

Expanded Interiors

Bringing contemporary site-specific fine-art practice to Roman houses at Herculaneum and Pompeii



Blog & Podcasts

Catrin Huber & Expanded Interiors

IH

When did you first start drawing on at Roman Wall Painting as a source of inspiration for your practice?

CH

In 2008 I was a fellow at the British School at Rome for 3 months, and I knew about Roman Wall painting. Because my practice is very much engaged with architectural space and how paintings work within architectural spaces I knew it would be interesting.

Then I came here and saw them on site in Herculaneum, Pompeii and Rome, I was really struck, totally. I thought it was so fresh, so topical, and I also think it is really relevant for site specific art practice, in terms of the way fictional and actual architecture negotiate each other. There is also this interesting play where they are really immersive, and, at the same time still keep a distance from the viewer.

IH

Is there an aspect of Roman Wall painting that particularly interests you as an artist in relation to painting and architectural space?

CH

I think some of the most refined wall paintings were incredibly sophisticated and worked with many different layers, almost like riddles for the viewer. For example, you sometimes have pillars standing on one plane and ending on a different one. You don't notice at first, but the longer you look you see it's a very painterly way of suggesting space, but also bringing it back to the wall and to the surface and material, and that's exactly what I'm interested in.

IH

Did you see quite a lot of Roman Wall painting before you came to Pompeii?

CH

I saw the houses on the Palentine, and the House of Livia, Palazzo Massimo, they are amazing, I spent hours there.

IH

Yes, they are amazing, just the way in which they play with the viewer. Not as if the viewer is a puppet, it is a knowing game, also an exchange, a dialogue.

CH

It's also amazing they have this artificial light, recreated, and you see very different details, whether it's dawn or dusk. I loved being with the camera to see details you wouldn't have seen, I spent hours there.



IH

Can you tell us about how this experience affected the work you've done since then up till now?

CH

I did a series of exhibitions in response to Roman wall painting, exhibiting at Kiosk24 (Herford, Germany), the Hatton Gallery (Newcastle) and the British School at Rome. For me it's always relevant what it means to contemporary practice, what can we learn from Roman Wall painters?

From that it grew, I wrote a fictional panel discussion where a Roman wall painter discusses the relevance of Roman wall painting with El Lizitzky, a Russian Avant Garde artist, very instrumental in exhibition design. It's about art within the context of the spaces.

Through these things the idea grew that I should really do something on site, I started working on that and here we are.

Last modified: Fri, 24 Nov 2017 10:32:28 GMT



Images courtesy of Expanded Interiors, su concessione del MINISTERO DEI BENI E DELLE ATTIVITA' CULTURALI E DEL TURISMO – PARCO ARCHEOLOGICO ERCOLANO & PARCO ARCHEOLOGICO POMPEI

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