9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 1

ECA 3 (2006), p. 1-24; doi: 00.0000 / ECA.0.0.0000000

Late Antique Aesthetics, Chromophobia, and the Red Monastery, Sohag, Egypt[1]

Elizabeth S. BOLMAN

Late antique monastics carefully structured their way of life, and in so doing generated considerable material evidence, particularly in Egypt, due to the excellent conditions for preservation there. They left varied physical traces behind, ranging from graffiti scratched onto the walls of pagan tombs, to expertly bound and illuminated texts, to monumental, purpose-built churches. Those in pursuit of the *bios angelikos*, or angelic life, chose both to adapt preexisting spaces for their struggles, and to build completely new ones[2]. They embellished some of these environments solely with roughly marked out crosses. Others, they ornamented elaborately, participating in the varied and colorful visual culture of late antiquity[3].

One of the most lavishly decorated of the surviving late antique churches in Egypt has been largely overlooked by scholars[4]. It belongs to the so-called Red Monastery, or Monastery of St. Bishay (Bishoi), near Sohag, in Upper Egypt. Its trilobed sanctuary includes well-preserved paintings with figural subjects, and also with patterns that stretch around columns and along walls, enliven capitals with colored accents, and unsettle our sense of architectural propriety (Pls 1-2)[5].

These paintings have acquired layers of dirt and varnish over the centuries, and have also begun to detach from the walls. Due to conservation work begun in 2002 in this church, making the paintings

[1] My thanks to Philip Sellew and Sheila McNally for their invitation to participate in one of the best symposia it has ever been my privilege to attend, in March 2003, at the University of Minnesota. I first presented some of the material in this paper at that event: "Living for Eternity: Monasticism in Egypt." I have benefited particularly from discussions with Fabio Barry, Slobodan Ćurčić, Dale Kinney, Jane Evans, Mat Immerzeel, Barbara Kellum, Ann Kuttner, Ioanna Kakoulli, Gertrud van Loon, Thomas Mathews, Cédric Meurice, Thelma Thomas, Maria Vassilaki and Stephen Zwirn, and I thank them for their generosity. I am also very grateful to Dumbarton Oaks, Temple University, and the J. William Fulbright Commission for their support. All conservation and scholarly work on this project between December 2002 and April 2006 has been funded by the United States Agency for International Development, through the Egyptian Antiquities Project of the American Research Center in Egypt, under USAID Grant No. 263-G-00-93-00089-00 (formerly 263-0000-G-00-3089-00). Copyright for all Red Monastery research, photography, studies and documentation carried out during this period belongs to the American Research Center in Egypt. For their support and collaboration, we thank Zahi Hawass, Abdallah Kamel, Magdi al-Ghandour, Abdallah Attar, and Mohammed abdel Rahim. The members of the Red Monastery Project are grateful to the Coptic Church, and particularly to His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Bishop Yohannes, Father Wissa and Father Antonius, for their generous hospitality and dedicated involvement in the project. We thank USAID and ARCE for their exceptional support and assistance, particularly Gerry D. Scott, III, Robert K. Vincent, Jr., Janie Abdel Aziz, and Madame Amira. We particularly appreciate the collegiality and hard work of Michael Jones, the EAP Project Manager for the Red Monastery Project. See below, note 10, for information about the Red Monastery Project team.

[2] For a serious and detailed examination of varied monastic habitations, see: Brooks Hedstrom forthcoming.

[3] For a discussion of monastic representation in cells, see: Bolman, forthcoming a.

[4] We look forward to the important contribution of Karel Innemée, who is continuing work on the Red and White Monasteries begun by Jean Clédat, Jules Leroy and Paul van Moorsel, to be published in the IFAO series *La peinture murale chez les coptes.* The only articles specifically dedicated to the Red Monastery paintings now in print are by Otto Meinardus and Innemée. Meinardus 1969-1970; Meinardus 1974-1975; and Meinardus 1981. Innemée 2004. The fundamental study by Ugo Monneret de Villard privileges architecture over painting. Only half a chapter is reserved for "decoration", at the end of volume two. Monneret de Villard 1926-1927, vol. 2, Ch. 7, 119-135. In the preface he extols the architecture, and does not mention the paintings once. Monneret de Villard 1926-1927, V. 1, 9-12. I discuss the historiography of the Red Monastery church paintings at greater length in another article, in progress.

[5] All photographs are by Patrick Godeau, and copyright for all images is held by the American Research Center in Egypt, unless otherwise noted.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 2

Pl. 1. Detail of the north lobe, middle register, and semidome with the Galaktotrophousa, sanctuary, Red Monastery church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 3

Pl. 2. Salome, with the broad decorative band framing the north semidome at right, sanctuary, Red Monastery church
(Photograph E. Ricchi)

clearly visible for the first time in centuries, I have been able to date all of the paintings in the triconch area to late antiquity. In this article, I examine the non-figural architectural polychromy in the original sanctuary, and its considerable significance for our understanding of late antique aesthetics[6].

A short distance to the west of Sohag the modern visitor can still find not only the Red Monastery church, but a second monumental church as well. These two sites are known under several names. The more famous is the Monastery of St. Shenute, often referred to as the White Monastery because of the white limestone out of which its prominent church was built (Pl. 3).

The nearby Red Monastery church is for the most part an architectural imitation of that at the White Monastery, but constructed predominantly in reddish (now light brown) brick, as its name indicates, and on a smaller scale (Pl. 4)[7]. They date to the fifth

6 Faint paintings, mostly of crosses, survive in parts of the nave. They do not obviously belong to the sanctuary paintings, and therefore are not considered as part of this study. Additionally, two areas of medieval paintings have survived in the northern side of the church, directly west of the trilobe. My thanks to Innemée for drawing to my attention the fragment on the eastern transverse wall (north side), prior to the trefoil. The faint painting of an equestrian saint survives on the northern wall immediately to the west of the trilobed area. Drawings of the crosses and equestrian are published. Lafferière 1993. Additionally, more than one layer of painting has survived in a small room located in the north-eastern corner of the church. Prior to conservation, these paintings are difficult to date, although at least some of them are certainly late antique. I am publishing my analysis of the figural paintings in the north semidome in another article that is in progress.

7 Bricks exposed during conservation, for example when returning a painted fragment misplaced by the Comité to its correct orientation, are bright red.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 4

Pl. 3. White Monastery Church, exterior view (Photograph E. Bolman)

Pl. 4. Red Monastery Church, exterior view (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 5

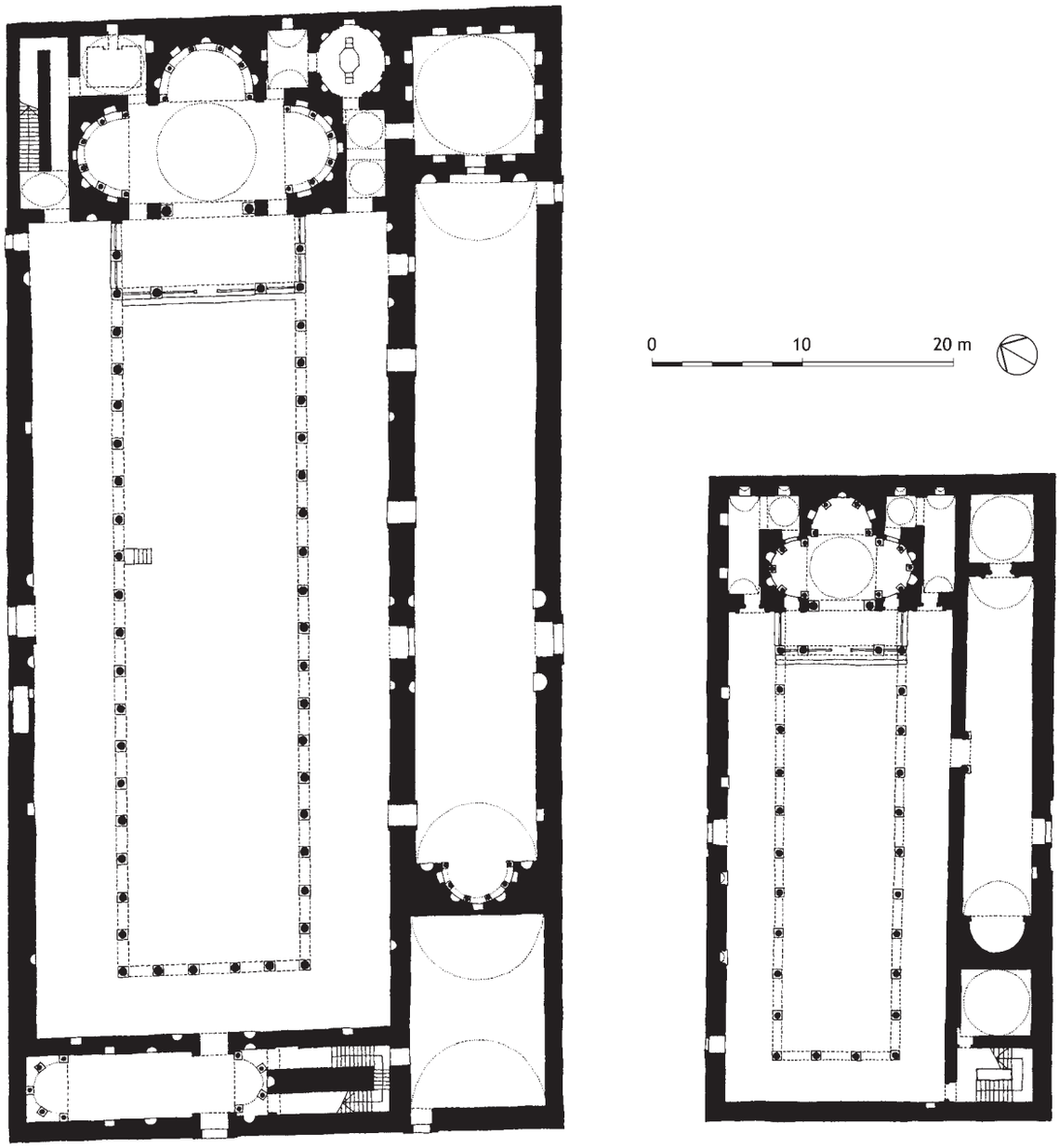

Fig. 1. White and Red Monastery Churches, plans drawn to the same scale. (Drawings: Nicholas Warner)

and sixth centuries, and served a federation of monastic communities[8]. Both churches were built with massive exterior walls, angled slightly inwards, and flared at the top with a cavetto cornice. From

[8] For orientation to the evidence and history at both sites, and also bibliography, see the entries in the *Coptic Encyclopedia*, by various authors. *CE*, 736-740, 761-770. The most current and thorough source for the architecture of the two churches is: Grossmann 2002, 528-539; and, for the Red Monastery, the article by Grossmann in this volume of ECA: "Zum dach über dem Ostumgang der Kirche des Bishuyklosters bei Sūhāǧ". For the Shenoutian federation, see: Layton 2002, 26-27 and n. 9. Hans-Georg Severin has recently redated the Red Monastery church to ca. 525-550 A.D. based on his analysis of the sculpture. My thanks to him for permitting me to read this important contribution in advance of its publication. Severin, forthcoming.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 6

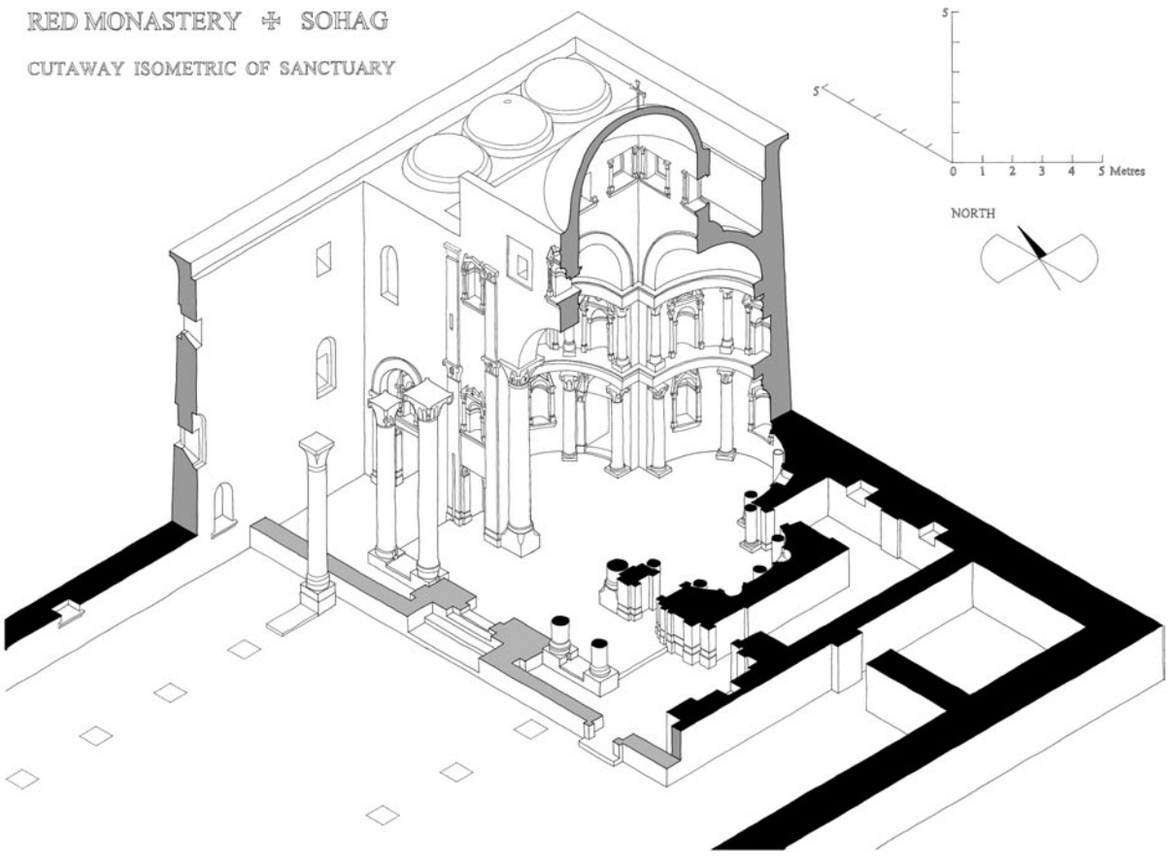

Fig. 2. Isometric View of the Red Monastery Church Sanctuary (Drawing: Nicholas Warner)

the outside they look very much like ancient Egyptian temples, but within these walls their architects have constructed basilicas, each with a trefoil sanctuary rendered in the architectural language of the late Roman empire (Fig. 1). We know this type not only from these two sites, but also from other late antique churches, for example one at Dendera (Tentyra), dating to the sixth century[9].

The trilobed eastern end of the Red Monastery church has survived astonishingly well. This area originally functioned as the sanctuary, but the monastic community uses the now unroofed nave as a courtyard, and a façade has been constructed between the nave and the eastern end. Within the former sanctuary, only the easternmost of the three lobes is currently screened off and used as the church sanctuary. Each of the three semicircular walls of the original sanctuary includes two tiers of architectural sculpture on top of which rests a large semidome. Variously curved or squared niches, framed by pilasters, half-columns and columns, with decorative gables, create strong contrasts of volume, light, shadow, and texture. A modern dome, resting on a clerestory with late antique elements, covers the center of the trefoil (Fig. 2). The late antique fabric of the building consists principally of brick, limestone, plaster and paint, with higher-quality stone used for some columns[10]. The artists employed tempera and to a lesser extent encaustic.

The Red Monastery church constitutes the best preserved example of this triconch basilical type in

9 Grossmann 2002, 443 – 446, 528 – 536, Figs 63 and 150. Dale Kinney is preparing a study of the Red Monastery church architecture.

10 A few higher-quality stone columns stand at ground-level in the sanctuary. One remains in the nave, this latter most likely belonging to what Johann Michael Wansleben described in the seventeenth century as a set of nave columns more beautiful than anything in the White Monastery church. Wansleben 1677, 336-337.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 7

Egypt, including as it does high walls and well preserved, original architectural sculpture in the sanctuary. The arrangement of tiers of niches with elaborate architectural framing is common in eastern Mediterranean architecture of this period. However, what the Red Monastery sanctuary has that these other sites lack is a substantial amount of surviving paint (Pl. 5).

The Wall Painting Conservation Project

A project to clean, conserve, study and publish the wall paintings in the Red Monastery church sanctuary was begun under my direction in 2002. Adriano Luzi and Luigi De Cesaris undertook the specialized work of conservation. Since the sad loss of Luzi in 2003, Alberto Sucato has assisted De Cesaris. The United States Agency for International Development and the Egyptian Antiquities Project of the American Research Center in Egypt have funded and administered the work conducted between December 2002 and April 2006[11]. We greatly appreciate the collaboration of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities in this project. Bishop Yohannes, Father Antonius and the monastic community facilitate site work with their gracious hospitality and support.

Pre-conservation, Ugo Monneret de Villard dated the bust of Patriarch Theophilus, above the eastern door in the northern lobe, to the seventh or eighth century, without commentary or analysis (Pl. 6)[12].

Paul van Moorsel and Karel Innemée dated the major apse painting of the north lobe, at a time when it was still obscured by darkened varnish, to 1301 and circa 1300 respectively, based on an inscription elsewhere in the church[13]. Impressively, before cleaning, he and Innemée observed that three layers of painted plaster existed that predated 1000[14]. The non-figural paintings have rarely been mentioned, and never studied[15]. After cleaning and conservation of approximately twenty percent of the triconch, it is possible to demonstrate that all of the paintings in this area date to late antiquity. All surfaces in the three lobes of the eastern end were originally covered with paint, including niches, column shafts, capitals, gables, cornices, and interspersed sections of wall. The same is the case for the transverse wall in front of the clover-leaf space[16]. Late antique pigment has survived on most of these surfaces, from the floor level through the clerestory.

The evidence of paint and plaster layers has relevance for dating, and the conclusions presented here derive from work on the north lobe only. De Cesaris and Sucato provided all of the information about paint and plaster layers, on which my art historical analyses depend[17]. It now seems to be the case that four principal layers of paint were applied in the three apses of the sanctuary, and two on the majority of the walls. The uppermost layer on most of the walls belongs to the third phase of work in the church. Aside from the apse, the only consistent appearance of the fourth paint layer is on the rear walls of the niches, where busts of saints have been repainted[18]. The non-figural architectural polychromy of the walls is therefore earlier in date than the major figural compositions of the apses. Elsewhere, I date the painting of the *Galaktotrophousa*, belonging to the fourth and final layer in the north

---

11 See note 1 for USAID, ARCE and EAP acknowledgments. USAID/EAP supported conservation ended in December 2005, but additional work on the project continued through April 2006. Assistant conservators who worked on the project between 2003-2005 are: Emiliano Abrusca, Emiliano Albanese, Emiliano Antonelli, Chiara Compostella, Ilaria De Martinis, Diego Pistone, Luigi De Prezzo, Chiara Di Marco, Emiliano Ricchi, and Maria Cristina Tomassetti, with specialized assistance from Maria Antonietta Gorini, Domenico Poggi and Sergio Tagliacozzi. Additional team members are: Father Maximous El-Anthony, Paul Dilley, Patrick Godeau, Karel Innemée, Dale Kinney, Michelangelo Lupo, Cédric Meurice, Hans-Georg Severin, Peter Sheehan and Nicholas Warner.

12 Monneret de Villard 1925-1926, V.2, 132.

13 Although he did not publish his work on the Red Monastery, Van Moorsel's estimation of the dating of the north semidome to 1301 was included in a dissertation. Langener 1996, 163. Innemée 2004, 1324.

14 Van Moorsel and Innemée 1997, 70-71.

15 Monneret de Villard mentioned that all surfaces were covered with painted stucco, but then proceeded to state that it was almost all destroyed as part of the restorations. Oddly, this seems to have happened at the White Monastery, but not at the Red Monastery. Monneret de Villard 1925-1926, V.2, 131. Albert Gayet observed that both sanctuaries were covered with non-figural decoration. Gayet 1902, 151-152.

16 See note 5 for reference to a surviving medieval fragment on the transverse wall.

17 These are documented at ARCE in a series of technical reports, and extensive graphic documentation of the conservation work.

18 Less comprehensive repainting and retouching also occurred elsewhere, as part of the fourth phase of painting. See Bolman, forthcoming b.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 8

Plate 5: General view of the north lobe, from the floor up to the clerestory, and showing the edge of the modern dome. Conservation completed everywhere except sections of the ground floor and clerestory. Sanctuary, Red Monastery Church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 9

Pl. 6. Patriarch Theophilus, left half conserved. Lunette over eastern door, north lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery Church
(Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

apse, to circa the eighth century[19]. The church itself has been dated between the late fifth to mid sixth century, and, most recently, Hans Georg Severin has assigned it to the period between 525-550 A.D.[20]. Therefore, the subject of this article, the visible, non-figural paintings on the walls of the sanctuary, date between circa 525 and 800 A.D. As will be shown later, connections exist between the Red Monastery architectural polychromy and paintings in other Egyptian monasteries that have been dated to the sixth or seventh century, confirming a similar chronological range for these paintings at Sohag. Our knowledge of late antique painting in Egypt is still too limited to permit a more precise dating.

Architectural polychromy and the classical tradition

The architectural polychromy of the Red Monastery sanctuary has a long pedigree with clear antecedents in Greek and Roman architecture. Ancient Egyptian painted architecture may also be part of its ancestry, but this tradition has not yielded precise parallels. An impression of the ways paint was used on Greek architecture is perhaps best obtained by considering the Macedonian tombs of the Hellenistic period, such as the one associated with Philip II at Vergina. Its façade replicates the architectural format of a temple front, and includes not only solid areas of color (blue triglyphs) but also a painted, but not sculpted frieze of a hunt[21]. Two large, reclining personages fill the pediment of the Tomb of the Palmettes at Mieza, depicted illusionistically in bright paint, not sculpture[22]. Color works to embellish three-dimensional elements, and also to replace them. Subjects include figures and patterns.

Greek tombs built in Alexandria for the Ptolemies, and infused in some cases with Egyptian

[19] This article is in preparation.
[20] Severin forthcoming. See note 7 for more bibliography.
[21] Drougou and Saatsoglou-Paliadeli 2002, Figs 60-62.
[22] Rhomiopoulou 1997, 30-35.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 10

motifs, often included substantial amounts of paint. In addition to paint on the façades of some of these tombs, a considerable amount covered the interior walls, ceilings and niches of many of them, much of it still visible. Some go well beyond simple decoration. Marjorie Susan Venit has described one particularly elaborate example that includes a double *trompe-l'oeil*, in the Tomb of Sidi Gabr, of circa 200 B.C. "The ceiling of the kline niche, which is painted to replicate a ceiling composed of painted coffers visible at left and right, is covered with a simulated tent or awning inflated by an invisible breeze."[23].

The Romans integrated color into architecture using various media, including paint, mosaic, and also colored stone. They used these materials to form patterns and also to create figural representations[24]. The inclination to color architecture gained momentum in the imperial period[25]. While illusory columns in the architectural fantasies of Roman wall painting far outstrip the decorative scheme of most physical columns, nevertheless numerous examples of paint on architectural elements survive in Pompeian houses. These often consist of solid colors on the lower part of column shafts, cream or white above, and sometimes restrained polychromy on capitals and cornices[26]. Pliny the Elder criticized the aesthetic impulses leading to such decoration, writing: "We are no longer content with panels nor with [wall] surfaces displaying broadly a range of mountains in a bedchamber; we have even begun to paint on the masonry."![27] The Romans commonly evoked faux architectural sculpture with paint, creating illusionistic vistas. Real architectural sculpture and that included in imaginary scenes frequently mimicked expensive materials. But accounting for painted architecture as a simple attempt by those with a limited budget to replicate more expensive views and materials fails as an explanation, because paint was sometimes added to high-quality surfaces in imperial settings. In the Forum of Augustus, the remains of fourteen-meter high white marble panels have been found painted with illusory textile hangings, suggesting that the Romans were playing an aesthetic game[28]. Surely, if Augustus had wanted actual textiles he could have had them made, no matter how large, so the rationale behind these paintings must be sought elsewhere, perhaps in the demonstration of the painters' skill, in the contrast between what was real and what only apparent, out of playfulness, or as a display of wealth, involving the obscuring with paint of that which was so often imitated in paint. These examples indicate that Romans deployed a flexible and creative attitude towards color and its integration into architectural spaces which is of great relevance for the Red Monastery church.

Art historians writing about Christian sites in late antique Egypt have made disparate references to color, paint, and their relationship to architecture. Marguerite Rassart-Debergh has observed what she calls a *trompe-l'oeil* attitude towards architecture, in the early remains at Kellia. It is expressed, for example, in the juxtaposition of a brick column, covered with stucco and paint to imitate stone, and topped with an actual carved stone capital. She has described the common practice of creating the illusion of porphyry, brightly colored textiles, jewels, mosaics, marble, and other beautiful colored materials within monastic spaces through the use of colored paint[29]. Analyzing funerary sculpture and its architectural framework, Thelma Thomas has carefully considered color and its effects. "Both polychromed reliefs and wall-paintings were integral parts of the overall schemes and intended to be seen as such. It is crucial to note the impossibility of

---

23 Venit 2002, 41.

24 Kelly 1986. Barry, 2006. Roman tombs offer us some of the best surviving examples of architectural polychromy, e.g. the Tomb of the Pancratii (Via Latina), the Columbaria of Pomponius Hylas, and the Columbaria of Vigna Codini. These are beautifully reproduced in: Della Portella 2000, 68, 70-72, 74-75, 120-127.

25 "Augustus' forum [was] the first to have been decorated profusely with polychrome marbles." Jones 2003, 22. James 1996, 66.

26 Some well-preserved examples of painted architectural sculpture have survived at Pompeii, e.g. the Casa dei Capitelli Colorati, and the Casa dei Dioscuri. My thanks to Kellum for these references. A painted column and more elaborately painted square columns at the former site are illustrated in: Cassanelli *et al.* 2002, 162, 213, Figs 116, 178. Examples of columns with color on the lower part of the shaft and capital, and variously on the column base and supporting cornice can be found in the Houses of Ariadne and of the Tragic Poet, illustrated in Cassanelli *et al.* 2002, 102, 128, Figs 47, 76.

27 Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, XXXV, 2-3 in: Loeb Classical Library 1959, 260-261.

28 For documentation on the painting in the Forum of Augustus, see: Jones 2003, 22-24. Ungaro and Vitali 2003, 217-218. C. Gasparri has observed a decorative transgression of media in Severan-period painting. Gasparri 1970, 32. Cited and translated in Clark 1991, 353.

29 Rassart-Debergh 1998, 29.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 11

determining where the polychromy of architectural relief ends and wall-painting begins."[30]. Marie-Hélène Rutschowscaya has noted the importance of color, working with relief sculpture used in the walls of churches such as those found at the Monastery of Apa Apollo, Bawit, "to accentuate the sumptuousness of the monuments."[31].

Until recently, Egypt's climate has been exceptionally dry, providing superb conditions for the preservation of paint on architectural sculpture[32]. Many pharaonic sites still include paint on figural relief sculpture, and on columns, capitals, and the like[33]. Numerous examples of painted architectural sculpture from Christian sites can be found in the Coptic Museum, in Cairo[34]. But even in Egypt, paint on architectural sculpture has often deteriorated, or has been removed.

Architectural Polychromy, the Red Monastery and Chromophobia

Western art and architectural historians have traditionally had something of a love affair with pristine white classical sculpture and architecture, often ignoring the colored paint that embellished both. David Batchelor has framed this attitude not in terms of loving whiteness, but as a manifestation of what he has termed *chromophobia*, a phenomenon that he sees expressed in numerous aspects of modern western culture, and one that has relevance for this study of the Red Monastery church[35]. The quintessential exemplar of classical purity is the Parthenon, used as a model for numerous buildings. These copies commonly omit the paint that originally decorated this temple, and other buildings in Greece and Rome[36]. In a publication of 1764, the influential art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) wrote:

For the essence of beauty consists not in colour but in shape, and on this point enlightened minds will at once agree. As white is the colour which reflects the greatest number of rays of light, and consequently is the most sensitive, a beautiful body will, accordingly, be the more beautiful the whiter it is[37].

And while it was certainly the case in the nineteenth century that many architects and architectural historians began to study evidence of paint at the Parthenon and elsewhere, after excavations at Aegina in 1811 revealed painted temple remains, nevertheless the habit of imagining these monuments as white maintained considerable vigor[38].

The desire for whiteness was expressed both in copies of ancient buildings and through the physical transformation of the original surfaces themselves. William St. Clair has recently discovered definitive proof that when the Parthenon sculptures were being prepared for display in the British Museum in 1937-1938, many of them were chiseled and scoured to remove all traces of paint and patina, in an effort to render them completely white[39]. This approach was not unique. A photograph taken in 1953 shows a Greek "restorer" scraping the patina off of the marble surface of the Hephaesteion in Athens using a steel chisel, as part

---

30 Thomas 1989, 60, and 58-59. See also Thomas 2000.

31 Rutschowscaya 1986, 102. My translation.

32 Extensive, year-round irrigation, possible after the construction of the Aswan High Dam, has caused substantial additional humidity in parts of Egypt and also rising ground water levels.

33 E.g. Karnak, the Mammisi at Edfu, Kom Ombo, and Medinet Habu.

34 For color illustrations, see a book published in the 1990s that is particularly useful for its collection of objects reproduced in color, although not for its text: Atalla n.d., e.g. 53 (top), 75 (all), 79 (top), 80, 83 (all), 92 (top and bottom) 96, 104 (top).

35 Batchelor 2000.

36 Phoca and Valavanis 1999, 94-95. Varied reconstructions of paint on the Parthenon are illustrated in color, for example some in: Tournikiotis 1994a, e.g. 264, 275. The following examples of classical buildings (often evoking the Parthenon) created white are illustrated in: Tournikiotis 1994b: the Custom House, Wall Street, New York City (p. 216); the house at Berry Hill, near Halifax, Virginia (p. 219); the Patent Office, Washington, D.C. (p. 218); and the Second Bank of the United States, Philadelphia (p. 213). These monuments span the nineteenth century.

37 "Da nun die weisse Farbe diejenige ist, welche die mehresten Lichtstrahlen zurükschiket, folglich sich empfindlicher machete: so wird auch ein schöner Körper desto schöner sein, je weisser er ist…" Winckelmann 1764, cited and translated in: St. Clair 1998, 290.

38 Writing about the Western reception of the Elgin marbles William St. Clair observed: "From the beginning some viewers were uncomfortable with what they saw. Ancient marble statues had been white, western Europe had come to believe over the centuries since the time of the Renaissance, and modern sculptures should be the same." St. Clair 1998, 289. For a historical overview of the people who engaged with the subject of color in ancient Greek architecture, see: Van Zanten 1994, 260-277. Nadolny shows that the direct study of works of art and architecture began even before the Aegina discoveries. Nadolny 2003. See also n. 35.

39 St. Clair 1998, 281-313, esp. 295-296.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 12

of a project undertaken by an American, Alison Frantz[40]. General studies of classical architecture still tend to give the subject of architectural polychromy short shrift, and those devoted to painting usually focus on images on flat walls and sometimes raised stucco[41]. While specialized publications on ancient architectural polychromy certainly exist, and are currently increasing in number, the topic of non-figural painting on architecture and architectural sculpture seems to be something of a blind spot, even today[42]. One salient mode for the reception of classical art and architecture views it through glasses that bleach it of all color.

William MacDonald, who did not follow the *chromophobic* trend, suggested a factor that may have contributed to it. He noted that "the lack of a complete ensemble [of marble, stucco, mosaic or paint within a standing architectural structure] makes it necessary to consider these techniques and materials separately."[43]. But rather than leave such considerations out of his study of Roman architecture, he identified a primary site for the use of color, vault decoration, and captured both its essential effect and the rarity of its survival. "What resulted was a shell of color, fitted around inside the architectural space… Imagination is required to recreate this effect in the mind's eye…"[44].

The specter of *chromophobia* arises in the historiography and conservation of the White and Red Monasteries. The greater popularity of the White Monastery in Egypt today and in the works of historians may plausibly be attributed to that prolific writer and famous monastic leader, Shenute of Atripe (346-465), once abbot of the White Monastery. We know of no parallel to him associated with the Red Monastery, and indeed Bentley Layton has identified the latter as belonging to a large federation, under Shenoute's control[45]. And yet one would think that art and architectural historians would have paid at least as much attention to the Red Monastery church as to that at the White Monastery, but this has not been the case[46]. Not only does its original architecture survive to a much higher level than that of most late antique churches in Egypt, but additionally the sanctuary of the Red Monastery church preserves *in situ* more extensive sculpture and painting than does any late antique monument in Egypt[47]. And yet, expressing a common attitude, Otto Meinardus wrote: "For obvious reasons, however, the White Monastery has attracted considerably more ecclesiastical and scholarly attention than its sister monastery, the Red Monastery, which is situated three kilometers north of it."[48]. The 'obviousness' of this situation is not apparent to me. Certainly another factor accounting for this disparity is the higher esteem in which stone architecture is held by traditional architectural historians, compared to brick. But I think another important element is the very whiteness of the "White Monastery" church, and the, by contrast,

---

40 Jury 1999, 10. Alberge 1999.

41 John B. Ward-Perkins referred to "effects of light and color" in the Parthenon, but did not elaborate on the subject of color. He mentioned colored marbles, mosaics and painted columns in passing, without commenting on the role of color in the architectural space. Ward-Perkins 1981, 116-118, 120. Color is clearly not a 'principle of Roman architecture,' according to Mark Wilson Jones, whose recent book includes one page and one caption on color. It may include another paragraph or two, but some of the page references in the index under the term "polychromy" are incorrect (pages 124 and 194-195 do not include a discussion of the subject). Jones 2000, Caption 5.1, 87, 196.

42 Two of the most exciting recent publications are: Bankel, Liverani, *et al.* 2004, and Brinkmann (ed.) 2003. My thanks to Niels Gaul for buying a copy of this second, rare, volume for me.

43 MacDonald 1965, 172.

44 MacDonald 1965, 174.

45 Layton 2002, 26-27, and n. 9.

46 The neighboring White Monastery has received considerably more attention, but even it appears only very rarely, except in publications of specifically Egyptian art and architecture. For a demonstration of preference for the White Monastery over the Red, compare the attention paid to the two in the *Coptic Encyclopedia*. Five pages are devoted to the Red Monastery, and ten to the White Monastery. *CE*, 736-740, 761-770.

47 Severin has evaluated the White and Red Monastery sculpture in the following terms. "The rich original architectural sculpture of the White Monastery is indeed preserved only in a very reduced state, due to the collapse of parts of the sanctuary in the early middle ages, to the following restorations and to further damage – a very reduced state of preservation from which it is hard to evaluate the past splendour and variety. On the other hand, the architectural sculpture of the Red Monastery – at least in the sanctuary and its [the sanctuary's] western facade – is preserved to a unique degree. Nowhere else in Egypt do we know a monument of the Late Antique and Early Byzantine period whose architectural sculpture is *in situ* up to the highest level of the building and can reliably be examined and estimated." Severin 2004, 1. Once uncovered fro their obscuring, later layers of unpainted plaster, the extent of the late antique paintings in the Church of the Virgin at the so-called Syrian Monastery (Wadi Natrun) may rival that of those in the Red Monastery sanctuary. Innemée is directing the Syrian Monastery work.

48 Meinardus 1969-1970, 111.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 13

Pl. 7. Niche with painted cross and sculpted shell, lower half built into the medieval roof. Current location, roof, White Monastery Church
(Photograph and © E. Bolman)

Pl. 8. Niche with a band of late antique paint immediately below the sculpted conch, northern nave wall, far western end, White Monastery Church
(Photograph and © E. Bolman)

shockingly dense and intensely patterned paintings in the Red Monastery sanctuary. And yet this absence of color at the White Monastery church is not, at least for the interior, historically accurate. As recently as 1900 substantial areas of colored paint survived. Albert Gayet described non-figural and figural paintings covering the interior of the White Monastery sanctuary, in a publication of 1902[49]. All but fragments of the non-figural paintings and their plaster layers have since been removed, and only some of the figural paintings have escaped destruction. One unusual survival is now accessible only by the roof, where one can see the upper half of a late antique painted and sculpted niche, the lower half of which was built into the medieval roof (Pl. 7)[50]. Most have even less of their original painted skin than a niche in the nave, in which a late antique painted band in yellow and pink survives immediately below the conch (Pl. 8). A recent survey has found evidence for two late antique painted layers, and additional medieval plaster and paint throughout the church[51]. It seems apparent that this *chromophobic* whitening (i.e. removal of painted plaster) was done by the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, which

[49] Gayet 1902, 145-146, 150-151.

[50] The painting of the upper half of a cross seems to me to be somewhat later than late antiquity, and may date to circa the tenth century, although this is a very preliminary guess.

[51] In March and April, 2006, the following team conducted a survey of the White Monastery church for remnants of paintings: Bolman, Louise Blanke, Cédric Meurice, Gillian Pyke, and Sheehan. We found traces of late antique and medieval painted plaster throughout the church, particularly in the easternmost lobe, and in part of two niches now accessible only via the roof. Our profound thanks to the Antiquities Endowment Fund of ARCE for funding this work. An article is in progress.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 14

undertook considerable work at both churches in the early part of the twentieth century[52]. Monneret de Villard's 1925-1926 publication shows the White Monastery church sanctuary without the patterned plaster that Gayet had observed in it a few decades previously[53]. Most likely, its removal was undertaken, as was the case with the Parthenon sculpture, in a misguided effort to return the monument to an imagined original state of white purity. The aesthetic preference for a colorless austerity may well account for the fact that the remarkable architectural polychromy of the Red Monastery church has thus far escaped art historical recognition and analysis[54].

Non-Figural Architectural Polychromy in the Red Monastery Sanctuary

The repertoire of motifs used in the Red Monastery sanctuary on the architectural sculpture and the walls draws on a long tradition, and transforms it. Some of the abstract patterns in the Red Monastery wall paintings repeat designs that had been current in floor mosaics for some time. A section of wall between two niches in the middle register of the eastern lobe (Pl. 9) repeats not only the pattern, but also the basic color scheme of a circa third-century A.D. floor mosaic in Antioch[55]. In late antiquity the same design and coloration appear in barrel vaulted ceiling mosaics in the Rotunda of St. George, Thessaloniki[56]. Other sections of paint imitate the much more expensive use of colored marbles, granites, and porphyry in Roman architecture, for example the panels to either side of the central niche, in the middle register of the eastern lobe (Pl. 10). Similar painted examples adorned one of the Greco-Roman tombs at Hermopolis Magna[57].

The rosette motif, a fully opened rose with a thin foliate "x" separating four large pink and red petals, adorns sections of the wall on the lowest level of the easternmost lobe. With a white center, it also appears on some of the painted curtains hanging in several niches (Pl. 11). Associated in antiquity with springtime, as Henry Maguire has shown, the rosette appears on countless late antique textiles and floor mosaics, both pagan and Christian[58]. For example, a mosaic band decorated with rosettes and cornucopias culminates in the Christogram of the eastern apse soffit, in the sixth-century A.D. Church of San Vitale, at Ravenna[59].

Many close parallels exist between other monastic paintings from late antique Egypt and those at the Red Monastery, and some of these also have classical antecedents. Lozenges set within rectangles adorn the ceilings of the Alexandrian Anfushy tombs I and V[60]. A circle set within a lozenge that is in turn framed by a long rectangle appears in the Antioch mosaics[61]. This configuration, with slight variations in proportion and decorative detail, is painted on the transverse wall fronting the sanctuary, at the Red Monastery (Pl. 12), in a tomb at Hermopolis Magna, and in chapel XXVIII and room six at Bawit[62]. Examples of a dappled background

---

52 Some of this work is documented in the following publications: *Comité* 1909, 60. *Comité* 1940, 267, 370. El-Habashi 2001-2002. Meurice is currently working on a publication of the Comité's role at both monasteries.

53 Monneret de Villard 1925-1926, vol.1, Pl. 11-17, 31, vol. 2, Pl. 173. In these views some plaster is still visible on the medieval brickwork, but it is not apparently patterned. In vol. 2, Pl. 169-170 one can see part of the brick with a coating of plaster that filled in the lobes of the church prior to the Comité's renovations. Pls 205-207, vol. 2, shows a watercolor by Clédat of some of the medieval figures painted on the plastered brick, in the south lobe. Meurice is working on this subject, with unpublished archival materials. One band of patterned paint on a cornice at the northern end of the narthex survived until recently. It is visible in Monneret de Villard 1925-1926, vol.1, Pls 18, 20. Caroline Schroeder was also able to photograph it in 1999. Schroeder 2004, Fig. 4. The area has since been filled with steel supports, damaging and obscuring most of the painted surface.

54 I base this assertion on published material, and do not know what the scope of Innemée's forthcoming volume will be.

55 For a black and white illustration of the floor mosaic, and a description of its colors, see: Campbell 1988, 25, Pl. 77.

56 Two panels using variations of this design, from the barrel vaults around the central domed space, are illustrated in: Papachatzis n.d., 54-55. These two do not have the same colors as the Red Monastery example, but another one does, which I photographed in 1999.

57 Gabra and Drioton 1954, Pl. 21.

58 Maguire 1987, 13, 36, 77, Figs 42, 44-47 (Heraklea Lynkestis, large basilica, floor mosaic), Figs 89-90 (San Vitale, Ravenna). A fifth-century textile example of a rosette in a tree of life is in Fribourg. Stauffer 1991, 132, Cat. No. 49, Pl. V. For rosettes used in a Christian context, that were intended to have an off-white center (now yellowed), see a textile with a gemmed cross in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts inv. 83.126, illustrated in Friedman 1989, 21, 214.

59 Maguire 1987, 77, Fig. 89.

60 Venit 2002, Pls I, III.

61 Campbell 1988, Pls 213-214.

62 House 4, Hermopolis Magna: Gabra and Drioton 1954, Pls 8-9. Chapel XXVIII, west wall, Bawit. Clédat 1904, Pl. CV. Salle 6, Bawit: Maspéro and Drioton 1943, Pls XVIIB, XVIIIb.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 15

Pl. 9. Detail of a pattern to the left of the southernmost niche (third from the left), unconserved. Middle register, eastern lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery Church
(Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

Pl. 10. Central niche, unconserved. Middle register, eastern lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery Church
(Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

Pl. 11. Niche with a painted curtain, conserved test cleaning with edges of the still unconserved wall showing. Northernmost niche (first from the left), middle register, eastern lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery Church
(Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

Pl. 12. Painted rectangle enframing a lozenge and circle, unconserved. Eastern face of the transverse wall fronting the trilobe, southern side. Sanctuary, Red Monastery Church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 16

pattern were painted at Hermopoplis Magna, Bawit (Pl. 13), the Monastery of Apa Jeremiah at Saqqara, and the Red Monastery (Pl. 14)[63]. Perhaps the painters used this technique to evoke a sense of the speckled quality of many colored stones, such as porphyry and red granite. (Pls 13 and 14) also both employ variants of the interlaced square (eight-pointed star) motif common in the late antique eastern Mediterranean, and associated by Andreas Schmidt-Colinet in Christian contexts with a cosmological significance[64]. Two-dimensional patterns of wildly curling vines are also frequently found in Roman mosaics, and they appear at Bawit and at the Red Monastery. In the two monastic examples, the vines frame niche heads[65].

In late antiquity, Christians adapted the hypostyle hall of Thutmosis III, at Karnak, making it a church. A French conservation team has dated these renovations to the seventh century[66]. Figural and decorative paintings assisted in the transformation of this temple into a church, including several braid motifs encircling columns immediately below the capitals, with very close parallels to those at the Red Monastery (Pls 15-16). Artists also employed them at Saqqara and Bawit[67]. Borders in the Rabbula Gospels, illuminated in Syria in 586 A.D., include multicolored braid motifs as well[68].

The significance of the non-figural Red Monastery paintings lies in the fact that they constitute the most complete example of monumental painted architectural sculpture surviving from late antiquity, within and also, to the best of my knowledge, outside of Egypt. They are a late example of what was a common practice, for which we generally have very fragmentary evidence, and they utilize motifs common in the larger Mediterranean realm. Extensive late antique monastic remains at Bawit, Saqqara, and the

Pl. 13. Interlaced squares against a speckled background. East wall, North Church, Monastery of Apa Apollo, Bawit. (Clédat 1999, 214, Fig. 202; © Musée du Louvre)

Pl. 14. Interlaced squares with speckled green and pink backgrounds, conserved square showing uncleaned wall (left and right), and conserved cornice forming the bottom frame of a niche (above). Lower register, north lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery Church
(Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

63 For Hermopolis Magna: Gabra and Drioton 1954, pl. 9. For Saqqara: van Moorsel and Huijbers 1981, Pl. F; see also Pls XIId; XIIIa-c.

64 Schmidt-Colinet 1991, 21-34.

65 One Roman example is an "Acanthus foliage populated with birds," Peristyle, House of Protomes, now in the Bardo Museum, Tunisia, and reproduced in: Blanchard-Lemée *et al.* 1996, 272, Fig. 213. Red Monastery, north lobe, lowest zone. Bawit, salle 1, east wall: Maspéro and Drioton 1943, fasc. 2, Pl. V – VII.

66 Le Fur 1994, 114.

67 Saqqara: Cell 708. Van Moorsel and Huijbers 1981, Pl. XIIa. Bawit: room 25bis, Maspéro 1943, fasc. 2, Pl. XL.

68 *Rabbula Gospels*. Cecchelli, Furlani and Salmi 1959, fol. 2b.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 17

Pl. 15. Late antique painted braid motif, immediately below a capital with intact Pharaonic architectural polychromy. Hypostyle Hall of Thutmosis III, Karnak (Photograph and copyright: E. Bolman)

so-called Syrian Monastery in the Wadi al-Natrun (Scetis) also attest to this intensely colored and patterned style. And early exception to it has survived, however, at Kellis, in the Dakhleh Oasis (Western desert), where the interior walls and columns of the earliest purpose-built church known in Egypt are painted white[69].

The tradition of architectural polychromy certainly did not remain static over the centuries, and one major contrast between the Macedonian *exempla* and this late antique church interior is the density and variety of coverage. While substantial unpainted areas exist on the façades and in the interiors of the Macedonian tombs, in the Red Monastery sanctuary paint apparently covered

[69] Bowen, 2002. This church is architecturally simple, and does not have Roman sculptural elements, so its lack of architectural polychromy might possibly derive from its very remote location.

Pl. 16. Architectural polychromy with braids (wall), twisted rope (arches) faux green marble (central column), etc. Middle register showing parts of the third and fourth niches (eastern half of the register), north lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery Church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 18

every surface[70]. At Pompeii, columns were usually painted with solid areas of color, and sometimes sections of walls were as well, and at the Red Monastery varied flamboyant designs stretch around and across all of them[71]. Even the column shafts painted to imitate colored marble include bands in other colors, for example two columns in the northern lobe rendered as green-veined marble, which are embellished at top, center and bottom with brightly contrasting yellow and pink bands (Pls 17-18). No solid blocks of undecorated late antique paint exist anywhere in the sanctuary.

In addition to their significance as a rare survival of the practice of painting architectural sculpture, the ensemble in the Red Monastery sanctuary also informs us as an expression of late antique aesthetics[72]. The patterns, colors, and dense visual juxtapositions in these paintings have parallels, some identical, in other media in the same general period, as discussed above. In some cases, they express a playful attitude towards materials echoing that found in the double *trompe-l'oeil* of the Sidi Gabr tomb, or Augustus' illusory curtain. For example, the fanciful twisted ropes and braids that commonly form arcades in late antique textiles have also been painted onto actual arches in the Red Monastery church, and on the flanking walls (Pl. 16)[73]. The textiles engage in a visual game, in which the pliable, three-dimensional, twisted yarn of a braid is actually made out of a two-dimensional weaving, that depicts a three-dimensional solid architectural support. In the Red Monastery architectural example, the soft twisted rope decorates an actual arch, and braids cover adjacent walls, undermining our sense of their solidity. Braids are fundamentally anti-architectonic. Unlike curtains, they have no normal function in architectural spaces. Soft architectural structures, such as tents, require fabric and rope, but large, elaborate colored braids are a standard part of neither soft nor hard architectural environments. These are not the only features that would have destabilized the building for the original viewer. Patterns commonly found in mosaics on floors appear in painted form, on walls. And long-standing habits of imitating expensive materials are also repeated here. What appear at first sight to be panels of inlaid porphyry turn out to be skillful illusions. The fanciful decoration of architectural elements exists in renderings in other media (e.g. textiles showing arches of twisted rope) and on the actual building, at the Red Monastery. In the flickering light of lamps, the material of the illusionistically painted curtains would likely also have been difficult to ascertain.

These paintings participate in a late antique aesthetic that crossed media, and made visual and verbal games out of color, pattern, material and scale. Michael Roberts has identified a delight in opposition expressed in late antique poetry that is established through the use of contrasts, such as height and depth, or wet and dry[74]. He has also described a preference for variety and color expressed with words and also visual media, which he termed the 'jeweled style.' Roberts observed that "late antique taste did not tolerate the plain and the unadorned; brilliance of effect, the play of contrasting colors, is all."[75]. Liz James has identified a similar interest in complex colors.

Gregory of Nyssa demonstrates a delight in the combination of colours and in translucent beauty and natural beauty which seems conceived primarily in terms of colour: 'the river glows like a ribbon on gold drawn through the deep purple of its banks.' Chief among the qualities of beauty for Gregory are variegated colours apprehended through sight, the highest sense. Simple colours are also beautiful, but he values them especially in combination: 'blue is interwoven with violet and scarlet mingled with white and among them are woven threads of gold; the variety of colours shine with a remarkable beauty.'[76].

---

[70] The ceiling no longer survives, and we have not yet explored the floor. My assumption is that the ceiling was painted, but I have no evidence for this assertion other than the complete covering of the walls in late antiquity.

[71] Much work still needs to be done to consider the relationship of the Red Monastery paintings and their Roman antecedents, for example those at Pompeii. One densely patterned and colored column that contradicts my generalization about solid colors on such architectural features was reproduced in a painting by Vincenzo Loria. It is from the Villa of the Columns, Pompeii. Cassanelli 2002.

[72] Some aspects of this aesthetic have their roots in classical antiquity, e.g. the use of painted ribbons in floor mosaics and wall paintings. For a Roman example see the Villa di Poppea, Oplontis, room 31, in: Laken 2001, Pl. LIX, Fig. 4.

[73] Numerous examples of this device can be found, and two are illustrated in: Rutschowscaya 1990, 83-85, 87.

[74] Roberts 1989, 16-21.

[75] Roberts 1989, 118.

[76] James 1996, 125. First quotation: Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter*, 20, *PG* 46, 1081A. For additional references to this passage see James 1996, 125, note 3. Second quotation: Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, 194, *PG,* 44, 389D-391A.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 19

Pl. 17. Veined marble column and two niches with Saints Besa (left) and Shenoute (right). Black uncleaned square on the central column shows condition before conservation. Western half of the middle register, north lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery Church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 20

Thomas has explored the extravagance of this late antique aesthetic, and also the playful approach to media, in a revealing study of a textile fragment. She included the following quotation from the fourth-century Cappadocian Bishop Asterius of Amaseia in her essay. Objecting to the wearing of dramatically colored silk textiles, he wrote: "When they come out in public, dressed in this fashion, they appear like painted walls to those they meet."[77]. Thomas insightfully observed that the "'jeweled style'… is an aesthetic of adornment that revels in polychromatic juxtapositions and contrasts which seek to outdo as much as to replicate effects seen in the natural world."[78].

These observations certainly resonate when looking at the interior of the Red Monastery church, particularly the preference for densely packed patterns and colors. Twenty-two different combinations enliven a single niche (middle zone, third from the left, north lobe; Pl. 18).[79]. Organized reversals add to the variation, both plastic and painted. Two rounded niches frame the row at either end, while the two central niches have squared backs. The curve of the outer set of niches manifests itself in reverse, in the attached half-columns that frame these niches. Pilasters similarly express the angularity of the central pair. The faux green pilasters and real pink pilasters of the niche shown in Pl. 18 are reversed in the niche to the left, where the illusory pair are pink and the three-dimensional pair are green (see Pl. 17, niche at right, for the color reversal). Post-conservation, no doubt more subtle relationships will be apparent, on a larger scale. But already, with its painted braids, floor patterns shown on walls, and *trompe-l'oeil* features, the artists responsible for this church show themselves to be engaging in a discourse expressed visually and textually that spans the late antique world[80]. Boundaries between media, even those as apparently disparate as painting, architecture, mosaics, textiles, poetry and prose, are everywhere transgressed[81]. Simple colors were good, complex colorist interactions were infinitely better, and patterns were used to facilitate not only complicated interactions of color, but also to increase exponentially the variety of visual stimuli.

The survival of an almost completely painted interior from late antiquity provides opportunities to consider not only the character of Christian and more specifically monastic art in Egypt, but also the surprising visual density and plastic richness of this late example of the classical tradition (Pl. 19). It remains to be seen what ties this aesthetic system has to pharaonic painted architecture, but the late antique mosaic interiors at Ravenna demonstrate no diminution of vibrancy, pattern and color, sometimes using the same motifs, indicating that the principal genealogy to which they and the Red Monastery painted program belong is the classical. The sanctuary at the Red Monastery enables us to experience the richness and variety of hue as well as pattern, of figural as well as non-representational painting. We can identify visual games, cueing the viewer to think about different media, and questioning the solidity as well as the fabric of the architectural elements. We are not forced through an absence of painted evidence cautiously (*chromophobically*) to imagine an architecture of pristine whiteness, with perhaps restrained areas of color, but are able to see the built up density of color and design that create a continuous, flamboyant internal skin within what is already a complex architectural space. With its painted architectural sculpture, this monument points back to the classical world, expresses the aesthetic preference for colored variety characteristic of late antiquity, and also directs our attention forward to Byzantium, where a delight in what James has called "chromatic diversity" is characteristic of the Middle Byzantine period[82]. It represents the high end of monastic visual culture, although not the highest, because of its inexpensive materials. Interestingly, this confident expression of late

---

77 Asterius of Amaseia, *Homily I*. PG 40, 165-168. Thomas 2002, 42. Thomas uses Cyril Mango's translation. Mango 1972, 50.

78 Thomas 2002, 39.

79 This is the niche in the north lobe, middle register, third from the left.

80 For more on the ties between this decorative program and those of other late antique monuments, see another article on this church, which I am in the process of writing.

81 On the parallelism between linguistic and visual arts, Roberts notes: "There is scarcely a stylistic technique identified in the second chapter that does not find an analogy in the visual arts of the period." Roberts 1989, 118. His book contains sustained demonstrations of this point.

82 For the Byzantine material, see James 1996, esp. Chapter 6. The phrase "chromatic diversity" appears on p. 114, and is expressed by such authors as Rhodios and Mesarites. For a consideration of architectural polychromy in the middle Byzantine period, see: Altripp 2002, 259-270, Pl. 1-2. For an exploration of architectural polychromy in medieval Spain, see: Katz 2002, 3-13, Pl. 1-3.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 21

Pl. 18. Niche with unidentified saint and architectural polychromy. Third from the left, middle register, north lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery Church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 22

Pl. 19. General view of the second through fourth niches. Middle register, north lobe, sanctuary, Red Monastery Church (Photograph Patrick Godeau; © ARCE)

antique aesthetics exists in remote Upper Egypt. More costly renditions would likely have existed as cathedral and patriarchal churches in urban environments. Nevertheless, through the Red Monastery church sanctuary, one can obtain a glimpse of the thousands of lost churches of late antiquity, within Egypt and beyond[83].

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alberge, D. 1999, 'Greeks 'Botched' Marble Clean up', *The Times,* London, Nov. 4.

Altripp, M. 2002, 'Beobachtungen zur polychromie Byzantinischer Bauplastik in Griechenland', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 52, 259-270, Pls 1-2.

Atalla, N. S. n.d., *Coptic Art, vol. 2: Sculpture – Architecture,* Cairo.

Atiya, Aziz S. (ed.) 1991, *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, New York.

Bankel, H., P. Liverani, *et al.* 2004, *I colori del bianco: polichromia nella scultura antica,* Roma (Collana di Studi e Documentazione, Musei Vaticani 1).

Barry, F. 2006, '*Painting in Stone: The Symbolism of Colored Marbles in the Visual Arts and Literature from Antiquity until the Enlightenment*', PhD, Columbia University, New York City.

Batchelor, D. 2000, *Chromophobia*, London.

Blanchard-Lemée, M. *et al.* 1996, *Mosaics of Roman North Africa: Floor Mosaics from Tunisia,* New York.

Bolman, E. forthcoming a, 'Depicting the Kingdom of Heaven: Paintings and Monastic Practice in Early Byzantine Egypt,' in: R. Bagnall (ed.), *Early Byzantine Egypt,* Cambridge.

Bolman, E. forthcoming b, 'The Red Monastery Conservation Project, 2004 Campaign: New Contributions to the Corpus of Late Antique Art', in: C. Hourihane (ed.), a volume on Eastern Christian art, Princeton.

Bowen, G.E. 2002, 'The Fourth-Century Churches at Ismant el-Kharab', in: C. A. Hope, G. Bowen (eds), *Dakhleh Oasis Project: Preliminary Reports on the 1994-1995 to 1998-1999 Field Seasons*, Oxford/Oakville, 65-85 (Dakhleh Oasis Project: Monograph 11).

Brinkmann, V. (ed.), 2003, *Bünte Götter: die Farbigkeit Antike Skulptur,* (Exhibition at the Staatliche Antikensammlungen

[83] My thanks to Roger Bagnall for information about the numbers of churches in Egypt by the sixth century, in an email message written August 24, 2004.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 23

und Glyptothek, Munich, in collaboration with the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, and the Vatican Museums, Rome), Munich.

Brooks Hedstrom, D. forthcoming, 'Divine Architects: Designing the Monastic Dwelling Place', in: R. Bagnall (ed.), *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 450-700*, Cambridge.

Campbell, C. 1988, *The Mosaics of Antioch,* Toronto (Subsidia Mediaevalia 15).

Cassanelli, R. *et al.* 2002, *Houses and Monuments of Pompeii. The Work of Fausto and Felice Niccolini,* Los Angeles.

Clark, J. 1991, *Houses of Roman Italy 100 B.C. – A.D. 250: Ritual, Space and Decoration*. Berkeley.

Clédat, J. 1904, *Le monastére et la nécropole de Baouît,* Le Caire (MIFAO 12).

Clédat, J. 1999, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouit.* D. Bénazeth, M.-H. Rutschowscaya (eds), (MIFAO 111), Cairo.

Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe: Exercices 1908, fasc. 25, Cairo 1909.

Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe: Exercices 1933-1935, fasc. 37, Le Caire 1940.

Della Portella, I. 2000, *Subterranean Rome*, Cologne.

Drougou, S., C. Saatsoglou-Paliadeli 2002, *Vergina: Promenade sur le site archéologique,* Athène.

El-Habashi, A. 2001-2002, *Athar to Monuments: The Intervention of the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe*, PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Michigan.

Gabra, S., É. Drioton 1954, *Peintures à fresques et scenes peintes à Hermoupolis-Ouest (Touna el-Gebel),* Le Caire.

Gasparri, C. 1970, *Le pitture della Caupona del Pavone*, Roma (Monumenti della pittura antica scoperti in Italia, sec. 3, Ostia fasc. 4).

Gayet, A. 1902, *L'Art Copte,* Paris.

Grossmann, P. 2002, *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten*, Leiden (Handbook of Oriental Studies, section one, The Near and Middle East, vol. 62).

Innemée, K. 2004, 'The Wall-Paintings of Deir Anba Bishoi (Red Monastery) near Sohag,' in: Immerzeel, M., J. van der Vliet (eds), *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium*, Leuven. vol. 2, 1321-1325 (Orientalia Louvaniensia Analecta vol. 133).

James, L. 1996, *Light and Colour in Byzantine Art*, Oxford.

Jones, D. 2003, 'Marmora Romana in the Imperial Forum', *Minerva* 14/1, 22-24.

Jones, M. W. 2000, *Principles of Roman Architecture,* New Haven.

Jury, L. 1999, 'Photo Shows Greeks Chiseling Marbles', *The Independent* (London), November 28, Sunday, 10.

Katz, M. R. 2002, 'Architectural Polychromy and the Painters' Trade in Medieval Spain,' *Gesta* 41/1, 3-13.

Kelly, K. 1986, 'Motifs in Opus Sectile and its Painted Imitation from the Tetrarchy to Justinian,' PhD dissertation, Columbia University, New York City.

Laken, L. 2001, 'Wallpaper Patterns in Popeii and the Campanian Region: Towards a Fifth Pompeian Style?' in: Barber, A. (ed.), *La peinture funéraire antique: IVè siècle av. J.-C.-IVè siècle ap. J.-C.* Paris. 295-300.

Langener, L. 1996, *Isis lactans – Maria lactans: Untersuchungen zur koptischen Ikonographie*. (Arbeiten zum spätantiken und koptischen Ägypten vol. 9), Altenberge.

Lafferière, P.-H. 1993, 'Les croix murales du monastère rouge à Sohag,' *BIFAO* 93, 299-311.

Layton, B. 2002, 'Social Structure and Food Consumption in an Early Christian Monastery: the Evidence of Shenoute's Canons and the White Monastery Federation A.D. 385-465', *Le Muséon* 115/1-2, 25-55.

Le Fur, D. 1994, *La conservation des peintures murales des temples de Karnak,* Paris.

MacDonald, W. 1965, *Architecture of the Roman Empire,* New Haven.

Maguire, H. 1987, *Earth and Ocean: the Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art,* University Park, PA.

Mango, C. 1972, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453: Sources and Documents*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

Maspéro, J., É. Drioton 1932, 1943, *Fouilles executées à Baouît*, Le Caire (MIFAO 59, fascs. 1-2).

Meinardus, O. 1969-1970, 'Some Lesser Known Wall-Paintings in the Red Monastery at Sohag', *BSAC* 20, 111-117.

Meinardus, O. 1974-1975, 'The Semidomes of the Red Monastery at Sohag', *BSAC* 22, 79-86.

Meinardus, O. 1981, 'Die Nischen-Fresken im Roten Kloster bei Sohâg', *OC* 65, 148-162.

Monneret de Villard, U. 1925-1926, *Les couvents près de Sohag,* Milan.

Moorsel, P. van, M. Huijbers 1981, 'Repertory of the preserved wallpaintings from the monastery of Apa Jeremiah at Saqqara', *Miscellanea Coptica*, Rome, 125-186, Pls A-G, 1-XXX (Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia vol. IX).

Moorsel, P. van, K Innemée 1997, 'Brève histoire de la 'Mission des peintures coptes", *Dossiers d'Archéologie* 226, 68-75.

Nadolny, J. 2003, 'The First Century of Published Scientific Analyses of the Materials of Historical Painting and Polychromy, circa 1780-1880', *Reviews in Conservation* 4, 1-13.

Panetta, M.R. 2004, *Pompeii: The History, Life and Art of the Buried City.* Vercelli.

Papachatzis, N. (with revisions by M. Molho) n.d., *Monuments of Thessaloniki*, Thessaloniki.

Phoca, I., P. Valavanis 1999, *Rediscovering Ancient Greece: Architecture and City Planning*, Athens.

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, XXXV, 2-3; Loeb Classical Library, 1959, Vol. 9, Cambridge, 260-261.

Rabbula Gospels 1959, facsimile edition of the miniatures of the Syriac manuscript Plut. I, 56, Medicaean-Laurentian Library, Cecchelli, C, G. Furlani, M. Salmi (eds), Olten and Lausanne.

Rassart-Debergh, M. 1998, 'Mosaïque de couleurs', in: Palette égyptienne: de la peinture romaine au décor des monastères coptes. *Solidarité-Orient, Bulletin* 207/2, 29-30.

Rhomiopoulou, K. 1997, *Lefkadia. Ancient Mieza,* Athens.

Roberts, M. 1989, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity*, Ithaca.

Rutschowscaya, M.-H. 1986, *Musée du Louvre: Catalogue des bois de l'Égypte copte,* Paris.

9183-06_ECA_3(2006)_01 26-10-2006 09:46 Page 24

Rutschowscaya, M.-H. 1990, *Tissus Coptes,* Paris.

Schmidt-Colinet, A. 1991, 'Deux carrés entrelacés inscrits dans un cercle. De la signification d'un ornament géométrique,' in: Stauffer 1991, 21-34.

Schroeder, C. 2004, "A Suitable Abode for Christ': The Church Building as Symbol of Ascetic Renunciation in Early Monasticism', *Church History,* 73/3, 472-521.

Severin, H.-G. 2004, 'Report', American Research Center in Egypt, unpublished.

Severin, H.-G. forthcoming, 'On the architectural decoration and dating of the church of Dayr Anbā Bišūy ("Red Monastery") near Sūhāg in Upper Egypt.'

St. Clair, W. 1998, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles,* Oxford.

Stauffer, A. 1991, *Textiles d'Égypte de la collection Bouvier, Musée d'art et d'histoire Fribourg,* Bern.

Thomas, T. K. 1989, 'An Introduction to the Sculpture of Late Roman and Early Byzantine Egypt', in: F. Friedman (ed.), *Beyond the Pharaohs: Egypt and the Copts in the 2nd to 7th Centuries A.D.*, Providence, 54-64.

Thomas, T. K. 2000, *Late Antique Egyptian Funerary Sculpture: Images for this World and the Next,* Princeton.

Thomas, T. K. 2002, 'The Medium Matters: Reading the Remains of a Late Antique Textile', in: Sears, E., T.K. Thomas (eds), *Reading Medieval Images: the Art Historian and the Object,* Ann Arbor.

Tournikiotis, P. (gen. ed.) 1994a, *The Parthenon and its Impact in Modern Times,* Athens.

Tournikiotis, P. 1994b, 'The Place of the Parthenon in the History and Theory of Modern Architecture', in: Tournikiotis 1994a, 200-228.

Ungaro, L., M. Vitali 2003, 'Die bemalte Wandverkleidung der 'Aula del Colosso' im Augustusforum', in: Brinkmann, V. 2003, 16-18.

Venit, M. 2002, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria: The Theater of the Dead,* Cambridge.

Wansleben, J.M. 1677, *Nouvelle relation en forme de journal, d'un voyage fait par le P. Vansleb en Égypte en 1672 et 1673,* Paris.

Ward-Perkins, J. B. 1981[2], *Roman Imperial Architecture*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex.

Winkelmann, J. J. 1764, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums,* Dresden.

Zanten, D. van 1994, 'The Parthenon Imagined Painted', in: Tournikiotis 1994a, 260-277.