

**Excavation Plan of the Villa dei Papiri  
1754–58**

**Karl Jacob Weber (Swiss, 1712–1764)**

**Vellum, ink, gouache, and pencil**

**Museo Archaeologico Nazionale di Napoli**

Karl Weber's plan of the Villa dei Papiri, drawn between 1754 and 1758, is not a complete record of the excavations, which began in 1750 and ended in 1761, although they resumed briefly in 1763 and 1764.

The legend of the plan, which is divided into several "Explanations" (*explicaciones*) is written in Spanish, the official language of the Bourbon court of Naples, beginning in the lower right corner and continuing clockwise, ending at the upper right.

The following translation into English, by Benedicte Gilman and Antonio Gilman, with the assistance of Javier Sánchez Palencia and Inés Sastre, was published on pages 363-367 of Carol C. Mattusch, *The Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum: Life and Afterlife of a Sculpture Collection* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005). Footnotes and museum inventory numbers included in that publication have been omitted here.

The unit of measurement used by Weber is the Neapolitan *palmo* (1 palm = 26.455 cm), comprised of twelve *onzas* (1 *onza* = 2.205 cm).

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**EXPLANATION OF THE SUBTERRANEAN EXCAVATIONS FROM THE CICERI WELL  
TO SCIONA, EXECUTED BY ORDER OF THE KING**

1. Pavement of *africano* and *rosso antico* marbles, which about two thousand years ago was [the floor of] a kind of belvedere, rising 15 palms above the ground facing the sea mentioned.
2. Step in white marble, 1/2 palm higher [than the floor of the belvedere].
3. Separate and continuous place [rectangular niche] on the same level [as the step in no. 2].
4. Staircase to go out to the belvedere that [was] discovered.
5. [Where] two silver coins were found.
6. Wall supporting earthen fill with a convex molding for reinforcement, 15 palms.
7. Tunnel where there were found a dented earthenware jar, 4 hinges, and another small piece of ornament, or door decoration, which are always made of bronze or copper; on 19 August 1750 when the large bronze statue was found in the Theater of Herculaneum.
8. Three hinges, and a boss, as usual from a door. Connection with the *gruta derecha* [primary tunnel].
9. First Ciceri well, near the Caravita garden; here begins the main *gruta derecha* by means of which the large subterranean antique Roman palace [i.e., the Villa dei Papiri] was found, and as a result all the precious things were found.
10. Second Ciceri well, toward the grove of Saint Augustin. This tunnel from no. 9 to 10 [on the plan] runs 102 palms under the Ciceri road and measures perpendicularly [i.e., in

height] the width of the road. The wall, which is colored red, follows this very tunnel from no. 9 to no. 10, and continues to the letter *d*, where the first room was found.

11. Tunnel, and first connection between the two wells [at 9 and 10], which also runs in various directions [*mixtilineamente*] under the Ciceri road.

## SECOND EXPLANATION OF THE CONTINUED WORK IN THE TUNNELS CARRIED OUT AS TIME PROGRESSES

- a. Small room where were found 4 hinges, a bronze vessel, and another of terracotta near the lead water pipe *b*.
- b. Lead water pipe, which continues 76 palms to *c*.
- c. Fountain with pyramidal marble steps, [the fountain] rising 2 palms and 3 *onzas*; the base is 7 palms square.
- d. Four small bronze statues on 28 January 1751, 19 *onzas* high, representing Cupids with dolphins, amphorae; 2 vessels, another one broken with 2 handles, 1 lamp, 1 scraper, and a pile of fishhooks, all of bronze, 3 lamps, 1 clay vessel.
- e. Painting 1 palm [high] of seahorses and bird, 3 clay cups, dish, vessel, another one broken, lamp, bronze door ornament or fixture.
- f. Marble statue, it is a youth, nude, 5 palms [high] with the base, a pretty vessel, on 24 March 1751. The pavement of 26 by 23 palms of fine antique marbles in different colors, 11 basketfuls of *serabeza* and *rosso antico* marble, which dressed the room. A bronze candelabrum, 2 bosses with flat backing. In this area 17½ hinges, 3 bosses, 2 clamps, 2 latches or door knockers, 4 small pieces of door ornament, 1 door ornament or fixture. A marble lion's foot, a clasp [or brace], 1 touchstone, and pieces of marble, a lead weight.
- g. Mosaic.
- h. Old [*viejas*] tunnels.
- i. 7 baskets of *africano*, *rosso antico* [marble].
- j. Antique well and antique tunnels.

## THIRD EXPLANATION, WHICH CONTINUES FROM g ALONG THE *GRUTA DERECHA*

1. Antique tunnels by which [they] have gone looking for precious things.
2. The *gruta derecha* goes on.
3. The fish pond 8 was found.
4. A marble satyr and she-goat together, on 1 March 1752.
5. Marble herm, life-size with horns on its head.
6. Another [herm], which appears to be a philosopher on 25 April, and the one above on 7 April 1752.
7. Large bronze herm, apparently of a woman, week of 22 to 27 May [1752].
8. Fish pond 252 palms long, 27 1/2 palms wide, near which in room *d* we have found a large pile of bronze fishhooks: water 8.
9. Tunnel and antique empty space.
10. Our ramp and tunnel.
11. Life-size marble statue, who is an astrologer, the head ought to be found: week of 17 to 22 July 1752.
12. Another during the week of 14 to 19 August 1752.

FOURTH EXPLANATION WHICH CONTINUES AND GOES ON IN ACCORDANCE WITH HOW THE TUNNELS HAVE RUN AND WHEN THERE WERE FINDS AND PRECIOUS OBJECTS

- a. One enters the large room [i.e., tablinum] of the palace, which has 3 doors from the large garden surrounded by the peristyle; [the garden has] water channels constructed of volcanic stone [*piperno*]; its [the garden's] maximum lengths on the long sides are 357 palms, on the short sides 120 palms, and in the middle it encloses the fish pond no. 8. The same room [tablinum] has 3 other doors on the side of the square courtyard [*perterra*], [which is] 80 palms on each side, [and which has] similar water pipes and peristyles, in each corner a well, with bronze herms, and in the middle a pool 71 palms long and 5 wide, 3 deep, paved and faced with white marbles.  
The room [tablinum] measures 42 by 31 palms, with mosaic floor; from the center we have taken out an elegant piece [of the mosaic].
- b. A broken bronze dish, 12 papyri, and 6 pieces of mosaic removed from the 6 aforementioned doors [the three doors on either side of the tablinum].
- c. Three life-size heads, and 3 rather small ones, and another life-size herm, [in] good [condition], all of bronze.
- d. Life-size marble statue, the vestal, all from 18 to 23 September 1752.
- e. Marble foot of a lion.
- f. Wall-painting with small head of a woman, 6 *onzas* [high].
- g. 101 papyri, two carbonized boxes, 13 by 8 by 10 *onzas*, and the other 24 by 12 *onzas*, with 20 large, 20 medium, and 20 small papyri, from 7 to 21 May 1753.
- h. Life-size marble statue, Minerva, 30 October to 4 November.
- i. Life-size bronze head, 5 papyri, 28 copper rods.
- l. Painting of Cupid.
- m. Life-size bronze herm.
- n. Room with grain.
- o. Main water channel, vault.

FIFTH EXPLANATION

1. Two bronze herms.
2. Pool.
3. Seem to be a temple and chapel.
4. Seems to be a chapel; beautiful piece of mosaic [has been] cut out, and a brick-and-mortar base without a statue, and 3 hinges 20 *onzas* long and 3 large bosses, a wide strip of copper at no. 3 in the large doorway [to the "temple"].
5. Low wall 1 palm high.
- 6 and 7. Two marble floors in white, black marbles, alabaster, *sarabeza*, *paragona*.
8. Idem, in October 1753. Three intact [small busts] with their bases and the names ZHNΩN, ΕΠΙΚΟΥΡΟΣ, ΕΡΜΑΡΧΟΣ: these in November; 9 *onzas* [high]; another without name.  
At no. 8 a large antique empty space with little *vergen*.
9. Pavement again.
10. Water pipe.

11. [Modern] ramp.
12. Life-size marble togate statue.
13. Arm, foot of marble statue.

The statue from no. 12 is an old man with beard and cape, which is similar to one of the ones according to the imp.[erial] .... institute.

Found 28 May 1753.

X. Antique tunnel.

I. Heater [for baths]. 4 paintings: a tiger 12 by 6 *onzas*; landscape 16 by 10; two cocks 24 by 12; mask 12 by 6 *onzas*.

II. Marble fountain 4 palms by 1 and 10 *onzas*; a broken dish, lead water pipe with its bronze spout, and large iron pick.

III. Good pavement of fine antique marbles.

IV. Lime pit.

V. Papyri, about 87 in 19 piles; another 161 whole; broken 101; a pile of writing tablets half broken 15 by 6 [*onzas*] and 4 *onzas* high.

VI. Vent near the grove of Saint Augustin to give air; it is 74 palms deep; a small piece of stucco with metal letters OHΣE.

VII. Large piece of figured mosaic.

VIII. On 16 November 1753 the fourth life-size bronze herm, and a marble wellhead, 34 *onzas* high and 24 in diameter with bas-reliefs of bucrania and flowers.

IX. Another similar bust on 10 April 1754, broken bronze vessel, lead water pipe.

X. Another similar bust on 16 April 1754; near these were found their square marble pillars, 6 palms and 9 *onzas* high; from the actual surface to the water are 5 palms in the well n. *viii*.

XI. Another similar bronze half-bust. Painting of labyrinthine lines 4 palms by 1. Another such 27 *onzas* by 12, on 26 March 1754. A bronze faun 9 *onzas* [high] without the other foot. A similar [faun] 13½ *onzas* [high]. Small bronze barrier and lead water pipe. A life-size bronze bust without head. A bronze horn of an ox 6 *onzas* [long]. A base 4 *onzas* [high], bronze clamp, wide strip of copper. Five bronze candelabra from 4 to 5 palms [high]. Another shorter one, which seems to be an altar.

Furthermore a bronze boss 6 *onzas* in diameter.

XII. A lead basin or box from a fountain [broken] into pieces, and 11 life-size bronze tiger heads, which were imbedded in the same lead that was in this niche; said box was placed 5 palms above the floor, which is of coarse mosaic.

XIII. Paintings of ducks 4 ½ by 4 [palms]. Another [painting] 24 *onzas* by 21. Another 2 palms square. Here is a main water pipe with its vault.

XIV. Iron grille for the main water channel *o*. Clay lamp.

XV. Wall podium [= base of wall?].

XVI. Piece of figured mosaic 7 palms square, 5 large papyri, 5 small; 27 August 1753.

XVII. Molding (astragal) that accompanies the ends of the mosaic and separates the garden from the statues; here one expected the first [statue].

XVIII. A bronze statue, 6 palms high; it is a clothed woman, complete with base.

XIX. Another similar [statue] on 13 April 1754. The first one mentioned on 24 May.

XX. Another similar [statue] on 22 June.

XXI. Another [bronze statue of a woman], missing head and chest, on 16 July from that same year 1754.

- A. Bronze statue of a nude man 5 palms high with the base.
- B. Another similar [statue] 6 1/2 palms [high], missing the base. The first one on 6 July 1754. The second on 10 July 1754.
- C. Small marble column 34 *onzas* high and circular, it is a fountain [wellhead], and a bronze spout; 20 July 1754.

Supplement. In all the rooms, besides what has been written, were found bronze door ornaments, namely: hinges 130, door ornaments or fixtures 33, bosses 34, various ornaments 38, rings 6, bracelets 13, door ornaments or fixtures 13, clamps 1 1/2, *zepo* 1, locks 7. This is all up to 20 July 1754, the work having started on 20 July 1750.