

## **(iv) Still Life Pompeii – 2016**

**Photographs K and L show wall paintings from the House of Julia Felix in Pompeii.**

### **(a) Give a description of the two paintings.**

Both paintings are from the House of Julia Felix in Pompeii. The first photograph is of “thrushes, eggs, and domestic utensils.” In the foreground, there is a plate of eggs that is flanked by a silver vessel with a ladle and a silver jug. Hanging on a hook behind them are four dead birds. The table on which the bowl sits seem to be rigid when contrasted to the curvature of the vessel. Skillfully, the vessel is colored blue, showing off its surface reflection and light. It is the rendering of bright colors, as well as the clear realism that suggests that this painting is the second Pompeiian style.

The second photograph is of a painting with a large glass bowl that rests on a table. There is ripe fruit placed in it and can be seen as though being reflected. This is skillfully done, and the effect is very realistic. On one side of the oversized bowl lies a pomegranate sliced in half. Further back behind the table, an amphora lies at a lower level against a clay jar. This jar is filled with ripe grapes. The perspective of this painting is a little off. The bowl for example seems too large when set against the other objects. This still life sort of lacks the balance and symmetry of the other painting in photograph K. This painting is also second style which can be recognized from the still life scene and the architectural elements, for example, the ledge/table.

### **(b) Wheeler's view is that Roman artists recognized the world around them as a field of study in its own right, even in its more trivial aspects. Discuss this view with reference to these paintings.**

Both the paintings shown support Wheeler's view. The subject of the paintings could not be more ordinary. The painting's both depict items that can be found in Romans everyday lives. Simple depictions of fruit and decorations of a Roman home that are far from grand. The paintings are also uneventful. There is no drama element to them. Unlike other paintings such as the “fight in

and around the Amphitheatre of Pompeii”, The paintings in photographs K and L are not telling us of a great event or symbolizing anything. There is no story being told.

However, the attention to detail demonstrates the admiration and love the Romans found in everyday items. From the reflection on the metal vessels to the rendering of the glass bowl, the Romans spared no expense in their attention to every aspect. The colors of the fruit and the feathers of the birds are all planned and capture the realism in the amount of detail. It is this focus on features that highlight that the Romans viewed household items as objects of beauty, just as much as a beautiful orchard like “the Garden of Livia”.

**(c) Comment briefly on anyone other style of wall painting favored by the Romans.**

Style three of the Pompeiian styles (20 BC - AD 62) changes from the focus of realism and moves towards impressionism. This tended to mean loose brushstrokes and the like. Unlike the second style, there is less emphasis on perspective and focuses more on the narrative.

In terms of color, the third style prefers strong colors. These would include colors such as blacks, yellows, and reds. these could cover large areas with just one color for example monochrome works. in the third style, painted architectural features such as columns tended to be thin and windy unlike in previous styles when they would be sturdy and realistic. As well as this, people’s faces in this style are barely recognizable making them more impressionistic rather than realistic. “Offering to a seated Dionysus” is highly impressionistic.