

Tracking dependency in late-antique Roman domestic architecture: the example of the Domus del Ninfeo at Ostia (III, VI, 1-3)

Abstract: Throughout the Republican and Imperial periods, the materiality of slave bodies was carefully taken account of and disciplined as appropriate. From a legal point of view, this was a long process dictated by humanitarian concerns as well as collective anxiety – generated by the mere existence of “speaking tools”, even though their owners were well aware that slaves were much more than that. The coerced invisibility of the slaves was pursued not only in the public sphere but also within the domestic walls. In this talk, I will look at an example of domestic architecture, the Domus del Ninfeo – a second-century CE *insula* (apartment house) in Ostia, which was turned into an elegant *domus*, an upmarket family residence, in late antiquity – to highlight how architectural analysis can shed light on dependency, inclusion and exclusion.

Short biography: Alessandra Batty holds a degree and a postgraduate degree (*Specializzazione*) in Classical Archaeology from the Università di Roma “La Sapienza”, and an MA in Archaeology and PhD in History of Art from the University of Manchester, where she has lectured on Greek and Roman art and architecture for more than ten years. She is currently affiliated to the University of Bonn.

Alessandra’s main research interests are architectural analysis (and its implications) and the history of archaeological studies. Among her publications is a monograph about the Domus del Ninfeo at Ostia: one of the most imposing late-antique houses of the town. Her English translation of Giuseppe Maggi’s book on Herculaneum will be published soon.