

Epicurean Symbolism in Herculaneum Art - Something To Track Down

published under the title *La bibliothèque de Philodème et l'épicurisme romain* (1987), with an introduction by Pierre Grimal. The French edition was revised and published in Italy under the title *Filodemo in Italia* (1990). The book presents an overview of the philosopher and writer Philodemus of Gadara (circa 110–40 B.C.E.), a follower of Epicurus and proponent of Epicureanism in Italy in the first century B.C.E. The work is an outgrowth of the intense study which has been devoted in recent decades to the philosophical and philological significance of Philodemus and his work, in conjunction with the archaeological discoveries and interpretations offered by art historians regarding the so-called 'Villa of the Papyri'. This is a villa discovered in Herculaneum, where it lay buried under the lava and ashes during the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 C.E.. A large number of papyri were discovered in the Villa containing works belonging to Epicurean circles (either works of Epicurus himself, or of his followers, Philodemus among them). The Villa, with its library of papyri, is considered to be the center of what was the Epicurean school in Italy, headed by Philodemus himself.

The first chapter of Gigante's book provides a comparison of the various interpretations which have been offered of the sculpted decorations which were discovered in the Villa, whose dense array of symbols seems certainly to refer to the world of Epicurean philosophy. Gigante is especially indebted to the treatment of the problem by Pandermalis (1971), who considers the sculpted decorations to be arranged in opposing pairs so as to express a symbolic contrast between the Epicurean universe and everything that differs from it, especially the contrast between the Epicurean universe and the Stoic alternative, and thus between the

Epicurean ideal of the private contemplative life on the one hand and the ideal of the active public life which was typical of the Stoics. Philodemus, according to Gigante (again following Pandermalis), played a prominent role in determining the artistic tastes of Lucius Calpurnius Piso, the aristocratic Roman owner of the Villa and a prominent representative of Philhellenism in Italy.

The source is : https://www.academia.edu/4198417/Philod...semiotic_debate