desired affect of the inhabitant or occupant. For instance, in the House of the Ceii, central portions of the atrium wall are painted solid black, resembling openings, to imply a space beyond, which might coincide with an ‘ideal’ *domus* floor plan. Similarly, the decorative partition within the House of the Wooden Partition appears to be a retrofit attempt to achieve a sense of the atrium style *domus* plan by reasserting the special independence of the *tablinum* after a transition to the peristyle type plan. Furthermore, this validates the study of interior design as a set of concepts separate from architecture due to its unique implications and potentially divergent theories. Though I still maintain that architecture and interior design are interdependent for the success of any building or space, I would also venture to say that the history of architecture cannot be fully written or understood until interiors gain a historical and theoretical background from those trained to view and interpret them.

To further illuminate the importance of ancient Roman domestic interiors to the history of interior design awareness must be raised concerning their high level of coordination and sophistication. This coordination exists on various levels, the first of which is the coordination of disciplines necessary for the completion of these interiors. As was discovered in Chapter 4, numerous artifex were needed to implement even one space within the ancient Roman domus and to make holistic environments of those interiors was contingent on the coordination of their multiple processes. This coordination is even more apparent in that the holistic quality of a space was more of a concern than the recognition or fame of any individual artifex. As Lawrence Richardson qualifies: “Pompeian painters, then, were not aiming at faithfulness to an original masterpiece; rather, they were interested in harmony within the particular room in which they were working.”266

Thus, the implementation of decoration evolved into a visual composition by the coordination of decorative surfaces. This holistic effect is achieved by all decorative surfaces working in concert with one another, including floors, walls, ceilings and even furniture, as was evident in both the House of the Cei and the House of the Wooden Partition. What is more, these interiors served as inspiration and influence for later styles and designers in the history of interior design, like Robert Adam. After studying in Italy during the mid-18th century Adam was inspired, among other things, by the excavations occurring in Pompeii and Herculaneum. Though a trained architect, many of Adam’s commissions consisted of the redecoration of existing interior spaces which he accomplished through the interpretation and incorporation of interiors he had seen in Rome. Adam’s style, which was avant-garde during its time, is now

---

266 Richardson, *A Catalog of Identifiable Figure Painters of Ancient Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabiae*, 12.
known as ‘Neo-Classicism’. Through his designs, Adam reveals an understanding of the ‘coordinated interior’ first achieved in ancient Rome. This is evident by the fact that he designed everything in a space, from the surfaces enclosing a space to ornamented doorknobs. [Fig. 5.1] In fact, the mere naming of one of his designs as ‘the Etruscan Room’ at Osterly Park (ca. 1775-77) indicates a convergence of studies on ancient Roman interiors was contemporary with the emergence of interior design practice. [Fig. 5.2] Yet, it appears that while the investigation of Pompeii and Herculaneum by disciplines like archaeology and art history continued beyond the 18th century, interior design has never entered the discourse. This becomes problematic because while Adam was reflecting on the interiors of ancient Rome, his interpretations eventually inspired subsequent major development in interior design. So, many periods currently studied and discussed in the history of interior design, or even used as design precedents, appropriate some manifestation of ancient Rome domestic interiors.

In addition to the coordination of interior surfaces, furniture and accessories in Roman interiors, they also expressed various social customs with a subtle symbolism for both the inhabitant of the *domus* as well as anyone visiting. Though briefly touched on throughout the thesis, the symbols inherent in ancient Roman domestic interior decoration can best be discussed in conjunction with much larger theoretical concepts, such as: ‘culture’, ideology/ies’, ‘identity’, ‘power’, ‘materiality’, ‘view’, ‘patronage’, ‘mode of production’, etc. Theories such as this, which have received much attention in recent design-related scholarship, might serve as future implications that can further respond to the research question: Can contemporary interior design theory and practice further illuminate the process of design and creation of these ancient interiors?
Figure 5.1
Page of designs from Robert Adam's *Works in Architecture*, 1773-78
[Source: Parissien, *Adam Style*, 52]
Figure 5.2
Etruscan Room at Osterly Park, designed by Robert Adam ca.1775-77
[Source: digital slide provided by Patreck Snadon]
Other possible implications of this thesis includes further questions concerning the ways in which certain aesthetic, functional and symbolic practices have consistently influenced interiors through history. For example, by considering the House of the Cæsii alongside general tendencies observable in modern day domestic decoration, can the effect of ancient Roman domestic interiors on contemporary domestic interiors be determined? When approaching the House of the Cæsii, one was to be impressed by the decorative artifice resembling rich materials and the application of architectural elements which overtly indicated the owner’s status. Once invited inside the ancient Roman *domus*, guests were greeted by an impressively open, grand and public space from which point they were ushered to various destinations, according to the purpose of their visit, by decoration. Finally, when the destination had been reached, decoration not only indicated the function of the room, as in dining within the *triclinium*, but the amount of time which one was meant to linger. These same notions apply to a typical contemporary domestic setting. For instance, the facades of houses that attempt to express the perceived status of the inhabitant(s) are aggrandized with seemingly expensive, yet typically artificial, materials as well as classical articulation, like columns and/or pediments. [Fig. 5.3] Furthermore, guests entering a house like this are typically greeted by a grandiose space, often referred to as the foyer. [Fig. 5.4] From this point, they are then invited further into the house depending on their relationship with the inhabitant(s) and the reason for their visit. This is aided, on a more subtle level, by the decorative elements within various private and semi-private spaces. An example of this might be a formal living or dining room which is expressed by the rich materials used or possibly the special furniture and heirlooms displayed. [Fig. 5.5] Finally, once within these spaces, decoration serves to indicate the amount of time one should remain. For example, if attending a dinner party the furniture is most likely formal dining chairs around a table. Because
Figure 5.3
Entrance of a modern day house compared to the House of the Celi (see also Fig 3.1)
Figure 5.4

Foyer of a modern day house compared to the House of the Celi (see also Fig 3.3)
Triclinium in the House of Julius Polibius
[Source: photograph by author, 2010]

Figure 5.5
Dining room of a modern day house compared to the triclinium in the House of Julius Polibius
these chairs are not extremely comfortable for extended visits it is thought that they should only be occupied for a short amount of time, whereas if guests are then invited into the living room it might be thought that they are welcome to stay longer as this is usually a more comfortable and casual setting.

So, while the topics of interior design and ancient Roman domestic decoration may initially seem disparate, I believe the information presented throughout this thesis indicates they are, in fact, contingent. To continue my attempt to initiate a continuous, reflective and reciprocal relationship between interior design and ancient Roman domestic interiors, ancient Roman domestic space needs to become a significant part of the history of interior design and the interior design discipline should engage the discourse concerning ancient Roman domestic interiors. As I discovered, the history and theory of interior design tends to be marginalized or subsumed by others that are more developed and substantiated, like art or architectural history. In lieu of endeavoring to reach a similar status by writing its own history, though, interior design has been content with depending on the history and theory of these other disciplines to augment its own. Regrettably, this has led to interior design history that emphasizes the mere aesthetic qualities of ancient spaces rather than reasons why such spaces were decorated, who designed them and how they were implemented. This lack of scholarly and theoretical history regarding interior design, specifically concerning ancient civilizations, could possibly correspond to issues discovered in the historiography of this thesis. Most studies, both avoid cross-disciplinary research and tend to divorce decoration from its context. It is difficult to discuss or study holistic ancient Roman interior environments when, conceptually, they have not been recognized to exist.


Pliny the Elder. *Natural History*. Translated by H. Rackham. Vol. 9, 10. London: Harvard University Press, 1938. (Cited pages will consist of only odd numbers because the book is divided such that the Latin translation occurs on the even pages adjacent to the English translation on the odd pages.)


Schoenauer, Norbert. 6,000 Years of Housing. New York: W.W. Norton, 2003.


