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Marine-themed entrance-mosaics at Pompeii

a case study

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Front Cover: Detail of Rutland mosaic showing King
Priam of Troy (right) and the weighing of Hector’s corpse
(Photo courtesy of ULAS).

Inside Back Cover: Akaki. Egg counter.

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Back Cover: *Fauces*-mosaic in *Casa di M. Caesius Blandus*,
Pompeii (Photo: Fanny Kärfe).

Marine-themed entrance-mosaics at Pompeii: a case study

Fanny Kärffe

Introduction

For researchers and tourists alike, the mosaics of Pompeii are a well-known artistic feature, exceptionally preserved because of the Vesuvian eruption that destroyed the city in AD 79. However, a certain group of mosaics, those that adorned the entrance-passages, *fauces*, to the city's atrium-houses has been much overlooked in scholarly discussions. Although most of these mosaics are included in the excellent descriptive documentation on early Roman mosaics by Marion Blake and Erich Pernice from the 1930s,¹ no coherent study has, up until now, been undertaken. Because of this, there have been some misconceptions in need of revision. One of them is a recurrent idea that many entrances were tessellated, which is quite far from the truth: in fact, of around four hundred atrium-houses in Pompeii, only about 30 had tessellated *fauces*. Furthermore, the iconography of these *fauces*-mosaics is not restricted to the so-often mentioned watchdog or salutatory inscriptions. Instead, the repertoire was much more varied, ranging from geometric and floral designs, to figurative and plain bichrome and to those with precious stone-inlays (see Appendix). In other words, the famous *Cave canem*-mosaic with the attentive watchdog was only one expression among many (Fig. 1).

With the hope of bringing the *fauces*-mosaics back into the spotlight, I have studied them with the aim of understanding the Roman perception of the entrance as a liminal space, and how decoration was used as a means of communication.² The entrance was a natural place for meetings and greetings and this is well illustrated by graffiti recorded from Pompeian *fauces*-walls.³ More importantly, it was a transitional space where the act of crossing the threshold was taken seriously and where one had to keep watch so that only the good spirits (and people) were allowed to enter.⁴ This ancient view has formed a point of departure for my study of the *fauces*-mosaics and their patterns and designs. In my conclusion I propose various interpretations for the different mosaic designs; these include themes such as protecting the liminal threshold, greeting and welcoming visitors, providing a glimpse of the luxury inside the house and, in so doing, advertising the wealth and status of the house-owner. Some of the mosaics seem to communicate a combination of these themes, while others are more focused on one aspect. I have also considered how the mosaics may have regulated movement by influencing the way visitors moved across the thresholds. It is this double nature of the *fauces*-mosaics—their ability to deter evil and protect the liminal threshold whilst, at the same time, welcoming and guiding visitors—that makes them such a fascinating study object.

In this article, I will focus on four particular *fauces*-mosaics that portray marine themes as these have been the subject of diverse interpretations. Although they form only a small sample of the overall Pompeian mosaic corpus, it is my opinion that these four mosaics contribute to our understanding of interior decoration in transitional spaces. The dates of the mosaics range from the late Republican period, that is the 1st century BC to the last decades prior to the volcanic eruption in AD 79, and cover a time-period from when Pompeii was a relatively new Roman colony to when it was a city under strong Roman imperial influence. These four marine-themed mosaics have been variously interpreted over the years. On the one hand it has been suggested that Pompeian house-owners used the rudder and the anchor, which commemorated important naval victories and formed an essential part of the Roman political sphere, to convey political messages. On the other hand, the marine motifs are seen as part of a Hellenistic tradition, alluding to peace and prosperity; in my opinion, this is a more plausible interpretation.



Fig. 1 *Fauces*-mosaic in *Casa del Poeta tragico*. (Photo: Public Domain)



Fig. 2 Two-stepped *fauces* with mosaics in *Casa dell'Ancora*. (Photo: Author)



Fig. 3 Mortar-paved *fauces* in *Casa di Oppius Gratus*. (Photo: Author)

A short presentation of the marine iconography

All four *fauces*-mosaics are composed mainly of black motifs on a white ground. The *fauces*-passage in *Casa dell'Ancora* (VI 10,7) may be described as a two-stepped entrance and both levels are tessellated.⁵ The lower level is adorned with a mosaic showing an anchor, which has given the house its modern name (Fig. 2). A black border frames the white mosaic which, in turn, is occupied by the black anchor displayed horizontally with the top to the left-hand side when entering the building. The mosaic on the upper level is also framed by a black border but the main design here is a so-called imbrication pattern with 'fish scales' outlined in black and pointing to the interior. This design is also found on *fauces*-floors around the city



Fig. 4 *Fauces*-mosaic in *Casa di M. Caesius Blandus*. (Photo: Author).

that were paved with mortar with inset tesserae (Fig. 3), and it is therefore possible to interpret it as an *appropriate* motif for an entrance—one that urged movement to the inside.⁶

The second *fauces*-mosaic is found in a house called *Casa di M. Caesius Blandus* (VII 1,40), named after a proposed owner. The recently restored mosaic presents a white-grounded mosaic framed by a wide black border (Fig. 4). The same black border also frames a threshold-panel at the intersection with the atrium. The marine scene is in black and covers the whole floor: a rudder with a stripy pattern runs the entire length and on its top stands a polychrome bird. Behind the rudder, a trident is placed diagonally across the panel, its three prongs pointing towards the atrium. At the lower end of the rudder, a tiller is shown, its shaft piercing the rudder. On either side of the rudder a dolphin swims towards the exit. Finally, above the dolphin on the right-hand side, as seen by visitors entering the house, a seahorse (*hippocampus*) swims towards the atrium. The threshold-panel closest to the atrium depicts a crenelated city-wall with a central, closed gate, two red shields above and black towers at either end.⁷

The third *fauces*-mosaic, found in *Casa del Marinaio* (VII 15,2), is unfortunately not well preserved, even though recent restoration work has improved its current state. What remains of this mosaic, which adorns the upward-sloping entrance-floor, is the middle section that consists



Fig. 5 *Fauces*-mosaic in *Casa del Marinaio*. (Photo: Author).



Fig. 6 Painting by Luigi Bazzani from the 1870s of the *fauces* in *Casa del Marinaio*. (Photo by kind permission of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London)



Fig. 7 *Fauces*-mosaic in *Casa del Centenario*. (Photo: Author)

of a black meander in a key pattern on a white ground (Fig. 5). A watercolour dated to the 1870s by Luigi Bazzani (today at Victoria and Albert Museum) (Fig. 6), and a photograph by Erich Pernice from the 1930s, record an additional threshold-panel adjacent to the atrium. The now lost figurative scene depicted an arcaded boathouse with ships' prows visible under the arcades. Below the meander design, Pernice also recorded a dolphin and an anchor.⁸

In the last house, *Casa del Centenario* (IX 8,6), a staircase from the street leads to the short, wide entrance-room. The *fauces*-mosaic has a black ground, two white borders and an inner white square that contains a figurative scene in black: a *hippocampus* chasing a dolphin (Fig. 7). Below are black lines to indicate waves. A wide black horizontal band forms the threshold to the atrium.⁹

Chronology

Three of the four *fauces*-mosaics have been assigned a date to the period between the end of the late Republic and the Augustan period, so roughly between 40 BC and AD 20, while the fourth, the dolphin-chase in *Casa del Centenario* (IX 8,6), is dated to the last decades prior to the volcanic eruption of AD 79. This chronological outline is interesting for at least two reasons. Firstly, marine themes seem to have enjoyed a certain popularity during the late Republican period. Marion Blake has noted that motifs drawing inspiration from the sea were especially popular on the early figurative mosaics at Pompeii and this may have been an influence that came from the mosaics of Delos,¹⁰ a prosperous Greek harbour-city that later came under Roman rule. Alternatively, the motifs may have alluded to more topical political matters, as will be discussed below. Secondly, the cluster of marine scenes around the late Republic and Augustan period coincides with the main production period for Pompeii's *fauces*-mosaics. In other words, even though the Roman mosaic craft evolved over time, became more common and expanded to encompass larger domestic spaces as well as public areas,¹¹ the key period for the laying of entrance-

mosaics in Pompeii is between c50 BC and AD 20. Of the 28 *fauces* with mosaics that can be dated, 18 have been assigned to this period.¹² Although it has not been established where the inspiration to tessellate house-entrances came from, be it from Hellenistic cities like Delos, or from Rome, it is clear that a wish to employ mosaics resulted in a ‘boom’ in the decades after 80 BC when general Sulla turned Pompeii into a Roman colony. However, as discussed above, this does not mean that every Pompeian house-owner chose to tessellate their entrances, quite the contrary, the most common paving continued to be a red or black mortar, traditionally labelled *opus signinum* (although this is a much-debated term), often adorned with inserted tesserae.¹³ According to my chronological survey it may, at first glance, look as if there was a slight decrease in the production of *fauces*-mosaics during the course of the first century AD. However, this lacuna should be treated as an artificial gap due to somewhat uncertain dating, especially for the immediate post-Augustan period, as it seems unlikely that no *fauces*-mosaic was made at all during a period of two to three decades. Also, the fact that some noteworthy figurative mosaics, among them the *Cave canem*-mosaic from *Casa del Poeta tragico*, (VI 8,5), were made towards the end of the city’s life suggests that *fauces*-mosaics as a decorative element had not lost their value.

The function of *fauces*

Before addressing the iconography of the *fauces*-mosaics it may be worth discussing the practical function served by these spaces. *Fauces* were the main entrances into Roman atrium-houses, that is, houses that took the traditional form of a town-villa.¹⁴ There were many variations to the architectural layout of these houses, some of which even omitted the entrance-corridor altogether. However, in most cases we have evidence for *fauces* and, traditionally, they have been regarded as the official entrances used by clients of the *patronus* for the daily morning ritual of the *salutatio*. Roman writers of the late Republic and early Empire painted a vivid picture of the busy morning hours in Rome, which involved waiting in a relatively large *vestibulum* outside the house proper, before being admitted into a senatorial house.¹⁵ However, Pompeii was not Rome and current scholarship is now questioning earlier, uncritical readings that equated the smaller city of Pompeii with Rome. Neither historical nor archaeological sources confirm that the rather small and confined entrance-space of *fauces* found in the architectural remains of Pompeii, served as waiting rooms, *vestibula*, for morning clients.¹⁶ The transitional character of the entrance enabled communication between the outside and the inside—between public and private spaces—and would have been seen by visitors and passers-by alike. House-owners could therefore use the decoration of the *fauces* to convey different messages.

Interpreting the marine iconography: war and politics or prosperity and protection?

As mentioned in the introduction, the *fauces*-mosaics have, in general, not received a great deal of attention. The underlying meaning of the motifs was not given much consideration by prominent scholars like Blake and Pernice and contemporary research takes a rather different approach; it puts more emphasis on the houses as ‘homes’, takes into account how and when the buildings were used, builds up a picture of the people who occupied the spaces, and then tries to understand the significance of the internal decoration.¹⁷ This is an approach succinctly summarised by the art historian John R. Clarke: ‘context first and last’.¹⁸

Some of the *fauces*-mosaics have received more attention than others, in particular the figurative ones. The anchor in *Casa dell’Ancora* (VI 10,7), for example, was previously understood as representing the profession of the house-owner who was believed to have been involved in maritime business.¹⁹ Even more intriguing is a thought-provoking interpretation of the two richly decorated *fauces*-mosaics in *Casa di M. Caesius Blandus* (VII 1,40) and *Casa del Marinaio* (VII 15,2) by Domenico Esposito. He suggests that the combination of the ships’ prows, city-wall, bird, rudder and dolphins may reflect the political standpoints of these two particular house-owners.²⁰ The mosaics are dated to the late Republic, a period of political chaos and struggle for power, notably seen in the numerous naval battles between Octavian and Sextus Pompey.²¹ A further reference to war or military activity is provided by the bird, identified by some as a woodpecker (*Picus Martius*),²² depicted on the *fauces*-mosaic from *Casa di M. Caesius Blandus* (VII 1,40), and which, according to Roman mythology, was sacred to Mars. Esposito has also highlighted a possible correlation between the houses that had naval motifs on walls and floors and their topographical location within the city: were they in some way connected to the Sullan veterans after the Roman colonisation? Or to elite citizens with clear outspoken political views, for example those favouring Octavian by adapting to a visual language used in the political propaganda from Rome? And was there a military naval dockyard next to the western city-gate (today’s Porta Marina), just below the multi-storey houses overlooking the former city-wall? If that were the case, could this explain why the naval theme featured in the interior decoration of many of these houses, amongst them *Casa del Marinaio* (VII 15,2)?²³

The motif of the crenelated city-wall, on the threshold-panel in the *fauces*-mosaic in *Casa di M. Caesius Blandus* (VII 1,40), has also been read in political terms and has been seen as a symbolic reference to the Roman conquest of the peninsula during the Republic.²⁴ However, as discussed below, this motif may also have been read as a symbolic barrier, intended to hinder or direct the movement of visitors.

Fig. 9 Atrium-mosaic in *Casa del Cinghiale I*. (Photo: Author)

A rudder and a ship's prow and other prosperity symbols

A political reading of the mosaic motifs is, in my view, a very intriguing interpretation, particularly given the political unrest during the last days of the Republic. However, earlier archaeological attempts to link houses to specific owners, for example, the question of the Roman veterans that reportedly came to inhabit Pompeii and her surroundings after the colonisation in 80 BC, have tended to be inconclusive,²⁵ and it is important to remember that Pompeii was a harbour-city. Consequently, many inhabitants would have had connections with the sea and the port or would have been involved in maritime activities. Also, the impact of Hellenistic culture, with its large artistic palette of motifs, on the artists and patrons in Pompeii should not be underestimated.

When Sulla turned Pompeii into a Roman colony, the official name became *Colonia Cornelia Veneria Pompeianorum*, and Venus Pompeiana was adopted as her patron goddess. Among the attributes assigned to Venus were the rudder, a mural crown and, occasionally, a ship's prow, all intended to underline her protective and fortune-making government of the harbour-city.²⁶ Many of these figures are recurrent in Hellenistic mosaics as seen, for



Fig. 8 The so-called *Sophilos* mosaic from Thmuis, c200-150 BC. Today at the Graeco-Roman Museum, Alexandria (Photo: Public Domain)

Fig. 10 Mosaic-panel around the *impluvium* in the atrium of *Casa di Paquius Proculus*. (Photo: Author)



example, on the famous so-called *Sophilos* mosaic dated to around 200-150 BC (Fig. 8). The mosaic portrays a woman, interpreted either as the personified city of Alexandria or as Queen Berenike II, wearing a regal costume that includes a rudder and a crown that incorporates a ship's prow. The outer border of the mosaic is a crenelated city-wall motif.²⁷ City-wall borders continued to be used on mosaics at Pompeii until at least the middle of the 1st century AD, as illustrated by the elaborate atrium-mosaic in *Casa del Cinghiale I* (VIII 3,8) (Fig. 9).²⁸ Whether or not the motif of the city-wall contained any deeper meaning is a question that has divided scholars. Apart from the proposed hypothesis mentioned above that ascribes the motif political connotations by marking Roman presence, some view it as a primarily decorative boundary marker,²⁹ others as an indication that the border between private property and the outside world should not be misused but treated with respect.³⁰

Naval symbols like ships' prows and anchors are present on a handful of mosaics and wall-paintings from Pompeii (Fig. 10), many of which are found in the so-called terrace houses overlooking the former western city-wall. However, the search for a naval dockyard below has so far proved futile,³¹ leaving many scholars to question whether there is actually any correlation between artistic elements in the interior decoration and the political stances of the house-owners. In short, even though the ship's prow was an important symbol within the Roman political sphere (note the *rostra* at Rome), and the fact that sea battles occurred frequently during the course of the last century BC (for instance, Pompey's defeat of the pirates, as well as clashes between Octavian and his antagonists, Sextus Pompey and Mark Antony), the decorative theme was already wide spread within Hellenistic culture.³²

Depictions of anchors are also commonly featured on mosaics from the Hellenistic East, for example, in the courtyard houses on Delos where they are often found in

combination with dolphins.³³ Might, then, the house-owner of *Casa dell'Ancora* (VI 10,7) (see Fig. 2) have chosen the anchor for its general auspicious efficacy? Perhaps to ensure a safe journey and timely return, as proposed by Italian archaeologists working in Pompeii?³⁴ What is clear is that the symbol of the anchor was a popular choice for Pompeian house-owners, just as it was for residents in the corresponding harbour-city of Delos.

A bird of prey or peace?

Returning for a moment to the bird on the *fauces*-mosaic in *Casa di M. Caesius Blandus* (VII 1,40) (see Fig. 4), Antero Tammisto has convincingly proposed that it could be a kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), rather than a woodpecker.³⁵ This would suggest that instead of having bellicose connotations (as the woodpecker was linked to Mars, the god of war), the bird was intended as a sign of peace and prosperity. The kingfisher may have been referencing its breeding season, a time when the sea is calm and navigable. Although there is no apparent connection between the kingfisher and Venus Pompeiana, it is possible that the inclusion of the bird, standing on top of the rudder, might have been making reference to the deity as guardian of seafarers.³⁶ The fact that the bird and the two shields above the crenelated city-wall are depicted in red and green points to the early date of the mosaic, a period when Hellenistic polychrome mosaics were still used and coloured tesserae were sometimes incorporated in the newer Roman black-and-white pavements. It is also worth considering whether the colour red was chosen for its apotropaic qualities; it was believed—and, indeed, still is around the Mediterranean today—to possess powers against the forces of evil.³⁷ Red details are also found in some of the other black-and-white *fauces*-mosaics in the city, perhaps most notably in the three mosaics with watchdogs, all of which have their sole eye highlighted in red. The fact that red is an unnatural eye-colour, suggests to me that it was used to underline the Roman belief that it was possible to 'bounce back' the powers of the evil eye.³⁸

Bath-mosaics

To turn now to the issue of spatial context, it is worth noting that tessellated entrances in Pompeii consist primarily of domestic *fauces*. Public spaces were hardly ever paved with mosaics, although there was one other group of Pompeian entrances that were sometimes tessellated: those leading into public bath-houses and private bath-suites. Of special interest here is the wealthy house, *Casa del Menandro* (I 10,4), which, although not having a *fauces*-mosaic, had a bath-suite paved with mosaics with similar motifs to those found in the *fauces*-mosaics. In the entrance to the small *atriolum* of the bath-suite, a small mosaic depicting a dolphin with a trident welcomed visitors. The *atriolum* itself is adorned with a black mosaic with scattered white and polychrome stone-inserts and either side of the *impluvium*, at the centre of the room, are two mosaic-panels with various black-and-white motifs (Fig. 11). One of these panels has a design that bears a resemblance to the *fauces*-mosaic of *Casa di M. Caesius Blandus* (VII 1,40) (see Fig. 4) with two dolphins around a stripy trident (Fig. 12). Another panel shows a crenelated city-wall (cf. *Casa di M. Caesius Blandus*), and a third, two seahorses that face a centrally placed trident (cf. *Casa di M. Caesius Blandus* and *Casa del Centenario*, IX 8,6). Some of the remaining panels depict other designs also found on other Pompeian *fauces*-mosaics, for example, a floral pattern with ivy, vine and tendrils, and dogs chasing a wild boar. The black mosaic with scattered stone-inserts in the *atriolum* is yet another design found on some *fauces*-mosaics.³⁹ The assigned date of the mosaics in the bath-suite is the late Republican period, that is the second half of the 1st century BC

(contemporaneous with the 2nd style of Pompeian wall-painting),⁴⁰ and as such, the floor decoration is chronologically coherent with at least three of the four *fauces*-mosaics discussed here.⁴¹

As for the late *fauces*-mosaic from *Casa del Centenario* (IX 8,6) (see Fig. 7), the motif of the *hippocampus* chasing the dolphin is commonly found in wall-paintings and mosaics around Pompeii, which may indicate that a standardised pattern for this scene existed here. One notable comparison is a large mosaic adorning the central courtyard of *Praedia di Iulia Felix* (II 4,1-12), a large semi-public bath and dining complex in the area next to the amphitheatre of Pompeii. The mosaic, now in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, depicts a marine *thiasos* of swimming *hippocampi* and dolphins whose counter-clockwise formation around the mosaic is thought to have encouraged entering visitors to move in a certain direction around the space.⁴²

Although the motif of the *hippocampus* chasing a dolphin is also found in non-watery contexts, current archaeological investigations of *Casa del Centenario* (IX 8,6) have prompted a radical interpretation of this atrium-house; it may have been (partly) turned into a semi-public entertainment complex with a bath-section in the very last phase.⁴³ If this interpretation is correct, it is reasonable to ask whether the *fauces*-mosaic from *Casa del Centenario* (IX 8,6), which is of a late date (the second half of the 1st century AD), was actually decorated in the marine style in imitation of mosaics from other bath-complexes from around the city. Was it placed there in order to announce



Fig. 11 View of the small *atriolum* in the bath-suite in *Casa del Menandro*. (Photo: Author)



Fig. 12 Mosaic-panel around the *impluvium* of the small *atriolum* in the bath-suite of *Casa del Menandro*. (Photo: Author)

the function of the place? From this same late period, we have at least one more case of a public or semi-public establishment that included an entrance-mosaic with a figurative design. In the so-called *Palaestra* (VIII 2,23), a bath-complex that took the form of an atrium-house with several storeys, the entrance-mosaic, portraying a couple of combating wrestlers, made sure to announce the function of the complex.⁴⁴ What we see here, then, is a new purpose for this mosaic; it took on the role of advertising and promoting the (semi-public) business within. Furthermore, this is something that became popular in Ostia, Rome's harbour-city, during the High Empire.

Concluding remarks

To sum up, the four *fauces*-mosaics with marine themes offer us a glimpse of how a few Pompeian house-owners chose to present themselves through the decoration of the entrances to their houses. The recurrent figure of the dolphin was widely used across a vast geographical area and over many centuries. But the combination of rudders, ships' prows and anchors demands attention and encourages interpretation. As discussed above, the late Roman Republic was a period characterised by political chaos and power struggles. By the time many of the *fauces*-mosaics were laid, Pompeii was under Roman rule, the inhabitants involved in and affected by current politics. This may have influenced the designs and motifs chosen. Nevertheless, in my view it is also important to underline the nature of Pompeii as a harbour-city, still much under the influence of Hellenistic culture. Naval motifs, such as the rudder and the ship's prow, for example, although commonly found in Roman contexts as political symbols, can also be understood as protective symbols alluding to peaceful navigation.

The study of *fauces*-mosaics illustrates a change in how entrances were perceived as doorways and entrance-spaces became more accentuated—attention seeking even. For example, the figurative repertoire was reserved for mosaics: it was not found in the mortar-paved *fauces* around the city. The mosaics had more than one meaning and served

more than one function and as well as protecting the space they paved, they communicated between the interior and the exterior, inviting the outside world in. As discussed above, thresholds, whether in domestic houses or in public venues, were regarded as vulnerable spaces that needed to be protected to prevent evil entering. The use of the colour red, a crenelated city-wall and an arcaded boathouse were all part of an arsenal of devices used on threshold-panels to protect those entering and leaving the houses, or to control movement (by making the visitor pause before moving forward). Yet, at the same time, welcoming figures were embedded in the mosaics; the dolphins swimming towards those entering the building seem to be offering a greeting, while the hippocampus assists by leading visitors to the red-coloured shields which are tilted away from the gates, as though allowing one to pass through. Also, in the two-levelled *fauces* with the anchor mosaic, the upper level is decorated with fish scales pointing towards the interior, as though inviting visitors to enter. This dual aspect of the Pompeian *fauces*-mosaics is a feature they shared with bath-suites; both were public, dynamic and vulnerable spaces. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that it was considered appropriate to pave both with mosaics that served to protect the place and the people within, while, at the same time impressing those who encountered them.

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Notes

- 1 Blake 1930; Pernice 1938.
- 2 Fanny Kärfve, *Greeting the visitor. A contextualising study of fauces-mosaics in Pompeii* (Doctoral dissertation, Lund University), 2022.
- 3 See, for example, the studies by Benefiel 2010 and 2012.
- 4 See Dunbabin 1989.
- 5 Blake 1930, 82, 85; Pernice 1938, 78.
- 6 De Vos 1991, 39; Swift 2009, 34, 38, 57. Although the pattern is also found on floors inside houses at Pompeii, Pernice has discussed the pattern as one obviously preferred for entrances, Pernice 1938, 136.
- 7 Blake 1930, 75-76, 85, 121; Pernice 1938, 53-54.
- 8 Pernice 1938, 64, pl. 18:4. See also Blake 1930, 79-81, 84-85, 109, where she, too, mentions the figures of the dolphin and the anchor, although without specifying their location on the mosaic.
- 9 Blake 1930, 98, 121; Pernice 1938, 43-44.
- 10 Blake 1930, 85, 121. For a comparison between, among others, Delian and Pompeian mosaics, see especially Joyce 1979 and Westgate 2000.
- 11 See, for example, Clarke 1979; 1991; Dunbabin 1999; Swift 2009.
- 12 Kärfve 2022, 130-132, and tables 5 and 6.
- 13 For a discussion of how to label mortar-pavements, see Wootton 2018.
- 14 Not all houses in Pompeii were atrium-houses; upper-floor apartments or smaller rooms behind taverns served as accommodation for, for example, those from lower social classes.
- 15 See, for example, Liv. 2.49.2-4; Mart. *Epigram* 1.70; Sen. *Ben.* 6.33-34; Sen. *Cons. Marc.* 6.10. On *vestibula*, see Aulus Gellius, *Gell. NA* 16.5.
- 16 Leach 1993; Speksnijder 2015 and 2022 (forthcoming).
- 17 See Andrew Wallace-Hadrill's study from 1994.
- 18 Clarke 2008, 314.
- 19 Coarelli & Pesando 2006, 163.
- 20 Esposito 2008.
- 21 Pompey the Great, the father of Sextus Pompey, reportedly had his vestibule adorned with as much as 90 ships' rams taken from defeated pirates in his victorious campaigns, see Cic. *Phil.* 2.28; Plut. *Pomp.* 28.
- 22 Esposito 2008, 79. The interpretation was first formulated by Della Corte 1965, 186-188.
- 23 Esposito 2008, esp. 70-90. Besides the marine symbols, deities like Venus, Apollo and Diana that feature in the studied 2nd style wall-paintings constitute yet another argument for his hypothesis about politically engaged house-owners as these figures were used for propaganda purposes. See also Zevi 1996.
- 24 Van der Graaff 2019, esp. 157-173. Not only in Pompeii do we find the city-wall motif on mosaics, but also in other newly established Roman colonies during this period.
- 25 The epigraphic work by Della Corte 1965, attempting to identify many Pompeian house-owners, has been much

- criticised over the years, specifically by Castrén 1975, 155-156, and Mouritsen 1988, 13-27.
- 26 See discussion in Kärfve 2022, 243-244.
- 27 Dunbabin 1999, 24-26.
- 28 Blake 1930, 99, pls. 26:3 & 27:3; Pernice 1938, 66, 141. For a discussion of the dating of the mosaic, see Kärfve 2022, 126-127. The figure of the city-wall originally developed on Hellenistic mosaics and alluded to textile designs, or more specifically to the fringes of carpets. Over time it gradually changed to become a border of stylised city-walls, see Blake 1930, 73. Van der Graaff 2019, 161, states that the standardised figure was so common in Hellenistic and Roman mosaics that it is reasonable to attribute it to circulating pattern-books.
- 29 Clarke 1979, 10. Van der Graaff 2019, 160-161, does not rule out the possibility of a deeper meaning to the pattern.
- 30 See, for example, Ling & Ling 2005, 58.
- 31 Rankov 2013, 37-38, 43-44.
- 32 Avilia & Jacobelli 1989, 132-133, 146.
- 33 Blake 1930, 85; Pernice 1938, 24-31, 78.
- 34 Coarelli & Pesando 2006, 163.
- 35 Tammisto 1985, 224-227, 229-234, 241.
- 36 Tammisto 1985, 227.
- 37 See discussion in Kärfve 2022, 43-45, 262, 279. See further Plin. *NH* 21.94.166; 30.30.98-99; 33.38-40, on protective amulets to be worn, that either were dyed red or tied with red threads. Cf. the entrance-mosaic to a 2nd century house in Antioch, which presents a centrally placed, and red-lined, evil eye that is being attacked by various animals and weapons. A Greek inscription, *KAICY* (“You, too!”), reinforces the message.
- 38 Elliott 2016, 170-174.
- 39 See discussion in Kärfve 2022, 288.
- 40 See Ling & Ling 2005, 13-18, 56-63, for a description of the bath-mosaics and a summary of the scholarly discussion regarding the date.
- 41 With regard to the combined figures of the dolphins swimming around a centrally placed object (rudder or trident), it is tempting to view it as a standardised model, available in pattern-books, as it is further found on metal cups in the Vesuvian area. For a further discussion, see Kärfve 2022, 247-248.
- 42 De Vos 1991, 36-37, n. 2, and fig. 1.
- 43 Coralini 2017, 38, 82-83, 504, 508, 517.
- 44 Kärfve 2022, i.a. 135-136, 174, 281, 290-291.

Appendix

House

Casa di Paquius Proculus (I 7,1)
Praedia di Iulia Felix (II 4,1-12)
Casa di Caecilius Iucundus (V 1,23-26)
Casa delle Vestali (VI 1,7/25)
Casa del Poeta tragico (VI 8,3/5)
Casa dell’Ancora (VI 10,7)
Casa del Fauno (VI 12,2)
House VI 13,13
Casa del Leone (VI 17,25)
Casa del Bracciale d’oro (VI 17,42)
Casa del Bracciale d’oro (VI 17,44: stairway)
Casa di M. Caesius Blandus (VII 1,40)
Casa di Popidius Priscus (VII 2,20)
Casa dell’Orso (VII 2,45)
Casa del Marinaio (VII 15,1-2)
Casa di Aulus Umbricius Scaurus I (VII 16,12-13)
Casa di Aulus Umbricius Scaurus II (VII 16,15)
Casa di Championnet I (VIII 2,1)
Casa di Championnet II (VIII 2,3)
Casa dei Mosaici geometrici (VIII 2,14-16)
House VIII 2,18
Palaestra (VIII 2,23)
Casa del Cinghiale II (VIII 2,26)
Casa di Severus (VIII 2,29-30)
Casa del Cinghiale I (VIII 3,8)
Officina offectoria di Ubonius (IX 3,2)
Casa di Marcus Lucretius (IX 3,5/24)
House IX 5,6
Casa del Ristorante (IX 5,14-16)
Casa del Centenario (IX 8,3-6)

Mosaic motif/pattern

Watchdog
 Plain white (basket-weave technique) with scattered black tesserae
 Watchdog
Tabula ansata with inscription (*Salve*)
 Watchdog with inscription (*Cave canem*)
 Anchor and geometric design
 Cut stones and threshold-panel with theatrical masks
 Geometric design and threshold-panel with floral design
 Lion
 Flowers/volutes
 Geometric design
 Marine animals and objects
 Stone-inserts
 Bear with inscription (*Have*)
 Marine animals and objects and geometric design
 Floral design
 Geometric design with stone-inserts
 Stone-inserts
 Geometric design
 Geometric design
 Plain black with scattered white tesserae
 Wrestlers
 Wild boar
 Stone-inserts
 Wild boar and geometric design
 Geometric design
 Plain white with black borders
 Plain white with black borders
 Plain white with floral threshold-panel
 Marine animals