



Type: Wall painting

Findspot: Pompeii, Italy

Chronology: AD 1 century

Actual location: Naples Archaeological Museum, Italy. Inventory nr. 9043

The painting originally decorated the house of Marcus Gavius Rufus in Pompeii.

It depicts the aftermath of the killing of the Minotaur by Theseus. The hero is standing, naked and with a short mantle on the shoulder, in a contrapposto posture, raising his eyes to the sky. He holds a club in one hand, while the other is being kissed by a young boy, also naked but wearing a short mantle. Another boy, this time wearing a white tunic is embracing the hero's feet. The children are thanking him for the killing of the Minotaur and therefore for saving their lives. An old man, points at the dead Minotaur, while at the same time holding his left hand over the shoulders of another boy, who wears a tunic and a himation, a Greek mantle. Behind them, five women look at the scene. The body of the Minotaur lies at the left of the hero, under the arched entrance to the maze, visible in the background.

It has been suggested that Theseus is represented in images of this kind as Augustus: as the hero saved Athens subjugated by Crete, so Augustus saved Rome from its subjugation from the East, ruled by Marc Antony.

Similar depictions of the Greek hero circulated from the Augustan period onwards and can be found on Roman wall paintings (in the Augusteum, honouring Augustus and the Julio-Claudian family in Herculaneum) but also on portable items, such as gemstones.

## MY RESEARCH

Where were ancient Greek myths represented? What was the legend of Theseus and the Minotaur? What can ancient Greek and Roman representations of heroes reveal about contemporary notions about power and identity? How far were images of Greek myths re-semanticised in the Roman period?