Considerations on the colours of Pompeii walls

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Abstract

The present considerations on the colours of Pompeii are carried out specifically in connection to colour application to walls: a research topic within the project “Colour Folds of Pompeii” developed at ‘Laboratório da Cor at School of Architecture’ and ‘Research Group of Colour and Light’ - University of Lisbon’s Research Centre (CIAUD). The overall project investigates a multiplicity of colour sources that range from architectural elements, façades and reconstruction thereof, interior colours and house objects, outdoor and indoor settings, frescoes, sculptures, mosaic panels, pavements, ceilings, vaults, floorings and walls, clothes, technologies, materials, and broader cultural fields of knowledge.

This paper integrates architectural and pictorial settings concerning wall painted mural colours that were buried in the Mount Vesuvian eruption of 79 A.D. The uncovering of Pompeii provides testimony of a civilisation that did not change in almost two thousand years, therefore allowing for the rebuilding of Roman history and art. The excavations unveiled walls that offer an understanding of Pompeii culture and revealed their extraordinary wealth of colours.

The methodology adopted in the research study includes techniques of observation at Pompeii’s archaeological site, and data gathering of documental sources, photographs and sketches drawn in situ and at Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli.

Keywords: Pompeii, colours, painting, walls, frescoes.