

Private Spaces in Pompeii

Part II: Houses of Pompeii

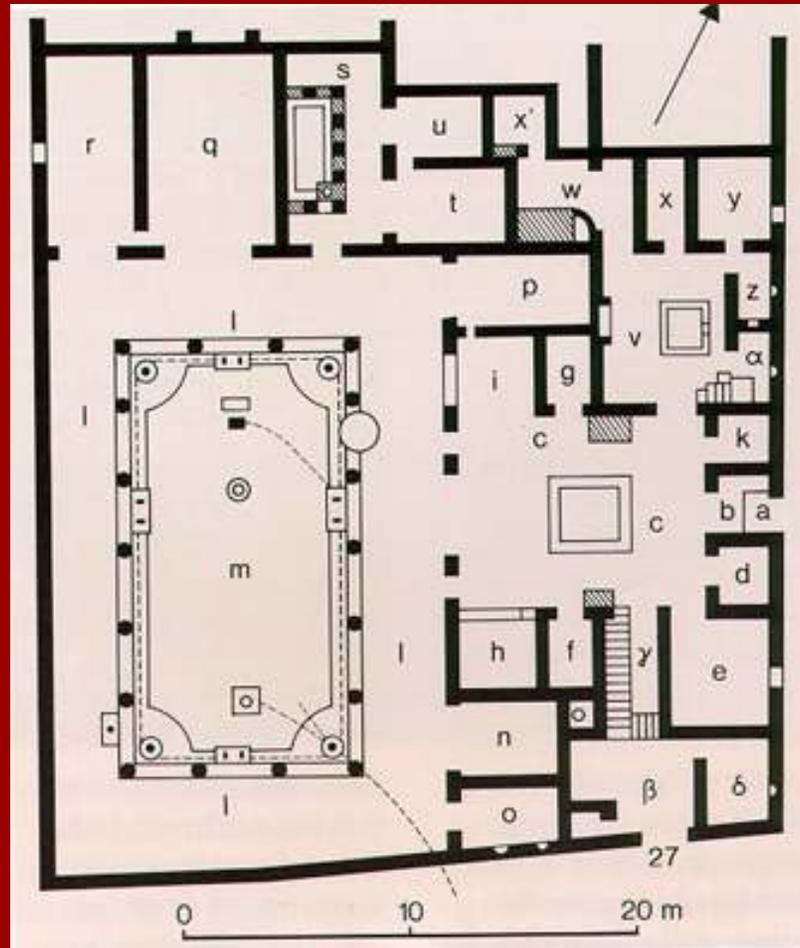
House of the Vettii

- The house takes its name from the family of freedmen who owned the house. Evidence of their ownership is taken from campaign slogans found on the walls and a number of seals bearing the names A. Vettii Conviva and A. Vettii Restitutus. They were likely involved in trade of wine and other agricultural products.
- Excavation of the house takes place in 1894-1895, though preservation work does not really take place until 1905-1906, which caused some of the colors in the atrium and peristyle to fade.

House of the Vettii

- At the time of the eruption, the house was clearly the combination of at least two earlier houses, both of which opened to the east. They were likely combined in the early 1st century A.D. and were extensively restored after the earthquake of 62.
- The plan of the house involves a modest atrium and large Tuscan peristyle along with a number of other rooms, both public and private, which are not seen in all Roman houses.

House of the Vettii



A plan of the House of the Vettii

House of the Vettii

- The atrium of the house is immediately indicative of the style of the rest of the house. Decoration is elaborately done in 4th style wall painting, showing scenes of boys carrying various items which were connected with domestic cult religion against a black background. On the borders of the paintings are cherubs involved in circus and amphitheatre activities, and the highest point of the wall shows candelabra.

House of the Vettii



Atrium, House of the Vettii

House of the Vettii



Decoration in the Atrium, House of the Vettii

House of the Vettii

- The atrium floor, like the floors in the rest of the house, are done in opus signinum, which involved a layer of small fragments of tiles and broken amphorae (wine or oil jugs) embedded in mortar and sometimes coated with a red paint. This cheap but classy-looking type of floor was the most common in Pompeii. In the House of the Vettii, the tesserae of the floor were white.
- On either side of the entrance are two cubicula, each of which have 4th style decoration, but of a lower quality than that found in the atrium.

House of the Vettii

- The cubiculum on the left side of the entrance is of some interest. The painting includes the use of faux marble with a middle section of alternating red and white panels showing the abandonment of Ariadne by Theseus and other mythological scenes. A frieze shows a fishpond, the the uppermost region shows imaginary buildings.
- The room is sometimes referred to as the “fish room.”
- It is unclear how this particular cubiculum would have been used.

House of the Vettii

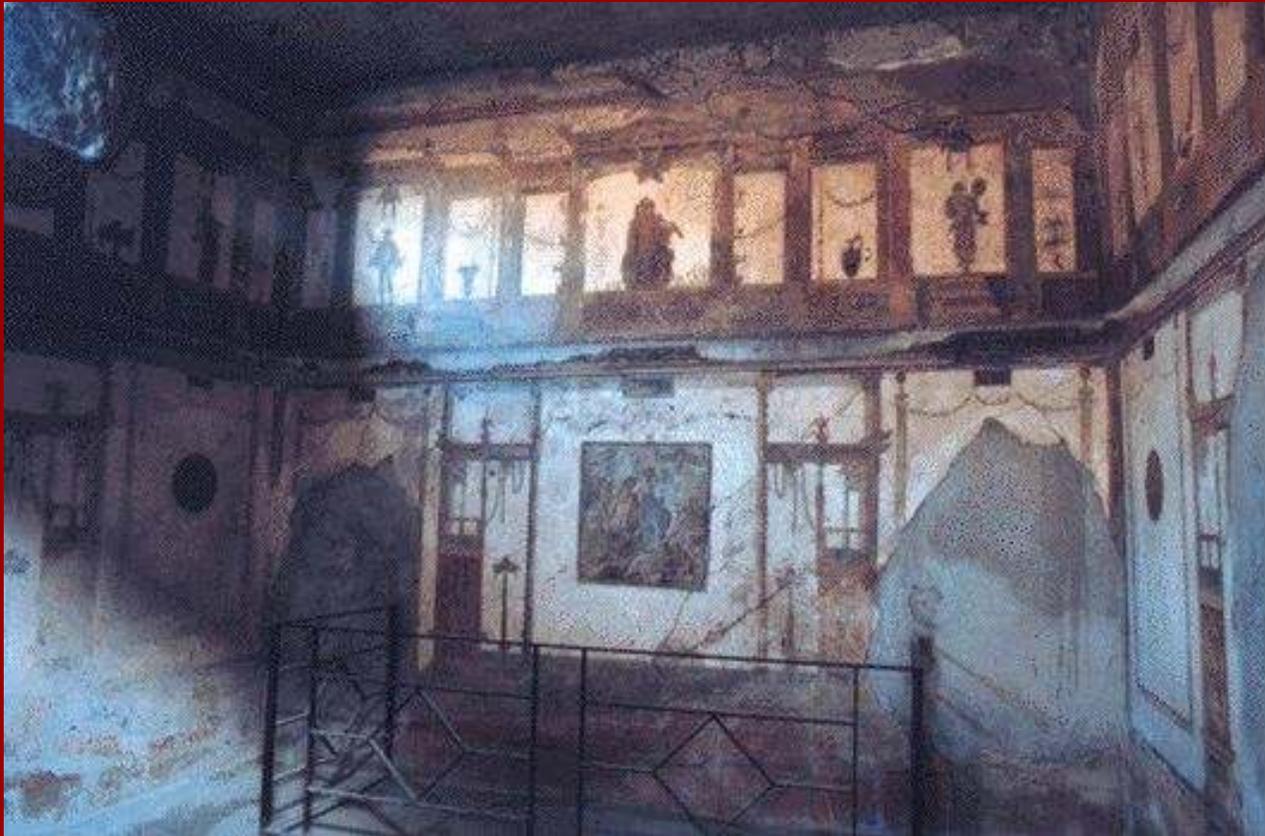


Decoration in the “Fish Room,” House of the Vettii

House of the Vettii

- Some of the most beautiful decorations in the house are located in the so-called “white oecus.”
- An oecus was generally a sort of parlor or salon within a Roman house, though it sometimes could double as a triclinium, according to the Roman architect Vitruvius.
- This particular oecus has decorations involving theatrical buildings as well as various love-related myths, including Bacchus and Ariadne, Leda and the swan (Juppiter), and Danae and the shower of gold (also Juppiter).

House of the Vettii



The White Oecus, House of the Vettii

House of the Vettii



Decoration in the White Oecus,
House of the Vettii

House of the Vettii

- One unique feature of the house was a viridarium, which was a 4-sided portico surrounding a small fountain which would have echoed in the small space. There was some greenery planted here as well, almost in the manner of a small peristyle or pleasure garden.
- This viridarium was surrounded by Corinthian columns supporting an architrave with a frieze showing acanthus leaves on a red background.

House of the Vettii

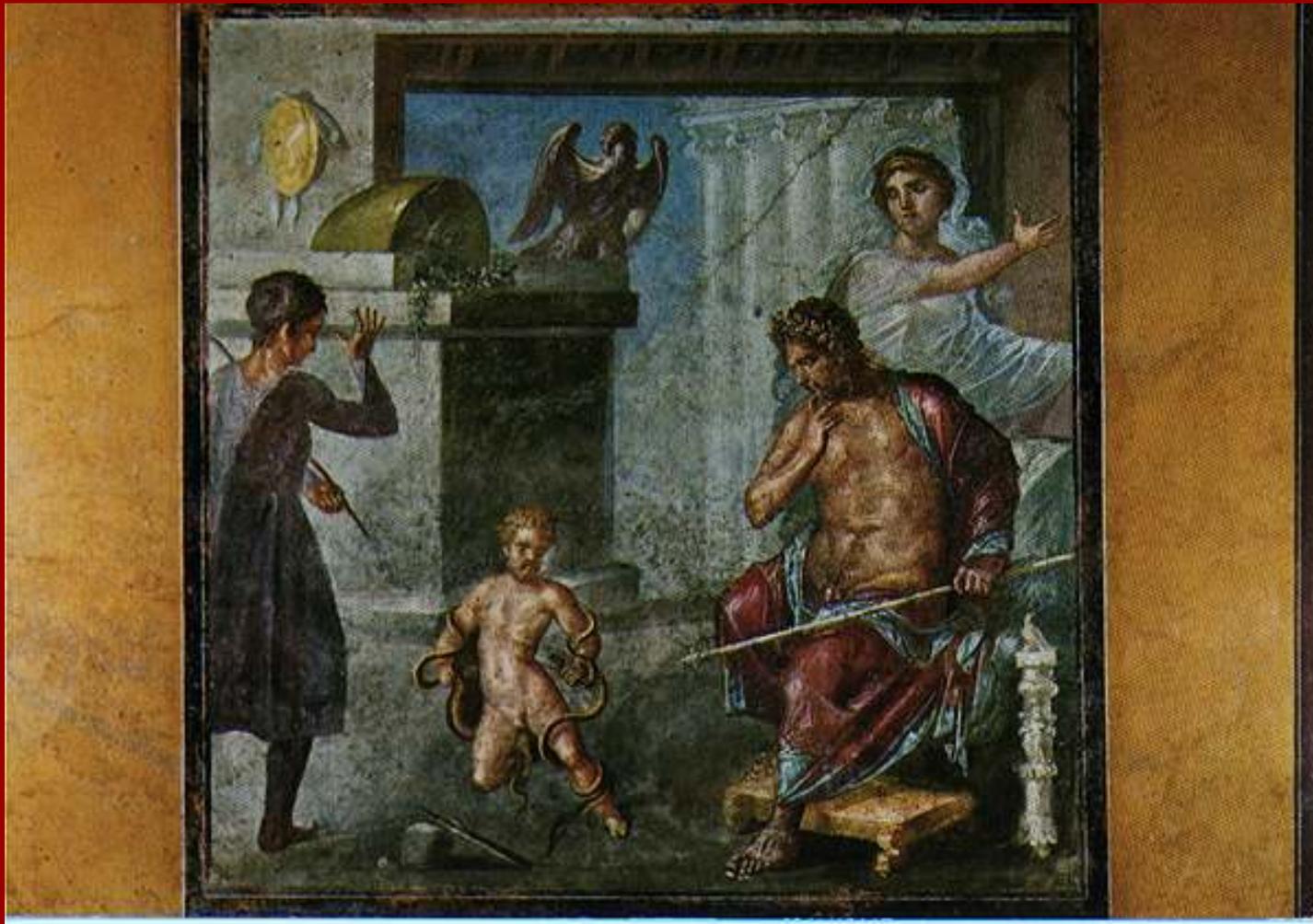


Viridarium, House of the Vettii

House of the Vettii

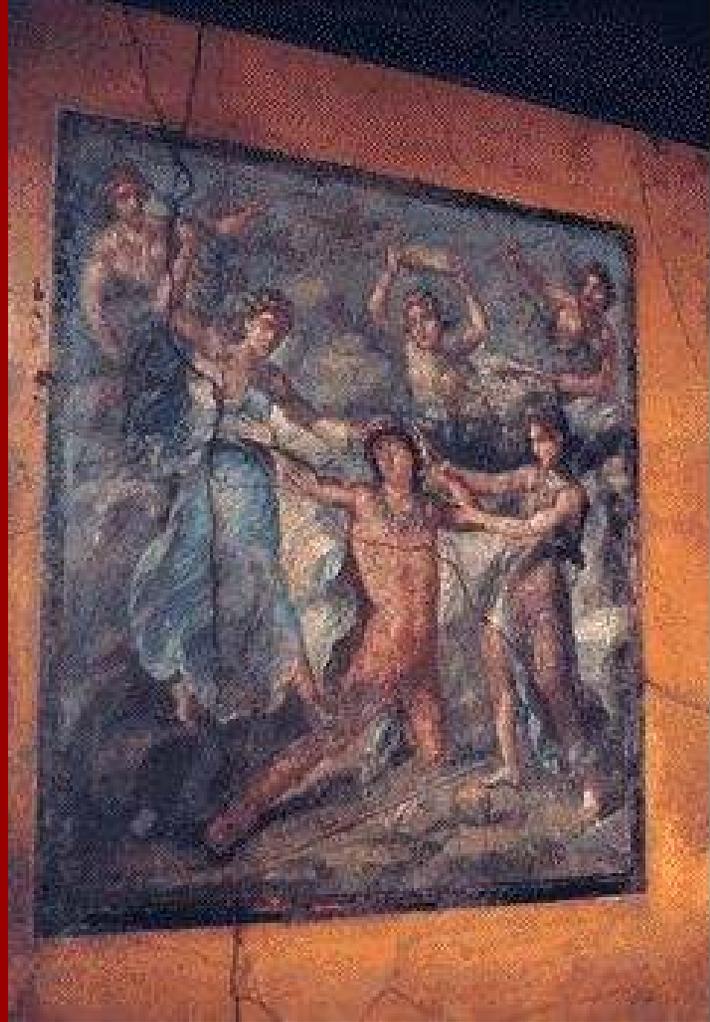
- The most celebrated rooms of the house give onto the peristyle at the rear of the dwelling. These rooms include an oecus, known as the “Gold Oecus,” which displays fabulously painted mythological scenes against a golden background. The scenes include a young Hercules strangling serpents, Pentheus being stoned by worshippers of Bacchus, and others.
- On the opposite side, a room known as the “Red Oecus” displays scenes of Bacchus finding Ariadne on the island of Naxos, Ixion being bound to a wheel in the underworld, and Daedalus delivering the wooden cow to queen Pasiphaë.

House of the Vettii



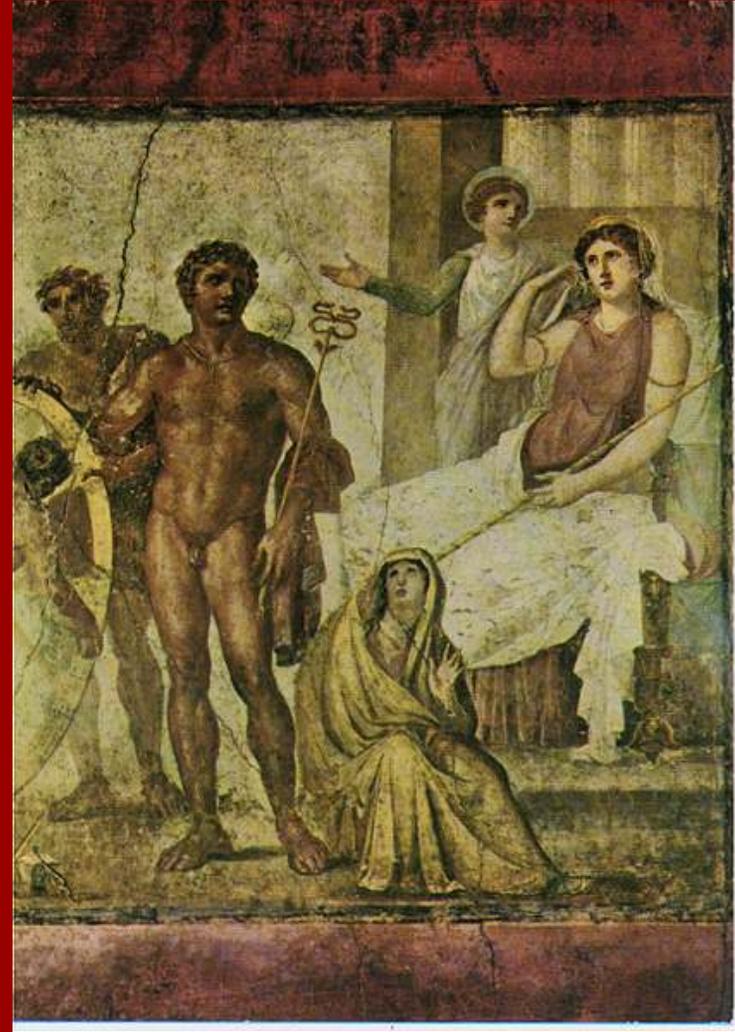
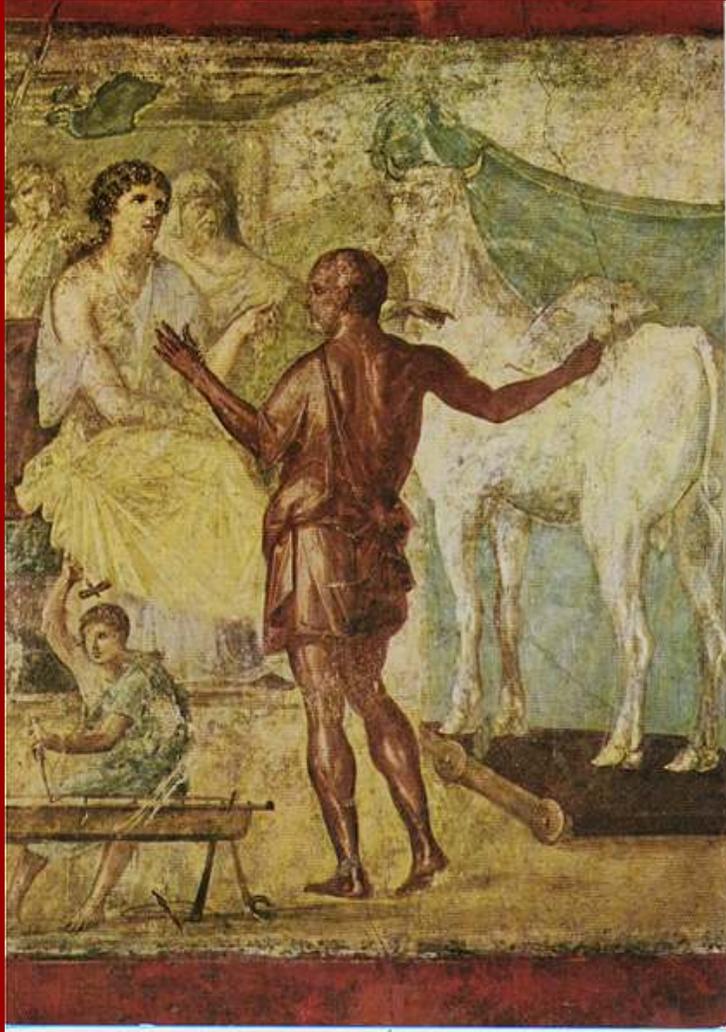
Hercules strangling serpents, Gold Oecus,
House of the Vettii.

House of the Vettii



Pentheus and the Bacchantes, Gold Oecus,
House of the Vettii

House of the Vettii

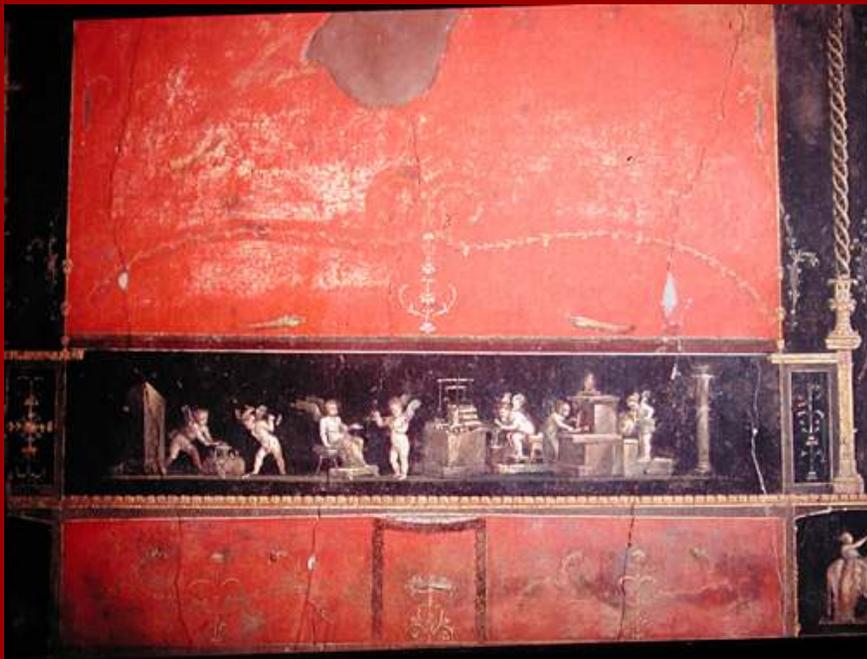


Left: Daedalus and Pasiphaë; Right: Ixion,
Red Oecus, House of the Vettii

House of the Vettii

- The house is also quite well known for its triclinium. A black frieze against a red background shows cherubs engaged in a number of activities, including an participating in an archery contest, making garlands from picked flowers, making perfume, racing chariots pulled by deer, minting coins, baking bread, harvesting grapes and making wine, and more.

House of the Vettii



Decoration in the Triclinium, House of the Vettii

House of the Vettii

- One of the finest features in the House of the Vettii is its peristyle, located at the rear of the house and surrounded by a colonnade with more painted scenes. A great deal of statuary can also be found in the peristyle.
- Though this is not among the largest of the peristyles in Pompeii, it is especially well-decorated and would have flowed nicely with the rest of the house.

House of the Vettii



Peristyle, House of the Vettii

House of the Vettii

- The House of the Vettii is the most visited structure at the archaeological site of Pompeii, most likely due to the quality of the wall paintings. The house itself is not among the largest in Pompeii, nor are any of its architectural features of considerable interest. However, the house does preserve the best of 4th style painting.
- The frequent traffic from thousands of visitors each day has taken its toll on the house. There has been some damage done to the frescoes and floors in the house, especially in recent years.

House of Loreius Tiburtinus

- This house takes its name from numerous pieces of electoral graffiti on its façade and on the façade of the house across the street from it. Some of these encourage voters to choose Loreius, others Tiburtinus. Further, a painting in the house of a priest of the goddess Isis identifies the priest as Amulius Faventius Tiburs.
- Despite all this, the last owner of the house was probably Octavius Quartio, whose seal has been found in the house.

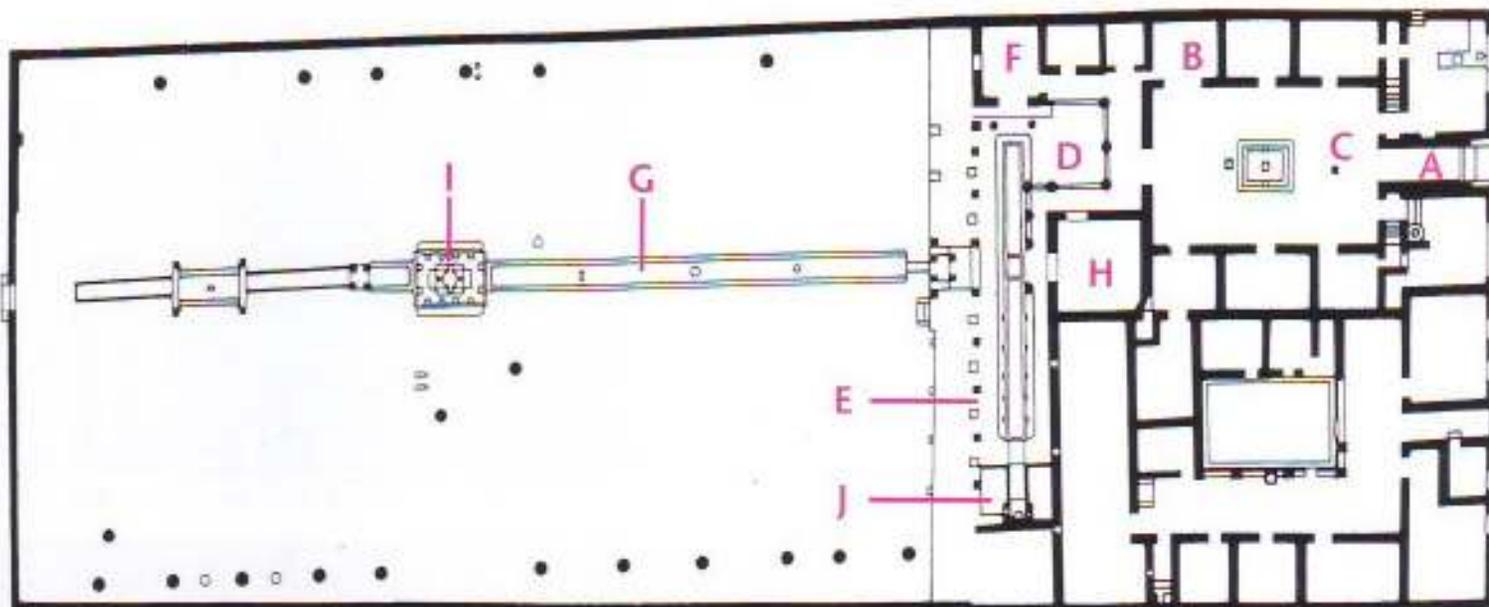
House of Loreius Tiburtinus

- Octavius Quartio converts the house into a sort of personal shrine for the worship of Isis, who grew in popularity in Pompeii in the 1st century A.D.
- The house is excavated between 1916 and 1921 by V. Spinazzola.
- The entrance to the house is located on the Via dell' Abbondanza, a street with many luxurious addresses, and takes up the majority of the insula it occupies.
- The house itself is not really the most impressive feature of the residence. Rather, an enormous garden located off the back of the house is the focal point.

House of Loreius Tiburtinus

- A Entrance
- B The oecus of Justile
- C Atrium
- D Viridarium
- E Upper euripus

- F 4th-style oecus
- G Lower euripus
- H Oecus with Trojan cycle
- I Fountain
- J Summer triclinium



Plan of the House of Loreius Tiburtinus

House of Loreius Tiburtinus

- The entrance to the house is flanked by two cauponae, or inns, which were probably associated with the house as a source of income.
- The atrium floor was decorated with marble hexagons in opus sectile and had an impluvium in the center which was surrounded by structures similar to flower-boxes. In the center of the impluvium was a fountain with a tall vertical jet.

House of Loreius Tiburtinus

- The rooms around the atrium display a variety of decorative motifs. While most of the paintings in the house are in the 4th style, there are traces of 1st style decorative moldings as well.
- Based on the presence of the 1st style moldings, it is possible to date the house back as far as the 2nd century B.C., though clearly the house was redecorated at some later point. The house was also being repaired after the earthquake of 62 A.D.

House of Loreius Tiburtinus

- From the atrium, one proceeds to a small peristyle which occupies the place of the original tablinum (recognizable from a remaining piece of a wall). This peristyle is small in comparison to the massive garden behind it, making it interesting that the owner chose to build a peristyle instead of keeping the original tablinum.
- Surrounding this small peristyle/viridarium are two of the most interestingly decorated rooms in all of Pompeii: an oecus and a triclinium.

House of Loreius Tiburtinus



Small peristyle, House of Loreius Tiburtinus

House of Loreius Tiburtinus

- The oecus is decorated with highly elegant 4th style paintings displaying trophies in architectural features which divide white panels. These panels are surrounded by frames with miniature decorations.
- The ceiling is also partly intact and is ornamented with circular and square features which contain detailed stucco reliefs.

House of Loreius Tiburtinus



Painting in the oecus, House of Loreius Tiburtinus

House of Loreius Tiburtinus

- The triclinium of the house is decorated with scenes from the history of the city of Troy in two levels. The upper level shows Hercules' battle with Laomedon, the king of Troy. The lower level shows scenes from the Trojan War, especially featuring the Greek warrior Achilles.
- This triclinium has entrances from the peristyle and the garden at the back.
- This is only one of several dining rooms in the house.

House of Loreius Tiburtinus

- As mentioned, the garden at the rear of the house was the most significant feature. Larger than the house itself, it boasted 2 large water courses, called euripi (singular = euripus). The euripus which runs parallel to the back of the house is known as the upper euripus, and the lower euripus runs perpendicular to this.
- The upper euripus was covered by a pergola supported by pillars which were decorated with themes related to Bacchus, god of wine. There were also numerous statues surrounding this.

House of Loreius Tiburtinus

- The north wall around this upper euripus was decorated with a large hunting scene. The west wall showed the myth of Diana and Actaeon, whom she turns into a stag. The east wall shows the myths of Narcissus and Pyramus and Thisbe. On this wall, the only signature of an artist in Pompeii was found, saying “Lucius pinxit,” which means “Lucius painted this.”

House of Loreius Tiburtinus

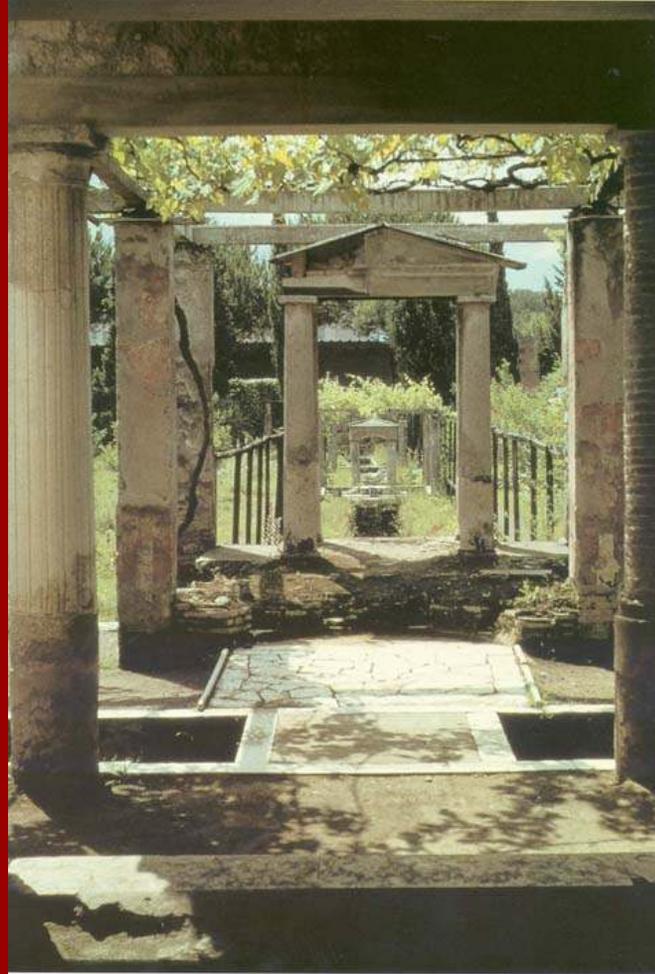
- The lower euripus runs through the rest of the garden, surrounded by acanthus and fruit trees, and had large pergolas on either side.
- Where the upper and lower euripi connected, a sort of temple stood, decorated in the 3rd style.
- At the base of this temple, a fountain was installed, fitted with a semicircle of spouts pointing outwards and a vertical jet in the middle.

House of Loreius Tiburtinus



The Temple, House of Loreius Tiburtinus

House of Loreius Tiburtinus

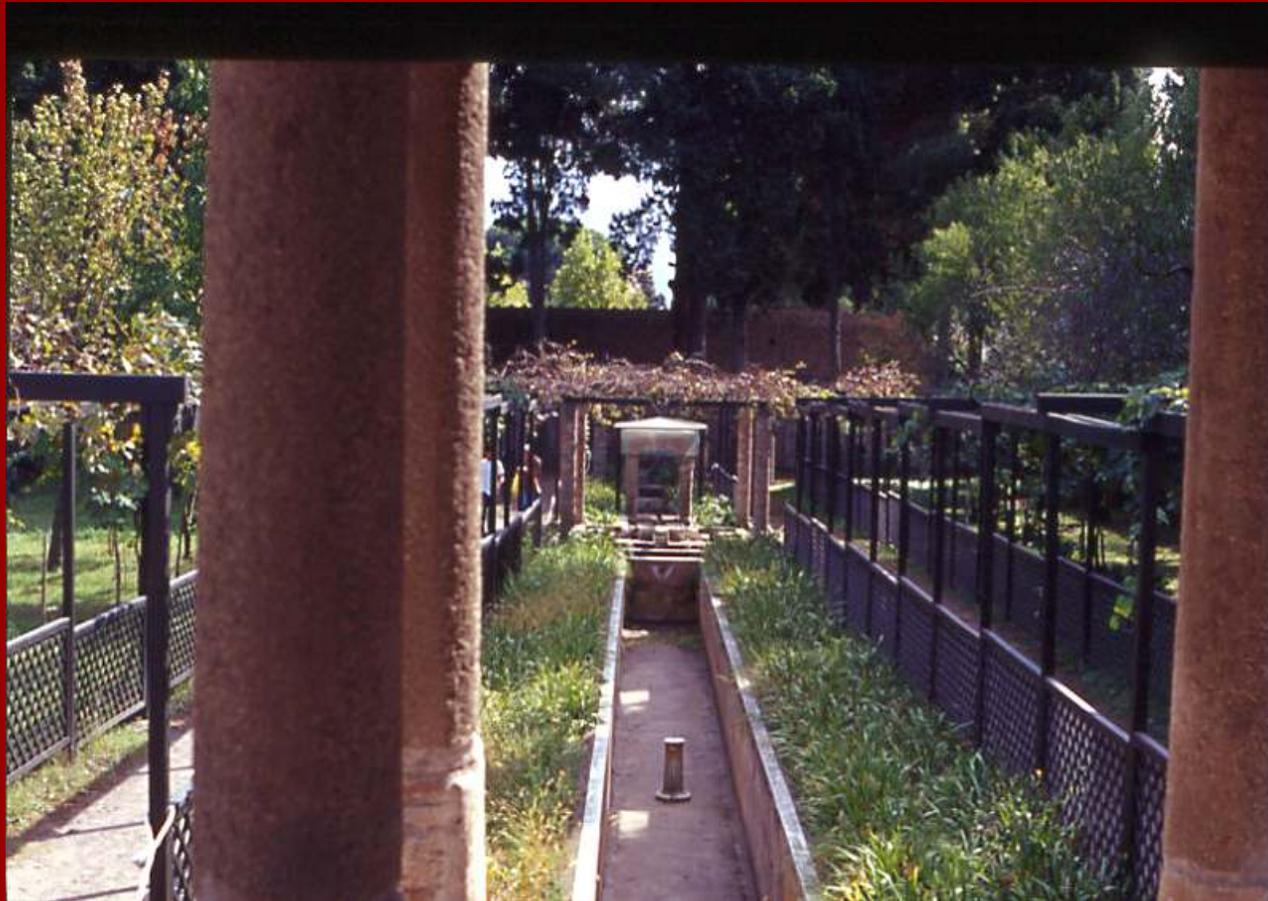


The Temple, House of Loreius Tiburtinus

House of Loreius Tiburtinus

- Another water feature was placed in the middle of the lower euripus. It was quadrangular in shape with a pyramidal structure in the center. There were “stairs” leading down to the water on each side. Water from a fountain ran down these steps, which probably created a pleasant sound in the middle of the garden.
- The pyramidal structure recalls the Egyptian home of the goddess Isis with whom the owners of the house were connected.

House of Loreius Tiburtinus



The Lower Euriptus, House of Loreius Tiburtinus

House of Loreius Tiburtinus



The Lower Euripus, House of Loreius Tiburtinus

House of Loreius Tiburtinus

- The water features in the garden would have been pleasing on warm summer days, cooling off the residents and guests of the house.
- The controls for the water features were in a castellum plumbeum which was located at the northwest corner of the block.
- There was also an outdoor biclinium, or two-couched dining room, at the east end of the upper euripus, in which summer meals could be eaten and both residents and guests could have enjoyed the garden and water features.

House of Loreius Tiburtinus



Outdoor biclinium with paintings of Narcissus (left) and Pyramus and Thisbe (right), House of Loreius Tiburtinus

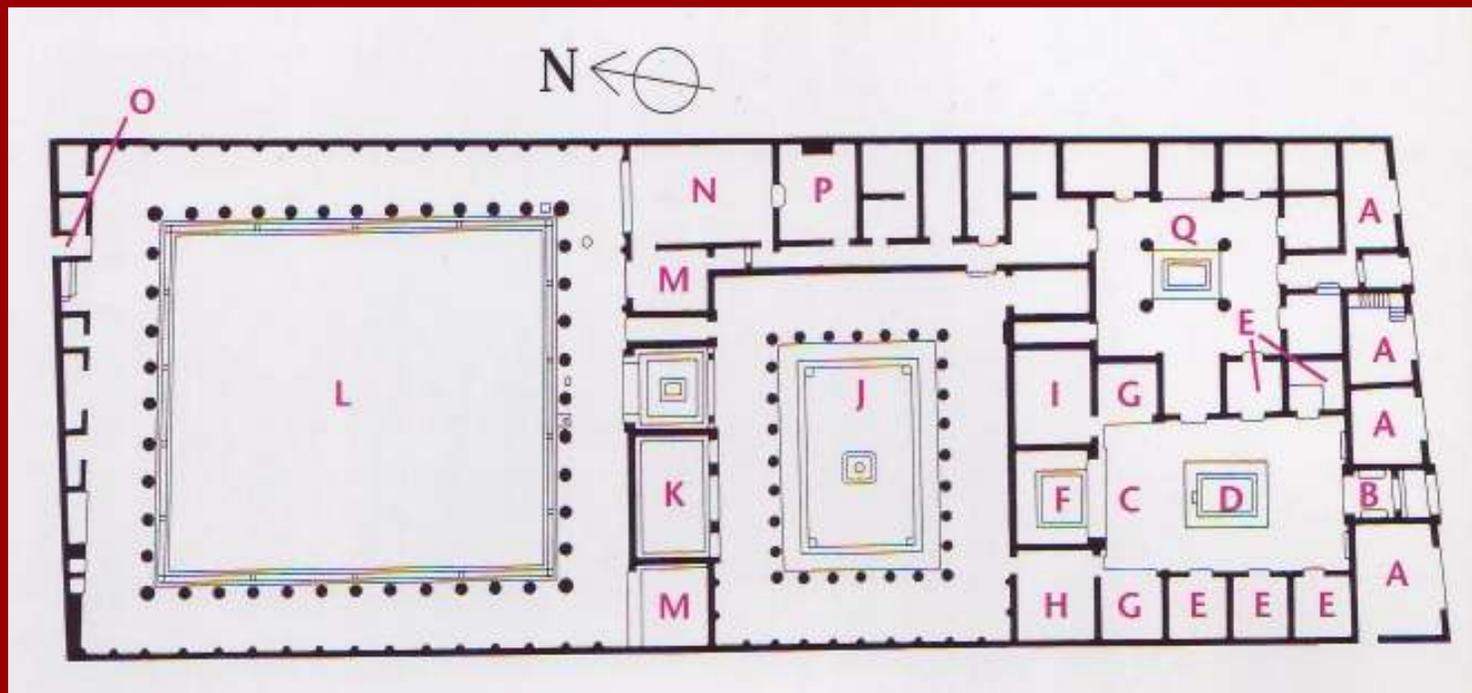
House of the Faun

- The house takes its name from the statue of a dancing faun located in the impluvium of the atrium of the house.
- This is the largest of the houses in Pompeii, about 3,000 square meters in size and taking up an entire city block.
- The house was excavated between 1830 and 1832 by A. Bonucci.
- The house as it appears was mostly built in the 2nd half of the 2nd century B.C. (180-170), replacing an earlier 3rd century dwelling which stood in the center of the insula.

House of the Faun

- There are renovations to the house done at the end of the 2nd century B.C. as well. The large hortus, or garden, at the rear of the house was turned into a 2nd peristyle which was Doric in style. Additional rooms flanked the northern edge of this peristyle. A second entrance was also added.
- The plan of the house suggests either a possible fusion of two earlier houses or a desire on the part of the owners to build on a grand scale. There are 2 atria in the house along with at least 5 rooms which could have been used for dining.

House of the Faun



- A Shops
- B Vestibule
- C Atrium
- D Impluvium
- E Cubiculi
- F Tablinum
- G Alae
- H Anteroom
- I Oecus
- J Transverse peristyle
- K Exedra of the Alexander mosaic
- L Peristyle
- M Oeci
- N Triclinium
- O Posticum
- P Bathing area
- Q Servants' quarters

Plan of the House of the Faun

House of the Faun

- The rooms around the 2nd atrium (known as the tetrastyle atrium) are thought to have been the servants' quarters, a more private area of the house.
- The house also had its own bathing complex, which means it must have had water piped directly to it. Along with the other earlier mentioned late 2nd century B.C. renovations, this complex was moved towards the rear of the house.
- The house also has 4 shops across the front, one of which has a connection to the house itself.

House of the Faun

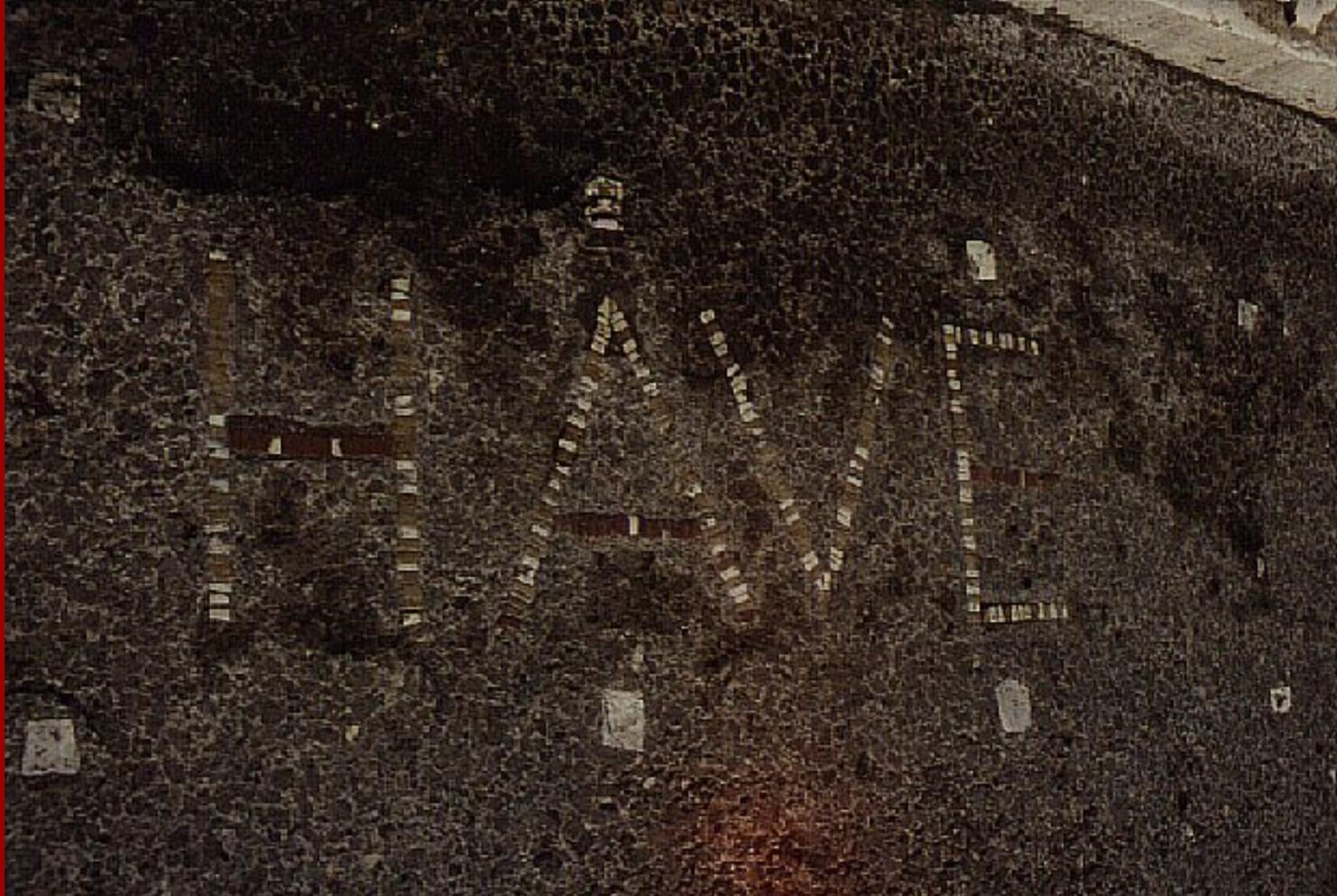
- Decoration in the house is all in the 1st style, emphasizing a desire on the part of the owners to keep an austere and classy appearance in this large and extravagant home. This decoration is consistently restored rather than updated, and when new areas of the house are built or old areas are renovated, the decoration is matched to the earlier areas of the house.
- At the entrance to the house, visitors were greeted by a mosaic which read “HAVE,” which is Latin for “WELCOME,” spelled out in colored tiles.

House of the Faun



1st style decoration, House of the Faun

House of the Faun



“Welcome Mat” mosaic, House of the Faun

House of the Faun

- The vestibule of the house is decorated in the 1st style. There are 2 tetrastyle shrines with Corinthian columns elevated in the entryway which served as the lararia for the house.
- The floor in the vestibule and likely in the atrium as well was done in opus sectile, which is indicative of the wealth of the owners of the house. The impluvium is also done in opus sectile and had a small statue of a dancing faun at its center.

House of the Faun



Atrium and Impluvium, House of the Faun

House of the Faun



Lararia, House of the Faun

House of the Faun

- Various cubicula surrounded the atrium, and there was a tablinum at the rear. Behind this atrium was the first (smaller) peristyle.
- A series of exedrae and oeci connected the two peristyles. In one of these, a large mosaic depicting the battle between Alexander the Great and Darius of Persia at Issus (fought in 333 B.C.). This mosaic was based on an earlier Hellenistic painting by Philoxenus. The mosaic itself contained over 1.5 million colored tesserae, with some estimates going as high as 4 million. The total size is 19 ft. x 10 ft., 3 in.

House of the Faun



The Alexander Mosaic, House of the Faun

House of the Faun



The First (or smaller) Peristyle, House of the Faun

House of the Faun



The Second (or larger) Peristyle, House of the Faun

House of the Faun

- In general, the house of the Faun is best known for its size, its majesty, and its mosaics. The house is not as well preserved as many others, but it is easy for archaeologists to dream about what it may have looked like in its heyday.

House of the Faun



Some mosaics from the House of the Faun