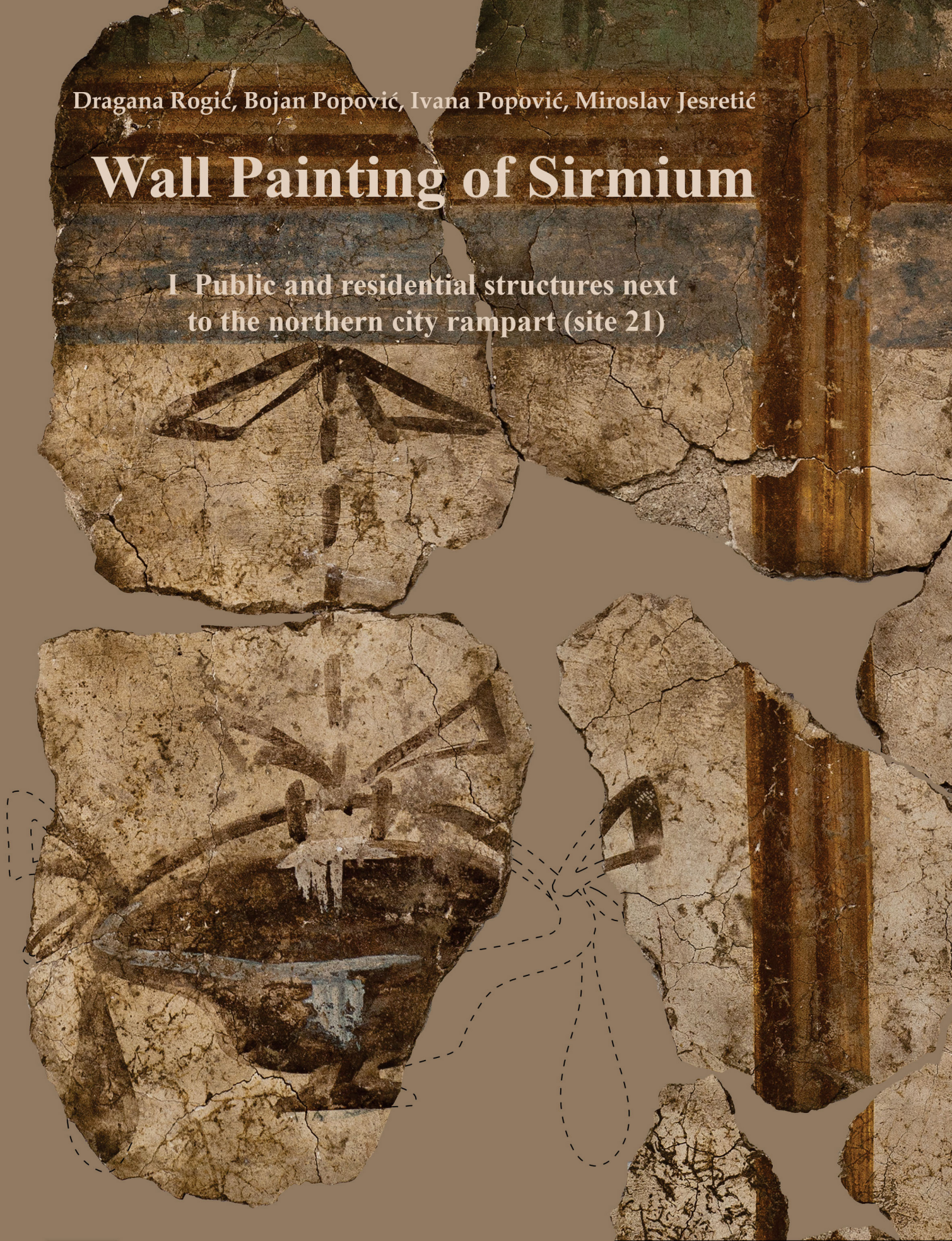


Dragana Rogić, Bojan Popović, Ivana Popović, Miroslav Jesretić

# Wall Painting of Sirmium

I Public and residential structures next  
to the northern city rampart (site 21)





**Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade**  
Monographs - N° 61

## **Wall Painting of Sirmium**

### **I Public and residential structures next to the northern city rampart (site 21)**

*Dragana Rogić, Bojan Popović, Ivana Popović, Miroslav Jesretić*

Belgrade 2017

**Arheološki institut, Beograd**

Posebna izdanja 61

## **Zidno slikarstvo Sirmijuma**

### **I Javne i stambene građevine uz severni gradski bedem (lokalitet 21)**

*Dragana Rogić, Bojan Popović, Ivana Popović, Miroslav Jesrečić*

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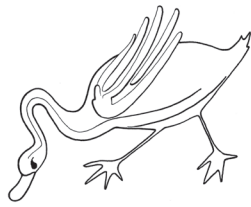
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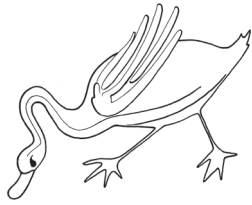
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# Chapter III







Dragana Rogić

## Compositions rendered on white intonaco

All the visual entities that will be analyzed further on in this work have one common characteristic – they are all rendered on a white intonaco background<sup>1</sup> (fig. 54), unlike the wall painting from the “Room of Muses” which was rendered on red intonaco background. The predominant colors are mostly bright, and the white intonaco background is visible. Apart from the results obtained in the course of the project “Processing of the fragments of Roman wall painting from the archaeological site of Sirmium” in 2010,<sup>2</sup> this paper will also present the new insights into the already published wall paintings.<sup>3</sup>

Since the fragments were, for the greatest part, discovered in the debris, it is difficult to reconstruct a general image of their original layout on the walls. For that reason, they are divided into several logical groups, among which an attempt was made to find the connection in terms of the artistic expression, colors and motifs. Even the very small fragments on which the motif was discernible were also taken into account.

The task was also impeded by the fact that segments of certain units had been conserved long time ago, and more fragments that used to belong to them were found in the depot of the Museum of Srem. A large number of fragments of white plaster surfaces and red borders, that comprised the backgrounds of the compositions, was also registered.



Fig. 54 - Plaster

<sup>1</sup> Intonaco is the finest layer of the plaster with the aggregate of very fine granulation, on which it is painted. The arriccio of all the fragments is composed of slaked lime and sand.

<sup>2</sup> See the footnote 2 in Conclusion.

<sup>3</sup> Popović 2008.



### “The unit with an oval floral band and a part of a figural representation”

If we take a look at the composition from left to right (fig. 55), a border can be seen that follows the white plaster surface. After it, there is a band with a pink base, adorned by light and dark green leaves, which in some parts form a flower with yellow-ochre stamens. The band with leaves is bordered by orange wavy, as well as linear, decoration on both sides (two yellow lines between which there is a pinkish one).

On the right side, a blue surface was painted, on which segments of an arm and drapery are visible. The blue field with a “hovering” human figure probably used to have an ellipsoid shape and was decorated with a wide band with vegetative motifs along the outer edge.

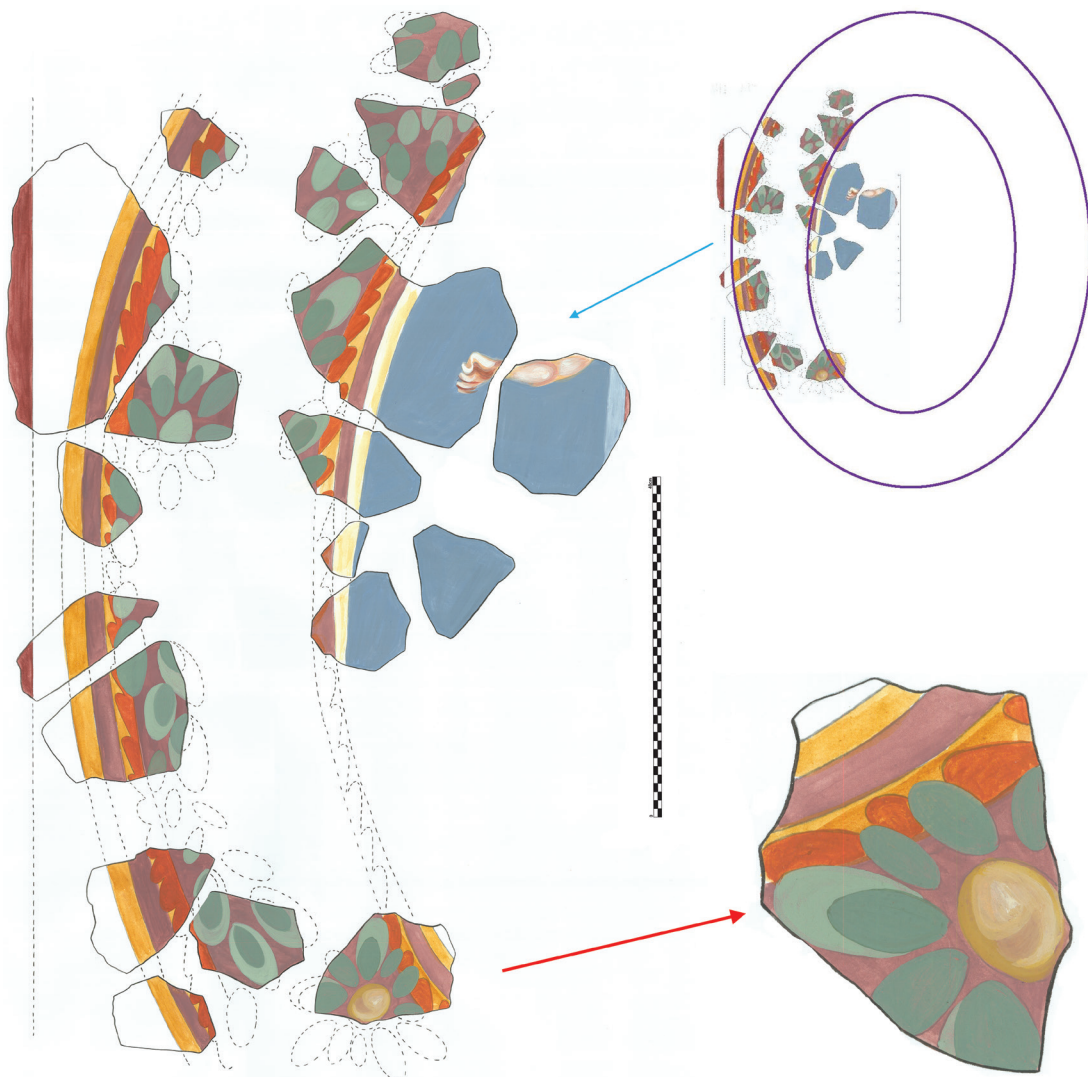


Fig. 55 – Visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić



### “The figure under a baldachin”

Fragments with segments of a drapery are found in the depot of the Museum of Srem (figs. 56 i 57). They round up the story of the so-called “female figure under the baldachin” which is familiar from the archaeological field diary kept during the 1960s.

The drapery was painted with blue color on a white plaster base. The drawing of the horizontal folds of the drapery was outlined in a darker tone, while the brightening is white. The edges of the drapery are outlined with white semicircular lines, and they end with semicircular ochre decorations on whose ends there are round ornaments with one dot above each. The drapery is not “hung” straight, but sloping to the left side.

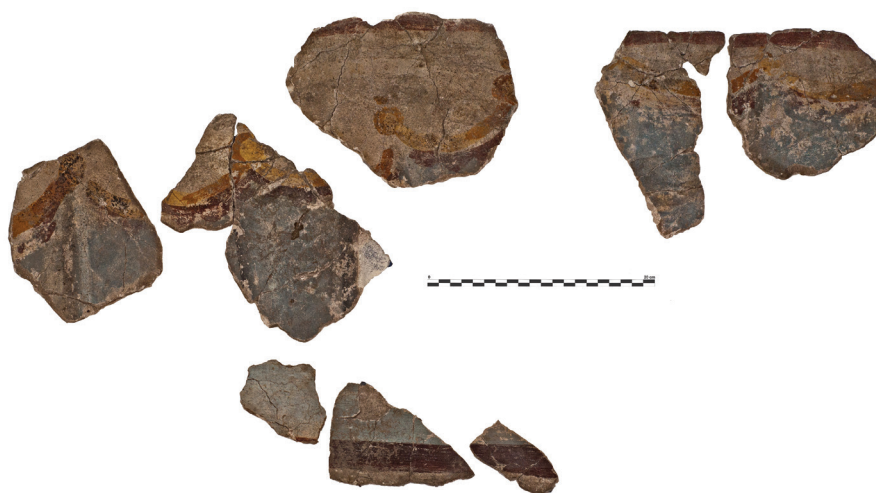


Fig. 56 - The original fragments, photo D. Rogić, unpublished.

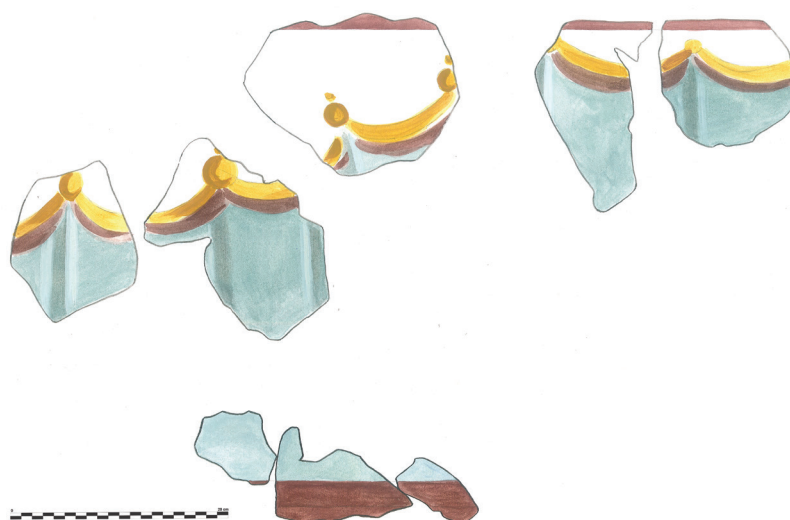


Fig. 57 - Visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić



So far, it has been considered that the representation of the female face in figure 58 depicts the goddess Luna.<sup>4</sup> In The Provincial Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments – Serbia, a drawing from the conservation documentation kept in the 1960s was found. The drawing indicates that the drapery from figure 56 and the face from figure 55 are actually the segments of one and the same composition. The face was preserved only in a photography, so the re-installment of fragments cannot be carried out, and any other reconstruction except for the one shown in figure 62 would be questionable.

More fragments that were depicted in the drawing from the documentation have been identified. These fragments were drawn so as to represent a part of a shoulder and an arm, but this is not the conclusion that can be drawn according to the original (figs. 60 i 61). The only assumption that could be made is that it was probably an entire figure, which is suggested by the lower fragment in figure 60 which could represent a segment of the hip (?). In terms of composition, that would be logical if we take a look at the theoretical drawing in figure 62 which nevertheless requires the entire figure, instead of the figure represented to the waist level. What is interesting is that the decorations on the drapery partly hide the hair of the figure. The whole scene reminds of a stage on which an actor is moving.

On the drawing from the documentation, a very small nimbus was observed around the head of the representation, and in the photograph it is a field a little lighter than the background. It is not certain if it is only an area on which the color is lighter or is it really a halo (?).

Since the mentioned fragments were placed together with the unit “with an oval floral band and a part of a figural representation” (fig. 55), perhaps they may be placed within the same context,<sup>5</sup> judging by the blue colored surfaces.

The representations of the draperies are painted in a wall painting from Herculaneum (*Casa de Grande Portale*, the last quarter of the 1st century, Third Pompeian Style), where an illusion of a theatre is depicted, i.e. a curtain with masks. Hanging draperies are also painted on the wall of atrium B in *Domus dei Coiedii* (2nd century, Fourth Pompeian Style).<sup>6</sup> The above mentioned draperies or curtains were represented in the upper zones of the compositions with architectural elements.

### “The Portraits in Medallions”

A finely modeled portrait in a medallion is on permanent display in the Museum of Srem, and it was already published in the book “Figural Wall Painting of Sirmium”, where it was determined as the “Medusa”<sup>7</sup> (fig. 65).

<sup>4</sup>Popović 2008, 38.

<sup>5</sup>It is possible that both the “Unit with an oval floral band” and the “Female figure under a baldachin” were painted on the same wall.

<sup>6</sup>Baldassarre et al. 2002, 207, 322.

<sup>7</sup>Popović 2008, 27.



Fig. 58 - After: Popović, 2008, fig. 1, 38.

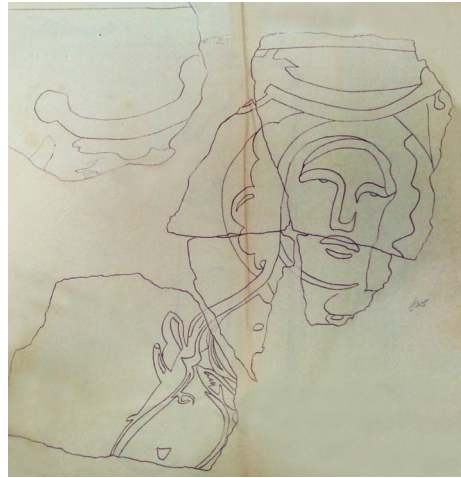


Fig. 59 - A drawing from the conservation documentation of The Provincial Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments - Serbia



Fig. 60 - The original fragments, photo D. Rogić, unpublished.



Fig. 61 - Comparison

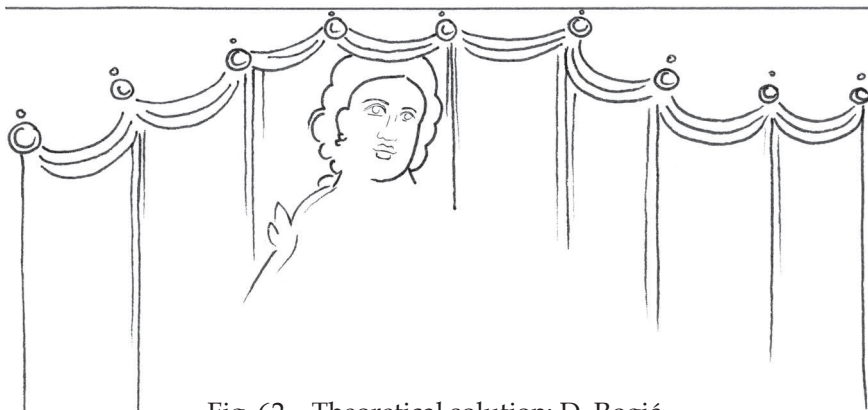


Fig. 62 - Theoretical solution: D. Rogić.



Among the fragments in the depot of the Museum of Srem, the ones that constitute another medallion with a portrait were discovered, too (fig. 63). Parts of a head are identified, features of the face are only barely discernible, and the eyes are most prominent. The face is depicted in a three-quarter view, turned to the left, framed by slightly wavy brown hair, and on the ears, there are earrings with two pearls on each. On the light green background, few green leaves of grass can be observed. On certain fragments, parts of red floral motifs can be noticed. The medallion is encircled by a red band with white dots. The dark grime conceals the beauty of artistic expression to a great degree.



Fig. 63 – Fragments with a portrait in a medallion, photo D. Rogić, unpublished.



If the representation of a face with the hair and neck only were reconstructed, its dimensions would be about 60 cm, while the diameter of the medallion could come to as much as 100 cm. According to the reconstructed drawing in fig. 64 it can be noticed that the medallion is, however, small in relation to the head, which confirms the opinion that the fragments of the medallion probably used to belong to the representation in fig. 65.



Fig. 64 - Drawing: D. Rogić





The portrait in fig. 65 is in a much better condition than the previously mentioned one. The features of the face are completely discernible, a part of one eye and jaw bone with the neck are missing. Because of the size of the portrait, the painter paid attention to details (fig. 66), like fine hairs of the eyebrows and eyelashes – they are rendered in brown color with a thin brush. The iris of the eye is painted by the upper eyelid. The carnation is very thin. The shading by the line of the nose is painted with dark ochre, in short horizontal linear strokes. The mouth is small, proportionally of the same size as the part of the nose at the nostrils. The lips are pouting, the upper lip is pinkish-brown, while the lower lip is the same color as the carnation, very light, and the shadow below it creates an illusion of three-dimensionality.

Around the hair, there are green leaves of grass and red flowers that resemble a wreath around the head. A dark red band is decorated with flowers with white petals. The diameter of the medallion is 96 cm. It seems as if the fragments with red flowers found together with the fragments of the medallion shown in figure 63 were mixed up during the conservation works and that they belong to the portrait represented in figure 65.

Among the fragments, parts of another medallion were found (fig. 67). The background of the medallion is green (same as in figs. 63 and 65), and ochre colorations that suggest that another portrait had been painted inside the medallion are visible. The dark red band that surrounds the medallion is decorated with green vegetative motifs, which remind of vine leaves.

Among the fragments, the one on which a part of chin of pinkish shade can be seen was also found. The neck was painted in light ochre color with white brightening. There is an ochre lunula necklace on it (fig. 68). A segment of ochre colored clothes can also be observed. The background is light green, like in figures 63 and 65. This is a figure or a portrait of large dimensions. The dimensions of the larger fragment are 17 x 23 cm, which means that the neck would be about 20 cm wide. By its size, this portrait could correspond to the one represented in figure 65. The colors are more vivid in comparison to the colors of the medallion from the permanent display, but the reason for this could be the fact that it was kept in the museum depot for over fifty years, protected from various adverse influences (light, dust etc.).

Among the fragments, parts of another medallion were discovered (fig. 70), similar to the ones in figures 63, 65 and 67.

All of this indicates that the medallions in figures 63, 65, 67 and 70 belonged to the same room, maybe even to the same wall, which, except by the artistic expression, can also be noticed by the colors and motifs that were used. Outside the outer borders of the dark red circular bands, parts of white plaster surface can be seen, as well as the surfaces of other colors. In three medallions (figs. 63, 65 and 67) red borders are present, but it is not completely clear in what way these borders used to frame the compositions with the medallions.

The analogous examples can be seen on a wall painting from the vault of the house from Brigetio (*Komárom/Szőny*, 3rd century). In the central part of the composition, a female



Fig. 65 - Portrait displayed in the Museum of Srem, after: I. Popović, 2008, 26.



Fig. 66 - Details

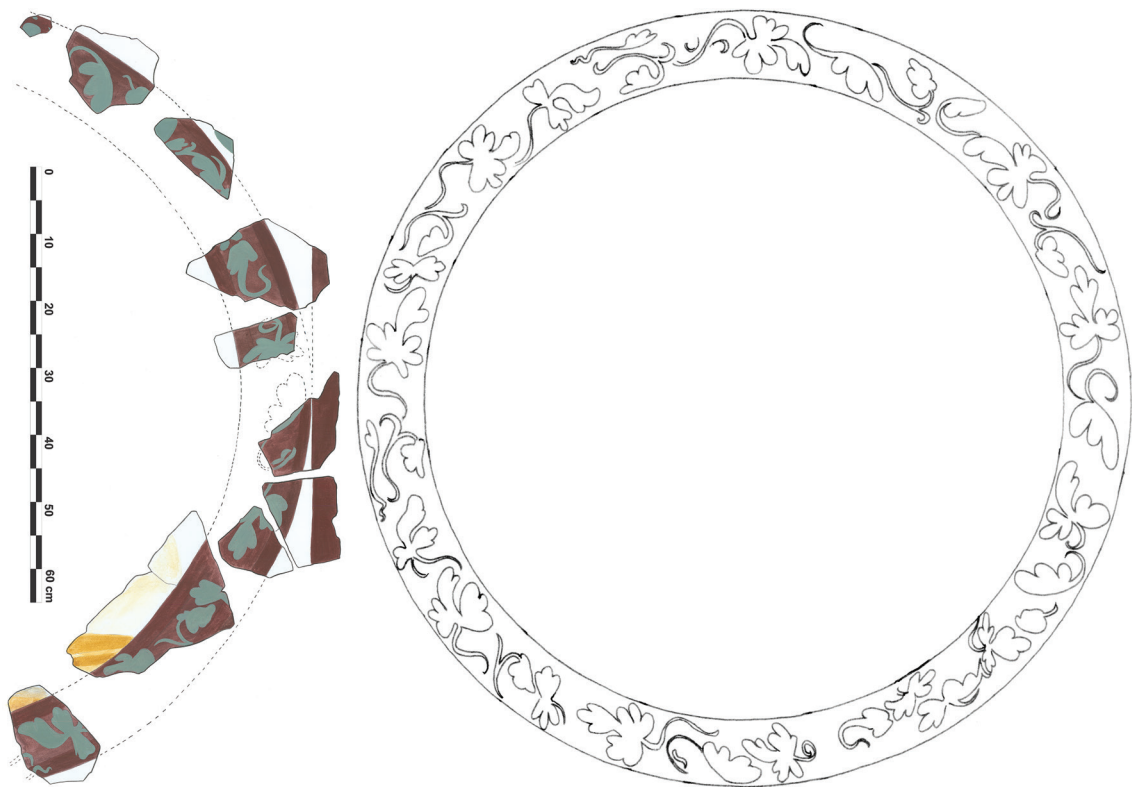
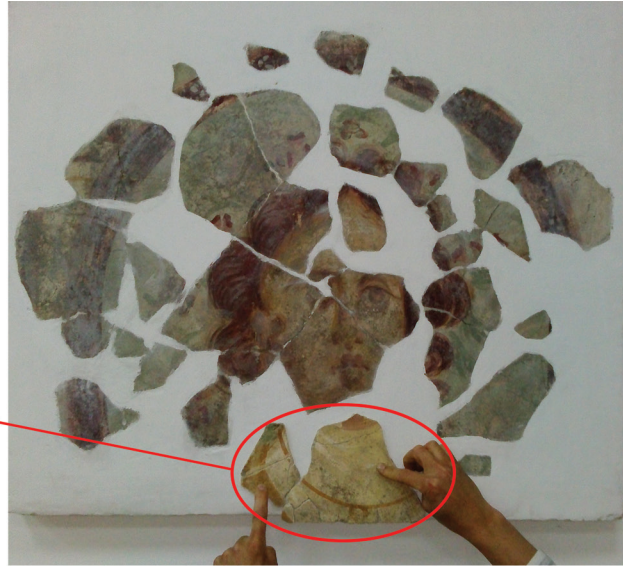
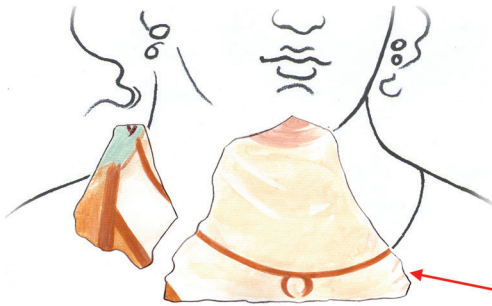


Fig. 67 – Parts of another medallion, visual appendix made according to the original painting:  
D. Rogić



Fig. 68 – The original fragments, photo D. Rogić, unpublished.



a. Visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić

b. Exponat displayed in the Museum of Srem with an additional fragment from the depot of the Museum of Srem.



c and d. Theoretical solution: D. Rogić.

Fig. 69



Fig. 70 – Parts of another medallion, the original fragments, photo D. Rogić, unpublished.

figure on a horse is painted inside a medallion, and in the four corners, personifications of the four seasons are placed. The personification of spring has a floral wreath on the head, “summer” – a wreath made of wheat, “autumn” – a wreath made of grapes, while “winter” has some sort of a veil on the head.<sup>8</sup> The representations of these personifications are placed inside square frames. Their faces are painted in a similar manner as the portraits in the medallions from Sirmium. On the personifications of autumn and winter, earrings with one pearl are painted, unlike on the ones from Sirmium, that have earrings with two pearls.

Portraits with depictions of the personifications of winter and spring can be seen on a mosaic from Stolac (2nd–3rd century) which was discovered in a Roman villa in a larger ancient Roman settlement. The personification of spring has a veil and a floral wreath on the head, a necklace on the neck, while the shoulders and the hair of the personification are covered by a cape, and there is also a wreath made of reed on the head.<sup>9</sup>

The example of a tomb from Anemurium (*Anemurium*, tomb B I 16), where the portraits of the personifications of winter<sup>10</sup> and summer<sup>11</sup> are depicted inside green wreaths instead of medallions should not be omitted.

According to everything said above, it can be presumed that the portraits in medallions from Sirmium represent the personifications of the four seasons. The personifications in the imperial art symbolize the security of the empire and its citizens.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Borhy 2010/2011, 51, 52.

<sup>9</sup> Busuladžić 2008, 48.

<sup>10</sup> Russel 1977, 140, Fig 4.

<sup>11</sup> Russel 1980, 4, Fig 4.

<sup>12</sup> Borhy 2010/2011, 52.



Since in the Roman mosaic art the Medusa does not have a horrifying appearance, but is transformed into a beautiful girl instead, with an apotropaic meaning, but also with a decorative role,<sup>13</sup> the assumption that the portrait from figure 65 represents a Medusa could be true.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, since another portrait in a medallion and fragments of two more medallions were found, it could also be presumed that the representation in figure 10 is not the one of the Medusa, but of one of the personifications, maybe spring, judging by the wreath<sup>15</sup> around her head.

### Figural representations of small dimensions

In the depot of the Museum of Srem, there is a portrait with a nimbus (fig. 71). By its dimensions, it is considerably smaller than the portraits in medallions (figs. 63 and 65). This character was identified as the Medusa<sup>16</sup> by I. Popović. The symbolism of the halo could point to some other interpretations, the nimbuses surrounded the heads of deities, personifications and the deceased mortals. In the art of the Late Antiquity, the imperial dignitaries were often shown with some kind of a halo.<sup>17</sup> Since the representation of a female in figure 71 has earrings with two pearls and a necklace with a lunular pendant, maybe what was previously stated could be confirmed – that the portrait does represent a lady of a high social status.

On the territory of Serbia, on the east wall of the tomb from Beška (4th century), the three Moirae with haloes<sup>18</sup> are depicted, while on the west side of a tomb from Viminacium a female decedent of a high social status was depicted with a square shaped nimbus.<sup>19</sup>

The wall painting on the ceiling of the Roman house from Trier (4th century) could be an analogous example. Antropomorphic figures are painted in the fifteen preserved “cassettes”. Four female portraits have nimbuses, as well as lavish jewelry, crowns and golden wreaths. The two common interpretations of these portraits refer to the personifications of the four seasons<sup>20</sup> and female members of Constantine’s family.<sup>21</sup>

According to the analogous mosaic examples, perhaps it might be concluded that the portrait presented in figure 71 represents either a deity<sup>22</sup> or a member of the nobility (?). By comparing the colors of the “portrait with a nimbus” to the fragments of

<sup>13</sup> McKeon 1985, 111–102.

<sup>14</sup> Popović 2008, 26.

<sup>15</sup> Rogić, Anđelković Grašar, Nikolić 2012, 342.

<sup>16</sup> Popović 2008, 25–26.

<sup>17</sup> Đurić 1985, 177.

<sup>18</sup> Marijanski-Manojlović 1987, 19 i 29.

<sup>19</sup> Korać 2007, 96; Anđelković Grašar, Tapavički Ilić 2015, 18; Anđelković Grašar 2015, 271–272.

<sup>20</sup> Rose 2006, 101.

<sup>21</sup> Lavin 1967, 99–102.

<sup>22</sup> Which is assumed to represent Venus: Popović 2008, Kat. Ib. 17, 33.



Fig. 71 - After: Popović, 2008, fig. 26.

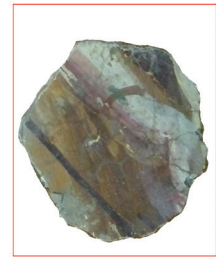


Fig. 72 - Hand representation is not published.



Fig. 73 - After: Popović, 2008, Cat. Ib. 12.



Fig. 74 - Theoretical solution: D. Rogić.



the upper body of another figure<sup>23</sup> (the fragment on the left side of figure 72) and to the fragment with a representation of a hand with a bracelet on the wrist (the fragment on the right side of figure 72 and fig. 74), the dark red color of the background that connects them can be observed. In the halo on the right side, as well as around the shoulder and the upper arm, an ochre coloring is observed, which could represent a segment of a cape (it is badly damaged). In the case of the fragment with a hand representation, a segment of ochre drapery can be seen clearly. Nevertheless, these are not the parts of the same figure, since in the case of the portrait with a nimbus a part of clothes painted with blue color can be seen. In spite of that, the colors, as well as the proportions of the parts of figures, suggest that they used to be a part of the same composition, with multiple figural representations.

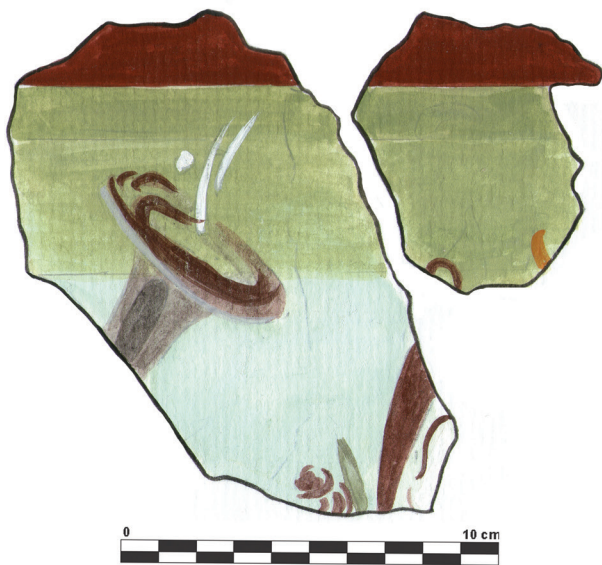
The same dark red coloring connects the portrait of Venus (fig. 73) and the upper part of the body shown in figures 72 and 74, which introduces another figural representation into this composition. On the upper arm of the figure from fig. 74 a hoop bracelet is painted, and on the neck, a part of a necklace is visible, which probably used to be similar to the one found on Venus (figs. 73 i 74).

The green color on the background of the representation of Venus also connects many other representations which are similar by the style of painting and the colors (fig. 75). Among them, there is a fragment with a representation of an object which widens in its upper part and out of which three white strokes “emerge”. The object resembles a grey-brown neck of a pitcher or a musical instrument (?), vegetative motifs are painted on the right side (fig. 75 a). A fragment of a face also belongs to this group, specifically – the fragment of an eye with the eyebrow, a segment of the forehead and the cheekbone, as well as the fragment with a hand and wrist with a hoop bracelet (fig. 75b). In figure 75c, a forearm preserved to the wrist is presented, with an ochre bracelet. The arm is slightly raised, and its upper part and the shoulder covered with ochre fabric reaching the elbow. Below the hand, the hair of a smaller figure, probably one of a child, can be observed. On the fragment on the right side, a part of another hand is represented, a forearm down to the wrist with a hoop bracelet. It could be assumed that these two arms belong to the same figure, due to the manner of painting, the painter’s palette, size, as well as due to the bracelets. The arms are firstly underpainted with green, then a drawing in the nuance of red and brown color is made. The carnation was painted in a very thin layer, in two nuances of ochre-pink, the brightening is white, rendered in the linear way, and the shadow is painted with dark ochre. The manner of painting can best be observed on these two fragments, since they are the most preserved ones. A red fruit with green leaves and three white berries can also be observed on the fragments belonging to this group.

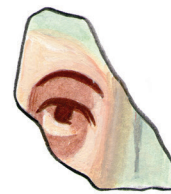
It is obvious that the fragments used to belong to the same composition with numerous figures of smaller dimensions, to which the portraits that are on the permanent exhibit in the Museum of Srem from figures 76 a, b and c can be adjoined.

<sup>23</sup> Which is assumed to represent Venus: Popović 2008, Kat. Ib. 17, 33.

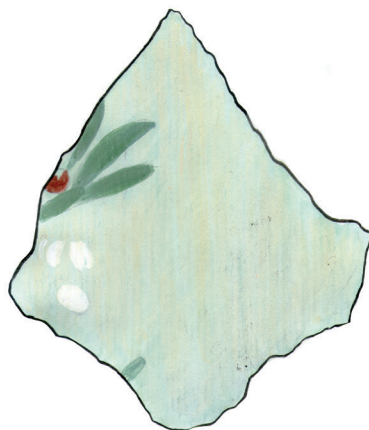




a.



b.



c.

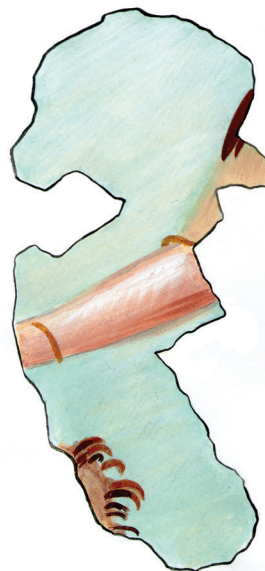


Fig. 75 - a, b, c. Visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić



Fig. 76



Fig. 77 – After: Popović, 2008, Cat. Ib. 13, 32.

The portrait in figure 77 is characteristic by its light purple background on one side, and green on the other side. The light purple background is also painted in one part of the “scene with a kantharos”, so this portrait perhaps completed that composition, too, on the left side (?) (fig. 98).

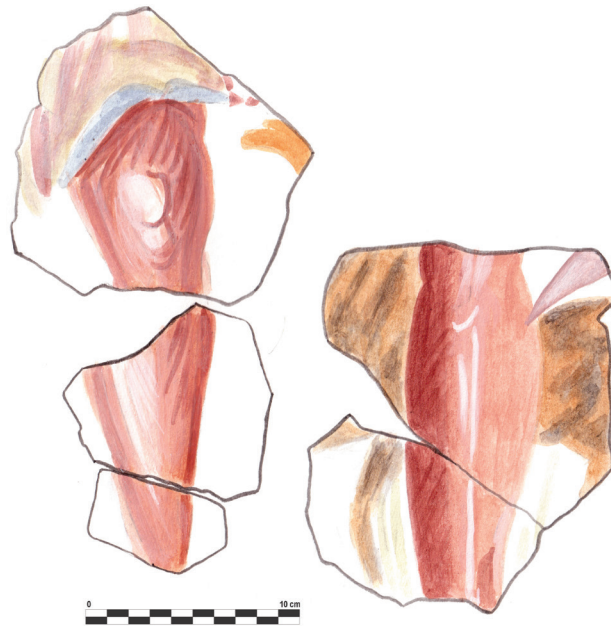


Fig. 78 – Visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić

The fragments with the representations of legs can be seen in figure 78. Three fragments constitute a leg on the left side. The knee is clearly visible, as well as a part of the thigh and the calf with the ankle. The carnation is light pink, while the shadings are rendered in sharp brown-red strokes, and the brightening is white. Above the knee, a part of a dress is painted. The background is white (plaster).

On the remaining two fragments (on the right side) the lower part of the knee and the calf are visible. The manner of painting and colors are similar to those in the previous description, only here an ochre black background which could represent fur of an animal (?) can be observed behind the leg. The fragments of these two legs do not belong to the same composition.

Except for *Bachus*,<sup>24</sup> another deity was painted on the wall of one of the rooms of the public object from site 21 (fig. 79). This unit is comprised of two fragments. On the larger one, whose dimensions are 21 x 25 cm, there is a hand holding a thin ochre thyrsus, 4 mm thick. On the right side, floral motifs are rendered in green and red paint, representing a segment of a wreath on the head. On the smaller fragment, a part of an elbow and the ochre staff can be seen. The arm is underpainted with pink color and raised to the level of the head.

A similar position of arm and the wreath on the head can be seen on the panel with *Bachus* which is on permanent display in the Museum of Srem (fig. 80). The figure of *Bachus* is of much smaller dimensions than the figure from fig. 22 would be (its height could even exceed 120 cm). By the colors and the lazure layers of the paints it can be considered that in both cases this is a fresco technique.

<sup>24</sup> Popović 2008, 28.



Fig. 79 - Deity



Fig. 80 - Bachus

### The portrait of a child or a cupid

The wall painting with a portrait of a “child or cupid” was not preserved, the only information about it is a black and white photograph in the documentation of the Institute of Archaeology (fig. 81). We cannot discuss the colors, except for the fact that it can be observed that the background is darker, and above the head, as well as on the left and right, a light surface is painted. Judging by the proportions of the forehead and other features of the face, this could be a representation of a child. Children are frequently painted with big eyes and foreheads. The hair of the representation is short, with high whiskers. It is possible that the light surfaces around the head actually represent wings, which would indicate that this is a representation of a cupid. The area above the head resembles a part of a drapery, judging by the manner in which the folds are painted.

### Plant motifs

The plant motifs are almost always present in Roman painting, because of their decorative effect as well as because of their symbolism.<sup>25</sup> The motifs that will be discussed further in the text could not be connected to the larger compositions, but regardless of that, all the examples will be presented.

<sup>25</sup> Рогић, Анђелковић 2011, 85-103.



Fig. 81 – After: Popović, 2008, 34



Fig. 82 – Visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić

Among these fragments, those with representations of two trees stand out (fig. 82), on the unit on the right, the trunk and the branches of a tree with leaves can be seen. The trunk and the branches of the tree are rendered in brown nuances, and the leaves in two shades of green, in lazure and in some places in thicker paint. A segment of the lower part of the trunk around which there are leaves of grass is visible on the fragment on the right side. Two entirely different artistic expressions can be observed in the tree representations, a looser and a more realistic one.

Different types of green plant decorations can be seen in figure 83.

Among the fragments, floral, dotted and linear motifs rendered in ochre and red color on a white plaster surface are registered (fig. 84).

The example of the green leaves rendered on a black background is very specific. This is a rare example from site 21 in which the black color is not painted on the so-called red intonaco or another underpainted color, which was habitually done so as to increase the coverage of black color. The leaves are rendered in two shades of green, above them, the linear decoration continues: a light green band – 1,6 mm, in the middle of which there is a white line, 8 mm thick, then a red band – 1,6 mm, followed by a thin black line (sl. 85). Another very specific vegetative decoration is rendered in ochre color on a white plaster surface with the remains of a dark red border (fig. 86).

Parts of red spiral garlands with a bow can be seen on the conserved panel no. 5 (fig. 87). Fragments with the parts of a red spiral garland are found in the museum depot of the Museum of Srem (fig. 88).

On a group of fragments with lazure blue background (fig. 90), ochre semicircular motifs and dots are painted. The vertical lines were carved in while the plaster was still fresh. A part of a wavy blue garland whose inner area is decorated with red strokes is observed among the above mentioned fragments (fig. 91), as well as a floral motif (fig. 92). On three fragments with a light orange background, a pastuous white floral motif can be observed (fig. 89). On one fragment, the orange base comes after a blue coloring, and these two colors are separated by a white line.

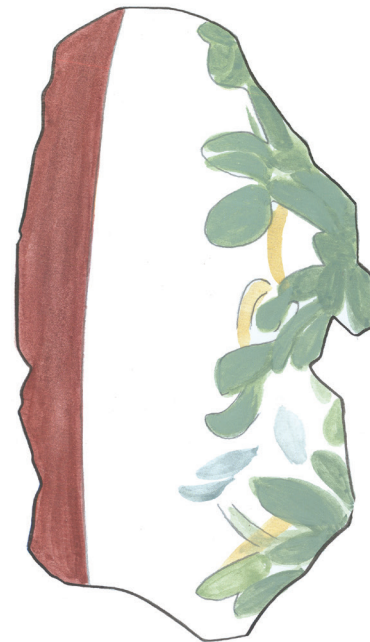
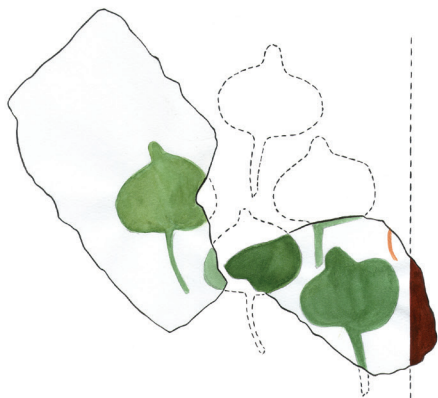
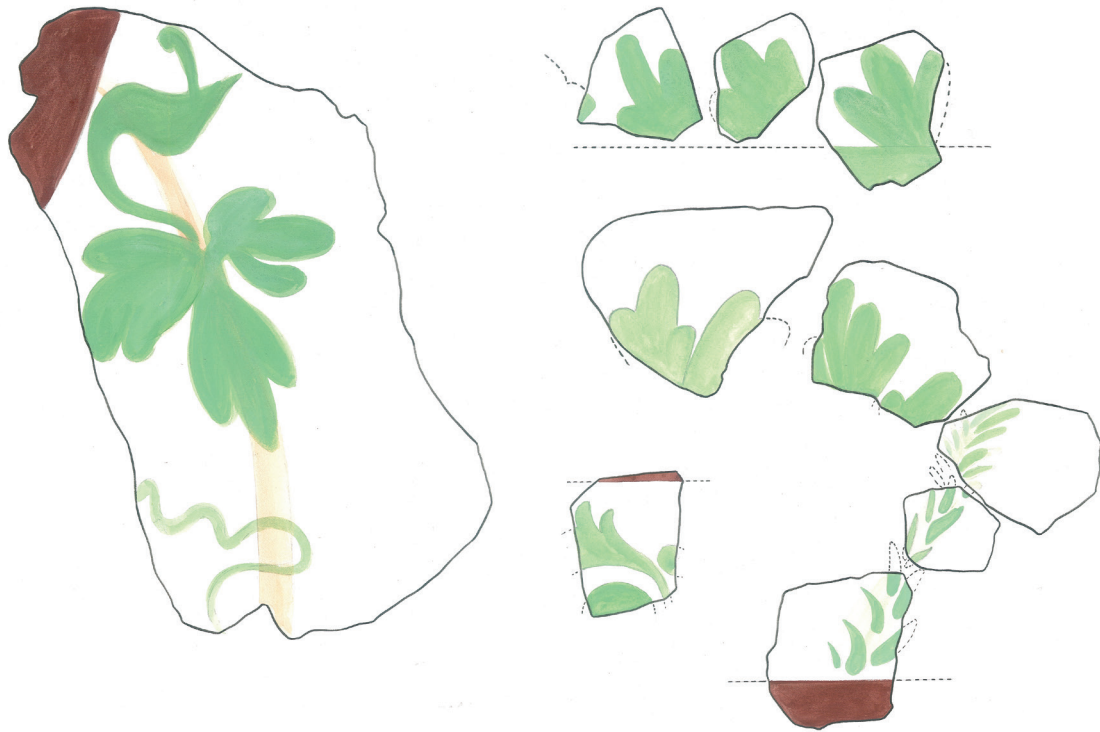


Fig. 83 - Visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić



Fig. 84 - Visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić

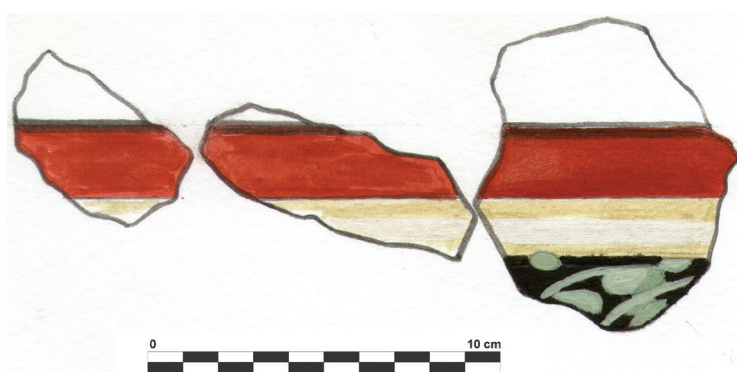


Fig. 85 - Visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić



Fig. 86 - Visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić



Fig. 87 – Panel no. 5, photo: D. Rogić, unpublished.

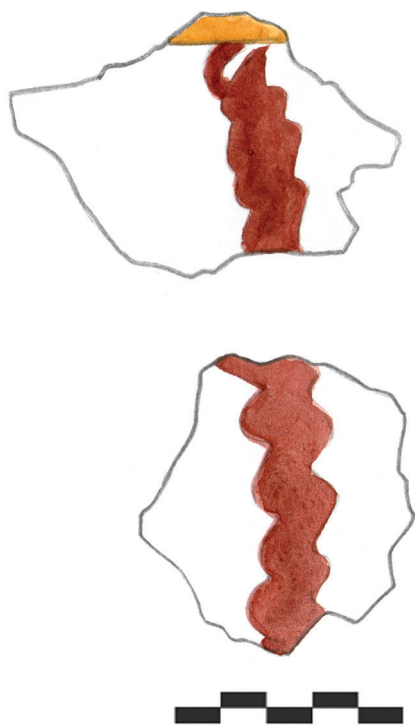


Fig. 88 – Red spiral garland, visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić



Fig. 89 – Pastuous white color



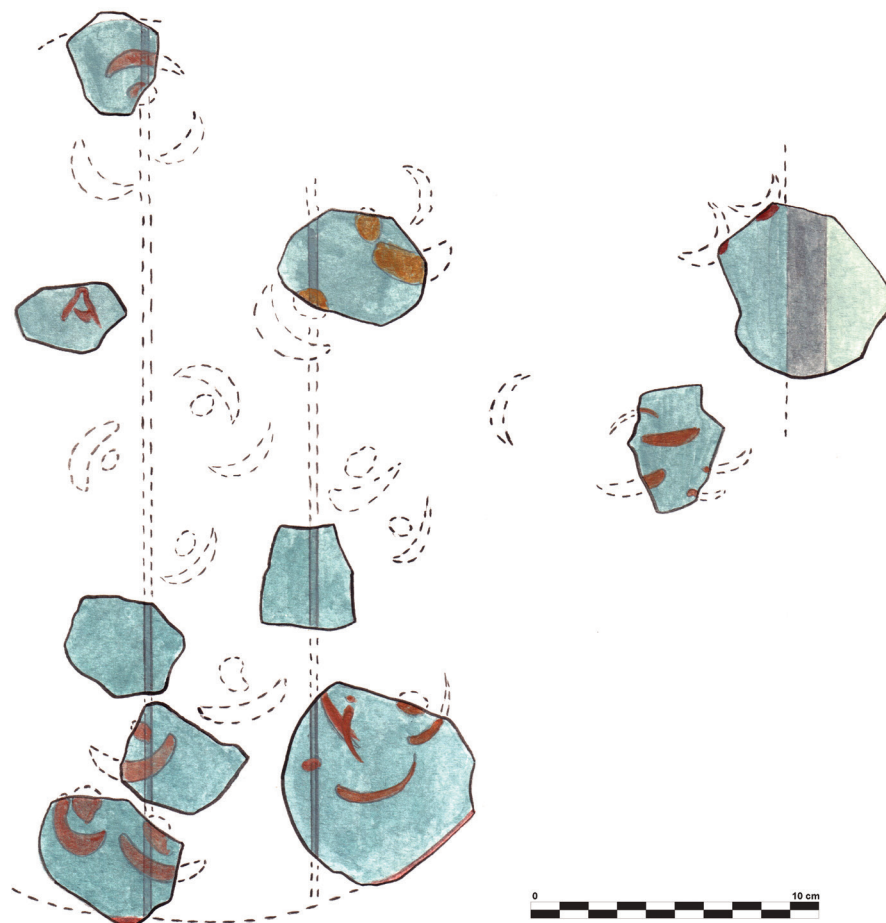


Fig. 90 - Visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić

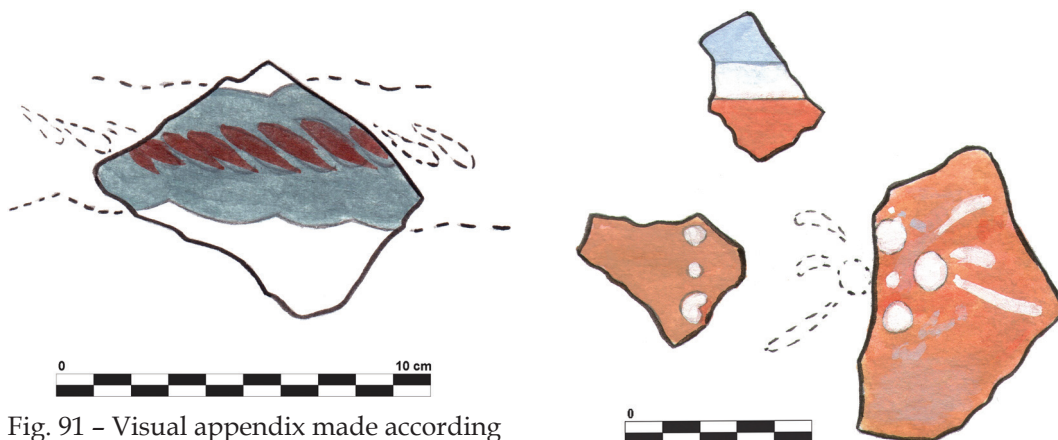


Fig. 91 - Visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić

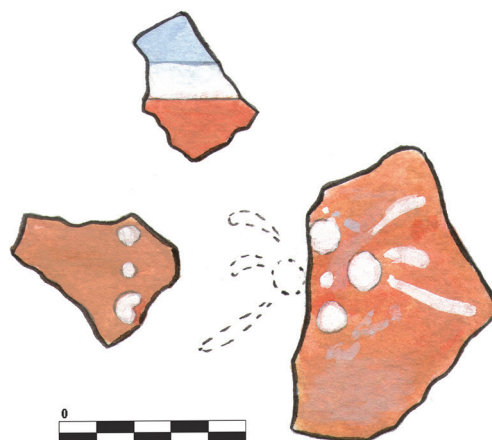


Fig. 92 - Visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić



## Bird representations

Three birds of larger dimensions<sup>26</sup> are already published,<sup>27</sup> but there were no data about their colors (figs. 93 i 94). They are painted with blue and green color, the beaks and the legs are red, while the eyes are rendered in white and black. On the necks of two birds, a red coloring in the form of a stripe is visible. Their species cannot be determined with certainty, except that it could be said that they do not represent peacocks,<sup>28</sup> as was determined before, because of the appearance of pointed tails which go upward, and the absence of the crests on the crowns of their heads. The length of one bird is about 50 cm judging by the dimensions; they probably used to adorn the higher wall zones.

The head of the red bird with a long beak is shown in figure 95. On the left side a part of a red frame inside which the bird might have been painted is visible.

In the photo-documentation of the Museum of Srem, a black and white photograph of another bird was found (fig. 96). There are no data about the colors, nor about its size. The bird is standing on a branch, the head is turned towards the tail, which is lowered. By the shape of the head and the slightly hooked beak, it most resembles a bird of prey. However, the representation of a peacock could also be taken into consideration, whose tail would naturally weigh down in the closed position, though it would probably be thicker at the base. The crest on the head for identification of a peacock is missing, as well as the appearance of the entire tail. The peahen does not have a crest on the head, and its tail is modest in comparison with the peacock's tail, but then again, the base of the tail would have to be thicker than it is in figure 96.

## The architectural construction, astragals, frames and imitation of marble panelling

### “The architectural construction with a kantharos“

Among the fragments kept in the museum depot of the Museum of Srem, the ones on which a simplified representation of an architectural structure can be recognized, the cornice of the roof with acroteria, as well as a construction of vertical and horizontal beams are found (fig. 97). This unit could not be reconstructed completely. In the upper zone, there are ochre colored plant motifs which could represent the acroteria. In painting, they often have a vegetative form, and can even portray some stylized animals, whose decoration ends in the form of a vine.<sup>29</sup>

Below the acroteria, there is a fragmented strip inside which thin horizontal lines are rendered in lighter and darker ochre, which could be an imitation of wooden beams.

<sup>26</sup> The total dimensions of the conserved panels are 42 x 176 cm.

<sup>27</sup> Popović 2008, 35.

<sup>28</sup> On peacocks in: Anđelković, Rogić, Nikolić 2011, 231–245.

<sup>29</sup> Wall painting in Villa Negroni, Ling 1992, 176, 189.



Fig. 93 - Bird representations, photo D. Rogić, unpublished.

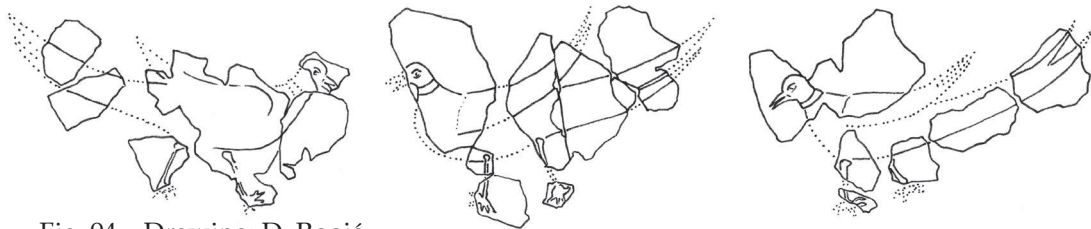


Fig. 94 - Drawing: D. Rogić

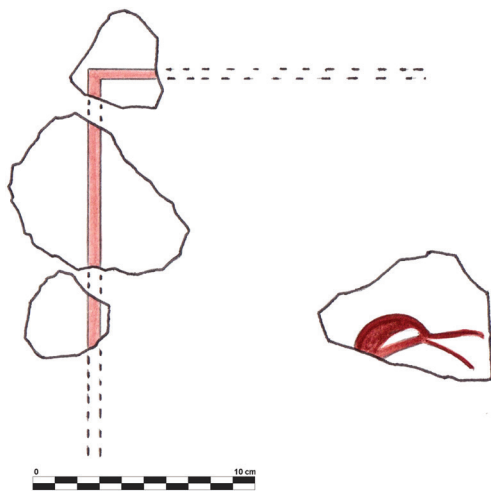


Fig. 95 - Bird representation, visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić

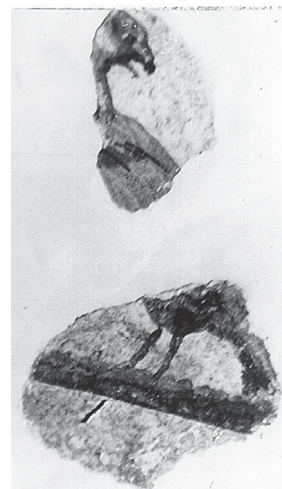


Fig. 96 - Bird representation, documentation of the Institute of Archaeology.



Below the linear decoration, a very stylized repetitive ornament was painted with light ochre. The ornament consists of one short horizontal line, i.e. one stroke made with a flat brush, while above it, a longer one was outlined, and immediately next to it an oblique line dropping to the right. The other horizontal and vertical beams are without ornaments. It is clear that only the cornice of the roof had ornamentation. Between the beams in the upper zone, there is a painted green area.

In the lower zone on the right side, a part of the blue “frame” is visible, which is actually the right angle around the hanging kantharos. On the left side, the blue horizontal angle comes after the dark strip, and then continues on to the purple area. These two areas are separated by a white line, which points to another composition. The vessel is hung on the blue frame by a black discontinuous ribbon that ends in a bow. The kantharos is painted with black color on a white plaster surface and brightened with a blue shade around the rim and on the body of the vessel (fig. 98).

Similar representations of the portico were prevailing in the Second Pompeian Style, although they also appear in the Third and the Fourth. The singularity of the Second Pompeian Style, which is also referred to as illusionistic or architectural, lies in the representations of stone in the lower zones, while in the upper zones most versatile scenes were combined, framed by architectural elements, giving an impression of stages. This style emerged at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC in Pompeii and lasted until the middle of the time of Augustus. It can be traced through numerous examples in Rome, Pompeii, Sicily, as well as in central and north Italy and in the south of France.<sup>30</sup> These are usually very large and elaborate compositions with a central aedicula or portico. One of the most beautiful examples is the wall in *Aula Isiaca*.<sup>31</sup> An example of the Third Pompeian Style can be seen in the painting of the triclinium in *Casa del Frutteto*, in the upper zone. A similar manner of depicting the “delicate” architectural elements, with hanging vessels, is presented in the cryptoporticus in *Domus Aurea* (Fourth Pompeian Style).<sup>32</sup>

## Astragals

There are three preserved fragments that form a semicircular dark red band in the middle of which there are white astragals. On the lower side of the band, a black line is painted. The outer side probably used to be surrounded with small green leaves, visible on two of the fragments (fig. 100).

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<sup>30</sup> Mielsch 2001, p. 29–65

<sup>31</sup> A rich house on the Palatine Hill “*Aula Isiaca*”, with wall paintings of Egyptian deities Isis and Serapis: Boatwright 2012, 109–110.

<sup>32</sup> Baldassarre et al. 2002, 225.



Fig. 97 – The architectural construction with a kantharos, photo: D. Rogić

### The system of square frames

A painted decoration inspired by coffered ceiling can be observed. The decorative scheme is rendered by the motif of three squares, one inside another. The smallest one is in the middle, without ornaments, the larger one is around it, and finally, the largest square closes the entire composition (fig. 101). The line of the largest square is the thickest one. The middle square is decorated with astragals, three on each side. The outer corners are decorated with floral elements with volutes – that is, stylized lilies, from which dots run diagonally and connect to the largest square.



Fig. 98 - Detail of kantharos, photo: D. Rogić



Fig. 99 - Merging fragments

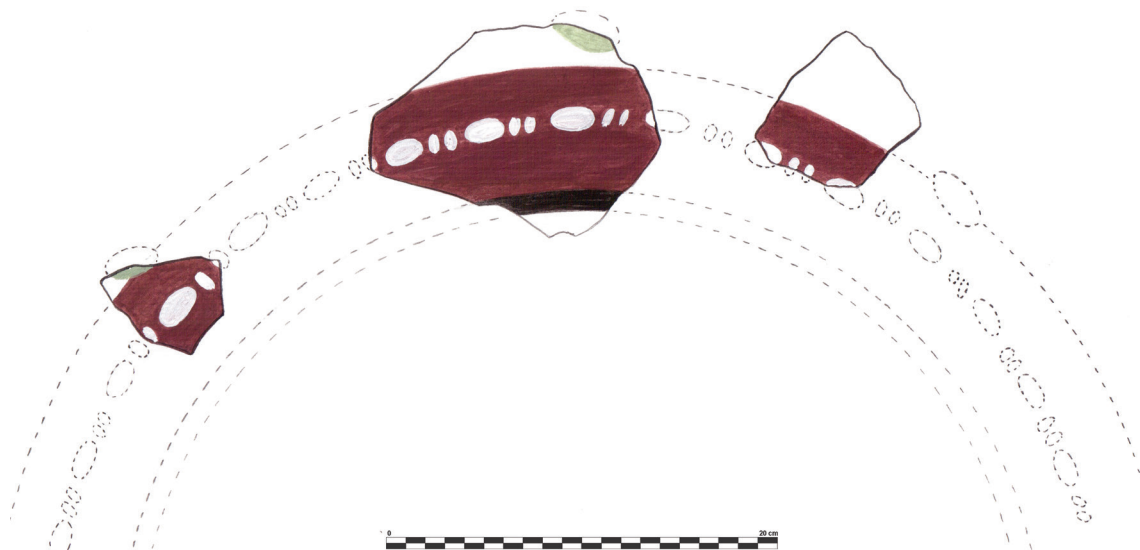


Fig. 100 - After: Rogić, Nikolić, Jesretić, 2011, fig. 9.

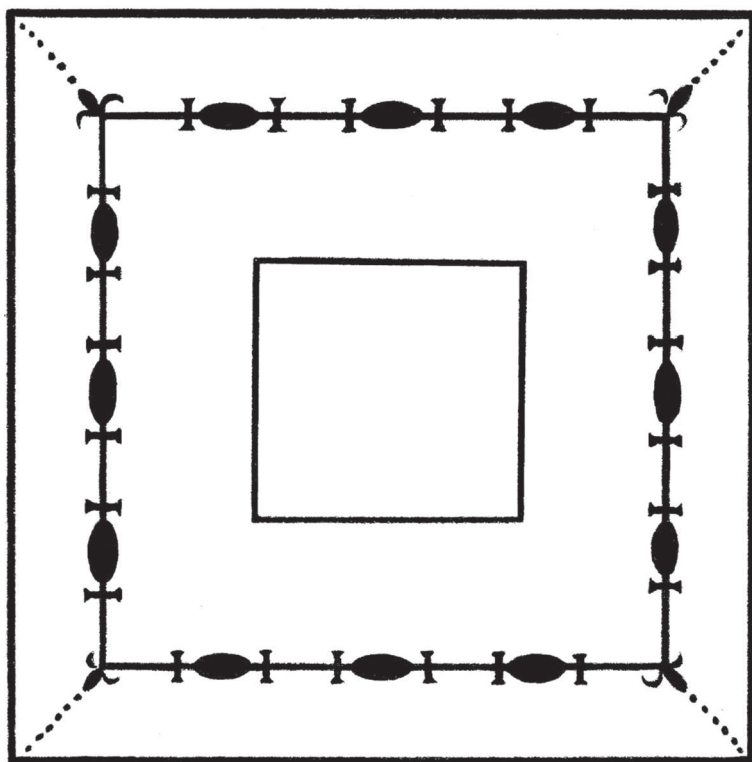


Fig. 101 - The system of square frames



## Marbleizing

In Roman villas and houses, various kinds of marble stone were imitated, so as to reflect an idea of luxury. The marble panels were located mostly in the lower wall zones (except in the First Pompeian Style). Most versatile patterns were applied, as well as the colors that cannot be seen in the natural marble stone, so the kind of marble in painted decoration often cannot be determined.<sup>33</sup> Within an imitation of a marble panel, different square forms, circles and rhombi can be seen.

The motif of marbleizing rendered by spattering red, blue and ochre paint on a white plaster surface can be seen in figure 102. The spattered motif was framed by a wide red border and was probably repetitive, like in figure 103.

The marbleizing rendered in lighter and darker red lines on an ochre background is shown on the conserved panel No. 6 (fig. 104).

It should be noted that 80 fragments with white plaster surfaces and red borders were registered. It seems that the borders were set apart with no regard to the compositions. The borders that fell off the wall edges can also be discerned.

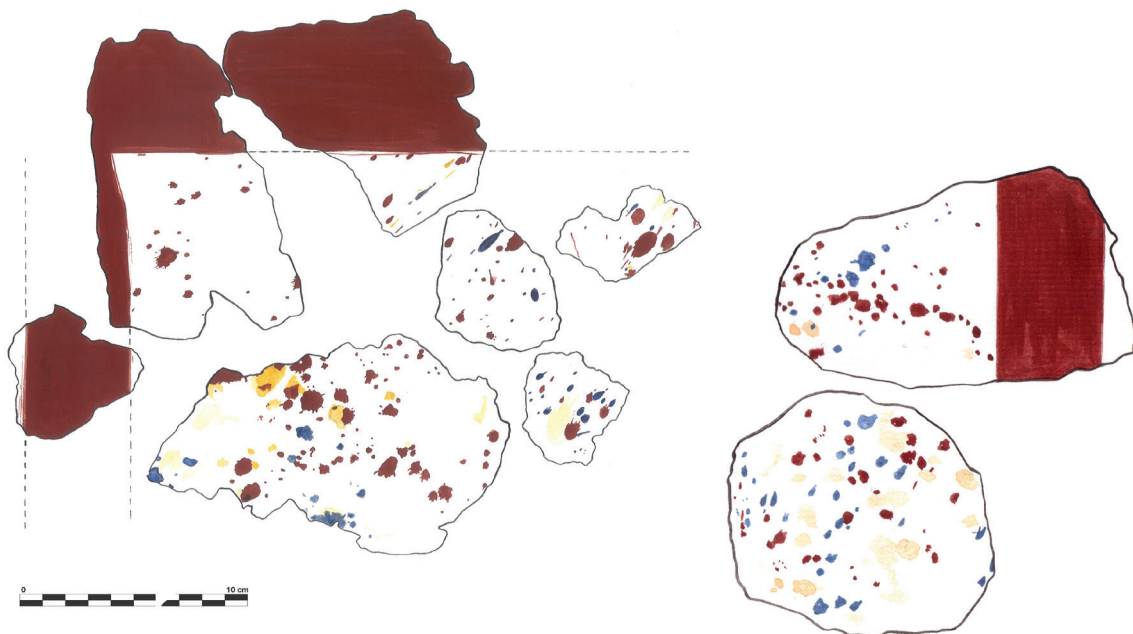


Fig. 102 – Visual appendix made according to the original painting: D. Rogić, unpublished

<sup>33</sup> Ling 1992, 13.



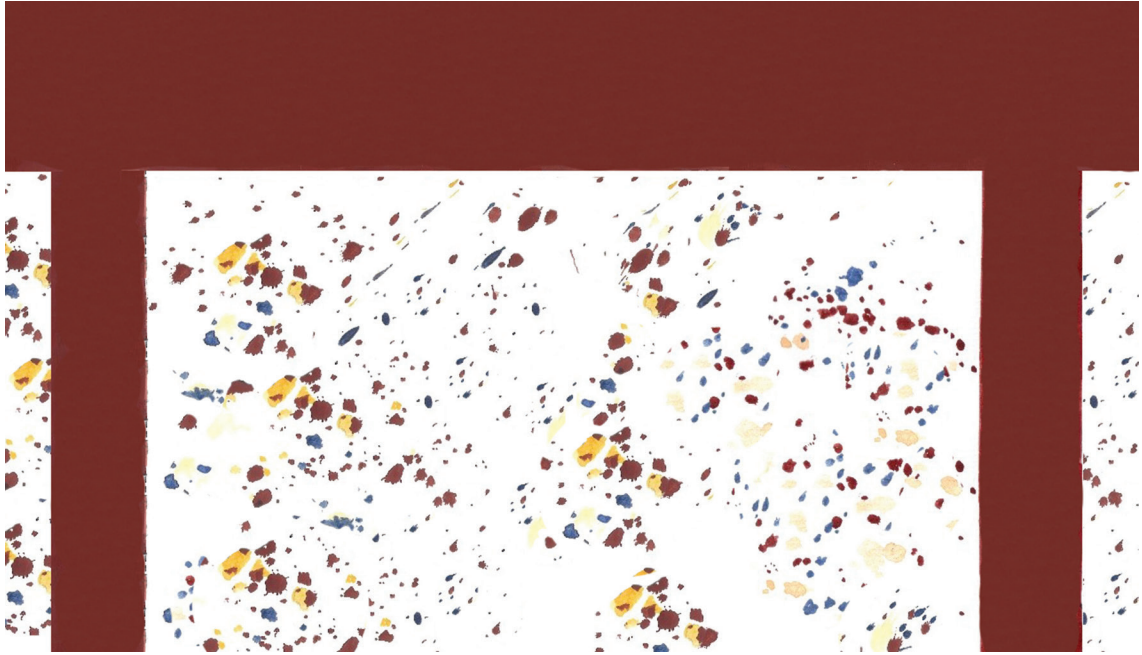


Fig. 103 – Theoretical solution: D. Rogić.



Fig. 104 – Panel no. 6.



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By processing the fragments of the wall paintings belonging to this group, a series of significant data was obtained, and impressive painted complexes discovered. A review of certain already published examples was given, together with the new insights.

In this work, the painting is divided into seven groups: “the unit with an oval floral band and a part of a figural representation”; “figure under a baldachin”; “medallions with portraits”, “figural representations of small dimensions”; “vegetative motifs”, “bird representations”, “architectural object, astragals, frames and the imitation of marble panels”.

The “*unit with an oval floral band and a part of a figural representation*” comprises a very specific representation (fig. 55) in which a part of the arm of the figure with a red and white cloak is visible. The figure is painted on a light blue background and encircled by an ellipsoid band decorated with vegetative motifs. The blue color also connects the so-called composition of the “figure under a baldachin” (figs. 56–62) which was finally tracked down. That is to say, the composition was itemized by this title in the archaeological diary from the 1960s. It was only after the discovery of the drawing in the Provincial Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments – Serbia that it was concluded that the parts of the drapery whose fragments are kept in the depot of the Museum of Srem and the photograph with a representation of a female face from the documentation of the Institute of Archaeology in Belgrade represent a part of the same composition. The drapery is painted with blue color with semicircular ornaments by which it is hung. In the central and uppermost part of the drapery a face is painted, whose features are barely discernible. It can be supposed that this used to be an entire figure, since on one fragment a part of the hip (?) can be seen. The composition resembles a stage with a splendid curtain and a figure standing beside it. However, the nimbus around the head of the representation in the drawing from the conservation documentation further complicates the interpretation of this representation.

Another exceptional portrait in a medallion was discovered (fig. 63), very similar to the one that is on permanent display at the Museum of Srem (fig. 65), as well as the fragments of two more medallions (figs. 67 i 70). These four medallions lead to the conclusion that the personifications of the four seasons were depicted in them. The red bands of the medallions have a special decoration in the form of dots, white flowers and grapevine (?). The possibility that the fragment with a part of the chin and neck with a necklace (found in the depot of the Museum of Srem) probably used to belong to the portrait in the medallion from the permanent exhibit (fig. 68) at the Museum of Srem should be considered. Close analogies in the facial expression could be found in the painting of the “personifications” from Brigetio, which are dated to the 3rd century.



What would go in favor of the interpretation of the representations in medallions from Sirmium as the personifications are the wreaths on the heads, which are non-existent? Floral motifs around the head can only be seen in the representation from the permanent exhibit, which might determine this representation as the personification of spring. In the newly discovered medallion (fig. 63) few green leaves of grass can be observed, while a great portion of the green background is missing.

Parts of various figural representations of smaller dimensions which were placed within the same context were processed, too. The manner of painting, colors and dimensions of the figures (figs. 71–76) point to that. Everything mentioned above suggests that the described fragments used to belong to the same composition with several figural representations.

On the fragments with arm representations, characteristic hoop-shaped bracelets are observed (figs. 72 i 75b i c). In the portrait with a nimbus, a lunula necklace is painted (fig. 71). After a detailed survey, a part of a necklace was also observed in the already published nude figure from fig. 74. Fragments with parts of the face, instrument (?) and vegetative motifs (fig. 75) were discovered, too. According to the analogous examples, perhaps it could be concluded that the previously published portrait with a nimbus (fig. 71) represents either a deity, or a member of nobility, a personification, or a deceased mortal.

Beside Bacchus, another deity was depicted on the wall of one of the rooms (figs. 79 and 80), which is indicated by the fragments of a wreath on the head and the hand holding a thyrsus. Among the fragments, leg parts of different figures are observed, of larger dimensions (fig. 78.).

By the colors and the very lazure layers of paint it could be considered that the representations were painted mostly in the fresco technique. Pastuous color is applied in the painting of the “unit with an oval floral band and a part of a figural representation”, due to which a great portion of the thicker layers of color fell off. The portraits in medallions are of delicate expression, with no strong contrasts. In the portrait with a nimbus, the blush on the cheeks is prominent, brightening and shading are executed in linear strokes, and similar solutions can also be seen in the hand representation in figure 75 c, as well as in the legs in figure 78.

Almost all the portraits were done in the similar manner. The working schedule in the Sirmium workshop probably carried on in a habitual order, like in most of the painting officinae – *pictor imaginarius*<sup>34</sup> painted the faces. The portraits in medallions stand out by the beauty of the expression, like the portrait of Harpocrates and the portrait with a nimbus. The jewelry consists of pearl earrings, simple hoop bracelets and necklaces with lunula pendants. It can be noted that the hairstyles are predominantly of shorter length, reaching the jawbone or half of the neck. They are formed by large curls, dark or light brown, except on the portrait with a nimbus, where longer locks are noted.

<sup>34</sup> Adam 2005, 457; Clarke 1992, 57–58.



Different types of green vegetative decoration are observed: parts of trees, various leaves, twigs, as well as garlands – green, red and blue.

Three birds from site 21 were known so far, but their colors remained unknown. The feathers of these birds is painted with blue, green and ochre color, with a red “collar” around the neck. Their species cannot be determined (figs. 93 i 94). Apart from the ones mentioned above, a head of another bird with a long beak was observed, painted with red color (fig. 95), as well as a bird which is standing on a branch, but for which there are not enough data to make the determination possible (fig. 96).

One of the most authentic representations is the unit named “*the architectural object with a kantharos*” (fig. 97). A delicate architectural construction made of “wooden beams” was painted, with a segment of a simplified roof cornice with acroteria, while in the lower zone there is a representation of a hanging kantharos. Most analogies were found in the Second Pompeian Style, although there are similar examples in the Third and Fourth Style, too. We get the impression that the portrait with the characteristic light purple background (fig. 77), like the one that was also painted in a part of the “architectural object with a kantharos” (on the left side of the composition), could be adjoined to a part of this composition. The wall paintings with the representations of architectural objects (apart from the above mentioned one) are not found on the territory of Sirmium and on the territory of Serbia.

The imitations of marble veneers, astragals and various frames can be seen as the motifs inspired by the architectural decoration, specifically – the stucco technique, as well as by marble works. In the “*system of square frames*” decorated with astragals, the inspiration by stucco decoration of ceiling cassettes is evident (fig. 101). Different types of the imitation of marble inlay, which probably used to adorn socle zones, rendered by spattering different colors (fig. 102) and wavy lines (fig. 104) should not be omitted.

On one hand, painting can display the affluence and taste of the owner, and very narrowed painted areas, as well as the large white plaster backgrounds, such as the ones prevailing here, suggest the economic status of the owner. As it was mentioned, for the background of the paintings the painters used the white plaster surface, while figures and other motifs were painted with different colors. Painted backgrounds are, of course, also present in this group, but they are smaller, like the green backgrounds in the medallions, or they are very lazure, like on the imitations of certain marble panels. The predominant colors are mostly light.

Although the plaster on almost all of the fragments was thinned during the conservation work done long ago, according to a couple of fragments that haven’t been processed by conservation, and which are kept in the depot of the Museum of Sirmium, their composition could be understood. The plaster consisted of the white intonaco, 3–5 mm thick, made of marble powder and slaked lime, while the grey arriccio was made of slaked lime and very finely sieved sand. On a couple of fragments, as much as 2 cm of the arriccio could be observed. The surface of the intonaco on which it was painted is very finely levelled, has no special characteristics, except for the auxiliary lines of the



incisions detected on a small group of fragments (fig. 90).

It would be very difficult to say which style certain compositions belong to, not only because of the dating which is much later than the period in which the gradation of styles was happening in Italy, but also because none of the walls is entirely preserved. We can rather talk about the reminiscences of mixed styles merged/developed into a unique style of the Sirmium painting atelier, which is the very characteristic of the local workshops.