

**PARETI DIPINTE
AIPMA XIV**
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The Structural Division of Roman Wall Paintings (c. 200 BC – c. AD 100)

| THE STRUCTURAL DIVISION | THE FIRST EXAMPLES OF THE STRUCTURAL DIVISION | SAME ELEMENTS IN THE 'FOUR STYLES' |
|--|---|--|
| Masonry and marble imitations | c. 200 BC | The First Style (200 -80 BC) |
| Colonnaded pavilion | c. 200 BC (in stucco) c. 100 BC (painted) | The First Style (200 -80 BC) The Second, Third, and Fourth Style (80 BC -AD 79) |
| Propylon | c. 50 BC | The Second Style (80-15 BC) |
| Central aedicule | after 50 BC | The Late-Second, Third, and Fourth Style (30 BC- AD 79) |
| Scaenae frons | after 50 BC | The Late-Second and Fourth Style (30 BC- AD 79) |
| Movable structures: panels, tapestries, thin columns and candelabras | after 50 BC | The Late-Second, Third, and Fourth Style (30 BC- AD 79) |

1. In the 'Structural Division' wall paintings are grouped according to architectural structures of their pictorial composition. The most striking phenomenon is the rapid appearance of various kinds of architectural elements in Roman frescoes during the last half of the first century BC. For some examples of the 'Structural Division' see figure texts (figs. 2,4,5, and 6).

My study continues a discourse of advantages and problems of the 'Four Styles' of Roman wall paintings recently discussed by Eric M. Moormann (2018) in the XIII AIPMA-congress. Both the current chronology of the 'Four Styles' and 'Roman wall-facing styles' originate from August Mau's hypothetical constructions arranged in rigid evolutionary framework. Unfortunately the chronology of the 'Four Styles' is often in contrast to archaeological evidence: the ruins reveal that diverse room-types were decorated simultaneously with different wall paintings and earlier painting manners were repaired, modified as well as imitated later.

Mau's idea of the 'Four Styles' is brilliant and valuable, but it is not always fitting for contemporary studies, especially those focusing on spatial aspects. I developed an alternative division in my dissertation on the relationship between Roman domestic space and wall decoration (Koponen 2009). This *Structural Division of Ancient Roman Wall Paintings* (c. 200 BC – c. AD 100) is free from hypothetical periodization (fig. 1). Its terminology, however, follows earlier studies being familiar for ancient Roman scholars (see figure texts 2, 4, 5, and 6). One aim of my study is to challenge also other scholars to develop new ways of speaking about multitude of Roman frescoes.

Marcello Mogetta (2013) demonstrates that diverse wall-facing techniques of concrete do not always represent successive events and any periodization based solely on building technique must be taken with caution. His study underlines that circular reasoning is behind the identification of Roman concrete structures of the second century BC. The same is true with the Mau's four Pompeian wall painting styles and its derivatives.

Diverse wall painting styles were used to differentiate spaces of the Roman house in order to underline their diversity; this fact is noted by Vitruvius and clearly explained by August Mau. But when H. G. Beyen (1938, 1960) divided the Second Style into various phases, he emphasized the chronological development of the styles. After this the scholarly focus was on the creation of the detailed chronology. The spatial diversity of the interior decoration of the Roman house remained with little attention till the article by Daniela Corlàita Scagliarini (1974-76), in which she divided the Roman house into the dynamic spaces (*atrium*, *peristyle*, *corridors*) and the static spaces (*tablinum*, *dining room*, *cubiculum*), which were decorated differently due to their diverse use.

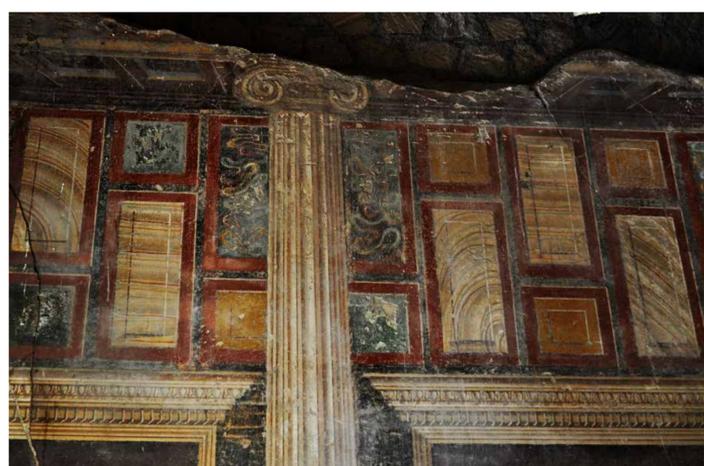
Due to the lack of exterior evidence, the division of the 'Four Styles' is mainly based on the stylistic criteria till the year 60 AD, after which we have numerous details revealing the execution dates of many wall paintings both in Rome and Pompeii. Before the year 60 AD, there are only few wall paintings whose execution period can be deduced from a graffito, an inscription, or a coin pressed in the wet plaster (figs. 2 and 3). Luckily, recent studies offer new exterior evidence of execution dates such as: pigment analysis by Regina Gee (2015 a, b), plaster analysis by Agneta Freccero (2018), binder analysis by Monica Gelzo *et al.* (2014), and a method of tracing painters and their workshops by observing depicted details by Domenico Esposito (2016, 2009 and 2004), Regina Gee (2015 a, b), and Francesca Bologna (2016). A more detailed and accurate picture of the chronology of Roman frescoes could emerge by combining this kind of information. In the future it would be useful to collect a large data of pigments, binders and plasters layers and their historical sequences. It is important that scholars of diverse fields collaborate, searching for new strategies and putting emphasis on minor details and materiality of Roman wall paintings.



2. The wall paintings of the Pyramid of Caius Cestius are a rare example of Roman frescoes with a fixed execution date. They represent panels or tapestries and candelabras. They are surprisingly simple and modest compared to the impressive marble exterior of the pyramid (photo: Author).



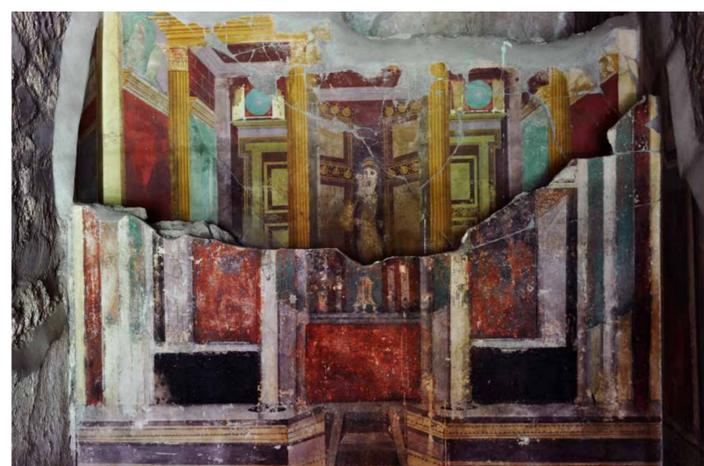
3. An inscription (CIL, VI 1374a) on the statue base reveals that the execution date of the pyramid is between 18-12 BC. It also tells that Caius Cestius had ordered in his testament to decorate his burial chamber with precious "Attalic" textiles. But his heirs were not able to fulfill this will due to a new Augustan sumptuary law. They sold the textiles and used the money on portrait statues. Therefore, these simple wall paintings cannot be regarded as a typical example of decorative fashion of the early Imperial era (photo: Author).



4. Diverse architectural elements of the 'Structural Division' are often combined in one wall painting. In the Villa Arianna (Stabiae) imitations of marble plates are combined with a colonnaded pavilion (photo: Author).



6. The decoration in the monochromatic white background of the Casa di Iulius Polybius (IX 13, 1-3, Pompeii) alludes to both panels and tapestries. In the centre of the rear wall is painted a central aedicule decorated with a mythological scene. The upper zone reminds of a multi-storey scaenae frons structure (photo: Author).



5. In the fresco of the Casa di M. Fabius Rufus (VII 16.17-22, Pompeii) an actress is peering through a central door of a scaenae frons. Later in the front of it has been constructed a new wall decorated with a similar architectural structure but painted more roughly and without an actress (photo: Author).

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