

4 | Framing the Roman ‘Still Life’

Campanian Wall-Painting and the Frames of Mural Make-Believe

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Campanian wall-painting has a complex history of framing, deframing and reframing. Since their discovery in the eighteenth century, many fractured fresco fragments have been excised from their original mural contexts: they have been hung in the museum like canvases in a gallery.¹ Copies of the most famous extracted mural panels (and sometimes also their associated ‘ornamental’ frameworks) were likewise soon commissioned by contemporary Grand Tourists, inserted into the frameworks of British aristocratic homes – from James ‘Athenian’ Stuart’s painted room at Spencer House in London to Ickworth House’s thoroughly more Victorian-looking ‘Pompeian Room.’² Modern photographs, not to mention textbooks, catalogues and websites, very much follow suit: by isolating the panelled ‘highlights’ of the wall from their mural surrounds, photographic reproductions necessarily distort, reconfiguring such images in both formal and conceptual ways.³

The present chapter stems from two papers originally presented at Corpus Christi College, Oxford and at the Institut für Klassische Archäologie at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich; my thinking greatly benefited from the searching questions and contributions of both audiences, and especially from the encouragements of Jaś Elsner and Rolf Schneider. Since then, parts of those papers were reframed within a different project (Squire 2009: 357–428), which explored not only the illusionism of ancient ‘still-life’ paintings, but also the relationship with the Elder Philostratus’ *Imagines* (*Imag.* 1.31, 2.26). Additional thanks for their criticisms and guidance are due to Emily Gowers, Robin Osborne and Christopher Whitton; I am also grateful to Rebecca Hill and Tony Kitto for their assistance in acquiring the chapter’s Alma-Tadema pictures (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). Last but not least, I owe a great debt to Verity Platt – for her characteristically sharp suggestions, and for much more besides.

¹ On the aesthetic preferences that fuelled this process, see Sampaolo 1998; cf. A. Gordon 2007: esp. 50–1 and D’Alconzo 2002.

² For an introduction, see Coltman 2006: 97–121; cf. Amery and Curran 2002: 168–83 and Leach 2004: 11–14. Compare also Werner 1970 and Blix 2009 on parallel traditions in Germany and France respectively, along with Valladares 2014 on how the ‘floating figures of Roman wall painting . . . were frequently excised from the fabric of their original walls and reframed as self-contained, individual works of art’ in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (178).

³ Such literal reframing goes hand in hand with the intellectual reframings of classical art historians – not least a tendency to approach Roman wall-painting within more conjectural accounts concerning lost traditions of Greek art (e.g. Ling 1991: esp. 128–41 and Lydakakis 2004); the most important account here remains Lippold 1951, but cf. Heslin 2015: 139–93 for a recent

As other contributors to the present book emphasise, Roman wall-paintings are by no means the only materials of Graeco-Roman art to have undergone this sort of physical and intellectual reframing. One might compare, for example, Clemente Marconi's comments about d'Hancarville's eighteenth-century representation of the 'Hamilton Vase', with its dismantling of the pot's original three-dimensional 'objectness' (and not least its addition of a containing ornamental border on all four flat sides) (Figures 2.1 and 2.2);⁴ the courtyard of the Palazzo Mattei in Rome, as discussed by Verity Platt, provides a related parallel (Figure 7.1), this time incorporating Roman sarcophagi panels within an external palatial façade, thereby 'flattening out' the original, three-dimensional function of sarcophagi as containers for the dead.⁵ Unlike the material discussed by both Marconi and Platt, our modern reframings of Pompeian wall-paintings do not comprise a medial sort of collapse: whether rehung on the wall, emulated within a Neoclassical aristocratic mansion, or reproduced on the page and screen, these two-dimensional forms *remain* two-dimensional. But such reframings – such literal and metaphorical removals of wall-paintings from their original mural and architectural frameworks – nonetheless impact upon how this material is viewed. If we tend to look at Campanian wall-paintings through the frames of their modern afterlives – and above all through the frames of post-Enlightenment art history – such frames are themselves framed by larger interpretive assumptions about the medium, mechanics and meanings of this material.

Few images better visualise the significance of these frames than Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema's 1874 painting of an imagined Roman 'picture-gallery' (Figure 4.1).⁶ As with a number of other pictures treating related subjects, Alma-Tadema's depicted 'gallery' incorporates some of the most celebrated images from Pompeii and Herculaneum.⁷ On the far left can be

bibliographic review. The phenomenon can be traced back to Winckelmann – not least in the context of his 1760s writings on material from Campania (translated as Winckelmann 2011): cf. Moormann 1995.

⁴ See Marconi's chapter in this volume (pp. 118–22), along with Tanner 2010: 268–9.

⁵ See Platt's chapter in this volume (pp. 354–6).

⁶ On *Opus* CXXXVI, see Swanson 1990: 175, no. 165; for the painting's 'allegory of classical viewing', see also Beard and Henderson 2001: 8–9. Prettejohn 1996 offers a good introduction to painted Victorian recreations of Rome more generally, while Prettejohn 2002 explores related themes in particular relation to Alma-Tadema's paintings; cf. also Barrow 2007 and Goldhill 2011: 21–84. On the significance of Alma-Tadema's painting for introducing the 'art of art history in Graeco-Roman antiquity', compare my discussion in Squire 2010a: 133–6, along with Tanner 2006: esp. 1–3.

⁷ Alma-Tadema had visited Pompeii in 1863. At least two other paintings follow a closely related composition (*Opus* L, 1867: Swanson 1990: 144–5, no. 90; and *Opus* CXVII, 1873: Swanson



Figure 4.1 Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *A Picture Gallery* (*Opus CXXVI*), 1874. Burnley, Towneley Hall Art Gallery and Museum. Photograph by Tony Kitto, commissioned and reproduced by kind permission of the Towneley Hall Art Gallery and Museum and Burnley Borough Council.

seen the raised spears and single horse of one tableau (albeit almost entirely eclipsed by the surrounds of Alma-Tadema's own picture-frame), alluding to the so-called 'Alexander Mosaic' discovered in the Casa del Fauno in 1831 (Pompeii, VI.12.2). Just as in the Archaeological Museum at Naples, the image has been transferred from underfoot floor-mosaic to mural adornment, albeit now framed within a multi-tiered black, red and gold surround (complete with elaborate floral pattern).⁸ To the right, on the rear wall, are two additional pictures deriving from images removed from Pompeii and Herculaneum. In these pictures we see Greek 'masterpieces' that were also mentioned by ancient writers: the large panel to the left of the rear wall shows a pensive-looking Medea (attributed to Timomachus); below it, to the right, is a smaller panel portraying Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia (attributed to Timanthes).⁹

In all three cases, Alma-Tadema's reproduced images hark back to famous prototypes known from Campania. And yet, at least in this depicted gallery, all three pictures are also presented as independent panel-paintings, each contained within its own ornamentally bordered frames. What ultimately interested the artist are not the mural, domestic or cultural contexts that once surrounded these fragmented fresco images, in other words, but rather the information that they collectively bestow about a (largely lost) tradition of Greek panel-painting. Each picture-frame – whether a simple wooden casing, a geometric surround, or an elaborate floral border – acts out on a physical level the recurrent conceptual assumption that Campanian images can be extracted from their original surrounds. At the same time, each reframed example wilfully restores such Roman mural 'copies'

1990: 171–2, no. 157); like the image illustrated here, these two paintings also formed a pair with a depicted *Sculpture Gallery*. A number of other paintings by the artist might also be compared here, among them *A Visit to the Studio* (*Opus* CXIII, 1873), *Two Heads of a Picture-Gallery* (*Opus* CXXIII, 1874) and *Antistius Labeon* (*Opus* CXXXVI, 1874).

⁸ On the mosaic, see e.g. Cohen 1997; on the fanciful attribution of its supposed 'original' painting to Apelles, see Moreno 2000.

⁹ For the relevant texts, see *DNO* 4.747–54, nos. 3544–61 (on Timomachus' painting of Medea) and *DNO* 2.800–5, nos. 1614–19 (on Timanthes' painting of Agamemnon and Iphigenia). As ever, the testimonies of Pliny loom large for Alma-Tadema (cf. *HN* 35.73, 136); in an earlier 1867 painting of the same scene, the Iphigenia scene is explicitly labelled below with the name of Tima[nthes] (Swanson 1990: 144–5, no. 90). On the original context of the Iphigenia painting (Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 9112) in the Casa del Poeta Tragico at Pompeii (VI.8.3), see Bergmann 1994: esp. 249–54; on the painting's thematics, see Platt 2014a. The precise provenance of the Medea portrait from Herculaneum (Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 9976) is not known; on its relation to Timomachus' Greek 'original', though, see e.g. Gutzwiller 2004: 342–55 (with detailed bibliography at 342, n. 8) and Vout 2012 (with references at 141–2, n. 3).

to the status of ‘Old Master’ Greek ‘originals,’ as conceived through the aestheticising frame of Alma-Tadema’s own tableau.

There is more to this act of reframing than physical boundaries alone. By transforming Campanian wall-paintings into the framed canvases of the modern art gallery, Alma-Tadema transforms them into ‘Art’ in its familiar, autonomous, post-Enlightenment sense.¹⁰ Removed from their former mural settings, and inserted into the self-standing picture-frames of the museum, these paintings invite a gaze of quiet reflection and enthralled absorption; as such, the framed images within the painting resemble the gilded *opus* of Alma-Tadema’s own canvas, as today displayed in its own ‘picture-gallery’ at Burnley’s Towneley Hall (Figure 4.2).¹¹ Displaced and decontextualised, the extracted images inside the picture’s frame become self-contained entities in their own aesthetic right: the represented frames of each imagined painting – in turn replicated in the frame of the representing picture – turn them into objects of contemplation. In the words of Louis Marin, the framing here ‘renders the work autonomous in visible space’; or as William Harries succinctly puts it, such frames may be ‘understood as objectifications of the aesthetic attitude,’ thereby conferring an idea of the ‘autonomous aesthetic object.’¹² The frames enwrapping the pictures, in

¹⁰ The classic discussion here is Tanner 2006, which provided the impetus for the essays in Platt and Squire 2010: ‘Alma-Tadema’s paintings engage a series of key concepts in the modern institution of art as high culture and project them back onto classical antiquity’, Tanner 2006: 3 concludes. On concepts of (visual) ‘art’ in antiquity, the key contribution remains that of Paul Oskar Kristeller (originally printed in 1951 and 1952, but combined and reprinted in Kristeller 1990: 163–227); cf. Squire 2010a: esp. 137–44, along with the essays in e.g. Sluiter and Rosen 2012; cf. also below, n. 30.

¹¹ On the symbolic and practical functions of the modern picture-frame, which ‘closes off’ the privileged aesthetic space of the pictorial representation from the material world surrounding it, see especially the discussions of Georg Simmel (first published in 1902 – but most handily available in Simmel 2009: 97–102 and translated as Simmel 1994). The frame, according to Simmel 1994: 11, ‘excludes all that surrounds it, and thus also the viewer as well, from the work of art, and thereby helps to place it at that distance from which alone it is aesthetically enjoyable’. For the Kantian debt behind such thinking (albeit oriented around reflections on ‘das Naturschöne’), see the introduction to this volume: particularly relevant is the assessment by Derrida 1987: 61, critiquing the idea that ‘*parerga* have a thickness, a surface which separates them not only (as Kant would have it) from the integral inside, from the body proper of the *ergon*, but also from the outside, from the wall on which the painting is hung, from the space in which statue or column is erected, then, step by step, from the whole field of historical, economic, political inscription in which the drive to signature is produced’.

¹² Marin 1996: 82 and Harries 1989: 64–89 (quotations from 67 and 69). Numerous other discussions might be cited here (cf. our introduction to this volume): e.g. Abrams 1989: 136 (‘The most prominent institution that functions to confer this status [of ‘art-as-such’] has become the public museum . . . in which the product is hung on a wall and isolated from its surrounding by a material frame; and the disinterested and absorbed contemplation of an isolated art object – the paradigmatic experience of the theory of art-as-such – is typically a



Figure 4.2 View of the same picture, as displayed in the Towneley Hall Art Gallery and Museum in Burnley. Photograph by Tony Kitto, commissioned and reproduced by kind permission of the Towneley Hall Art Gallery and Museum and Burnley Borough Council.

other words, are integral to the aesthetic enrapture made manifest within the frame of this self-declared *opus*.

The result, at least in the representational space of Alma-Tadema's painting, is a strikingly modern-looking 'picture-gallery', premised in turn on decidedly modern modes of looking. This explains the artistic fantasy that allows the artist to populate his gallery with modern-day Victorian dilettanti (complete with the recognisable portrait features of the artist's contemporaries).¹³ It also explains the legends accompanying a number of the paintings ('Marcus Ludius' inscribed on the rear wall 'landscape', for

museum experience'); Kiilerich 2001: 223 (on how 'the western concept of an image as picture and frame conditions our viewing of artworks in general').

¹³ See Swanson 1990: 175, no. 165 and Barrow 2001: 79. The portrait features of Ernest Gambart (Alma-Tadema's dealer) have been detected in the standing figure at the centre, for example, while Henry Wallis (an artist and dealer, thus shown at the easel), Charles Deschamps (Gambart's nephew) and Madame Angelée are shown seated in front; Madame Angelée was Gambart's mistress – which explains the standing figure's distraction before the easel-propped painting in the foreground.

example, and '[Pau]sias' underneath the lower right 'lion').¹⁴ The display strategies depicted within this allegedly *Roman* gallery have been configured after those of the Victorian museum, whereby each and every framed 'master-piece' is duly attributed (most often on its framed outer fringe) to its associated artist.¹⁵

The aesthetic affordances of the frame are fundamental to Alma-Tadema's larger conceptual approach to Roman wall-painting: the physical (re)framing of these wall-paintings goes hand in hand with an ideological (re)framing of their function, value and meaning. On the one hand, Alma-Tadema's painting represents a sort of representational *mise en abyme*: just as our framed panel (surrounded by its ornate gilded edge) contains further framed paintings within it, so too are viewers of that panel invited to replicate the same aesthetic reflections that we see portrayed inside the frame. On the other hand, and despite all the recognisable 'classics' of ancient art, this recreative vision of a 'Roman picture-gallery' toys with an 'invisible masterpiece' lying beyond our view – the reversed-view picture-panel to which the three seated subjects look in enraptured turn, and which itself overlaps with the physical boundaries of Alma-Tadema's own image.¹⁶

¹⁴ Once again, Alma-Tadema takes his references from Pliny: the 'Ludius' citation derives from a notoriously tricky passage at *HN* 35.116–17 (cf. Ling 1977), while the works of 'Pausias' are described at *HN* 21.4, 35.123–7 (cf. *DNO* 4.20–9, nos. 2701–8). Although Pliny does not mention any painted *lion* by Pausias, he does describe a certain mode of depicting animals championed by the artist – and one to which Alma-Tadema's framed panel seems knowingly to allude: instead of showing a bull sideways on (*longitudinem bouis ostendi*), writes Pliny, Pausias adopted a frontal rather than profile view (*aduersum eum pinxit, non trauersum*), thereby conveying the size of the animal (*abunde intelligitur amplitudo*). Within the 'Pausias' panel of Alma-Tadema's painting, an associated feat explains the dilettante interest of the two young men inspecting the picture (identified as P. J. Pilgeram and Léon Lefèvre): as Pliny states, Pausias 'was the first to invent something which many have subsequently imitated, but which nobody has equalled' (*HN* 35.126).

¹⁵ For a brief introduction to the principles of Victorian museological display, including the labelling of artworks, see Barringer 2006; cf. Dietrich's chapter in this volume (pp. 271–4). With typical playfulness, Alma-Tadema in fact inserts his own artist signature *within* the painting rather than at its customary lower right-hand boundary: the name (complete with a title, 'Op. CXXVI') is inscribed along the horizontal edge of the outer decorative surround framing the boundary of the left-hand wall, just to the lower left of the room's upper window. If Alma-Tadema's painting quite literally reframes some of the most iconic images of Campanian wall-painting within its pictorial borders, in other words, his signature duly plays with the boundaries between the 'inside' and 'outside' of the framed panel: where Campanian wall-paintings are rendered as free-standing panel-paintings (their attributing inscriptions in each case reserved for the outer frame), Alma-Tadema's self-standing painting aligns itself with the framing mural adornments of the imagined gallery's upper wall.

¹⁶ On the aesthetics of the 'invisible masterpiece', bound up with post-Enlightenment (Kantian) ideals of art (a 'state beyond the reach of every tangible artwork', 11), see Belting 2001.

It is with such physical and ideological reframing of Campanian wall-painting that the present chapter is concerned. The rich and varied semantic significance of ‘decorative’ frameworks in Roman wall-painting has already been discussed in this volume’s introduction (analysing the ‘self-aware’ frames in the Villa of Poppaea at Oplontis (Figure 1.19), the Villa della Farnesina at Rome (Figure 1.20) and the Casa del Bracciale d’Oro at Pompeii (Figure 1.22), for example). Where the introductions to both the volume and this current section have talked about framing in Roman frescoes *tout court*, however, my objective here is to focus on just one ‘genre’ of depicted subjects, grouped together under the habitual modern category of ‘still lifes’.¹⁷ By exploring the ways in which Campanian ‘still-life’ images were incorporated within their original mural contexts, I set out to explore the larger disjunctions between ancient and modern modes of viewing them, rooted as they are in associated modes of physical and metaphorical framing.

My particular choice of case study is important. Our very delineation of these images as ‘still lifes’, as we shall see, returns us to the frames and frameworks of Alma-Tadema’s painting. Of all modern artistic genres, the ‘still life’ epitomises a set of aestheticising ideas, ideals and ideologies: if Roman images of fruit and other comestible subjects have been assumed to function in the manner of a posthumous western tradition of still-life painting, they have also been viewed in ‘purely’ aesthetic terms, as though catering to a Kantian gaze of disinterested artistic reflection. Like the self-contained panels of Alma-Tadema’s gallery, Campanian paintings of food have in one sense been *deframed* – isolated from their original cultural frameworks, no less than their original physical sounds. Yet in another literal and figurative sense, they have also been *reframed*: bounded within the cultural limits of a modern artistic genre, they have been understood as autonomous aesthetic entities, intended above all as self-standing objects of aesthetic reflection.

If my chapter exploits the affordances of the frame to showcase a number of differences between ancient and modern modes of viewing the ‘still life’, it also attempts to look beyond those modern interpretive frameworks, relating so-called ‘still lifes’ back to culturally contingent discourses about nature, realism and representation. As we shall see, the concept of framing is particularly germane here, since it captures an interest both in the physical incorporation of these images within mural schemes and in the metaphorical surrounds of their significance. By looking at how

¹⁷ My analysis in this chapter will stick with the modern term, but always (at least when talking about antiquity) framing it within inverted commas.

Campanian mural schemes literally framed these images, and at the associated ways in which their interpretation was figuratively framed within pre-conceived ideas about their comestible subjects, my aim is demonstrate how so-called 'still-life' images themselves framed, and were framed by, contemporary cultural debates about make-believe, simulation and illusion.

The Anachronistic Frame of the 'Still Life'

Before turning to ancient 'still-life' images themselves, I begin by exploring their delineation as 'still lifes' in the first place. For modern viewers, the very category of the 'still life' brings to mind a coherent genre of images – above all, those originating in Protestant Flanders from the late sixteenth century onwards: whether a bowl of fruit on a table, a painted bouquet of flowers, or some other artful arrangement of inanimate things, 'still lifes' are broadly understood as images for pondering and contemplation.¹⁸ Figure 4.3, signed by Peter Claesz and Roelof Koets, is just one representative example, with its rich abundance of light-reflecting fruits, its silver platter of broken bread and its translucent display of a water-filled glass.

Whichever example we think of, our conceptual frame of the 'still life' coheres around a set of common assumptions about artistic purpose and meaning. For those moulded within a German Enlightenment tradition, the still life caters to a gaze of pure aesthetic contemplation. Communicating through internal artistic qualities alone, and lacking any overt visual narrative, the still life might be said to champion a Kantian aesthetic of disinterested pleasure – of 'purposiveness without a purpose' ('Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck').¹⁹ Arthur Schopenhauer epitomised this rhetoric in his 1819 book, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* ('The World as Will and Representation'). Flemish Still lifes, Schopenhauer argued, reveal the true nature of things by liberating us from our enslavement to the 'will'. Through its very achievement of representational 'stillness', the still life presents us with something that 'real' life – that is, the transient world that lies beyond the

¹⁸ Despite a relative lack of academic interest in the genre until the last quarter of the twentieth century, there are now numerous histories and catalogues, of which Bergström 1956 and Sterling 1981 (first published in French in 1959), Bergström et al. 1977 and Bergström 1979 are central. Among the many catalogues, overviews and discussions, the following have been particularly enlightening: Blanchard 1981, Grimm 1988, Skira 1989, Comte 1992, Esielonis 1994; N. Schneider 1994, König and Schön 1996, Rowell 1997, Ebert-Schifferer 1998, L. Brown 1999, A. Chong and Kloek 1999 and Grootenboer 2005.

¹⁹ Cf. Kant [1790] 1987: 84 (the 'Explication of the Beautiful Inferred from the Third Moment'): for a brief discussion, see Hammermeister 2002: 21–41.



Figure 4.3 Peter Claesz and Roelof Koets, *Still Life with Fruit and Roemer*, 1648. Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 53.478. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Archiv, Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

frame of artistic representation – cannot: nourishing our creative imagination (‘Vorstellung’), still lifes provide images of not just food, but also, as it were, food for thought. By looking into the aesthetic frame of these paintings, we can aspire to free ourselves from our material appetites – to become the subjects of a ‘will-less’ knowing.²⁰

Martin Heidegger advanced a different but related argument in his celebrated essay on *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (‘The Origin of the Work of Art’), first published in the mid 1930s.²¹ According to Heidegger, the

²⁰ Jacquette 1994 offers a solid discussion of Schopenhauer’s comments; on Schopenhauer’s aesthetics more generally, see Jacquette 1996. As Grootenboer 2005: 25–8 explains, Schopenhauer makes a fascinating distinction between Flemish paintings of fruit (a ‘further development of the flower’), grounded in nature, and Flemish breakfast paintings: the former can liberate the will by granting access to the sublime, ‘as a beautiful product of nature through form and colour, without our being forced to think of its edibility’; the latter, by contrast, risk agitating our desire because of their ‘deceptive naturalness’, serving up ‘prepared dishes ... which is wholly objectionable’ (Schopenhauer [1819] 1969: vol. 1, 208). Relevant here is also Hegel’s 1820s discussion of Flemish still-life painting (esp. Hegel 1975: vol. 2, 597–600).

²¹ Heidegger’s essay is translated in Heidegger 1971: 17–87; German citations are taken from the edition of Heidegger 1960. For two celebrated responses, see Schapiro 1968 and Derrida 1987: 257–382; cf., more recently, I. D. Thompson 2011: 86–120 and Sühner 2014. Numerous other critical discussions of ‘still-life’ aesthetics might be compared here. Among the most famous is



Figure 4.4 Vincent Van Gogh, *Old Shoes with Laces* (1888). New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 1992.374. Photograph by the author.

true artwork can remove us from the vicissitudes of the specific and familiar, granting access to the universal essence of things. Heidegger did not look to the sorts of Flemish paintings which Schopenhauer discussed, nor indeed to images of food specifically. But he did nevertheless return to the modern genre of ‘still life’, analysing Van Gogh’s painterly treatments of peasant shoes (Figure 4.4 provides one example, set against red and pastel tiles). ‘As long as we only imagine a pair of shoes in general, or simply look at the empty, unused shoes as they merely stand there in the picture, we shall never discover “what the equipmental being of the equipment

Roger Fry’s 1927 analysis of Cézanne’s *Still Life with Compotier* (republished as Fry 1952: 42–51): resorting to the language of ‘handling’, ‘form’, ‘contour’, ‘plane’, ‘surface’ and ‘material’, Fry argues that it was in his still-life paintings specifically that Cézanne ‘appears to have established his principles of design and his theories of form’ (ibid. 52).

in truth is” (“was das Zeugsein des Zeuges in Wahrheit ist”); Heidegger opines.²² In the hands of Van Gogh, however, an image of shoes has the phenomenological potential to launch us into a wholly more essential set of reflections:²³

This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs to the earth, and it is protected in the world of the peasant woman. From out of this protected belonging the equipment itself rises to its resting-within-itself [*Aus diesem behüteten Zugehören ersteht das Zeug selbst zu seinem Insichruhen*]. But perhaps it is only in the picture that we notice all this about the shoes. The peasant woman, on the other hand, simply wears them.

For the peasant woman to whom they belong, the shoes are not a subject of contemplation: they are practical objects, one that she barely looks upon (‘sie gar anschaut’). For the viewer of the painting too, the subject might be dismissed as a ‘pair of peasant shoes and nothing more’ (‘ein Paar Bauernschuhe und nichts weiter’). ‘And yet’ (‘Und dennoch’), Heidegger continues, the painting invites a wholly more creative form of subjective reflection, taking viewers beyond the realm of ‘use’ (‘Gebrauch’). The very frame of the representational picture proves critical here: ‘but perhaps, it is only in the picture that we notice all this about the shoes’ (‘Aber all dieses sehen wir vielleicht nur dem Schuhzeug im Bilde an’). In this phenomenological sense, the picture might be thought to ‘deconceal’ something: however parergonal its represented subject, ‘still lifes’ shed light on the aesthetic dimension that necessarily frames all artistic representation; ‘the artwork lets us know what shoes are in truth’ (‘Das Kunstwerk gab zu wissen, was das Schuhzeug in Wahrheit ist’).²⁴

Heidegger’s comments lead squarely back to the phenomenology of framing: for Heidegger, it is the very frame of the picture that demarcates the special realm of the *ergon* (in the Kantian sense); for all the parergonal

²² Heidegger 1971: 33. Numerous other critical thinkers could be compared here, not least Theodor Adorno, arguing for art’s combined distance from and participation in social reality (‘Only by virtue of separation from empirical reality, which sanctions art to model the relation of the whole and the part according to the work’s own need, does the artwork achieve a heightened order of existence’ (Adorno [1970] 1997: 2)); cf. Danto 1981: 1–32.

²³ Heidegger 1971: 34.

²⁴ Ibid. 35. What matters for my argument is less Heidegger’s specific aesthetic agenda (or indeed his case study) than his recourse to the genre of still-life painting in the first place: for Heidegger, as Grootenboer 2005: 3–14 explains, the still life encapsulates art’s supposed faculty for metaphysical communication *tout court*.

trappings of its subject, the frame of artistic representation turns these shoes into a *Kunstwerk*. But Heidegger's essay also returns us to ideas about the still life specifically. Whatever else we make of this aestheticising rhetoric, a problem lies in assuming that such modern aesthetic modes, so embedded in our collective post-Enlightenment western consciousness, are common to other times and places. Even in the seventeenth century, this framework looks conspicuously out of place.²⁵ To the Calvinist eye of seventeenth-century Holland, arguably more attuned to the religious symbolism of objects than to any pre-Kantian critique of art's metaphysical power, 'still lifes' evidently dealt a religious lesson in the way of all flesh (and hence, by extension, the vanity of riches).²⁶ Although artists and viewers were of course sensitive to what Svetlana Alpers has called the 'art of describing' (and to what Hanneke Grootenboer has likewise more recently termed the 'rhetoric of perspective'),²⁷ this formal concern seems to have operated within an overarching theological framework: the more convincing the descriptive quality of the painting, after all, the more pressing its Calvinist message of *nihil est in rebus*.²⁸ Merely to call seventeenth-century Flemish paintings 'still lifes' is therefore to surround them in posthumous assumptions about the genre. 'Still life', 'choses mortes et sans mouvement', 'nature inanimée', 'nature morte', 'Stilleben': these are primarily eighteenth-century terms, retrospectively applied to a Flemish culture whose 'ways of seeing' were in fact rather differently comprised.²⁹ We are back once again with the central issue of framing – albeit, in this case, with the discursive frames of verbal

²⁵ Compare Gombrich's important review of the work of Charles Sterling (Gombrich 1985: 95–105): 'it is dangerous to underrate the distance between such natural reactions to forms and their articulated meaning in the contexts of a culture' (98). For the general art-historical problem here, framed around the poles of 'vision' and 'visuality', see the essays in Foster 1988; cf. also the chapters of Nelson 2000 and Squire 2016a: esp. 1–8.

²⁶ Cf. Schama 1988, further developed in Bryson 1990: 96–135. On the 'emblematic' approach to Flemish still lifes as embodying symbolic Protestant messages, the classic article is de Jongh 1982a.

²⁷ See Alpers 1983 and Grootenboer 2005. For a related 'materialist' account, see P. Hecht 1986 and 1997, Foster 1993, Mandel 1996 and Honig 1998. For an overview of debates between the 'emblematic' and 'materialist' approaches to such Flemish paintings, see Frantis 1997 and Grootenboer 2005: 14–17.

²⁸ The point was championed in francophone treatments of Flemish paintings: cf. esp. Marin 1971 and 1990, and Barthes 1988.

²⁹ On the development of a terminology for these paintings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see e.g. Sterling 1981: 63–4, Esielonis 1994: 53–4, N. Schneider 1994: 7–10 and König and Schön 1996: 21–34. Although the Dutch term 'Stilleven' is attested in the mid seventeenth century, as Esielonis 1994: 51 notes, more specific generic titles – *Bloempot* ('Vase of Flowers'), *Ontbijtje* ('Breakfast Painting'), *Fruitje* ('Fruit Piece'), etc. – were much more common.

language: our modes of viewing these paintings, we might say, are contained and constrained within our own interpretive systems, themselves bound up with the cultures of post-Enlightenment ‘art.’³⁰

The problem of anachronism is all the more conspicuous when dealing with the ‘still lifes’ of antiquity.³¹ Wherever we look, we find an overarching (and deeply romantic) scholarly assumption about a *continuous* aesthetic tradition of the still life, and one that stretches the *longue durée* between antiquity and modernity. Take the following assessment by Guy Davenport (although admittedly dealing with Roman mosaics rather than paintings):³²

A Roman landscape in mosaic on the wall of a villa... is a vision radically different from a medieval landscape with its toy charm and fidgety business... or a Poussin, or a description by Proust of the meadows around Balbec... But a Roman mosaic of a basket of apples and pears... is wonderfully like baskets of apples and pears of all ages. There is the same nakedness of presentation, the same mute hope of and confidence in the clarity of the subject.

For all their differences in disciplinary perspective, the same sorts of thinking characterise classical archaeological analyses of Campanian ‘still-life paintings.’ There have been five important catalogues of such paintings over the last century (by Beyen, Rizzo, Eckstein, Croisille and de Caro),³³ and ‘still lifes’ have also been treated in a plethora of shorter discussions.³⁴ Yet common to the vast majority of these analyses has been the assumption that responses to ancient ‘still lifes’ were structured around modern aestheticising agendas. As Jean-Michel Croisille argues in what is still the most detailed

³⁰ For the eighteenth-century ‘invention’ of art, see n. 10 above. Kristeller’s arguments about the ‘modern system of the arts’ have been most notably taken up by Mattick 1993 and Shiner 2001: esp. 1–16; no less important are the impassioned exchanges between Porter 2009a, Shiner 2009 and Porter 2009b. For one recent important attempt to champion the ‘antiquity’ of art, see in particular Porter 2010: esp. 26–40 (with discussion of ‘visual experience’ at 405–50).

³¹ In this connection, it is worth noting how most discussions of the ‘still life’ still begin with those from antiquity: cf. e.g. Sterling 1981: 25–33, Skira 1989: 17–25 and Ebert-Schifferer 1998: 15–23.

³² Davenport 1998: 10.

³³ Cf. Beyen 1928, Rizzo 1935, Eckstein 1957, Croisille 1965 and de Caro 2001. In what follows, I privilege the catalogues by Croisille and de Caro: Croisille 1965: 123–6 offers a useful concordance of earlier catalogues.

³⁴ Cf. Rizzo 1929: 70–2, Casella 1950, Schefold 1952: 38–44, Maiuri 1953: 133–8, Borda 1958: 256–9, Croisille 1973 and 1982: 271–89, Rouveret 1987, Ling 1991: 153–7, Scheibler 1994: 173–6, Junker 1996, Donati 1998: 276–8, Croisille 2005: 228–44 and Moretti 2010: esp. 337–47. I have not seen Croisille 1995 or de Caro 1999 (a catalogue accompanying the exhibitions in Naples, Barcelona, Paris, Berlin and Stockholm).

catalogue of *natures mortes campaniennes* (published in 1965), ‘still-life’ paintings are thought to have been motivated by ‘l’intérêt, plus désintéressé et raffiné, de la contemplation des objets pour eux-mêmes, dans la beauté simple de leurs formes et de leurs couleurs.’³⁵ Stelios Lydakis’ glossy 2004 catalogue of *Greek Painting* goes even further, at once extracting extant Pompeian paintings from their original mural contexts, and reframing them in a pictorial spread alongside the works of Frans Snyders, Peter Claesz and others: the associated invitation is for readers to observe the shared ‘compositional structure’ that unites these paintings across time and space.³⁶ ‘Not till the Dutch still lifes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’, as Roger Ling succinctly concludes, ‘were the aesthetic qualities of food and inanimate objects so effectively recaptured in painting.’³⁷

Such conceptual delimitations of Roman ‘still-life’ images have gone hand in hand with the delineation of their formal boundaries. In many cases, our very frameworks for approaching the ‘still life’ have determined the literal frames in which these paintings are presented and visually reproduced.³⁸ Like so many other Campanian paintings, the vast majority of so-called ‘still-life’ images discovered in Pompeii and Herculaneum in the eighteenth century were removed to the archaeological museum at Naples, displayed alongside other instances of (what were taken to be) the same artistic genre: out of the 340 images that Croisille analyses, a staggering 147 paintings were removed to Naples to be catalogued together as ‘genre’ paintings.³⁹

³⁵ Croisille 1965: 13; cf. *ibid.* 15: ‘le contraste entre le gibier et la volaille, le pain dans les paniers et les fruits, révèle aussi une recherche de variété dans les formes digne des meilleurs peintres du XVIII^e siècle’. Charles Sterling went even further, arguing that what we understand by the term ‘still life’ in fact had its origins in the revival of ancient Roman paintings during the Quattrocento, when the ‘centuries-old monotony of still-life themes’ was once again reinvigorated (Sterling 1981: 158).

³⁶ As Lydakis 2004: 242 concludes, ‘all three examples, ancient and modern alike, share the same compositional structure’. Such thinking has a much longer archaeology: compare some eighty years earlier, for example, Rizzo 1929: 70: ‘nulla si potrebbe immaginare di più moderno, che la concezione e l’esecuzione di queste pitture’.

³⁷ Ling 1991: 157; cf. also Dunbabin 1993: 79, on Roman mosaic panels of fruit and foodstuffs ‘approximately equivalent to [those of] a modern still life, though with a much more restricted repertory’; compare too F. S. Kleiner 2007: 149, declaring that ‘art historians have not found evidence of anything like these Roman studies of food and other common objects until the Dutch still lifes of the 17th and 18th centuries’.

³⁸ There are of course exceptions: Rouveret 1987: 18, for example, astutely points out that ‘la catégorie moderne de la nature morte ne recouvre pas exactement le découpage antique’. Cf. Toynbee 1966: 263 (reviewing Croisille 1965): Toynbee deems Croisille’s recourse to the name ‘natures mortes’ ‘a counsel, it seems, of despair’ (and suggests in its place the category of ‘Nature Studies, Animal and Vegetable’, *ibid.* 264).

³⁹ Cf. Croisille 1965: 17–64. Out of the 115 paintings catalogued in de Caro 2001, 45 are likewise housed in Naples.



Figure 4.5 Photograph of a Campanian ‘still life’ as displayed in the Art Institute at Chicago. Chicago, Art Institute (on loan from the Field Museum, inv. 24654). Photograph by the author.

In other museums too – and across a remarkably wide geographical span – the supposed ‘still lifes’ of Campanian painting have lent themselves to the metaphorical and literal frames of the modern gallery: consider, for example, a fresco fragment in Chicago’s Art Institute, now displayed behind glass in a double-mounted gilded frame (alongside a label that declares the work a ‘still life, including a platter with vegetables, a pinecone, [and] garlands’) (Figure 4.5).⁴⁰ Whatever its original mural context, this

⁴⁰ The displayed fragment is on loan from the Field Museum (inv. 24654), and my photograph was taken in January 2008. On a parallel problem within the supposed genre of Roman ‘landscapes’ – founded on the ‘apparent similarities of these landscapes to European oil paintings’ – see Bergmann 1992: 22–3: ‘Ironically this attitude has determined the present appearance of many of these works, which, cut from their settings in the eighteenth and

panel has been thoroughly ‘Alma-Tadematised’ (cf. Figures 4.1 and 4.2): within the framework of the museum, it is presented as an autonomous, self-contained artwork.

Given the physical excision of such images from their mural frames – hung in the museum like the self-contained easel-paintings of the gallery – it is perhaps not surprising that these decontextualised chunks of painted plaster have turned into ‘still lifes’ in the familiar modern sense. A number of paintings have even been lined up and joined together to form composite friezes – not only *deframed* from their original mural contexts, but also *reframed* in an attempt to satisfy modern generic expectations. This is true of ‘two’ framed images in Naples (inv. 8645 and 8644), both comprised of paintings taken from the Casa dei Cervi in Herculaneum (IV.21).⁴¹ But it is also true of a ‘third’ example in Naples (inv. 9819), this time made up of four separate fragments of unknown provenance (Figure 4.6).⁴² Each of the fragments contained within this ‘single’ framed panel seems to have come not only from different paintings, but also from different houses (and perhaps even from different towns): one depicts a silver urn, a second shows book scrolls, a third a rustic shrine and a fourth a collection of fruits. For those who constructed the painting in the eighteenth century, however, these decontextualised fragments could satisfyingly be reframed as a single ‘still-life’ composition – an independent aesthetic assemblage with its own autonomous frame.

If Figure 4.6 testifies to the ways in which archaeologists have tended to approach ancient ‘still-life’ paintings within the hermeneutic frameworks of modern art history, its constitutive components also bear witness to the specific visual subjects of that assumed ‘still life’ genre. Whichever catalogue of ancient ‘still lifes’ we consult, we find related modern criteria defining the boundaries of the genre. This is surely the reason why images of books and writing equipment – so-called *instrumenta scriptoria* (cf. Figure 4.6) – are recurrently incorporated within ancient ‘still-life’ catalogues, aligning as they do with the subjects of still-life paintings of the seventeenth and

nineteenth centuries, now hang in wooden frames on the white walls of the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples’; cf. *ibid.* 34–7, for a highly relevant discussion of ‘framing the grove’ in different Pompeian mural schemes.

⁴¹ On these paintings, see Croisille 1965: 39–40, nos. 43–4 (with earlier bibliography), Ward-Perkins and Claridge 1976: 256, nos. 255–6, Donati 1998: 277, nos. 22–3, and de Caro 2001: 69–79, nos. 45–58. For their probable original domestic setting, see Allroggen-Bedel 1975.

⁴² On Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 9819, see e.g. Ward-Perkins and Claridge 1976: 256, no. 258.

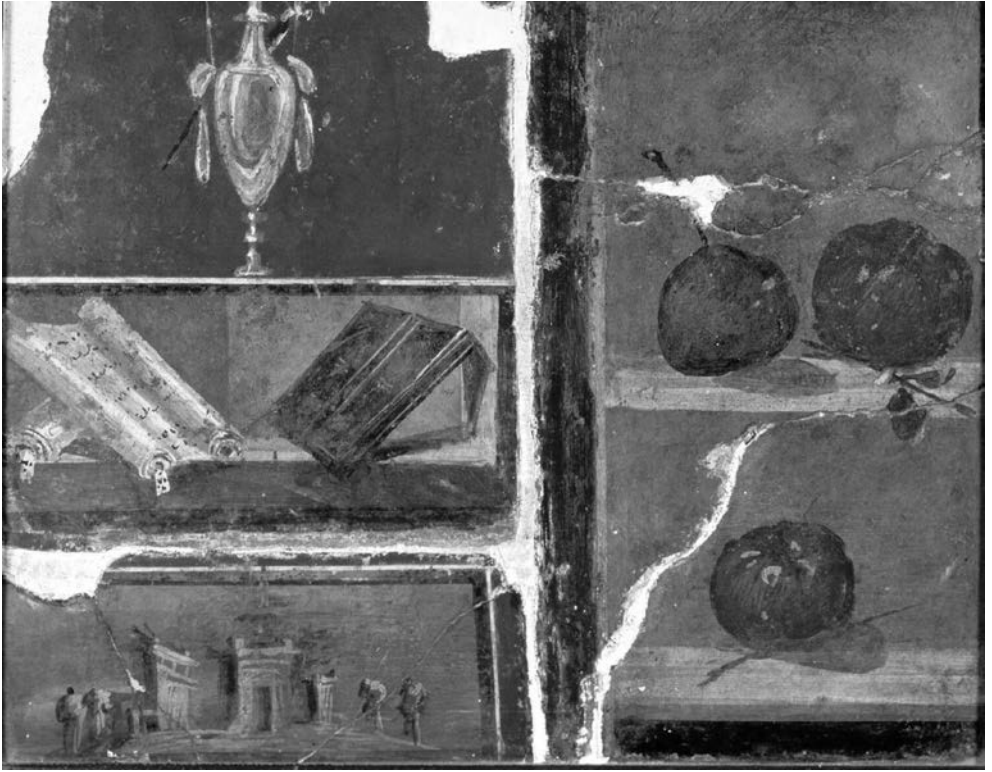


Figure 4.6 Composite painting made from different fragments of Campanian ‘still-life’ paintings collected in the eighteenth century. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 9819. © Scala/Art Resource New York.

eighteenth centuries;⁴³ conversely, it is perhaps why *trompe l’œil* painted garlands and associated ‘garden’ scenes, which cannot so easily be connected with the modern genre, are omitted.⁴⁴ Our modern hermeneutic frameworks likewise explain why Croisille’s catalogue of Campanian ‘*natures mortes*’ omits ‘*tableaux à animaux*’ (so-called *Tierstücke*), and in particular why it limits itself to autonomously ‘framed’ images – that is, to paintings set off from their mural schemes in bounded panels (excluding images organically incorporated into *trompe l’œil* schemes): just as the very framework of the ‘still life’ relies on the aestheticising excision of its subject matter from the everyday world of mundane reality, so too does Croisille’s

⁴³ See e.g. Croisille 1965: figs. 195–208 and de Caro 2001: 30–3, 106–9, nos. 110–16. One of the most conspicuous differences between the subjects of ancient and more modern paintings is the absence of cut flowers among the subjects of the ancient material: cf. Scheibler 1994: 176.

⁴⁴ On the relationship between the ancient ‘genres’ of ‘still-life’ and ‘garden’ paintings, see de Caro 1990 (translated as de Caro 1991); de Caro 2001: 18–19.

catalogue restrict itself to pictures laid out in self-standing frames.⁴⁵ In deciding which images to include within the category of the ancient 'still life', and by extension which images to keep out, we have applied a set of anachronistic criteria: it is our modern frames – bounded by the associated frameworks of a much later artistic and aesthetic tradition – that have structured a critical approach.

One question that results from this scenario is whether or not we can talk about ancient 'still lifes' as a self-standing category of ancient artistic production. A second – and closely related – question is whether or not we can find a related language in which to discuss Campanian 'still-life' paintings in 'emic' historical perspective. In response to both questions, scholars have traditionally turned to literary texts, and to two Latin passages in particular. The first comes from Vitruvius' late first-century BC *On Architecture*. Explaining the differences between Greek and Roman domestic architecture, Vitruvius provides an apparent aetiology for paintings of food:⁴⁶

For when the Greeks were more luxurious – when they found themselves in more opulent circumstances – they provided for their visitors, upon their arrival, dining-rooms, bedrooms and storerooms with supplies. On the first day, they invited them to dinner; afterwards, they sent poultry, eggs, vegetables, fruit, and other such rustic produce [*res agrestes*]. That is why painters, when they replicated in their paintings the things sent to guests, called them *xenia* [*ideo pictores ea, quae mittebantur hospitibus, picturis imitantes xenia appellauerunt*]. Thus the heads of a family in a guest-house do not seem to be away from home, enjoying private generosity in their guest-quarters.

The importance of this text has been deemed to lie in the apparent terminology that it bestows, grouping together paintings of rustic produce under the title *xenia*, or 'guest gifts'.⁴⁷ For some critics, the term *xenia* has served as a simple way of imposing the modern genre onto ancient thought and practice. Norman Bryson's sophisticated analysis of ancient 'xenia'-paintings provides just one example. Although insistent about the

⁴⁵ Croisille 1965: 17. For intellectual objections to Croisille's framing here, see the reviews by Plommer 1967 and Schefold 1967: 90.

⁴⁶ On the Vitruvian passage, see e.g. Eckstein 1957: 13, 31–2, Hanoune 1990: 7, n. 1, Junker 1996: 93–7 and de Caro 2001: 8.

⁴⁷ The Greek term *xenia*, of course, is much more wide-ranging than my English translation implies, connoting time-honoured Greek (and especially Homeric) ideals of friendship, ritualised in the exchange of symbolic gifts. On traditions of gift-giving in Roman (literary) culture of the first century AD, see esp. Croisille 1982: 274–7 and Gold 2003.

importance of ancient terminology – after all, he concedes, it is all too easy for ancient paintings to be ‘elided with images produced under quite different cultural conditions’ – Bryson nevertheless maintains that *xenia* comprised ‘a category much resembling what would later be called “still life”’.⁴⁸ Bryson is explicit about this essentialist and universalising attitude, arguing that ‘still life as a category within art criticism is almost as old as still life painting itself’;⁴⁹ for Bryson, moreover, this is a meaningful category ‘not only within the reception and criticism, but within the historical production of pictures.’⁵⁰ In my view, we should exercise considerable caution here: whatever else we make of Vitruvius’ term, after all, it is significant that it recurs in only a handful of other Latin contexts, none of them associated with painting.⁵¹

When read in its own terms, Vitruvius’ passage gives some important additional insights about the hermeneutic frameworks surrounding the images that we shall explore in this chapter. If Vitruvius frames such paintings with ideas about *luxuria*, no less than about ‘Greekness’, his very talk of their different display contexts points to the transportability of the underlying themes. As artistic motif, Vitruvius informs us, *xenia* are not topographically specific to particular types of room, but instead depict subjects that are suitable in different sorts of spaces – dining-rooms, bedrooms and

⁴⁸ Bryson 1990: 17. Taking his lead from the two descriptions of self-styled *xenia* in Philostratus’ later *Imagines*, Bryson argues that Campanian *xenia* paintings vacillated between the raw (*Imag.* 1.31) and the cooked (*Imag.* 2.26), thereby occupying an associated set of dialectics between not only reality and representation, but also ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ and ‘Roman’ and ‘Greek’ (ibid. 52–3). Each of these structures, Bryson continues, can be related to broader dialectical oppositions – between the important and the unimportant, the aniconic and the iconic, and the masculine and the feminine – that have bounded the still life across the ages.

⁴⁹ Bryson 1990: 8.

⁵⁰ Bryson 1990: 11. For a critique of these essentialising assumptions, see e.g. P. Taylor 1992 and Lowenthal 1996: 10. Whereas Bryson moves to situate ancient images of food within a diachronic set of essential structures that make up ‘still-life’ painting across the ages, my aim in this chapter is to locate them within the specific visual cultural contexts of Roman antiquity, and within Roman viewing-cultures in particular.

⁵¹ Two other associated Latin instances of the term *xenia* come in Apul. *Met.* 2.11 (in the diminutive, *xeniola*; cf. Van Mal-Maeder 2001: 195–6) and Plin. *Ep.* 5.13.8, 6.31.14 (the first reference relating to gifts bestowed by the emperor on the final day of a feast, the second to senatorial bribes). A fourth instance is the title of Martial’s thirteenth book of epigrams, published in AD c. 84 (cf. Leary 2001: 3, noting how Martial ‘makes the word his own’; Croisille 1982: 271–89 and Moretti 2010). It is of course significant that the word is used to describe two paintings in Philostratus the Elder’s *Imagines*: as I have argued in Squire 2009: 416–27, esp. 427, this ‘title’ is no straightforward precursor to our own essentialising ‘still-life’ category, however, but rather implicates the subject within a whole network of ideas about visual, as well as ephrastic, make-believe.

supply-rooms.⁵² In doing so, Vitruvius suggests that *xenia* could be reframed as painted subjects to suit multiple contexts: his comments chime with a certain idea about the ‘transferability’ of these motifs, attesting to their literal and metaphorical portability – whether integrated within the illusionistic schemes of the wall, as we shall see, or else reframed as (make-believe) portable panels. At the same time, it is worth noting how Vitruvius frames such images within the language of replication: these images are defined first and foremost as real-life gifts that painters ‘imitate in their pictures’ (*picturis imitantes*).

The second text to which scholarship has referred comes in Pliny the Elder’s first-century AD *Natural History*, discussing an otherwise unknown painter named Piraeicus. After surveying the grand masters of Greek painting, Pliny turns to what he calls a ‘lesser style of painting’ (*HN* 35.112), including the depiction of viands, or *obsonia*.⁵³

For it is fitting to add something about the artists whose fame for the brush stems from smaller painting [*minoris picturae*]. Among these was Piraeicus, who should be ranked below few in skill. It is possible that he won distinction by his choice of subjects, inasmuch as, although adopting a humble line, he nevertheless attained in that field of humility the pinnacle of glory [*quoniam humilia quidem secutus humilitatis tamen summam adeptus est gloriam*]. He painted barbers’ shops, cobblers’ stalls, asses, viands [*obsonia*] and the like: consequently, he received the [Greek] name ‘painter of sordid things’ [*rhyparographos*]. In these paintings, however, he gives exquisite pleasure; indeed, they fetched bigger prices than the largest works of many [*in iis consummatae uoluptatis, quippe eas pluris ueniere quam maximae multorum*].

We know nothing about ‘Piraeicus’ other than what Pliny tells us in this short passage.⁵⁴ Still, this has not stopped scholars from attempting to construct a whole life history for the painter. Piraeicus is sometimes deemed to have worked in Hellenistic Alexandria, in what Charles Sterling confidently calls a ‘familiar line of evolution’:⁵⁵ Piraeicus, the reasoning runs,

⁵² For the motif of using fruit to adorn dining-rooms specifically, cf. Varr. *Rust.* 1.59.2, describing the practice of setting up triclinia within the rustic storerooms of the villa (and thereby allowing the associated displays of fruit to frame the rituals of dinner): for discussion, cf. Rouveret 1987: 15–16, Purcell 1995: 151–4 and Bergmann 2002a: 87–90.

⁵³ On the Plinian passage, see in particular Croisille 1968, Croisille 1982: 271–5, Reinach 1985: 390–3, Rouveret 1987: 14–16, Junker 1996: 97–8 and de Caro 2001: 10.

⁵⁴ Cf. *DNO* 4.774–5, no. 3580; *KLA* 2.201, s.v. ‘Peiraikos’.

⁵⁵ Sterling 1981: 41. More generally on the supposed Hellenistic origins of ‘still-life painting’, see Sgatti 1957: esp. 192, Balmelle 1990: 51–2 and Guimier-Sorbets 1990.

must have worked at a time when, just as in seventeenth-century Holland, attention turned from the grand subjects of the 'Classical' Renaissance to the mundane subjects of the 'Hellenistic' Baroque.⁵⁶ Piraeicus, in G. E. Rizzo's terms, was thus the 'pittore "olandese" dell'antichità'.⁵⁷

One of the reasons why this Plinian text has proved so appealing to modern readers is its seemingly disparaging dismissal of Piraeicus as *rhyparographos*, or 'painter of sordid things'. The historical context of Piraeicus – and above all his choice of artistic subjects – is accordingly reframed in terms of later European art history, and above all the pejorative critical interpretation of Flemish still-life painting in the art academies of the eighteenth century: Pliny's associated talk of *minoris picturae* (literally 'smaller painting', but usually translated as 'a lesser style of painting') has been interpreted as incontrovertible evidence that in antiquity, just as in the eighteenth century, 'still lifes' were judged ancillary to the more important genres of historical and mythological paintings.⁵⁸ This diminutive framework for discussing the ancient material has very much endured. 'Subsidiary motifs' and 'stock fillers used by painters to save time': that is how Roger Ling describes 'still-life' paintings surviving from Pompeii and Herculaneum,⁵⁹ just as Andrew Wallace-Hadrill constructs a whole hierarchy of Roman painting (deeming 'landscapes and still lifes' the least significant).⁶⁰ If many scholars have consequently judged 'still lifes' an 'inferior' sort of painterly subject, they have also assumed a hierarchical distinction between the realms of figure and ornament (no less than between peripheral frame and central panel); in doing so, there has been a tendency to undervalue the subtle interplay of different representational elements,

⁵⁶ Cf. e.g. Croisille 1965: 8–11, Sterling 1981: 27–8, Rouveret 1987, de Caro 2001: 9–10 and Croisille 2005: 228–30. Most explicit is Ling 1991: 154: 'though Piraeicus' date is uncertain, the context suggests the Hellenistic age... The foundations of still-life painting were therefore laid in the Hellenistic age'. In discussing the 'trivial' subjects of such paintings, many scholars have compared the so-called *asaratos oikos* mosaic type (as mentioned by Plin. *HN* 36.184): see below, pp. 235–8.

⁵⁷ Rizzo 1929: 64–5; cf. *ibid.* 70. The second chapter of Lessing's 1766 *Laokoon* introduces the Plinian passage in related spirit, attributing Piraeicus with 'all the zeal of a Dutch artist' ('mit allem den Fleisse eines niederländischen Künstlers'): Lessing [1766] 1984: 13 (§2).

⁵⁸ On the institutional low regard for still-life paintings between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, see e.g. Sullivan 1984: 2–4, Bryson 1990: 7–9 and 60–95, Esielonis 1994: 49–53, N. Schneider 1994: 7–10 and Lowenthal 1996: 7–10. Pliny's comments themselves had a profound effect in influencing that low opinion: cf. Gasten 1982: 13–14.

⁵⁹ Ling 1993: 240–1.

⁶⁰ Cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1988: 75 and Sterling 1981: 27, which imposes a descending hierarchy from mythological 'megalography' to 'rhyparography' onto the ancient material.

thereby overlooking the complex framing of these issues within the larger cultural and representational frameworks of Roman fresco-painting.⁶¹

Regardless of whether or not Campanian paintings have any connection with the *obsonia* images that Pliny describes (just how 'sordid' their subjects remains far from clear), Pliny's evaluation is rather more ambiguous than most scholars have supposed. Observe, for example, how Pliny relishes the paradox that, despite their small-scale subjects, these paintings were enjoyed above all others (*consummatae uoluptatis*). Indeed, it is worth noting that, despite their smaller size and subjects, they are said to have fetched more money than even the biggest works of many other painters.

So much for the Roman literary evidence. But what of actual extant images? When turning to Campanian wall-paintings, one of the most striking features of such 'still-life' imagery is its sheer popularity. Of course, we might expect paintings of food to have been prevalent in the dining spaces of the triclinium, associated with the themes of feasting and hospitality. But far from adorning triclinia alone – still less the triclinia of 'more modest houses whose owners could not afford the luxury of a mythological picture', as Roger Ling posits⁶² – depictions of food recur *throughout* the Roman house. Indeed, they frequently appear in its most conspicuous and important rooms – tablina, atria and peristyles, for instance.⁶³ Just as our quoted Vitruvius passage implies of the 'original' *xenia* lying figuratively behind these representations, painted foodstuffs evidently amounted to transferable sorts of images, suitable for all manner of different domestic contexts. The very popularity of these motifs subsequently calls for a wider-ranging analysis. And this in turn requires us to try and think beyond our

⁶¹ Compare our introduction to this volume (pp. 21–5, 65–74), the introduction to this section (pp. 102–06), and not least Verity Platt's recent discussion of *monstra* in Augustan wall-painting (Platt 2009: esp. 62–3).

⁶² Ling 1993: 247.

⁶³ De Caro 2001 nicely demonstrates that variety of spatial contexts. If we discount images which deal with Greek and Etruscan precedents, mosaics and 'still lifes' incorporated within mythological paintings, de Caro discusses 115 paintings in total: of these, the majority are without precise provenance (46), or else come from rooms of uncertain function (12); but 12 come from tablina, 11 from triclinia, 7 from cryptoporticoes, 5 from oeci, 4 from peristyles, 4 from cubicula, 3 from porticoes, 2 from atria, 2 from exedrae, and 7 from other rooms. This general pattern appears to hold true beyond Pompeii and Herculaneum: related mosaics from Roman North Africa (cf. below, pp. 233–5) are similarly incorporated within some of the household's most public rooms (see e.g. Ben Abed-Ben Khader 1990 and Darmon 1990: 108). Likewise, whether or not we agree with the assessment that these paintings are 'purely decorative illustrations' (133), related images of birds and berries recur in all manner of different domestic spaces in later second- and third-century Ephesus (Zimmermann and Ladstätter 2011: 132–4).

modern aestheticising frameworks – above all, by considering how ‘still lifes’ were framed within their original mural schemes.

Framing Representation and the ‘Four Styles’ of Pompeian Painting

Precisely because so many ‘still-life’ panels were physically removed from their walls in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it can be difficult to reconstruct their original mural contexts – a case, as we have said, of our theoretical frameworks governing the physical frames of modern display (and *vice versa*).⁶⁴ Still, enough paintings do survive either in situ or with secure provenance to warrant that attempt. In what follows, I therefore investigate the physical frames of Campanian mural-paintings to explore the particular cultural historical frameworks operating behind them: as we shall see, the ways in which surrounding walls framed images of food, and by extension the ways in which images of food in turn framed their mural surrounds, directly bore upon a viewer’s impulse either to look through the wall, or else to see it as the spatial limit of the room.

Before explaining what I mean here, it is necessary to say something about traditional scholarly schemes for approaching Campanian mural frames, and in particular about the system devised by August Mau during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶⁵ In delineating between what he labelled the ‘Four Styles’ of Pompeian painting, Mau’s objective was to determine an evolutionary history of stylistic sequence that could date, albeit relatively, any extant example. Starting out from Vitruvius’ disparaging comments about new-fangled styles in the late first century BC,⁶⁶ Mau developed a four-tiered typology which charted developments between the second century BC and the late first century AD (the Vesuvian explosion of AD 79 forming the key chronological terminus). We move progressively from the mock-masonry blocks of the First Style, through the illusionistic

⁶⁴ Even when information about provenance does exist, moreover, many scholars have chosen to overlook it: cf. L. Richardson 1966: 207, criticising Croisille 1965 for making ‘no mention ... of the place of still lifes in the scheme of decoration’.

⁶⁵ For discussion of Mau, see our introduction to this volume, esp. pp. 10–11. Mau’s classificatory scheme is laid out in Mau 1882 (cf. Mau 1899: 446–74); for further bibliography, see e.g. Bergmann 2001, Tybout 2002, Leach 2004: 14–16, P. Stewart 2004: 74–92 (esp. 82–6) and Stroocka 2007. The most detailed overview of scholarship here is now Lorenz 2015.

⁶⁶ See Vitr. *De arch.* 7.5. The bibliography on Vitruvius’ comments is immense: cf. e.g. Elsner 1995: 323, n. 40, Ling 1997 and Platt 2009: esp. 51–7.

architectural vistas of the Second, to the Third style, with its artful alignment of restrained centrepieces and symmetrical patterns, and finally on to the Fourth, which combines elements of the Second with aspects of the Third. Mau made no secret of his own aesthetic preference: if the Third Style marks an acme of Roman artistic achievement in wall-painting, the Fourth, with its exuberant extravagance, reflects its baroque ('over-the-top') decline.⁶⁷

Mau has had a mixed reception in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. While many scholars have tended to refine his chronological scheme, recent anglophone scholarship has taken issue with his assumptions head-on, substituting his formal analysis with a more contextual mode of interpretation, and paying special heed to mythological assemblage, visual narrative and domestic setting.⁶⁸ This has gone hand in hand with a chronological critique. Mau's system of linear progression, it is rightly said, overlooks the fact that different mural schemes coexisted at one and the same time.⁶⁹

As so often with revisionist scholarship, there seems a danger here of throwing out the metaphorical baby with the bathwater. For all his chronological assumptions, Mau demonstrated an exemplary sensitivity to the importance of overall design. Where he took an holistic view of the overarching significance of different mural schemes,⁷⁰ more recent work has

⁶⁷ Cf. Mau 1899: 448: 'the decline is characterized by increasing poverty of design, with feeble imitation of past styles'.

⁶⁸ One of the most decisive contributions came in Bergmann 1994; for a review of bibliography, see esp. Lorenz 2008: 4–13, and compare the assessment of Clarke 1991: 31 ('the use of Mau's system has become overrefined ... Modern scholars [are] intent on an ever-more precise chronology'). There are, of course, exceptions to these national stereotypes: particularly noteworthy is the work of Karl Schefold, which demonstrated a remarkable sensitivity to the programmatic and contextual displays of different paintings (cf. esp. Schefold 1952).

⁶⁹ Cf. Dwyer 1991: 39 and Elsner 1995: 63: 'the evidence of Pompeii and Herculaneum point not to four separate styles of decoration, but rather to the co-existence and synchronicity at a single date (AD 79) of a variety of types of decoration which we choose to label "four styles"'. An enlightening example is the so-called Villa of Poppaea at Oplontis (modern Torre Annunziata), on which see especially de Franciscis 1975a: 9–10, Clarke 1987 and 1991: 112–40, Fergola and Pagano 1998, Guzzo and Fergola 2000, Bergmann 2002a: 97 and Clarke and Muntasser 2014. The villa had a complex history and was refurbished, remodelled and extended at various different times. Its different walls certainly reflect that disparity (see de Franciscis 1975b and Barbet 1985: 62–3, fig. 32). But for all its stylistic diversity, there are a number of poignant visual *leitmotifs* between its different spaces: cf. e.g. Andreae 1982 and R. Robert 1993: 168, noting the painted peacocks that recur across different rooms (cf. Figure II.4).

⁷⁰ Consider, for example, Mau's extraordinarily rich discussion of the ambiguous framing of Second and Third Style *pinacotheca*-panels (Mau 1903) – images which could serve as *both* make-believe *tabulae* and as make-believe apertures within the larger painterly design of the wall: cf. below, pp. 239–49.

sometimes tended – rather like the Alma-Tadema painting with which we began (Figure 4.1) – to approach extracted mural panels in isolation from their larger mural frameworks, assuming a categorical sort of distinction between the realms of ‘figure’ and pererogal ‘ornament’. In treating Roman wall-painting as a sort of ‘interior design’, moreover, some scholars have been swayed by anachronistic notions of Neoclassical decoration (taking their lead from the ‘Pompeiana’ of the British aristocracy). Still more critically, scholarship can sometimes lose sight of the single variable which Mau deemed so important in Pompeian wall-painting – and which he therefore, following Vitruvius, understood to govern its evolutionary trajectory: namely, that of pictorial illusion. Most valuable in Mau’s typology, we might say, is not the neat and unidirectional process of chronological development – the aspect that Mau’s modern-day followers have tended to champion – but rather his emphasis on the underscoring and dissolution of the pictorial plane.⁷¹

By thinking about the physical framing of Campanian ‘still-life’ imagery, it is this illusionistic framework that the present discussion sets out to develop.⁷² In what follows, I suggest that mural-painting’s formal framing of food motifs in turn framed an interpretive agenda which revolved around the illusory status of the subjects depicted. If my aim is thus in one sense to vindicate Mau, an associated objective is gently to nudge attention towards issues of visual response: where Mau was predisposed to privilege formal analysis, my concern will be with what – and how – illusionistic and anti-illusionistic mural frames might have meant within their original cultural frameworks.⁷³

⁷¹ Sometimes scholars have challenged this interpretive framework explicitly: one prominent example is Wallace-Hadrill 1988: 69, arguing that ‘from the point of view of the social function of decoration, what matters is not the visual games played, but the associations evoked, by the decoration: its power not of *illusion*, but of *allusion*’ (cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 23–37); another is Yerkes 2000, supposing that illusionism was ‘a means to an end’ rather than the ‘*subject* of the wall paintings’ itself (251).

⁷² Again, my analysis thus draws upon Bryson 1990: 35–45. My concern, however, is rather with the *different* ways in which images of food were framed within the space of the wall. Bryson rather oversimplifies those differences, stating that ‘all four styles are structured around a shared aspiration, to negate the physical limits of the room – floor, ceilings and walls – in order to break past the parameters of the real and allow actual space to be penetrated by a fictional expanse beyond it’ (ibid. 45), as though all Roman wall-paintings (never mind mosaics and ceilings) follow the Second Style.

⁷³ For an overview of the development of Campanian still-life paintings, and the ways in which they were integrated into the different mural schemes of the Second, Third and Fourth Styles, compare Beyen 1928: esp. 82–7, Sgatti 1957, Croisille 1965: 9–10 and de Caro 2001: 14–33.



(a)

Figure 4.7a Detail of a basket of figs from the north wall of triclinium 14 of the Villa of Poppaea at Oplontis. Photograph by the author.

Allow me to begin with the incorporation of food and fruit motifs in mural schemes of the Second Style, and in particular with the so-called Villa of Poppaea at Oplontis.⁷⁴ Images of fruit appear prominently in two Second Style rooms at Oplontis (room 14 and oecus 23), taking their place amid a variety of architectonic trappings.⁷⁵ Figure 4.7a shows just one detail – a basket of green and purple figs from the north wall of room 14 (Figure 4.7b), two of them so ripe that they have burst through their skins;⁷⁶ on the left-hand side of the same wall, occupying the same position as the fig-basket, and again set against the painted blue vista, we see a glass bowl of fruit. Such fruit-filled glass bowls recur on the east wall of oecus 23 (Figure 4.8a), this time perched on small pedestals on the upper ledge of the painted scaenae

⁷⁴ On Oplontis, see above, n. 69, together with full synthesis of bibliography in Bergmann 2002a: 92–6; for an overview of the Oplontis trompe l'œil wall-paintings, see Conticello 1999. For three brief overviews of the Second Style and a synthesis of bibliography, see Strocka 1990, Ling 1991: 23–51 and Croisille 2005: 47–67. On the earlier archaeology of the First Style, see now the stimulating analysis of Rosenberg 2010.

⁷⁵ Cf. de Caro 2001: 52–6, nos. 21–4.

⁷⁶ One might compare here Philostr. *Imag.* 1.31. Philostratus describes a *xenia* painting complete with figs shown at different moments of (temporal) ripeness: 'some, bursting at the seams, have disgorged their honey, while others have almost broken open because of their ripeness' (καὶ τὰ μὲν ὑποκέχηνη παραπτύοντα τοῦ μέλιτος, τὰ δ' ὑπὸ τῆς ὥρας οἶον ἔσχισται, *Imag.* 1.31.1).



(b)

Figure 4.7b West, north and east walls of the same triclinium in the Villa of Poppaea at Oplontis. Photograph by the author.

frons (with each pedestal painted in accordance with the perspective from which the architecture below is seen).⁷⁷ Framed inside the room's projecting architectural structure is also a wicker-basket, or *calathus*, covered with a transparent veil (which offers a teasing glance at the apples and prunes contained within) (Figure 4.8b): the basket is made to stand as if in front of the rear painted wall but behind the architectural ledge.⁷⁸

It is important to emphasise that, within Second Style painted schemes like the ones at Oplontis, such images of fruits are not formally framed as

⁷⁷ More generally on the Second Style scaenae frons, see e.g. Rouveret 1984 and Leach 2004: 93–122. Most scholars identify the Oplontis oecus as a place for dining: see Guzzo and Fergola 2000: 42 and Tybout 2001: 52.

⁷⁸ On the west wall of the same room appear also a cake on a silver stand, garnished with cherries; a bunch of grapes, drooping delicately over the stage floor; and a peacock walking towards other objects.



(a)

Figure 4.8a East wall of oecus 23 of the Villa of Poppaea at Oplontis. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Archiv, Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

self-standing panels. Instead, each bowl, basket and container is surreptitiously placed within the mural framework of the illusionistic architectural structure: both Oplontis rooms integrate their painted fruits within the illusionistic space of the wall, as if replicating the sorts of real-life *res agrestes* that Vitruvius mentioned in his account of *xenia*. In this sense, the make-believe of the receding mural structure is bound up with that of the depicted fruits. Each frames the other in a mutually implicative way: the mimetic simulation of the figs and apples rests in part on the replicative persuasiveness of the painted architecture, and *vice versa*. Such illusionism can be related to the Second Style at large, as Wesenberg has argued, with its various attempts to elide the real space of a room ('Realraum') with the representational space of its depicted forms ('Bildraum').⁷⁹ At the same time,

⁷⁹ Cf. Wesenberg 1993: 105: 'Die integrierten Stilleben haben in der Wanddekoration des frühen zweiten Stils die Funktion, deren Realität zu steigern, indem die durch die Evokation von in die Wanddekoration eingreifenden Handlungen, die nur kurze Zeit zurückliegen, den Eindruck der Kontinuität von Bildraum und Realraum verstärken und zugleich den Bezug der an und



(b)

Figure 4.8b Detail of *calathus* framed in the projecting scaenae frons on the east wall of the same oecus at Oplontis. © Scala/Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo/Art Resource, New York.

the specific recourse to images of fruit finds numerous parallels both on the Bay of Naples and in Rome: painted bowls of fruit, again resting on painted architectural ledges, beams and supports, can be found in the Second Style

für sich zeitlosen Architekturmaleri zur Gegenwart herstellen'; cf. the earlier discussion of Beyen 1938–60: vol. 1, 6–20. More generally on such make-believe Second Style effects, see Drerup 1959, Wesenrg 1968, Winkes 1973, Ehrhardt 1987 and 1991 and Kuttner 1998.

decoration of the so-called ‘Room of the Masks’ in the so-called ‘House of Augustus’ on the Palatine,⁸⁰ for instance, as well as in cubiculum M of the Casa di Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale (cf. Figures II.3 and II.5).⁸¹ We might note in passing that, among contemporary scholars, many of these same rooms have also given rise to debates about linear pictorial perspective in antiquity.⁸² Within such feats of replicative *trompe l’œil*, painted fruits added the figurative ‘cherry on top’: they recur precisely in those scenographic scenarios where the painted mural schemes have us think that we might be looking *beyond* (or perhaps rather *through*) the containing frame of the wall.

So far, we have examined the ‘unframed’ images of foodstuffs in Campanian painting – that is, images that are integrated within the larger illusionistic frameworks of the Second Style. But such schemes provide only one visual surround. When we look to walls of the Third and Fourth Style, the framing works very differently.⁸³ Tablinum 7 of the Casa di M. Lucretius Fronto (Pompeii V.4.11) offers just one Third Style case study.⁸⁴ Framed paintings of fish appear on both the north and south walls of the room (Figures 4.9a–b): in a self-standing panel in the central upper section of the north wall, two groups of three fish lie on a window ledge above three pairs of fish below; in a parallel composition occupying the same space on the south wall, two single hanging fish flank a window, with its basket spilling its contents onto the space below. On each wall, these compositions take their place within a larger decorative scheme, structured around a central

⁸⁰ Cf. Carettoni 1983: 37–8. Here, in contrast to the scenario at Oplontis, the architectural backdrop in one sense undermines the suggested illusion, since ‘the whole wall is set against a white ground, negating the realism that the architecture in the foreground appears to set up’ (Hales 2003: 67).

⁸¹ Cf. Croisille 1965: 120–1, no. 340, and the stimulating discussion in Bryson 1990: 37–41, 46–8. At Boscoreale, the north wall’s painted glass bowl of fruit is (tellingly) placed next to a real-life window within the wall, but above a highly impressionistic ochre-on-yellow landscape below (Figures II.1 and II.5): cf. Bergmann 2013: 12–13 and Platt’s introduction to this section (pp. 102–16).

⁸² Cf. e.g. Stinson 2011 and Sinisgalli 2012: esp. 100–19. On the whole issue of ‘perspective’-painting in Greek and Roman art, see the scintillating overview of Tanner 2016: 110–14.

⁸³ For some overviews of the Third Style, and its relation to the Second, see e.g. Leach 1982, Ling 1991: 52–70 and Croisille 2005: 68–80. Bastet and de Vos 1979 is the most detailed analysis, but principally concerned with questions of chronology. On the differences between images of food in the Second and Third Styles, see in particular Beyen 1928: 20–8 (esp. 20–2), describing a shift between ‘stillebenartige Dekorationen’ and ‘dekorative Stilleben’.

⁸⁴ On the images, see Croisille 1965: 81, no. 206 and de Caro 2001: 58–9, nos. 28–30; on the room, see *PPM* III: 1006–20, nos. 82–97. On the house’s Third Style paintings, see Bastet and de Vos 1979: 64–7 (esp. 66) and Clarke 1991: 146–63.



(a)



(b)

Figure 4.9 (a) North wall of tablinum 7 of the Casa di M. Lucretius Fronto, Pompeii (V.4.11). (b) Detail from the south wall of the same tablinum. Photographs reproduced by kind permission of the Archiv, Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

self-standing mythological panel (offset in red and black), with two miniature villa ‘landscapes’ on each side (supported by elaborate *candelabra* structures). In the centre of the wall’s fanciful upper structures, set off against a yellow background, we find receptacles rather like those encountered in earlier Second Style schemes – albeit this time these are empty vessels, devoid (so far as we can see) of fruits within.

As for the two fish-paintings themselves, it is worth noting the highly contrived frame. Each panel is surrounded by a thick black border, and each incorporates within it an additional recessed ledge (supporting an assemblage of fish on the south wall, and an upturned basket on the south – the motion of its spilt fish ‘stilled’ in time); in each case, moreover, the fish have been specially arranged, with their tails obligingly curled so as to fit within the frame. While the recessed ledges within each framed picture visually echo the stylised architectural recessions surrounding them above and to the sides (complete with shuttable doors), the panels are clearly demarcated as *separate* from the wall. The very framing of the images, then, serves to insert them in figurative quotation marks. The literal frame of the picture frames our view of it as a self-standing representation, depicted at second remove from the mural scheme in which it appears: the panel creates its own representational world, one physically and metaphorically detached from both the wall’s painted architectural fancies and the real space of the room.⁸⁵

Related Third Style examples could be introduced here. But my emerging suggestion is that images of food, integrated within different stylistic frameworks, played a decisive role in constructing (as indeed deconstructing) the ontological register of the painted wall. Second and Third styles framed food images in very different ways: while Second Style schemes tantalisingly whet the viewer’s appetite, integrating bowls and baskets of fruit within their illusionistic vistas (and thereby making those vistas out to be *more* than paint and pigment), they necessarily thwart such consumption.⁸⁶ Despite the palpable differences in frame, both schemes exploit consumable subjects as an index for the simulative or dissimulative framework of the wall, just as the

⁸⁵ For the interpretive effects of Third Style paintings here, see Elsner 1995: 58, describing how ‘viewing is seen as complex – as a process of desire, as a creative act of the viewer’s relationship with the image (rather than as merely the passive registering of the real)’.

⁸⁶ The ‘tantalising’ associations are surely important, finding their archaeology in the myth described at *Od.* 11.582–92: Tantalus’ celebrated punishment, we remember, was to be tormented by water and fruit that perpetually elude his grasp (διψάων, πῖεῖν δ’ οὐκ εἶχεν ἐλέσθαι, *Od.* 11.584). Later authors explicitly present this fate as a form of ocular torture: as Apollod. *Ep.* 2.1 puts it, Tantalus could see (ὄρων) – but not eat from – the fruit-trees around him; cf. e.g. Hyg. *Fab.* 82, Diod. Sic. 4.74.2, Sen. *Thy.* 1–23, 152–75.

framework of the wall provides a way of gauging the virtual reality of this food imagery.

This leads directly to Fourth Style frames, with their simultaneous fusion of Second Style illusionism with Third Style anti-illusionistic elements.⁸⁷ Once again, we find images of food being used to interrogate the boundaries between reality and replication; framed in self-standing panels, moreover, food motifs are exploited to underscore and destabilise the fictive semblance of the overarching mural scheme. In Fourth Style walls, such images are often set off as delicate ‘miniatures’ within overriding swathes of colour. Sometimes, they are incorporated within stylised circular panels (as for example in tablinum F of the Casa dell’Ara Massima, Pompeii),⁸⁸ at other times, the very scale of the depicted objects is distorted – both the size of the framed objects in relation to the wall in which they were set,⁸⁹ and the respective scales of different objects within a single composition.⁹⁰

Among the most striking aspects of Fourth Style walls is their framed inclusion of not just fruits, but also birds interacting with them.⁹¹ In some schemes, these are set off from the wall in clearly demarcated panels: Figure 4.10a, for example, shows two sparrows inspecting cherries and plums (surrounded by a tripartite frame), while Figure 4.10b portrays a cockerel pecking at an open pomegranate and pear. On other occasions, and nowhere more prominently than at Oplontis, we find this subject floating on a flat monochrome ground (e.g. Figure 4.10c): in keeping with the

⁸⁷ For a general introduction to the Fourth Style, see Croisille 2005: 81–103; cf. e.g. Leach 2004: 156–264 and P. Stewart 2004: 81–2.

⁸⁸ Cf. *PPM* V: 862, no. 20, Croisille 1965: 93–4, nos. 251–4 and de Caro 2001: 79–80, nos. 62–5. For the Casa dell’Ara Massima’s particularly sophisticated games of representation and illusionism – centred around its use of frames – cf. below, pp. 245–9.

⁸⁹ The images from the north wall of tablinum 92 of the Praedia di Giulia Felice (Pompeii II.4.3) provide one example, in which large panelled paintings of foodstuffs outsize the small villa landscapes framed below (see de Caro 2001: 62–7, nos. 36–9): the context of these paintings is known thanks to a drawing of the north wall by Filippo Morghen in 1792 (cf. *PPM* III: 289, no. 177; *ibid.* X: 65, no. 2).

⁹⁰ On the north wall of peristyle 53 of the Casa dei Dioscuri (Pompeii VI.9.6–7), for instance, the two deer shown in the upper register are painted on a scale out of proportion with that of the duck and fruit basket represented below: see Croisille 1965: 87, no. 229 and de Caro 2001: 101, no. 101.

⁹¹ A selection of such paintings can be found in Croisille 1965: figs. 109–39 and de Caro 2001: 81–9, nos. 69–81 (which concludes that the motif was quickly ‘ridotta ad una semplice vignetta stereotipa’, 25). The most detailed discussion of such motifs is R. Robert 1993: Robert concludes that ‘la présence de l’oiseau coincide avec la volonté d’accentuer, dans le décor mural, l’illusionisme du relief et de la profondeur’ (*ibid.* 168); he then proceeds to associate this both with the artist’s drive to emulate the work of Zeuxis, and with the client’s desire to show off his knowledge about Greek ‘Master painters’ (cf. *ibid.* 170).



(a)

Figure 4.10a Painting from portico I in the Casa del Principe di Napoli, Pompeii (VI.15.7–8). Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Archiv, Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

move from Third to Fourth Style framing systems more generally, the motif is extracted from any architectural or panelled scheme, raising larger questions about the porous boundaries between not only frame and framed, but also thereby between the figurative and the ornamental. It is worth noting the iconographic continuity with earlier paintings too: the basket of figs in Figure 4.10d (an unprovenanced painting from Pompeii), for example, looks almost as though it has been lifted from the Second Style trappings of our Oplontis triclinium (Figure 4.7a) – albeit now set on a shelf *within* a self-standing framed panel, and once apparently contained within a Fourth Style wall.⁹² While suggesting the aperture of a window, as though viewers could look *through* the wall (a topos that Roman wall-painting of course played with in knowing and self-referential ways: cf. Figure 1.22), the frame here serves itself to frame the mimetic artifice involved: the figs may be

⁹² On Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 8640, see Croisille 1965: 38, no. 39, and de Caro 2001: 97–8, no. 97.

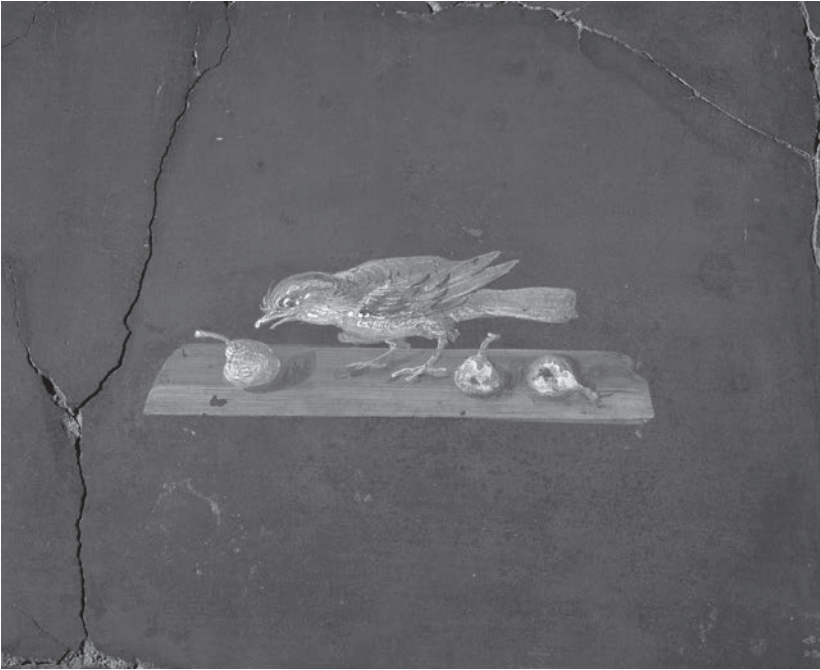


(b)

Figure 4.10b Unprovenanced painting from Pompeii. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 86719. © Scala/Art Resource, New York.

lifelike enough to attract the attention of birds (at least within their frame), but the panelled edges simultaneously contain the picture as a figment of self-contained artifice.

How should we explain such images of birds and fruit? If the motif takes us back to the overriding themes of artifice and illusion – themes, as we have seen, expressly framed by the different surrounds of Campanian



(c)

Figure 4.10c Detail from the east wall of room 81 in the Villa of Poppaea at Oplontis.
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wall-painting – it might simultaneously bring to mind a specific anecdote of virtuoso artistic illusion. In the thirty-fifth book of his *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder tells the story of an artistic competition (*certamen*) between Zeuxis and Parrhasius, both working in the early fourth century BC (*HN* 35.65).⁹³ So successfully (*tanto successo*) did Zeuxis paint a bunch of grapes, we are told, that birds flocked around its promised fruits, ‘flying up into the scene’ (*ut in scaenam aues aduolarent*); undeterred, Parrhasius responded to his rival by painting a curtain, and did so

⁹³ For the ancient sources on the two painters, see *DNO* 2.815–53, nos. 1636–702 and 2.858–907, nos. 1710–86 (with 2.860–1, no. 1712 on this particular story). On Pliny’s implied layerings of different ‘figurations’, see Bann 1989: 27–40, along with e.g. Bryson 1990: 30–2, Gilbert 1993, R. Robert 1993: 169–70, Elsner 1995: 16–17, 89–90, Morales 1996: 184–8 and Carey 2003: 109–11; compare also Leatherbury’s discussion in this volume (p. 564). The underlying anecdote finds numerous additional resonances: cf. Morales 1996: 206–7 on Sen. *Controv.* 10.5.27–8, an ‘ingenious parody of the proverbial story of Zeuxis and the grapes’. One might also compare the birds included in the painted representation of Philostr. *Imag.* 2.17.8, as well as the birds flying around the painted grapes of *Imag.* 1.23.2, and not least the birds described as burrowing into the ‘sweet figs’ within the *xenia* painting of *Imag.* 1.31.1.



(d)

Figure 4.10d Unprovenanced painting from Pompeii. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 8640. Photograph: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rom (D-DAI-Rom 1960.2412; photograph by Sansaini).

with such representational realism (*ita ueritate repraesentata*) as to hoodwink Zeuxis himself. After instructing Parrhasius to remove the curtain and reveal the image beneath, Zeuxis realises his mistake (*intellecto errore*) and concedes victory: ‘whereas Zeuxis had deceived birds, Parrhasius had deceived *him*, a painter’ (*quoniam ipse uolucres fefellisset, Parrhasius autem se artificem*).

Frames prove fundamental to this story of ‘truth’ (*ueritas*) and (mis)understanding: just as the birds were deceived by the imagery within the replicative frame of Zeuxis’ artistic representation, so Zeuxis mistakes Parrhasius’ painted image for the peripheral frame of its protective



Figure 4.11 Adriaen van der Spelt and Frans van Mieris, *Trompe-l'œil Still Life with a Flower Garland and a Curtain*, 1658. Chicago, Art Institute, inv. 1949.585. Reproduced by kind permission of The Art Institute of Chicago (Wirt D. Walker Fund 1949.585).

outer curtain.⁹⁴ Within western art history, Pliny's tale is deeply familiar – thanks in part to the self-referential visualisations by later artists, and not least to post-Renaissance images that played upon the underlying topoi (e.g. Figure 4.11).⁹⁵ But it is worth remembering that Pliny's story is structured, first and foremost, around the convincing representation of painted fruit.

Whether or not they knew this specific anecdote (or indeed other associated stories of virtuoso illusionism), Fourth Style mural-painters certainly seem to have recognised its underlying layering of representational registers: playing knowingly with associated discourses of artistic illusion, they sometimes even insert both illusory stimulus and deluded birds into their

⁹⁴ Cf. Morales 1996: 187 on how 'a hierarchy of spectatorship is established with birds as capable of appreciating art, humans more so, and artists most of all'. For the underlying Stoic stakes, framed around the supremacy of *natura*, see Tanner 2006: 242–6 (comparing e.g. *HN* 35.95, *Ael. VH* 2.3 and *Strabo* 14.2.5).

⁹⁵ On the Renaissance reception of this and other related stories, see esp. Barkan 1999: 65–117 (discussing the anecdote at 87–8); cf. Hénin 2010 (discussing the connotations of 'metapictoriality', 258) and McHam 2013: 47, 243–50 (on how the story featured alongside other Plinian anecdotes amid the six rust-coloured monochrome paintings in the *gran salone* of Vasari's house at Arezzo – themselves presented as illusionistically framed *quadri riportati*).



Figure 4.12 Detail from the upper west wall of tablinum I at Pompeii IX.2.10. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Archiv, Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

mural frames. In doing so, Fourth Styles schemes simultaneously collapse and underscore the different representational levels involved. On the upper west wall of tablinum I in Pompeii IX.2.10 (Figure 4.12), for example, we find not only the painted image of a rooster pecking at grapes (complete with basket of figs to the left) (cf. Figure 4.10b), but also a painted curtain above, illusionistically draped over the scene. The combination of motifs might be said to anticipate the sorts of replicatory games which later western artists relished (cf. Figure 4.11): if the cloth's embroidered pattern visually echoes that of the lunette's 'ornamental' semicircular surround, the motif of fruit and birds is replayed in the additional panels offset within the tablinum's Fourth Style mural and ceiling decoration, which contains offset vignettes of sparrows eating fruit (e.g. Figure 4.13), as well as free-standing bird motifs against the wall's monochrome red background.⁹⁶ So are we to think that an (unconvincing?) bird is to be convinced by these painted fruits, but that human viewers are not? Or does the fact that this is a *painted* bird undermine the berries' capacity for illusion (and *vice versa*)? On the one hand, by

⁹⁶ See *PPM VIII*: 1106–16, nos. 21–41. On Figure 4.12, cf. Croisille 1965: 101, no. 282 and de Caro 2001: 89, no. 80.



Figure 4.13 Detail of the painted ceiling decoration of tablinum I at Pompeii IX.2.10. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Archiv, Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

incorporating within the fictional frame of the wall-painting not only ‘realistic’ grapes, but also the legendary birds that (mis)took those grapes for reality, such images might be said to trump even Zeuxis’ virtuoso *trompe l’œil*. On the other hand, the whole feat of illusion is staged here with a knowing degree of replicative self-referentiality – a self-consciousness about the interventions of different representational registers.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ The idea of ‘staging’ is perhaps important, at least if one accepts the argument of Bann 1989: 27–40 about the original context of the Plinian story: does the talk of birds flying *in scaenam* suggest a competition within the context of stage-painting specifically – that is, of painting itself designed to frame the mimetic representation of theatrical performance? I do not mean to suggest that such play with multiplex frames is an exclusively Fourth Style phenomenon. The motif also appears in Third Style schemes – such as in two panels in the triclinium of the so-called *Complesso dei Riti Magici*, Pompeii II.1.12 (cf. *PPM* III: 28, no. 9; *ibid.* III: 33, no. 20, de Caro 2001: 58–9, nos. 31–3), and still more spectacularly on the south wall of *exedra q* in the *Casa del Gallo*, Pompeii VIII.5.2 (cf. Bastet and de Vos 1979: 27–8, pl. III.5). We can see its

Framing, it seems to me, plays a central role in such mimetic games. To extract such 'still lifes' from their original mural contexts, privileging an anachronistically modern aesthetic framework, is to overlook the illusionistic discourses that once (again both literally and metaphorically) surrounded them. As we have seen, different Campanian mural schemes evidently framed images of food in remarkably different ways. And yet common to all was a concern with the conceptual frame of painterly representation: the divergent frameworks in which images of food were contained amounted to very different claims about pictorial *mimêsis*. Of course, such blurrings between reality and framed painterly representation emerge as a major topos in ancient Graeco-Roman art criticism – and in responses to free-standing panel-paintings in particular.⁹⁸ While views of our paintings were framed by such discourses, the different mural schemes of the Pompeian Styles place that critical frame at their centre, posing questions (and tantalising us with divergent answers . . .) about the painted wall's ability to reach beyond the physical constraints of a given space.

archaeology in still earlier Second Style images, not least in e.g. the motif of a peacock strutting towards the displayed fruit in oecus 23 at Oplontis; consider too the north wall of cubiculum M in the Villa of P. Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale (Figure II.5) in which – to the right of the 'real' window offering a vista beyond the room – we see a glass bowl of fruit in front of a black curtain, with a bird perched teasingly above. At the same time, it is worth noting the continuity of such motifs long after the Vesuvian eruption of AD 79 – and across the Roman Empire: cf. e.g. Zimmermann and Ladstätter 2011: 132–4 on the second- and third-century evidence from Ephesus.

⁹⁸ In addition to countless other examples, one might think here of the Elder Philostratus' *Imagines* (for a review of bibliography, see Squire 2013a). There are numerous moments within the *Imagines* where the visual frames of a purported gallery are opened up to question, flagging in turn the pictorial reframing that underscores Philostratus' project of ecphrastic verbal description: when it comes to the insects within Philostratus' (highly self-reflective) *graphê* of Narcissus, for example, the speaker declares not to 'know whether a real bee has been deceived by the painting, or whether we are to be deceived into thinking that a painted bee is real (οὐκ οἶδα εἴτ' ἐξαπατηθεῖσα ὑπὸ τῆς γραφῆς, εἴτε ἡμᾶς ἐξηπατηθῆσθαι χρὴ εἶναι αὐτήν, *Imag.* 1.23.2 cf. Elsner 2007b: 144–5 and below, p. 248); likewise, within a described tableau of 'hunters', the speaker suddenly stops in his tracks, claiming to have been 'deluded by the *graphê*, thinking that these figures were not painted/described, but that they were actual beings which move and love' (ἐξήχθην ὑπὸ τῆς γραφῆς μὴ γεγράφθαι δοκῶν αὐτοῦς, εἶναι δὲ καὶ κινεῖσθαι καὶ ἐρᾶν, *Imag.* 1.28.2); so too, in one of two tableaux dedicated to *xenia* specifically, the speaker claims that the 'redness' of a painting's depicted apples seems not to have been imposed onto the frame of pictorial representation, but rather to have bloomed organically from within (τὸ δὲ ἐν αὐτοῖς ἔρευθος οὐδὲ ἐπιβεβλήσθαι φήσεις, ἀλλὰ ἐνδον ὑπηνηθέναι, *Imag.* 1.31.2). Again and again, the representational frames of these described tableaux prove unstable, interacting with the viewers (imagined as) standing before them within the gallery; moreover, the verbal frame of the *Imagines* reiteratively reframes that representational instability – re-representing the paintings (*graphai*) in the verbal terms of the spoken speeches enacted before them, in turn rendered as a readable text (*graphê*) on the inscribed scroll.

Images of food therefore take their place amid the numerous other subjects framed within the walls of Campanian wall-painting. Needless to say, so-called 'still lifes' were by no means the *only* subjects to explore such themes of artistic replication: as Norman Bryson puts it, 'illusionistic skill... is a precondition of the system rather than *xenia's* specific objective'.⁹⁹ Nonetheless, I would argue that fruit and other foodstuffs proved a particularly delicious subject for thinking about the consumable illusionism of pictorial representation. One only need think of the frequent recourse to 'make-believe' foods for debating the correlations between sense perception and knowledge in ancient philosophy – as demonstrated by the tricks played out on the Stoic philosopher Sphaerus during Ptolemy Philopater's apocryphal dinner party in the third century BC,¹⁰⁰ for example, and as satirised in Petronius' account of Trimalchio's own *cena* (where no foodstuff proves quite what it seems to be).¹⁰¹ Again and again, Greek and Roman discussions of empiricism and knowledge frame (make-believe) fruits in related terms: on the one hand, fruit emerges as a pinnacle of objective reality, quite literally incorporated (through the act of consumption) within our bodily frames; on the other, fruits and other foodstuffs are frequently cited as culturally 'cooked' things – as objects which can

⁹⁹ Bryson 1990: 58, cf. Bergmann 1992: 34–7 on 'framing' the imagery of Roman mural landscapes. Roman garden paintings provide an obvious comparandum (cf. Figure 1.19). Frequently set up within real domestic viridaria, garden paintings could likewise frame nature 'unadorned' with her painted semblance (as well as *vice versa*) – and in all manner of self-referential ways: the best recent discussion is Bergmann 2014 (with detailed overview of bibliography).

¹⁰⁰ Testimonia are catalogued in Blümner 1920: 348, in the context of this celebrated disagreement about whether one can hold an opinion based purely on empirical knowledge (*doxasis*): according to Diog. Laert. 7.177, Sphaerus was offered wax pomegranates by Ptolemy Philopater; according to Ath. 8.354e, he was instead served make-believe fowl (although the essence of the anecdote is otherwise the same). On the significance of the story within Stoic theories of *phantasia katalêptikê*, see e.g. Reed 2002: esp. 151, n. 10; cf. more generally, Sedley and Long 1990: 241–53 (listing the Diogenes Laertius passage as no. 40F). For one attested artist who was famous for his make-believe apples and grapes – so convincing that 'you would not have been able distinguish their appearance from the real thing' (*ut non posses aspectu discernere a ueris*), see Plin. *HN* 35.155 on a certain 'Possis': the very name of the artist ('Mr Could-You?') evidently reflected his mimetic feats (*ut non posses*).

¹⁰¹ On the external semblances of food constantly belying the actual matter from which it derives at Trimalchio's dinner, cf. e.g. Nichols 1991: esp. 829–30 and Courtney 2001: 82–4. The theme is explicitly mentioned during the purported dinner party: at one point, Encolpius' conversation recalls how, celebrating the Saturnalia at Rome, he came across a so-called *imaginem cenarum* (Petron. *Sat.* 69.2). One might also compare here SHA *Heliogab.* 25.9–27.5 – an account of an imperial dinner party designed perpetually to fool its guests with make-believe foodstuffs, leaving them forever 'tormented by hunger' (*fame macerarentur*, 27.5).

seem other than what they are.¹⁰² Food made for a particularly appropriate subject within the frames of mural make-believe, we might say, precisely because of its conceptual implications for distinguishing between truth and semblance.

Allow me to round off my discussion here with two final observations. The first remains in the realm of Campanian 'still-life' painting, and pertains to one recurrent visual topos treated so far only in passing – namely, the frequent depiction of glass vessels containing fruit and other consumable objects.¹⁰³ We have already encountered this motif in our two rooms at Oplontis (Figures 4.7b and 4.8a), where fruits are displayed in transparent glass both within a framed vista and on top of the protruding upper ledge of a scaenae frons; likewise one might compare the glass bowl of fruit incorporated within the multilayered pictorial frames of cubiculum M in the Villa of P. Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale (Figure II.5).¹⁰⁴ Whereas such vessels are integrated within the overarching illusionistic mural schemes, later self-standing panels frequently isolate related glass containers: reframing the motif within the clearly demarcated borders of their pictures, some images juxtapose water-filled glass vessels with their displayed fruits (e.g. Figure 4.14), while others compare and contrast obscuring terracotta containers with large diaphanous bowls filled with fruit (and occasionally place additional 'unmediated' fruits at their sides (Figure 4.15). In all these examples, the see-through quality of glass seems to have rendered it a particularly rich medium for visualising the

¹⁰² Cf. Gowers 1993: 4: 'A piece of fruit on a table figures again and again in anecdotes as a test of the nature of reality'. One of the most detailed discussions is Macrob. *Sat.* 7.14.21–3, analysing how 'reasonably' to determine whether an apple really *is* an apple (on the basis of not only its looks, but also its smell, touch and taste).

¹⁰³ Bryson 1990: 57 briefly notes this feature of 'xenia paintings', but does not situate its significance within Roman cultural discourses about glass. Some (selective) examples of glass containers include images in or from the following domestic contexts: the north wall of triclinium 14 and the east and west walls of oecus 23 of the Villa di Poppaea at Oplontis; tablinum 92 of the Praedia di Giulia Felice, Pompeii II.4.3 (Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 8611B); various images from the Casa dei Cervi, Herculaneum IV.21 (including Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 8644A, inv. 8645A and inv. 8645B); a cubiculum of the Casa Samnitica, Herculaneum V.1–2 (cf. Croisille 1965: 113–14, no. 322); and the Villa di Popidio Floro at Boscoreale (Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 150599, on which see de Caro 2001: 81, no. 66. On the first-century BC import into Rome of eastern (above all Syrian) technologies of blowing glass, see Fleming 1999: esp. 13–35. More generally on depictions of glass in Roman wall-painting, see Eckstein 1957: 20–1, no. 5, Naumann-Steckner 1991 and 1999 and Wesenberg 1993: 164–5.

¹⁰⁴ On the significance of these vessels within the mural scheme in this Oplontis room, see e.g. Bergmann 2002a: 118, n. 66; on the glass bowl of fruit in cubiculum M in the Villa of P. Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale, see the introduction to this section (pp. 102–16).



Figure 4.14 Wall-painting from the Casa dei Cervi, Herculaneum (IV.21). Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 8645A. © HIP/Art Resource, New York.



Figure 4.15 Painting from the north wall of tablinum 92 of the Praedia di Giulia Felice, Pompeii (II.4.3). Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 8611B. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Archiv, Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

frames of pictorial representation – both the frames of different overarching mural schemes, and those of the self-standing panels framed within Third and Fourth Style walls.¹⁰⁵ The prismic transparency of glass becomes, as it were, a metaphorical figure for the frame of pictorial representation: the very vessels containing such fruits, themselves contained within the mural (anti-)illusions of the painted wall, mirror the containing mediation of all pictorial replication (as well as the bounded promise of breaking that frame).¹⁰⁶ As such, glass vessels take their place alongside related containers, tantalisingly placed so as to mediate between frame and framed, no less than between visual object and viewing subject. One might remember, for example, the transparent veil draped over the *calathus* of fruit in oecus 23 (Figure 4.8b), itself placed (unlike the glass vessels of fruits on the wall's upper make-believe ledges) within the tangible grasp of the viewer.

All this corroborates what we have said about the illusionistic frameworks of Campanian painting, and about their interest in food motifs in particular. But my second observation takes us beyond Campania – as indeed the specific medium of wall-painting. After all, the sorts of subjects that we have examined in this chapter were by no means unique to wall-paintings: they recur in other representational contexts too, and above all in Roman mosaics.¹⁰⁷ Despite the change in medium, Roman mosaics visualise related games of reality and representation, framing them around ideas about art and nature. In numerous examples from North Africa, the sorts of fruits and vegetation that were so often used to frame inner emblemata find themselves framed *within* the mosaic floor, surrounded by recessions of geometric shapes. Sometimes, we even find intricate garlands of leafs and fruits wrapping around them, blurring the boundaries between the framed images

¹⁰⁵ It is worth remembering here Roman discussions about the distorting qualities of glass, which was said at once to allow viewers to see through it, and yet also to refract an illusory image of the things seen: cf. e.g. Sen. *QNat.* 1.3.9, 1.6.5 and Macrob. *Sat.* 7.14.1 (the latter two passages drawing specifically on the distorted images of fruit when seen through glass vessels filled with water).

¹⁰⁶ This is not to deny a mimetic relation to real-life practices of both presentation and preservation: Columella espouses the virtues of glass for storing fruit over long periods (*Rust.* 12.4), for example; Naumann-Steckner 1991 likewise discusses some of the parallels between extant glassware and the depicted vessels of Campanian painting.

¹⁰⁷ On 'still-life' motifs in Roman mosaics, see the wide-ranging discussions in Balmelle et al. 1990; cf. e.g. Dumbabin 1978: 123–6, Kondoleon 1994: 128–31 and Zapheirpoulou 2006: 77–82. For the argument that such images came to be infused with an overarching 'Dionysian' significance, see Gozlan 1981 and 1990 and Ben Osman 1990. For fish mosaics – turning the floor into a translucent pool (albeit one most often seen from the side as opposed to from above) – see Andreae 2003: 127–57.

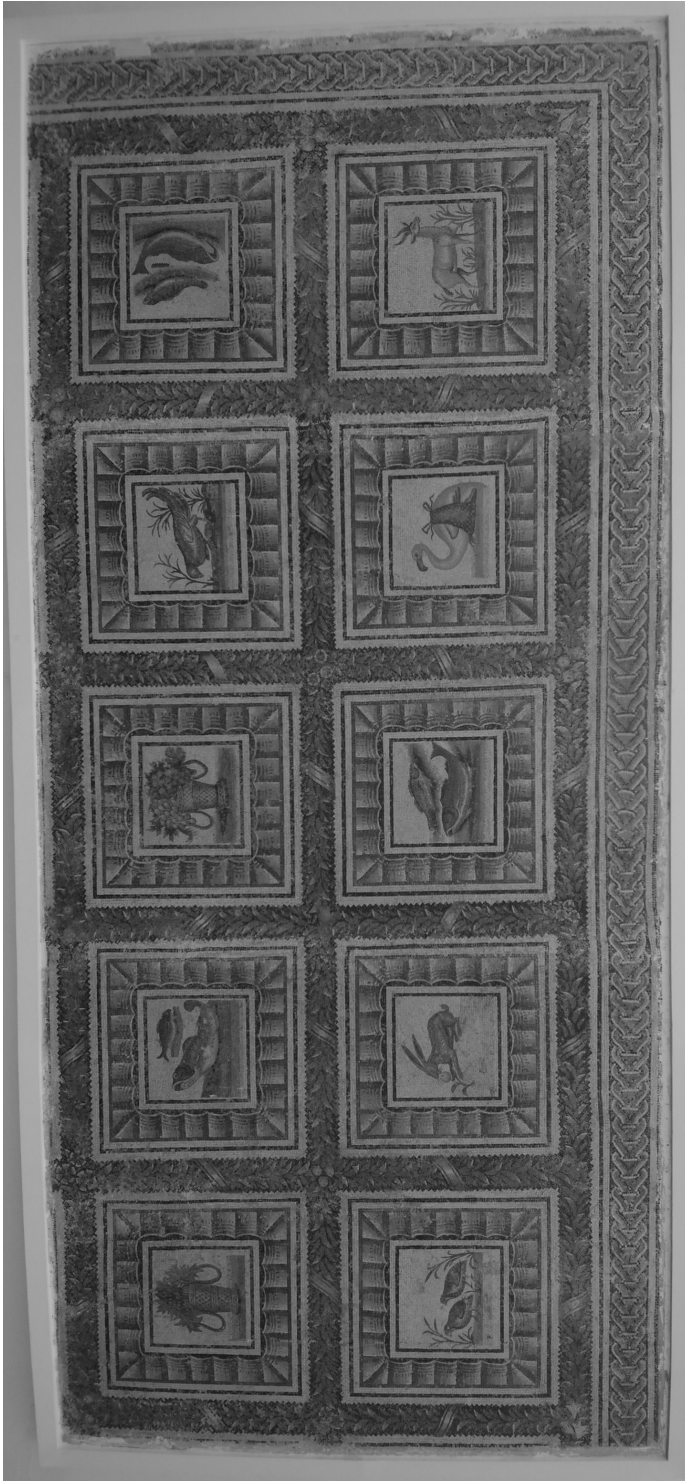


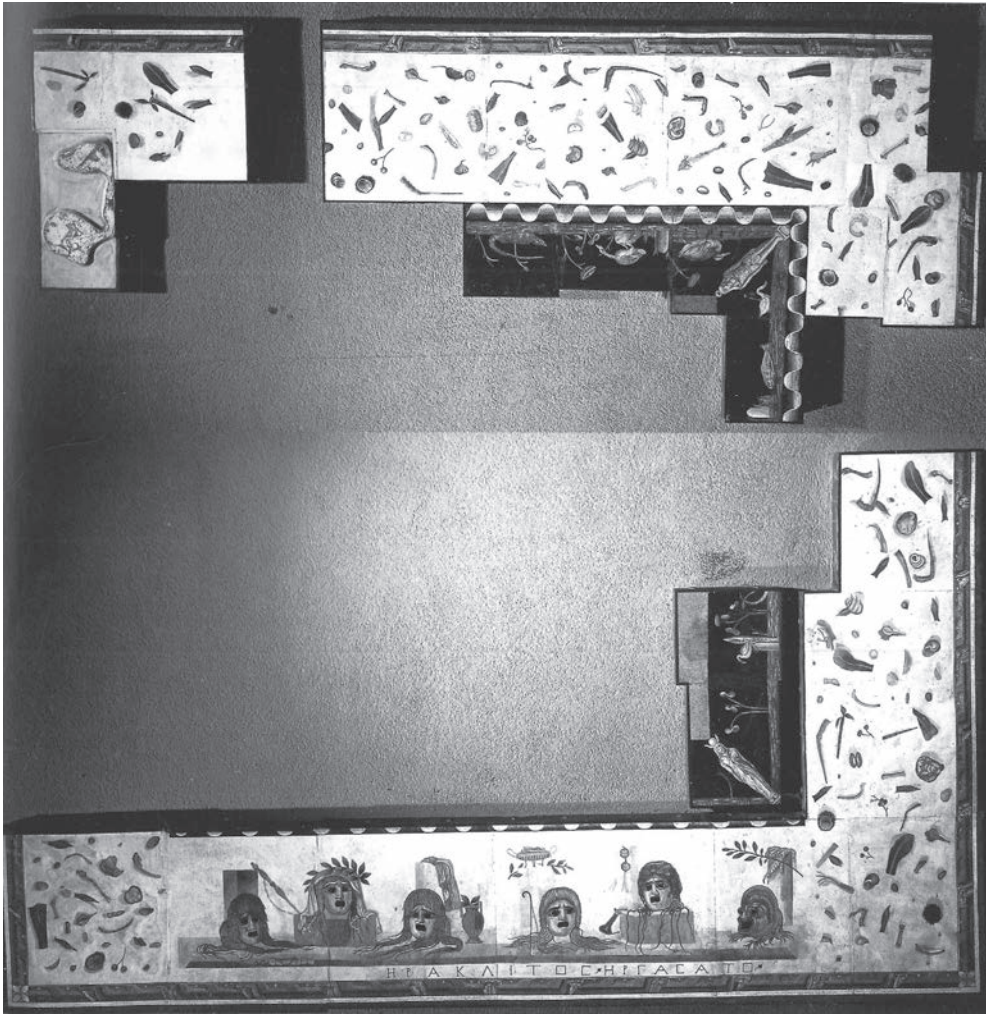
Figure 4.16 Mosaic with framed *xenia* scenes from El Djem. Tunis, Bardo Museum, inv. A 268. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of Fatma Naït Yghil.



Figure 4.17 Second-century AD mosaic emblem from the ‘Grotte Celoni’ on the Via Casilina in Rome. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano (Palazzo Massimo alle Terme), inv. 340767. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Archiv, Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

and framing ornament: in a fragment of a once much larger mosaic from El Djem, for example, we find ten inner individual panels featuring so-called *xenia* motifs (including fruits in wicker baskets, animals and fish), themselves contained in turn within multiple frames, woven together by a complex wreath of leaves, flowers and fruits (Figure 4.16). When it comes to such mosaics, the tessellated medium serves simultaneously to underscore the artifice involved. While framed mosaic panels play with the illusion of real-life fruits and birds flocking round them (e.g. Figure 4.17), the very frame of the mosaic *as* mosaic in one sense underscores their piecemeal representational status.

Mosaics like these certainly parallel (and develop) the illusionistic games of wall-painting. But the shift in medium nonetheless changes a viewer’s interpretive framework. One of the richest parallels for considering the relationship comes in the so-called *asaratos oikos* or ‘unswept household’ motif, which Pliny attributes to a very famous (*celeberrimus*) second-century BC mosaicist named Sosos. In a pavement at Pergamon, we are told, Sosos worked with ‘small cubes tinted in various shades’ to represent ‘the debris



(a)

Figure 4.18a Reconstruction of a second-century AD *asaratos oikos* mosaic. Vatican City, Musei Vaticani (Museo Gregoriano Profano), inv. 10132. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Archiv, Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

of a meal and things which are normally swept away, as if they had been left there (*uelut relictā*)' (HN 36.184).¹⁰⁸ Sosos' mosaic is lost, but numerous

¹⁰⁸ The same mosaic most likely once contained at its centre a famous emblem of doves around a water vessel: for the relationship, see e.g. Donderer 1991 and Dunbabin 1999: 26–7 (with further bibliography in nn. 29–30). Numerous Roman 'copies' of the inner emblem are



(b)

Figure 4.18b Detail of the same mosaic. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Archiv, Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

later imitations are known.¹⁰⁹ In one Hadrianic example – today housed in the Vatican Museums, but deriving from a rich villa to the south of Rome’s Aventine Hill¹¹⁰ – we find related ‘unswept’ panels surrounding a (now lost) central scene on three sides (Figures 4.18a–b). Whatever it originally depicted, the central emblema was surrounded by a series of surrounding frames – including not just the outer *asaratos oikos* panels

known, the most famous being the example from Hadrian’s Villa at Tivoli (and now held in Rome’s Musei Capitolini): cf. Andreae 2003: 161–83, along with Leatherbury’s chapter in this volume (pp. 551–2).

¹⁰⁹ On Sosos, see *KLA* 2.413, s.v. ‘Sosos’. In fact, numerous creative ‘copies’ are known: see e.g. Deonna and Rénard 1961: 113–27, Rouveret 1987: 16–18, Donderer 1991, Junker 1996: 100–1, Andreae 2003: 46–51, Dunbabin 2003: 64–5 and Pappalardo and Ciardiello 2012: 35–45, 115–19. For a parallel mosaic from El Djem discovered in 1960, see Foucher 1961; cf. Dunbabin 1978: 124–5 and Ennaifer 1995: 73–8.

¹¹⁰ On this example (Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Profano, inv. 10132 – albeit heavily restored), see Andreae 2003: 46–51 (with further bibliography at 312, n. 38). Such scenes evidently resonated with Roman, as well as Greek, dining practices: Moretti 2010: 336 points to an interesting parallel with Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.66 – Cicero’s vivid description of a dining floor that was ‘filthy, swimming with wine, littered with wilting garlands and fishbones’ (*humus erat immunda, lutulenta uino, coronis languidulis et spinis cooperta piscium*); she also points to additional supposed Latin references in Stat. *Silv.* 1.3.52–7 and Sid. *Apoll. Carm.* 23.57–8 (337, n. 21; cf. Hagenow 1978 and Nichols 1991: 841–3).

(their white ‘floor’ itself mounted on a make-believe architectural platform, albeit one complete with decorative floral designs at the corners), but also an inner black-ground frieze with flowers, animals and Egyptianising motifs. The whole layout of the floor was evidently designed with the room’s function in mind. Originally, the room’s entrance was flanked by six theatrical masks and an arresting Greek inscription (which names the mosaicist as ‘Heraklitos’).¹¹¹ The three sections of the *asaratos oikos* motif consequently aligned with the three couches that defined this room as a triclinium; indeed, the representational frame of the mosaic is itself wholly dependent on the real-life frame of the furnished room.

Although, once again, the mosaic’s frame is very different from the mural frameworks explored in this chapter, it nonetheless delights in the paradoxes of consuming illusionistic art. If the panels scatter all manner of disposed meal debris around this representational space (fish bones, pips, crustacean claws, nutshells, leaves, even in one section a mouse gnawing away at a walnut), they also include the shadows that each object casts against the white floor: the representational frame of the panels – themselves externally framed to resemble a raised platform, and in turn framing the internal emblema at the room’s centre – poses (in every sense) as ground. At the same time, however, the tessellated nature of this figured imagery literally and metaphorically fragments the illusion, throwing into relief the simulative make-believe at play (itself bringing to mind Sosos’ renowned artistry as antiquity’s *celeberrimus* mosaicist). Just as the imagery portrays the remnants of a banquet – foodstuffs now ‘emptied’ of their nourishing qualities – the mosaic medium too in one sense ‘un’-represents its consumable subjects.¹¹²

Conclusion: Frames in Frames

We began this chapter with Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema and his depicted ‘picture-gallery’ of 1864 (Figure 4.1). Alma-Tadema, we have said, exploits the frame to demarcate the privileged aesthetic space of the artwork from

¹¹¹ On the significance of the signature inscription, see Hurwit 2015: 66–7: Hurwit assumes that the name replaced that of Sosos’ ‘well-known original’; as such, the signature is ‘a kind of boast that Heraklitos, three centuries later, was able to compete with Sosos and match his famous illusionism’ (67).

¹¹² Cf. Nichols 1991: 839–44, concluding that ‘this is not representation in the sense of showing what is there, but rather of unrepresenting’ (843). More generally on the frames of Roman mosaics, see Leatherbury’s chapter in this volume.

the worldly structures that contain it: for Alma-Tadema, as for Kant, the frame materialises a distinction between the true artistic *ergon* and its par-ergonal surroundings; as such, the picture-frames replicated within Alma-Tadema's painting mirror the aesthetic affordances of the picture's own external frame, structuring a conceptual parallel between these allegedly 'ancient' images and the artwork of Alma-Tadema's self-declared *opus*. By considering Alma-Tadema's imaginary gallery in relation to the historical schemes of Campanian wall-painting, I hope to have shown the very different affordances of the frame between the modern gallery and Roman mural schemes. So-called 'still lifes', I have argued, are particularly rich when it comes to exploring these divergent 'modern' and 'ancient' frameworks, the one structured around a set of self-standing aesthetic ideals, the other implicated within larger ideas about illusion, replication and make-believe: if food provided a nourishing subject for thinking through the ontology of matter in antiquity, food-paintings provided a good theme for figuring – and above all, for toying with – the ontology of pictorial representation *tout court*.

It seems fitting, however, to end my chapter by returning to real-life, physical picture-frames like the one that surrounds Alma-Tadema's painting itself (Figure 4.2). After all, self-contained panel-paintings certainly existed in the Graeco-Roman world, called *pinakes* in Greek, and *tabulae* in Latin; some are known to have had closable wooden shutters (so-called *pinakes tethyrômenoi*), resembling two of the panels prominent in Alma-Tadema's painting.¹¹³ Picture-galleries, or *pinacothecae*, are also well attested in Roman antiquity:¹¹⁴ Vitruvius himself advised about the size,

¹¹³ See van Buren 1938: esp. 70–2. Ehlich 1953 attempts a full history of the ancient pictorial frame and its development, discussing 'Klapptafelbilder' at 163–85. The name *πίνακες τεθυρωμένοι* (as opposed to *πίνακες ἀθύρωτοι*, without protective covers) is attested in Hellenistic temple inventories (see e.g. Vallois 1913 and most recently N. B. Jones 2014a – with further bibliographic review); for other ancient literary testimonies to panelled picture-frames, see Ehlich 1953: 195–201.

¹¹⁴ So far as I know, it is Varro who provides our earliest attestation of the term (Varr. *Rust.* 1.2.10, 1.59.2; cf. van Buren 1938: 70); although Varro plays on the inherent luxurious 'Greek' connotations, I can find only one Greek literary author using it (Strabo 14.1.14) – this does not seem to be a word with an established (pre-Roman) Greek archaeology. On *pinacothecae*, see Bergmann 1995 (collecting some of the most important ancient literary testimonia at 98–102); cf. e.g. van Buren 1938: 76–80, Schefold 1952: 32–4, M. L. Thompson 1961, Ehlich 1953: esp. 186–94, 1977 and 1979: esp. 8–20, Leach 1982: esp. 159–67, Strong 1994: 13–39, Hallett 2005a: esp. 433, Tanner 2006: 266–76, esp. 167–73 and Rutledge 2012: 56–77, esp. 58–9; particularly relevant are now the essays in Gahtan and Pegazzano 2014 – especially Ghedini and Salvo 2014 and N. B. Jones 2014b. On the picture-gallery described at Petron. *Sat.* 83–90, and its literary relation to the fantastic galleries later described by Lucian, Philostratus and others, see esp. Elsner 1993 (reprinted in Elsner 2007b: 177–99); cf. Slater 1987, Croisille 2003, Bounia 2004: 255–62 and Baier 2010.

aspect and topographic situation of such rooms (*De arch.* 6.3.8, 6.4.2, 6.7.3), and there can be little doubt that, beginning with the late Second Style, Campanian mural schemes were frequently designed to emulate these sorts of public and private painting collections.¹¹⁵ Extant cavities in Campanian walls likewise suggest practices of ‘reframing’, whereby wooden *tabulae* could be inserted into mural schemes; indeed, extracted portions of plaster could sometimes be salvaged from one wall and reinserted into another, rather like the ‘deframings’ and ‘reframings’ of more recent times.¹¹⁶ The phenomenon leads to a set of fundamental cultural comparative questions. In reframing the extracted wall-paintings from Pompeii and Herculaneum, after all, does Alma-Tadema’s painting not in one sense hold true to ancient Roman practice? Do modern aesthetic framing strategies not consequently have ancient precedent? And if so, do the affordances of the frame – at least in the realm of painting – really work so differently between the ancient and modern worlds?¹¹⁷

The difficulty in tackling such questions lies in the fact that we have so little material evidence for *pinakes* and *tabulae* to go on. In rare cases, exceptional archaeological conditions have led to the preservation of wooden panels complete with their original devices for display (as in a portrait from

¹¹⁵ Still fundamental are Mau 1902: esp. 195–231 and Mau 1903. For an overview of the ways in which Campanian walls evoked *pinacothecae*, see Leach 2004: 132–55, together with Bragantini and Parise Badoni 1984, Clarke 1991: 64–5 and 1996: 86–8, Ling 1991: 112–28, Croisille 2005: 169–97, Petersen 2006: 138–33 and N. B. Jones 2014b.

¹¹⁶ Literary attestations confirm the practice (Vitr. *De arch.* 2.8.9; Plin. *HN* 35.154, 173). Cf. van Buren 1938: 72, 76, Calabi-Limentani 1958: 119–24, Barbet 1985: 116–22, Ling 1991: 205–7 (with bibliography on 234), Bergmann 1995: 100–1 (collecting literary references) and N. B. Jones 2014a: 301 (with nn. 23 and 24). For some surviving examples of inserted panels, see Maiuri 1937–8 and Maiuri 1940. It is also worth flagging here a Latin verbal distinction between ‘figure-painters’ (*pictores imaginarii*) and ‘fresco-painters’ (*pictores parietarii*), suggesting a particular distinction in labour: this is clearly testified by the emperor Diocletian’s edict of AD 301, which granted twice the maximum daily salary to the former as compared with the latter (cf. e.g. Clarke 1991: 57–8, Ling 2000: 105 and Esposito 2009: 26–30).

¹¹⁷ For one scintillating answer to some of these questions, see Tanner 2005 and 2006: 267–73. Tanner argues of Hellenistic Greek and Roman *pinacothecae* that ‘framing each picture as an independent object of visual interest’ (Tanner 2006: 271) ‘served to inculcate a rationalist sensibility, congruent with the cultural patterning of elite and rhetorical culture’ (ibid. 265). But I nonetheless wonder whether Tanner’s associated talk of ‘art after art history’ (ibid. 277–302) takes on an overly ‘modernising’ hue (cf. Squire 2010a: 135–6, nn. 8–10, with response in Tanner 2010: 274, n. 5), at least when applied to the make-believe *pinacothecae* of Campanian wall-painting. Whether or not we agree with Tanner that ‘the pragmatic relevance of viewing was suspended in such contexts’ (271; cf. ibid. 210–11, and the different approach championed by Platt 2002b), the mural schemes of Campanian wall-painting, I think, framed interpretation around rather different lines.



Figure 4.19 Portrait of a woman painted on sycamore-fig wood, set within two frames of sycamore fig and hung with twisted rope; from Hawara in Egypt, mid first century AD. London, British Museum, inv. GRA 1889.10–18.1. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Egyptian Hawara, encased in a double frame of sycamore-fig wood and bound with rope (Figure 4.19));¹¹⁸ likewise, there are the odd second-degree glimpses of how such panels might have been displayed in certain contexts

¹¹⁸ London, British Museum, inv. GRA 1889.10–18.1: see Walker and Bierbrier 1997: 121–2, no. 117, along more generally with the comments in Mathews 2001 and Sande 2004. In this case, the painted inner panel (also made from sycamore fig wood) is set in a morticed frame; ‘the planks of the outer frame are cut with two grooves, the outer one 0.75 cm wide, indicating that there was originally a glass cover, now lost, protecting the inner frame and the painting’ (Walker and Bierbrier 1997: 117). Parallel sorts of panels survive – the most famous being the Severan tondo of Septimius Severus and family (Berlin, Antikensammlung, inv. 31329) – but very few preserve such information about original display.



Figure 4.20 Scene of a painter's workshop, painted inside a limestone sarcophagus from Kerch, first or second century AD. St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, inv. P-1899.81. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Archiv, Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

(as, for example, on the painted scenes adorning the inside of a second-century AD sarcophagus from Kerch in the Crimea (Figure 4.20)).¹¹⁹ In general, though, our understanding about *pinakes* and *tabulae* – that is, about their actual form, their surrounds and different modes of display – must derive in large part from the second-degree evidence of Campanian wall-painting itself. Of course, this has not stopped many classical archaeologists, intent on debating hypothetical ‘originals’ – and original framing practices.¹²⁰ But in forging my own brief response to the questions above, I want instead to revisit these issues from the perspective of Roman mural

¹¹⁹ For the imagery – on the inside of a sarcophagus in St Petersburg (State Hermitage Museum, inv. P-1899.81) – see Squire 2015e: 178–9, with further bibliography.

¹²⁰ The key work here remains Ehlich 1953, discussing the ‘Forschungsmaterial’ at 31–5, and exploring ‘ob und wie weit es in den alten Kulturen schon Bilderrahmen gegeben hat, und wie ihre Formen und Ausführungen gewesen sein können’ (6). I would nonetheless take issue with many of Ehlich’s conclusions, not least his romantic claim that the ‘invention’ of *pinakes* must be understood in line with ‘[dem] ästhetischen Gefühl der Griechen’ (78–9), ‘denn die antike Welt scheint ... das Ideal der Schönheit für alle Zeiten festgesetzt zu haben’ (226)!

schemes themselves. For what strikes me as so revealing about the framed *pinakes* and *tabulae* of Campanian wall-painting are their playful mimetic games.

From this perspective, it is worth emphasising the various illusionistic tricks that Roman fresco-painters developed so as to render their two-dimensional walls in the guise of three-dimensional picture-galleries.¹²¹ For one thing, ‘panel-paintings’ were frequently displayed within painted aediculae, following the architectural display strategies of actual *pinacothecae* (all the while rendering that architecture within the representational frame of the two-dimensional wall),¹²² for another, such two-dimensional ‘galleries’ even sometimes rendered the physical casings of such panels, exploiting moulded plaster panelling and various chiaroscuro effects to capture the shapes of wooden *pinax*-surrounds as well as the imaginary shadows that they cast.¹²³ Most striking are the folding ‘doors’ frequently depicted on such paintings from the third quarter of the first century BC onwards, suggesting the wooden shutters of *pinakes tethyrômenoi*.¹²⁴ One revealing example can be found in cubiculum B of the Villa della Farnesina in Rome’s modern-day Trastevere district (Figure 4.21a; cf. Figure 1.20).¹²⁵ The intricately adorned cubiculum toys with multiple make-believe means of ‘inserting’ fictive panel-paintings within its two-dimensional, painted mural space: these range from the architecturally framed central image of the north-east wall (its rich polychrome subject contained within a fictive aedicula structure), through the gilded white-ground panels to the side

¹²¹ For an excellent overview, see Bergmann 1995: esp. 101–2.

¹²² Cf. Ling 1991: 112–13; Bergmann 1995: 101; Leach 2004: 134–5 (citing Plin. *HN* 35.130).

¹²³ For examples, see van Buren 1938: 73.

¹²⁴ For a catalogue of depicted *pinakes tethyrômenoi* in Campanian wall-painting, see Ehlich 1953: 165–9; I have not seen Gasser 1982. So-called ‘Klapptürbilder’ are also discussed by Scheibler 1998, who relates their origins to a Hellenistic cultic tradition (following van Buren 1938: 72–3). Among the earliest examples from Pompeii is the Villa Imperiale, in which six *pinakes* with shutters are depicted in oecus A: cf. Pappalardo 1987: 127–8, Scheibler 1998: 1–2, Leach 2004: 142–4. The painted *pinakes tethyrômenoi* that have been recently discovered within the so-called ‘royal box’ of Herod’s theatre at Herodium in Judaea confirm that this was not just a ‘Campanian’ phenomenon in the late first century BC: for a preliminary publication, see Netzer et al. 2010: 96–101 (with images on 98–100, colour figs. D, H–L).

¹²⁵ The two most important catalogues of the Villa Farnesina paintings are Bragantini and de Vos 1982 and Mols and Moormann 2008. For discussion of the villa and its paintings, see e.g. Sanzi di Mino et al. 1998, Hallett 2005a: 433–5, Wylter 2005 and 2006, Mols and Moormann 2008, Platt 2009: esp. 41–51 (with review of bibliography at 43, n. 5), Squire 2012: 606–11 and N. B. Jones 2014a: 299–301 (concluding that ‘cubiculum B must have purposefully evoked an aestheticized, curated art-display space’, 302). Whether or not the villa once belonged to Agrippa, it certainly dates from around the twenties BC, and belonged to someone from the upper echelons of Roman aristocratic society (Beyen 1948; cf. Platt 2009: 42–43, n. 4).



(a)

Figure 4.21a View of the east wall of cubiculum B of the Villa della Farnesina.
© Scala/Art Resource, New York.



(b)

Figure 4.21b Detail of *pinax* painting from the same room. © Scala/Art Resource, New York.

(supported by miniature siren-figures against a rich red setting),¹²⁶ to the two extant shuttable *pinakes* painted on top of the cornice in the room's side walls (the erotic scenes within thereby rendered perpetually 'open' to view (Figure 4.21b)).

Illusionism, it seems to me, plays the decisive role in such installations.¹²⁷ Perhaps no case study demonstrates the point better than the atrium of the Casa dell'Ara Massima in Pompeii (VI.16.15).¹²⁸ In a (real-life) architectural alcove, receding back from the atrium's west wall (directly opposite the external entrance), we find a subject that was particularly favoured in the Pompeian home (Figures 4.22a–b):¹²⁹ a scantily clad Narcissus

¹²⁶ On the significance of these *monstra*, see Platt 2009: 47–50.

¹²⁷ For an associated argument, see Bergmann 1995, arguing that the display of make-believe framed *pinakes* was as much concerned with 'Roman recreative fictions' as with 'Greek masterpieces'.

¹²⁸ For the image and its context (in 'pseudo-tablinum D'), see *PPM* V: 880–1, nos. 44–5. For stimulating discussion, see Elsner 2007b: 156–60 and Lorenz 2008: 410–12.

¹²⁹ For the popularity of the myth, see Lorenz 2008: esp. 187–9 (with further bibliography), along with Hodske 2007: 166–71 and 2011: esp. 153–7. The interconnected themes of erotics, representation and the gaze in the Narcissus myth – and their self-reflective development in



(a)

Figure 4.22a View of the west wall of atrium B of the Casa dell'Ara Massima, Pompeii (VI.16.15) (with view into the 'pseudo-tablinum D'). Photograph by Michael Squire.

(with spear held in the left hand), reclines in three-quarter view before a pool of water; Narcissus' reflected face – the celebrated cause of his

Campanian painting – have attracted a substantial bibliography: cf. Bann 1989: 108–13, Balensiefen 1990: 130–66, Elsner 1996b, 2000a (revised in 2007b: 132–76) and 2004b: 170–1, Frontisi-Ducroux and Vernant 1997: 200–41, Bartsch 2000, Bartsch 2006: esp. 84–103, Platt 2002b: 88–90, R. Taylor 2008: 64–77, Squire 2009: 270–5 (for an inscribed parallel in the 'Casa di Propertio' at Assisi), Valladares 2011 and P. Knox 2014: 40–1. As Elsner 2000a: 102 puts it, 'if the painting within the painting (the painted pool which is Narcissus' portrait) should have the effects on Narcissus described in the story, then what guarantee have we got that the image... will not have similar enticing effects on us?'



(b)

Figure 4.22b Detail of Narcissus panel in the recessed ‘pseudo-tablinum’ D off the atrium in the same house. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Archiv, Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

mythological downfall – can be made out in the represented pool at the lower left-hand edge of the panel. The square panel is framed by delicate pattern (floral motifs, animals, even perching birds), framed in turn by the larger red mural scheme that engulfs the room (extending to include additional landscapes and architectural vistas in its Fourth Style upper storey (Figure 4.22a).

What particularly interests me about this panel is its make-believe presentation as a *pinax*: observe the trompe l’œil shutters that leave the image

‘open’, as well as the two depicted supports below (Figure 4.22b).¹³⁰ In this case, the literal surrounds of this image go hand in hand – or frame in frame – with its metaphorical mounting of themes about replicative representation: just as Narcissus falls for his reflected image within the image, mistaking simulated image for objective reality, so too are viewers in danger of being duped by the fictive *pinax* within the two-dimensional reality of the wall. As is well known, the underlying stakes of the Narcissus story – its richness for thinking about the push-and-pull of pictorial representation – engrossed ancient thinkers, and none more so than the Elder Philostratus: enamoured with such questions, the *Imagines* inevitably turned to a painting of Narcissus, reframing it in relation to the author’s own graphic project of ecphrastic representation.¹³¹ Within the Casa dell’Ara Massima, it is the make-believe of wall-painting specifically that seems to have been at issue. In this connection, we might note an additional conceit, designed to replicate still further the underlying replicative games. For the lived-in space of the atrium itself frames this two-dimensional *pinax*: not only did the image of Narcissus (reclining before his pool) look out onto the room’s central water-filled impluvium, but the fictive picture-frame seems originally also to have been displayed behind a basin of water below.¹³² The result is a telling *mise en abyme* that at once mirrors and interrupts the frames of pictorial representation. For refracted in the rippling surface of real-life water, our fictively framed image of Narcissus (figured in front of his own reflected image) toys with the suggestive possibility of at once replicating and breaking the frame. We are dealing, in short, with different ontologies of reality and representation, each one sutured over the next: the theme of Narcissus’ own enthrallment with a non-real image (as depicted within the painting’s frame), the picture-frame itself (which plays with the make-believe of an actual *pinax* propped up on the wall), the framing space of the

¹³⁰ Cf. Ehlich 1953: esp. 169, no. 21. For evidence of real-life ‘hung’ *pinakes* on the walls of Pompeii (albeit primarily based on the second-degree evidence of Pompeian wall-painting), see *ibid.* 202–15, along with N. B. Jones 2014a: 300 (on πίνακες πρὸς τῷ τοίχῳ, πίνακες ἡρτημένοι and πίνακες τετραπημένοι).

¹³¹ The best readings of Philostr. *Imag.* 1.23 are Elsner 1996a and 2000a (revised in 2007b: 132–76, esp. 137–46); for my own interpretation, see Squire 2013a: 115–17, with further bibliography at 138–9, n. 111. Among the most important analyses are: Boeder 1996: 153–61, J. Heffernan 1999: 22–3, R. Webb 2006: 128–32, Newby 2009 and Baumann 2011: 1–9.

¹³² Cf. *PPM* V: 854, no. 8, with discussion in Lorenz 2008: 411: ‘So verknüpfen sich hier schließlich die beiden in der Dekoration des *atrium* anklingenden Aspekte von Außenbereich und Mythenzimmer: Das Becken weist sowohl aufs Draußen, wie es aber auch die Figur des Narkissos, welche sich in der tatsächlichen Wasseroberfläche des Beckens spiegeln kann, in den Raum hinein holt und dem Betrachter hinzugesellt.’

mural scheme that surrounds these, and the lived-in space within which all of the above are contained.

The illusionistic framing of this *pinax* in the Casa dell'Ara Massima makes for a poignant contrast with the one depicted in Alma-Tadema's gallery (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). Where Alma-Tadema's picture-frames demarcate the essential space of 'art for art's sake', Roman muralists seem to have surrounded the frames of wall-painting rather differently. At issue in Campanian wall-painting, once again, is a distinctive set of ontological questions. And ultimately, I think, these literal picture-frames interrogate issues about frameworks of pictorial *mimêsis* itself.

If *pinax* picture-frames return us to our opening discussion of Alma-Tadema, they also lead us back to 'still-life' motifs specifically. For one of the most striking aspects of such make-believe *pinax* frames, at least as framed within Campanian mural frameworks, is their common association with images of fruit and food. Beyen was the first to notice the correlation, concluding that 'still lifes' were the most frequent subjects within make-believe *pinakes tethyrômenoi*.¹³³ In some Pompeian houses, we find isolated examples of 'open' *pinax* panels (as in the portico of the Casa dei Dioscuri, Pompeii VI.9.6–7, for instance).¹³⁴ In other contexts, including the west wall of peristyle 39 in the Casa delle Vestali (Pompeii VI.1.6) (Figure 4.23), different food motifs could be displayed in multiple *pinakes*, each fictively mounted alongside the other. Although this room was destroyed by an Allied bomb in 1943, a drawing by Giuseppe Chiantarelli shows how the whole wall originally resembled a garlanded colonnade, decked out with hanging *pinakes* in its upper register: the shuttered panels (some more open than others) show various fruits, fish and animals, rendered in each case against a recessed window (which is depicted, as it were, 'behind' both the frame of the *pinax* and the frame of the mural scheme); below, rendered against the white ground, are additional smaller painted panels, this time appended to the make-believe columns and containing single facial portraits.¹³⁵

What should we make of these make-believe panels depicting make-believe consumable subjects? Perhaps one idea was to replicate the sorts of images that could frequently be seen in dedicated *pinakes*

¹³³ Beyen 1928: esp. 4–5; for examples, see *ibid.* 8, 27, 30–3, 39, 49–51, 55, 57, 68, 70, 82, 84–6. Compare also van Buren 1938: 72, Scheibler 1994: 173–6, Leach 2004: 144.

¹³⁴ Cf. Ehlich 1953: 168, no. 15 and de Caro 2001: 101, no. 101 (although note how his fig. 101 omits the *pinax* shutters).

¹³⁵ Chiantarelli's drawing was made in 1803: cf. *PPM* IV: 27, no. 44, Ehlich 1953: 167, no. 12 and 1978: 174, Croisille 1965: 82, no. 209, de Caro 2001: 61–2, no. 35 and Croisille 2005: 232. On these paintings, see also d'Otrange Mastai 1975: 43–5.

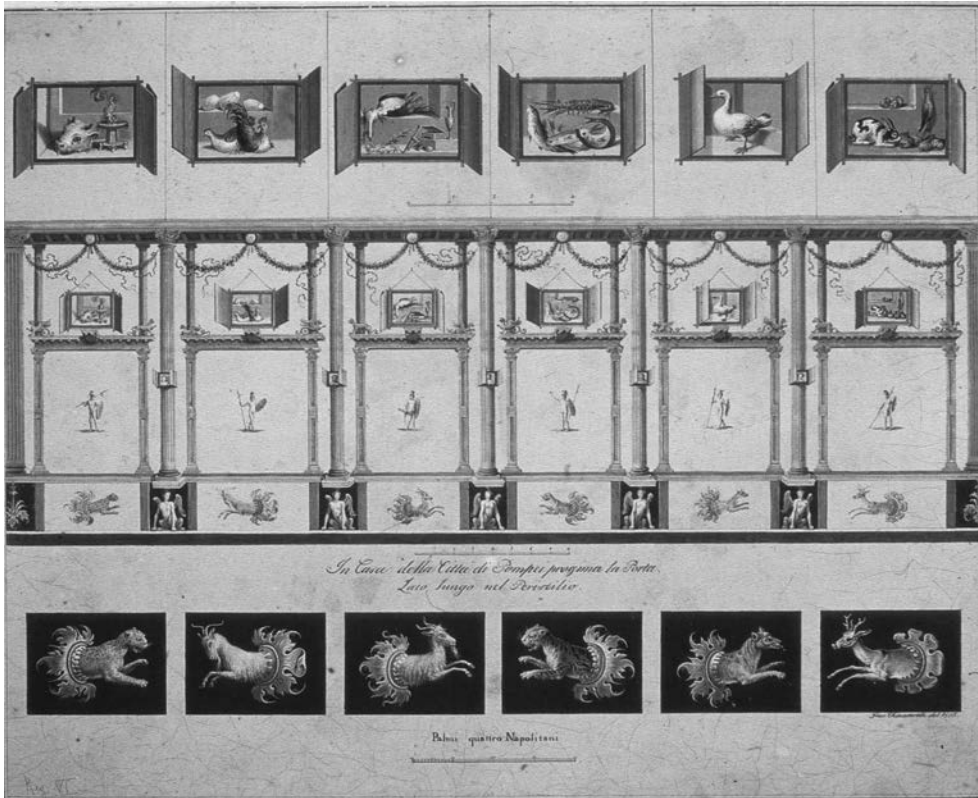


Figure 4.23 Reconstruction of the west wall of peristyle 39 of the Casa delle Vestali, Pompeii (VI.1.6) (by Giuseppe Chiantarelli (1803), from the Archivio dei Disegni della Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei). Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Archiv, Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

tethyrômenoi – suggesting, for example, the kinds of paintings displayed in sanctuaries.¹³⁶ But I think more might be at stake. For the differences between real food and its painted simulations are here further paralleled by the fissure between a real *pinax* hanging on the wall and its represented two-dimensional semblance. Just as wall-paintings explored the picture's capacity both to actualise and to negate the reality of the foods depicted, the painted *pinax*-frame overtly signals the simultaneous power of images both to convince and to delude. Posing as authentic three-dimensional paintings, these simulated images of self-conscious simulation incorporated within

¹³⁶ For the general argument, see Scheibler 1998; for the so-called πίνακες ἀναθηματικοί that feature so prominently (alongside πίνακες εἰκονικοί) in the Delian Hellenistic temple inventories, see Vallois 1913: 290–1.



Figure 4.24 Detail of the south wall of oecus 22 of the Casa del Criptoportico, Pompeii (I.6.2–4). Photograph: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rom (D-DAI-Rom W1479; photograph by Warscher).

their literal frame the very boundaries between nature and art, truth and artifice, and reality and representation.

One final sophisticated example provides a fitting note on which to close. In oecus 22 of the Casa del Criptoportico, Pompeii I.6.2–4, make-believe *pinakes* of foods (complete with make-believe moulded shutters) were inserted alongside an assemblage of other panelled subjects (Figure 4.24).¹³⁷ Underneath these *pinax*-panels were rendered hanging

¹³⁷ On the room, see *PPM I*: 250–73, nos. 99–143; on the panelled food paintings, see Croisille 1965: 67, no. 150, Scheibler 1998: 5–6, de Caro 2001: 48–9, nos. 13–15, Croisille 2005: 231–2.

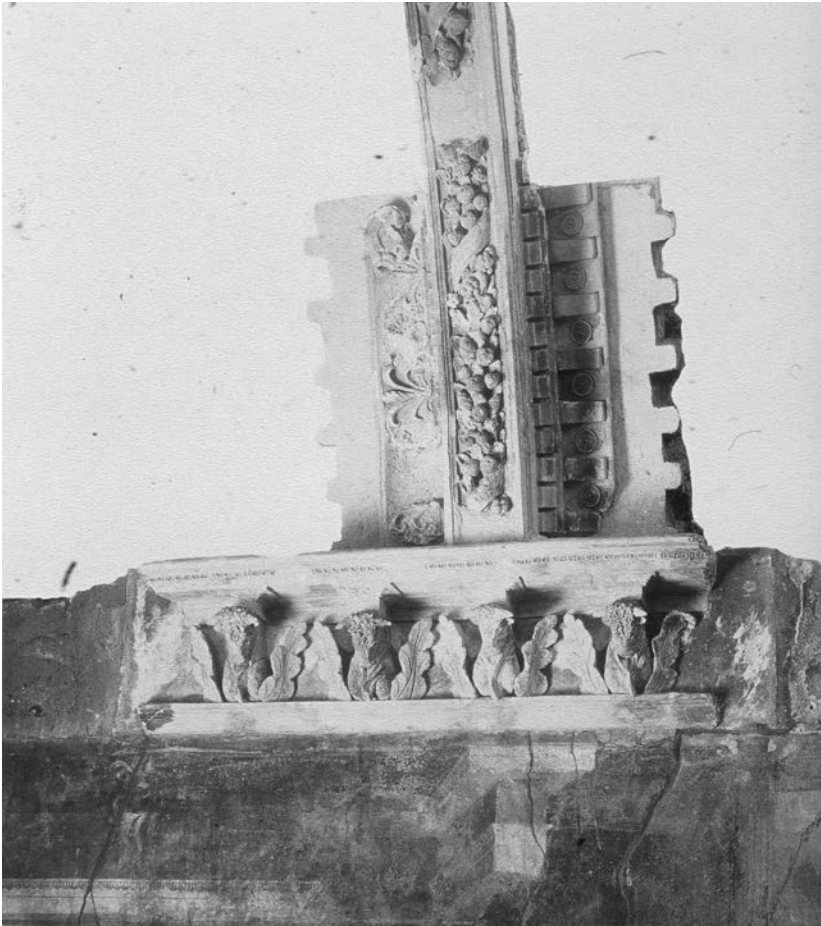


Figure 4.25 Fragment of stuccoed rib and cornice from oecus 22 of the Casa del Criptoportico, Pompeii (I.6.2–4). Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Archiv, Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

garlands, and painted above them we find transparent glass vessels, each carefully placed within the simulated architectonic space of the illusionistic cornice. In this room, however, the vaulted ceiling in one sense trumps the various make-believe strategies of the walls – the painted fruit, the painted glass and the painted *pinax* paintings alike. Not only does it remain to

The other represented *pinax* paintings are thought to pertain to Dionysiac cultic activity: see van Buren 1938: 72, Ehlich 1953: 166, no. 6 and Scheibler 1998: esp. 11–14. For an overview of the history of this house, and in particular the functions of this particular space within it, see Beyen 1938–60: vol. 2, 87–199, and Pesando 1997: 35–45.

this day difficult to determine where the painted architectural detailing ends and the real vaulted ceiling begins, but boughs of fruit, moulded into three-dimensional shapes, drape across the room's upper expanse (Figure 4.25).¹³⁸ The permeable boundaries between real fruits and their painted reproductions, no less than between real panelled fruit-paintings and their two-dimensional semblances, are here framed (and are in turn framed by) an additional mimetic fantasy. For the represented subjects of the panel-paintings in one sense break free from their two-dimensional pictorial plane altogether: the plastic fruits of the vaulted ceiling now themselves frame viewers within the three-dimensional space of the room.

¹³⁸ Cf. *PPM* I: 270, no. 134, along with Ling 1991: 47–8.

