

Dominik Maschek

## The Campana Reliefs and Their Place in the Architectural *decorum* of Late Republican Rome

### Abstract

*In the material aesthetics of central and southern Italic architecture, baked clay was of fundamental importance. The appearance of roofs, cornices, pedimental sculpture, acroteria, and friezes was dominated by elaborately modelled, decorated and painted terracottas from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE onwards. In the history of Roman art and architecture, this phenomenon is often still assessed as a genuinely 'Italic' building tradition, which was successively replaced in the course of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE by new forms of architectural decoration imported from the Greek East, primarily in marble. In the so-called Campana plaques of the late Republican and Augustan periods, it was believed that a 'neo-Attic' artistic taste had merged with the traditional material of earlier times. In contrast, the aim of this paper is to assess the significance of the Campana plaques, exemplified by the case of the plaques with Nilotic scenes, as part of an architectural and artistic production that was essentially determined by contemporary discourses and a widely shared 'culture of making'.*

When considering the role of the Campana reliefs in the architectural *decorum* of late Republican and early Imperial Rome, there are many possible starting points. One could consider the terracotta plaques with respect to their links with so-called Neo-Attic art, their various socio-political interpretations, or the technical aspects of their serial reproduction.<sup>1</sup> However, in this paper I will attempt to do something rather different, namely to explore the *conditions* under which the Campana reliefs were initially conceived, propagated, and disseminated as an important part of a lively discourse about architecture and architectural decoration. In other words, I am primarily interested in the Campana reliefs not as artworks but as elements in a much wider setting of architectural practice and ways of conceptualising and perceiving architectural designs. The paper will start with a case study, move on to some analysis, and finish with a few broader observations.

- 1 These topics have been the subject of a number of recent important studies on Campana reliefs, see e.g. Pellino 2006; Bøggild Johannsen 2008a; López Vilar et al. 2008; Simon 2009; López Vilar et al. 2010; Siebert 2011; Mar – Pensabene 2015; Baas – Flecker 2016; Reinhardt 2016a; Pensabene – Gallochio 2017; Tortorella 2018a; Reinhardt 2019; Tortorella 2019a; Reinhardt 2022a. Fundamental for typology, classification, and stylistic assessment: Rohden – Winnefeld 1911; Koch 1912; Andren 1939/1940; Borbein 1968; Mielsch 1971; Calderone 1975; Rizzo 1976/1977; Tortorella 1981a; Tortorella 1981b; Hedinger 1987; Strazzulla 1990; Dupré i Raventós – Revilla Calvo 1991; Strazzulla 1991; Strazzulla 1993; Rendini 1995; Perry 1997; Rauch 1999.

## Late Republican Campana Reliefs with Nilotic Scenes: Genre and Historical Context

As my case study I have chosen one specific type of Campana reliefs from the scores of available material. This type consists of plaques decorated with Nilotic scenes that appear within a frame of smooth pilasters and arcades (Fig. 1). These architectural elements are in turn framed by larger, fluted Corinthian pilasters that support the plaque's crowning ornament of standing leaves. Inside the arcades we see, from top to bottom, various animals, including hippos, crocodiles, and ducks, within the landscape of the river Nile. Moreover, there are boats with figures whose anatomy is reminiscent of pygmies, and, in the upper register, we see cranes sitting on different types of huts with thatched roofs and walls that seem to consist of reeds. Well-preserved specimens of this type reveal the original colour scheme: the Nilotic landscape would have been painted in blue and green, while the huts and boats were depicted in shades of yellowish brown and ochre.<sup>2</sup> In the typology proposed by Marion Rauch, these particular Campana reliefs belong to Type Ia.<sup>3</sup> Due to the Egyptian theme, Rauch tentatively dated this type to the early Augustan period, after the battle of Actium. So far, this date has been accepted in all major publications on Egyptianising motifs in Roman art.<sup>4</sup>

However, the work of recent years, and in particular the studies of Patrizio Pensabene, Ricardo Mar, and Enrico Gallochio, allows us to revisit the traditional chronology, as fragments of this particular kind of Campana relief with Nilotic scenes have been found in the so-called House of Octavian on the Palatine, and more specifically in the backfill layers which were brought in for the construction of the Temple of Apollo in 36 BCE.<sup>5</sup> One fragment clearly belongs to one of the large, fluted Corinthian pilasters of a Nilotic plaque, including the rest of one of the smaller pilaster capitals and the lower end of an arch; another fragment shows the base and the lower end of a smooth pilaster shaft, including some faint traces of blue colour suggesting a Nilotic landscape scene. It is therefore certain that such plaques did, at some point, decorate the so-called House of Octavian on the Palatine.

Within the scope of this paper, it is not possible to discuss the details of the protracted and complicated scholarly debate surrounding this residential complex.<sup>6</sup> To briefly summarise, the so-called *Casa di Augusto* was extensively excavated by Gianfilippo Carettoni, and was then written into the common, mainstream understanding of Augustan art and ideology in Paul Zanker's "Augustus und die Macht der Bilder".<sup>7</sup> However, over the course of the last twenty years, a major revision of Carettoni's

2 E.g. the plaque from S. Sabina, now in the Vatican Museum (Inv. 22865): Rauch 1999, 222–224. 259 N10. On the original colour scheme of Nilotic Campana plaques, see also the contribution by B. VAK, K. UHLIR, M. GRIESSER and R. IANNACONE in the present volume.

3 Rauch 1999, 220–232. 240. 258.

4 E.g. Söldner 1999; Versluys 2002, 87–90. 241–248. 287–289. 358 f.; Söldner 2004; Rose 2013; Swetnam-Burland 2015, 1 f. 144–167; Barrett 2019, 25 f. 56–60; Pearson 2021, 33–77.

5 Pensabene et al. 2014; Mar – Pensabene 2015; Pensabene – Gallochio 2017.

6 Important recent contributions include Iacopi – Tedone 2005/2006; Carandini – Bruno 2008; La Rocca 2008; Tomei 2014; Lipps 2018, 80–87; Wiseman 2019; Pensabene 2021.

7 Carettoni 1983a; Carettoni 1983b; Zanker 1987, 59–61. 279 f.



Fig. 1 Reconstructed fragment of a Nilotic Campana plaque. Heidelberg, Institute of Classical Archaeology, Inv. C XIII; Perry 1997, 47–49 cat. 23 pl. 10, 2; Rauch 1999, 222 f. 232. 259 N4.

Image: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 (Drawing: D. Maschek; Photograph: Institut für Klassische Archäologie, Universität Heidelberg).

documentation has shown that the chronology of the house, or multiple houses, is actually much more complex than the first generation of commentators tended to think.

Apart from the well-known wall paintings of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> Style, Campana reliefs played an important role in the house's decoration in its various building phases. Overall, Pensabene and Gallochio were able to distinguish six different groups of reliefs, attributing them to different time periods, depending on their respective find context (Fig. 2). Of particular relevance to this paper are the fragments with Nilotic landscape scenes which belong to Group 2a. The year 36 BCE constitutes a clear and indisputable *terminus ante quem* for all the reliefs of this group, as in this very year, with the beginning of construction works for the Temple of Apollo, the so-called House of Octavian and its short-lived successor, the so-called 'Casa Interrotta', were largely remodelled and the Campana plaques destroyed and discarded.

This has two serious implications: first, the conventional context for the beginning of this particular type of Nilotic landscapes on Campana reliefs cannot be dated to the early Augustan period after the battle of Actium, because the finds from the Palatine show that such reliefs were already in circulation at least ten to five years *before* Actium.

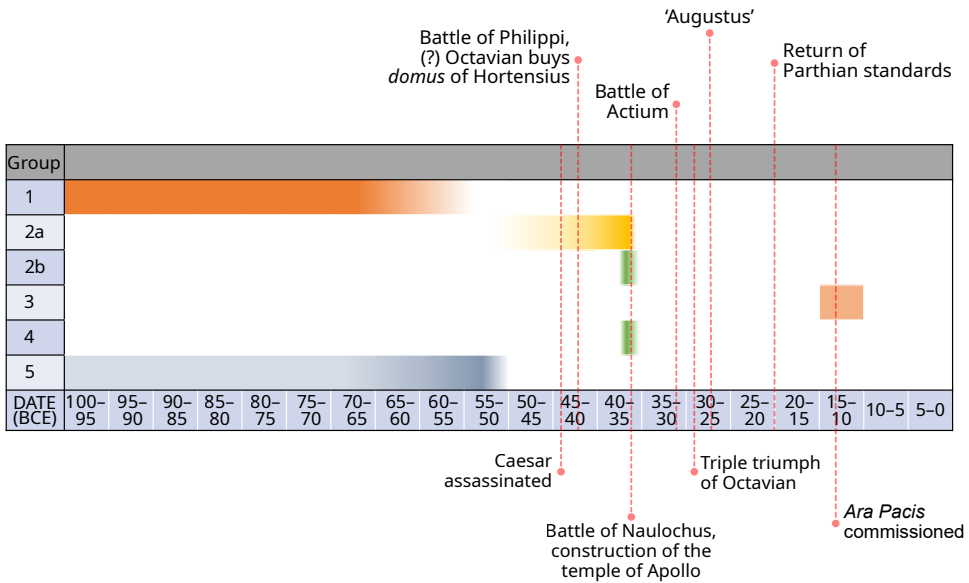


Fig. 2 Typological and chronological groups of Campana reliefs from the so-called House of Octavian, after Pensabene – Gallochio 2017, 164 f.

Image: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 (D. Maschek).

And, second, thousands of pages of highly intellectual and interesting academic literature on the supposed ideological connections between the struggle involving Octavian, Marc Antony, and Cleopatra and the Egyptianising scenes in wall paintings and on decorative reliefs have lost their historical substance.<sup>8</sup> The Nilotic landscape scenes on this particular type of Campana reliefs must derive from an altogether different historical context. Thus, it is necessary to take a fresh look at the possible reasons why this type of Nilotic scenery in an architectural setting might have appealed to a commissioner or a wider audience in the period between 50 and 36 BCE. In the following, I will focus the analysis on three distinctive aspects: first, the structural organisation of space on the Nilotic plaques; second, the creation of additional depth in the reliefs; and, third, the relations between the plaques' composition and contemporary architectural designs.

### Nilotic Campana Reliefs: Space, Landscape, and Architecture

In terms of the conceptualisation and presentation of space, the most important element for the structural organisation on the Nilotic Campana plaques is clearly the framing architecture, which consists of pairs of arcades and flanking pilasters that are, in turn, framed by taller, fluted pilasters. This arrangement finds close parallels in the painted architectural prospects of the Second Style, most strikingly in *Cubicolo* 16 of the Villa dei Misteri at Pompeii, which predates the Nilotic Campana reliefs by

8 For similar considerations for the wall paintings from the 'House of Augustus' see La Rocca 2008, 232–241.



Fig. 3 Tetrastyle *oecus* in the so-called House of Octavian on the Palatine, virtual reconstruction.

Image: © J. Lipps.

roughly one generation.<sup>9</sup> Very similar axial views which are framed and thus deliberately conditioned by arcuated ceilings, pilasters, and columns, both painted and real, also appear in the built architecture of elite houses and villas of the same period, such as in the Casa del Criptoportico at Pompeii, in the Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum, and in the tetrastyle *oecus* in the so-called House of Octavian on the Palatine (Fig. 3).<sup>10</sup> The framing of landscape scenery and panel paintings by columns is attested in the so-called Odyssey Landscapes from the Esquiline, commonly dated to the mid-first century BCE, and in *Exedra* 13 of the Villa of Terzigno which was decorated in the years around 40 BCE.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, on the southwest wall of *Triclinium* IV in the so-called House of Livia in Rome, we find painted niches in arcades, flanked by free-standing columns, and a central view into a sacro-idyllic landscape with Agyieus and Diana.<sup>12</sup>

However, and this is the second aspect of importance, the Nilotic Campana reliefs not only organise space in a similar way as in contemporary painted and built architecture, but they also create additional depth by opening the view into a landscape setting that transcends the arcades in the foreground. This can be compared with the way in which, from the earlier decades of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, Second Style wall painting had

9 Tybout 1989, 105 f. 218 f. 225–231 tab. 15–19; Pappalardo – Mazzoleni 2009, 48. On the date of the paintings in the Villa dei Misteri, see Esposito 2007, 442. 450. 454–459; Esposito – Rispoli 2015, 69–71. 75.

10 Casa del Criptoportico, Pompeii: Lipps 2018, 35. 59 fig. 96; 127; Villa dei Papiri, Herculaneum: Lipps 2018, 127 f. fig. 168. 169; so-called House of Octavian: Lipps 2018, 147–169.

11 So-called Odyssey Landscapes from the Esquiline: O’Sullivan 2007, pl. 1–3 fig. 4; Villa of Terzigno: Strocka 2005/2006, 84–86 fig. 1–4.

12 Strocka 2005/2006, 109 fig. 25.

gradually developed stunning architectural vistas and perspectives, thus substantially supplementing the physical space of a building with additional painted columnar façades, shrines, monuments, and gardens.<sup>13</sup> The Nilotic Campana reliefs achieve a very similar effect, albeit with a lesser degree of three-dimensionality. Crucially, they do not create the illusion of more substantive architectural prospects within their arcades, but they rather present the idyllic setting of the majestic river, its exotic birds and other animals, the simple huts, and the pygmy figures in the boat.

In Central Italy, this type of Egyptianising scenery is by no means confined to the 50s, 40s or 30s of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, but can already be found in religious and domestic architecture as early as the last quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century: famous examples include the so-called Nile mosaic from the Aula Absidata of the Sanctuary of Fortuna at Praeneste, and the Nilotic scenes from the garden exedra that also contains the Alexander mosaic in the House of the Faun in Pompeii.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the Nilotic Campana reliefs combine a particular mode of illusionistic architectural representation, derived from slightly earlier to contemporary Second Style wall painting, with a set of much older imagery that had been in use in Central Italy for at least three generations.

This leads to the third aspect, namely the larger scheme of composition beyond the single terracotta plaque. As becomes clear from the paratactic design of the individual plaques, the reliefs were not meant to be seen in isolation, but larger numbers of plaques were combined to decorate substantial parts of a building. Such a series of Nilotic plaques would have resulted in a striking overall pattern (Fig. 4). On a purely practical level, it becomes instantly clear that arcades are a perfect device for creating long series of matching plaques, whereas the production of coherent Nilotic landscape scenes without such architectural elements would have been much more of a challenge. Framing these scenes with arcades therefore gave the producers the possibility to deliver perfectly matching pieces of equal quality.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, when differentiating between the scenes in the background and the architecture in the foreground, it appears that the architectural structure created by the series of reliefs actually does *not* copy the predominant design of illusionistic architecture in Second Style wall paintings which usually are arranged in wings around a central axis.<sup>16</sup> The Nilotic plaques, by contrast, add up to a long and deliberately repetitive series of arcades, interspersed with the larger fluted pilasters and resting upon the shorter pilasters with their smooth surfaces.

13 E.g. in the famous *oecus* 15 in Villa A at Oplontis: Pappalardo – Mazzoleni 2009, 74f. For different perspectives on the significance of the broader phenomenon, see Drerup 1959; Engemann 1967; Tybout 1989; Ehrhardt 1991; Grüner 2004, 56–110; Leach 2004, 85–92; O’Sullivan 2007; Jones 2019, 137–168.

14 Nile mosaic from Praeneste: Coarelli 1987, 80–82; Meyboom 1995; Versluys 2002, 52–54; Hinterhöller-Klein 2009; Nilotic mosaic from the House of the Faun: Versluys 2002, 121–123; Faber – Hoffmann 2009, 107f.; Barrett 2019, 228 fig. 5, 4; 229–249.

15 Rauch 1999, 241 f.

16 See already Perry 1997, 49 who states: “die Nilszenen [scheinen] weniger von der Wandmalerei beeinflusst zu sein, ihre Komposition ist viel zu additiv, um malerisch zu wirken.” More positively, Rauch 1999, 245 f. On the principles of design and perspective in Second Style wall painting, see Stinson 2011; Hinterhöller-Klein 2015, 121–170. 229–264.



Fig. 4 Reconstructed series of Nilotic Campana plaques, based on fig. 1.

Image: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 (D. Maschek).

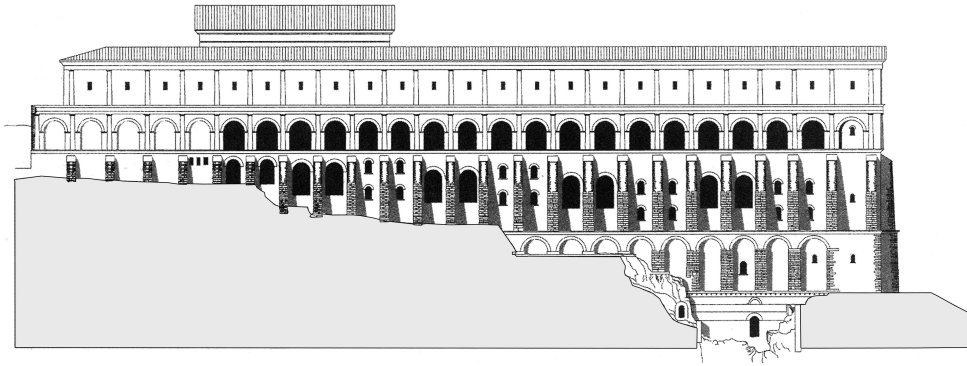


Fig. 5 Sanctuary of Hercules Victor at Tivoli, northern façade (reconstruction).

Image: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 (D. Maschek after Giuliani 2004, 33 fig. 13).

This particular arrangement, commonly labelled the ‘theatre motif’, finds obvious parallels in late Republican monumental architecture, such as in the Sanctuary of Hercules Victor at Tivoli (Fig. 5), dating to the late 80s of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, the contemporary ‘*Tabularium*’, or the outer façade of the *cavea* of Pompey’s Theatre in Rome, dating to the later 50s of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> The same motif of continuous arcades is also reflected in the decoration of a number of monumental tombs from the 40s and 30s of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, such as the marble blocks from a funerary *rotunda* at the Via Appia Antica in the Roman *suburbium* (Fig. 6), or the remains of a large circular tomb at Pietrabbondante.<sup>18</sup>

17 Sanctuary of Hercules Victor: Giuliani 2004, 33 fig. 13; 63 fig. 56; 65 fig. 58. 59; Giuliani – Ten 2017, 7 fig. 11; 27 fig. 70; ‘*Tabularium*’: Delbrueck 1907, 35 fig. 31; 39 fig. 35 tab. 1. 5; Tucci 2005, 7; Coarelli 2010, 126 fig. 15; Davies 2017, 191 fig. 5, 4 a. b; theatre of Pompey: Monterroso Checa 2010, 48f. fig. 15; 63 fig. 36; 175–184. Another earlier example of the ‘theatre motif’ appears in the Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia at Praeneste (last quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE): Fasolo – Gullini 1953, 155–165 tab. 10. 11.

18 Funerary rotunda, Via Appia Antica: Sydow 1977b, 278–297; tomb from Pietrabbondante: Sydow 1977a, 275–279 fig. 19–28 tab. 132.



**Fig. 6, a. b** Funerary rotunda at the Via Appia Antica in the Roman suburbium, next to Casal Rotondo: particular (above) and reconstruction (below).

Image: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 (D. Maschek [above] and D. Maschek after Sydow 1977, 264 fig. 20 [below]).



In this context, it is important to contrast these principles of design with later examples of Nilotic Campana reliefs which date from the later 1<sup>st</sup> century CE to the early Antonine period:<sup>19</sup> these plaques show a very different architectural style with free-standing columns and arcuated, richly decorated architraves with dentil friezes. All these elements are much more in line with the impressive columnar façades of *nymphaea*, porticoes, temples, and stage buildings of theatres, which, when compared to the rather old-fashioned, traditional arcades with pilasters, became more and more important as signs of monumentality and architectural *magnificentia* in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries CE.<sup>20</sup> Equally, the extravagant spirally fluted columns on these later Nilotic plaques are well known from representative marble buildings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.<sup>21</sup> This shows that the architectural frame of the earlier late Republican reliefs was not chosen randomly but actually very carefully, insofar as it deliberately presented an iconic element of contemporary monumental buildings which, for commissioners and viewers in the 50s, 40s, and early 30s of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, would have represented one of the cutting-edge hallmarks of public construction.

In histories of Roman architecture, this type of arcuated façade is usually understood from the perspective of someone viewing it from the outside, as a manifestation of strength and power, and as a substructure for imposing buildings. Although scholars already pointed out the connections between buildings such as the Sanctuary of Fortuna at Praeneste and the architectural vistas of Second Style paintings, they focused primarily on architectural perspective and landscape setting.<sup>22</sup> This underestimates the utility of arcades for framing and directing the viewer's gaze. By using a paratactic arrangement of arches, late Republican architects were able to orchestrate views from the inside, from the reassuring frame of one's own familiar architecture into a heterotopian outside. The design of the Nilotic Campana plaques suggests that a similar effect was indeed intended by those who first designed and produced them, as the arches quite literally serve as windows from a space of Roman power into a distant and exotic landscape.

Overall, the Nilotic Campana reliefs provide evidence for the careful selection and combination of three well-established motifs and tendencies in late Republican architectural design and decoration: first, the arcades, framed by pilasters, had been popularised as a powerful icon of monumental architecture since the 120s BCE, and, therefore, over a period of seventy to eighty years (roughly two to three generations) before the production of this particular type of Campana plaques actually started. Second, the views into a landscape, framed by architecture, had been common stock

19 Rauch 1999, 233–240 N105–120.

20 Ward-Perkins 1981, 164f. 260–263. 287–299. 328–332; MacDonald 1986, 179–220. 221–247; Onians 1988, 51–58; Wilson Jones 2003, 111–119; Yegül – Favro 2019, 619–634. 659–696. On the beginnings of this tendency and on the concept of *magnificentia* in Imperial architecture, see Hesberg 1992.

21 E.g. the spirally fluted columns on the colonnaded main street of Apamea (2<sup>nd</sup> century CE; Yegül – Favro 2019, 714 fig. 11, 3) or the *Tetrapylon* at Aphrodisias (mid- to later 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE; Outschar 1996). On spiral fluting in the Roman period, see Fano Santi 1993.

22 Fasolo – Gullini 1953, 339–352 fig. 460–466; Kähler 1958, 209–212 fig. 8. 9 tab. 30. 31; Drerup 1959; Drerup 1966; Gullini 1983; Gullini 1992.

in Second Style wall painting for at least one generation, famously being approved by Vitruvius due to their accurate nature, in contrast with the fantastic creations of the later Second Style.<sup>23</sup> Third, Nilotic scenes had also been highly popular in mosaic decoration since the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE across central Italy, albeit in continuous scenes and not as vignettes.

### The Campana Reliefs and Late Republican Architectural *decorum*: Tradition and Innovation

When considering the place of Campana reliefs in late Republican architectural aesthetics, it is important to stress the striking level of complexity which has become apparent from the analysis of the Nilotic plaques. Clearly, these reliefs did not just passively reflect inspirations from late Republican architectural design and decoration, but were actually an integral part of an ongoing, productive discourse about what was appropriate in architecture.<sup>24</sup> The mere fact that the aforementioned motifs and principles of design occur on the Nilotic plaques is therefore less interesting than the question of *how* exactly we should envisage the process of them being introduced to this new type of serial production in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. In this context, it is fruitful to look into the parallel transfer of decorative motifs from older terracotta decoration into stone, and in particular marble.

As has become clear from the detailed discussion of the case study material, the inception of the first type of Nilotic Campana reliefs must have been based on the close observation of older as well as contemporary architecture, and established strands of design and decoration. The same tendency can be seen in some of the most important monumental buildings of the 50s and 40s BCE in the city of Rome; for example, the porticoes of the Forum of Caesar combine Corinthian marble columns with a frieze of heraldic griffins and acanthus plants which are very similar to late Hellenistic terracotta revetment plaques.<sup>25</sup> The first building phase of the forum, dating to the 50s and early 40s BCE, might even have deliberately combined marble columns with a richly decorated terracotta frieze and cornice, as demonstrated by a large number of fragments which were discovered in the excavations from 1930 to 1933.<sup>26</sup> The marble decoration of the Temple of Divus Iulius, commissioned in 42 BCE, immediately after

23 Vitr. 7, 5, 1–4. Cf. Callebat 1994; Grüner 2004; Grüner 2014; Nichols 2017, 123–162; Jones 2019, 159–168.

24 For the notion of *decorum* and associated debates in late Republican intellectual circles, see: Horn-Oncken 1967; Callebat 1994; Grüner 2004, 252–256; Perry 2005, 28–50; Gros 2006; Grüner 2014; Thomas 2014, 39 f.; Popkin 2015; Nichols 2017, 112–114, 120–123; Oksanish 2019; Maschek 2022a, 153 f.

25 Maisto – Pinna Caboni 2010, 442–444 fig. 19–21; Delfino 2014, 170–172 fig. 3, 132, 133. Cf. Tortorella 2018a, 211 fig. 9.

26 Delfino 2014, 171–173 fig. 3, 134.

Caesar's death, was obviously inspired by late Hellenistic terracotta plaques and antefixes that show winged goddesses and *gorgoneia* in the centre of acanthus scrolls.<sup>27</sup>

Similar processes of careful studying and copying were at work in the early Augustan period. On the Doric marble frieze of the Augustan Meta Sudans, the metopes are decorated with motifs which are well known from the 4<sup>th</sup> to early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE terracotta revetment plaques of Central Italic temples.<sup>28</sup> The same is true for the marble frieze of the *exedrae* in the Forum of Augustus, which replicates a particular type of ornament that is equally characteristic of the terracotta decoration of much older religious buildings in Etruria, Latium, and Campania.<sup>29</sup>

This process of copying and emulation must have worked through the observation of standing monuments and buildings, some of them quite recent, whilst others would have been hundreds of years old. Scant reflections of this practice can be found in literary sources, for example when Pliny the Elder, writing in the early Flavian period, states (Plin. *NH* 35, 46) that terracotta “statues of this kind are still to be found at various places. In fact even at Rome and in the Municipal Towns there are many pediments of temples, remarkable for their carving and artistic merit and intrinsic durability, more deserving of respect than gold, and certainly less baneful.” Likewise, Vitruvius, in his discussion of buildings in the Tuscan style (Vitr. 3, 3, 5), which is clearly based on his own observation, tells us that they “are clumsy-roofed, low, broad, and their pediments are adorned in the Tuscan fashion with statues of terracotta or gilt bronze: for example, near the Circus Maximus, the Temple of Ceres and Pompey's Temple of Hercules; also the Temple [of Jupiter] on the Capitol.”

However, this fruitful co-existence and creative nexus between marble and architectural terracottas in the late Republican and early Imperial period does not feature prominently in standard modern accounts on Roman architecture.<sup>30</sup> Quite the contrary, modern scholars have frequently voiced the view that such terracotta sculptures and reliefs represented something of a backwards-looking, traditional, or indigenous artistic tendency. In conventional accounts on Roman Republican architecture, the discussion of late Republican building materials is, therefore, still dominated by the powerful ideas of ‘Hellenisation’ and “Marmorisierung”, which both rely on the proposition that, as Rome conquered the Eastern Mediterranean, marble would have gradually superseded the supposedly primordial Italic building materials such as volcanic stones, travertine, wood, and terracotta.<sup>31</sup>

27 Montagna Pasquinucci 1971–1973, 265–280 no. 1–12 tab. 7 b; 8. 9 a. c. Cf. Rohden – Winnefeld 1911, 221–223 fig. 450. 453 a; 454–457 tab. 70, 1. 2; Strazzulla 1987, 134–136 no. 101–108; 200f. no. 251. 252; 267 no. 340; 369 no. 456; 410f. no. 508–512 tab. 18. 19. 45. 63. 102.; Schörner 1995, 114 no. 1150; Giorgi et al. 2020, 206–208 fig. 9. 10.

28 Cante 2013, 27 fig. 15. 16. Cf. Andrén 1939/1940, 59f. tab. 19; 63; Strazzulla 1993, 301 fig. 3 d–e; Taylor 2002, 75 fig. 17. 18; Giorgi et al. 2020, 195–197 fig. 1. 2.

29 Kraus 1953, 49–51. 55–57; Spannagel 1999, 12f. Cf. Strazzulla 1993, 301 fig. 3 c; Taylor 2002, 65 fig. 7; 76 fig. 21; 80 fig. 32; Strazzulla 2006a, 28–31 fig. 3, 7–9; Giorgi et al. 2020, 209–214 fig. 11–15.

30 For rare exceptions, see Mattern 1999; Strazzulla 2010; Maschek 2014; Tortorella 2018a; Tortorella 2019a. The broader phenomenon is now expertly treated in Crawford-Brown 2022.

31 On architectural ‘Hellenisation’ and “Marmorisierung”, see Maischberger 1997, 17–19; Hesberg 2005, 42–59; Pensabene 2007, 8–21. 365–373; Howe 2016; Davies 2017, 96. 105. On the diachronic usage

This is clearly a teleological concept which finds its natural endpoint in the time of Augustus, allegedly encapsulated in the famous quote from Suetonius (*Aug.* 29) that Augustus found a city of brick and left it in marble. It is important to note, however, that this familiar narrative of late Republican architecture and the linear transformation of its material fabric is ultimately based on a very small number of Imperial texts which strategically excerpt and collate snippets of information from late Republican sources, such as Cato the Elder, Lucius Calpurnius Piso, and Varro.<sup>32</sup> The Imperial texts dealing with the conflict of ‘native’ versus ‘luxurious’ building materials in the Late Republic therefore reflect what *other* authors, writing from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> to the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, had uttered in the context of a highly specific discourse of morality and politics. Moreover, it would be an obvious fallacy to think that imperial authors such as Pliny the Elder just neutrally reported the late Republican luxury debate without an underlying agenda of their own.<sup>33</sup>

The evidence of the Campana plaques shows us an entirely different and much more nuanced picture. It demonstrates that late Republican producers in Rome and Central Italy were exceedingly adept at drawing upon a wide range of styles and translating them to the requirements of high-end terracotta work as well as architecture in local and imported stone.<sup>34</sup> Ultimately, it is pointless to draw an aesthetic or cultural line between late Republican architectural decoration in terracotta and stone, as the stylistic and iconographical inspirations for both clearly came from a central to eastern Mediterranean artistic *koinè*, in which the Roman, Latin, and Campanian producers and craftspeople happily and creatively participated throughout the second and first centuries BCE. Most importantly, fashionable decorative art was chosen from a set of styles and themes which patrons deemed appropriate for specific contexts of display. For late Republican commissioners of public and private buildings, the very richness of Greek, Egyptianising, or Italic styles and themes offered the same range of opportunities for social, political, and cultural distinction as the discourse of connoisseurship in architecture, art, furniture, and other categories of material culture.<sup>35</sup>

This has obvious implications for our understanding of the development and use of late Republican Campana reliefs. In both the public and the private sphere, the choice and combination of particular stylistic features would have been up to the commissioner or buyer. However, designers and craftsmen would not just have reacted passively to this demand, but we should rather imagine that, within a shared ‘culture of making’, they actively searched for ways in which to address the most common

of building stones in Republican Rome, see the astute observations in Gros 1976, 397–407; Bernard 2010; Mulliez 2014, 22–24. The persistence of terracotta decoration on monumental buildings into the early Imperial period is emphasised in Strazzulla 2010 and Maschek 2014 (cf. Crawford-Brown 2022).

32 E.g. Liv. 34, 4, 4–5; Vell. 1, 11, 3–5; Plin. nat. 36, 2. 7. 8. 24. 34. 40. 42. 43. Cf. Rawson 1991, 260–267; Gruen 1992, 85. 112; Nichols 2010; Davies 2017, 112–117. 158–161.

33 On Pliny’s own position in the early Imperial luxury debate, see Siwicki 2019a, 187–193.

34 On this late Republican ‘culture of making’ and its prolific and rapid geographical spread, see also the contribution by E. C. PARTIDA in the present volume.

35 The complexity of this cultural environment has been expertly explored by Wallace-Hadrill 2008 and, most recently, by Barrett 2019; Pearson 2021.

trends to match their clients' passionate desire for appropriate decoration. Faced with the challenges of a dynamic marketplace, the producers of late Republican Campana reliefs pursued a strategy of creative emulation – drawing upon well-established designs, architectural motifs, and decorative elements – which clearly catered to the needs, expectations, and wishes of their commissioners.<sup>36</sup> This led to the creation of eclectic compositions, such as the Nilotic plaques, that combined multiple styles and themes, thus constituting a complex multivocality of semantic systems within a most energetic crucible of architectural and artistic creativity.

## Bibliography

For the works cited in this article, please refer to the comprehensive BIBLIOGRAPHY at the end of the volume.

## Signature

Prof. Dr. Dominik Maschek  
 Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA)  
 Kompetenzbereich Römische Archäologie  
 Professur für Römische Archäologie (Universität Trier)  
 dominik.maschek@leiza.de  
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2918-3384>

36 For the agency of late Republican artists, architects, and commissioners, see Rawson 1975; Coarelli 1976; Gros 1976; Gros 1978; Coarelli 1983; Gros 1983; Coarelli 1990; Gazda 1991; Gruen 1992; Zevi 1996; Masterson 2004; Perry 2005; Wallace-Hadrill 2008; Anderson 2014; Zarmakoupi 2014; Popkin 2015; D'Alessio 2016; Siwicki 2019b; Maschek 2022a.