Secret Gardens:

The Garden Room of the Villa of Livia *Ad Galinas Albas* at Prima Porta

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Abstract

English

Now at the Museo Nazionale Romano - Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, the so-called Garden Room once adorned the semi underground room at the imperial estate of emperor Augustus and his wife Livia, the Villa of Livia *Ad Gallinas Albas* at Prima Porta. A unique example of Roman domestic decor, the Garden Room has been the subject of numerous archeological and art historical studies. Yet most studies have isolated the Garden Room frescoes from the wider spatial context of the villa itself. In this thesis, I explore the illusionism of the garden scene and the distinctive way in which it relates to the design of the Villa of Livia as a whole to create a space that brings the Augustan iconography of abundance vividly to life. The significance of the Garden Room frescoes begins beyond the room itself; it is entrenched in the villa's mythological and material history as well as its architecture and design. Whether visitors saw a sacred grove or an Augustan paradise, whether they dined here or simply relaxed in the cool semi underground space, the Garden Room was meant to make them feel as if they were outdoors. With no divide between art, architecture, landscape, and nature, the Villa of Livia's design and overall program further encourage sensory experiences. In the Garden Room, the walls melt away and space expands; for an instant, visitors are transported to the paradise of a Roman Golden Age.

Français

Aujourd'hui logé au Museo Nazionale Romano, le jardin peint souterrain de la Villa Livia faisait jadis partie du domaine de l'Empereur Auguste et de sa femme Livia à la Villa Ad Gallinas de la Prima Porta. Le jardin peint souterrain est unique et puissant par la manière dont il entre en relation avec la Villa de Livia dans son ensemble créant ainsi un espace qui donne vie à l'iconographie d'abondance de l'époque Auguste. L'illusionnisme de la salle débute bien avant qu'on y entre et va au-delà de cette chambre. Il est ancré dans la mythologie et l'histoire matérielle de ce lieu ainsi que dans son architecture et sa conception. Le rôle central de la nature et du paysage s'exprime à travers la conception architecturale et la mythologie très riche qui l'entoure. Bosquet sacré ou paradis Augustin, cet endroit donnait aux visiteurs l'impression d'être à l'extérieur qu'ils y soient pour prendre un repas ou pour simplement relaxer dans la fraîcheur semi-souterraine. Mariage entre l'art, l'architecture, le

paysage et la nature, la Villa de Livia a été conçue pour faire vivre des expériences sensorielles multiples à ses visiteurs. Les murs s'effacent et l'espace s'élargit. Pendant un instant, les visiteurs sont transportés au paradis de l'âge d'or de l'ère romaine.

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Introduction

Now at the Museo Nazionale Romano - Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, the so-called Garden Room once adorned the semi underground room at the imperial estate of emperor Augustus and his wife Livia, the Villa of Livia *Ad Gallinas Albas* at Prima Porta (Fig. 1). The Garden Room frescoes depict a floor-to-ceiling garden that begins with the tamed grassy walkway in the foreground and spreads out into a distant forest (Fig. 5). All flora are in bloom, all fruit are ripe, and a variety of birds fly across the walls, upheld by the gentle breeze moving in the painted foliage. While pastoral themes and landscape scenes were popular during the Augustan period, the Garden Room remains the sole extant example in which a scene of nature takes up the entirety of the room's four walls. Beyond the frescoes, the stuccoed ceiling remains demonstrate a unique use of rare sky-blue pigment as a background that contributes to the art's realism. Iconographic interpretations of the Garden Room's decor have stressed the strong parallels with Augustan ideologies such as those manifest in poetry of the era and other visual programs as well. The symbolic potential of plants suggests the ways in which arboreal mythology generated meaning both for the prosperity of the union between Livia and Augustus, and for the couple's rulership of a new era in Roman history. The Garden Room's meaning extends beyond its walls, and beyond its iconography.

What distinguishes the Garden Room from contemporary Roman wall painting is its relationship to the design of the Villa of Livia as a whole, to create a space that brings the Augustan iconography of abundance vividly to life. The illusionism of the garden scene, as this thesis will show, begins beyond the Garden Room itself; it is entrenched in the villa's

mythological and material history as well as its architecture and design. The centrality of landscape and nature to the estate is expressed through its architectural layout as well as the rich mythological history that surrounds it. Ancient texts help identify the villa as Livia's because of an omen recounting a sacred laurel grove that grew on the estate, a symbol of Augustan prosperity. While the sacred laurel grove has yet to be identified, recent archaeological surveys reveal the presence of a variety of gardens and semi exterior spaces. Indeed, what is remarkable about the Augustan structure of the Villa of Livia is that about half of its surface area is made up of gardens and open courtyards.[1] Built upon a levelled hill, the villa commands breathtaking views of Rome, the Tiber valley, and the Apennine mountain ranges befitting its residents who could survey the land and the city they ruled. At the southwestern edge of the villa, the Garden Room could only be reached by passing through at least two gardens or walking along a portico that overlooked the Tiber valley below. The Villa's strategic articulation of space, which blends art and architecture with nature and topography, culminates in the Garden Room. Here, the senses are manipulated by decor and design to create an immersive experience. Whether visitors saw a sacred grove or an Augustan paradise, whether they dined here or simply relaxed in the cool semi underground space, they were meant to feel as if they were outdoors. With no divide between art, architecture, landscape, and nature, the Villa's design and overall program further encourage sensory experiences. In the Garden Room, the walls melt away and space expands; for an instant, visitors are transported to the paradise of a Roman Golden Age.

The Garden Room

The Garden Room is decorated with unparalleled refinement. All four walls are

[1] Marcie Collin Paolinelli, "A Visitor's Guide to the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta" (Master's. Thesis, California State University, Sacramento, 2012), 11.

painted from floor to ceiling with various arbours and plants, that fade into the horizon in a blue haze, and, nearer to the foreground, are well-kept fruit trees, flowers and birds of different varieties (Fig. 5). Contemporary Roman wall painting commonly framed much smaller garden scenes like windows into distant vistas or decorative pictures. Distinct from all other known examples, the garden scene at Livia's villa features neither architectural structures nor large panels of colour that cut into the imagery. Instead, nature takes up the entirety of the room's four walls. The framing elements are subtle and almost imperceptible, providing depth and accentuating the variety of the gardens depicted. While the program lack architectural elements, such as pediments and columns that are the prevalent markers of "Roman illusionism" elsewhere, there are two low fences or balustrades that run along the wall's bottom edge: a thatched wicker fence closest to the floor and to the viewer, as well as a low stone wall painted in oblong panels with inlaid geometric patterns (Fig. 7). At the bottom of both enclosures is a continuous trim of small, white flowers and green leaves, between them lies a neatly trimmed grass path or *ambulatio*. The stone wall recedes at the center of each wall, framing a single tree (Fig. 10). At regular intervals of about three feet at the bottom edge of the stone wall are small bunches of ivy with violets, irises, and hart's tongue ferns (Fig. 11).[2] Beyond the stone balustrade spreads a vista of trees that recede into a blue haze, becoming progressively smaller and softened, representing both linear and atmospheric perspectives. The trees in the distance become progressively greyer and less detailed than those in the foreground, whose tendrils often spill over the stone wall. The broad landscape features birds of various kinds in flight or perched on trees, which add to the sense of movement created by the flora (Fig. 8 and 12). Apart from the structuring effect created by the bordering wall, symmetrical alignment of trees and shrubs, and the top floriate fringe, the

[2] Mabel McAfee Gabriel, *Livia's Garden Room at Prima Porta* (New York: New York University Press, 1955), 9-11.

trees move in a consistent fashion. On both long walls (east and west), the center spruce trees incline away from one another (Fig. 10 and 14). The lines of leaning trees and shrubs are always counterbalanced by other groupings of plants.[3]

Stucco panels once covered the room's vaulted ceiling (Fig. 9 and 13). Restored in 1972, today only nineteen coffered panels from the eastern side of the room and twelve from the western wall remain. These panels combine stucco relief and painting. The colours, Egyptian blue and vermillion, are used not for painted details, as is most common in Augustan coffer-style ceilings, but as the background for a series of victories atop candelabra executed in plain white stucco relief.[4] The use of such vivid colours has no parallel in pre-Imperial Roman domestic design.[5] A rare and expensive colour, Egyptian blue accentuates the lightness and openness of the room and creates the illusion of a sky above.[6] Demonstrating innovative craftsmanship, the ceiling decor's deliberate attention to detail suggests an unparalleled sensitivity in its design, which extends well beyond the room's ornamentation.

The Garden Room is one of three rooms in a semi-underground complex (Fig. 2 and 3) that is reached through a narrow, windowless descending staircase and a hallway once paved with marble, measuring approximately 5.0 meters long.[7] To the left of the hall is an arched doorway (2.12 x 1.43m) that opens to the Garden Room. As the largest of the three rooms in the semi-underground complex, the Garden Room measures 11.70 meters long, 5.50

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[3] For a more detailed description of arboreal symmetry, see Gabriel, *Livia's Garden Room at Prima Porta*, 17-18.

[4] Jane Clark Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas': A Study in the Augustan Villa and Garden* (Providence, RI: Center for Old World Archaeology and Art, Brown University, 2001), 67-68.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 67-71.

[7] Some scholars have proposed that the complex was entered via a ramp rather than a staircase but archaeological evidence suggests otherwise. See Gabriel, *Livia's Garden Room at Prima Porta*, 3; Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 46-47. The marble flooring was subsequently destroyed; see Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 47.

meters wide, with a height of 3 meters from floor to barrel vault, and 5.16 meters from floor to summit (Fig. 2 and 3). Across the corridor, are two smaller adjacent rooms. The ceilings of the access hall and the smaller vestibule are also vaulted and feature narrow ornamental stucco moulding with fragmentary blue colouring running under the vault.[8] Antique travertine thresholds form at the foot of the stairs below the entrance to the two smaller rooms.[9] The floors are decorated with small black and white *tesserae* in a pattern of white squares bordered by narrow black bands, a motif similarly found at the House of Livia on the Palatine.[10] The two vestibules adjacent to the garden room lay under a single vaulted ceiling and are separated by a wall with a doorway and two openings, the larger one measuring approximately 1.70 meters high by 1.18 meters wide and a smaller one 57 by 42 centimeters. [11] The rear room is the largest and features a similar red band border around its walls. Light comes in through a cryptoporticus window cut high up the outside wall of the smaller front chamber and illuminates both rooms. The rooms likely served as a waiting area before guests entered the Garden Room or as a service room used by slaves attending to visitors.[12]

Function

The Garden Room's function is a subject of scholarly debate.[13] It is most commonly described as a *triclinium* because its dimensions correspond with textual descriptions and extant remains of Roman dining rooms. *Triclineae* are rectangular rooms that usually feature

[8] Gabriel, *Livia's Garden Room at Prima Porta*, 3.
[9] Other details found in the entrance to the complex are polished dark blue or black walls, "stucco palmettes at the corners, and a red band around the walls, about two thirds of the way up"; see Gabriel, *Livia's Garden Room at Prima Porta*, 3.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 17-20
[13] The debate as to the room's original function is the subject of Reeder's book, in which she argues that the Garden Room served as a semi sacred grotto/*nymphaeum*. Gabriel, *Livia's Garden Room at Prima Porta*, 15-16, also discusses the contentious nature of the room's still unresolved function..

sumptuous decor befitting a banquet. In his *De Architectura*, Vitruvius writes that spring and autumn *triclineae*, rooms used for dining or leisure during daylight hours, should face east to be warmed by the sun, so that they may keep that warmth during the later day. Summer *triclineae* should look north to provide shelter from the heat of the sun while winter *triclineae* should look westward to catch the evening light.[14] The configuration of the Garden Room corresponds to Vitruvius's description of a summer dining room. As such, its semi underground design provides shelter in all weather and could easily be used during winter and summer months, both in its ability to retain heat during cooler periods, and coolness during hot summer days. The adjacent rooms accommodate visitors' needs, functioning as service, waiting or storage areas. The two rooms across the corridor may have been service areas used during banquets. The southwestern block featured residential rooms and access to the bathing complex to the northwest similar to contemporary Roman villa where *triclineae* are usually included within a residential area and near a bathing complex. This layout further supports the Garden Room's function as a summer dining area.

The Garden Room has also been interpreted as an interior grotto or *nymphaeum*[15] with sacred associations, perhaps tied to the sacred laurel grove at the villa. The word *nymphaeum* was first recorded as a definition of a grotto of the nymphs with strong associations to the goddess Diana.[16] Artificial grottos and *nymphaea* had a sacral dimension, and were popular features of the opulent residences of the Roman elite.[17] Such rooms featured decor that was meant to replicate elements of real grottos, such as artificial stalactites or rockwork. Artificial grottos and *nymphaea* not only displayed the status of the villa's owner, but were also meant

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[14] See Vitruvius, *De Architectura* 6.4.1-2 in Vitruvius Pollio, *Vitruvius: Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Ingrid D. Rowland, commentary Thomas Noble Howe and Michael Dewar (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 180-188.
[15] For a typology and historiography of terms, see Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 34-44.
[16] Ibid., 42.
[17] Ibid., 45-66.

to instil awe in the visitors. Accordingly such rooms were commonly constructed for and used during a banquet.[18] The radical illusionism of the fresco program, which includes the trompe l'oeil effect of hanging plants, supports of the Garden Room's possible function as a grotto/nymphaeum.

It is more likely, however, that the Garden Room had multiple functions. Indeed, the very classification and naming of rooms, such as "*triclinea*" or "grotto," in ancient Roman villas is and should be considered as generic rather than implying modern conceptions of use. [19] Domestic space in ancient Roman villas was multifunctional and much more varied and flexible than their modern counterpart. The rooms of Roman homes, as well as the domestic activities they served, corresponded to external environments, be it weather, climate, or topography, to the extent that wealthy Romans could and did own different villas for different uses and seasons.[20] The Garden Room's ability to provide both coolness during hot weather and shelter during cooler and wetter months demonstrates this very multifunctionality and flexibility of use. Beyond its typology, the Garden Room's design and decor demonstrates a deliberate attention to, and manipulation of, external and internal elements. As such, this room cannot be fully understood without examining the entire villa, its history and context, within which the Garden Room's design is inextricably linked.

The Villa of Livia

The remains of the Imperial Villa of Livia, known in ancient texts as the villa *Ad Gallinas Albas* or "henhouse of the white hen," sits atop a twenty-meter high plateau approximately fourteen kilometers north of Rome. Recognized as a suburban residence of

[18] Ibid., 34-44.
[19] Annalisa Marzano, *Roman Villas in Central Italy: A Social and Economic History* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 18.
[20] Ibid., 19-21

Augustus's wife Livia, who reigned as *princeps* of the Roman Empire from 27 BCE until his death in 14 CE, the villa overlooks the Roman countryside. The site is located in modern-day Prima Porta, or ancient Saxa Rubra, where the Via Flaminia and Via Tiberiana fork (Fig. 1).[21] The villa dates from late Republican period and was rebuilt in several phases up until the fourth century CE.[22]

The larger terrain of the Villa of Livia is divided between the main buildings at the south-west of the *basis villae* (approximately 104 by 60 = 6,240 meters^2)[23] and the large garden terrace (approximately 77 by 100 = 7,700 meters^2)[24] at the northeast (Fig. 1). The archaeological evidence gathered by the Swedish Institute in Rome and Soprintendenza Archaeologica di Rome shows that the structure dates back to the Republican period with changes made during the Augustan period.[25] The underground complex, in which the Garden Room was found, is located at the south-western edge of the villa and the south-western side of a peristyle garden. Evidence of other rooms, some standing over the semi-underground complex, confirms that this area was once a residential quarter connected to the rest of the villa during the Augustan period.[26] The semi-underground complex was closed off at some point during the early first century CE. It was likely partly damaged during the earthquake in the year 17 CE and subsequently shut off and abandoned.[27] Because of this, the Garden Room was previously assumed to have been disconnected or isolated from the rest of the villa.[28]

The site has an extensive archaeological history, beginning in the seventeenth century

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[21] Paolinelli, "A Visitor's Guide," 3-6.
[22] Ibid; Mantha Zarmakoupi, "Designing the Landscapes of the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta," in *Essays in Classical Archaeology for Eleni Hatzivassiliou 1977-2007* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2008): 270-71.
[23] Zarmakoupi, "Designing the Landscapes of the Villa of Livia," 270.
[24] Ibid., 270.
[25] See Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 9-10; Paolinelli, *A Visitor's Guide*, 18-19; for a detailed walk-through of the site, see Paolinelli, *A Visitor's Guide*, 19-43.
[26] Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 45.
[27] Ibid., 48.
[28] Ibid., 18-19.

when it was identified by antiquarians and historians. The first organized excavation of the site took place in 1863-64 by Count Francesco Senni and two partners.[29] The diaries kept by the Count and his partners record several findings other than the frescoes in the semi underground complex and the statue of Augustus, including a marble head believed to represent Livia, a torso of Hercules, and the heads of Apollo and Jupiter, all of which have subsequently been lost but attest to the wealth and status of the villa's occupants.[30] In 1837, prior to Count Francesco Senni's excavations, which were driven primarily by a desire to find valuable and moveable artworks and artifacts, Antonio Nibby conducted a study of the masonry at the site and found similarities between the villa at Prima Porta and the Mausoleum of Augustus in Rome.[31] Almost a century later, H. Sulze conducted further surveys of the masonry work at the villa and found comparisons with structures at the House of Livia on the Palatine.[32] In the most recent surveys conducted by the Soprintendenza Archaeologica di Roma in the 1980s and the Swedish Institute in Rome in the 1990s and early 2000s, terra sigillata from the Villa of Livia was analyzed to establish dates of the Villa's structures.[33] Gaetano Messineo, who led the Soprintendenza Archaeologica di Roma's excavations of the site, concluded that the Villa had been modified from its Republican nexus during the Augustan Period, and then again in the Servian period.[34]

In 1996, the Swedish Institute in Rome collaborated with the Soprintendenza Archaeologica di Roma for a five-year investigation of the Villa's gardens in an attempt to

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[29] Ibid., 13-14.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., 16-17; Allan Klynne, Malgorzata Daszkiewicz, and Gerwulf Schneider, *Terra Sigillata from the Villa of Livia, Rome: Consumption and Discard in the Early Principate* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, Dept. of Archaeology and Ancient History, 2002), 12.
[32] Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 17-18.
[33] Although this methods of dating is still a topic of debate amongst archaeologists, combined with literary evidence, it is the most conclusive for identifying and dating the villa. See Reeder, ibid., 16-29.
[34] Messineo discusses and describes masonry work and date throughout the site while dealing with each room of the villa; for an introduction of the villa's dating, see G. Messineo, *La villa di Livia a Prima Porta: Roma* (Roma: Libreria dello Stato, Istituto poligrafico dello Stato, 2004), 9-16; for a concise summary of the dating arguments and the villa's three central phases, see Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 19-29.

locate the famous laurel grove. While the famous laurel grove was not identified by these excavations, they did uncovered evidence of several gardens, including a large garden terrace with a double colonnaded portico of one hundred to one hundred and fifty columns, and at least two planted gardens.[35] Finds from the northeastern corner of the terrace included parts of stucco fluting, a limestone capital, and remains of columns of the Corinthian order that demarcated the corner of a portico.[36] An analysis of various mollusk and mesophilic land snail remains at the villa has provided further information about the gardens and topography of the estate, showing the presence of hanging plants and the use of snails as pest control in the northeastern corner of the large terrace garden. Symmetrically aligned pots found in the small sheltered garden below the atrium, used to grow decorative plants, also demonstrate the presence of flora in the villa's other garden spaces.[37] Ancient animal bones, such as the red fox and eurasian badger, found in and around the large garden terrace suggest the villa was once surrounded by woodlands.[38] Taken collectively, these various archaeological and archaeobotanical finds establish the presence of at least four types of gardens at the villa: a hanging garden, a small garden, a porticoed area, and channels linking rooms featuring flora.[39] Gardens and landscapes were thus an integral and dominant feature of the villa's architectural design.[40]

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[35] For more on the garden terrace, see Klynne, Daszkiewicz, and Schneider, *Terra Sigillata*, 19-22; for more on the hanging gardens, which will be discussed in more detail below, see Ezequiel M. Pinto-Guillaume, "Mollusks from the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta, Rome: The Swedish Garden Archaeological Project, 1996-1999," *American Journal of Archaeology*, 106, no. 1 (2002): 51-56.

[36] For more on the archaeological finds and descriptions of each garden, see Klynne, Daszkiewicz, and Schneider, *Terra Sigillata*, 20-22.

[37] It has been suggested the pots may have contained a variety of laurels grown for ornamental use. Analysis of the contents of the pots corresponds to ancient authors who write that a variety of laurels used for celebratory wreaths was grown in amphora and such smaller vessels. For more, see Paolinelli, *A Visitor's Guide*, 11; Messineo, *La villa di Livia a Prima Porta*; Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 7.

[38] See Pinto-Guillaume, "Mollusks from the Villa of Livia," 55-56.

[39] For an analysis of the four excavated plots, see Pinto-Guillaume, "Mollusks from the Villa of Livia," 51-56.

[40] This also corresponds to the extensive areas dedicated to *horti* in Rome during the Augustan era. For more on gardens in Rome, see Alma Kumbaric, "Updated Outline of Floristic Richness in Roman Iconography," *Rendiconti Lincei: Scienze Fisiche e Naturali*. 25.2 (2014): 181-193; Diana Spencer, *Roman Landscape: Culture and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press, 2010); for more on the landscape and Augustan

The diversity of gardens at Villa of Livia is indicative of the period's fascination with landscape in art and architecture.[41] Prior to the Augustan period, villas were productive farms rather than retreats from city life.[42] After the civil wars of the Late Republic and during the relative peace of the early Imperial period, however, the countryside took on distinctive cultural importance. Just as in the visual art and literature of the period, architectural design reflected the period's newfound interest in and idealization of nature through an increase of ornamental rather than purely functional interior gardens. The influx of wealth in Rome helped shape the ways in which suburban villas were constructed during the Late Republican and Early Imperial Period.[43] Trends in Greek architectural designs and styles, such as the inclusion of porticoed gardens, statues, open air dining areas, were also incorporated. As Mantha Zarmakoupi writes in her study of ancient Roman villa design, for the first time in Roman history, "landscape was singled out as a theme in its own right."[44]

Architects, artists, and patrons explored the use of space to enhance a sense of grandeur and played with concepts such as the dialogue between urban and suburban, nature and art, informality and formality.[45] Nature and architecture were often designed with

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iconography, see Barbara A. Kellum,"The Construction of Landscape in Augustan Rome: The Garden Room at the Villa Ad Gallinas," *The Art Bulletin* 76, 2 (1994): 212-216.

[41] For the relationship between Vesuvian villas and their surrounding landscapes, see Mantha Zarmakoupi, *Designing for Luxury on the Bay of Naples: Villas and Landscapes (c. 100 BCE-79 CE)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 196-224; Donatella Mazzoleni, *Domus: Wall Painting in the Roman House* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2004), 25-35; John R. Clarke, "Landscape Paintings in the Villa of Oplontis," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 9 (1996): 81-107; Umberto Pappalardo, and Donatella Mazzoleni, *The Splendor of Roman Wall Painting* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2009), 37-52.

[42] Paul Zanker, *Roman Art* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010), 125-132; Zarmakoupi, *Designing for Luxury on the Bay of Naples*, 1-30; Mazzoleni, *Domus*, 7-23; Clarke, "Landscape Paintings," 81-107, probes the meaning of the landscape for Roman viewers in his discussion of the Villa of Oplontis; Kellum, "Construction of Landscape in Augustan Rome," 211-24, discusses Augustus' construction of landscape ideologies during his reign in relation to the Garden Room frescoes,.

[43] James S. Ackerman, *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 34.

[44] Zarmakoupi, *Designing for Luxury on the Bay of Naples*, 19-20.

[45] Indeed, villa architecture during this period was a playground for the fancies of patrons and artists alike. For the first time, the once productive suburban estate became a space of retreat and escape from the city. For a discussion of the growth of villa architecture as a genre, see William J. Anderson, *The Architecture of Ancient Rome, an Account of its Historic Development, Being the Second Part of the Architecture of Greece and Rome*, (New York: Scribners Sons, 1927), 26-28, 34-35; for a more extensive discussion of portio and criptoportico

parallels to urban structures. Like the columns in a forum, trees added value to the villas they adorned. Older trees were usually planted in preference to younger ones for their grandeur.[46] Porticoed gardens, which were often designed as semi-exterior galleries intended as spaces for philosophical conversation, also drew inspiration from urban and Greek architectural design while marrying these themes to nature and art. Indeed, the villa's garden spaces were central to social interactions. Whereas urban households centered on the atrium as the core of social interactions, the heart of the suburban estate was the open porticoed garden and its adjoining cluster of rooms.[47] The social performances that took place in the atriums of urban villas shifted to dining rooms flanked by porticoes and gardens in their suburban counterparts.[48] The development of the villa during the Augustan period thus created a new architectural language in which designers constructed spaces that expressed an acceptable aesthetic experience that was sober rather than ostentatious or overly decadent.[49]

Nature and landscape had a deeper ideological significance in Augustan period villas. In addition to enhancing architecture and recalling urban settings, plants and trees were encoded with symbolic and sacred significance.[50] Nature in general, and plants and trees more specifically, were associated with divinities. Plants were often part of religious holidays and each had its own mythological associations. During Augustus's reign, however, nature became suffused with political significance. Augustus promised to bring about a Roman Golden Age, a time of perfect harmony and peace after the turmoil of civil war during the

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gardens in Late Republican and Early Imperial villas, see Zarmakoupi, *Designing for Luxury on the Bay of Naples*, 100-101.

[46] Marzano, *Roman Villas in Central Italy*, 98.

[47] Paolinelli, *A Visitor's Guide*, 18-19; Zarmakoupi discusses the structure of suburban villas, writing that unlike their urban counterparts they had no "core." Rather, clusters of rooms acted as nexi and dining rooms were the stages for social performance rather than the atrium. For more on this discussion, see Zarmakoupi, *Designing for Luxury on the Bay of Naples*, 220-222.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., 113-114.

[50] Ibid., 112-113.

Late Republic. Drawing on sacred and mythological symbols, Augustus accentuated and manipulated nature, art, and architecture to construct a sophisticated political ideology in which he was the fist of men, divine leader of a Golden Age Rome.[51]

The design of the Villa of Livia exemplifies broader trends in Roman villa architecture while also articulating particular ideologies that associated nature to Augustan peace and prosperity. Unlike other villas in the Vesuvian valley, which are built in the shadow of the towering volcanic mountain, the Villa of Livia dominates the surrounding valley. Atop its hillside perch, the villa provides a stage from which residents become observers of the land around them, an Olympian-like paradise for its semi-divine residents to look over their empire. The Villa's location creates strong parallels between Augustus and his forefather Romulus, who gained divine right to the city upon a nearby Roman hilltop. Within the Villa of Livia itself, gardens play an important role in constructing a pastoral oasis that brings Augustus' Roman Golden Age to life. The large garden terrace, for instance, built upon raised and leveled ground provides sweeping views of the Roman countryside while also expanding space within the Villa.

In addition to the mythology that surrounds both the estate and its imperial owners, what imbues the Villa of Livia with unparalleled cultural and political significance is the well-known omen that occurred there. While each ancient author's description of the event varies, they all concur that some time soon after Livia's betrothal to Augustus, on her journey to the villa, an eagle dropped a white hen carrying a laurel branch onto her lap.[52] The new

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[51] Augustus's rule and his political ideologies is as fascinating as it is complex. For a discussion of Augustus's use of tradition and the making of the Principate, see Karl Galinsky, *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 12-32; 33-54; for a discussion of how Augustus constructed Rome in relation to political ideologies, see ibid., 234-263.

[52] According to Pliny, the omen took place between October 39 BCE and January 38 BCE, before Livia's marriage, while Suetonius reports the omen occurred after her marriage of January 17th, 38 BCE; Pliny *HN* 15.136-137, Suetonius *Galb.* 1 and Cassius Dio 48.52.3-4; 63.29/3. For more, see Klynne, Daszkiewicz, and Schneider, *Terra Sigillata*, 11-12; Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 13-14.

bride planted the laurel at the villa, from which sprung a sacred laurel grove, and nurtured the hen and its plentiful offspring.[53] This resulted in the rather odd colloquial name of the estate: the villa *Ad Gallinas Albas*, or "henhouse of the white hen."[54] It also foretold a fruitful marriage and prosperous reign for the new couple, who had been wed while Livia was nine months pregnant with her recently divorced husband's child.[55] Regardless of the accuracy of these events, the sacred laurel grove was well attested by authors. The grove was the Villa of Livia's central feature for classical writers. While laurels adorned the Augustus's house and Apollonic temple on the Palatine, as well as in various parks and colonnades in Rome, the omen and sacred laurel grove at the Villa of Livia eclipsed these.

The sacred and iconographic significance of the laurel plant gave greater import to the Villa of Livia's laurel grove and the mythology surrounding the Villa and its owners. Perhaps the most culturally significant plant in Augustan Rome, the laurel was a powerful symbol with mythological roots that date back to Ancient Greece.[56] The laurel, sacred to the god Apollo, was a symbol for triumph, prosperity, peace, healing, and abundance.[57] Nowhere is Augustan arboreal mythology more poignantly articulated than with the laurel. The laurel's iconographic significance was itself largely an Augustan construction. Early on in his reign, Augustus planted the seeds of what would become deeply rooted political ideologies. With his keen awareness of the evocative capability of symbols, Augustus used the laurel to propagate an image of himself as divine-born leader of Rome, the one who would bring a Golden Age of peace and prosperity. During the principate, laurels were planted at his estates

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[53] Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 84-91.
[54] The estate likely belonged to Livia's father and was given to her upon her marriage to Augustus. Reeder, Ibid., 29-34, recently examined Cicero's correspondences regarding the purchase of a suburban estate and proposes that the original villa likely belonged to Livia's father, Drusus Claudianus. Cicero mentions Drusus Claudianus bought and owned several suburban estates near Rome.
[55] Klynne, Daszkiewicz, and Schneider, *Terra Sigillata*, 11-12; Reeder, Ibid., 13-14.
[56] Annette Giesecke, *The Mythology of Plants: Botanical Lore from Ancient Greece and Rome* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2014), 34-36; Kellum,"The Construction of Landscape in Augustan Rome," 211-218.
[57] Giesecke, *The Mythology of Plants*, 33-36.

as well as in Rome's public parks and fora. Laurel branches also adorned Augustan altars, were made into crowns worn by the *princeps* in ceremonial and public events, and often crowned Augustus' head in representation, from statues to coinage (Fig. 19 and 20).[58] First used as the emblem that tied a young Octavian to his patron god Apollo, the laurel became symbolic for the *domus Augusti*, the Augustan clan and later the Julio-Claudian family.[59] The laurel was thus an important and omnipresent symbol in public as well as private life, in the political and sacred realm of Rome, and one whose meaning took on more power over time.[60] The significance of both *lauretum* and the founding myth suggest Livia's own influential position and claim to the sacred plant. Livia, who received the name *Augusta* on her husband's death, was depicted in Tiberian era cameos with the laurel (Fig. 21).[61] Her role as the receiver and caretaker of the sacred laurel in the omen imbued her with divine right and sacred influence.

The laurel is also ubiquitous in the Garden Room's frescoes. The only plant that appears in such variety, the laurel has been interpreted as a key element of Augustan iconography.[62] While the Garden Room's meaning cannot be determined solely by the laurel's Roman iconography, its omnipresence cannot be overlooked. The laurel's symbolic quality has contributed to interpretations of the room as a sacred grotto that may have sustained visual parallels to the Villa's real laurel grove.[63] In Pliny's account of the omen, he stresses the religious sanction of Livia's receipt of the sacred laurel branch, which she was to guard with religious care.[64] Beyond the sacro-idyllic links drawn from the laurel, the other

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[58] Kellum,"The Construction of Landscape in Augustan Rome," 211-213.
[59] Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 84-91.
[60] Ibid., 211-213.
[61] Ibid., 91.
[62] Kellum,"The Construction of Landscape in Augustan Rome," 219-220; Gabriel, *Livia's Garden Room at Prima Porta*, 15-16.
[63] Ibid., 219-224.
[64] Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 91.

flora depicted also have strong connections to Augustan divinities.

The Garden Room's frescoes are ripe with further symbolic associations. All the plants present in the garden scene are linked to Roman divinities closely connected with Augustus, as well as female fertility.[65] Some of these include the myrtle traditionally associated with Venus, mother to Augustus's mythical ancestor Aeneas,[66] the pine to Cybele, [67] the holm to Diana, sister of Apollo and goddess of the grove,[68] and the pomegranate to Proserpina, the fruit representative of fertility and immortality.[69] The divinities associated with the plants, fruits, and birds depicted in the frescoes are all Roman. Cybele, Great Mother goddess of Phrygia, gained prominence during the *principate* when Augustus rebuilt the old temple of *Magna Deum Mater Idaea*, which flanked his house on the Palatine along with the Temple of Apollo.[70] Livia was even depicted as Cybele after the death of her husband.[71] Likewise, Proserpina, the Roman equivalent to the Greek goddess Persephone, was mainly associated with Hecate's triple shape before the Augustan era. Her cults were primarily in Southern Italy and Sicily after being brought from Greece as the Goddess of the Underworld. In Rome, Proserpina's role altered during the *ludi Saeculares*, the sacred games revived and held by Augustus and Agrippa in 17 BCE, to one more closely associate to spring and fertility, the time when the goddess returned to her mother and brought with her the end of winter. While the festival once celebrated the deities of the underworld during the Republican era, under Augustus, it celebrated heavenly deities, including Diana, Apollo and Persephone in her new role.

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[65] Pliny, *Natural History,* 15.136-137; Gabriel, *Livia's Garden Room at Prima Porta*, 15-16; Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 95-107.
[66] Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 95-96.
[67] Ibid., 96.
[68] Ibid., 98-102.
[69] Ibid., 96.
[70] Ibid., 95.
[71] Ibid., 96.

In addition to the Roman sacred associations evoked by the Garden Room frescoes, there are strong correlations with deities and themes of fecundity.[72] The aforementioned divinities are all associated with marriage, fertility, and motherhood, appropriate themes for the newly wedded wife of the new ruler of Rome. The quince was symbolic of love and fertility, so too was the pomegranate, while the dove and the sparrow were both associated with Aphrodite (Fig. 12).[73] Indeed, the imagery – the garden in bloom with its abundance of ripe fruit – recalls a more basic association with nuptial themes. The Garden Room is thus a suitable representation for the new reigning couple and may have been seen by Roman viewers as symbolic of the Augustan *principate*'s success and the promise of Livia and Augustus' fruitful marriage.

The ceiling stuccos likewise contribute to iconographic interpretations of the Garden Room's design. Two other important Roman divinities are depicted in the remaining stucco coffers. The first is Pan, who appears in one of the coffers to the eastern corner of the room's ceiling lying on a rocky bed.[74] Pan, originally the goat-legged Greek god of flocks and shepherds, became identified with Faunus, the Roman horned forest god.[75] Though the evolution of Pan in Rome is complex and his association with illicit sexuality underwent some attempted reformation during the Augustan period, the god was still strongly associated with love, desire, marriage, and sex.[76] His presence in the Garden Room counterbalances as well as complements that of Diana, who is associated with chastity.

The second Roman divinity depicted in the ceiling decor are winged Victories. Victoria is a "quintessential Augustan goddess" who was often depicted on Augustan

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[72] Kellum,"The Construction of Landscape in Augustan Rome," 220; Reeder, Ibid., 84-91.
[73] Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 89-90; Gabriel, *Livia's Garden Room at Prima Porta*, 52.
[74] Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 109.
[75] Ibid., 110.
[76] Ibid., 114.

coinage, especially during the period immediately prior to and after the battle of Actium.[77] Victoria also had a temple on the Palatine, like Apollo and Cybele, and winged Victories decorate the walls of the House of Livia and Augustus on the Palatine.[78] The winged Victories atop candelabrum, which as an ornament played a role in Augustan cult rituals,[79] draw strong associations to Augustan peace and Golden Age themes.[80]

The Garden Room is thus well contextualized within the robust canon of Augustan iconography. The painted scenes and ceiling coffers show a deliberate attention to and expression of complementary themes. The room's decor demonstrates not only the mastery of Roman domestic art but also its complexity of meaning and relation to social, political and religious context. But there is an another dimension to this room that exceeds iconographic and symbolic readings. What makes the Garden Room at the Villa of Livia remarkable and unlike any other extant example of Roman domestic art is the way it marries art, architecture, and nature, to manipulate the senses in the creation of an immersive experience. To look simply at the Garden Room's décor, therefore, is to miss how the Villa's design imbricates nature and political ideologies in the scale of human experience. The Garden Room was more than a beautiful and symbolic work of art, it generated a powerful visceral impact that expanded space and turned art into a microcosm of a Roman Golden Age.

Walking Through the Villa: *Atrium*

Even before entering the villa, visitors would have been struck by the beauty of the Roman countryside. The perfect location for Augustus and Livia's summer retreat, the Villa of Livia is built upon a plateau and situated at the junction of Via Flaminia and Via Tiberina

[77] Ibid., 115.
[78] Ibid., 116.
[79] Ibid., 117.
[80] Ibid., 117-118.

(Fig. 1). While today the site is reached by a steep path from the modern highway of the Via Flaminia, in antiquity it would have been reached by the gradually sloping path of the Via Tiberiana. Once at the entrance of the villa, breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside extend on all sides. To the south, "the Tiber winds its snakelike way through the plain" with the Alban hills farther in the distance.[81] The view spreads on to the east and west with the rugged Apennines to the north, "sapphire blue in the clear atmosphere."[82] Even on hot days a fresh breeze cools the summit of the villa's hillside location.[83] These vistas have distinctive parallels with the expansive nature in the background of the Garden Room frescoes. The cool blue haze with its distant, dancing wilderness of trees, is analogous to the real, far-reaching landscape one sees approaching the villa and looking out from it.

The entrance hall to the Villa is the atrium at the centre of which was the impluvium, a pool in which rainwater would be collected from the open sky-light above (Fig. 4).[84] The presence of *opus reticulatum* masonry, that is the reticulated work of diamond-shaped bricks layed in forty-five degree angles, dates the original atrium to the Augustan period with some subsequent alterations, such as mosaic flooring and decorative motif around the *impluvium*'s pool. Evidence of four brick pillars at the base of the *impluvium* corresponds to descriptions of the skylight or *compluvium* by Vitruvius.[85] As a feature of the atrium, the *compluvium* would have been supported by two wooden beams running the length of the ceiling and framing the long sides to let light, air, and rain water in.[86] Excavators also discovered fresco fragments at the marble-covered brick base of the south wall's support that feature a foliate

[81] Gabriel, *Livia's Garden Room at Prima Porta*, 2, provides a beautiful description of the villa and its countryside..
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Paolinelli, *A Visitor's Guide*, 18-19.
[85] Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture*, 180-188
[86] Paolinelli, *A Visitor's Guide*, 18-19.

frieze.[87] These decorative elements, while fragmentary, are suggestive of the once opulent decor of the Villa's entrance hall.

The continuity between indoor and outdoor is executed not only through artistic features that carry over the theme of nature in small details, such as the foliate frieze, but also through the atrium's architecture. As a compluviate room that is open to the sky, the atrium is at once indoors and outdoors. Villa atriums during this period often featured decor that helped create a sense of seamlessness between the exterior and the interior. The well preserved atrium in the Samnite House at Herculaneum demonstrates how designers depicted exterior vistas to create an expansive sense of space. The painted colonnades of the Samnite House's atrium joins the real stucco pilasters, seamlessly weaving painted and real architecture.[88] The atrium at the Villa of Livia likewise opens to the outdoors and shows traces of careful, although fragmentary, artistic design that erases distinctions between interior and exterior.[89] Sounds and smells from the outdoors come in through the compluvium – the lapping rainwater echoing in the *impluvium*'s marble basin, the breeze blowing in – add to the dexterous and deliberate manipulation of architecture, art, and nature at the villa. The atrium utilizes all the senses to efface the boundaries between indoors and outdoors. This entrance hall introduces a theme that runs throughout the Villa of Livia's design and is most significant in the Garden Room: the creation of expansive and experiential spaces that seamlessly blend nature, art and architecture.

The Large Terrace

To the right of the atrium past the adjacent smaller *cubiculi* is the bathing complex,

[87] Ibid.; for archaeological notes, see Messineo, *La villa di Livia a Prima Porta*, 25-35.
[88] Ibid., 72-74.
[89] Ibid., 18-19; Messineo, *La villa di Livia a Prima Porta*, 25-35.

dating mainly from the villa's Servian period, which can be reached through a hall leading to the northwestern side of the Villa.[90] A doorway to the south end of the atrium gives access to both a small, sheltered garden (room 48) and the large garden terrace to the northeast of the Villa (Fig. 4). The garden terrace, entered by the small vestibulum (room 46), has been the subject of the Swedish Institute in Rome's extensive archaeological project that revealed a variety of types of gardens.[91] The large garden terrace was partly constructed on the artificial *basis villæ*, or leveled land, the buttress wall of which can be seen at the southeastern corner. Below an agricultural layer of soil 45 centimeters deep, archaeologists uncovered several pottery fragments and some root cavities similar to those found in the small garden that indicate gardening activities.[92] The large terrace was therefore a space for a wide range of cultivation. The large terrace also offered views of the surrounding landscape and included a variety of flora and fauna.[93]

At the northeast corner of the terrace, excavations reveal what has been termed a 'hanging garden.'[94] A row of rectangular compartments were uncovered between a dividing walls with a row of apses at the back. These structures, which were built into the slope where the terrace and hill meet, have been reconstructed as a porticoed structure with a back wall in which plants and small trees may have been planted in the rectangular compartment and framed by the apses.[95] The presence of an orange tufa clay bottom indicates this area was

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[90] For a description of the bathing complex, see Paolinelli, *A Visitor's Guide*, 24-28.
[91] Klynne, Daszkiewicz, and Schneider, *Terra Sigillata*, 20-22.
[92] Prior to excavations, the land above the villa's eastern terrace garden was used for agricultural purposes. Deep grooves from plowing have been detrimental to excavation work. See Peter Liljenstolpe and Allan Klynne, "Investigating the gardens of the Villa of Livia," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 13 (2000): 226; Klynne, Daszkiewicz, and Schneider, *Terra Sigillata*, 22-29.
[93] Wild mammal remains, such as the red fox and eurasian badger, were uncovered and analyzed by Pinto-Guillaume, "Mollusks from the Villa of Livia," 56.
[94] Liljenstolpe and Klynne, "Investigating the gardens of the Villa of Livia," 227-30; Klynne, Daszkiewicz, and Schneider, *Terra Sigillata*, 21 and 29-31.
[95] For a drawing reconstructing this structure, refer to Klynne, Daszkiewicz, and Schneider, *Terra Sigillata*, 21-22; and Pinto-Guillaume, "Mollusks from the Villa of Livia," 56.

fertile, humid, and open.[96] A high concentration of land snail remains found in the porticoed structures and rectangular compartments further suggest the presence of plants, since certain varieties of snails were used as a form of pest control. The abundant number of mollusk remains at this site also indicate that it was a low human traffic area, since higher traffic locales, such as walkways, retained far less snail remains.[97] Dated to the first century CE, the hanging garden was likely irrigated by an aqueduct uncovered where the modern-day tunnel of the via Flaminia was dug through the northern hilltop.

According to Pinto-Guillaume's reconstruction of the hanging garden, the semicircular alcoves and the rectangular compartments were likely planted and flanked by a path that visitors could walk through.[98] Such a design indicates deliberation and planning in which architecture and nature were bound together. Furthermore, the semicircular alcoves in Pinto-Guillaume's reconstruction bear striking similarity to the balustrade depicted in the Garden Room frescoes. In the Garden Room, central trees are framed by a low wall that separated the domesticated garden with the distant landscape beyond. Likewise, the hanging garden, located at the corner of the large terrace, is designed with a wall that frames plants and creates a border between the domesticated and wild nature, between the villa and the landscape beyond. The parallel in architectural form in which recessed walls frame flora suggests a thoughtful continuity between the Villa's real gardens, its architecture, and its interior decor, which evoked the exterior in vivid pictorial terms.

The large garden terrace also featured a two-aisled portico with shed-roof along its eastern and northern sides and likely also the western side.[99] The western foundation wall

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[96] Pinto-Guillaume, "Mollusks from the Villa of Livia," 56.
[97] Liljenstolpe and Klynne, "Investigating the gardens of the Villa of Livia," 230; Pinto-Guillaume, "Mollusks from the Villa of Livia," 56.
[98] Klynne, Daszkiewicz, and Schneider, *Terra Sigillata*, 22; Pinto-Guillaume, "Mollusks from the Villa of Livia," 56.
[99] Liljenstolpe and Klynne, "Investigating the gardens of the Villa of Livia," 231-232.

indicates its probable use as a stylobate for a row of columns. A more solid wall would likely have bordered the terrace and featured openings towards the eastern Tiber valley and hanging gardens.[100] In addition to painted stucco fragments suggesting the presence of decorated ceilings, the walls were painted with yellow-reddish with white and blue details. Material and archaeological evidence indicate both that the area was frequented by visitors and featured decorative elements. Such blending of interior and exterior space supports the importance of gardens in events such as banquets where guests would pass through the Villa's gardens and residential quarters.

The large terrace garden contained a variety of plants and decor, combining the tamed and the wild. Porticoed walkways, hanging gardens, and open vistas framed by painted walls offered pleasant retreats for visitors. During hot seasons, the shaded walkways offered cool areas to stroll through or sit in, and during colder and wetter seasons, one could still enjoy the pleasures of the outdoors while enjoying the shade provided by being partially indoors. The terrace garden is evidence of a playful manipulation of art, architecture, and nature to create a sense of continuity between outside and inside.[101] One is never quite fully outdoors or indoors at the Villa of Livia. This central thematic is tied from the eastern garden terrace to the southwestern end of the Villa where the Garden Room is located. Before reaching the semi-underground complex, however, visitors passed through two more important garden spaces, which were in direct dialogue with the frescoed room.

The Small Garden

Just below the atrium to the southeast of the Villa is a small sheltered garden.[102] Dated

[100] Wall fragments were found south of the garden structures; see Liljenstolpe and Klynee, Ibid., 232.
[101] Pinto-Guillaume, "Mollusks from the Villa of Livia," 56; Liljenstolpe and Klynne, "Investigating the gardens of the Villa of Livia," 233.
[102] The area was backfilled and is today covered with gravel and features a group of citrus and laurel trees in

to the 30s BCE, or the Republican period of the Villa, during which the garden saw several agricultural as well as building phases.[103] This garden once featured flora ranging from flowering plants to small trees, as the planting pots or *ollæ perforrat* and root cavities indicate.[104] It originally measured approximately 6.10 by 9.06 meters with a garden at the center, a colonnade of stuccoed columns, and a marble floored *ambulatorium*.[105] To the south, the garden would have provided a view of the Tiber valley. The smaller trees would have been set axially in relation to the columns.[106] The walkway would have served as more than merely a connection from the atrium and its adjoining cubiculi to the rest of the Villa. Its position provided a peaceful and lush retreat for residents as well as commanding views on the surrounding landscape.

Evidence of the era's fascination with nature and landscape, this small garden juxtaposes domesticated nature with the distant vistas below and uses its colonnade to frame the landscape, which included a view on Mons Albanus, modern-day Monte Cavo, and "the sanctuary of Jupiter Latiaris where the festival of Latins (*Feriea latinae*) was celebrated."[107] Such careful attention to framing the landscape visually was an essential element of villa design and can be seen in the architecture of contemporary villas in the Vesuvian valley. One

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pots. These do not correspond to archaeological evidence or the Swedish Institute's suggested reconstructions. See Klynne, Daszkiewicz, and Schneider, *Terra Sigillata*, 22.

[103] Liljenstolpe and Klynne, "Investigating the gardens of the Villa of Livia," 224; Klynne, ibid., 22 and 27-28.

[104] Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 9; Messineo, *La villa di Livia a Prima Porta*, 14; Kellum, "The Construction of Landscape in Augustan Rome," 212-15, suggests the planting pots were used to grow a variety of laurel used for ceremonial purposes and that the contents correspond to ancient descriptions of such a growing technique. Klynne and Liljenstolpe note that without the layer of pumice that has preserved ancient plants in the Vesuvian region, the gardens in Lazio, such as those in the Villa of Livia's small sheltered garden, do not illuminate planting patterns. Liljenstolpe and Klynne, "Investigating the gardens of the Villa of Livia," 224, provide an archaeological study of the planting plots with dating analysis..

[105] The addition of a wall on the south side cuts the area to 5.70 x 9.06 m. Excavations by the Soprintendenza and further studies conducted by the Swedish Institute reveal remains of mosaic flooring at the sides of the garden beginning ca. 60 cm from the edge of this wall. Evidence also indicates the presence of columns made of travertine or marble. See Liljenstolpe and Klynne, "Investigating the gardens of the Villa of Livia," 223-224.

[106] Liljenstolpe and Klynne, "Investigating the gardens of the Villa of Livia," 224-5.

[107] Zarmakoupi, *Designing for Luxury on the Bay of Naples*, 225; For more on landscape in Roman domestic art and architecture, see 19-20.

such example is the Villa of Mysteries at Pompeii (Fig. 17). Oriented around a longitudinal axis that aligns with Mount Vesuvius to the northeast, this small, double-fronted villa demonstrates a thoughtful orchestration of the views of the surrounding topography.[108] Its porticoes and gardens utilize light and architecture to frame vistas, creating the illusion of space and highlighting various viewpoints. The architecture conforms both to the terrestrial and astronomical orientation of the city and indicates what Donatella Mazzoleni describes as a "contemplative relationship with the landscape and the earth, which is kept at a distance, the object of the gaze rather than something to manipulate."[109]

Likewise, the Villa of Livia's small garden expands beyond its small plot while also containing the vast landscape beyond by framing it with architectural structures such as in its colonnaded walkway. Architectural structures and flora construct a real life landscape scene in which viewers are immersed. The boundaries between art and nature, interior and exterior are effaced. Instead, visitors become part as much as viewers of this landscape scene. As Klynne and Liljenstolpe note, such a remarkable example of the use and juxtaposition of open space and "refined visual sequence is hard to find."[110]

It is no coincidence, therefore, that this garden is a feature of the same villa as the Garden Room. The parallels between real and painted garden suggest not only a design plan that utilised and amalgamated interior and exterior space but also a close link between the Garden Room and the Villa's gardens. Like the painted scene, the small garden features an *ambulatorium*, a variety of plants, from decorative flowers to trees, and offers views of a distant landscape. Both the small garden and painted Garden Room offer an immersive experience to viewers by blurring the boundaries between indoors and outdoors, artifice and

[108] Mazzoleni, *Domus*, 29.
[109] Mazzoleni, *Domus*, 29-30.
[110] Liljenstolpe and Klynne, "Investigating the gardens of the Villa of Livia," 224-5.

nature. Walking through the small garden shifts a viewer's perspective and perception of space. Traversing this garden was necessary in order to reach the southwestern block of the villa and was likely intended to complement, if not enhance, a visitor's experience of the illusionary painted Garden Room.

Peristyle Garden

Moving westward towards the semi-underground complex, visitors crossed another garden space. The peristyle portico, approximately 22 by 18 meters, is connected to the small garden by a vestibule (room 56), which features traces of Republican era flooring and Augustan era diamond patterned mosaic flooring.[111] Large red and white stuccoed brick columns lined the sides of the garden and at the center was a large pool over three feet deep.[112] The original garden is dated to earlier phase of the Villa's construction with subsequent alterations, such as mosaic details in the pool.[113] The peristyle garden gives access to rooms 54-58 on the south, to the semi-underground complex, and to the adjacent cubiculi to the southwest.[114]

Peristyle gardens were common features of villas during the late Republican into the Imperial era. Inspired by Greek architecture, they were often rectangular with covered walkways that framed central gardens.[115] The gardens included a variety of flora, decorative vegetation, and fruit trees, and often featured pools, sculptures, and artworks.[116] The peristyle was indeed a sort of semi-interior, semi-exterior art gallery and served as the "[l]oci of

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[111] These features are heavily damaged by ploughing; Paolinelli, "A Visitor's Guide," 31; Messineo, *La villa di Livia a Prima Porta*, 35.
[112] Paolinelli, "A Visitor's Guide," 29-30.
[113] Ibid., 30.
[114] For more description of these rooms, see Paolinelli, "A Visitor's Guide," 29-30; Messineo, *La villa di Livia a Prima Porta*, 34-36.
[115] Paolinelli, "A Visitor's Guide," 29; Zarmakoupi, *Designing for Luxury on the Bay of Naples*, 113.
[116] Zarmakoupi, *Designing for Luxury on the Bay of Naples*, 113.

philosophical discussion and emblem of discipline and pleasure."[117] As Zarmakoupi notes in her study of Roman villa architecture, "designers constructed a space in which the experience of aesthetic pleasure was acceptable to villa owners in Italy who wished for luxury without imputations of decadence."[118] No longer bound to the earlier restraints of utility and production, the suburban villas of late Republican and Imperial Rome were spaces in which designers and patrons explored concepts of art and nature, formality and informality, real and illusory.[119] Peristyle gardens offered residents and visitors a space in which art, nature, and all living beings were in harmony.[120]

The Villa of Livia's peristyle garden, like the gardens, colonnades, hanging gardens, and atrium, create a space that is neither interior nor exterior, neither nature nor art, but both and all at once. Its porticoed walkway served as framing elements to the central garden, guiding the gaze and framing it much in the way wall paintings frame vistas.[121] While the peristyle garden bears similarities with contemporary examples, the Villa of Livia's unique history and surrounding mythology suggests compelling parallels with Augustan ideologies. Since the peristyle was a space that combined art, architecture, and nature to create an oasis within the interior of a villa, the Villa of Livia's peristyle in some sense brings to life Augustus's Roman Golden Age by creating a space that featured art alongside nature and likely in line with Augustan ideologies. The close proximity of the peristyle to the southwestern complex and the Garden Room therein brings the experiential effect of the

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[117] Ibid., 220.
[118] Ibid., 114.
[119] William J. Anderson, Richard Phené Spiers, and Thomas Ashby, *The Architecture of Ancient Rome, an Account of its Historic Development, Being the Second Part of the Architecture of Greece and Rome* (New York: Scribners Sons, 1927), 34; Mazzoleni, *Domus*, 8-11 and 30-31; for more on the history of the villa as an architectural type, see Pappalardo and Mazzoleni, *The Splendor of Roman Wall Painting*, 37-52.
[120] Mazzoleni, Ibid., 30.
[121] Ibid., 9-14; Elsner discusses how Roman villa architecture framed the gaze and uses the Garden Room at the Villa of Livia as one example in relation to contemporary architecture, for more see Jaś Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of art From the Pagan World to Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 72.

villa's design and underlying thematic full circle. Reaching the Garden Room, the careful articulation and manipulation of space through the blending of boundaries between art, architecture, and nature come to life as interior becomes exterior.

Art and Artifice

The Garden Room lies in the southern residential block of the Villa of Livia adjacent to the peristyle garden. The recent excavations of 1982-1992 establish the presence of a residential block above the semi-underground complex.[122] These above-ground rooms date to the Augustan period and feature later changes. The southwestern block is made up of five rooms and with the furthest limits of the villa closed by a border wall on the western end of the terrace built upon the *basis villae*.[123] After the semi-underground complex was closed off around 17 CE, the pavement of the rooms above and the dividing walls between rooms 3 and 4 sealed the light shaft of the Garden Room below.[124] Despite the new information provided by recent archaeological evidence, the various alterations, and poor state of much of the area, leave some details about the date(s), function, and entranceways to the residential complex uncertain.[125]

There are two proposed routes of entrance to the southwestern area of the Villa. The first is via a porticoed passageway that ran around the southeastern perimeter of the Villa. Messineo suggests the area was entered by way of a portico that likely ran the length of the boundary wall overlooking the Tiber valley, connecting to the large garden terrace with the residential quarters of the Villa.[126] Visitors passing from the large terrace could walk along

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[122] Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 45; Messineo, *La villa di Livia a Prima Porta*, 235-245.
[123] Ibid., 45; Messineo, ibid., 235.
[124] Dating of pavement establish that the light shaft was not sealed until the first century CE; Reeder, ibid., 45.
[125] Evidence suggests that the block saw extreme damage, likely by the earthquake in 17 BCE, and was subsequently closed off entirely; Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 47-8.
[126] Messineo, *La villa di Livia a Prima Porta*, 35; Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 47.

the perimeter of the Villa, moving southward past the small garden and then turning northeastward to this residential block. In this case, one would walk through the semi interior space of a portico while overlooking the Tiber valley. From the high perch of the Villa, the landscape below unfurls itself. It is of no coincidence that the Eternal City would be framed in such a way, dominating the view and giving precedence to the gaze of both Augustus and Livia. Such a circuit corresponds to the thematic importance of nature, art and architecture, and demonstrates a dexterous attention to and the manipulation of spatial boundaries. This entranceway encourages strong visual parallels between the Garden Room, located within the southwestern block, the villa's gardens, and surrounding topography.

The other plausible entrance to this area of the Villa would be situated across the peristyle garden. Visitors crossing this area would continue south eastwards to the adjacent quarters through a hall or cryptoporticus.[127] Unique to villa architecture, the cryptoporticus was a covered walkway with walls instead of columns that could be above ground or semi-underground.[128] It thus served not only to connect rooms in villas, but also to hold warmth, contain coolness, and break winds.[129] The foremost characteristic of Roman design in luxury villas, the cryptoporticus "emulated the grandeur of public architecture" and demonstrates another way in which Roman architecture negotiated the boundaries between exterior and interior.[130] This second possible entrance to the southwestern block therefore also provides thematic and spatial continuity between the Villa's various gardens and rooms, as well as between outdoors and indoors, nature and design.

In either scenario, the passageway connecting the southwestern quarter to the rest of

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[127] Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 46.
[128] The term "cryptoporticus" is first described by Pliny and is used interchangeably as a term for vaulted semi-underground or underground structures. See Zarmakoupi, *Designing for Luxury on the Bay of Naples*, 75-87.
[129] Zarmakoupi, *Designing for Luxury on the Bay of Naples*, 224.
[130] Ibid, 75.

the villa was designed to blur exterior and interior space. Once in the southwestern block, one could reach the semi-underground complex and the Garden Room itself by a staircase leading downwards.[131] In elaborating the approach to the room in such great detail, the intention is to demonstrate how the experience of the space prepared the viewer for the unprecedented illusionistic qualities of the Garden Room, which is not only enhanced by the overall structure, architecture, and the surrounding topography of the Villa but also affected by its semi-underground position. Entering from the bright, exterior light and descending into the windowless, narrow hall of the semi-underground complex would have caused one's eyes to visually adjust to the darkness.[132] The period of ocular adjustment to darkness depends upon the duration of light exposure before. The shorter the period of exposure to light, the easier it is for the eye to adapt to darkness. Generally, it takes approximately 5 to 8 minutes for the eye to adapt to a darkened space, with only a heightened sensitivity after forty minutes. Visitors would likely have been exposed to daylight for a significant period before entering the dark hallway. The span it took to descend to the Garden Room through the 5 meter long hall is too short for the eye to fully adjust. With the sun shining towards the entrance of the room, the eye of the visitor, in the process of adjusting to darkness, would be hit by light. The ocular adjustments from light to dark and back to light would therefore impact the viewing process, inhibiting visitors' vision.

The formal erasure of the wall created by the floor to ceiling frescoes and stucco ceiling decor would have been enhanced by the momentary visual adjustment experienced by visitors. Instead of architectural elements in the frescoes that emphasize the fictive nature of

[131] Previous scholarship suggests the Garden Room was accessed via a ramp or inclined corridor, such as the one at the House of Livia on the Palatine and at the Auditorium of Maecenas, but these hypotheses were made prior to Messineo's excavations; see Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 46-47.
[132] Messineo, *La villa*, 242; Reeder discusses this and points out that Blake's hypothesis was made prior to the excavations of the southwestern residential block; see Reeder, *The Villa of Livia 'ad Gallina Albas,'* 46-47.

the painting, one sees abundant flora, while birds flying, perching amongst trees and shrubs, accentuated a sense of nature in all its disarray. The ways in which every tree, shrub and flower inclined away and towards each other also disguise symmetry, while accentuating variety and creating the sense of a gentle breeze flowing in the otherwise enclosed room. The inconsistent direction of the breeze and the light in the frescoes enhance the sense of a moving image and create the intended *trompe-l'œil* effect.

In her foundational study of the frescoes Gabriel outlines the technique and quality of the frescoes, noting various discrepancies in style and execution between each wall. She divides the four walls of the Garden Room into six panels, enumerated in a clockwise rotation that began to the right of the entrance (Fig. 18). Panel I and VI are part of the east wall, Panel II the south, Panels III and IV the west, and Panel V the north. The east wall is the entrance, with the west wall directly in front, and the north and south, to either end, feature lunette windows (Fig. 6 and 16). Gabriel assesses the technical quality and workmanship of the painted scene in relation to ancient Roman fresco painting. Her focus on details, however, neglects to consider elements, such as lighting, architecture and other decorative features, that would affect both the what painters saw when they worked and what visitors saw and experience when they entered the Garden Room. Reviewing Gabriel's estimations of the "superiority" of some panels reveal striking parallels with the design of the room and suggest that what she describes as poor workmanship may have been due to or affected by poor lighting.

In Gabriel's estimation, Panel I demonstrates quality in technique and execution, with beautifully painted quinces and pomegranates that are "suggestive of the master artist's hand" (Fig. 14).[133] She argues that Panel II was the work of the master artist and describes the

[133] Gabriel, *Livia's Garden Room at Prima Porta*, 29.

execution as "his particular masterpiece" that sets the standard for the other panels.[134] She sees in it even greater freedom and imagination than Panel I. Gabriel notes the "perfect composition" of this panel and the "harmonious design of the shrubs, emphasized by corresponding highlights."[135] This is the only panel to feature detailed colouring technique wherein the "greenish-yellow leaf stems turn into pink near the branches" of the painted foliage (Fig. 11).[136]

On the western wall, Panels III and IV, are of lesser quality in Gabriel's estimation. Panel III demonstrates beautifully executed quinces, like those in Panel I but the "daisies and chrysanthemums of Panel III are not as well painted as those in Panel II."[137] Panel IV, to the right if viewed from the entrance, is badly damaged. Despite this, Gabriel still contends that the brushwork in the group of laurel, oleander, and viburnum is of lesser quality, evidence that the student artist was "undoubtedly" helped by his teacher.[138] Gabriel maintains that the style and method of painting in the pine trees in Panel III and V differ and are much coarser than Panel I.[139] The western wall's general "lesser quality," for Gabriel, confirms that it was the work of a less skilled artists.[140]

Panel V on the north wall shows similar features, such as the softening of distant cypress trees and farther pine branches, "modeling, striation, and highlights on the bark and pine" that bear comparison to the details found on the pine in Panel II.[141] Like Panel II, the light of Panel V is "richer, warmer, and more varied than in any other panel."[142]

Finally, Panel VI on the east wall right of the entrance, is heavily damaged, which

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[134] Ibid., 28.
[135] Ibid., 28.
[136] Ibid., 29.
[137] Ibid., 31.
[138] Ibid., 29.
[139] Ibid., 29.
[140] Ibid., 29-30.
[141] Ibid., 29.
[142] Ibid., 21.

makes judging it difficult. This panel resembles Panel IV in its uneven composition and lack of balance. Gabriel writes that the "trees are placed in a careless, haphazard manner, and show no relation to one another [and thus] must have been painted by the artists who were responsible for Parts of III and IV."[143] She does praise the execution of the poppies but notes that the white strokes are broader over the darker leaves comparatively to the softly blended shadows of the poppies in Panel II. Overall, Gabriel contends Panel VI is of inferior in quality.

Gabriel's observations are valuable and not necessarily incorrect. With the removal of the frescoes from the site, the walls behind could be examined and the technique used to paint the walls studied with more precision. What Gabriel's argument disregards, however, is the way natural light may have affected not only what the painter or painters saw as they worked, but also what visitors saw when they entered the completed Garden Room. How did the vaulted ceiling with its painted stucco coffers, possible fountain, and other ornaments alter light? How did the time of day or the season one visited the room also contribute to what one saw? Though some of these questions cannot be verified with certainty, some hypotheses can be gleaned from observing how light may have shown on the walls and what Gabriel characterizes as "quality." The time of day and year allows us to estimate how the sun shone in the room, which would have had a significant impact on the viewing processes of the Garden Room's decor. At its zenith, mid afternoon light would have shone directly above the room through the skylight of the vaulted ceiling, moving westward and shining at an angle towards the entrance of the room at the east. The two lunette windows above the north and south ends of the room would have cast more light on those walls. This may explain the fact that the north and south walls, which contain Panel II and V, are two of the best executed

[143] Ibid., 30.

sections of the program since they received the most light. They are painted with finer and richer details because they were the most visible. Not only could the artist(s) see more clearly what they painted, so too could visitors.

Lighting explains the variation in detail and technique that is described by Gabriel in terms of quality and craftsmanship. The western wall, for instance, which Gabriel describes as of a poorer quality than the eastern wall, received less light, meaning that artists might not have executed such fine details and that, even had they done so, these would have been lost on viewers since the wall was not brightly lit. Though questions remain, it is evident lighting greatly contributed to the effect the Garden Room would have had on its visitors, an effect we can only imagine.

The Garden Room not only capitalizes on vision but also takes into account the other senses. Sound likely contributed to the room's realism. Visitors of any Roman, or indeed Italian, archaeological site today are familiar with the abundant sounds. The Roman countryside is ripe with birdsong and the rustle of trees and tall grass, cicadas in the summer and crickets in the evening.With adjacent gardens, open windows, and skylight, sounds from outdoors would very likely have been heard in the Garden Room itself. Like the atrium, the Garden Room allowed for natural light and air to enter the space. When looking at the painted wall, it is easy to imagine the wind from outdoors could be the very same one passing through the painted trees.

Other elements, such as a fountain or domesticated birds, which may have been present, would further contribute to the auditory element of the Garden Room and create another layer of continuity between interior and exterior. Owning domesticated birds was common among elite Romans and most aristocratic estates included aviaries that held an abundant variety of birds, which were kept to eventually furnish the lavish dining tables of

elite Romans.[144] The empty birdcage that straddles the stone balustrade in Panel II on the south wall suggests not only the presence of caged but also free birds in or near the Garden Room (Fig. 7). It would have been appropriate, and indeed complementary, for their to have been domesticated birds directly outside or even inside the room, flying among or perching alongside their painted companions. The multitude of external elements, design and decorative features therefore contributed to the Garden Room's decor, effectively transforming art into nature.

This marriage of architecture, art and nature is not unique to the Villa of Livia. Indeed the Vesuvian villas combine interior decor and exterior topography expertly. Mazzoleni notes that "illusionistic spaces painted on the walls at Pompeii seem to have several consistent directional orientations that vary depending on the subject represented in them."[145] Villa Poppaea at Oplontis, for example, is designed in specific orientation to its topography and orientation in line with Mount Vesuvius. While one enters through the villa's center at the archaeological site, if one enters at the Villa Poppaea's atrium, the rooms unfold in a labyrinth and "the architecture dissolves into a sequence of small, partially open spaces, creating long perspectives that are punctuated along the way by discreet screens, internal windows that frame one another. Thus our gaze into this space is measured in a cadenced way at different distances."[146] Zarmakoupi likewise discusses the ways in which porticoes were reordered to "open up the architectural composition of the villa and create a more immediate relationship with — and mastery of — the landscape theme."[147] At both the Villa

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[144] Varro's friend, M. Laenius Strabo, is said to have invented the first model of a large, decorative aviary at his Casinum estate in southern Latium around the same time Livia became mistress of the Villa Ad Gallinas Albas. Measuring approximately 22 by 14.6 meters, Strabo's aviary was a domed structure reached by an uncovered walkway and was one of the few meant to be ornamental; see Alba Costamagna, "Introduction," in *Galleria Borghese* (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 2001), 6.
[145] Mazzoleni, *Domus*, 19.
[146] Ibid., 26.
[147] Zarmakoupi, *Designing for Luxury on the Bay of Naples*, 122.

Oplontis A and the Villa of the Papyri, for example, miniature scenes of nature alternate with *xenia* (food still life) so as to toy with the imagination of the viewer at dinner, and thematic combinations of monumental architecture and garden scenes manipulate one's perception of space.[148]

Spectacular rooms that manipulated the boundaries between art and reality, architecture and nature, were meant to impress. Villa owners sought to awe their guests by not only complementing food, music, and entertainment but also by carefully planning dinner parties and using the sumptuous decor and design of their villas to their full potential. Indeed, Zarmakoupi notes how banquets and their "extravagant character of the dinner practices and entertainment … informed the architectural design of the dining facilities where the events took place."[149] Banquets required multiple multifaceted spaces for more dining, as well as entertainment ranging from musical to theatrical performances.[150] Some rooms were privileged for the visual effects they could create, namely through the use of light and architecture.[151] Banquets were organized and facilitated by a villa's design and the visual and spatial connections between rooms.[152] Banquets and similar events were elaborate and lengthy affairs requiring a full staff and lasting from one to several days.[153] Designers created versatile spaces that could accommodate as well as satisfy the needs of an owner's theatrical staging of his social status. These spaces often "opened out across the landscape and allowed guests to have with both inner and exterior scenery."[154] In contrast to the structured social performance that took place in the atrium of the urban domus, social interactions and social performance at the suburban villa took place during these events. Roman elite and designers

[148] Ibid., 125-6.
[149] Ibid., 180.
[150] Ibid., 222.
[151] Ibid., 196.
[152] Ibid., 210.
[153] Ibid., 186-203.
[154] Ibid., 180.

came together to build spaces that would seamlessly bind art, architecture, and nature with a villa owner's social status and identity.

Conclusion

The Villa of Livia is unparalleled in the way in which it blends landscape and art, nature and architecture. While the Villa Poppaea's design is limited by both its narrow plot and its orientation to the sea and Mount Vesuvius, the Villa of Livia's design accentuates its location making the villa seem limitless. The villa's interior gardens continue to expand space through its architectural design, artistic decor and use of natural elements. Likewise, the decor at the Villa Oplontis A and Villa of the Papyri simply complement the immediate space and social activity held there, while at Prima Porta the relationship between nature, landscape, and design far exceed the status of a pleasurable backdrop. The Garden Room does not merely complement the Villa of Livia's thematic spatial design, it builds upon and accentuates it. If we imagine the Garden Room as the culmination of a banquet, the illusionistic quality of the room is even more strikingly apparent. Walking through the villa, visitors are encouraged to view nature and landscape as part of the Villa, a real image framed like a painted scene. The centrality of nature to the Villa's design are easily distinguishable in the abundance of parallels between art and architecture. Gardens that expand a viewer's perspective and sense of space effectively set up one's experience of the Garden Room. The blurring of interior and exterior is completed through a reversal of the binaries at hand. When one reaches the semi-underground complex, the juxtaposition between reality and art is reversed and it is art that takes the place of nature.

In addition, Garden Room brings its own mythological and political context to life. The Villa of Livia aligns with the values upheld during this era. The villa befits the *princeps*

who brought peace to Rome and promised a return to older values, to the "good old days" of a glorified past. Nature is highlighted but not fully tamed; the villa's art and design is exquisite, spacious and verdant, but not ostentatious. The site allows a respite from the city of Rome, but also offers a view of its splendor. With its own sacred grove, the villa was a sanctified place, fit for its semi divine residents. The Garden Room is the zenith of the villa's expression of a Roman Golden Age. Here in this paradise all fruit are ripe at once, all flora in bloom; nature is in perfect harmony. Yet, without the experiential impact, the two dimensional painting becomes a beautiful, symbolic picture of Augustan ideology and marital bliss. Only by bringing art to life is the full effect of the Garden Room expressed, for then its visitors enter into a Roman Golden Age.

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Appendix

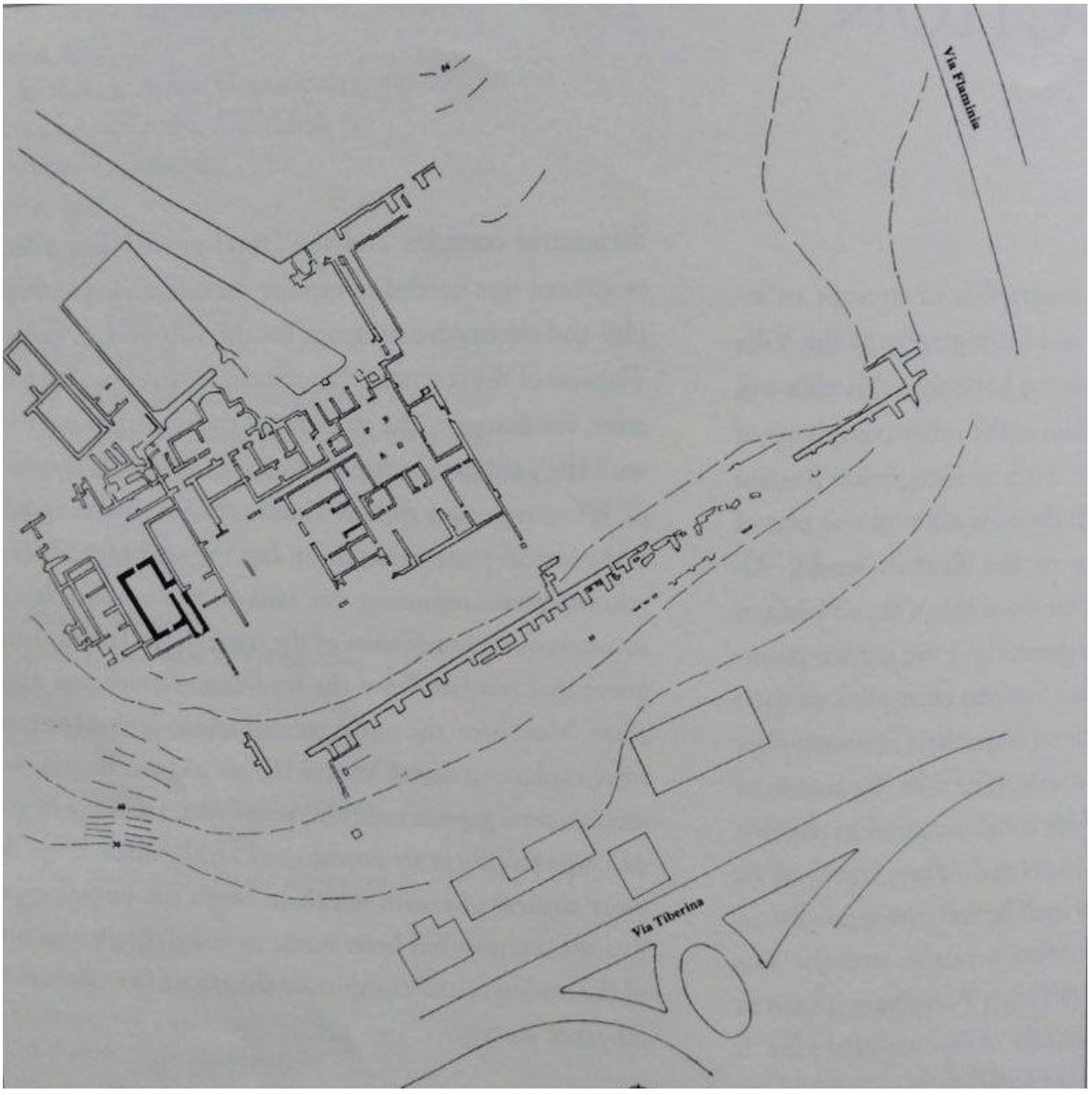

Figure 1. Plan of the Villa of Livia *Ad Gallinas Albas* with the Underground Complex Highlighted (left of center). Reproduced from Reeder (2001), 8.

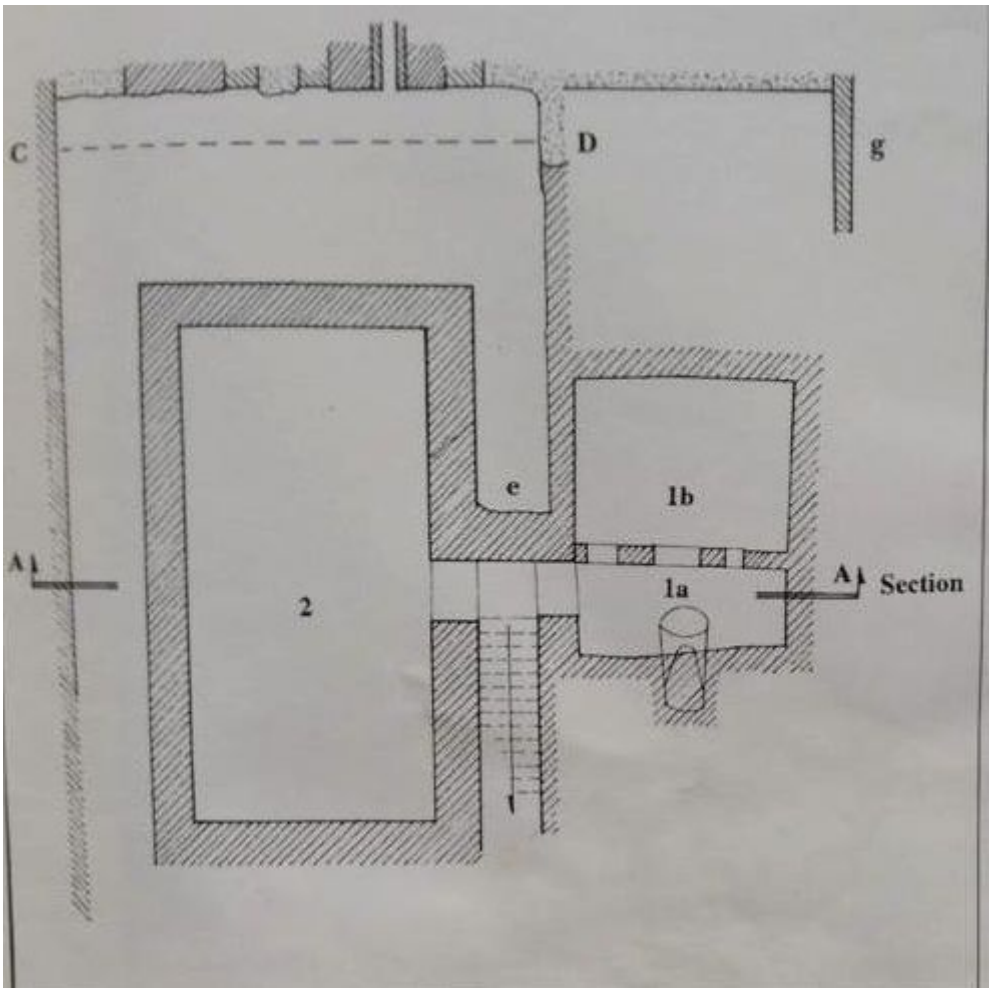

Figure 2. Overhead View of
Underground Complex at the Villa of Livia *Ad Gallinas Albas*. Reproduced in Reeder (2001), 15.

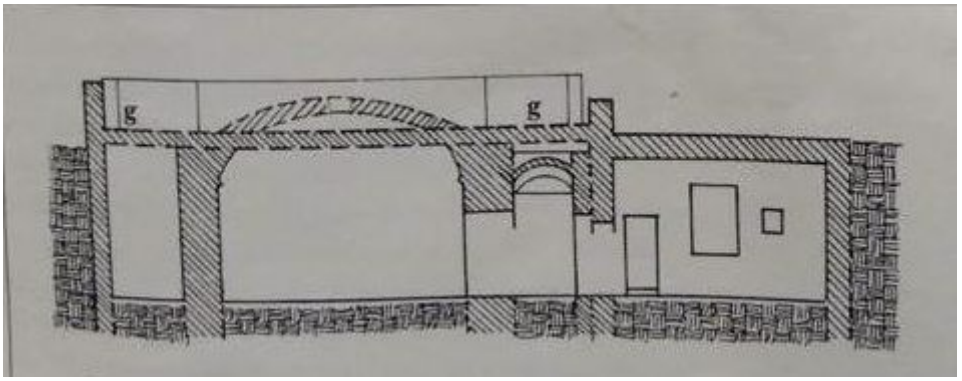

Figure 3. Underground Complex at the Villa of Livia *Ad Gallinas Albas*. Reproduced in Reeder (2001), 15.

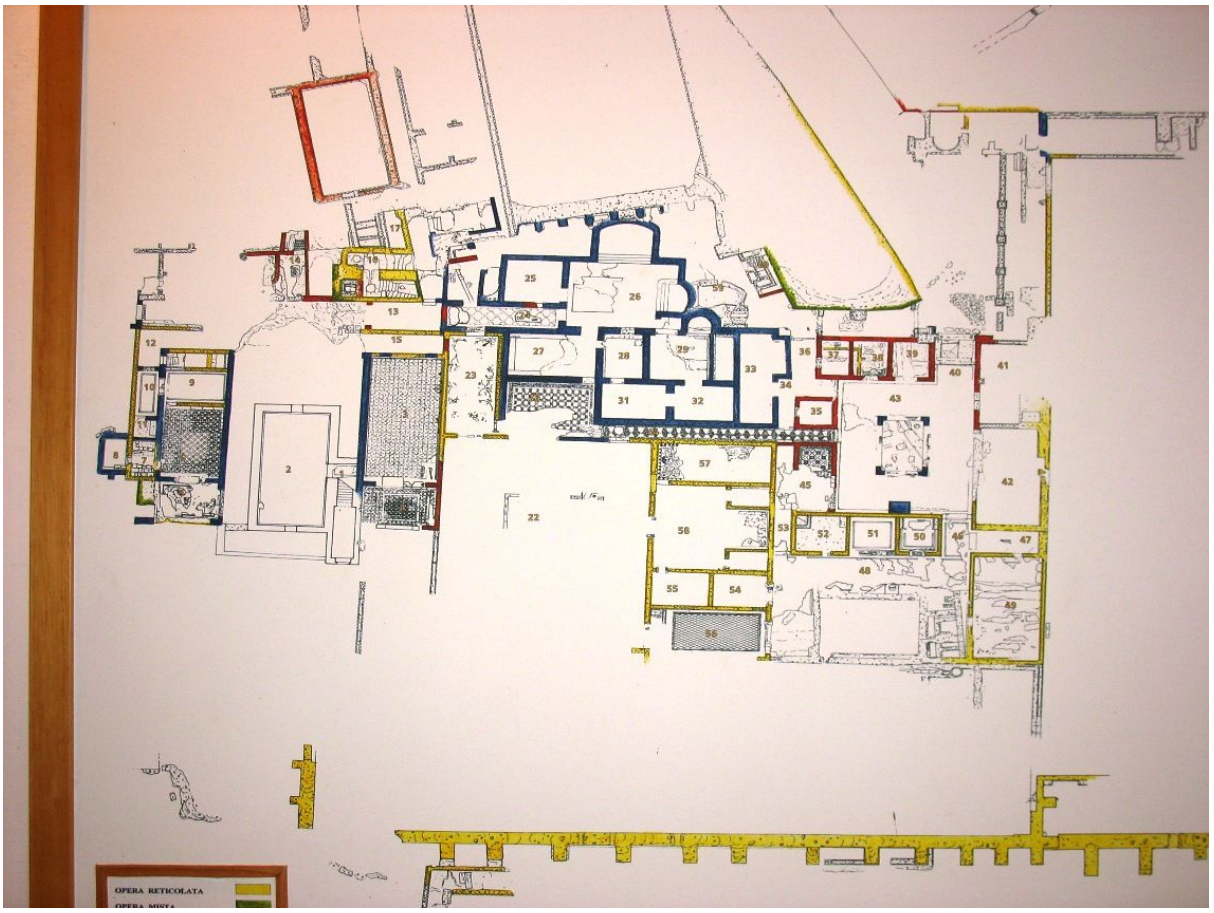

Figure 4. Villa of Livia at Prima Porta, site plan.

Figure 5. Villa of Livia Frescoes, view of west and north wall. Museo Nazionale Romano - Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Roma.

Figure 6. Garden Frescoes at Prima Porta Before Removal, view of north wall. Villa of Livia, Prima Porta, Lazio.

Figure 7. Details of Poppies, Stone Balustrade and Bird Cage. First century CE. Museo Nazionale Romano - Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Roma.

Figure 8. Detail of Fruit Trees, Flowers and Birds from the Garden Frescoes from the Villa Livia. First century CE. Museo Nazionale Romano - Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Roma.

Figure 9. Details with Stucco Frieze and Quince Tree. First century CE. Museo Nazionale Romano - Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Roma.

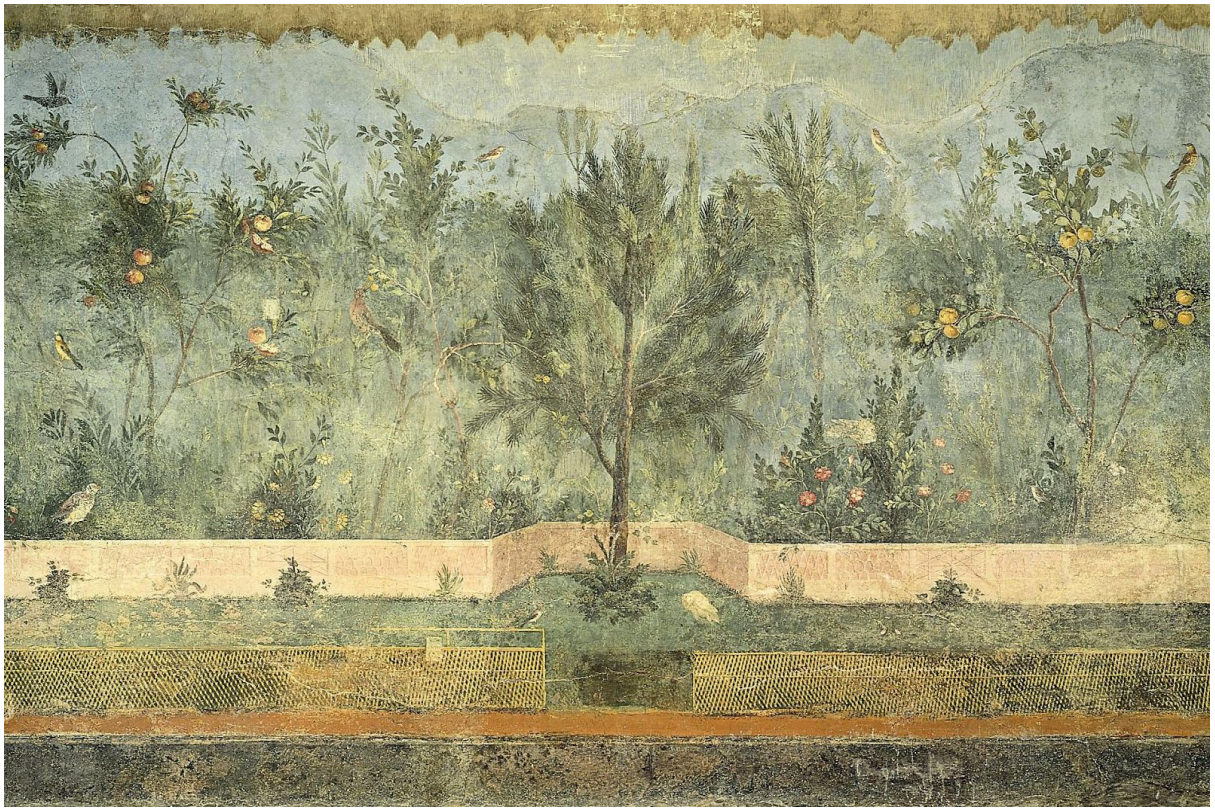

Figure 10. Details of Garden Frescoes from the Villa Livia (west wall). First century CE. Museo Nazionale Romano - Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Roma.

Figure 11. Details of Garden Frescoes from the Villa Livia. First century CE. Museo Nazionale Romano - Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Roma.

Figure 12. Details of Pomegranate Tree and Birds. First century CE. Museo Nazionale Romano - Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Roma.

Figure 13. Details of Ceiling Frescoes. First century CE.Museo Nazionale Romano - Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Roma.

Figure 14. Underground Room with Fresco Reproductions at Villa of Livia (east wall). Villa of Livia, Prima Porta, Lazio.

Figure 15. Underground Room with Fresco Reproductions (south and west walls). Villa of Livia, Prima Porta, Lazio.

Figure 16. Garden Frescoes at Prima Porta Before Removal (east and south walls). Villa of Livia, Prima Porta, Lazio.

Figure 17. Peristyle. Villa of Mysteries, Pompeii.

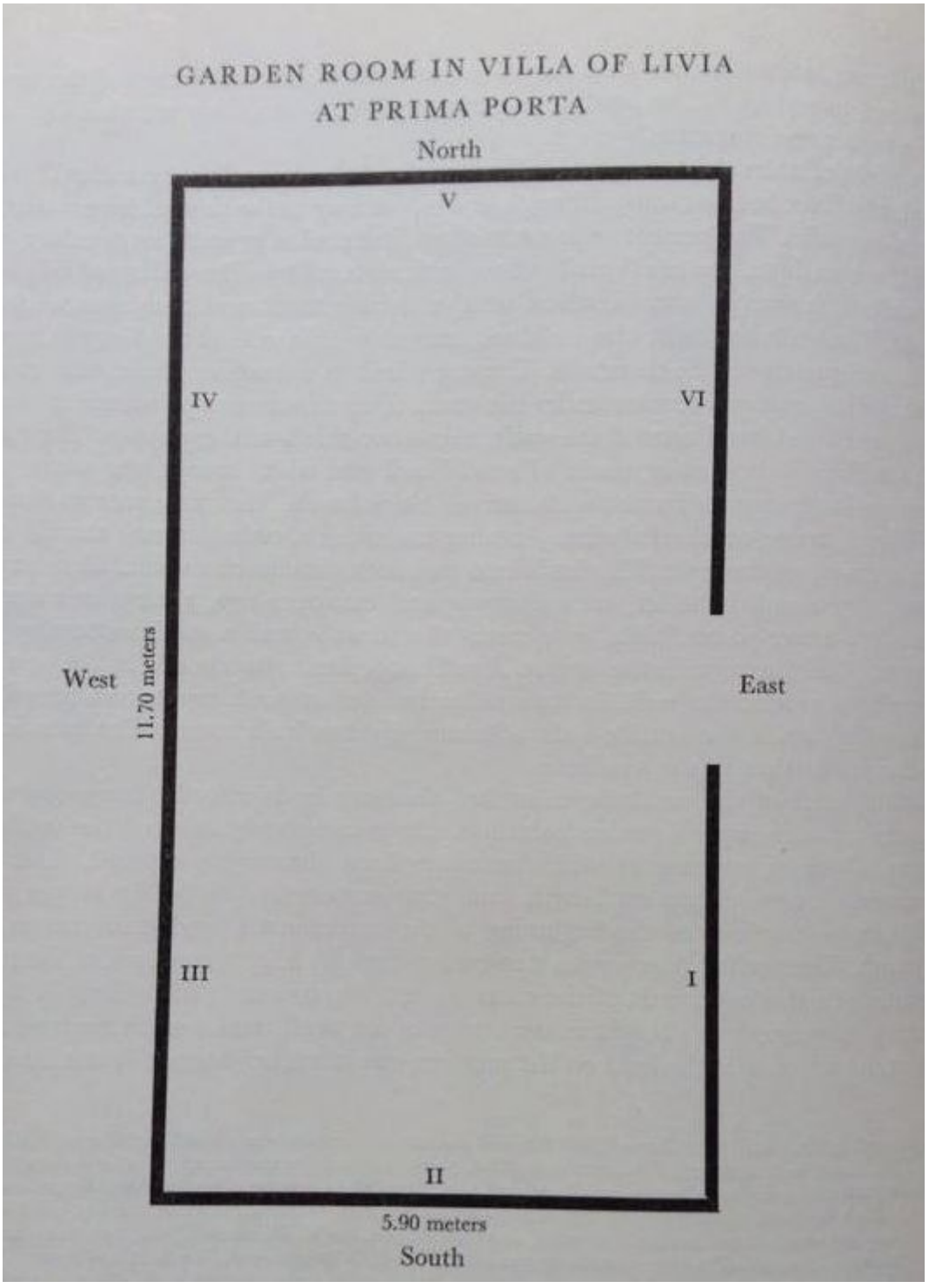

Figure 18. Garden Room Orientation, Measurements and Panel Division, from Gabriel (1955).

Figure 19. CAESAR AVGVSTVS between two laurel trees / OB CIVIS SERVATOS in three lines within an oak wreath. BMCRE 317 var (aureus only); RIC - (ditto); Sear - (ditto). Augustus AR denarius from aureus dies, Emerita mint. 19-18 BCE.

Figure 20. The wreathed head of Octavian with Greek style lettering "IMP CAESAR DIVI COS VI LIBERTATIS P R VINDEX" (left). Surrounding laurel leaf is an arising serpent from cista mystica and a PAX the goddess of peace standing left holding caduceus (right). Cistophoric tetradrachm, or a large silver type, weight of four denariu. 19-18 BCE.

Figure 21. Gilded Glass Gem: yoked (jugate) heads of Augustus and Livia. Roman, c. 5-14 CE. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.