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# The Portico Belvedere: An Experience of Iconography, Illusion and Impressions upon the Soul

Phyllis J. Henderson  
(University of Florida)

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**Abstract.** Literally meaning “beautiful view” in Italian, the *belvedere* is an architectural construct designed precisely for the enjoyment of a view or intellectual connection to the landscape.<sup>1</sup> The *belvedere* first took shape behind the summer dwellings along the coast of Italy when the architecture of the traditional Italic atrium villa experienced a gradual, yet crucial twist over the course of the second century B.C. Borrowing from Greek public buildings, the Hellenistic suburban villa replaced the static garden located at the rear of the house with the dynamic peristyle garden and the ambulatory portico *belvedere* that critically transformed the most basic function of the garden through the superimposition of physical and metaphysical experience.

The *belvedere* is brought to light through historical hermeneutic interpretation, archaeological analysis and the case studies of the Villa Arianna, the Villa Poppaea at Oplontis and the Villa of the Mysteries with literature from Vitruvius, Cicero, Virgil and Pliny the Younger; each contributing a unique perspective that collectively describe the experience of the ancient Roman portico *belvedere*. Examining first the key physical aspects of the peristyle garden, this analysis explores phenomenological features that underscore the spatial perception and experience of the peristyle portico as a *belvedere*.

Quite different from our present-day understanding of a *belvedere* as a static scenic overlook, the ancient portico *belvedere* is proposed as a physical mediator between the real and the illusionary, between the past and the present, between the human and the divine. The ancient human intention for constructing places for viewing nature is brought to the forefront as a means to advance our understanding about how to create meaningful places through the synchronization of real and phenomenal space.

**Keywords:** *belvedere, garden, Roman, portico, peristyle, phenomenology, history, landscape, nature, architecture, transparency*

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<sup>1</sup> Nicola Zingarelli and Miro Dogliotti. *Vocabolario Della Lingua Italiana*. 10. edizione rielaborata a cura di 109 specialisti diretti e coordinati da Miro Dogliotti, Luigi Rosiello, Paolo Valesio. ed. (Bologna,: Zanichelli, 1970), 188. The definition of *belvedere* remains elusive as numerous inquiries return a wide range of definitions such as an architectural structure, the upper part of a building, a turret, a cupola, an open gallery, a small pavilion or a place for viewing. A *belvedere* can also be a *palazzetto* or building such as the *Belvedere Palace* for Pope Innocent VIII in Rome. Bramante linked the Vatican with the *Belvedere Palace* when he designed the *Cortile del Belvedere*, which began the fashion in the sixteenth century for “the *belvedere*” as the term officially entered popular use. It is interesting to note that modern discussions persists regarding the exact definition and usage of *belvedere*: <http://english.stackexchange.com/questions/127907/does-belvedere-mean-the-same-as-viewpoint>. Accessed 9/30/2014.

## THE DAWN OF THE PORTICO BELVEDERE IN THE PERISTYLE GARDEN

More than two centuries of excavations in and around Pompeii reveal the desire for the landscape view and the physical constructions that were in place for that purpose. Most compelling was the horticultural archaeology of Wilhelmina Jashemski, which provided evidence confirming the desire for the view and the purposeful cultivation of nature in ancient Pompeii. Jashemski determined that Pompeii was quite different from the crowded, overbuilt city it was sometimes portrayed to be, with nearly 18% of the city dedicated to gardens and green space.<sup>2</sup>

Italian atrium houses before the second century BC featured a garden at the rear that functioned as a terminal space. Accessed as the sole destination, the rear garden had few ancillary rooms and no connecting spaces beyond. By the second century BC, borrowing from the Greek *gymnasium* and *palaestrae* (outdoor courtyard spaces used for exercise, socializing and study with porticoes around the perimeter), the static rear garden was replaced by the dynamic peristyle garden. With it came the ambulatory portico *belvedere* that critically transformed the garden experience during the second century BC. The columned walkway was reconfigured so that it encircled the garden, channeling movement *around* the perimeter while maintaining sightlines along the central axis (Figure 1).<sup>3</sup>

Described by Vitruvius, the peristyle garden introduced square courts surrounded by colonnades that presented delightful views to the internal garden.<sup>4</sup> Vitruvius wrote of spacious atriums and peristyles “with plantations and walks of some extent in them, appropriate to their dignity.”<sup>5</sup> The columned portico in domestic architecture signified a refined citizen who upheld the education and status of a cultured elite.<sup>6</sup> The renowned Neapolitan archaeologist Amedeo Maiuri wrote, “It is above all the ample and spacious square garden surrounded by a great pillared portico that gives this house the appearance of a villa.”<sup>7</sup> The portico *belvedere* that encircled the peristyle garden transformed the villa symbolically, becoming the cultural icon of the villa.

Cicero frequently wrote to Atticus regarding the portico of his new Tuscan villa decorated in a fashion appropriate to that of the Greek *gymnasia* and *palaestrae*.<sup>8</sup> In his garden, sculptures of Hermes and Minerva assured onlookers of Cicero’s elevated social

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<sup>2</sup> Wilhelmina Mary Feemster Jashemski, Appendices, *The Gardens of Pompeii: Herculaneum and the Villas Destroyed by Vesuvius*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Caratzas Bros., 1979), 1: 24.

<sup>3</sup> Katharine T. von Stackelberg, *The Roman Garden: Space, Sense, and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 20-21.

<sup>4</sup> Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, Book VI, 3.7, 5.2, 5.3

<sup>5</sup> Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, Book VI, 5.2.

<sup>6</sup> Jens-Arne Dickmann, “The peristyle and the transformation of domestic space in Hellenistic Pompeii,” in *Domestic Space in the Roman World: Pompeii and Beyond*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Ed. Laurence, R., A. Wallace-Hadrill, et al. (1997), 127.

<sup>7</sup> Amedeo Maiuri and Istituto Geografico De Agostini, *Pompeii* (Novara, Italy: Istituto Geografico de Agostini, 1957), 155.

<sup>8</sup> Cicero, Letter to Atticus, 1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11; On landscape views: *Epistulae ad Atticum*, 2.3.2.

status and obvious understanding of elite Greek society.<sup>9</sup> Hermes, the great messenger who crossed between the human and the divine, was also the patron of orators and poets. Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom, merited “special appropriateness” in Cicero’s garden.<sup>10</sup>

Symbolically, the peristyle garden embodied the sense of hope through human action -- a physical fusion of past, present and future. If no hope existed for freshly planted seedlings to take root and grow, there would certainly be no point in going through the laborious process of cultivating a garden.<sup>11</sup> Nature was an essential aspect of everyday life and a lush garden exemplified fertility, order and peace. The turning of new soil and the flourishing of vegetation brought new hope each season as the garden represented ideal perpetuity. It provided the setting where Romans could envision themselves as an integral part of a greater metaphysical whole.<sup>12</sup>

By the middle of the first century CE, the peristyle literally unfolded from the confines of the enclosed rectangular garden and stretched out to embrace the landscape (Figures 2 and 3). The developments took place in three stages: in the first stage, rooms of the house assembled around an internal atrium. The second style brought the addition of the peristyle garden as a distinct ambulatory with only one or two ancillary spaces opening onto it. Finally, in the third phase, a fundamental transformation took place: an about-face where the primary reception spaces in the villa reversed direction from the internal atrium and turned their focus to the external peristyle garden.<sup>13</sup> A sense of “view mania” along the coastal countryside ensued and the portico began to flourish as a true ambulatory.<sup>14</sup>

## AMBULATIO

The earliest type of peristyle emerged as a set of walkways (*ambulationes*) that literally transformed the view from of the peristyle into a landscape of motion and the portico into a belvedere.<sup>15</sup> The term *ambulatio* means to stroll or walk about. The ambulatory participation of the visitor in the peristyle garden forever altered the relationship between the landscape view and the experience of the garden. In some cases, when the

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<sup>9</sup> Cicero, Letter to Atticus, 1.4

<sup>10</sup> Cicero, Letter to Atticus, 1.4

<sup>11</sup> Annette Giesecke, *The Epic City : Urbanism, Utopia, and the Garden in Ancient Greece and Rome*, Hellenic Studies 21 (Washington, D.C., Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Hellenic Studies Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2007), 125.

<sup>12</sup> Giesecke, 133.

<sup>13</sup> Jens-Arne Dickmann, 127-130. For a concise overview of the three stages, see Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, “Rethinking the Roman Atrium House,” *Domestic Space in the Roman World: Pompeii and Beyond*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Ed. Laurence, R., A. Wallace-Hadrill, et al. (1997): 235.

<sup>14</sup> John R Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250 : Ritual, Space, and Decoration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 20-21.

<sup>15</sup> Dickmann, 136.

portico turned inside out, the ambulatio stretched out, providing visual access along the outside perimeter of the house to the landscape in the distance in addition to the internal peristyle garden. For example, the portico belvedere at the Villa di Arianna commanded an extraordinary view of the bay and Mt. Vesuvius as it overlooked an ambulatio nearly 230 feet long (Figures 4, 5 and 6).<sup>16</sup> The implications of this shift in spatial orientation were significant as the landscape views were no longer limited to an internally bound rectangular garden. Now limitlessly drawn out into the distance, elongated views merged with traditional garden views from within the villa.

As the ambulatory experience of the landscape intensified, there was an increased effort to associate the experience of the garden walk with the development of one's philosophical and intellectual views. Cicero linked the ambulatio to meditation and philosophical discussion, noting "whatever ability I possess as an orator comes not from the workshops of the rhetoricians, but from the spacious grounds of the Academy."<sup>17</sup> The Academy was a bare and dusty spot, converted into "a watered grove with shady walks" on the outskirts of Athens.<sup>18</sup> Plato's Academy marked the withdrawal of philosophy into the garden.<sup>19</sup> A gymnasium provided places for exercise with alcoves for classrooms and "colonnaded walks for philosophical discussion", recalling Plato's *Lysis* where Socrates walked from the Academy to the Lyceum.<sup>20</sup>

Eighty years later, Epicurus founded his school at Athens commonly known as "The Garden."<sup>21</sup> This launch was a radical move. The Garden was the first to bring nature *into* the city of Athens, creating an oasis of tranquility for moral, educational and contemplative pursuits.<sup>22</sup> Seeking peace of mind from a rapidly growing urban existence and freedom from the anxiety of political crises, Epicureans called for a societal reintegration with nature, whereby the human state of *ataraxy* (a state of tranquility and freedom from fear or physical pain) occurred through service to the greater whole that was Nature.<sup>23</sup>

As cities multiplied in size and number, a pronounced longing for the unspoiled countryside framed the ongoing question of man's true place in a world that was becoming increasingly impersonal.<sup>24</sup> Epicureans looked to the cosmos, with Nature at its center. A frame for all human action, the *parergon* exercised substantial control over the *ergon* or the subject that they framed: in this case, the human race.<sup>25</sup> In other words,

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<sup>16</sup> John H. D'Arms. *Romans on the Bay of Naples; a Social and Cultural Study of the Villas and Their Owners from 150 BC to AD 400* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 128-29.

<sup>17</sup> Cicero, *De Oratore* 3.12.4-8

<sup>18</sup> E. V. Walter, *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 196.

<sup>19</sup> Giesecke, 90.

<sup>20</sup> Walter, 196.

<sup>21</sup> Cicero and Walsh, *The Nature of the Gods* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1997), xxxi.

<sup>22</sup> Giesecke, 128.

<sup>23</sup> Giesecke, 239.

<sup>24</sup> Giesecke, 94.

<sup>25</sup> Giesecke, 41-45.

humankind should look to Nature for fulfillment of all basic needs and overall happiness.<sup>26</sup>

As Romans grew wealthier, the villa garden expanded and thrived, symbolizing *otium* and leisure, exemplifying Epicureanism as it became increasingly popular. The Roman upper class combined social and intellectual pleasures through philosophical discussion during the promenade through garden sanctuaries.<sup>27</sup> Ideas of bodily movement, acquisition of knowledge, philosophical contemplation, and the notion of travel permeated Roman culture. Family tales of lineage, fantastical literature and mythological paintings were common topics of discussion while walking after a meal or during the traditional afternoon promenade.<sup>28</sup> Movement, painting, literature and philosophy encompassed the notion of travel and, for Plato and Aristotle, manifested itself in terms of *theoria*. *Theoria* was “a cross between tourism and pilgrimage” and even an analogy for philosophy itself.<sup>29</sup> Philosophers traveled in their minds to contemplate the greater truth. Although *theoria* favored the notion of *theory* (travel in the mind), it was closely related to the Latin word *contemplatio*, to look at or gaze upon, uniting the traveler’s gaze with physical movement, education and metaphysical inquiry.

Walking the length of the portico belvedere, Romans experienced *theoria* as body and mind moved simultaneously. *Theoria* was laden with the notion of traveling to another place to witness some aspect of existence that was not one’s own, thereby learning something of another *reality* by the very act of bodily movement. Designed as a sequential unfolding of views, movement through the peristyle garden enticed strollers to experience both the immediate site and overall grounds, if not entirely by foot, then through views from the belvedere.

The exploratory nature of the ambulatory garden walk created a simultaneous experience of smell, sight, sound and motion through nature. Human senses were the subject of philosophical and scientific debates during the second century BC. Entangled with the study of knowledge and human interpretation, the garden was frequently the setting for dialogue on the existence of the gods, their control of nature and the effect of human senses on everyday life.

Attaining a state of tranquility through the senses became the ultimate expression of joy, as pleasures of the mind were valued over physical gratification.<sup>30</sup> Epicurean philosophy upheld the view that the *senses* were the source of all knowledge – and that they were infallible. If we were misled by our senses, then it was due to our faulty interpretation of the evidence presented. Epicurus believed that all objects constantly

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<sup>26</sup> Giesecke, 133.

<sup>27</sup> Giesecke, 116-117.

<sup>28</sup> Timothy M. O’Sullivan, “Walking with Odysseus: The Portico Frame of the Odyssey Landscapes.” *The American Journal of Philology* 128, no. 4 (2007): 526.

<sup>29</sup> O’Sullivan, 98.

<sup>30</sup> Cicero and Walsh, xxx.

gave off a film of atoms, described as *eidola* or images. These images would strike the senses, creating our interpretive understanding of the object. Occasionally bypassing the senses altogether, some images strike our minds directly, forming the dreams and mental pictures of our subconscious known as *phantasia*.<sup>31</sup>

#### PHANTASIA: IMPRESSIONS ON THE SOUL

Both Stoics and Epicureans accepted the Aristotelian doctrine that all knowledge came through the senses, resulting in *phantasia* or impressions on the soul - sensations stored in our memories, collectively building our perception of the world.<sup>32</sup> To better articulate the relationship between information held in the mind and the actual object, the term *phantasia* aligned with the word for light (*phôs*). Like light, the impression on the soul revealed itself through the senses. *Phantasia* encompassed two worlds simultaneously: the phenomenal experience of an object *and* the representation of the object in the world.<sup>33</sup> Expressly linked with the cognitive understanding of the visual image, the metaphysical effect of *phantasia* was an important aspect of viewing the image of the distant landscape from the belvedere.<sup>34</sup> The phenomenological experience of the body in space affected the processing and interpretation of information taken in through the senses. Sight, smell, taste, sound and touch experienced during the *ambulatio* shaped human cognition, which was thought to be situated somewhere between knowledge and belief.<sup>35</sup>

A visitor invited to enjoy a stroll on the portico belvedere might have had little knowledge of the experiential meaning of the *ambulatio*, but he would have known that the deepest part of the garden designated equal footing in society. By proximity alone, he had risen to a measurable social level in the eyes of the homeowner. He would presume that an expansive place for strolling indicated a preferred leisure activity among the aristocracy; that the cultivated grove in the sizable landscape beyond represented a certain degree of wealth and that the manicured garden indicated a high level of worldliness and control over nature.

Because *phantasia* encompassed the phenomenal and the representational, the exploration of experience through physical movement and theoretical engagement deepened the appeal and function of the belvedere in the second century BC. Experiences of the physical and theoretical engaged simultaneously, creating

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<sup>31</sup> Cicero and Walsh, xxxi.

<sup>32</sup> Cicero and Walsh, xxxiv.

<sup>33</sup> Katja Maria Vogt, *Why Beliefs Are Never True: A Reconstruction of Stoic Epistemology* (Notre Dame, Chicago Area Conference, 2010), [http://www.katjavogt.com/pdf/katja\\_vogt\\_belief\\_2.pdf](http://www.katjavogt.com/pdf/katja_vogt_belief_2.pdf). Accessed February 26, 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Eleanor Winsor Leach, *The Rhetoric of Space: Literary and Artistic Representations of Landscape in Republican and Augustan Rome* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 7n.

<sup>35</sup> Katja Maria Vogt, *Why Beliefs Are Never True: A Reconstruction of Stoic Epistemology* (Notre Dame, Chicago Area Conference, 2010), [http://www.katjavogt.com/pdf/katja\\_vogt\\_belief\\_2.pdf](http://www.katjavogt.com/pdf/katja_vogt_belief_2.pdf). Accessed February 26, 2013.

meaningful associations for the Romans who engaged them. There was a persistent belief that human cognition was beholden to the metaphorical travel of the mind, the multi-sensory data imprinted upon one's soul and the ambulatory movement of the body.<sup>36</sup> The belvedere in the garden became a unique space for the convergence of the real and phenomenal.

The physicality of strolling the belvedere extended from the portico and continued into the villa where wall paintings portrayed a kinetic sense of spatial provocation, satisfying the Roman's persistent desire for illusionary vistas. In Cubiculum 16 at the Villa of the Mysteries, architectural vistas lined the walls, creating motion within the room. The painted angles encouraged viewers to move toward the back of the room to reconcile the image from the main axis of entry (Figure 7). The directional orthogonal angles originate from there, as if the three walls were conceptually unfolded in the artist's mind, and then folded back again to enclose the space of the room.<sup>37</sup> This form of kinetic arrangement was consistent with other perspective constructions that used either this technique or multiple viewpoints to invite a sense of depth and controlled movement within the space.

Negotiating the geometry of the wall, multiple convergence points and overlapping planes, the viewer is shuttled between illusionistic remote views and the landscape views at hand. This system of representation placed the most important emphasis on the experience of the viewer rather than following strict conventions of drawing. The formal structure and composition of wall paintings suggested that artists valued the role of perception and showed an apparent preference for diversified representations of space.<sup>38</sup> Artists conveyed subjective and intellectual aspects of sensory experience through layers of space and perspective as opposed to simply recording external information on a two-dimensional surface.<sup>39</sup>

The experience of the view represented in painting was consistent with that of the physically constructed belvedere. In an illusionary painting where images overlap and distances are indeterminable, spectators within paintings direct our eyes through their glances. Where they look, we look. A glimpse and gesture confirms importance and guides our focus. As external viewers, we enjoy the ability to see and understand without serious consequence. Viewers in the second century BC were also liberated spectators; sightseers released from the bound image who brought individualized meaning to the art. Viewers moved about the room for a better point of view, drawn by light, texture, color and asymmetrical perspective. Within the ancient villa, painted views regularly corresponded to actual openings, compelling the mobile spectator to decide between the outside landscape view and the inside illusion where intangible

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<sup>36</sup> O'Sullivan, 100.

<sup>37</sup> Philip Todd Stinson, "Light and space in the Villa of the Mysteries," a master's thesis of the University of California, Los Angeles (2001), 22-37.

<sup>38</sup> John R Clarke, 33-35.

<sup>39</sup> Stinson, 1.

architecture expanded real space. Here, the task of metaphysical inquiry fell to the viewer as they explored the real and illusionary simultaneously.

Some openings, both painted and real, admitted the eye alone; these spaces were not meant for walking as the eye could travel to places the body could not. The experience of the landscape became fractured with tension as the architecture revealed and concealed. This phenomenon is most readable in the typical atrium villa as one looks from the entrance, through the atrium, past the *tablinium* (the office or drawing room) and finally into the peristyle garden along a central axis that was often physically impossible to travel (Figure 8).

The central axis that ran the length of the atrium house provided varying degrees of views from the entry to the peristyle garden in the rear. In the house of Octavius Quartio, one had to enter the house to enjoy the most impressive view, whereas at the House of Menander, visitors experienced the garden view from outside the main threshold.<sup>40</sup> Some garden views were quite direct, accessed through actual cut openings in the walls. Others required a more mysterious approach and revealed only glimpses of garden while coaxing the visitor through slender dark passages within the house.

The interplay of revealing and concealing views was a part of everyday life. Lucretius observed the recurrence of perceptual images when he wrote that a person never saw an object itself, but instead experienced a complex stream of multiple images emanating from it “in such a constant stream from all things that several qualities are carried and are transmitted in all directions.”<sup>41</sup> We might imagine how views unfolded for the Romans as they strolled through a portico – how a vast panorama was impossible to take in all at once and how perception of space resembled an assemblage of images accumulated over time.

As ‘travelers’ and ‘tourists’ within the villa, ancient Romans negotiated spaces of dark and light that led them to the peristyle garden by following cultural clues and their instinctive human desire to move closer to the indeterminate view naturally illuminated in the distance. Finally arriving at the portico belvedere, the ancient Roman encountered a physical pause that demanded visual reconciliation: the interplay between the foreground of the symbolic ornamental garden and the lure of the boundless natural landscape beyond.

## NEGOTIATING CONFLICTS OF REALITY AND ILLUSION

Meaningful human experience is inseparable from the act of everyday memory making. It is an activity of construction, integrating one image with the next, reconciling each experience with the one before. The Villa Poppaea at Oplontis demonstrated this principle through architecture, gardens and frescos where painted images overlapped

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<sup>40</sup> Stackelberg, 112.

<sup>41</sup> Lucretius Carus, Titus, Epictetus, Aurelius Marcus, H. A. J. Munro, and George Long, *Lucretius: On the Nature of Things* 200-202 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), 130.

successive planes that gave way to framed garden views, both real and imaginary. Themes portrayed in paintings related to garden sculpture; architectural views evoked spectator experiences through purposeful association of related images. Painted architectural vistas framed deep landscapes and correlated to actual openings in the villa walls. Painted architectural perspectives recalled actual villa space and painted landscapes foreshadowed actual gardens beyond immediate reach (Figures 9 and 10).<sup>42</sup>

A mythological garden resides within a recess of contrasting tones of blue bordered by planes of red and yellow (Figure 11). The illusionary garden fluctuates with continuous activity as our eyes move back and forth between three overlapping planes, two real and one illusionary. Above the mythological garden, two miniature panoramic paintings punctuated by peacocks of an entirely different scale appear too large to visualize inside the panoramas and too small to identify with the mythological garden (Figure 12). Peacocks served as both pets and food, again furthering the experience of alternate meaning through multiplicity.

Illusionary marble columns embedded with jewels and wrapped in vines mimicked real columns within the garden, recalling the vines in the landscape (Figure 13). This same vine-wrapped reality repeated throughout the villa through other garden features such as a sacred tree or gold statuary. As the visitor neared the garden, engaged columns painted with twisting ivy stood outside the garden near marble pillars carved and painted with clinging vines. Finally, in the garden itself, one found small pots planted in front of each marble column, slanted, to allow the vines of the clematis, honeysuckle or ivy to climb upward mimicking the lines of the architecture (Figure 14).<sup>43</sup> Near the center of the garden, trees and shrubs revealed their purposeful alignment within this same organizational grid.

Once inside the garden, the visitor experienced firsthand the sculpture that they only glimpsed previously. Interplay between sculpture and painting prompted immediate association while statues communicated through glance and gesture. Returning inside, the illusionary peristyle garden provoked the visitor's most recent memory of the very garden from which they came (Figure 15). Associations of literature, architecture, landscape and painting demanded active participation from the viewer of the second century BC. Through the interplay of objects, illusions and movement the visitor traversed two worlds simultaneously, overlapping the phenomenal and the representational, marking an impression on the soul through the development of memory and the phenomenon of *phantasia*.

The ancients explored the landscape through the experience of the belvedere through a multifaceted balance of artistic representation and conflicting reality, resulting in what architect and philosopher Dalibor Vesely called "a strange sense of

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<sup>42</sup> Bettina Bergmann, "Art and Nature in the Villa at Oplontis," in *Pompeian Brothels, Pompeii's Ancient History, Mirrors and Mysteries, Art and Nature at Oplontis, the Herculaneum "Basilica"*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Ed. McGinn, T. A. (2002): 109.

<sup>43</sup> Bettina Bergmann, 110-112.

unreality.”<sup>44</sup> What made the belvedere experience *unreal* was the superimposition of the ideal vision within the context of realistic nature. The illusionary view of the landscape painted on walls, realistic nature in the distance, and the assembled memory of the viewer synthesized the kinetic experience of the garden into an exploration that was impossible to grasp directly, yet blended without the need for forced justification.

### CONSTRUCTING THE IMAGERY OF ILLUSION

Writing in the first century BC, Virgil, an Epicurean in his youth, put into prose this notion of conflicting multiplicity. Presenting various accounts of pastoral nature within the context of political allegories, optimistic views on childhood and imaginary descriptions of mythological spirits in the earthbound landscape, Virgil overlapped numerous images and depictions of the natural world, reflecting a multi-sided outlook toward nature that is much less common today. In the *Eclogues*, Virgil guided the reader’s eyes around the farm, pausing to frame views beneath a tree:

Fortunate old man, here between the rivers  
 you know and the sacred springs you’ll lie in the cool shade.  
 Here your hedge, as it always has, at your neighbor’s line  
 will pasture on willow buds Hyblaeon bees  
 which soon will coax you to sleep with their light murmuring hum  
 There beneath the high rock the vinedresser  
 will sing to the breeze and all the while your hoarse pigeons  
 and your turtle dove, high in the elm, will murmur and coo.<sup>45</sup>

Virgil presented a decidedly dynamic natural order of the landscape, even though the old man relaxed in the cool shade by the river. His gaze was progressively directed upward, commanding the eye to move from the low river, to the hedge and pasture beyond; to the tops of the trees and finally to the high rocks above.<sup>46</sup>

Virgil used the landscape view as a springboard to imagine a multi-level, multi-image existence in nature, simultaneously considering the past, present and future. While paintings and poetry entangled artifice and reality through representation, constructed belvederes were physically anchored to the landscape, shifting reality by literally positioning the viewer in the most ideal manner. In this respect, there was a unification of the undeniably real and the provocatively illusionary analogous to the multi-sensory experience of the belvedere.

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<sup>44</sup> Dalibor Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2004), 168.

<sup>45</sup> Virgil, *Eclogues*, Eclogue 1, Lines 51-59.

<sup>46</sup> Eleanor Winsor Leach, *Virgil's Eclogues; Landscapes of Experience* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1974), 76.

The superimposition of time and space was what painter and Bauhaus professor László Moholy-Nagy in *Vision in Motion* described as “the approach to the practical task of building up a completeness by an ingenious transparency of relationships.”<sup>47</sup> Linguistic transparency arises through metaphor, alteration, distortion, double entendre, illusion and implication. Mohony felt that these particular types of experiences evoked the joyous sensation of “looking through a first plane of significance to others lying behind.”<sup>48</sup> Linguistic transparency is comparable to the experience of the belvedere in the same way that the ancients compressed layered references in painting, sculpture, literature and space to achieve desired ‘completeness’.

### TO DWELL WITHIN THE FOURFOLD

German philosopher Martin Heidegger explored association and completeness through referential complexity in architecture when he wrote about *staying with things*. Similar to the notion of overlapping or superimposing a multiplicity of associations to uncover meaning, Heidegger was interested in how human beings maintained access to the essence of the “fourfold,” or the union between the divine, the human, the earth and the sky.<sup>49</sup> It was Heidegger’s view that humans could achieve this completeness by maintaining a connection to the divine through staying and cultivating space -- protecting and preserving the meaningful and poetic through the passage of time. In this sense, we can infer that to stay in the landscape meaningfully, it is important to cultivate human experience by bringing into nature the tools necessary to encourage one to spend time there.<sup>50</sup> As a receptacle, the belvedere acted as a common place for the gathering of man and the divine through the simultaneous cultivation of the illusionary and the real.

‘Maintaining access’ to the divine was not a new concept for the Romans, as the gods were an omnipresent. Whether presiding over crops or meals, animals or trees, births or funerals, they were a consistent part of everyday life. Multiple household shrines accepted daily offerings. Limentinus protected the threshold, Forculus guarded the door panels and Cardea watched over the hinges. Wax masks of ancient ancestors guarded the entry to the household. Every aspect of domestic life came into play: walls, furniture, dishes, the dining table and the bed. In the countryside, every setting had its

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<sup>47</sup> Colin Rowe, *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa, and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1976)161. See also László Moholy-Nagy. *Vision in Motion*, Id Book, Institute of Design (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947), 350.

<sup>48</sup> Rowe, 161.

<sup>49</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic writings from being and time to the task of thinking* (New York: Harper & Row, 1999), 325.

<sup>50</sup> Heidegger, 325.

own spirit or *genius loci*. Vallonia oversaw valleys, plains belonged to Rusina and the hills fell under the watchful eye of Collatina.<sup>51</sup>

Just as the villa and landscape accommodated daily interaction with the gods, the garden was the spatial culmination of spiritual and physical transformation defined by the permeable boundary of the portico belvedere. Permeable in the sense that sightlines and landscape views (real and imaginary) allowed multiple simultaneous sensory experiences, the belvedere encompassed a wide, flexible margin that shifted based on the literal ability to see into the distance. Understanding the essence of the belvedere requires us to interpret the Roman garden as a malleable periphery rather than a rigid edge between the villa and the landscape.

The garden was an intensely immersive, complex space that fused symbolic associations through experiential imagery, sound and smell. The portico belvedere made physical demands on the body through suggestive sightlines and evocative views, accommodating a plurality of experiences by guiding movement through exposure and obscurity. Spaces that exhibit this “seduction of the senses” carry the most potential to encourage plural experiences, and plurality of experience encourages the convergence and synthesis of meaning for the individual.<sup>52</sup> The natural world played a transcendental role in the lives of the ancients, where nature prevailed as a live presence whose qualities could not be discovered by inquiry alone, only by the presence revealing itself. In other words, nature was experiential, not merely contemplated to achieve transformative understanding.<sup>53</sup>

#### FANTASY, MEMORY AND THE EXPERIENCE OF THE BELVEDERE

Art and literature in Italy during the first century reflected activity in the garden organized according to the systematic rhythm of the seasons, expectations of nature (planting, growing, harvesting) and tasks associated with everyday life. In the *Silvae*, the poet Statius illustrated the ancient belief that the landscape was a magical opportunity for ordering and restructuring; not only could man *improve* upon nature but he could also *create* nature where none existed before:

Where you see level ground, there used to be a hill; the building you now enter was wilderness; where you now see lofty woods, there was not even land. The occupant has tamed it all; the soil rejoices as he shapes rocks or expels them, following his lead.<sup>54</sup>

The perceptual image of nature in the hands of artist and poets is noteworthy. For the massive amount of physical labor, buttressing and excavation required to construct

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<sup>51</sup> Robert Turcan, *The Gods of Ancient Rome: Religion in Everyday Life from Archaic to Imperial Times* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 38-39.

<sup>52</sup> Stackelberg, 51-52.

<sup>53</sup> Frankfort, Henri, 1967. *Henriche Antonia Groenewegen Frankfort*, John Albert Wilson, and Thorkild Jacobsen. *Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man; an Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*, A Pelican Book. Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 29.

<sup>54</sup> Statius, *Silvae*, 2.2.55-59.

porticos and terraces, the belvedere translated into a mythical construction of sublime transparency. Statius once described a villa in terms of how “the proud mansion floats upon the glassy flood.”<sup>55</sup> By removing the irrepressible weight of materiality, the reader is at liberty to drift, no more anchored to the rocky hillside than a soaring gull. Experiencing an overlap between illusion and reality, the spectator glides upward through the literary descriptions of the water below. In reverse, the sensation of floating corresponds to a view from a terrace belvedere nearby. The panoramic view is unencumbered by framing from a portico or window opening; thus, the viewer is predictably outside, elevated, and removed from the moisture of the sea; able to drift effortlessly into the indeterminate distance.

Likewise, Pliny the Younger wrote about the terrace belvedere from within his garden, displaying an unwillingness to create barriers between nature and architecture. Precisely crafted words reduced artificial division by any means necessary.<sup>56</sup>

My house, although built at the foot of a hill, has a view as if it stood upon the brow of it..On the outside is the lawn, as beautiful by nature as what I have been describing is by art. Farther on, the prospect is terminated by meadows and many other fields, and little coppices of wood. From the extremity of the portico projects a large dining room, from the doors of which you look to the end of the terrace.<sup>57</sup>

Pliny’s tour directs us *around* and *through* the terrace without unfolding the garden from one logical end to the other. With an unnatural hush, the quiet of empty space permeates the villa, discounting the sights and sounds of what was likely a fully operational farm.<sup>58</sup> It is important to recognize Pliny’s primary goal – not to describe the villa and garden realistically, but to guide the reader through his perception of dwelling in ancient Italy.<sup>59</sup> Using “villa lore” Pliny offered a paradisaical ideal that was illustrative of the perception of nature at the time.<sup>60</sup> The desire for the beautiful view infused Pliny’s descriptions of the constructed belvederes that dominated his villas and attest to the strong desire to superimpose the distant view with the foreground. “It is a blend of consciousness; on the one hand the architecture must achieve within the

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<sup>55</sup> Statius, *Silvae*, 2.2.50.

<sup>56</sup> Pierre de la Ruffiniere Du Prey, *The Villas of Pliny from Antiquity to Posterity* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 26-27.

<sup>57</sup> Pliny the Younger, *Letter to Apollinaris*, 5.6.

<sup>58</sup> Bettina Bergmann, “Visualizing Pliny’s Villas,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 8 (1995): 409.

<sup>59</sup> Sara Myers, “Representations of Gardens in Roman Literature,” forthcoming in *Gardens of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge), 48.

<sup>60</sup> Bergmann, 410.

historical frame...on the other hand, architecture's utopia seeks to acquire its disruptive force and ethical value precisely by *not* being conflated with the real."<sup>61</sup>

Romans repeatedly confronted illusionary space and the persistent challenge of looking both *at* the wall and *through* it in wall paintings and overlapping planes throughout the atrium house. Perhaps this corporeal reality supports the notion that the "ancient, nonliterate society may well have possessed powers of pictorial visualization much greater and more intense than our own."<sup>62</sup> In much the same way that an orator elicited an emotional response from his audience, Pliny constructed particularly striking images to portray the experience of his legendary literary villas, engaging the spectator. Creating an impression on the listener (and presumably the reader) through the "eyes of the mind," the ancient orator used the technique of *evidentia* to describe *visiones*; in other words, mental descriptions created by words that then took up residence as images in the memory of the receiver.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, the images derived from real objects (landscapes included) produced a "lasting physical impact on the mind by means of the eyes...retained in the mind and reproduced from memory."<sup>64</sup>

The ambiguous nature of Pliny's villas presented indefinite details that become conceivable through multi-sensory experience, very much like a memory. Perhaps Pliny aimed to convey a sense of experiential difference, where, like nature, details may not fit together neatly amongst themselves, but unite more effectively when considered as a whole, comparable to the richness of an assemblage of related snapshots rather than the seamlessness of a sweeping panoramic.

#### THE LIMINAL SPACE BETWEEN HOPE AND CERTAINTY

As a place of rejuvenation, the belvedere implied the spatial notion of paradise -- a liminal space where one stands upon the threshold between past and future, seeking transformation through the unification of everyday reality and potential hope. We inherited the notion of paradise from Persian *paradeisos*, where enclosed watered orchards sustained pleasure and production simultaneously.<sup>65</sup> *Paradeisos* merged the home with hunting parks, production places for exotic food, spaces for entertainment and elaborate displays of sophisticated hydraulic mechanisms that kept the garden fantastically lush. Roman elite established country villas and suburban *horti* capable of intensive cultivation for sustenance and entertainment by the second century BC. Symbolically, the Roman interpretation of the paradise garden represented the power

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<sup>61</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance: Princes, Cities, Architects* (New Haven Conn., Cambridge, Mass.: Yale University Press; In association with Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 2006), xii.

<sup>62</sup> Ann Vasaly, *Representations: Images of the World in Ciceronian Oratory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 99.

<sup>63</sup> Vasaly, 94-96.

<sup>64</sup> Vasaly, 95-97.

<sup>65</sup> Purcell, 126.

and prestige of the villa owner. Gardens revealed long colonnaded walks, raised porticos and vast terraces where one could view the productive and leisurely landscape simultaneously. The outward expression of opulence paraded independence, individualism, success, wealth and affluence. For the Romans, the notion of *paradeisos* embraced the logic of practicality, aesthetics, philosophy and economics that did not necessitate psychological or physical separation, but rather surpassed topographical, spatial and historical boundaries.

The Roman lifestyle of pleasure, power, privilege and cultivation appears in bucolic literature, particularly through Virgil, as he articulated a new golden age of political vision through the veil of a newborn child in a series of detailed pastoral images:

For you, little child, spontaneously, as first gifts,  
the earth will lavish creeping ivy and foxglove  
everywhere, and Egyptian lilies with smiling acanthus.  
Goats will come home by themselves with udders full  
of milk, nor will the oxen fear the lion's might.  
Your very cradle will flower with buds to caress you.  
The serpent will die as well as poison's treacherous plant,  
and everywhere Assyrian balsam will come to bloom.  
And when you have learned to read the praises of heroes and deeds  
of your own father and know what manhood is, the plain,  
little by little, will grow gold with waving grain,  
and grapes will redden on the untended vine of the thorn,  
and the hard oaks distill honey-dew from their barks.<sup>66</sup>

Virgil's landscapes in the Eclogues were sometimes as ambiguous as Pliny's terrace views, even though there were plenty of details. Virgil expressed the progression of time through the meticulous naming of plants, flowers and animals. Pliny embellished his description of the view through the dining room doors adjacent to the portico. Holding a narrative together through specificity was quite common, especially in the case of geographical descriptions (*topographia*) or descriptions of imaginary places (*topothesia*). In an oratory where places or monuments were concerned "the speaker was advised to use concrete details in order to create a 'visual image' in the minds of his listeners."<sup>67</sup>

Missing from Virgil's narrative was the greater context of overall topography, an omission that created a sense of uncertainty similar to the experience of a belvedere where nearby garden details were fully comprehensible, yet the limits of the distant

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<sup>66</sup> Virgil and Barbara Hughes Fowler, *Virgil's Eclogues* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 11. Eclogue IV, lines 17-30.

<sup>67</sup> Vasaly, 89-90.

horizon remained allusive. An incomplete context supported a sense of fantasy, recalling literature that decisively distanced itself from reality. Vesely's notion of the unreal celebrated ambiguity that released and extended the meaning.<sup>68</sup> The passage above reads as a hopeful dream for the future with an underlying critique of present reality. In Virgil's Eclogue 4, we are not driven to define a context of time or space, thus, we are at liberty to create our own. A villa owner who viewed the city from a remote belvedere interpreted the reality of the hazy city beyond as he pleased, contemplating his existence in the urban setting. Physical distance exposed a pathway for metaphysical travel in both literature and the experiential landscape view from the belvedere, overlapping the real and unreal as the range of meaning became elongated.

Virgil's writing exemplified the Roman view that civilization and nature were fiercely interdependent: clearly an Epicurean viewpoint illustrating the aspiration of freedom from human toil.<sup>69</sup> Virgil's poems illustrated the coexistence of manmade objects in the landscape and used this context to explore the human condition, emphasizing the interaction between human and natural forces -- very much in keeping with the sacro-idyllic landscape paintings found in actual belvederes of luxury villas to which Vitruvius attested: (Figure 16):

their walks, on account of the great length, they decorated with a variety of landscapes representations of places, copying the characteristics of definite spots. In these paintings there are harbors, promontories, seashores, rivers, fountains, straights, fanes, groves, mountains, flocks, shepherds.<sup>70</sup>

Sacro-idyllic paintings and pastoral poems both dismissed the complete context, preserving the impression that these landscapes were possibly attainable only through one's imagination.<sup>71</sup> Yet in contrast to that notion, one might consider that the belvedere was perhaps the architectural *manifestation* of the sacro-idyllic experience written about by Virgil and painted by artists in the first century BC. The bucolic experience occurred somewhere between myth and reality. The belvedere provided the distant view of the sacro-idyllic painting and the nearby landscape detail of the Virgilian narrative simultaneously, literally bridging the two.

While sacro-idyllic landscapes should not be defined as "Virgilian" (they are missing the appropriate degree of allusion, conversation and song for which Virgil was notorious) the painted image complimented the poetry due to their common origins of the early Augustan age and shared literary background.<sup>72</sup> Both painting and poetry

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<sup>68</sup> Vesely, 170.

<sup>69</sup> Giesecke, 155.

<sup>70</sup> Vitruvius, Pollio, and M. H. Morgan. *Vitruvius: The Ten Books on Architecture* (New York: Dover Publications, 1960), 211. [7.5.2].

<sup>71</sup> Eleanor Winsor Leach, *Virgil's Eclogues; Landscapes of Experience* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1974), 111.

<sup>72</sup> Eleanor Winsor Leach, *The Rhetoric of Space: Literary and Artistic Representations of Landscape in Republican and Augustan Rome* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 198-213.

provide a reasonable frame of reference to explore how the experience of the belvedere might have intensified the prevailing philosophical views of nature. Sacro-idyllic paintings from the first century BC were located within the portico belvederes themselves as they portrayed an idealized world through pause and reflection.

### THE VEIL OF TRANSPARENCY

Positioning the viewer between the literal and the representational, the belvedere united the painted paradise on one side, a constructed paradise on the other and a distant paradise beyond. The triad of simultaneous experience within the belvedere created a unique spatial condition that Colin Rowe called *phenomenal transparency*.<sup>73</sup> The concept of phenomenal transparency hinged upon overlapping systems of organization that provoke multiple outcomes simultaneously. The superimposition of systems encourage multiple experiences of the belvedere through the landscape, the painted illusion and the literary fiction. Here, transparency has little to do with seeing through materiality; rather, it is through the absence of clarity that the image gains strength.

Numerous levels of suggestion imply many possible interpretations through the systematic assembly of definable objects to create form. For instance, Virgil cloaked the unpleasant reality of the world with the mask of an effortless illusion. Pliny superimposed a serene garden upon the tactile materiality of the country villa. At the same time, Pliny unveiled the villa as a symbol of ultimate paradise while the reader overlaid their personal experience of how a working estate really looked and sounded. In Pliny's writing, there was an absence of context, even as deep space emerged through the organizational system of architectural details. Virgil attempted no description of spatial background in Eclogue 4, yet succeeded in creating considerable perceptual depth in his effortless world through detailed descriptions of Egyptian lilies and smiling acanthus that will come to lavish the earth "everywhere."<sup>74</sup>

Superimposed contrast in literature created a transparency of multiple readings, just as literal contrasts of color, light and form created shifting fluctuations of depth where one system of contrasting planes continually shift in front of and behind a second system of smaller, clearly defined objects. Transparency emerges as dark and light planes alternate between foreground and background, creating a sense of depth in a flat volume of space as we attempt to resolve the spatial relationship. Virgil used implication rather than definition to provoke depth of meaning when he described creeping ivy and waving grain. Only the magnified details persist; the overall context is implied through mere suggestion. The buildup of fragments where no physical space existed resulted in a multilayered extension of possible meaning.

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<sup>73</sup> Rowe, 161.

<sup>74</sup> Virgil, *Eclogues*, Eclogue 4, Lines 19-20.

In Virgil's narrative, we shuttle between what was obviously a fantastical description of a carefree paradise and our understanding of a more burdensome earthly reality. A similar experience occurred in the axial arrangement of the atrium house as alternating volumes of light and shadow persistently competed for attention (Figure 8). The large sunlit garden in the distance beckoned one forward while smaller shadowed spaces caused reluctance. Arriving at the belvedere, perception shifted: the peristyle garden became illuminated foreground while the uncertain outlying landscape now commanded attention. A constant shifting of perception took place as the ambiguous reality of deep space contrasted minute details of the garden and illusionary images on the wall. One might have experienced the garden at hand as objective reality while the vastness of the distant panorama became difficult to grasp. Important to the experience of the belvedere, simultaneous perception of overlapping space rearranged insignificant singularities into meaningful complexities evoking Heidegger's call for engagement of the divine, the human, the earth and the sky.<sup>75</sup>

Simultaneous perception of different locations created a sense of space that not only receded, but also fluctuated with continuous activity. At the Villa Arianna, the great peristyle garden not only contained three simultaneous experiences of illusionary, constructed and natural landscapes, but the addition of the ambulatories within the garden set the belvedere in perpetual motion through continuous activity (Figure 5). Integral to the perceptual experience of the landscape, the body in motion prompted an unlimited variety of shifting planes, overlapped with vertical, horizontal and receding space. Moholy described the implications of this phenomenon when he wrote, "some superimpositions of form overcome time and spaces fixations."<sup>76</sup> Thus, in real space, iterations of reality through successive overlapping are not layered in two dimensions like a painting; rather they are blended in our minds by our perception of the unfolding experience.

The realities of time and space simultaneously retreat and expand as the mind shifts between past and present, near and far, real and illusionary. The visitor who walked through the garden at the Villa Arianna might have perceived deep space as the evidence of human intervention diminished from the repetitive colonnade of the portico, to the planted garden and *ambulatio*, finally culminating in the shifting watery view of pristine nature in the distant Bay of Naples. Three distinct systems of organization overlapped to create an ever-changing interpretation of the landscape and man's role within it.

The Villa Poppaea at Oplontis demonstrated phenomenal transparency through successive overlapping of physical planes of landscape experiences. Most apparent in the traditional atrium portion of the complex, the axial sequence from the atrium to the viridarium (the large rear garden) was an expected spatial negotiation (Figure 2). It was

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<sup>75</sup> Rowe, 161.

<sup>76</sup> Rowe, 161. See also László Moholy-Nagy. *Vision in Motion*, Id Book, Institute of Design (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947), 210.

entirely impossible to physically travel the straightforward path starting from the atrium and ending in the viridarium. Direct access through the internal garden to the viridarium was denied as one was funneled toward an offset narrow passage that compressed both the stride and the garden view. The eye, however, passed freely from the atrium, through the internal garden, past the salon and arrived at the rear garden through a series of optical fluctuations that responded to the axially of the space. Important here is how the experience of the landscape emerged as a series of negotiated overlapping planes and the similarity of that experience to the portico belvedere as repetitive columns formed a series of framed landscape views in motion producing an effect of parallax.<sup>77</sup> The belvedere provoked a constantly changing point of view that directly affected the perceived reality of the landscape in the distance. As the viewer progressed along the portico belvedere, the most distant view served as a backdrop that gradually adjusted to frame the quickly shifting garden view at hand, altering both the frame and the image simultaneously. Alternating viewpoints, overlapping images and multiple lines of convergence recall the wall paintings of the Villa of the Mysteries while the multiplicity of viewing planes through bodily movement encouraged diversity and transparency of meaning.

Phenomenal transparency achieved through the absence of volume, implication in place of definition, and contrast through light, color and form inspires a continuous didactic between real and unreal; in this case, between the known fact of the portico belvedere, the allure of the internal garden and the implication of an inaccessible landscape, both illusionary and distant. The experience deepens through an intensified tension where multiple layers of reality take turns claiming our attention. With this comes many levels of potential meaning that encourage enjoyment through the act of movement within the space of the belvedere.

It is unlikely that the original rear garden of the atrium house would have evoked a phenomenal experience comparable to that of the Hellenistic portico belvedere.<sup>78</sup> A “seduction of the senses” designed with constant visual exchange and a persistent, intentional shuttling between the remote view and the immediate, the portico belvedere provided a transformative space for joyous sensation.<sup>79</sup> The plurality of spatial layering, cultural iconography and artistic illusion overlapped landscape painting and literature, synthesizing the experience. Through layers of significance and Roman rituals and values, the portico belvedere offered an entirely original villa experience where the ancient Roman could situate themselves in the real and phenomenal worlds simultaneously.

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<sup>77</sup> J. A. Simpson, E. S. C. Weiner and Oxford University Press. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 20 vols. (New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>78</sup> Rowe, 171.

<sup>79</sup> Stackelberg, 51-52.

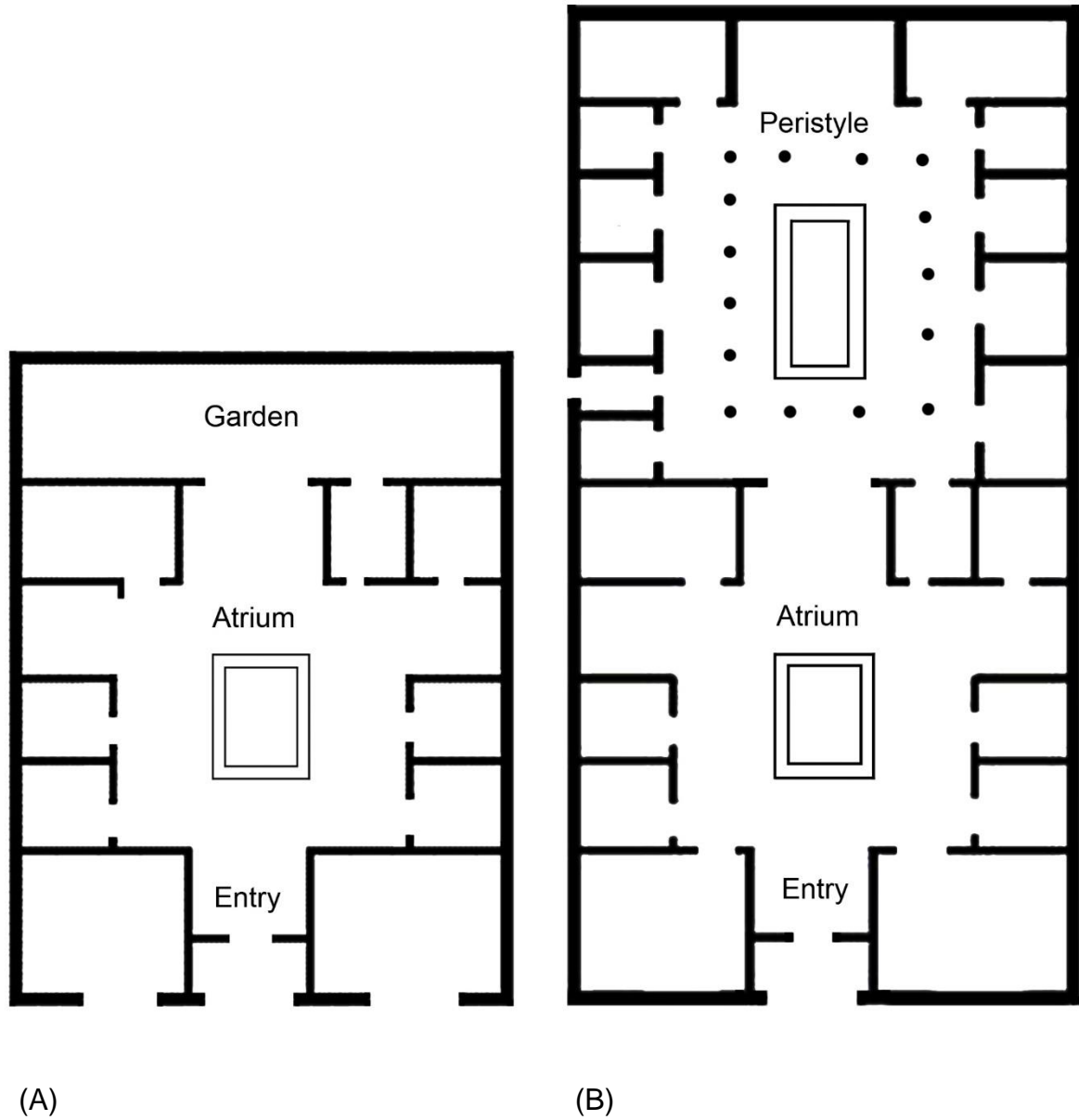


Figure 1. Typical second century BC Roman atrium house comparison between early Roman house with a rear garden (A) and the later modification with peristyle garden (B). Drawing by author, 2014.

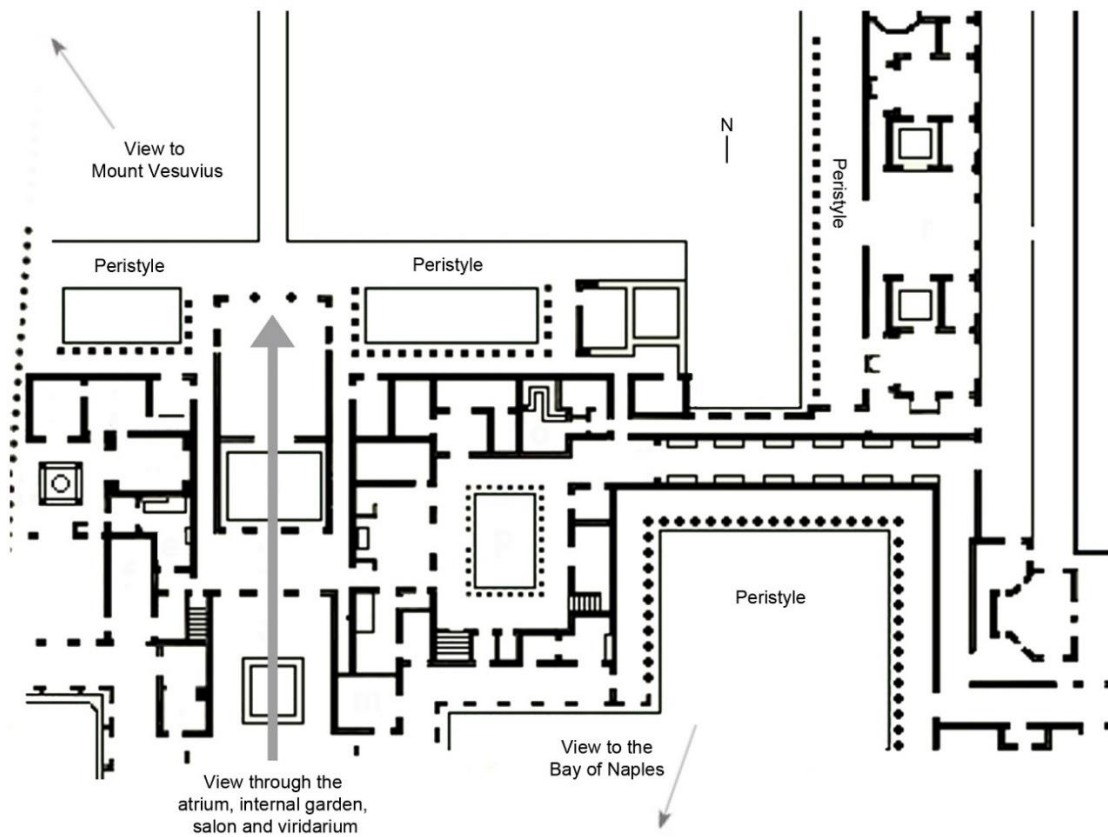


Figure 2. Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. From Wilhelmina Mary Feemster Jashemski, *The Gardens of Pompeii: Herculaneum and the Villas Destroyed by Vesuvius*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Caratzas Bros., 1979), Foldout Plan. Labeling modified by author.



Figure 3. Fresco. Castellammare di Stabia, Varano Hill, Villa San Marco First Century A.D. Courtesy of the Superintendency of Pompei and of the Restoring Ancient Stabiae (RAS) Foundation.

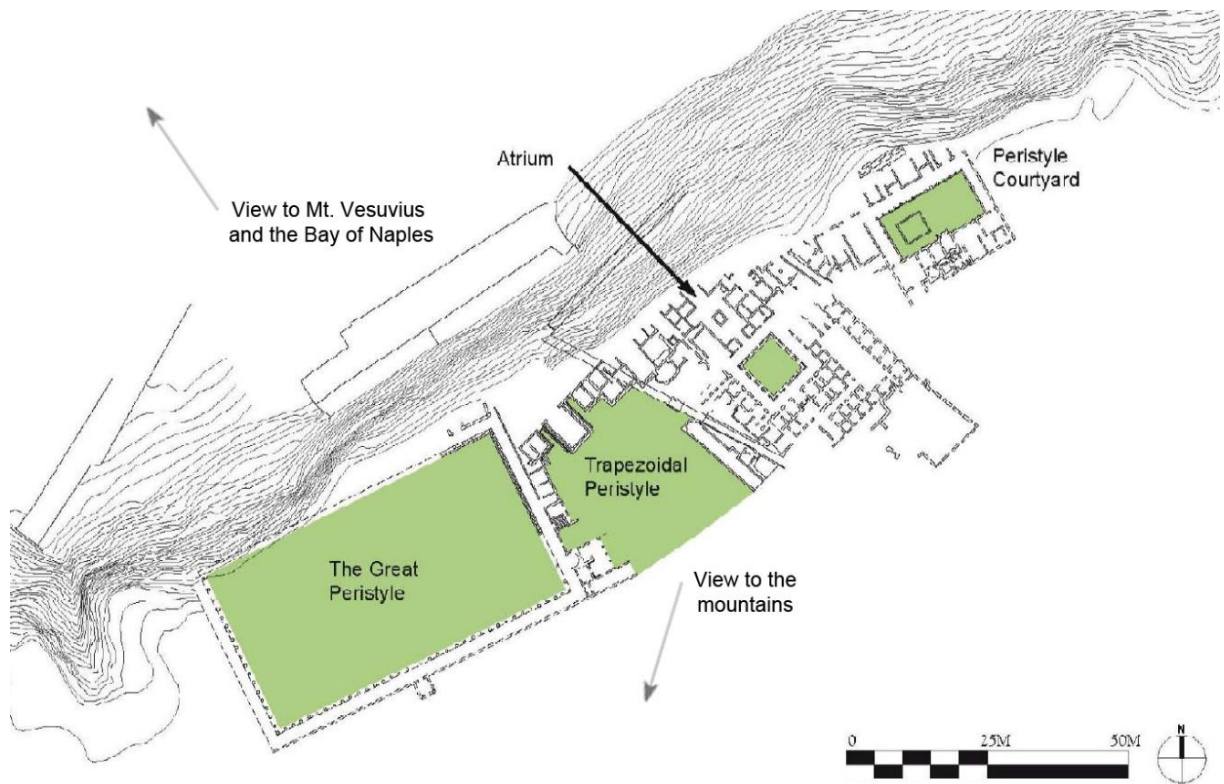


Figure 4. Plan of garden areas at Villa Arianna, Stabiae. From Kathryn Gleason "Constructing Nature: The Built Garden. With Notice of a New Monumental Garden at the Villa Arianna, Stabiae," in *Bollettino di archeologia on line* (Italy, Direzione generale per le antichità, 2008) 10, Figure 1. (Michelle Palmer, Courtesy RAS).

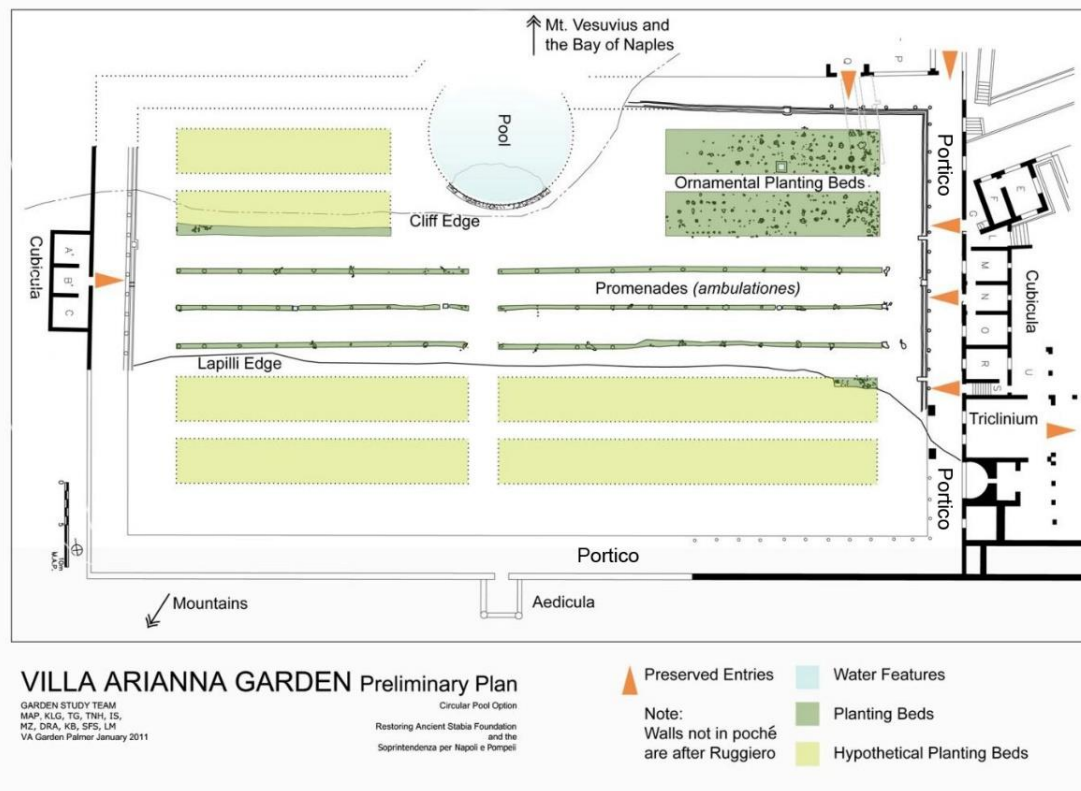


Figure 5. Plan of the Great Peristyle at Villa Arianna, Stabiae. From Kathryn Gleason “Constructing Nature: The Built Garden. With Notice of a New Monumental Garden at the Villa Arianna, Stabiae,” in *Bollettino di archeologia on line* (Italy, Direzione generale per le antichità, 2008) 12, Figure 3. (Michelle Palmer, Courtesy RAS). “Portico” notation added by author.



Figure 6. View of the Great Peristyle showing soil contours defining *ambulationes* at Villa Arianna, Stabiae. From Kathryn Gleason “Constructing Nature: The Built Garden. With Notice of a New Monumental Garden at the Villa Arianna, Stabiae,” in *Bollettino di archeologia on line* (Italy, Direzione generale per le antichità, 2008) 11, Figure 2. (Michelle Palmer, Courtesy RAS).

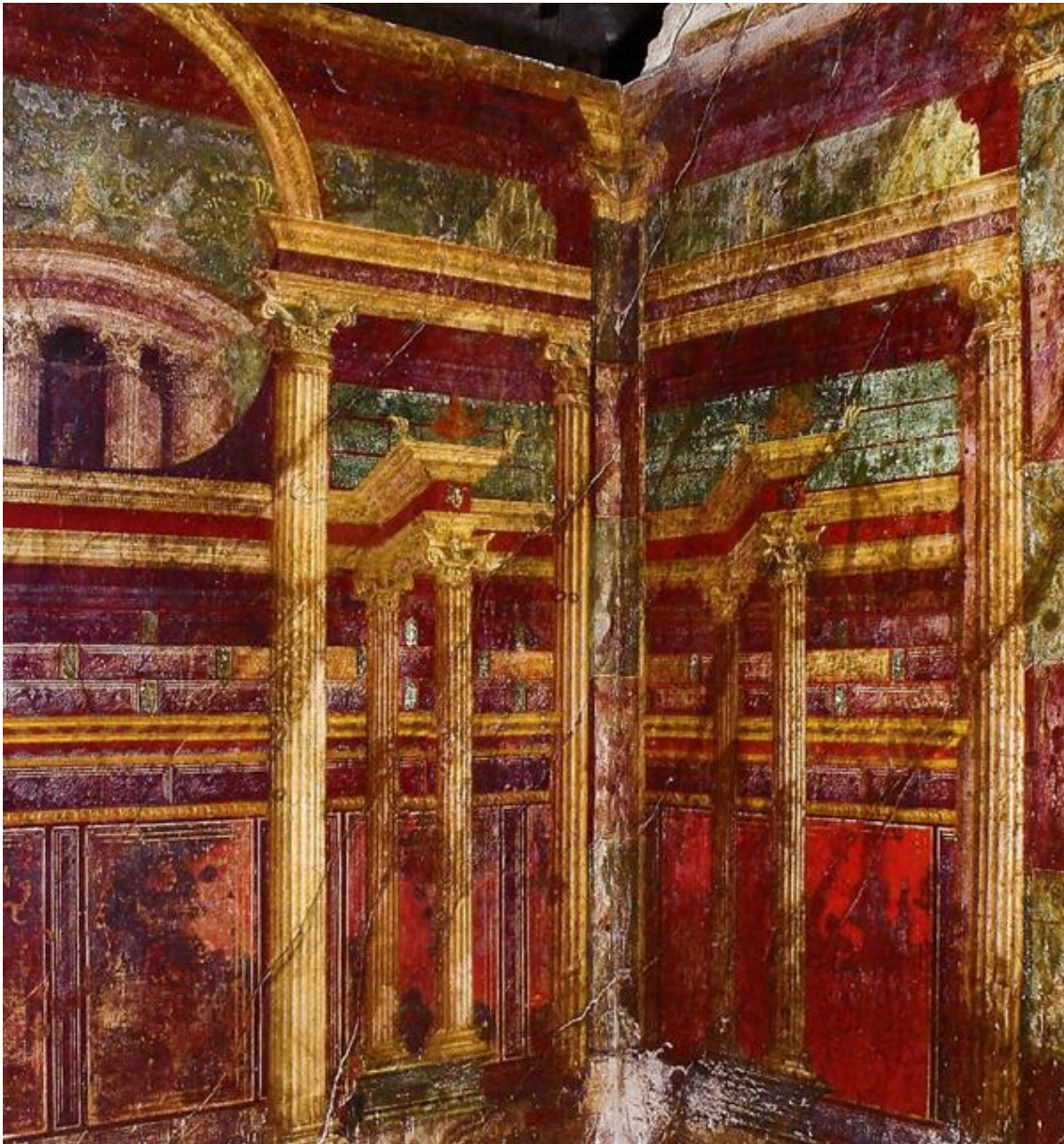


Figure 7. The fresco of Cubiculum 16, Villa of the Mysteries, Pompeii, from Filippo Coarelli, Alfredo Foglia and Pio Foglia, *Pompeii* (New York: Riverside Book Co., 2002), 358.



Figure 8. View from the entry of The House of the Vettii (typical atrium house). Photo by author, Pompeii, 2002.

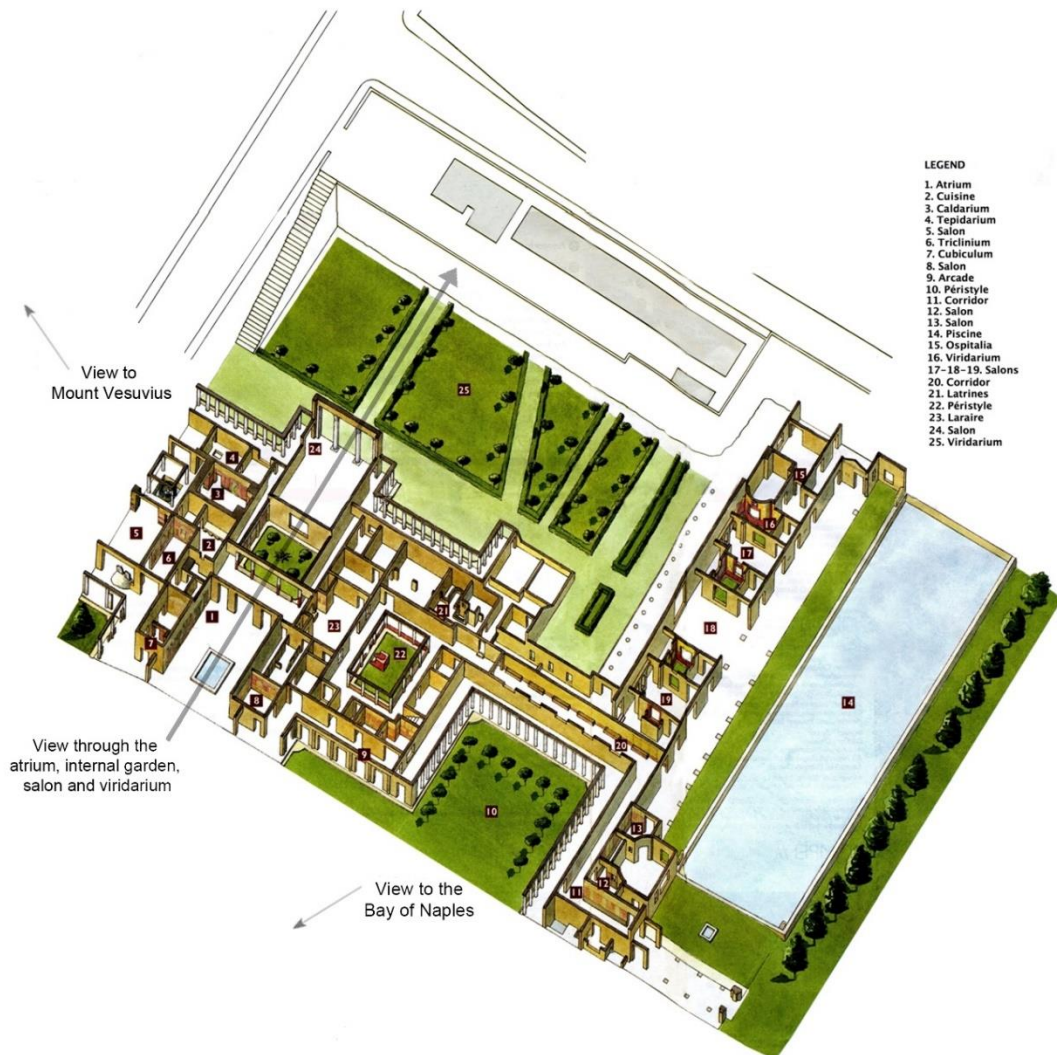


Figure 9. Plan of the Excavations at the Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. Adapted from November 2011 brochure. Soprintendenza Archeologica Napoli e Pompei.



Figure 10. Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. Overlapping planes. Photo by author, 2011.



Figure 11. Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. Mythological fresco in the third recessed plane. Photo by author, 2011.



Figure 12. Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. Left panoramic with peacock in alcove above mythological fresco. Photo by author, 2011.



Figure 13. Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. Detail of a column decorated with gemstones and foliage from the west wall of triclinium 14. From Pappalardo, Umberto, and Donatella Mazzoleni, *The Splendor of Roman Wall Painting* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2009), 78.



Figure 14. Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. Peristyle garden columns with vine pots planted nearby. Photo by author, 2011.



Figure 15. Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. Architectural vista. Photo by author, 2011.



Figure 16. Villa at Boscotrecase. Red Room (16) North wall painting, landscape vignette. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Inv. 147501.

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