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Hadrian's Villa: the "Macchiozzo".

Preliminary Report of the Excavations (2014–23).

Part II: Structural Features: Brick Stamps, Mosaics, and Paintings

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Riassunto: Dal 2014 al 2023, l'Advanced Program of Ancient History and Art (APAHA Tibur) della Columbia University ha condotto nove campagne di scavo nell'area del Macchiozzo presso Villa Adriana. Gli scavi hanno portato alla luce tre grandi edifici residenziali — un edificio a medianum e due edifici a cortile — risalenti al periodo adrianeo, insieme a numerosi dati sulla lunga durata di vita del complesso. Il rapporto viene pubblicato in tre parti. La Parte II presenta gli elementi fissi: bolli laterizi, pavimenti a mosaico tessellato e pitture parietali e soffitti dipinti dai colori vivaci. I bolli laterizi in situ sono coerenti con l'ipotesi che gli edifici di quest'area siano stati costruiti come parte di un'unità più ampia all'interno della villa; si pubblica un nuovo tipo di bollo laterizio orbicolare prodotto nelle cave d'argilla dei Domitii nel 128 d.C. Sono stati scoperti venti pavimenti a mosaico adrianei; le somiglianze risultano particolarmente evidenti con i pavimenti degli Hospitalia, ma anche con alcuni mosaici di Ostia — in particolare quelli della Casa di Baccho e Arianna. I confronti più stretti per le pitture murali dell'edificio a Medianum, ancora in gran parte in situ, e per i quattro soffitti dipinti trovati in stato di crollo primario nello stesso edificio, si trovano anch'essi a Ostia, nell'Insula delle Ierodule.

Parole chiave: Villa Adriana, bolli laterizi, pavimenti a mosaico bianco e nero, pareti e soffitti dipinti, motivi decorativi (grifi, candelabri, maschere di Oceano).

Abstract: From 2014 to 2023, Columbia University's Advanced Program of Ancient History and Art (APAHA Tibur) conducted nine field seasons in the area of the "Macchiozzo" at Hadrian's Villa. The excavations brought to light three large residential buildings—a medianum building and two courtyard buildings—of the Hadrianic period, along with copious data on the long-term life of the complex. The report is being published in three installments. Part II presents the fixed elements: brick stamps, tessellated mosaic floors, and colorful wall and ceiling paintings¹. The in situ brick stamps are consistent with the buildings in this area being constructed as part of a larger unit within the villa; a new type of orbicular brick stamp produced in the claypits of the Domitii in 128 CE is proposed. Twenty Hadrianic mosaic floors have been revealed; the similarities are particularly striking with the floors of the Hospitalia, but also with some of the mosaics of Ostia—especially those of the House of Bacchus and Ariadne. The closest comparisons for the paintings on the walls of the Medianum Building, still largely in situ, and the four painted ceilings found in a state of primary collapse in the same building, are also found in Ostia, in the House of the Priestesses (Insula delle Ierodule)².

Keywords: Hadrian's Villa, brick stamps, black-and-white tessellated mosaic floors, painted walls and ceilings, decorative motifs (griffins, candelabra, Okeanos masks).

¹ Part I (*FOLD&R, Italy*(600)) presented the stratigraphic data, the periodization, and the masonry of the newly discovered structures. Part III (*FOLD&R, Italy*(602)) will provide an overview of the movable objects—ceramics, coins, sculpture, small finds—from the pre-modern layers; the sections of the reports are numbered I, II, or III accordingly. For a comprehensive discussion of the excavation results, please see the General Conclusions (III.7) in *FOLD&R, Italy*(602).

² Of the team members who contributed to this report, Daira Nocera served as field director; Joe Sheppard as trench supervisor (II.1); Valentina Vincenti as the floor specialist (II.2); Stella Falzone, Paolo Tomassini, Mathilde Carrive, and Florence Monier as the paintings specialists (II.3); and Jane Botsford Johnson as field assistant (and editorial supervisor, with the assistance of Andrea Kmetz-Sheehy).

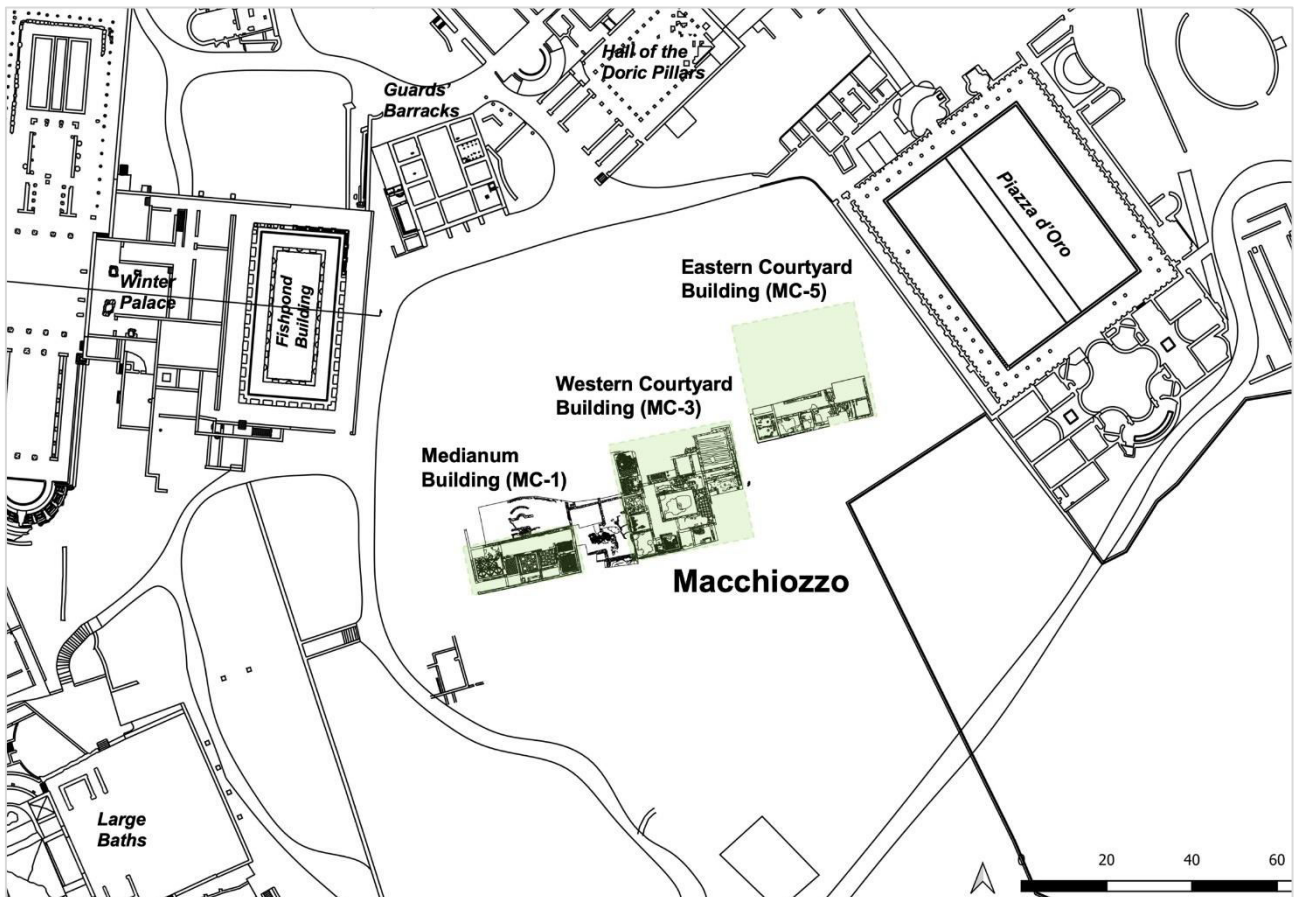


Fig. II.0.1. The APAHA Tibur excavation area in relation to nearby buildings at Hadrian's Villa.

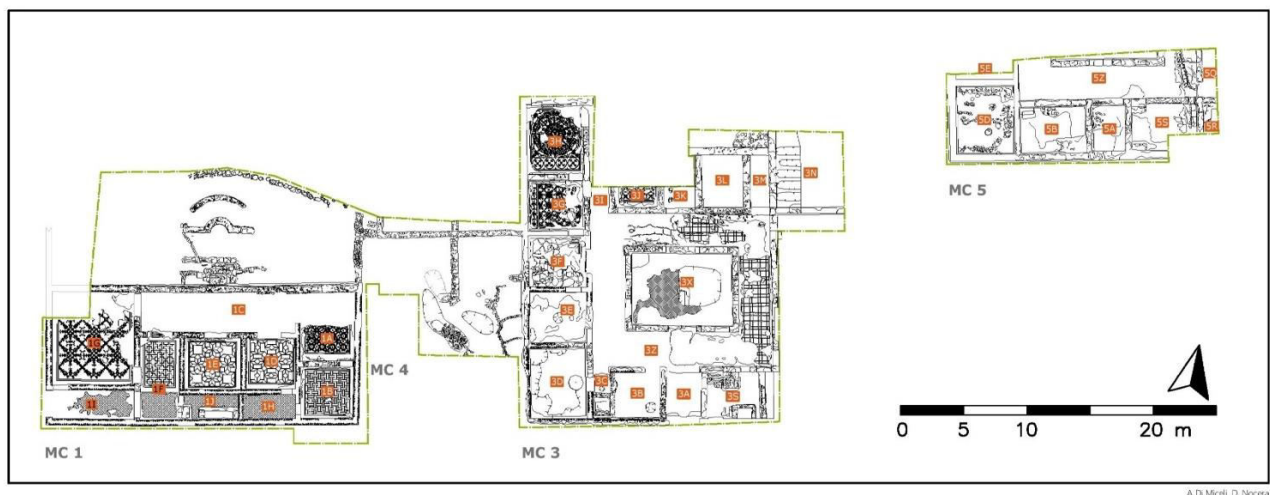


Fig. II.0.2. Plan of the archaeological remains in the Macchiozzo; the green dotted line indicates the excavation areas.

II.1. Brick stamps

II.1.1. Introduction

This preliminary report surveys the 296 brick stamps documented during the 2014–2023 excavations in the area of the Macchiozzo—the largest collection of such material from Hadrian's Villa since Herbert Bloch's foundational study³. Of particular importance for the architectural history of the site is the evidence found still in situ in the drain of the Medianum Building (MC-1) and the staircase of the Western Courtyard Building (MC-3; *Fig. II.0.2*). It is highly likely that twenty-six further specimens can be interpreted as belonging to the original buildings, since stamped tiles were found among the large contiguous panels of painted plaster that collapsed from the ceiling of MC-1 and similar assemblages from MC-3. The remaining 268 specimens were found on the surface or in soil deposits that cannot be linked to any original masonry context. Nevertheless, several clear patterns emerge from this large body of more sporadic evidence. Most notably, the supply of fired building materials for the area seems to have been dominated by a small number of individuals, in particular the network of Domitia Lucilla. Secondly, the well-provenanced material is consistent with the buildings in this area (*Fig. II.0.1*) being constructed as part of a larger unit within the villa, perhaps even as early as the Guards' Barracks (dated by a single *bipedalis* of 123 CE) or the Small Baths—two nearby buildings traditionally identified as the earliest structures built on roughly the same orientation as the Macchiozzo buildings⁴. The data thus support Bloch's overall conclusions about the prosopographical and chronological distributions for the villa, while further refining our knowledge of the nature of the building materials used for both construction and renovation. Finally, it has been possible to reconstruct a new type of brick stamp dating to 128 CE based on the detailed analysis of seven fragmentary specimens yet to be published.

II.1.2. General Catalog

The following table lists all 241 brick stamps from the area of the Macchiozzo excavations that can be identified with a type attested in the most updated version of Steinby's online clearinghouse, *I Bolli Doliari Romani dell'Italia Centro-Occidentale* (BDRICO), ordered according to the standard reference works, volume 15 of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (CIL), and Bloch's 1947 supplement (= *Suppl.*). Also included in the table are the dates for each stamp if the consular year is expressed internally—since chronologies for other second-century stamps have not been settled with the same degree of precision by scholarly consensus—or if the stamp is treated in Steinby's studies of late antique types⁵. The table is thus intended as a convenient snapshot of both the large body of material recovered from soil deposits during excavation and the few examples from primary contexts, which can be easily compared with Bloch's general catalog of the villa and his chronological chart⁶.

N.B. *Italicized entries* are unattested in Bloch's survey of the villa. Findspots have been provided if at least one specimen was found in a stratigraphically reliable context—either in situ or in association with a collapsed structure. Multiple types or subtypes have occasionally been collapsed into a single entry when identification is uncertain, but only when the dating, names, and text are the same (i.e., the only difference is in punctuation, paleography, or *signum*).

³ BLOCH 1947.

⁴ A chronology of the site is laid out in BLOCH 1947: 157–173 (cf. the summary, 182–183); see 127, n. 99 (= CIL 15.121) for the Guards' Barracks.

⁵ STEINBY 2001, 2020.

⁶ BLOCH 1947: 146–156 (part C) and 174 respectively. The findspots refer to rooms in two of the three buildings in the Macchiozzo, MC-1 and MC-3.

Reference	findspot	date	No. of specimens found
<i>CIL</i> 15.25a		117 CE	1
265		123 CE	1
268			1
270a	1F	123 CE	4
271		123 CE	1
272		123 CE	2
318			2
330			4
360		125 CE	1
361	3E, 3G		28
377a-b	3E		9
400			1
441b			1
478		123 CE	3
479a		123 CE	1
487a	3E	123 CE	3
497	1D		28
543		123 CE	1
635a	3G		20
649a-b	1B		6
692		123 CE	1
693	1B		8
803			2
804			1
808			3
811b			1
813a			1
829		124 CE	2
856	1B; 1D; 1I		3
<i>Suppl.</i> 238	3E		1
1026a	3D; 3E; 3S		47
1029a	1F	123 CE	2
1033		123 CE	1
1035			3
1037b	1J		1
1039		123 CE	4
1051			2
1057		137 CE	1
1106b	3D		1
1112	3Z		9
1208		123 CE	1
1228c		126 CE	1
1257 / 1258	1B		8
1299		123 CE	1
1342		123 CE	1
1343		126 CE	1
<i>Suppl.</i> 383A	3G		1
1419		123 CE	1
1519			1
1578a	3E	Maxentius: ser. 15	1
1597		Constantine: ser. 9	2
1629		Constantine: ser. 12	1
1647b-c	3E	Constantine: ser. 9	9

Most of these bricks were fragmentary and found in deposits dated by ceramics to several centuries after the construction of the adjacent buildings under Hadrian. It is plausible, however, that most of this stamped material was used somewhere in the construction or renovation of these particular buildings, especially since the vast majority of the excavated area fell either within MC-1, MC-3, and MC-5, or directly between the MC-1 and MC-3 structures in MC-4. Furthermore, these buildings were constructed using large quantities of brick and tile, among other materials.

In MC-3, the Western Courtyard Building, for example, the drainage channel running south from the central courtyard (**3X**) was lined at the top and bottom with large terracotta tiles. And the load-bearing walls and doorposts, faced in tufa, were reinforced at the bottom with brick—typically six courses. A second band, perhaps of three courses, appears about 140 cm above, judging from the only place where the walls have survived to that height. A greater concentration of fired clay was required for the subflooring and pillars beneath the floating hypocaust floor in Room **3F**, not to mention the double piers at each corner of the internal courtyard, which were evidently faced with brick from floor to ceiling. Many of the same foundation courses of brick are still visible in the walls of MC-1, i.e., the Medianum Building, and MC-5, the Eastern Courtyard Building. Furthermore, since the orientation, floor plan, scale, materials, and construction techniques of MC-3 and MC-5 have so far matched closely (see sect. I.3.3, *FOLD&R, Italy(600)*), it seems reasonable to assume that the original brickwork of the double piers in the MC-5 courtyard—which has so far only survived to a maximum height of five courses—would not also have extended to the roof, as it did in the MC-3 courtyard, **3X**.

The *medianum* apartments built in Ostia in the same decade were punctuated by a series of large windows in order to admit light. Assuming that this was also true of the northern wall of the central *medianum* corridor (**1C**), which was razed almost to the level of the foundations, any such openings in this exterior wall would also probably have been finished with brickwork to improve stability, rather than with blocks of volcanic stone. In any case, the uppermost masonry has clearly not survived intact for any of the three buildings in the Macchiozzo, and so a considerable volume of brick arches above the openings—as well as the second floors of the three buildings, and the tiles covering each roof—must have been dispersed in later centuries. For a local comparandum, one need look no farther than the heavily spoiled Guards' Barracks nearby (*Fig. II.0.1*).

Finally, the fact that there are clearly later phases of brick masonry still in situ perhaps makes it easier to understand why brick stamps dating to a later decade (e.g., *CIL* 15.1057 = 137 CE), or even century (*CIL* 15.1597, 1629, 1647 = Maxentius to Constantine), might be found at this site. Therefore, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the most parsimonious working hypothesis for all the brick stamps recovered during the excavations in the area of the Macchiozzo is simply that they came from the buildings in the immediate vicinity. Abundant evidence of other collapsed architectural materials has been found in this area, although the history of abandonment and spoliation at the site makes it impossible to prove such a connection *stricto sensu* for any randomly selected example.

II.1.3. Brick stamps otherwise unattested

Seven objects found in deposits during the excavation appear to have been marked with a new type of orbicular brick stamp produced in the well-documented claypits of the Domitii⁷. This conclusion was reached by creating a rubbing of each inscription with pencil and paper, which could then be superimposed for comparison with a light box, before developing a hypothetical prototype of the original stamp on tracing paper (*Fig. II.1.1*), as follows:

⁷ For the history of the *figlinae Domitianae*, see STEINBY 1974–1975: 47–58. Many thanks to Margareta Steinby and Janet DeLaine for their help and advice in discussing this stamp.

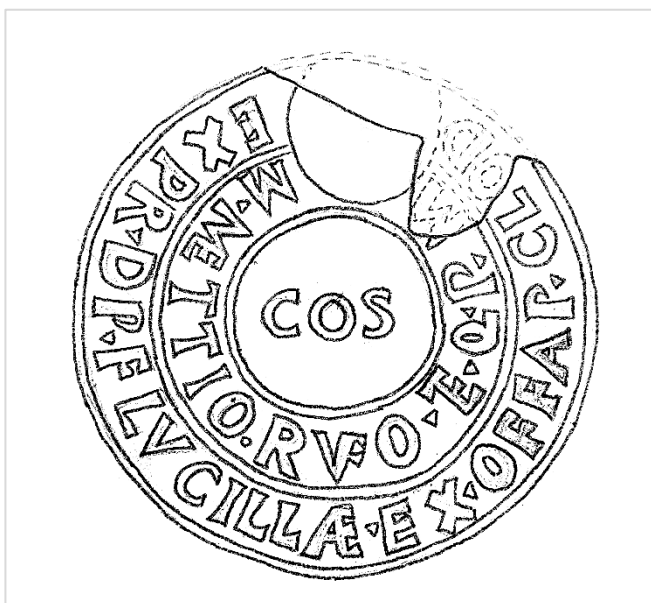


Fig. II.1.1.1. New type of orbicular brick stamp from the claypits of the Domitii.

Novum: MC2017/05, MC2017/122, MC2017/136, MC2018/43, MC2018/45, MC2019/129, MC2019/166⁸.

Form: 540 (i.e., height of *orbiculus* equals two lines of text).

Sig. 9.5, orb. 2.7. Lett. 0.8-0.9, 0.9, 0.8-0.9. Lin. 1, 2, 2.

1. EX · PR · D · P · F LVCILLAE · EX · OFF A · P · CL[. .]

2. M · M[^]ETTIO · RV[^]FO · E[^]T · Q · P · [.]

3. COS

Ex pr(aedis) D(omitiae) P(ubli) f(iliae) Lucillae ex off(icina) A(uli) P(onti?) Cl(od(iani)?) M(arco) Mettio Rufo et Q(uinto) P(omponio) [M(aterno)] co(n)s(ulibus).

Date: 128 CE.

The preliminary expansion offered here draws on the many published brick stamps and inscriptions that

already name the same individuals. The suffect consulship of 128 CE, shared by M. Iunius Mettius Rufus (*PIR*² I.777) and Q. Pomponius Maternus (*PIR*² P.736), is known from several other brick stamps (*CIL* 15.69, 939, 1409) and stone inscriptions, including the *Fasti Ostienses* for the Kalends of April and a dedication on June 1st of that year (e.g., *CIL* 6.30901). The figure of A. Pontius Clodianus, hypothesized in the reconstructed expansion, appears in combination with Domitia P. f. Lucilla (*PIR*² D.183) on at least two other brick stamps from the year 123 CE (*CIL* 15.1023, 1039)—four specimens of which have already been unearthed in the Macchiozzo—and one brick stamp from 127 (*CIL* 15. Suppl. 276)⁹. Elsewhere, Clodianus is identified in similarly abbreviated language as the *officinator* working with materials from the estate of M. Annus Libo (i.e., the brother-in-law of Domitia P. f. Lucilla)¹⁰.

II.1.4. Brick stamps too damaged or fragmentary to identify securely

Forty-eight further stamped fragments of brick remain that are too damaged or weathered to be identified securely with any known type. The size and form of the letters on several of these objects appear to match some of the stamps already found at the site in large quantities (e.g., *CIL* 15.693), but such provisional identifications still need to be reviewed systematically against images from the epigraphic corpora in order to eliminate the possibility that alternative options will lead to a false positive. None of these fragments were found in their original architectural setting, however, or even in a context that could be interpreted as a potential collapse.

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⁸ The publication format here follows STEINBY'S *BDRICO* project at the Institutum Romanum Finlandiae (<http://www.bollidoliar.org/index.php/segna-diacritici>).

⁹ Four examples of *CIL* 15.1039 have been discovered at the time of writing (MC2017/129, MC2018/22, MC2021/17, MC2023/01), while another specimen (MC2021/54) that seems to present the string of letters *CLOD* is too fragmentary to identify securely with this type.

¹⁰ *CIL* 15. Suppl. 146: *de pr(aedis) M. An(ni) Lib(onis) ex off(icina) A. Pon(ti) Clod(iani) Iuliano et Casto cos.*

II.2. The floors

For the first time, mosaics from the Hadrianic period are coming to light that are comparable to those found in the Hospitalia in 1881¹¹. While the latter might have been intended for the praetorians of the emperor's personal guard, we still do not know the functions of the personnel who lived in the Macchiozzo buildings; nevertheless, these discoveries shed new light on the accommodations for those who inhabited the villa near the imperial court.

Recent excavations have uncovered nine mosaic floors and one white mortar floor in MC-1, and eleven mosaic floors and one of *cocciopesto* (*cementizio a base fittile*) in building MC-3, for a total of twenty mosaic (*tessellata*) and two mortar floors¹², all from the Hadrianic period (*Fig. II.0.2*). Three mosaic floors are completely white and without decoration (**1H**, **1I**, **3X**) while all the others are black and white, except for a small fragment with rare polychrome *tesserae* scattered randomly on the white background in Room **3D**. In eight cases the designs are geometric, and in eight they are geometric-vegetal. Some floors are perfectly preserved (**1B**, **1D**, **1E**, **1F**, **1H**, **1J**, **1I**, **3S**), or, despite more or less large gaps, provide a general view of the floor (**1A**, **3B**, **1G**, **3E**, **3G**, **3H**, **3X**, **3Z**); two are badly damaged, though it is possible to understand their overall design (**3F**, **3J**); and only in five cases (**1C**, **3A**, **3D**, **3K**, **3M**) are the floors almost completely destroyed.

II.2.1. MC-1

The similarity between the Medianum Building, MC-1, and the residential buildings in Ostia is clear: the main rooms (**1A**, **1G**), with richer decoration, are located at the east and west ends of the *medianum* corridor (**1C**); the rooms of intermediate importance (**1D**, **1E**, **1F**), with simpler designs, are located in the middle; and finally the service rooms (**1H**, **1J**, **1I**) are located at the back, in this case with either white mortar (**1J**) or simple white tessellated mosaic (**1H**, **1I**) floors.

Room **1A** (*Fig. II.2.1*, top) has a design based on a network of squares and rectangles enriched with vegetal elements arranged in a pattern of four pairs of facing S-shaped vegetal volutes on the diagonals with whorls at their ends, forming octagons with concave sides, each containing a small four-petaled flower. The facing S-shapes motif was used for a long time, especially from the Hadrianic period onward, and continued into the third century¹³.

Floor **1G** (*Fig. II.2.2*), on the other hand, has a more complex pattern: it is based on a double grid of straight lines, both diagonal and parallel to the walls, which intersect to form squares that are oriented accordingly. This pattern consists of a rich vegetal decoration of vines, volutes, calyces, flowers, and buds of various shapes and sizes, interrupted at the intersections of the two grids by circles with eight-pointed stars in the center, which are also found on floor **3J**.

Four other rooms (**1B**, **1D**, **1E**, **1F**) are decorated exclusively with simple geometric patterns inspired by traditional designs, modified to make them more original. The design of Room **1B** (*Fig. II.2.1*, bottom) is a grid of interlaced, outlined bands that resembles a woven mat¹⁴. This pattern is rare in tessellated mosaics.

¹¹ On Lanciani's excavations of the Hospitalia and the archival documents pertaining to them, see PARIBENI 1994: 37.

¹² For the sake of completeness, we specify here that *cocciopesto* floors are composed of a mixture of lime and crumbled earthenware and are therefore red to pink in color (e.g., Room **3S**); white mortar pavements, on the other hand, are made of lime and crumbled white stone, usually travertine (*lapis Tiburtinus*), and are therefore white in color (e.g., Room **1J**). On the problems of the terminology of *cocciopesto* see TANG 2019: 16–17.

¹³ This motif is also found in Ostia, for example, in the center of a tessellated mosaic in the House of the Muses, dated to 130 CE, see BECATTI 1961: 132, no. 263, pls. LXVII–LXVII or even in compositions extended to the entire floor, as in the Schola del Traiano, which probably dates, however, to the reign of Septimius Severus (BECATTI 1961: 200–201, no. 379, pl. LXXXVIII). For other comparisons see BECATTI 1961: 201, n. 6.

¹⁴ *Décor* I, 140 a.



Fig. II.2.1. MC-1, Rooms **1A** (top) and **1B** (bottom).

Room **1D** has an outlined orthogonal pattern of adjacent rectangles and groups of four lozenges alternately recumbent and upright, all framed by two rows of black *tesserae*¹⁵; Room **1E** (partly visible in Fig. II.3.9), on the other hand, has stars of eight lozenges separated by five squares. Geometric decorations with rhombuses—almost always in groups of eight—converging in the center to form stars are among the most widespread in the Roman tessellated mosaic landscape. With many variations, the pattern appears from the second half of the first century BCE and continues for a long time, including the entire third century CE¹⁶; at Hadrian's Villa, however, it appears only in three mosaics of the Hospitalia¹⁷ and in a room on the second floor of the Latin Library¹⁸, but always in a different pattern.

Room **1F** (Fig. II.2.3) linked the rooms facing the garden to the service rooms at the back of the house; the northern part of the room is decorated with a geometric motif, composed of meandering swastikas and double Ts framed by two lines of black *tesserae*¹⁹; but again there are no identical comparanda, due to small variations in the basic pattern. In fact, in one area the pattern is interrupted by rectangles and a small square; since there are no signs of ancient restoration, these must be the artisan's errors or afterthoughts²⁰. Instead of marble, this room has a mosaic threshold. Mosaic thresholds are very rare at the villa, and always very simple, but in this case the decoration consists of four black rectangles and a square in the middle containing a small chessboard of nine black and white squares.

The southern part of **1F** is limited to white *tesserae*. There is an abrupt change in quality at the transition between the decorated area and the white homogeneous field, which is evidenced not only by the

¹⁵ *Décor I*, 182 d.

¹⁶ *Décor I*, 173 b; for a summary of the use of this motif GUIDOBALDI, GRANDI, PISAPIA, BALZANETTI, BIGLIATI 2014: 325–326, no. 299a, pl. L.

¹⁷ BLAKE 1936: 81–82, 204, pl. 12,4; DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: HS 19, 48–49, 360–361; MACDONALD, PINTO 1997: 182; VINCENTI 2017: 146, no. 76a, pl. XLII. BLAKE 1936: 80, pl. 11,1; DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: HS 7, 40–41, 360; VINCENTI 2017: 150–151, no. 79b, pl. XLV. BLAKE 1936: 80, pl. 11,2; DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: HS 8, 42, 360; VINCENTI 2017: 153–155, no. 81b, pl. XLVI.

¹⁸ DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: 388–389; VINCENTI 2017: 112–113, no. 49, pl. XXXVIII.

¹⁹ This is a variation of the *Décor I* motif, 188 a. The design, again with variations, is also found with geometric figures alternately fielded in black and white and not outlined. An example is found in Rome, on the Palatine, in the so-called Ponte di Caligola, dated to the reign of Domitian (MORRICONE MATINI 1967: 74, pl. XV, fig. 30); another is in Ostia (Reg. III, ins. II, 8) and dates between 110 and 120 CE (BECATTI 1961: 97, no. 169, fig. 28).

²⁰ Inaccuracies and errors in the floors are not uncommon in areas of the villa that were not intended for the court but for personnel, such as the Hospitalia; VINCENTI 2017: 146, no. 76a, pl. XLII; 151, no. 79b, pl. XLV). Inaccuracies can also be seen in the floor in **3G**.



Fig. II.2.2. MC-1, Room 1G.



Fig. II.2.3. MC-1, Room 1F: threshold at the top right, the larger mosaic tesserae to the south, bottom right.

lack of decoration, but also by the size of the *tesserae*, which increases from 1 cm on each side to 1.5–2 cm (bottom right, Fig. II.2.3). A curtain must have separated the two parts of the room, since no trace of a door was found²¹.

The rooms in the rear part of the house must have been intended for services, since they are characterized by simple white mosaics (1H, 1I) with *tesserae* of 1.5 cm per side, sometimes with an irregular cut. One room (1J), which must have served as a kitchen (see sect. I.3.3.1 and Fig. I.3.3, FOLD&R, Italy(600)), was paved with white waterproof mortar—a unique case at the villa in the imperial period. In fact, it is typical of Tivoli, where the abundance of travertine has always favored floors made with this stone, crushed, and mixed with lime, creating a very solid and resistant mortar²².

Finally, the floor of the long *medianum* corridor (1C) was completely removed in antiquity (see sect. I.4.3 and Fig. I.4.14); at the time of the excavation, two tiny fragments remained near the southern wall, which preserved a narrow white border and some black framing *tesserae*. The tenacious preparation was also destroyed, preventing any firm assumptions about the decoration. Numerous fragments that may have belonged to 1C, mostly with geometric designs, were found out of context during the excavation, but they have not yet been reassembled.

II.2.2. MC-3

Almost all the mosaics in MC-3 collapsed and sank a few centimeters below the original level, as evidenced by the door thresholds. The decoration again indicates the degree of each room's importance: the following description will

²¹ Floors with *tesserae* of different sizes to define spaces are very rare at the villa. One is found in the Maritime Theater, where part was in a room and part was in a small open-air courtyard (DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: TM 44, 198, 432; VINCENTI 2017: 93, no. 37, pl. IX) and another is in the Imperial Triclinium, in a floor that was restored in ancient times; the section with larger mosaics was made during an expansion of the room (DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: TI 18–19, 68, 70–71, 369; VINCENTI 2017: 132–133, nos. 65–66, pl. XVI).

²² Only one other floor of this type is known in the villa, but it belongs to the republican phase and is decorated with stone *litici* and marble inlays in pink and sea-green: DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: PI 30, 111–112, 412; VINCENTI 2017: 39–41, no. 2, pl. I.



Fig. II.2.4: MC-3 Room 3H.



Fig. II.2.5: MC-3, Room 3B; partition wall on the left (phase III: 300–350 CE).

start from the most complex and move toward the simplest.

Of all the Macchiozzo mosaics, the one in Room 3H shows the greatest decorative effort (Fig. II.2.4). A threshold area to the south indicates the main entrance to the room: circles are formed by four very thin *peltae*²³ with groups of four black calyx flowers in the center, which are also found in the beautiful mosaic in Room 3B. The mosaic has acanthus bushes at the four corners, and the central part has a complex composition: sixteen candelabra with shoots and flowers converge toward the center, where, within a circular frame, there is a large flower identical to that of one of the Hospitalia floors²⁴. Among the vegetal elements, there are various types of carefully rendered birds, including a hoopoe and larks; the birds are arranged in pairs, facing each other. At the base of eight of the sixteen candelabra are stylized faces, from which shoots and tufts of leaves branch out.

As is always the case with floors of geometric vegetal design, no identical comparisons can be found, but this mosaic bears a strong resemblance to a triclinium floor in the House of Bacchus and Ariadne at Ostia, especially the part of the floor visible between the three couches²⁵. The central parts of two rooms in the Hospitalia are also similar, but with a less complex design, no animals, and smaller dimensions²⁶. Mosaics of comparable quality are found in four other rooms (3B, 3E, 3G, 3J), with vegetal geometric designs based on modules that were always repeated four times on each side and were therefore easier to execute.

Room 3B was divided in Period III (300–350 CE) by a partition wall on the west side that interrupted and covered the mosaic (Fig. II.2.5), creating Room 3C (Fig. II.0.2). During restoration work carried out in 2023, it was discovered that the black *tesserae* had been placed on the white mortar according to a preliminary design sketched directly on the mortar bed. The *tesserae* in the field are 0.8 cm in size, while those connecting the mosaic to the walls are 1.5 cm in size and all white. The field is occupied by a square-based module decorated with a complicated vegetal design. Black calyces, also found in Room 1G, are among the various motifs, and the

²³ Circles formed by four elongated *peltae* are also found in the central part of a floor of the Hospitalia (BLAKE 1936: 81–82, 204, pl. 12,4; DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: HS 19, 48–49, 360–361; MACDONALD, PINTO 1997: 182; VINCENTI 2017: 146–147, no. 76b, pl. XLII).

²⁴ BLAKE 1936: 81–82, 204, pl. 12,4; DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: HS 19, 48–49, 360–361; MACDONALD, PINTO 1997: 182; VINCENTI 2017: 146–147, no. 76b, pls. XLII–XLIII.

²⁵ BECATTI 1961: 154–155, no. 292, pl. LXXV–LXXVI.

²⁶ BLAKE 1936: 81, 203, pl. 13,1; DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: HS 5, 38, 360–361; MACDONALD, PINTO 1997: 182; VINCENTI 2017: 145, no. 75c, pl. XLII; 149–150, no. 78c, pl. XLIV.



Fig. II.2.6: MC-3, Room 3E. The circular cut in the middle dates back to phase III (300–350 CE).



Fig. II.2.7: MC-3, Room 3G, the band decorated with a garland is on the left.

groups of four small black flowers in the middle of the room, positioned on the central axes, are the same as those used in the threshold area of Room 3H. This mosaic again recalls a floor in the House of Bacchus and Ariadne (III xvii.5)²⁷ in Ostia, in which heads and volutes branch out from squares with concave sides.

Room 3E (Fig. II.2.6) also yielded a beautiful mosaic with a geometric floral design, consisting of evenly spaced circles with large white four-petaled flowers in the center and four oval tufts on the outside; the resulting spaces are filled with a crosslet variant with chevrons²⁸.

The mosaic in Room 3G (Fig. II.2.7) has a band decorated with a bright garland on the western side. The pattern is very schematic—it consists of nine tangent semicircles with volutes and inflorescences at the apexes²⁹. Two black frames of two rows of *tesserae* enclose the field; it has a geometric design that can be likened to an orthogonal pattern of tangent circles and poised concave voluted octagons³⁰. Nevertheless, the floor is beautiful and elegant, with a light and airy design. Octagons with concave sides ending in scrolls and flowers are also found in one of the Hospitalia cubicles, although in this case the design is less elegant and more schematic³¹.

The floor of Room 3J (Fig. II.2.8) has a less complex decoration than the previous two rooms: the field contains a geometric vegetal design formed by tangent circles, each composed of four very elongated *peltae*. There is a four-petaled flower at the points of contact, and inside each circle four lotus flowers are arranged around a large eight-petaled flower. In the spaces between the circles are eight-pointed stars with small disks with a black field in the center. The motif is very similar to that found in the central part of a *cubiculum* in the Hospitalia³². The circles in 3J, however, are formed by elongated *peltae*³³, as in the threshold area of Room 3H, and not by simple arcs; the vegetal fillings and the decoration of the spaces between the borders are also different.

²⁷ BECATTI 1961: 155–158, no. 293, pl. LXXX.

²⁸ *Décor* II, pl. 39.

²⁹ No door seems to open in the western wall of the room, so it was not a threshold.

³⁰ *Décor* I, 157 b.

³¹ BLAKE 1936: 81, 203, pl. 12,1; DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: *HS* 4, 37–38, 360–361; VINCENTI 2017: 140–141, no. 73b, pl. XL.

³² BLAKE 1936: 81, 203, pl. 12,1; DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: *HS* 4, 37–38, 360–361; VINCENTI 2017: 141, no. 73c, pl. XL. The motif is similar to *Décor* I, 231c.

³³ Circles similar to these are found in a *cubiculum* in the Hospitalia (BLAKE 1936: 81–82, 204, pl. 12,4; DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: *HS* 19, 48–49, 360–361; MACDONALD, PINTO 1997: 182; VINCENTI 2017: no. 76b, pp. 146–147, pl. XLII).



Fig. II.2.8. MC-3, Room 3J, circles formed by elongated peltae.

Variation was a constant feature in vegetal geometric designs, since the details were left to the imagination and skill of the craftsman. It is clear that this is the same cartoon with minor modifications, although it is not possible to be certain that it is the same workshop.

In addition to the five geometric vegetal floors in MC-3 there are four with a simpler geometric design. The first, in Room 3F, was almost completely destroyed by the collapse of the hypocaust used to heat this room; only a few fragments remain in the northeast corner, but fortunately they allow us to understand the overall decoration of the floor. The mosaic consisted of both square (1 cm) and rectangular (1 x 2.5 cm) *tesserae*, all 1 cm thick. The latter are used only in the border, where the white rectangles are arranged in a somewhat irregular basketweave pattern; the field, framed by two thin black lines, is instead in straight white warp, decorated with a *semis* of small serrated squares, each composed of twelve black *tesserae* with a white one in the center, spaced 15 cm apart³⁴. As in some other villa mosaics, black *tesserae* were randomly inserted into the field; in the part that remains, four were noted.

The motif of the monochrome serrated squares is less common than that of the so-called diamonds³⁵, in which there are gradient colors. It is used in both thresholds and frames, especially in the second century CE, and its use seems to have continued into the third century³⁶. The most direct comparison, however, is found in the Villa of the Quintilii in Rome, also from the Hadrianic period. The characteristic feature of this mosaic is the presence of a border in a basketweave pattern, which is a real anomaly in the second century CE and in the imperial period in general, since it is typical of the central decades of the first century BCE—it is an elegant reference to the republican period. It is likely that

³⁴ The motif is similar to *Décor* I, 113e, punctuated with toothed squares in contrasting colors, although it is impossible to tell if the rows of squares were staggered.

³⁵ *Décor* I, 113f.

³⁶ A mosaic from a tomb on the Via Ostiense, excavated by Lugli, should be dated to this period; he does not propose a chronology for the floor, found in a room with paintings and masonry dated to the early third century CE (LUGLI 1919: 289, 331–332, fig. 24; BLAKE 1940: 121, pl. 11, no. 5). The design is found, though not with great frequency, in various parts of Italy in floors dated to the second century CE.

some of the white rectangular *tesserae* used in the nearby courtyard (**3X**) were also used on the strip on the edge of the floor, adding a touch of refinement to this mosaic.

The porticoed corridor (**3Z**) that surrounds the central courtyard has a mosaic of *tesserae* with an average side of 1.5 cm, forming a grid of rectangles and squares of two different modules. It is extremely simple, outlined only by two rows of black *tesserae*. The choice of the basic pattern, and the use of *tesserae* of considerable size—even reaching 2 cm in some cases—mean that this mosaic is of medium-low quality. The quality of the porticoed corridor is comparable to that of the courtyard and the floors of some of the corridors of the villa intended for subordinate personnel³⁷.

A completely white mosaic is preserved in the central courtyard, **3X**, with *tesserae* averaging 1.5 cm on each side, but with a thickness of 3 cm to better withstand moisture; this fact, together with a manhole located in the center, indicates that it was intended to remain open-air. The *tesserae* are arranged in parallel rows that are not regular in shape and size³⁸, such that the weave pattern is not very precise and the gaps between one *tessera* and another can be quite large. The mosaic is preserved only in the western part of the courtyard. Where it has been destroyed, the preparation is visible, composed of tuff flakes (20 x 10 cm on average) densely bonded together and set in a very tough gray mortar. Tessellated monochrome mosaics are very common in the villa and are used in many situations³⁹: in service corridors, the Heliocaminus Baths, and the terraces, and also in open spaces such as around the Fishpond Building, Roccabruna, or the Maritime Theater, where there is another courtyard paved with white mosaic⁴⁰.

Finally, in Room **3D**, the mosaic is almost completely lost; a small fragment remains near the south wall and the southwest corner, composed of irregularly arranged *tesserae*. Its characteristic feature is that a few *tesserae* of different colors—black, gray, pink, and yellow—are scattered among the white ones. The irregularly scattered polychrome pattern can be found in other floors of the villa, both from the republican and Hadrianic periods, though it is practically absent in the production outside the imperial residence. The great abundance of colored marble and limestone fragments probably induced the craftsmen to reuse them as colored *tesserae*⁴¹.

A *cocciopesto* pavement located in Room **3S** can be added to these mosaics. Pavements of this kind, apart from those of the republican villa, dating from the second to the first century BCE, are rare at the villa: only one other is known, in the latrine of the Guards' Barracks (*Fig. II.0.1*)⁴². The pavement in this service Room is extremely modest—it was a very durable hydraulic mortar suitable for an environment where water was constantly used.

II.2.3. Conclusions

Hadrian's Villa has yielded surprisingly few tessellated mosaics with black-and-white designs, which were so common on the Italian peninsula throughout the second century CE.

There are precise hierarchies in the Macchiozzo floorings as a whole, from the simple white mosaics in the service rooms and the open courtyard to what can be considered the most beautiful black-and-white mosaic floor at the villa, in Room **3H**. The level of execution is generally very good and in line with the production of the period, intended for the upper-middle class. As one might expect, the similarities are particularly striking with the floors of the Hospitalia, but also with some of the tessellated mosaics of Ostia, especially those of the House of Bacchus and Ariadne.

³⁷ The mosaics with medium-size *tesserae* in the villa are almost exclusively reserved for the less important buildings not intended for the emperor's inner circle, such as the *Hospitalia*, the Large Baths, the western substructures of the *Canopus*, and the Guards' Barracks (VINCENTI 2017: 299–300).

³⁸ Triangular, rectangular, and even trapezoidal *tesserae* have been noted; some reach 2.5 cm on the side, while others do not exceed 1 cm.

³⁹ On white mosaics and their use in the villa, see VINCENTI 2017: 306. Rare colored *tesserae* are also found, for example, in a floor of the Imperial *Triclinium* (DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: *TI* 7, 59–60, 369; VINCENTI 2017: 127–128, no. 58, pl. IX).

⁴⁰ DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: *TM* 44, 198, 432; VINCENTI 2017: 93, no. 37, pl. IX.

⁴¹ On the irregular polychrome and black-and-white speckling in the floors of the villa, see VINCENTI 2017: 306–307.

⁴² On the latrine of the Guards' Barracks, JANSEN 2003: 141, no. 26; for mortar pavement in the villa, DE FRANCESCHINI 1991: *CV* 15, 174, 439; VINCENTI 2017: 192–193, no. 115, pl. I.

In a context as exceptional as the residence of a Roman emperor, the Macchiozzo's floors are quite modest and certainly not meant for Hadrian's inner circle and the highest-ranking members of the court, although the black and white mosaics with geometric vegetal designs were innovative by the standards of the time and required skilled artisans capable of shaping individual *tesserae* to follow the complex patterns.

Neither the floors with geometric motifs nor those with vegetal decoration have identical comparanda within the villa, but this is not surprising since the former are few in number and the latter offered craftsmen the opportunity to create infinite variations. Nevertheless, some individual elements such as flowers, corollas, calyces, and buds are almost identical to the floors of the Hospitalia, and in one case (3J) it seems possible that the same cartoon was used as in one of the *cubicula*—there was certainly at least an exchange of ideas and models among the craftsmen working in the villa; moreover, it is clear that the workers at the imperial site wanted to make floors that were always different from each other, in a constant search for originality.

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II.3. The painted decoration of the Medianum Building (MC-1)

II.3.1. Introduction

Of particular interest during the excavation of the building was the discovery of the paintings on the walls, still largely in situ, together with numerous fragmentary materials pertaining to them in the collapse layers. Ceilings in a state of primary collapse, in contact with the floors of the rooms investigated, were also brought to light (see *Fig. I.4.9, FOLD&R, Italy(600)*).

The condition of the wall paintings and the collapsed ceilings required the development of a specific protocol for all phases of the work: in situ documentation, ceiling removal, conservation of the fragments, reassembly, and graphic reconstruction. These methods have been the subject of specialized training in the study of ancient painted plasterwork, which has taken the form of an annual workshop organized since 2017 by Columbia University and the École française de Rome, in collaboration with the University of Poitiers, AOROC CNR-ENS, and the Centro Studi Pittura Romana Ostiense⁴³. The first results of this project were presented at the 2019 and 2022 AIPMA conferences⁴⁴.

II.3.2. The wall paintings

At the time of their discovery, the walls of all the rooms (preserved, as mentioned in Part I, to varying degrees, up to a maximum height of 1.80 m) were highly compromised by the trees and vegetation that covered the Macchiozzo. The precarious state of the plaster made it necessary to carry out an immediate first consolidation of the paintings in situ. A subsequent superficial cleaning of the best-preserved walls made it possible to see some details of the decorative schemes⁴⁵. Fragments from the walls were also found collapsed in the accumulation layers in the Medianum Building. The decoration of these fragments is generally degraded and difficult to discern. Despite these difficulties, several decorative schemes can be identified.

⁴³ We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Istituto Villa Adriana – Villa d'Este, and in particular its Director, A. Bruciati, for the hospitality shown to us at the Sanctuary of Hercules in Tivoli, where the workshop has been held since 2017. We are especially grateful to M. Angle, V. Carbonara, S. Del Ferro, V. Fondi, B. Caponera, and E. Petrarca for their support. For the organization of the workshop, we would like to thank the École française de Rome and particularly Nicolas Laubry and Ilaria Parisi. We would also like to thank all the workshop participants who have contributed their enthusiasm and skills since 2017.

⁴⁴ CARRIVE *et al.* 2024; CARRIVE *et al.* forthcoming.

⁴⁵ In order not to jeopardize the preservation of the pictorial apparatus, and in the hope of a general cleaning and restoration once the full excavation of the building is completed, the rooms investigated so far have been backfilled.



Fig. II.3.1. Room 1A, in situ paintings on the west wall (photo D. Nocera).

II.3.2.1. Rooms 1A and 1B

The paintings of Rooms 1A and 1B (Fig. II.0.2) feature compositions with red and yellow backgrounds. In Room 1A, only the southern half of the room has been preserved, the other half having been completely leveled. The lower part of the wall was covered by a marble socle approximately 40 cm high⁴⁶. It consisted of elongated rectangular slabs of *portasanta* marble, some of which remain in place, although fractured. Above, the painted plaster is badly damaged: the finishing coat (*intonachino*) has collapsed in many places, leaving only the preparatory mortar visible. As a result, only 20 cm of the paint layer remains, and it appears worn (Fig. II.3.1). Alternating fields of yellow and red (with perhaps two shades of red), reminiscent of the ceiling's chromatic range (see sect. II.3.3.1 below), are all that can be identified.

The paintings of Room 1B are slightly better preserved, up to a maximum height of 1.40 m (Fig. II.3.2). The lower zone, about 50 cm high, is red ochre, with no preserved pattern. A band of burgundy stripes separates it from the yellow middle zone. Red rectangles framed by a darker burgundy or black band extend into both the yellow and red zones: this is probably part of an *aedicula*, placed in the foreground of the composition⁴⁷. The yellow panels must have been edged with vertical motifs (friezes? planted candelabra?), of which only faint traces remain. On the northern wall, we can make out a shield motif (or a kind of elongated *pelta*) painted in red cinnabar, reminiscent of the one with a blue background in the ceiling friezes in Room 1A.

⁴⁶ Marble revetments, also present in the *medianum* corridor (1C) and in Room 1G (whose wall paintings are not preserved), are not otherwise attested within the *medianum* typology of *insulae*, well known in Ostia.

⁴⁷ The paintings of rooms 7, 8, 9, and 11 of the House of the Priestesses in Ostia provide comparanda for the *aediculae*: FALZONE, PELLEGRINO 2014: 119–132, 135–143, figs. 95–113, 118–129.



Fig. II.3.2. Room 1B, in situ paintings on the east wall in the course of excavation (photo D. Nocera).

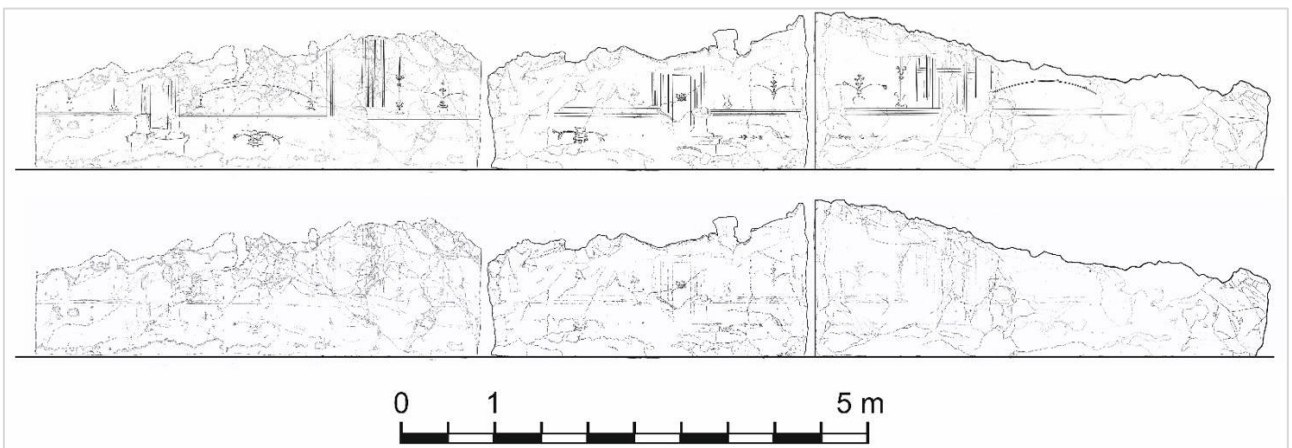


Fig. II.3.3. Room 1D, drawing of the in situ paintings (drawing M. Carrive).

II.3.2.2. Rooms 1D and 1E

A second decorative scheme is found in Rooms 1D and 1E; it is characterized by a white lower zone, topped by large yellow panels separated by *aediculae* on a white background. The plaster in these two rooms is preserved up to a height of 1.40 m, but it is covered by calcareous concretions. In anticipation of the restoration work, a 1:1 drawing was made by placing a plastic sheet directly on the walls, revealing numerous details. The digitization and processing of this

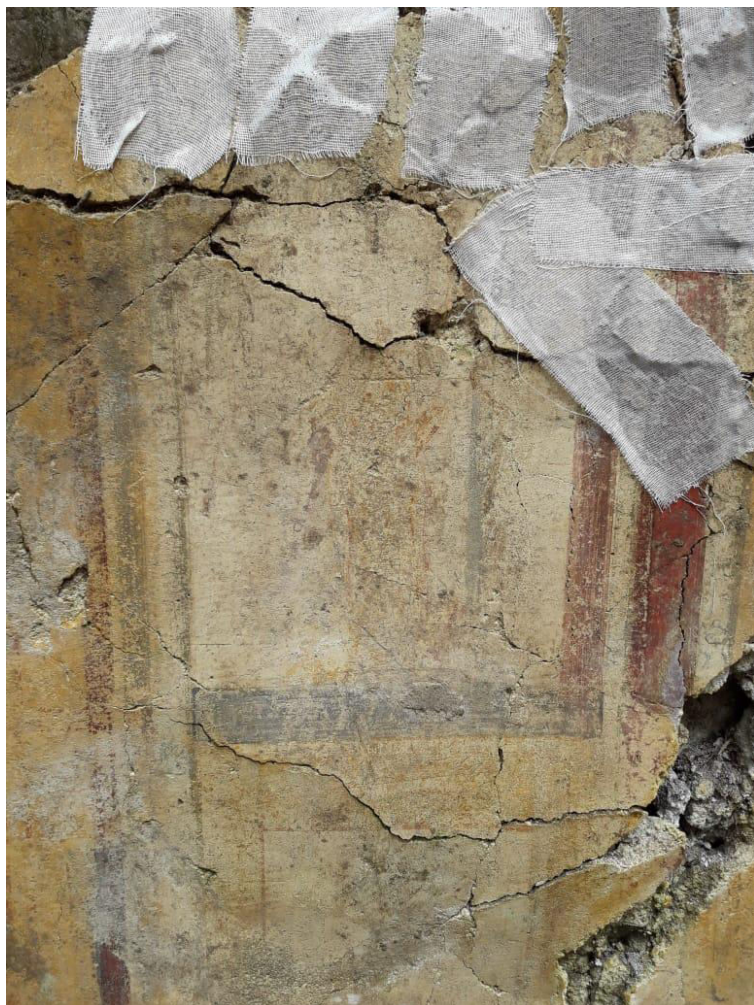


Fig. II.3.4. Room 1D, detail from the east wall (photo M. Carrive).

documentation is still in progress for Room 1E, but is almost complete for Room 1D, so we will focus on the latter (Fig. II.3.3). The plaster has been preserved mainly on the east, south, and west walls. On the north wall, only a low, worn panel to the east of the doorway to Room 1C has survived.

The white lower register, about 50 cm high, is punctuated by podiums in shades of yellow and red, each supporting two green pedestals from which the *aediculae* of the middle register rise. On the east and west walls, two podiums divide the lower register into a central compartment and two side compartments. The former is decorated with a plant motif with scrolls ending in flowers on acanthus bases⁴⁸; the latter contains a horizontal leafy stem, probably straddling two walls. On the south wall, which is shorter because it contains the doorway to Room 1H, a single podium has been preserved; it delimits a lateral compartment with a leafy stem on the right, and a central compartment with a motif on an acanthus base on the left.

A yellow and orange fillet separates this lower register from the middle register. The latter is divided into large yellow panels, separated by *aediculae* on a white background. The *aedicula* columns are green, vermillion, and burgundy, connected at the bottom by a

horizontal black band, which delimits a lower compartment framed by a wide yellow band and decorated with a central finial, well preserved on the south wall, and an upper compartment. The latter is best preserved on the east wall, where the silhouette of a figure can perhaps be discerned (Fig. II.3.4).

The *aediculae* are flanked by more slender architectural elements, in shades of red that stand out against the yellow background of the panels. As in the lower zone, these elements divide the east and west walls into a central panel and two side panels, and the south wall into a side panel and a central panel, with the door to Room 1H taking the place of the second side panel. The central panels are bordered by two delicate planted candelabra in various colors (black, white, bright blue, red) (Fig. II.3.5); they are linked at the bottom by a slender, arched flowering stem. The side panels straddle two walls. A planted candelabrum rises alongside the *aediculae*; it is slightly different from that of the central panel (the shape of the foot in particular differs, as does the chromatic treatment, with a green shaft) (Fig. II.3.6). Between these two candelabra are two groups of flowering stems, each about 30 cm high (a vertical stem between two arched stems), one on each wall (Fig. II.3.7). The elevation of the wall is not sufficient to preserve the motifs that would have decorated the center of the panels, and no trace of them has been found among the collapsed fragments.

⁴⁸ This motif is reminiscent of those used in the decorations of Rooms 4 and 6 of the House of the Priestesses in Ostia: FALZONE, PELLEGRINO 2014: 89–11, figs. 65–88.



Fig. II.3.5. Room **1D**, detail from the south wall (photo M. Carrive); preparatory drawings incised on the surface are visible.



Fig. II.3.6. Room **1D**, detail from the west wall (photo M. Carrive).



Fig. II.3.7. Room **1D**, detail from the west wall (photo M. Carrive).

II.3.2.3. Rooms **1H** and **1F**

Finally, very poorly preserved monochrome wall plaster was observed in Rooms **1H** and **1F**. The plaster in Room **1H**, with its yellow background, has preserved some traces of visible motifs. The best-preserved portion is located on the blocked doorway to Room **1B**⁴⁹. Burgundy, white, and blue-gray lines and stripes form what appears to be a schematic *aedicula* extending down to the lower area of the wall. Burgundy horizontal fillets on either side of it separate a lower zone, with no visible motifs, from a middle zone, the lower part of which is decorated with barely discernible

⁴⁹ As the plaster on this wall has only been preserved on the blocked door to Room **1B**, it is difficult to say whether it belongs to the same phase as the rest of the room. Observation of the plaster in Room **1B** has nevertheless shown that the painting in this room was done after the blocking of the door, and covered it continuously. See also sect. I.3.4, *FOLD&R, Italy(600)*.



Fig. II.3.8. Room **1A**, collapsed ceiling, during the excavation (photo D. Nocera).

floral motifs. Also visible on the west wall is a vertical gray-blue band bordered by a red one, which may belong to a schematic *aedicula* of which only a part remains. Room **1F** has revealed only a very poorly preserved red ochre background, on which no motif is visible.

II.3.3. The painted ceilings

As mentioned above, four painted collapsed ceilings were unearthed during the excavation of the Medianum Building. They were found directly on the floor of Rooms **1A**, **1B**, **1D**, and **1E**⁵⁰. The dynamics of the collapses are currently being studied, as each ceiling presents its own unique situation: most of the fragments from the ceilings of **1A** (Fig. II.3.8) and **1D** flipped upside down, with the decorated side up. This is a rather common phenomenon, which can be explained by the way each panel detached from the wooden *contignatio*, sometimes swinging before falling to the floor⁵¹. Ceiling **1B** collapsed in a heterogeneous manner, with large panels piled on top of each other, sometimes face down, sometimes face up. Ceiling **1E**, on the other hand, collapsed all at once, directly onto the room's mosaic floor, face down and cohesive (Fig. II.3.9).

Once each room had been excavated, the entire collapsed ceiling was documented through photogrammetry and a 1:1 scale drawing was made on a transparent plastic sheet, outlining the contours of the panels and fragments. The preserved surface was then divided and numbered by panel and group according to the cohesion of the fragments. Each group was then carefully removed and placed in a large wooden box to keep the fragments together for reassembly

⁵⁰ Some fragments were also found in Rooms **1H** and **1I**, but without any discernible decoration.

⁵¹ FALZONE, PELLEGRINO 2014, esp. 33–34, 147–148, 277–280, figs. 17–18, 184–185.



Fig. II.3.9. Room 1E, collapsed ceiling, during the excavation (photo P. Tomassini).

in the laboratory. The most fragile fragments were consolidated with gauze soaked in acrylic resin (Paraloid B72 in 30% solution with acetone), preferably attached to the back of the fragments. Once in the laboratory, the gauze was immediately removed with acetone applied delicately with a brush, taking care not to damage the painted surface and to avoid the detachment of the painted layers. Then came the cleaning: dirt and concretions were removed from each fragment with a scalpel, a sponge soaked in distilled water, or soft brushes, depending on the state of conservation (Fig. II.3.10).

After cleaning, the fragments were assembled with the aim of finding the connection between separated panels and loose fragments so that a rigorous reconstruction of the ceiling would be possible. The mortar on the back of the fragments retains the imprint of the reeds to which the plaster was attached, a valuable tool for determining their correct orientation. The reassembled groups of fragments were then drawn on a transparent plastic sheet, as was done in situ for the collapsed ceilings and wall paintings. This type of drawing allows an objective view not only of the decoration, but also of the state of conservation. The paintings were also documented with high-resolution photographs



Fig. II.3.10. Photos taken during the workshop in 2019. Top left: consolidation of a group of fragments with gauze and Paraloid; top right: removal of a group of fragments from a collapsed ceiling; bottom left: cleaning of fragments; bottom right: drawing of a fragment (photos M. Brigadoi).

that record the scale, provenance, and orientation of each fragment. Special attention has been paid to color accuracy through image calibration (using an X-rite color checker) and LED lighting with a high color rendering index (RCI 99). The results of the study converge in the graphic reconstruction of the ceiling decoration. The photographed fragments were assembled on a digital work surface, where the motifs were redrawn to scale and the missing elements completed.

At present, only ceiling **1A** has been completely reconstructed. The basic scheme of the other three ceilings is known, but we have chosen to present only partial reconstructions, leaving the presentation of the entire decorative program of the Macchiozzo's Medianum Building to future publications.

II.3.3.1. Room **1A**

Room **1A** was located on the northeast corner of the Medianum Building (Rooms **1A** and **1G** were the building's most important rooms). Unsurprisingly, the ceiling decoration is the most refined and richest of the Macchiozzo's preserved decorations (Fig. II.3.11). The pattern is particularly complex, with several different levels, and an abundance of very small motifs that enrich the general scheme. Plant motifs are preferred, but with a highly varied repertoire of both mythical and real animals (griffins, goats, rams, felines) and mythical beings in hybrid form (sirens, Ocean, tritons), with a predominant vegetalization of the shapes (Fig. II.3.12). The quality of the decoration is also marked by the

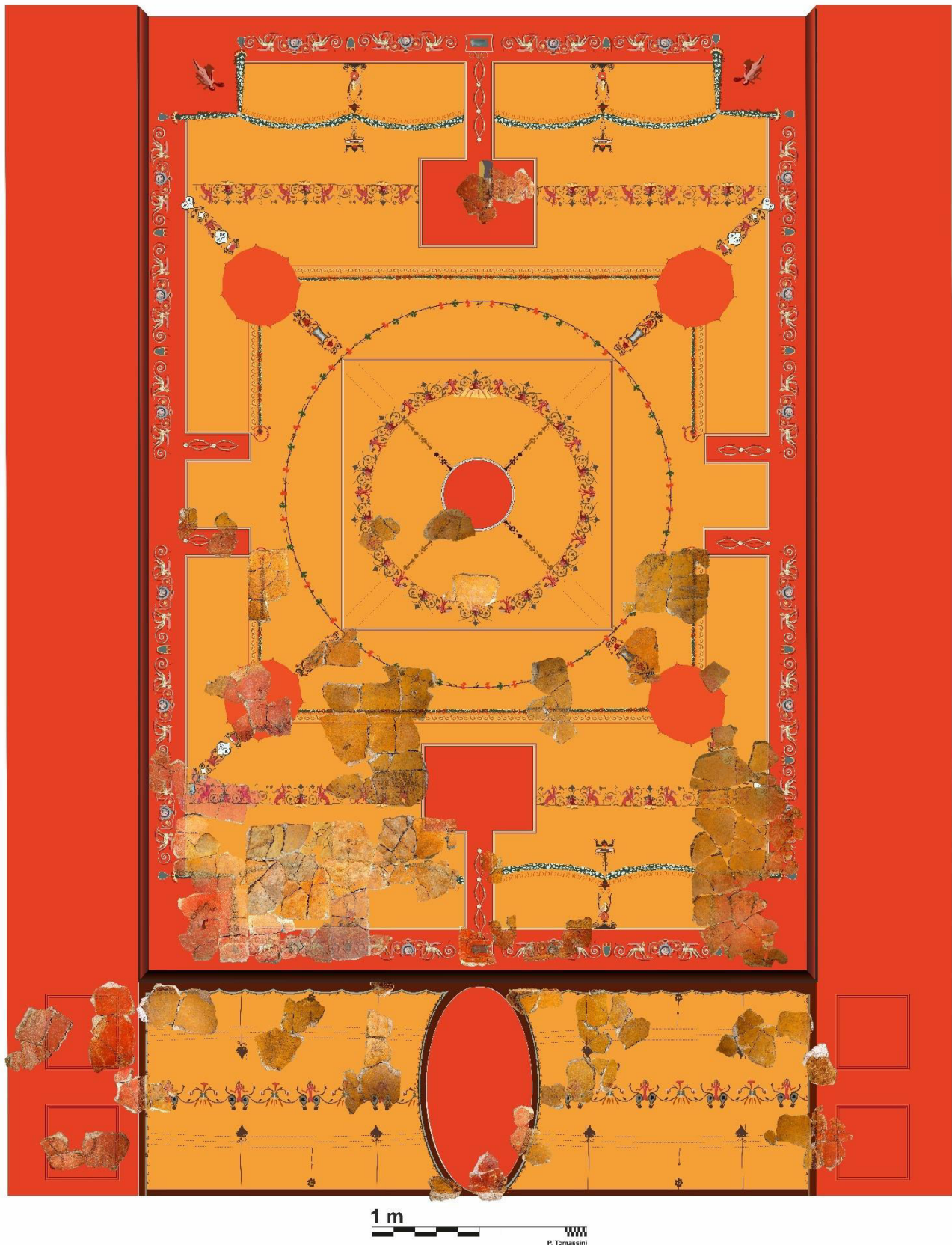


Fig. II.3.11. Ceiling 1A, reconstruction of the painted decoration (elab. P. Tomassini).

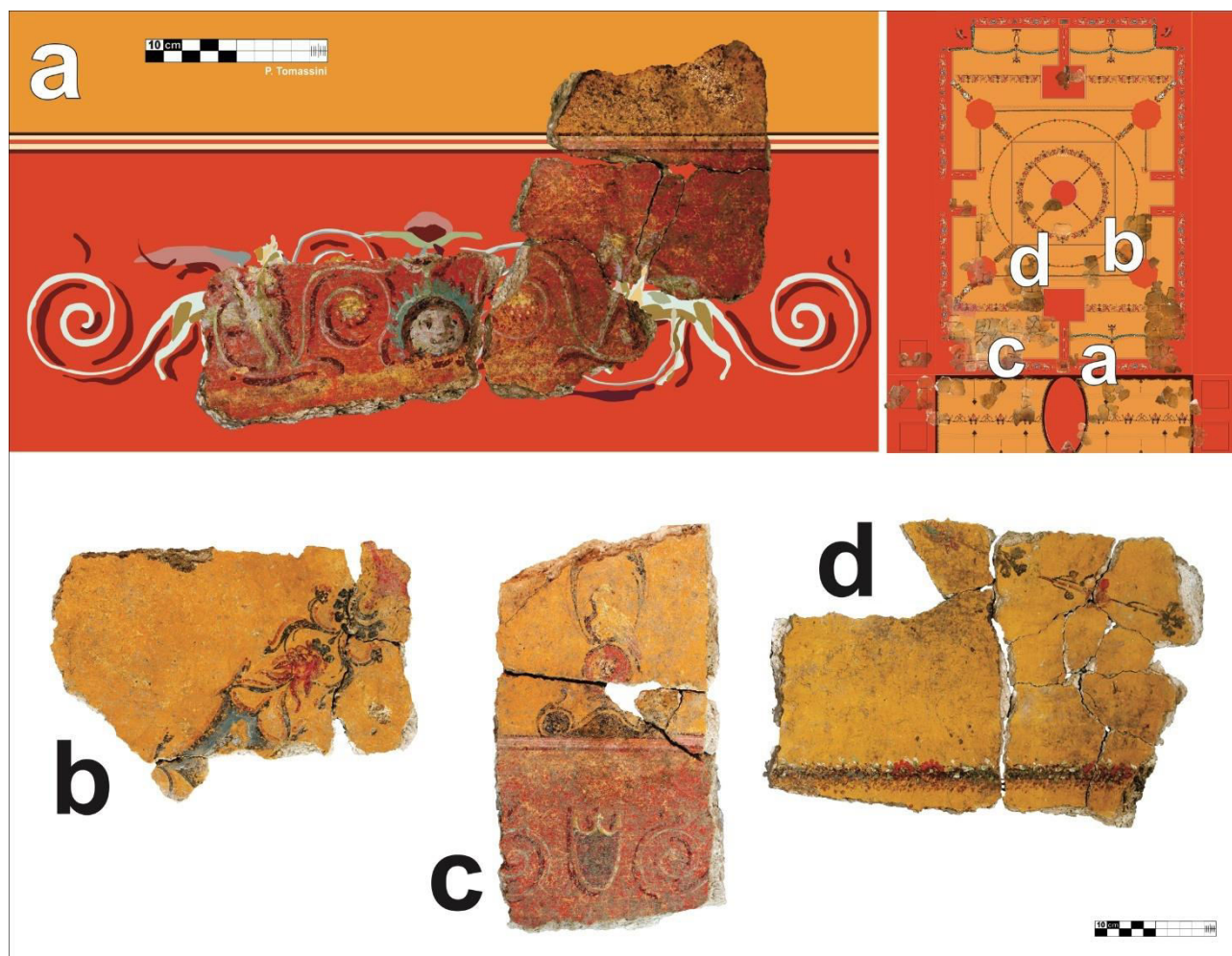


Fig. II.3.12. Ceiling **1A**, details (elab. P. Tomassini); preparatory drawings incised on the surface are visible.

systematic use of red cinnabar—in large quantities, both for the motifs and as a background color—as well as by the abundance of preparatory incisions.

A specific feature of ceiling **1A** is that its decoration was structured on two levels, at different heights (Fig. II.3.13). The central rectangular section was recessed 8 cm above a band that runs along three sides of the room. The difference between the two levels was bridged by a stucco border with alternating red and blue trefoils (Fig. II.3.14). This particular arrangement can be explained by the desire to mark a distinction of spaces within the room. This is a phenomenon generally found in floor decorations, notably to delimit the space dedicated to *triclinia*. Such a function would correspond well to the configuration and location of the room⁵², but the presence of a window and a door between Rooms **1A** and **1B** (see sect. I.3.3.1, *FOLD&R, Italy(600)*) would have made it difficult to position the couches. Although the precise reason for this spatial organization of the ceiling decoration is unclear, it certainly demonstrates a sophisticated use of stucco and painting to give the ceiling a three-dimensional effect, emphasizing the illusion of an imaginary vault, as already suggested by the decoration with the main diagonal axes. The use of multi-level ceilings, although quite rare, is beginning to appear as a feature attested in other Hadrianic contexts, such as the recently re-examined ceiling of the Domus of Vigna Guidi in Rome⁵³.

⁵² DELAINE 2012.

⁵³ The decorations are currently being studied by S. Fortunati, whom we thank for her interesting suggestion.



Fig. II.3.13. Ceiling 1A, 3-D modeling of the reconstructed ceiling (elab. P. Tomassini).



Fig. II.3.14. Ceiling 1A, stucco border (elab. P. Tomassini).



Fig. II.3.15. Ceiling 1A, detail of the border with griffins and masks (elab. P. Tomassini).

The decoration of the lower section cannot be fully restored due to missing fragments⁵⁴, but we have reconstructed a band with a red background along the east and west sides of the ceiling in Room 1A, with a row of quadrangular caissons, rendered by a pair of light white and brown lines, framing a circular motif. The south side has a more elaborate decoration, which is justified by the greater width of the band. The composition features a large red oval mandorla in the center, bordered by purple, blue, and red lines enriched with dots and flowers on a yellow background. The top side of the mandorla, which spans the full width of the band, forms the starting point for an undulating motif in purple and blue, reminiscent of a suspended *velum*; the motif is also enriched with flowers and dots. The oval's sides are the starting point for three borders, though only the central border remains: it contains humanoid, crowned, winged, anguiped figures—possibly tritons—holding plant scrolls in both raised hands that connect the various figures. Brown hanging motifs are depicted in the center of the whole composition, intersecting the borders.

The main part of the decoration on the recessed level is predominantly yellow. The rectangular shape of the area is divided into three registers, with a square central zone bordered on the north and south by two narrower registers. The ceiling's perimeter consists of a red band, with a long border of round masks (*têtes joufflues*⁵⁵) framed by two sphinxes facing each other, their tails ending in volutes, alternating with a shield motif (Fig. II.3.12a). The composition of the entire decoration is perfectly symmetrical, which greatly facilitated the reconstruction of the decorative scheme.

A motif of Eros in flight, the quiver for the arrows on his back, is depicted in the four corners, within a red-grounded square edged by a green garland. Corresponding to the ceiling's median axes, the red border with sphinxes and heads is bisected by a rectangular motif with a blue background, which serves as the base for interlaced white mandorlas within a red band extending toward the center of the ceiling. On the north and south sides, this red band serves as the base for a rectangular *pinax* with a red background and indecipherable figurative scenes. Only a female figure dressed in purple and yellow, belonging to one of the two *pinakes*, is visible.

Between the *pinakes* and the squares with Eros, a complex yet delicate articulation of motifs connects and fills the two lateral registers. The main link is a wide, highly articulated border composed of pairs of seated winged griffins facing each other on either side of a vegetal mask, linked by vegetal scrolls (Fig. II.3.15). Below this border, two arched garlands run from the corner of the square to the band supporting the *pinax*. Halfway along their path, they rest on a vegetal lyre motif with an eagle; the motif serves as the base for a candelabrum crowned by an umbel (Fig. II.3.12c).

The function of the two smaller registers is to limit the central field, giving it a square shape more in keeping with the decoration. This central square is formed by a wide band consisting of a rectilinear green garland set with small red, white, and blue flowers, and a band with a wave pattern rendered in monochrome yellow and red ochre tones, interrupted at the four median axes of the composition. The four corners are covered by large red circles with eight points each and figurative motifs in the center (of the four, only a goat remains). Diagonal borders, formed by blue heart-shaped motifs alternating with faint red figurative motifs extend from these near-octagons to the border of griffins and masks. The diagonals running from the circles to the center of the ceiling, on the other hand, are formed by a red and brown ram's head, a blue animal fleece stretched on all four sides, and a pair of scrolls (Fig. II.3.12b).

These four diagonal borders draw one's gaze toward the center of the composition, which incorporates a large circle composed of a brown vine scroll adorned with small green and red leaves, a square frame formed by white and red lines, and finally a highly articulated circular motif. This motif is formed by a border of alternating red and yellow sirens and vegetal masks. The small, highly stylized sirens are recognizable as winged female figures with two bird-like legs and a long tail, holding unidentified objects. The vegetalized heads can be identified as Okeanos heads, recognizable by the beard ending in a vegetal scroll and the two antennae protruding from the long hair. These heads would have been enriched by a yellow and orange shell motif at the four points where the diagonal lines meet the circle. The poorly

⁵⁴ This is partly due to the fact that almost half the room, with its decoration, was profoundly disturbed by agricultural activities in later periods; see sect. I.4.3, *FOLD&R, Italy(600)*.

⁵⁵ BARBET 2008: 359–360.

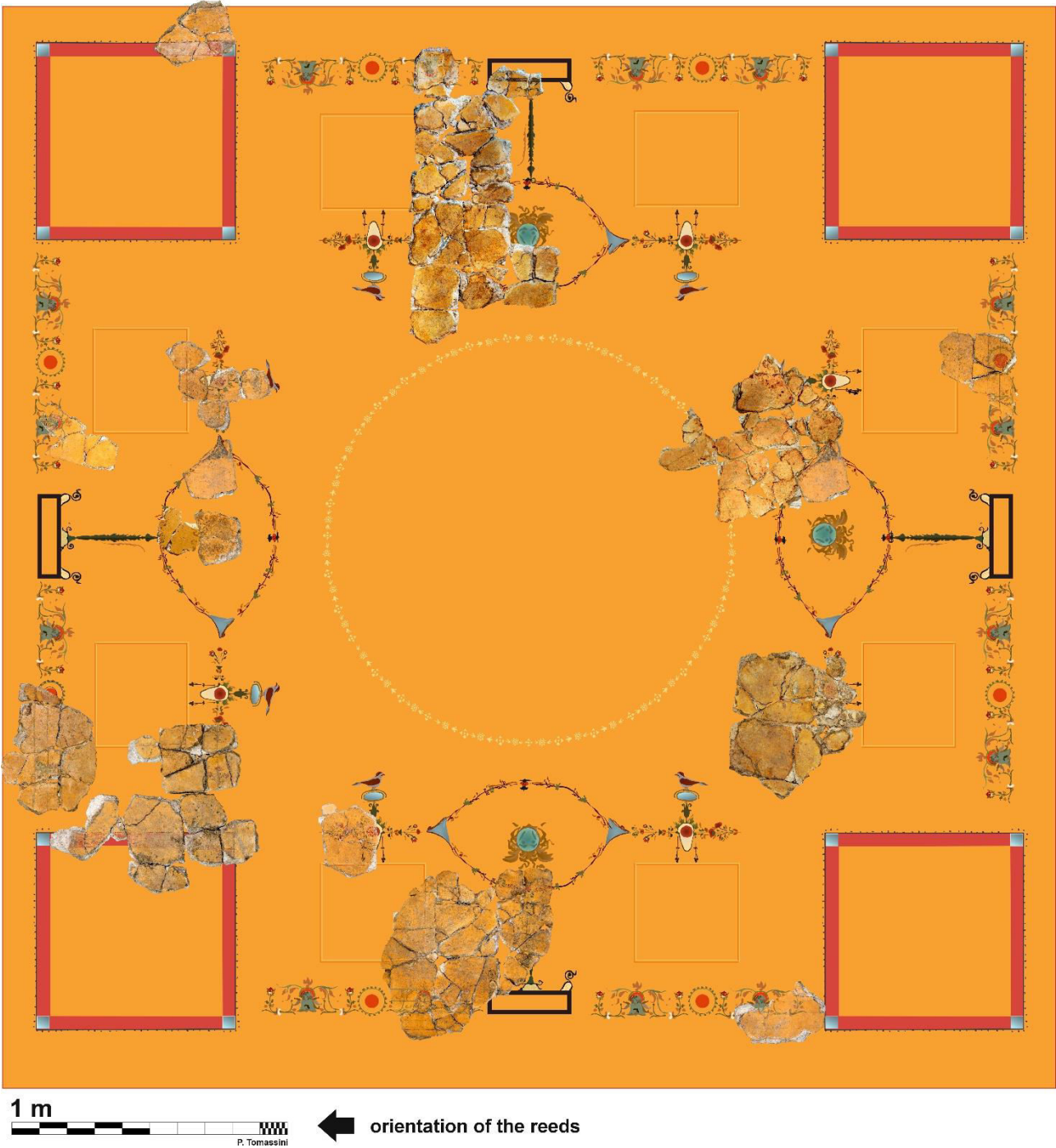


Fig. II.3.16. Ceiling Room 1B, reconstruction of the general scheme (elab. P. Tomassini).

preserved center of the decoration could have been a large circle with a red background, in which another figurative motif could have been inscribed.

II.3.3.2. Room 1B

The ceiling decoration in Room 1B is simpler than that in Room 1A, but it shares a number of similarities. It also has a yellow background and shows the same taste for abundant small-scale vegetal motifs that enrich the basic scheme. The square room favors a symmetrical, centered composition (Fig. II.3.16). The ceiling features what Alix Barbet calls a "composition à bandes et bordures concentriques prédominantes" (composition with predominantly concentric bands and borders)⁵⁶.

As in ceiling 1A, there is a series of concentric registers converging on the center. The outermost includes a large square in each corner. On a yellow ground, they are formed by bands of red cinnabar, interrupted at the corners by a smaller blue square. Centered between the squares, on the four sides of the ceiling, a small black rectangle bordered by yellow scrolls serves as the base for an articulated motif consisting of a long black and yellow foot (perhaps a candelabrum) ending in a mandorla motif, rendered in a fine brown, green, and red garland.

In the center of these ovals is a stylized *gorgoneion*—at least for one of the four attested. Small blue triangles on the sides of the ovals are attached to a straight garland that connects the ovals to the inner corner of the red squares at the corners of the ceiling. The center of these straight garlands is interrupted by a motif of uncertain identification, ovoid in shape, supporting a small umbel on which a bird sits—perhaps a sparrow (Fig. II.3.17). Below this peculiar motif, a smaller frame, rendered in monochrome yellow and orange tones on a yellow background, fills the empty space between the corner squares and the four median lines. The state of preservation of the ceiling makes it impossible to determine whether there were any figurative elements inside these frames. On the edges of the ceiling, the space between the four corner squares contains a border of Okeanos masks rendered in green and blue tones, framed by two



Fig. II.3.17. Ceiling 1B, detail of vegetal motifs and birds (elab. P. Tomassini).

⁵⁶ BARBET 2021: ch. 6.



Fig. II.3.18. Ceiling **1B**, detail of the border with Okeanos masks (elab. P. Tomassini).



Fig. II.3.19. Ceiling **1B**, group of fragments with Okeanos head (photo P. Tomassini).

foliate scrolls ending in a cinnabar-red flower bud, alternating with a large green and cinnabar-red stylized finial (Fig. II.3.18). The reconstruction of the center of the ceiling is still in progress. As in ceiling **1A**, the orthogonal regularity of the pattern makes way for diagonal and circular lines, creating concentric registers that emphasize the center.

Some groups of fragments could not be included in the reconstruction. In particular, there is a detailed plastic representation of a head, probably that of Okeanos (Fig. II.3.19), rendered in a large number of superimposed blue, gray, and white strokes, which—due to its quality—would have occupied a predominant place in the decoration, perhaps the center.

II.3.3.3. Rooms **1D** and **1E**

These two ceilings were located in rooms that were smaller and less public. They are presented together because they are very similar in terms of both rendering and preservation. Both have a red background, but compared to the other two ceilings, their patterns are less clear and less complex. The decorations seem to play with an illusionistic effect of depth created by the play of colors, using different shades of red on the red background, with brushstrokes of green, yellow, and white that give the whole a great elegance.



Fig. II.3.20. Ceiling 1D, detail (elab. P. Tomassini).



Fig. II.3.21. Ceiling 1D, detail (elab. P. Tomassini).

The reconstruction of the two ceilings is still in progress, and it is not yet possible to offer complete views of the decoration. Nevertheless, the current hypotheses point to the same type of concentric-register scheme identified in ceiling 1B, combined with and reinforced by the preference for marked diagonals in ceiling 1A. The visual language is exactly the same—proof that a single workshop was responsible for the paintings throughout the apartment. On the edges of the ceilings, we find the same repetitive borders, which here do not include figurative motifs such as masks or sphinxes, but only vegetal motifs. Ceiling 1D has a border of white and green scrolls, alternating with knot motifs and black *peltae* that punctuate its rhythm at the ceiling's midpoints (Fig. II.3.20). Ceiling 1E has an openwork border of tangent circles with an inscribed flower or palmette (Fig. II.3.21). Some of the motifs are similar to those found on ceiling 1B, such as the red squares with small blue squares at the corners, and the use of two shades, one lighter and one darker, again creates shadows that accentuate the relief of the borders.

II.3.4. Quality and technique of the painted ceilings and walls

As already mentioned, the ceilings of the Medianum Building are characterized by high-quality painted decorations. Although the degree of complexity varies according to the hierarchy of the rooms, as in the case of the floor decorations, all the ceilings were executed with particular care and attention. Preparatory tracings were used systematically for all ceilings. These include straight and diagonal incised lines, as well as tracings made with strings to mark the general guidelines of the design and identify specific points (center, midpoints, etc.). Freehand incisions were also used for smaller, more complex motifs, as were compass marks for circular patterns⁵⁷.

⁵⁷ CARRIVE *et al.* 2024

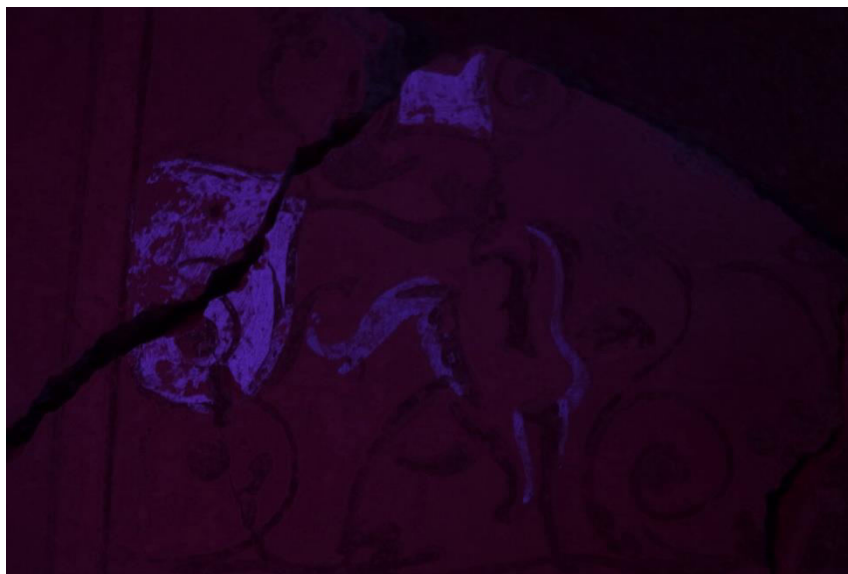
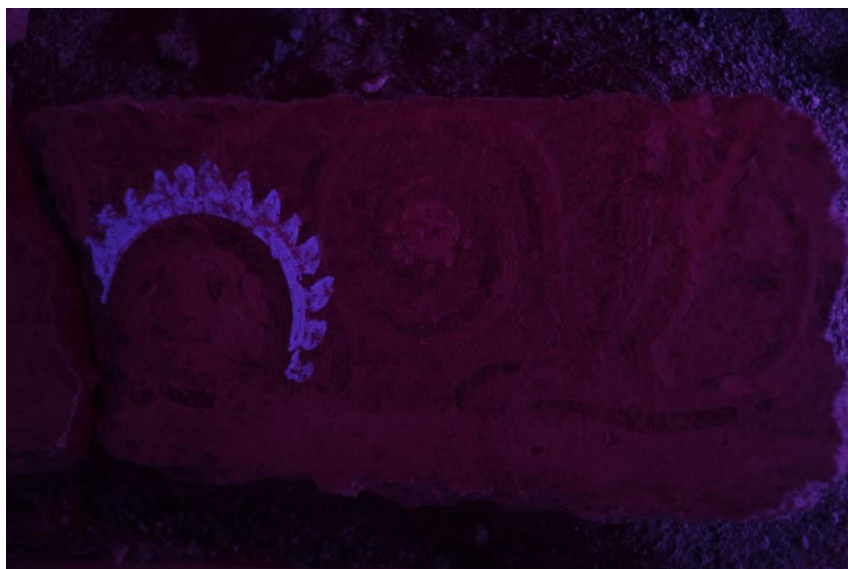


Fig. II.3.22a-b. Visible induced luminescence images of some details of ceiling 1A, showing the presence of Egyptian blue mixed with white, red, and green pigments (elab. P. Tomassini).



The care taken with the raw materials must also be emphasized. Cinnabar was used extensively on all the ceilings, both for motifs and as a background color, applied over a red undercoat. Egyptian blue is also present in very large quantities, both diluted to obtain the blue color, and mixed with several other pigments such as white, green, and yellow, to create cooler tones and add additional thickness to the pigment⁵⁸. This has been demonstrated by photographs taken using visible induced luminescence (VIL), which reveals the presence of Egyptian blue even when it is invisible to the naked eye⁵⁹ (Fig. II.3.22a-b). The painters included a range of delicate shades in their palettes⁶⁰, offering a wide variety of tones, from light yellow to orange, pink to deep red, violet to bluish gray, and light green to dark green.

The same can be said of the wall decorations, although their poor state of preservation means that they could not be observed with the same acuity as the ceiling fragments. Here, too, the palette seems very rich: yellow and red ochre dominate, particularly for the backgrounds, but the motifs preserved in Rooms 1D and 1E show a diffuse use of red cinnabar, Egyptian blue, and the same shades as

those mentioned for the ceilings. The painters prepared these decorations with numerous incisions and string tracings. Room 1D shows the differentiated use of two preparatory techniques: string was used to arrange the main lines of the scheme, in particular the fillet that divides the lower and middle zones and runs along the entire length of the walls, and incisions were used to place the motifs according to a regular pattern. This is especially true of the plant motifs: straight lines mark the shafts of the candelabra, curvilinear lines mark the arched stems, and more complex lines mark the feet of the candelabra. All these motifs are extremely finely crafted.

⁵⁸ As often attested in Roman painting; LENZI, TOMASSINI 2023.

⁵⁹ VERRI 2009; LENZI, TOMASSINI 2023.

⁶⁰ Archaeometric analyses have recently been carried out in collaboration with E. Del Federico (Pratt Institute, New York) and J. Zöldföldi (MPA Stuttgart Universität), the results of which will be published shortly.

II.3.3.5. The decorative repertoire of the paintings

Few painted decorations are known in the villa⁶¹, and some of them are later than the Hadrianic period. However, we can point out the strong stylistic similarities that exist between the paintings on the walls of the Medianum Building and those that decorated a room to the north of the Stadium⁶². Above a real marble socle, on a fictitious podium in red and green, *aediculae* divide the median area into yellow panels; delicate candelabra, now almost invisible, rise at the edges. Another comparison can be found in the surviving decorations of the Hospitalia and in a room of the Imperial Triclinium⁶³. In both complexes, the walls are divided into white and green panels, by means of candelabra in some rooms of the Hospitalia, and by architectural elements. These elements, consisting of columns, are simpler than the *aediculae* of the Medianum Building, but in analogy with the latter we find delicate floral motifs that rise in the middle of the panels⁶⁴.

Outside the villa, there are important similarities with the Hadrianic decorations in Ostia, particularly those in the House of the Priestesses (III ix.6) (as mentioned in n. 47). The slightly later paintings in the secondary rooms of the House of the Yellow Walls also offer very similar compositions, with yellow panels framed by plant stems separated by *aediculae* on a red background. Not surprisingly, however, the villa's decorations are of much higher quality, as can be seen in the great refinement of the plant motifs, which are absent in Ostia.

The Medianum Building's ceiling decorations, with a balance between a centralized composition and the underlining of the diagonals (as if in imitation of a vaulted ceiling), correspond for the most part to Barbet's typology of ceilings with a "composition centrée à diagonales et médianes affirmées" (centered composition with prominent diagonals and medians), although there is a complex articulation in the concentric registers where the attention of the decoration converges toward the center of the ceiling.

These compositions seem to have few parallels in the villa's pictorial production. The known compositions are in fact related to coffers (or pseudo-coffers), as in the cryptoporticus of the Prytaneum (or Plutonium)⁶⁵, in a room on the west side of the Serapeum in the Canopus⁶⁶, in the staircase leading to the *cryptoporticus* of the Fishpond Building⁶⁷, and in the *cryptoporticus* itself⁶⁸. The choice of compositions is perhaps related to the shape of the roof, since almost all of these rooms are covered by barrel vaults. Other simpler compositions on a white background are known in the Small Baths⁶⁹. In these paintings, however, it is worth noting the use of ornamental friezes, which are rather rich compared to the simplicity of the whole (circles with palmettes in the entrance corridor of the baths); this seems to be a characteristic feature of Hadrianic painting, particularly at the villa⁷⁰.

⁶¹ The picture of the attestations of the decorations in paint and stucco from the villa presented in WIRTH 1929: 125–147 (largely taken up in WIRTH 1934: 61–79) is still basically valid. A brief summary of the same decorations is offered in MACDONALD, PINTO 1995: 151–157. Some paintings are also examined in MIELSCH 2001: 99–100. A number of painting and stucco samples from various buildings, and not only from the Hadrianic period, have been subjected to chemical analysis in order to reveal possible differences in the composition of the preparatory layers: HENAU, DUPAS 1982; BRUNETTI 2024.

⁶² JOYCE 1981: 22, pl. I, fig. 1; C. LIEDTKE 2003: 144, pl. 52, fig. 106.

⁶³ For these paintings, now almost entirely lost, we must rely on the documentation produced by F. Wirth (WIRTH 1929: 128–130, tab. 22a; WIRTH 1934: 64–66, fig. 24–25). Panels with mythological scenes known from reproductions by Marco Carloni and from drawings and engravings by Agelli and Contardi (see, for example: AURIGEMMA 1962: 182–184, figs. 190–192) have been attributed to the Hospitalia; recent research, however, has shown them to be forgeries (BURLOT 2012: 133–140).

⁶⁴ Some fragments of pictorial decoration from the villa (without indications of provenance) refer to a generic floral repertoire, even with the "insertion of squares": GIULIANO et al. 1988: 63.

⁶⁵ WIRTH 1929: 138, pl. 24; WIRTH 1934: 65–66, fig. 28.

⁶⁶ WIRTH 1934: 68; JOYCE 1981: 71, pl. XL, fig. 66.

⁶⁷ WIRTH 1929: 136, 138, fig. 10; WIRTH 1934: 77, fig. 38; JOYCE 1981: 71, fig. 67.

⁶⁸ WIRTH 1929: 136, 137; JOYCE 1981: 71–72.

⁶⁹ WIRTH 1929: 134, tab. 23 a–b; WIRTH 1934: 72–73, fig. 34; JOYCE 1981: 71–72.

⁷⁰ In this regard, mention should be made of the recent discovery of a deposit of plaster and stucco in a secondary position, the subject of the "Valle Picta" project of the Istituto Villa Adriana–Villa D'Este, in collaboration with the University of Rome Tor Vergata, which is still

Outside the villa, the decorative schemes used in the Medianum Building's ceilings recall examples from the Hadrianic period in Rome and its surroundings, namely the ceiling of Room H of the Vigna Guidi at the Baths of Caracalla⁷¹, the ceiling of the Villa della Piscina in Centocelle⁷², and the ceiling of the Maison aux Salles Souterraines in Bolsena⁷³. The closest comparisons, however, are to be found in Ostia, and especially, as mentioned, in the House of the Priestesses⁷⁴. But at Hadrian's Villa we notice a much more pronounced taste for miniaturism, the rendering of relief through chiaroscuro, and the play of color nuances, particularly in the same tones of yellow and red. We also note a preference for chain borders, particularly rich and elaborate, and a figurative repertoire that draws much inspiration from the Fourth Style and, in particular, from Neronian and Flavian productions⁷⁵.

In the elaboration of the ornamental repertoire of the ceiling, the reference to the motifs in the mosaic floor below—with a non-random repetition of some elements executed simultaneously in both painting and mosaic—is noteworthy. Beyond the comparisons that can be established between the floors of the building and other complexes of the villa, the Hospitalia in particular⁷⁶, the choice of a shared repertoire between mosaic and painting (albeit in the ornamental aspects) raises questions that will have to be analyzed in more detail regarding the circulation of the cartoons or the workshops of the villa's decorators, taking into account the ability of the artisans to reproduce the same motifs using different techniques.

The building in the Macchiozzo contains one of the richest ensembles of wall paintings in central Italy at the beginning of the second century CE. It represents a very important case, because here we have the work of highly skilled craftsmen who were particularly close to the imperial sphere, in the exceptional context of Hadrian's Villa. At the same time, however, it is essential not to overlook the common elements with the *insulae* of Ostia, characterized by the same layout, built in the same period, and generally attributed to the middle class of the city⁷⁷.

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ongoing: the plaster fragments are characterized by very refined polychrome decorations, which fit well with the pictorial style of the Hadrianic period already described. Some plaster fragments have been presented to the press and in temporary exhibitions at Hadrian's Villa and in Rome, but have not yet been published.

⁷¹ JACOPI 1972: fig. 2.

⁷² FALZONE, GIOIA, MARANO 2018: 492–493, fig. 10; FALZONE, GIOIA 2019: 93–94, tab. XXIV.1–2.

⁷³ BARBET 1985: 190, tables XXXV–XXXVI.

⁷⁴ FALZONE, PELLEGRINO 2014: 147–169, figs. 13, 130–149.

⁷⁵ A similar frieze with masks and griffins can be found on the vault of a cryptoporticus in a building near the Via dei Cerchi in Rome, whose paintings might be attributable to the late Flavian age: WIRTH 1929: 95–96, tab. 16 a–b; WIRTH 1934: 45–47, figs. 11–13; ALTERI 2024.

⁷⁶ VINCENTI 2017: 115–160, nn. 72–81, tables XXXIX–XLVI. See also sect. II.2, above.

⁷⁷ DELAINE 2004; FALZONE, ZIMMERMANN 2010; FALZONE forthcoming.

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Abbreviations

CIL 15 = H. Dressel, 1891, *Inscriptiones urbis Romae Latinae. Vol. XV: Instrumentum domesticum. Berlin.*

CIL 15 Suppl. = H. Bloch, 1947, *Supplement to Volume XV, 1 of the Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum Including Complete Indices to the Roman Brick-stamps, Offprint from Harvard Studies in Classical Philology 56/57: 1–128.*

Décor I = 1985, *Le Décor géométrique de la mosaïque romaine. I. Répertoire graphique et descriptif des compositions linéaires et isotropes*, C. Balmelle, M. Blanchard-Lemée, J. Christophe, J.P. Darmon, A.M. Guimier-Sorbets, H. Lavagne, R. Prudhomme, H. Stern (eds.), Paris.

Décor II = 2002, *Le Décor géométrique de la mosaïque romaine. II. Répertoire graphique et descriptif des décors centrés*, C. Balmelle, M. Blanchard-Lemée, J. Christophe, J.P. Darmon, S. Gozlan, M.P. Raynaud, H. Stern (eds.), Paris.

LSO = J. Suolahti (ed.), *Lateres signati Ostienses* (Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae 7.1–2), Rome.

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