**Four Styles of Ancient Roman Paintings:** Toward the end of the 19th century August Mau a German art historian divided the various mural paintings in Pompeii and Herculaneum in the order they were introduced. It has been modified in detail, but still serves as the basis for the study of Roman paintings. Each house was painted according to a particular style, depending on the chronology; hence the house is necessary to determine the style of wall painting.

**First Style:**

Republic 509-27 BCE

Masonry Style to create the illusion of an elegant marble wall

Simulates the architecture of the wall itself

Mosaic

Tersserae

Theatrical quality

Exaggerated expressions

Found in private and public buildings

Reinforces the heavy presence of confining walls

**Second Style:**

Begins under the Republic and moves into theEarly Empire 27 BCE -96 CE

Buon Fresco (true fresco) put up wet with a touch of wax to make the painting shine.

Found in country villas and Pompeian homes

Long narratives divided by painted pilasters

Nearly life size figures both real and imagined (mythological, historical, Homer’s characters)

Illusion of three dimensional space usually a painted platform the ejects into the room

Pompeian red made of pigment ground from cinnabar and imported from Spain

Organic figures who interact with other figures across the corner of the wall

Meander pattern inconsistent sources of light

Some shadowing but mostly shadows are absent

Eroticism

Large Scale linear perspective Landscapes with small figures in pale colors, to imitate where a window would go

Perspective is more atmospheric than linear, so that the illusion of depth increases as the forms lose clarity.

Movement and action

Invention of landscapes with human is strictly Roman, but the mix of organic, animals, and atmosphere is Hellenistic.

**Third Style**

High Empire 96-192 CE

No longer attempted to replace the walls with three dimensional worlds of their own creations

No longer sought to imitate the appearance of marble walls

Decorated walls with delicate linear fantasies sketched on predominantly monochromatic backgrounds.

Architectural frame with colonnettes and feather weight canopies

Center of the wall is a miniature landscape

Landscapes and mythological scenes appear in frames.

**Fourth Style**

Late Empire 192-337 CE

Combines elements of all three previous styles

Spatial projection

Gradual shading

Bouncing light

Highlights together with shadowing create an illusion of three dimensionality with is only characteristic to the fourth style.