



# Enchanted Landscapes: Wall Paintings from the Roman Era

*Silvia Rozenberg*

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The Roman paintings mentioned by classical authors survive mostly in fragments - except for those fortuitously preserved by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79. The murals at Pompeii, Herculaneum, Boscotrecase and other sites are precious instances of an art form of paramount importance in the ancient world: the decoration of the Roman villa. Bearing witness to the prosperity and taste of their original patrons, these paintings decorated the country retreats of the patrician classes with sophisticated scenes and designs. "Enchanted Landscapes" is a colour record of an exhibition at the Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem, in which the original fresco and tempera works were carefully detached from their supporting surfaces and transported in order to be seen together for the first time. Examples of entire decorative schemes were brought from villas at Boscotrecase, a suburb of Pompeii: including the "White Room" (a grand reception hall); the "Black Room" (a sleeping chamber); and the "Red Room" (a reception room). Other frescoes come from Campania; from an imperial villa in lower Italy; and from Jerusalem, Samaria and other provincial outposts of Roman civilization. Idyllic landscapes and pastoral scenes alternate with figures of gods, heroes, maenads, mythical beasts, birds, nymphs and satyrs. These are integrated with painted pillars, vines, architectural features, mosaics and other fantastic designs. Dr Silvia Rozenberg is curator of Classical Archaeology at the Israel Museum.

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