

“Sex and Lots of Erotic Art to Prove It:
The Erotic art of Pompeii”

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The ancient Roman City of Pompeii is a spectacle of some of the worlds most beautiful and risqué forms of artwork ever found from ancient ruins. It is a city of beautiful villas, streets, bakeries, mansions, coliseums, bars and brothels. But the artwork of Pompeii is not like others found around the world. Rather the artwork from the city of Pompeii is very erotic. The city of Pompeii holds many secrets regarding the ideas of Roman morality, the erotic frescoes that line entire rooms with depictions of orgies, fellatio and cunnilingus sexual positions, and many other erotic depictions. Depictions in Peristyle Gardens (a colonnaded courtyard) show beautiful frescoes of Pygmies at a banquet being entertained by male and female pygmies having sex in front of the rest of the banquet. What does this depiction mean?



Figure 1: Pygmy erotic scene from House of the Physician (Clarke, 44)

It seems amazing to think that depictions of such things would line the walls of houses of elite men and women while also being very visible in the public sectors of the town as

well. It seemed that sexual behavior was appropriate and open in Pompeii. But was it really?

The questions of Roman morality and their obsessive love for erotic art, and its uses in everyday Roman life is the question that I would like to answer in this paper. I would like to discover the purpose of this art, and why it was placed in both private and public sectors of the city? Lastly, I would like to further understand the reasons why Roman society in Pompeii had such a fetish for erotic art. By understanding these questions we can begin to understand the personalities and lifestyles of the Roman citizens of Pompeii.

How can depictions of male and females having sex at public bathhouses be allowed in the public eye of families, and children especially? Did they have any moral guilt of having such artwork in public and private places of the city? Could there be a possibility that in public areas of the city such depictions at bathhouses would be acted out for pleasure, entertainment, and fun? Where the painting's clues to the pleasures of the owner of the house? Could all this lovemaking have been really displayed all over the town in such ways, or are these depictions just the art of the Roman world and nothing more?

To answer these questions just discussed, I think that it is important to first to take a look at what different scholars have said about their own research regarding this topic. And then I would like to focus the later part of this paper on the social functions of erotic art in both the private and public sectors of the city. By looking at the two areas of the city, we will begin to see the use of erotic art, while also evaluating the differences between erotic art and their functions in private and public life.

There have been many ideas in the archeological and historical community regarding the ideas about the social sex life of Romans in Pompeii. The research of many scholars has allowed us to better understand the life of these people. Because the city of Pompeii, Herculaneum and Stabiae were preserved by the ash so well, archeologists and social scientist have had the ability to investigate and try to understand this erotic fetish of the Roman people. One of the leading figures in this field would be Michael Grant, who has written several books on the city of Pompeii.

One such book is 'Cities of Vesuvius.' Grant describes the city of Pompeii as a haven of prostitution, brothels and bars. But surrounded by elite men and women with fantastic homes, slaves, and all the luxuries of ancient life. But Grant questions many of the ideals of Pompeii, mainly the brothels, prostitutes, and bars of graffiti and frescoes. Grant comes to the conclusion that such activities must have taken place, for the life represented in the graffiti and art of Pompeii, matches very similarly with the story of the Satyricon. Leaving Grant and other researchers to believe that Pompeii life may have been as erotic as depicted in its paintings.

John R. Clarke takes the studies of Grant farther by looking closely into the actions of the erotic art of Pompeii, and deciphering their visual rhetoric as an image of art and love. Clarke shows many examples of Frescoes, jewelry, furniture and other parts of material objects of Roman life that show the eroticism of this society. How depictions show rank in society, and status by lovemaking. "What emerges, first and foremost, is that –contrary to our expectations – the Romans are not at all like us in their sexuality.

The acts that artists depicted are familiar to us, but the meaning that these representations had for the viewer are far from the ones we would like to superimpose on them.¹”

One of the major issues we have to investigate is the idea of Roman morality and how it has played into this highly erotic society. It seems that morals and religion must have played a factor in some way or another in Roman life, and Amy Richlin discusses this in her book; ‘Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome.’ Richlin gives us an idea of the morals and also religious beliefs of the Roman system. Her conclusion is that there is a strong interrelation between lovemaking and life in the Roman art. Those morals of the time were much different than they are today. Richlin’s work is a good way to understand the fundamental aspects of sexual concerns regarding morals in the Roman cities, especially Pompeii.

We often times think of the act of love as something that is done in the privacy of our own homes. It seems very immoral to have public displays of sexual affection, especially in public places that are filled with people. But from the depictions that we can see in much of the erotic art and graffiti around Pompeii, it seems that sexual acts of all kinds in the public were a very common and highly accepted part of the Roman life.

In the book ‘Eroticism in Pompeii’ by Antonio Varone, he discusses one of these forms of public erotic behavior that would take place in the theatre of Pompeii. It is important to recognize the sexual acts that occurred in the theatre because this will help us understand the openness of sexual promiscuity between citizens of Pompeii.

It seems that often times sexual acts were very much apart of the plays, and that the actors would usually play there roles all the way to the end. “The favorite place for such moments of lustful eroticism was the theatre... genre in which sexual allusion

¹ Clarke, 3

played a substantial and conspicuous part. Sexual acts were often mimed on stage, and sometimes the players forged ahead and completed the act.²”

How did the crowd react to this kind of acting that was taking place? It seems immoral to think that sexual acts could have begun in the crowd as well. It seems likely that sexual promiscuity may have played a role in what was occurring off stage just as much as on stage. “Augustus, in his moralizing anxiety, sought to contain this phenomenon by having the women sit in separate sections of the theatre...to keep their involvement from becoming a show within a show.³”

So why was it that public sexual acts would erupt during the play? Were these sexual acts supposed to be apart of the play itself? Maybe this says something about the theatre. The theatre can be interpreted as places where the audience can live the story of the play. Be apart of the characters of the play and incorporate themselves in the action that is taking place. If we look back at what was earlier said by John Clarke, that sexual acts on the stage were most likely not used to arouse the crowd at the theatre, but rather was apart of the satirical and funny parts of the play. The idea of mimes, actors and dancers in the act of sex and the truthfulness of their actions was looked at as more comical than sexual.

If my conclusion is true, and the erotic acts being displayed on the stage were only for laughs and entertainment and did not produce sexual acts in the crowd, then why would Augustus create laws to separate the men and women from the theatres? Could it be that upper elite’s felt that such behavior demoralized the Roman people and made them seem uneducated and barbaric?

² Varone, 49

³ Varone, 49

Otto Kiefer discusses this point in his book 'Sexual Life in Ancient Rome,' which the actors of the play would end the play depending on the reactions of the crowd. Often times the crowd would seek sexual acts at the end, which was appreciated by the upper class, but because sexual acts would often seep into the crowd, this demoralized the art on stage, and this is what frustrated the upper class. This may be the reason that Augustus felt it was necessary to segregate the theatre from the opposite sex.

“The pantomimic performances did not necessarily aim at producing purely erotic effects. The effect desired was rather the imitation and reproductions of every conceivable emotion by movements of the hands, the arms, the head, and the whole body;... However, in the end the subjects of the pantomimic performances altered – as always – in accordance with the desires of the public. As we saw above, high officials and noble ladies did not in the least object to witnessing the mimic performances of amazingly erotic scenes: it is easily, therefore, to imagine the development of taste amongst the uneducated masses...⁴”

These ideas supplied by Kiefer give us another idea of the possibilities of things that could have happened at the theatre. And while I agree that erotic scenes may have caused some people in the crowd to become excited, it seems more likely that sexual activities in the crowd were possible to take place, but not a common factor at every show. It would be very unrealistic to believe that the sexual acts on stage would erupt the crowd into mass orgies, but may have played a factor in the other erotic places of the city after the performance.

The bathhouses of Pompeii could be one place where sexual acts may have been acted out after being entertained at the theatre. Community bathhouses were seen as a

⁴ Kiefer, 174

place to clean yourself, while also relaxing in a nice pool with steam baths, and a place for lounging around and discussing the current topics of the day. The importance of the bathhouses in our study is to understand the social attitude of bathing, and understanding the reasons why erotic art lined the walls of the suburban bathhouses. By understanding the function of the bathhouses, we may begin to see a pattern of erotic art in the public sector of the city.

The settings of the bathhouses were made for relaxing, bathing, and enjoying yourself with other people of the community. But it was the scenery inside the bathhouses that made the setting a worth while place to spend your afternoon, enjoying the luxuries of life. The depictions in the bathhouses were both erotic and non-erotic. “...baths were painted to give the bather the illusion of a pool set in a beautiful garden.”⁵ But even though many bathhouses had the beauty of nature surrounding it, we can also find in many bathhouses around the city depictions once again of erotic art. But I warn the reader to not automatically associate the erotic depictions in the bathhouses with sexual acts in the bathhouse, rather there must be some kind explanation for their purpose in these areas.

Plate 14 of John R. Clarke’s book shows us depictions from the suburban bathhouses of Pompeii, specifically apodyterium 7, scene VI. In this depiction we can see a threesome of two men and one woman on a lounge couch all in the act of sex.

⁵ Jashemski, 74



Figure 2: Threesome of two men and 1 woman from Suburban Bathhouses (Clarke, Plate 14)

This picture shows the erotic idea of threesomes. But what is most interesting of this painting is the particular position that is being used. The first person, a female, is laying head forward with her back to the air. The second person we see in the chain is the first male, who has inserted his penis into the women. But while the second man is penetrating the women the third man is penetrating the second man with his penis. This seductive train that we see from the suburban bathhouses once again raises many interesting questions. Where the depictions in the bathhouses used to aid or start such live shows? Depictions such as this one from the apodyterium 7, scene VI from the Clarke text, are not uncommon. Several other depictions from other bathhouses also show men and women couples, women on women, and also men on men coupling as well.

What exactly then were these depictions used for? Can it be safe to say that this was just art? Could it be that the Romans enjoyed the human body enough to enjoy the beauty of the body and its role in sexual acts? Or can we assume that sexual depictions were played out just like in the frescoes? Before we begin to jump to conclusions about the erotic depictions, I would like to suggest an alternative use for the erotic art that shows a usefulness which may prove that it was not solely used for sexual stimulants.

Obviously when people visited the bathhouses they needed to put their clothes in some kind of container, which would be similar to our lockers. In the suburban bathhouses in Pompeii we see erotic depictions being used as a way for illiterate people to know in what container they left there clothes.



Figure 3: Wall decoration at Suburban bathhouses of erotic scenes with numbered boxes underneath them (Varone, 30)



Figure 4: Erotic token to boxes at Suburban bathhouses, made of bone and on one side showing two people in the act of love with a woman astride a man and back side the numerical number of a box being used (Varone, 37)

On the south wall of the Suburban bathhouses, we can see containers in the changing room with numerical numbers on them and directly above the container an erotic depiction of some kind. What is further amazing is that there has been found in both the bathhouses and in other parts of the city are bronze and lead tokens that bare the same erotic depictions scene above the containers in the changing room. Also on the flip side of the coin it has a numerical number ranging from I to XVI, which corresponds with the numerical numbers of the containers as well from I to XVI. This coincidence allows us to draw the conclusion that these tokens may have been used to help illiterate people remember where they may have left their clothes after using the bath. This would allow the bather to either use the erotic depiction or the numerical number, what ever fit his liking. “What counts, however, is that , apart from the functional use of such tokens in

the changing room...the erotic scenes, whose humorous satiric intent at this point is clear, provided an amusing way for the public, even the completely illiterate, to remember where they had left their clothes.⁶”

So could these depictions be used for any other possible use rather than the one just discussed? It does seem likely and possible that these depictions in the bathhouses were decorated with erotic art for the possible enjoyment of the bather. Also the erotic depictions in the bathhouses could have been used strictly for their visual pleasure. Just like art work lines the halls of public places today, erotic art may just have been the flavor of decoration for visual stimulants. It must be recognized though that bathhouses were public areas but were segregated between men and women. “At most of the principal public baths there was a women’s section as well as a men’s...When no such segregation was provided for, the sexes were probably allotted separate times...Women were easily subject to criticism in the baths.⁷”

So if the baths were segregated between men and women, then it would be unlikely that activities would have been seen that were similar to the frescos found at the suburban bathhouse, apodyterium 7, scene VII, or was it? Even though women may not have been present at the same time as men. It seems very close minded to imagine that man on man sexual behaviors and the women on women behaviors would not begin. It seems very likely that homosexual behaviors could have occurred. Since a depiction from apodyterium 7, scene V shows the act two women enjoying homosexual activities. I would argue strongly that even though the public bathhouses were segregated by sex, that some kind of erotic behavior may have taken place there.

⁶ Varone, 37

⁷ Grant, 86

But why would such behavior take place? It seems that the baths were a very erotic area. A place where beautiful people would lounge around naked, enjoying the warm and enclosed steamed rooms kept at a very hot temperature. Other activities would also take place like play fighting, massages, drinks and pastries being sold. The pleasures of all these things and with the mistreatment of wine, it may have been more likely than not that sexual activities occurred because of the stimulating environment around them.

We also have to take into consideration that these baths were not always occupied in the midnight hours, and that sexual activities could have taken place during these times as well. It seems likely that the depictions of the bathhouses were there to stimulate the bather in addition to the other stimulants of the room. But I would still argue strongly that these depictions might have had more of a profound role in the bathhouses, like I suggested earlier with the containers. But either way the depictions could have played a multipurpose role, and allowed the bather to enjoy the depictions around him, while also playing an overall usefulness for the occupiers of the baths.

One of the last places we will look at for erotic art in the public sector of the city is in the brothels of Pompeii. The brothels are a key place to investigate along with the other public sectors of the city, because we will see a division drawn between the elite and lower classes of Pompeii by looking at the brothels. We will see that no elite men would have been associated with the brothels. It was only a place for lower class men and slaves, and this allows us to see the hierarchy of men in Pompeii. But we must not assume that the elite were too good for sexual encounters with prostitutes. In the later of the paper we will see that they just brought the brothel to their own private homes, where here sexual fantasies could be played out.

Originally when the city was first being excavated, archeologist believed that any home bearing erotic depictions must have been a brothel. At first this made the whole town look like one big playboy mansion. But further discovery has lead scholars to figure that only a hand full of the villas thought to be brothels actually are.

The significant difference between the brothels and the other houses and villas that have erotic art is there size. The brothels of Pompeii are very small venues. Often times they only consisted of several small bedchambers. The brothels were by far small, tight, and not very luxurious.

One way that researchers have been able to answer who occupied the brothels is through the translation of graffiti that lines the walls in and around the brothel. Many of these graffiti marks tell us of the prostitutes and there clientele. “Graffiti found both in this lupanar (brothel) and elsewhere in Pompeii further define its clientele, for they record the names of prostitutes and their customer. Because ancient Romans used a strict system of nomenclature, we can sometimes distinguish names of people who are slaves or freed persons from those of freeborn citizens. Analysis of the graffiti uncovers no names of the local elite families among there clientele...⁸” So we can immediately presume that only middle and lower class men and possibly women would have used the brothels. This may later explain why we find private hidden rooms with sexual depictions in the houses of the elite’s, to mimic the brothels, where there social standing was not accepted.

The erotic depictions of the brothels though tell us much about the atmosphere of the brothel, and how the erotic art would have been a useful tool for both the clientele and the prostitutes themselves. Many of the depictions in the lupanar we find men and women depictions of different positions, and also see women on women lovemaking

⁸ Clarke, 199

scenes as well. Often times these depictions are located on the top of the doorways entering one of the small rooms, while others can be found inside the rooms themselves. So what exactly was the purpose of the erotic art? Well first of all the artwork displayed a false sense of luxury to the brothel.

In the depictions it is very easy to notice lavish drapes, beds, and other amenities displayed in the paintings. But this was not the actual case for the rooms. Many of these rooms were so small that a bed would be about the only piece of furniture able to fit in there. So the depictions first of all give the visitor a sense of luxury and lust that waits for him in these rooms. It makes the client feel like he is enjoying the same lavish experiences that his master or other members of the elite class would enjoy in their large houses. “These are all artistic constructions that point to environment far removed from the realities of the lupanar ...they encode fantasies of upper-class sexual luxuries for the viewer who could not afford them.”⁹

Second, the depictions also gave the client the ability to stimulate himself while waiting for his turn. The possibility that lines would form in the brothels is not too far fetch. So the erotic art may have acted like a pre-stimulus to the client while waiting. “On a very practical level, even though the corridor itself is a rather cramped space, the paintings would give clients something to look at while they were waiting their turn.”¹⁰ This possibly could have been a strategy used by the owner of the lupanar to make the erotic art stimulate the men enough, so that there session may go quicker than planned, allowing for more clientele to circulate through the brothel to insure the maximum revenue for the day. It is very well noted in several books that tons of money circulated

⁹ Clarke, 205

¹⁰ Clarke, 205

through the brothels. So much in fact that Rome found it very necessary to tax the prostitutes of their hard work, and it seemed to be a very worthwhile tax for the collectors of Rome. "...indeed much of the other evidence, points to the profitability of the tax. This aspect receives further confirmation from the implications the high rate of taxation imposed on the prostitutes.¹¹"

The erotic art that lines the walls of the brothels of Pompeii were used to create an illusion to the customer, and also to allow him to use the depictions as a guide to his sexual fantasies, both before and during the act. It is likely that many of men and young boys used these depictions during the height of Pompeii; they would have been useful tools to create a fun and pleasurable evening at the brothel.

After discussing the public sectors of the city my conclusion is that erotic art in the public sectors of the city had other usefulness than just pornography. As we saw in the theatre, the act of the love was apart of the play. And was most likely used as a comical effect, rather than a stimulant to the crowd. In the bathhouses we also see an alternative function to the erotic art, by using them as locker keys to the occupants of the bath. In the brothels the erotic art played a usefulness in the environment, leaving the poor servant to feel that his money was well spent by creating a fantasy for him of a life he does not have, a life of the elite. In the public sector of the city, we see a very segregated environment between lower and upper class. This should be kept in mind when discussing the private sectors, because we will see that the luxuries of the elite allowed them to bring the pleasures of the public sectors of the city to there own homes.

I would like to turn our attention now away from the public displays of erotic art and begin to look at there use in the private sector of Pompeii. One of the first places that

¹¹ McGinn, 264

is important to look at is the House of the Vettii. Just to give the reader some insight about the House of the Vettii. It is not one of the larger houses in Pompeii, but don't let its size deceive you of the luxuries inside. "...the decorative ensembles of the House of the Vettii attempted to pack as many allusions to the world of aristocratic culture as would fit within its modest area.¹²"

Two brothers of the upper aristocracy built the house. But they were originally lower class slaves, who worked their way up to freedman status and through large donations of money and land they were able to buy their upper class status. So the House of the Vettii really shows off the new richness of these two brothers, and can be considered one of the most heavily decorated houses in Pompeii in the fourth style of artwork.

There are two areas of the House of the Vettii that I would like to discuss. The first being the presence of Priapus in the entrance and the garden of the house, and I would also like to investigate the small room off of the kitchen which has been labeled the cooks quarters.

The entrance of the House of the Vettii would have surprised any guest that entered the home, but the statement that is being made by the owners would have most likely made anyone blush and/or laugh. If you look to the floor plan of the house I would like to note that the depiction of Priapus is located at the entrance, labeled by the letter *b*. The depiction at the entrance shows Priapus the deity of protection; (he protected people from the evil eye, and would also protect homes and property. If you were caught by Priapus for stealing anything or using your evil eye, he would come to you in your

¹² Clarke, 210

dreams and rape you with his large phallus) weighing his large phallus (penis) on a scale, that is being weighed against a large sack of money.



Figure 5: Fresco in the entrance of the House of the Vettie of Priapus (Varone, 25)

There is much symbolism to the depiction of Priapus at the entrance of the home. It first of all was a warning to any visitor that entered the Vettii house to watch himself because he is being watched. While the symbolism of him weighing his penis against a large sack of money, also displays the wealth and social rank of the owners of the home. Also the depiction shows Priapus lounging very relaxed, and with his fancy clothes and the fruit basket below him, may have sent the message to the visitor that the luxuries of life could be enjoyed in this house. Because this painting gives off many hidden messages about the owner's house and the life they live, it would have been a very

conversational piece for anyone that saw it. Most likely for many it would have brought a good laugh or two.

The entrance though is not the only place that we see Priapus show up in the House of the Vettii. We also see his presence in the colonnaded courtyard or what is also known as a peristyle. In the colonnaded garden we see a statue of Priapus once again protecting the valuables of the garden, but this time Priapus and his large phallus have been put to use. His penis is used as an outlet for water to be put into the fountain. It gives off the idea that Priapus is peeing into the fountain, and his expression on his face gives the onlooker the effect that Priapus is happy to be urinating into the fountain. His pose is relaxed and funny, with a very large smile on his face.

The second area of the house that is worth looking at is the small room off of the kitchen, which has been designated as the cooks quarters, this room can be found on the floor plan map, it is marked by x1, just above room W. (Please see figure 5 below for room x1) We know that the cook in Roman times was a great asset to the owners of the home. Parties and banquets were very much apart of the social life of the upper class, and often times were used to show off the wealth and status of the owners of the home. The cook was looked at in high regard because of his abilities to make large and tasty meals for these banquets.

What is interesting about the cooks quarters are the three frescoes in this small room, which depict the act of lovemaking. The depictions in the cook's quarters are very similar to the ones found at the lupanar just down the street. What does this tell us about how the depictions were used by the cook? Could it be that the cook's small quarters would have been used for his/her own personal sex room, where he/she could hire

prostitutes and bring them there? This seems very unlikely, since the upper class owners of the house would probably not want such people entering their homes, when the cook could just walk down to the local lupanar. Rather it seems that these frescoes were most likely gifts given to the cook by the Vettii brothers. “Room x1’s painted decoration could have been a gift to the occupant...reminding him of the pleasures of the lupanar, much like the inevitable pinups one sees in car-repair shops today.”¹³

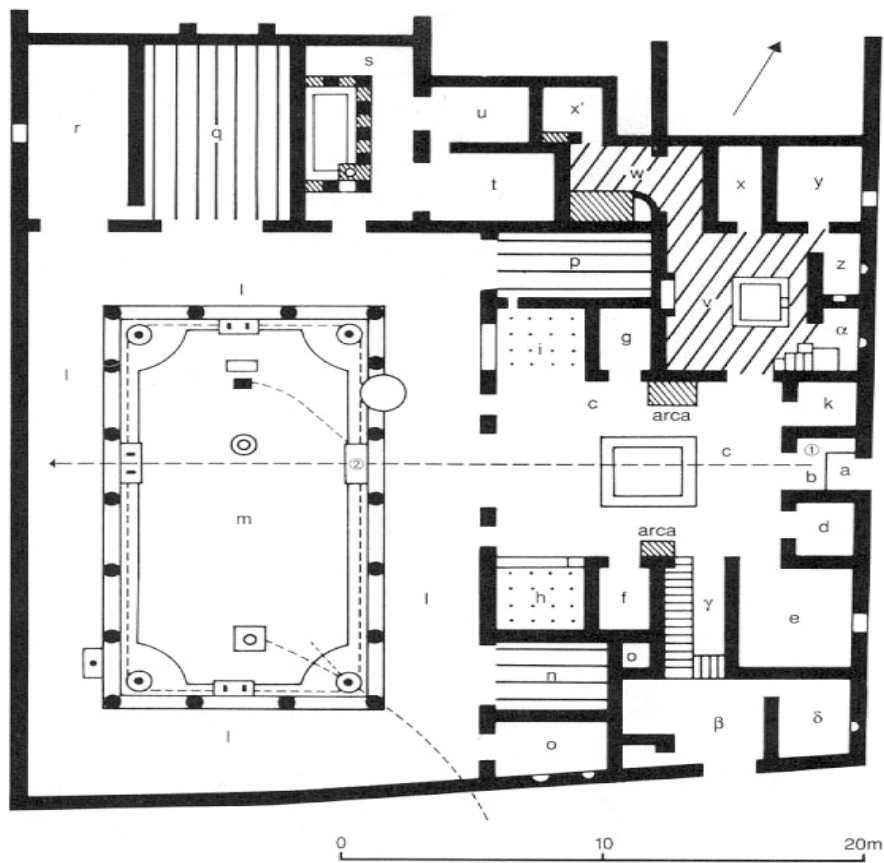


Figure 6: Floor plan of the House of the Vettii (Clarke, 209)

These depictions would have been used most likely for visual pleasure by the cook, just to make his/her room more exciting. In earlier years of research in Pompeii, these kinds of rooms were thought to be used as sex chambers by the elite. But further

¹³ Clarke, 221

research, especially the location of the room, allows us to develop more ideas and probably even more accurate hypothesis about the rooms and there depictions. The location of the room as a sex chamber has been thrown out as a possibility because why would the owner drag a prostitute from the entrance of his home (labeled a), when it would have made more sense to have his sex chamber located in the cubiculi (room labeled d) where the prostitute could have entered and exited very easily.

The second private home that I would like to look at is the House of the Centenary. The House of the Centenary is one of the noblest homes of Pompeii. It has been considered to be one of the most well preserved homes after the eruption of Vesuvius, but one of the most preserved parts of the house is the erotic frescoes that line the interior walls of the home. Although this house does give us many good examples of erotic art work, especially male on female depictions, I would like to focus our study of this house to a very recent discovery. This new discovery will bring light to the notion of this artwork being used for sexual acts. Our past endeavors have lead us to believe that erotic depictions could have been used for other purposes than just sex. But in the House of the Centenary we are going to see a device used to display the erotic art, which could mean the depictions were only used for one thing; sex!

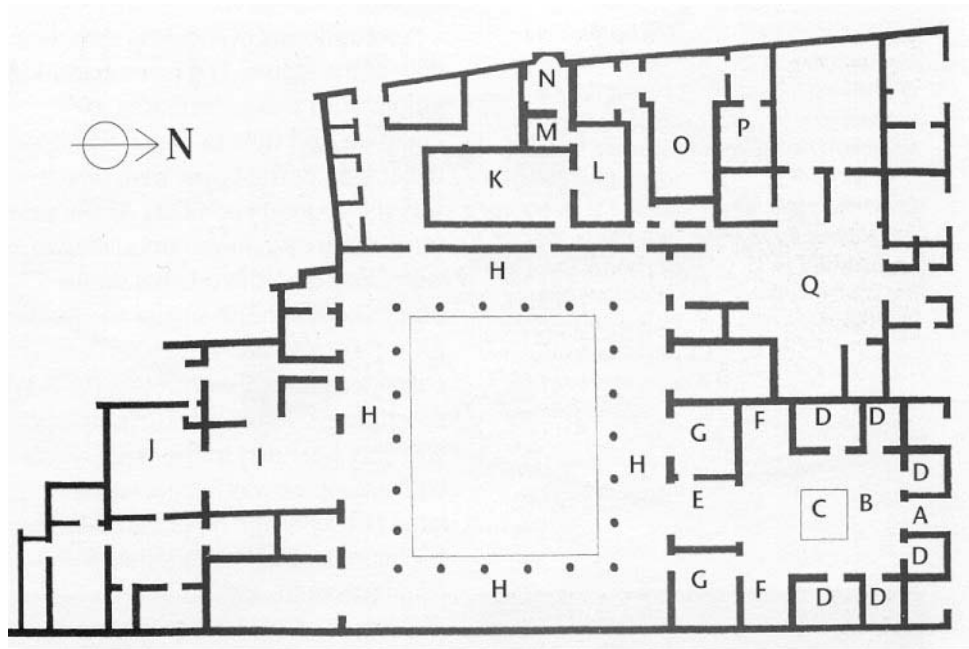


Figure 7: Floor Plan of the House of the Centenary (Nappo, 120)

When first entering the atrium of the house (labeled B), there are 6 cubiculi (bedrooms) that line both the west and east walls. In the most direct eastern room (labeled D) you would see a strange looking square door that would be too small to be used as a window for light, and also too small to be able to pass food or other objects through the opening as well. The room is also heavily decorated with other depictions of erotic art. As of now the only use that can be explained for this small opening, would be its use for putting erotic pictures in and out of the area, so that the viewer in the room could have a variety of depictions to see.



Figures 8 and 9: Picture of opening for tabulae pictae for erotic depictions (Varone, 66)

It seems very logical that a slave could have been on the other side of the wall, and while the master and his guest were partaking in sexual intercourse the slave could load an erotic fresco into the insert in the wall, and open the doors to suggest a new position. "...the owner of the house had bought pictures and had them inserted into the existing decoration directly on the wall. This phenomenon has been found elsewhere in Pompeii in important houses, such as in the House of Menander... These were made on perishable material that has not survived. Such pictures, which the context leaves no the slightest doubt were of erotic content... Covered until the door was opened, the picture was revealed to suggest a particular sexual position. The possibility that the picture could easily be replaced from the adjacent room, perhaps by a slave meant that each time the

door opened there appeared a new scene and position, in an erotic game of variety and surprise.¹⁴”

This use of erotic art seems to point to the truth that for some members of the upper class that eroticism and sex were very much apart of their daily lives. This room used by the owner of the House of Centenary probably created this interchangeable art stand so that variety and excitement could be accomplished during the act of love. Varone makes the comment in the quote above that other such things were found in other homes as well, suggesting that while the lower class attended the lupanar for sexual entertainment, that the upper class had the space and money to create there own brothel in their home. Allowing them to have there sexual pleasures come to life in the comfort of there own home, where they could not be scene mingling or copulating for that fact of the matter with the lower class of society.

Once again the location of the room also suggests something about the room and its usefulness. As discussed above, in the House of the Vettii it was unlikely that the cook’s quarters were used as a sex chamber because of its location. But unlike the House of the Vettii, the House of the Centenary used a cubicoli that was at the entrance of the home. Bringing to light just one more supporting factor that would suggest that this room was used as a place for the owner of the home to fulfill sexual fantasies.

After discussing the many different depictions and uses of these depictions in Pompeii, we need to begin to look into the question of the morality of Romans. It seems hard as 21st century human beings to feel that these Romans were pure and moral characters. But as members of the 21st century we need to realize that organized religion did not play a role yet in the way humans dealt with such depictions. If anything Roman

¹⁴ Varone, 69

religion, which was polytheistic at the time, used many of the gods and deities in their erotic frescoes. So we can not judge the Romans as a barbaric and highly sexual and evil society of people, because to them this art is beautiful, funny, and erotic. John Clarke makes an interesting statement that I would like to leave the reader with regarding the morality of the Roman's and their choice of art. "...lovmaking with the eyes of he ancient Romans allows us to enter a world where sexual pleasure and its representations stood for positive social and cultural values.¹⁵”

In retrospect to all the things that we have discussed in this paper, it must be understood that erotic art and sex were apart of Roman life and were scene as healthy depictions in this society. Instead of condemning the art work (which occurred for several years in the secret rooms of the Naples Museum), we should rather accept this artwork for the natural beauty and practical uses that the Romans used it for. By further understanding and learning about these depictions, their uses, and their placement in both the private and public spheres of the city, it will give us a better understanding of the life of the people of Pompeii.

I would like to leave the reader with this one and final thought. That while some art is more explicit than others, it should always be regarded as art, no matter what its use is. We can see that in this paper the artwork was used for many different reasons through out the public and private spheres of the city, but overall it was enjoyed by the people for its simplicity, beauty, and cultural value. That these depictions were not necessarily used strictly for sexual promiscuity, as it was labeled in the past by other scholars.

¹⁵ Clarke, 4

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