Introduction

Is pink a color in its own right? There are grounds for doubting this or at least asking the question. Contemporary science refuses to grant it that status; for science, it is neither a color in terms of material nor light, but simply a shade of red, absent from the solar spectrum. In 1666, when Isaac Newton succeeded in breaking down white light into colored rays, he did not find pink, although in addition to red, yellow, green, and blue, he found purple and orange. Following his lead, physics and all the related sciences have continually refused to see pink as a true color, or even as a half color, but only as a shade.

For the historian, the issue is more complex. While it is clear that human beings only began to produce pink quite late, both in painting and dyeing, it is just as apparent that early on they observed this color in nature, and sought to both name and classify it. How to describe this shade that was visible on various plants and minerals, on the fur and feathers of many animals, and even in the sky when the sun rose or set? For a long time the lexicon was powerless to do so, as neither Greek nor Latin had a standard word for *pink*. Then it was a slow, halting process, with vernacular languages only adopting a basic term for it in the eighteenth century when a flower finally gave its name to the color: the rose in French, German, and Italian, and the pink in English. And moreover, where to locate this color in the *ordo colorum* of scientists or on any chromatic scale? For centuries, nowhere, since it had no name, and to classify is, above all, a matter of vocabulary. In fact, pink is absent from all color lists left to us by antiquity and the Middle Ages as well as from poems, chronicles, treatises, or encyclopedias that speak of colors.

Beginning in the 1450s, things would change. Chromatic repertoires became matters of hues, not just words; pink finally found its place there, a discreet place admittedly, but well attested. It is surprising for us, incidentally, to see that before being included in the range of reds, pink was classed among the yellows—a pale yellow tending more or less toward orange, as neither dyeing nor painting yet knew how to make vivid, saturated pink tones. It was not until the eighteenth century that people learned how to do so, and that pink was definitively considered to be a mix of red and white, after which it would be grouped with the "mixed" colors, along with purple, gray, brown, and orange.

The history of pink, as we will see, is an uncertain and tumultuous one, difficult to trace because for so long

this color seemed elusive, fragile, ephemeral, and as resistant to analysis as to synthesis. No doubt that is why there are so few studies on it, at least with regard to its history. Most of the works available address only the last few decades. They are often disappointing, focusing most of their remarks on gender issues alone: feminine pink and masculine blue. That is a shame because this issue of sexual distinction involves only a short period of time and represents only one aspect of the rich symbolism of pink. Beginning in the eighteenth century, pink finally occupied a place in everyday life and started to possess its own symbolism, independent from that of red, yellow, or white. It deserves our sustained attention, and all the more so because the shades of pink then diversified and even multiplied in contact with other shades, while its name grew rich with various figurative meanings and was adopted in many expressions and idioms, sometimes positive ("to see the world through rose-colored glasses") and sometimes negative (*l'eau de rose*, meaning mawkish or sentimental). If pink is not a color for the sciences, it is undeniably one in the material culture, in its uses in clothing, and the social codes accompanying them. There, it is autonomous and significant.

In all of these ways, pink can serve as an example to illustrate and underline the divide that exists in the domain of colors between scientific theories and social practices. In various domains, physics and chemistry too often dictate their truths to society. With regard to colors, this is clearly not the case. Far from regretting that, the historian can only rejoice: whatever the hard sciences say, pink, like white and black moreover, is very much a color in its own right.

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The present book is the seventh in a series begun almost twenty-five years ago. *Pink* was preceded by *Blue: The History of a Color* (2001), *Black: The History of a Color* (2009), *Green: The History of a Color* (2014), *Red: The History of a Color* (2017), *Yellow: The History of a Color* (2019), and *White: The History of a Color* (2023), all published by Seuil and Princeton University Press. As with the preceding books, the plan for this one is chronological; it is very much a history of the color pink, not an encyclopedia of pink, and even less a study of pink in the contemporary world alone, as are those rare works devoted to it. I have tried to study this color over the long term and in all of its aspects, from lexicon to symbols, and by way of everyday life, social practices, scientific knowledge, technical applications, religious values, artistic creations, the world of emblems, and representations. Too often works that claim to discuss the history of colors are limited to artistic stakes alone, which is very reductive. The history of painting is one thing; the history of colors is another, and much more vast, and there is absolutely no reason to limit it to the contemporary era.

That said, as with the six preceding works, this one only appears to be a monograph. A color never occurs alone; it only derives its meaning, it only fully "functions" from the social, lexical, artistic, or symbolic perspective insofar

as it is combined or contrasted with one or many other colors. Hence it is impossible to consider it in isolation. To speak of pink necessarily leads to speaking of red, white, blue, and even green and yellow.

These seven works now form an edifice I have been working to build for more than half a century: the history of colors in European societies, from Roman antiquity to the end of the eighteenth century. Although, as readers will find in the pages that follow and the other volumes, I range considerably beyond and before those two periods, it is within that—already quite ample—slice of time that the essence of my research lies. Similarly, I have deliberately limited my research to European societies because for me the issues of color are first of all social ones. As a historian, I am not competent to speak about the whole planet, and not interested in compiling, second- or thirdhand, works by other researchers on non-European cultures. In order to avoid making foolish claims, plagiarizing, or recopying the books of others, I have limited myself to what I know, and what was the subject of my seminars at the École Practique des Hautes Études and École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales for four decades, starting in 1983. A warm thanks to all of my students, doctoral students, assistants, and auditors for the fruitful exchanges we had then, and that I hope will continue in different places and institutions. Color concerns everyone and touches on all the issues of life in society, whether material or cultural. Pink is no exception.

A DISCREET COLOR

(FROM EARLIEST TIMES TO THE 14TH CENTURY)

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The Pinks of Pompeii

The walls of Pompeii display many red tones as well as a certain number of pinks. Sometimes it is a matter of cinnabar-based red pigments that were transformed under the lava and ashes. Sometimes and more frequently it is a matter of actual pink pigments, produced by painters to convey the flesh tones of nudity. These tones are always lighter for female nudes than for male ones.

Cult initiation scene, first century BCE. Villa of the Mysteries, Pompeii.

Appearing on the walls of caves as early as the Paleolithic age, red is the first color that painters learned to break down into an array of different shades. Nevertheless, for the ranges of pinks, they did so only relatively recently, at least in Europe: the fourth century BCE. The few traces of this color that we can discover dating back to earlier times, on walls or movable objects, are not due to the work of painters but instead to the work of time, which has sometimes transformed into various pinks tones that were originally red, brown, or orange.[1] This late appearance of pink in European painting is somewhat surprising because nature offers various examples of this color, not only present in many plants, minerals, and shells, the fur and feathers of some animals, but also resulting, in a more fleeting way, from light effects tied to the course of the sun, the cycles of the moon, and even natural phenomena like thunderstorms and volcanic eruptions. Artists and artisans of antiquity rarely sought to reproduce these shades, and it was even later still that European societies began to categorize and name them.

OPPOSITE

The Pink of the Paleolithic?

The palette of prehistoric painters is relatively limited: red, black, yellow, a little brown and orange, and sometimes white, but never green or blue. The shades of these different colors are quite numerous, but they are often the result of time rather than the painters' intentions. That is true, notably, for the few pinkish reds that appear in many caves, like the Cave of Altamira in northern Spain.

The great bison of Altamira, 15,500–13,500 BCE. Cave of Altamira, Hall of the Bisons, Santillana del Mar (Spain).

The First Pink Pigments

In ancient Greece, there are recent discoveries of Macedonian paintings that date to the late fourth and early third centuries, and provide the first incontestable evidence of the use of pink by painters. Here, pinks are finally truly pink, and not the more or less light reds or oranges tending toward crimson that we see in figures on vases where, during firing, they took on shades similar to those of brick or tile. Let us cite, for instance, a famous Attic kylix from the years 500 to 480 attributed to the painter Onesimos: on the base of the cup appears a nude woman—a rare theme on Greek vases—her reclining body an attractive pink tone, unusual even for representing female flesh, which was often shown as paler than male flesh. But this is a ceramic piece, not a mural.

The discoveries made in Macedonia over the course of recent decades involve actual polychrome interiors. They have created difficulties for the idea of a Greek palette limited to four colors (red, white, black, and yellow)—a notion inherited from Pliny and his modern commentators that must be definitively abandoned. This painted decor comes from a palace in ruins, funeral temples, and especially, princely tombs from the late classical and early Hellenistic periods, dating from the years 330 to 280. Conducted in several stages between 1977 and 2014, excavations unearthed abundant archaeological material (jewels, weapons, and precious objects), and brought to light a whole group of painted scenes and motifs that constitute an exceptional contribution to our knowledge of fourth- and third-century painting. Bedrooms, beds, stelae, thrones, royal furnishings, walls, and facades: all are decorated in vivid and varied colors, the stone as well as the marble, ivory, metal, or simple surface coatings. The most lavish decor is found in four large tombs located in the village of Vergina, not far from Aigai, the first capital of Macedonian kings: the tomb of Alexander the Great's

Kylix with Pink Figures

A kylix is a wide, shallow drinking cup, generally used for enjoying wine at banquets. This one shows an entirely nude courtesan–a rare theme in Greek ceramics–playing the game of kottabos. Kottabos consisted of trying to throw the wine lees from the cup into a receptacle situated at a certain distance while invoking the name of a certain person. If the player was successful, the match with that person would be favorable. Here the figures are matched by pink, a fairly common color in Attic ceramics, resulting from the nature of the clay used and degree to which it was fired.

Attic ceramic kylix, ca. 500 BCE. J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Getty Collection, Los Angeles.

father, Philip II, who died in 336; the tomb of Philip II's mother, Eurydice, who died a generation earlier; and the tombs of two other younger princes or princesses, both unidentified. There are many other tombs in addition to those four, in Vergina and elsewhere, as well as more or less significant fragments of painted walls and objects.[2]

Studying these tombs has added immensely to our knowledge of the pictorial practices of ancient Greece.[3] Not only is the palette much broader, offering eleven rather than only a few colors—red, black, yellow, white, blue, green, gray, purple, orange, brown, and pink—but those eleven colors are each broken down into multiple shades thanks to the mixing of pigments and superimposition of colored layers forming a kind of glaze. We can even note that painters were already using a technique we find much later in Roman painting: "optical mixing." To make pink, for example, they could certainly mix or superimpose white, but they could also juxtapose those two colors in small touches, thus letting the eye of the viewer mix them and see pink. That procedure, perfectly familiar to the ancients, would not become theory until 1839 when Michel-Eugène Chevreul included it in his famous work *De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs*, a copious and difficult book that nevertheless exerted great influence on the impressionist painters thanks to a synopsis of it provided by Charles Blanc in 1867 in his *Grammaire des arts du dessin*.[4]

The analyses done on these various Macedonian decors have shed light on the use of numerous pigments, more varied than those we know were used in earlier Greek painting. Let us cite here only the ones employed in producing pink tones by mixing, superimposition, or juxtaposition. The whites have a base of chalk or chalky materials, kaolin (white clay), and sometimes calcined bones—three natural substances that were already used by Paleolithic painters. But we also find abundant use of a product destined for lasting success: ceruse, an artificial pigment with a lead base. To make it, the simplest method consisted of exploiting the oxidizing action of an acid on thin strips of lead, tightly sealed in a receptacle containing organic matter ready to ferment and release carbon dioxide. Once collected, the ceruse was washed, crushed, dried, and stored in the form of powder. Despite ceruse's toxic nature, until right up to the modern period, all artists appreciated its covering power, stability in light, low cost, adaptability, and the quality of tones it provided once mixed with other pigments. This was especially true of pink tones, created with the simple addition of a bit of red ocher or hematite powder (a mineral compound rich in iron oxide), or even lacquers made from plants (madder) or animals (murex).[5] On the other hand, Greek and Roman painters never combined ceruse with cinnabar (naturally occurring mercury sulfide), a costly pigment that they otherwise used and abused (in Pompeii, for example). Like all lead-based products, ceruse could not be mixed with or adjacent to pigments containing sulfur.

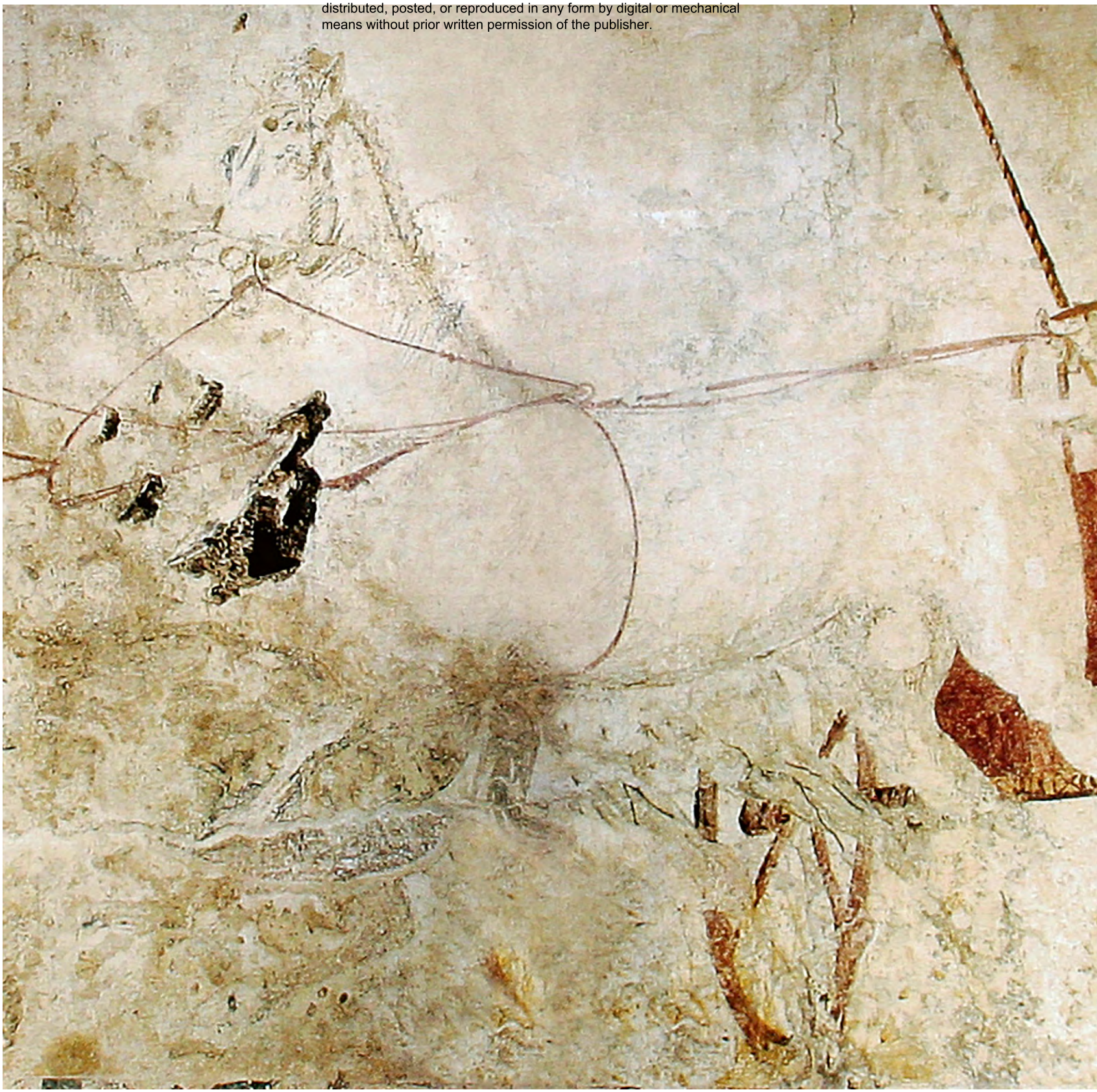
In relation to the painting of the classical period, the great innovations of the Macedonian painters lay in both the variety of their pigments and their way of using them to obtain different effects. The colors were applied in light touches and not on uniform, flat surfaces, thus allowing

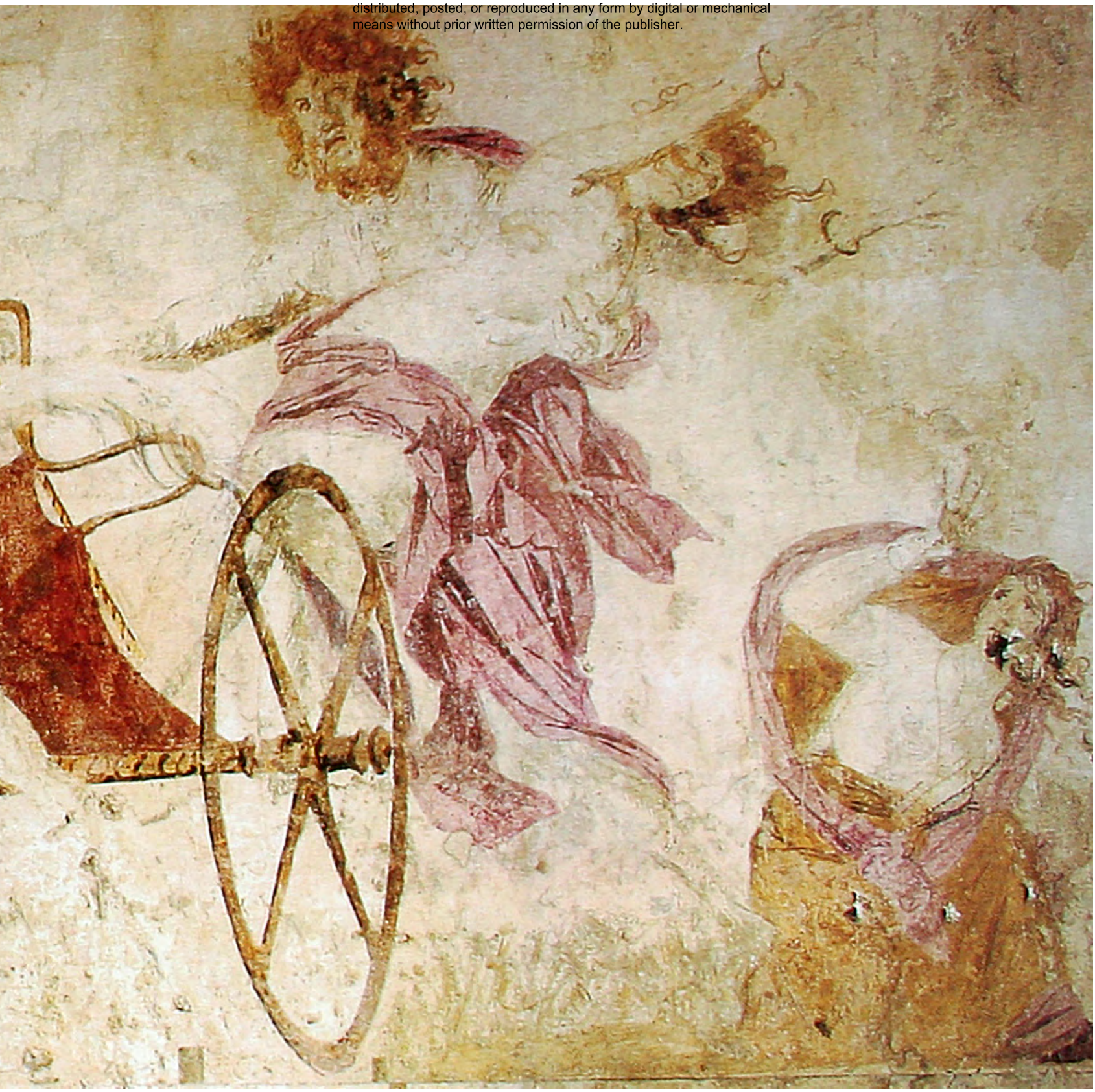
OPPOSITE AND NEXT PAGE SPREAD

Macedonian Funeral Paintings

Over the last half century, the paintings revealed on the walls of royal tombs in Vergina, Macedonia, have greatly increased our knowledge of the materials and processes used by Greek painters at the beginning of the Hellenistic period. Their rich and varied palette includes eleven different colors. The pinks were obtained by either mixing lead white, bone white, and a little red ocher, or juxtaposing small touches of cinnabar and white clay, leaving the mixing of the two colors to the eye of the viewer.

Hades abducting Persephone, funerary paintings in the tomb of Eurydice, mother of Philip II, king of Macedonia, ca. 340 BCE. Necropolis of Aigai, Vergina (Greece).





for nuanced shades, graduated tones, and sometimes subtle plays of transparency, which we will find more abundantly in Roman painting. Thanks to these variations in the application of pigments, the artists also learned how to manipulate relationships between shadow and light, to create illusions of volume, and even how to model, as in sculpture, the pose of a figure on a background, especially a human figure. Most of the painters working in Macedonia paid special attention to how they rendered flesh, mixing and superimposing pigments to vary skin tones, reserving the lightest for women and the darkest for men, and possibly distinguishing social status or ethnic origin through particular shades of skin.[6] Moreover, in a more general way, the delicacy of the skin tones brought to life the faces and bodies, not by making them more realistic, but on the contrary by idealizing them. In this domain, pink tones played a major role, and were broken down into subtle shades, more or less saturated, and lightly tinted with other colors: orange pink, beige pink, brownish pink, greenish pink, or bluish pink. This was an innovation, at least on this scale. In Western painting, pink would henceforth maintain a privileged relationship with skin, flesh, and nudity.

Stag Hunt

This famous mosaic was found in Pella, the birthplace of Alexander the Great, in a wealthy patrician's house that was known as the "House of the Abduction of Helen," the subject of another enormous mosaic. The artist, Gnosis, signed his work, but we know nothing about him. The two figures represented here are probably Alexander along with his general and favorite companion, Hephaistion. Marble tesserae provide the pink tones—a much more costly artistic material than molten glass.

Gnosis, Stag hunt, mosaic, late fourth century BCE. Archaeological Museum, Pella (Greece).

Ancient Flesh Tones

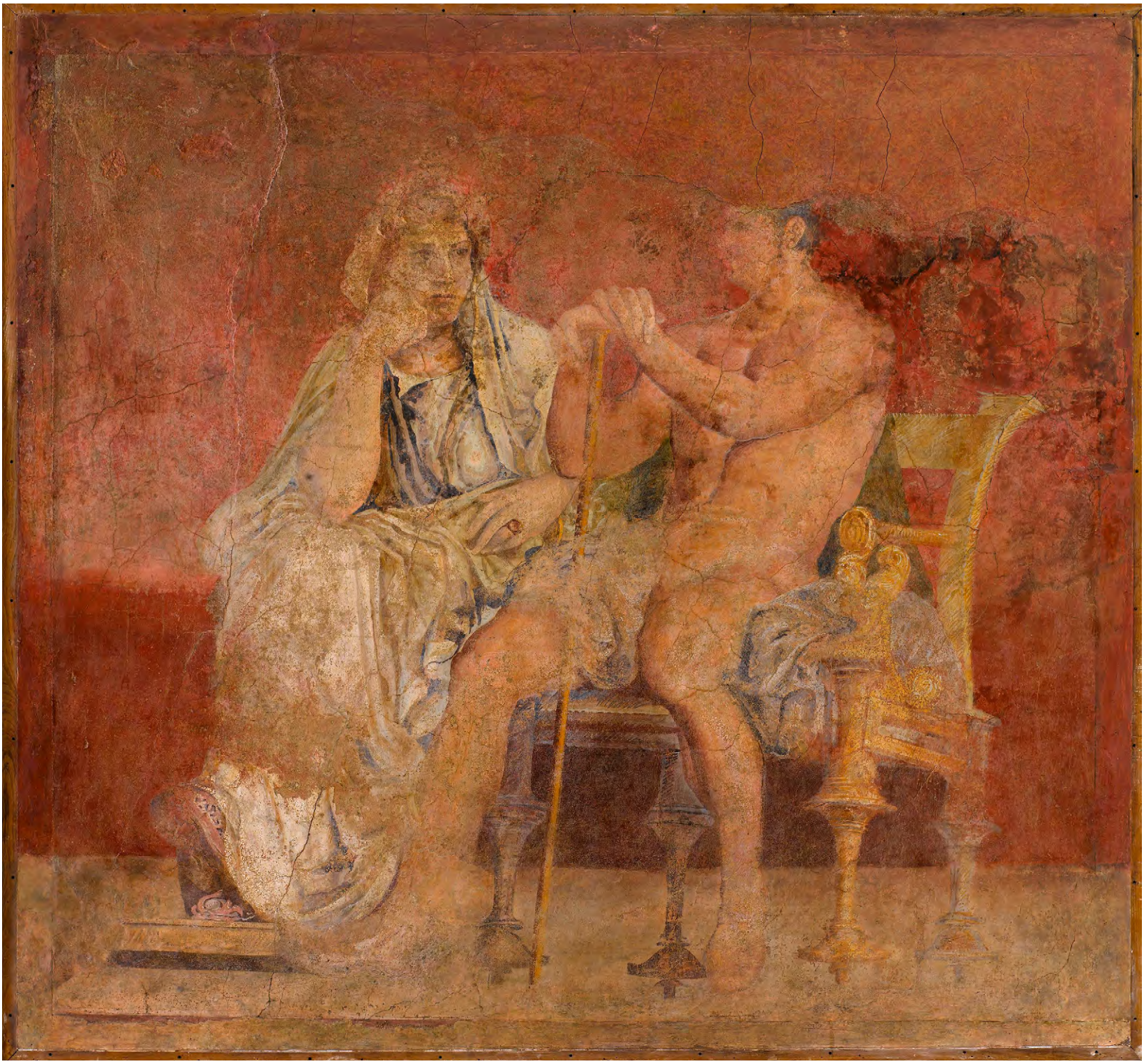
This close relationship between the color pink and nudity emerges fully in Roman painting. More frequently than in Greek painting, Roman painting presents the human body nude or seminude, notably in representations of the divinities and erotic art, abundant in the painted interiors of sumptuous patrician villas beginning in the first century BCE. The most famous examples come from the cities that fell victim to the eruption of Vesuvius around the Bay of Naples on August 24, 79, one of the most important dates in the entire history of painting. On that day, the volcano began erupting, and within a few hours, it had covered or destroyed four flourishing cities erected on its borders: Herculaneum, Pompeii, Oplontis, and Stabiae. Everything was engulfed or fixed in its current state at the moment of the eruption. Of course many inhabitants had time to flee—deaths totaled between 10 and 15 percent of the population—but public buildings, houses, workshops, shops, chariots, tools, instruments, merchandise, provisions, animals, vineyards, and gardens were covered and buried under stone, mud, lava, and ash, until the sixteenth century initially, and then crucially, the eighteenth century, when the first archaeological excavations began to extricate what could be unearthed.

Continuing to the present day—and far from being completed—these excavations have increasingly offered archaeologists and historians abundant materials for studying the material culture, urban life, and professional activities in the Roman Empire in the first century CE. And their contribution does not end there; they have also offered art historians an exceptional group of painted interiors, some of them remarkably well preserved, that have served for the past 250 years as our major source for studying Roman painting. Thanks to Vesuvius, Roman painting is the best known and best preserved of all ancient artwork.

Venus at Her Toilet

Roman mosaics often offer a palette of more diverse tones than do wall paintings. In particular, blues, greens, grays, and pinks are more abundant, more delicate, and lighter. This mosaic from a Roman villa is a beautiful example. It represents Venus at her toilet and is part of a series, following two other scenes: Artemis bathing, and Thetis, goddess of the sea, surrounded by sea creatures and sea monsters.

Pavement mosaic (detail), third century. As-Suwayda Museum (Municipality Building), As-Suwayda (Syria).



Sometimes extraordinarily sumptuous and refined, these murals are found in various villas that were owned by the wealthiest patricians in Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabiae. They mostly date from the first century BCE and first century CE. There is no comparison between what they offer us and what we can learn about ancient Roman mural painting otherwise from studying a few temples and villas located in Rome or its surroundings, or even in numerous cities in southern Italy, Sicily, and the provinces.

In Pompeii and other Vesuvian cities, red is ubiquitous, but pink is hardly less so, in a variety of tones. In some cases, it is a matter of yellows, reds, or purples that the heat of the eruption may have transformed into pinks (on friezes or columns, for instance), but generally these were the original tones: the flesh tones of faces, hands, arms, legs, and other parts of the body not covered by clothing. The wealth of examples is all the richer because the human figure is abundantly represented and erotic scenes are common, notably in bedrooms and brothels. Beginning in the eighteenth century, these scenes prompted surprise, alarm, and interrogation; they continue to do so today at the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, where one room (not always open) is devoted specifically to them. Not all the nudes in Pompeii are associated with Eros, however; a good number of the gods are naked for no particular reason, as are certain glorified or deified heroes. As for female nudity, it does not always evoke love or carnal relationships but more simply, beauty, fertility, prosperity, or even happiness or good luck. In Rome, Pompeii, and elsewhere, there is a great temptation to overanalyze or misinterpret such nudes anachronistically if the modern observer is too eager for spicy or transgressive content. How many historians of antiquity have thus gone astray, seeing "sex" where there is none!

Whatever the case, such a wealth of nudes provides us remarkable material for studying the range of pinks presented by these painters. There are many diverse tones. Some are pale and tend toward white or a very soft yellow; others are more saturated and tend more toward red, salmon, or orange; and still others are downright beige or even bister. Were they so before the eruption? It is hard to say. Furthermore, many of the flesh tones are not one uniform color but instead enhanced with glazes or highlights that are slightly amber, greenish, bluish, or even purplish. Just by itself, the Roman palette of pinks is almost a rainbow.

To obtain that palette, artists had many pigments available to them, which they were skilled at combining. There are the ones we have already encountered in Macedonia: chalk and ground limestone, kaolin, plaster, and ceruse for the whites; red ocher, hematite, and lacquers made from madder, kermes, or murex for the reds. Heating together ceruse and a bit of clay rich in iron oxide (*sinopia*) was a common method in Greece and Rome for making a pigment that offered lovely pink tones, although they had the disadvantage of being dull. Now in Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabiae, the preference was for high gloss, for what was bright, shiny, iridescent, and nacreous. Thus to make pinks, sulfur-based red pigments were used, like realgar, a natural arsenic sulfide already present in Egyptian painting, and especially cinnabar, the natural mercuric sulfide that we have already mentioned.

Banquet Room Decor

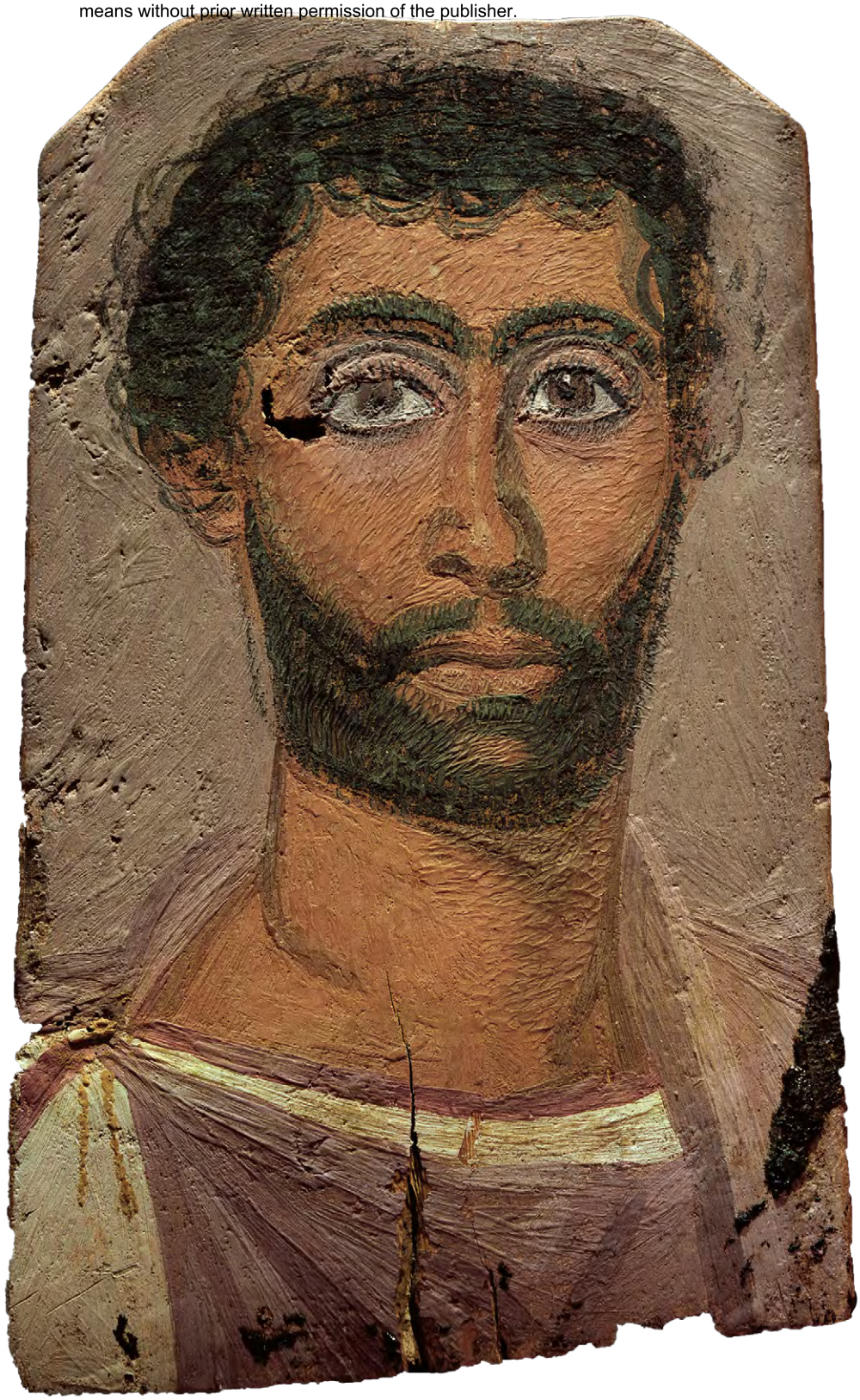
The eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE not only engulfed the cities located at the foot of the volcano but also buried the villas owned by wealthy patricians and scattered throughout the surrounding countryside. That was the case with the villa belonging to Publius Fannius Synistor, a figure about whom we know nothing, although his residence, with its abundant, lavish, painted decor, leads us to believe he was wealthy. Now housed in various museums, these paintings are, for the most part, remarkably well preserved. Pink tones appear in numerous shades, lighter for the flesh of women, and more orange for that of men.

Wall painting from the dining room of the villa of Publius Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale (Campania). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Encaustic Funerary Portrait Paintings

Inserted over the face of the mummified body, Egyptian funerary portraits from the Roman period could be stereotypical, or else as here, more or less realistic. For women, special attention was paid to makeup and jewelry, and for men, to the beard and hair. As in wall paintings, the female complexion is lighter and less orange than the male one.

Two Fayum funerary portraits (Egypt). The one of a mother, second century CE. Milwaukee Art Museum. The one of a bearded man, mid-third century CE. Roemer-Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim.



Despite its high price and dangerous nature (it is extremely toxic), cinnabar is everywhere in Pompeii, where it was used in an ostentatious way for painting backgrounds. Hence the dominant red appearing on the wall of many villas whose owners would have been considered "nouveaux riches" in the eyes of their contemporaries. In his *Natural History*, where Pliny is happy to inform his readers about prices, we learn that cinnabar cost "fifteen times more than red ocher from Africa," and that its price was even equal to that of "blue from Alexandria" (the famous Egyptian blue), the most expensive pigment of his time.[7] This luxury cinnabar was extracted from the mines of Almaden, located in the heart of Spain. Shipped to Rome in its raw mineral form, it was processed in many workshops operating at the foot of the Quirinal, an active industrial neighborhood, noisy and foul smelling, with a bad reputation. There was another, more ordinary kind of cinnabar that came from mines located below the volcanic mountains of the Apennines, but the painters of Pompeii seemed to disdain it. The artists' rich sponsors wanted whatever was most beautiful, expensive, and ostentatious. The fortune and rank of these sponsors had to be displayed on the walls of the lavish villas that they had rebuilt after the earthquakes of the years 61 and 62. The abundant use of cinnabar was a means of conveying their vast wealth.

It is to this cinnabar that we owe the lovely vivid, saturated shade that since the early nineteenth century has been called, a bit improperly, "Pompeiian red," and goes perfectly with gold or gilt. We also owe to cinnabar—and this is where our interest here lies—a great number of flesh tones in which small amounts of it were combined with chalky materials or kaolin. Sometimes a few grains of hematite were added to tone down its excessive brilliance. On faces, the tones thus obtained were often veined or shadowed with green earth or Egyptian blue. In the Vesuvian cities as throughout the Roman Empire, painting practices were already sophisticated, and the boundary separating them from chemistry, or rather alchemy, seemed fluid. Moreover, authors like Vitruvius and Pliny make that clear in the passages they devote to painting—Vitruvius in his treatise on architecture written about 30 or 25 BCE, and Pliny in the famous thirty-fifth book of his *Natural History*, compiled a century later.

Another important group of ancient flesh tones is provided to historians of painting by the famous "Fayum" funerary portraits (named for the rich agricultural oasis located in the western desert of Egypt). These portraits generally date from the second to fourth centuries CE. Painted on wood (sycamore, linden, oak, or cedar), less frequently on linen canvas, representing the bust of the deceased, head facing forward, they were meant to be inserted in wrappings over the face of the mummy. In Egypt under Roman rule, mummification was practiced much more often than cremation. These are the oldest painted portraits left to us by antiquity, and the most numerous as well; more than two thousand exist. Painted while their subjects were alive, the portraits were touched up at the time of their deaths, and served as both a means of identification and commemoration, and thus as a kind of survival for them. The most debated issue is clearly the one of resemblance: Are these realistic or idealized portraits? A little of both, probably, at least in most cases. Because although the body of work divides equally between men and women, and although it is relatively homogeneous from a social perspective (the wealthy classes, with clothing and hair styled in Roman fashion), there are no children or old people, and only a few adolescent boys and girls.

It is as if most of the dead had been represented at an ideal age, with traits that were certainly theirs, but more or less idealized as well.

Two techniques were used to paint these portraits: encaustic and tempera. The first technique, used in the majority of the paintings, offers less flat faces and a greater variety of skin tones. Pink tones abound, but these pinks are less "rosy" than in Pompeii or Rome; they are whiter, yellower, duller, and never uniform, but shadowed and accentuated or sharpened with other colors to model depths or emphasize an expression. The complexion is often darker for men than for women, who are made up and adorned with jewelry. Women's cheeks are of a more saturated skin tone than the rest of the face, and their lips are frequently bright pink or even fully red. The female complexion also seems smoother than the male one thanks to more finely ground pigments and smaller touches. All the faces contrast with the black or dark colors of the hair, eyebrows, and beards as well as with those of the background, generally neutral or summarily painted in beige, brown, grayish or greenish tones. Such a variety of flesh tones, otherwise unknown in ancient art, helps to make these portraits lifelike. Some of them seem to portray our contemporaries, to the point of having sometimes cast doubt—wrongly—on their antiquity or authenticity.

Dyes, Finery, and Clothing

Let us return to Rome, where the place of pink in everyday life was much more discreet than in Pompeiian painting. Only brick and tile sometimes introduced a bit of this color in street scenes, where reds, yellows, and oranges were much more present. The same is true for objects. None have survived that are truly pink, not even ceramic ones where the various shades of fired clay nevertheless formed a wide palette of rosy and orange tones. On murals, pinks were primarily flesh tones or else reds that became lighter over time. Mosaics, on the other hand, offered a slightly greater wealth of pinks, and these were the original colors. As for clothing—the first medium for color in all social life—pink was unknown there. There was no place for it in female attire during the successive waves of new fashions arriving from the East beginning in the first century CE. This introduction of frivolous colors (*colores floridi*), completely new to Rome, scandalized the old Romans (beginning with Pliny): blues, greens, blacks, purples, stripes, and brightly colored patterns, but no pink.

Moreover, naming such a shade would have been difficult. Latin possesses no word that means *pink*. The adjective *roseus* is a false friend that describes a bright red or vermilion tone, but not a pink in the sense that we understand it today. As for *rosaceus*, it refers only to the flower, to its beauty or scent, but never to its color. As it happens, that may be the reason why pink is absent from all color lists left to us by Latin antiquity; regardless the domain, pink is absent from any catalog or list of pigments, dyes, or colors. The same is true in the Middle Ages until the fourteenth century.

What documents we possess on the dyeing trade confirm this lack of interest in the color pink. Roman artisans nonetheless inherited solid technical knowledge in such

A Prelate Dressed in Pink

Ottonian illumination features more pink tones than do those from the Carolingian or Romanesque periods. In this regard, it may have been influenced by Byzantine illumination. In this frontispiece miniature, the archbishop Egbert of Trier (ca. 950–93) receives an illuminated lectionary that he himself commissioned from the monks of the Reichenau Abbey. He is entirely dressed in and surrounded by pink, a color present in images but not actually worn, especially by a high-ranking prelate.

Codex Egberti, Reichenau, ca. 980. Stadtbibliothek, Trier (Germany), HS 24, folio 2.

(continued...)