

ROMAN ART

MONARCHY	REPUBLIC	EMPIRE
753 b.C. - 509 b.C.	509 b.C. - 31 b.C.	23 b.C. - 476 A.D.
Foundation by Romulus - Expulsion of Tarquinius Superbus	Expulsion of Tarquinius Superbus Battle of Actium	Augustus Princeps Fall of the Western Empire
Unlike the Ancient Greeks, who saw art as a multi-disciplinary activity, Ancient Romans saw art as a waste of time that could distract people from their main activities, which were mostly military and political. The only artworks they produced are architectural and have a functional value, one which is functional to the growth and development of their own civilization. Wonderful examples of these are walls, roads, water supply systems, houses and sewers.	Religious --> Temples	Baths - Circuses - Amphitheatres Art is now aesthetic and ludic.

ANCIENT ROMAN ART

Art must be beautiful and can be useful; for the Ancient Romans, it was the other way round

Aeneas was a Trojan prince that was said to have given rise to the Roman civilization.

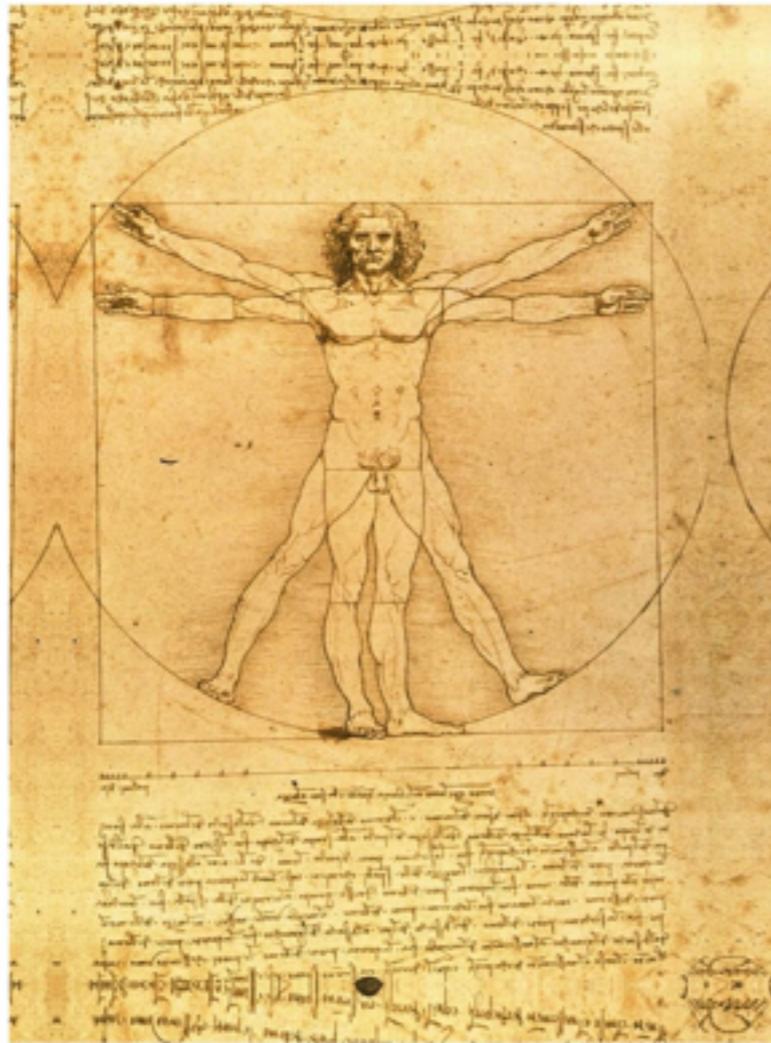
Imperial Roman Art

After a period of expansion wars and internal struggles, The battle of Actium marked the beginning of the Roman Empire (31 b.C.). Octavianus was proclaimed Augustus 4 years later. He will give unprecedented social, artistic and cultural impulse to Rome. Thanks to the Augustan peace, the economy flourished again throughout the Empire, which entailed a boost in construction activities all over the territories conquered.

Art was used to consolidate power.

The Augustan period was one of utter peace and maximum splendour.

Architecture



Between 40 and 15 b.C.,
Vitruvius wrote *De Architectura*,
the most important treatise of
Ancient History ever to come to
us.

He dealt with all sorts of
technical and theoretical
building issues, ranging from
the classic architectural orders
to the comparison and analogy
between human and
architectural proportions. It
was just this text that Leonardo
took cues from when he drew
his famous Vitruvian Man.

According to Vitruvius, good architecture must encompass 3
qualities:

venustas

(beauty, harmony between the parts, proportion),

utilitas

(functionality, usability, accuracy),

firmitas

(solidity, robustness, majesticness).

Numerous structures were built during that period, such as triumphal arches, fornices (monuments with 1-3 arch&vault passageways), which were created to celebrate the victories and undertakings of generals for propaganda.

The most ancient of the 17 arches Augustus had built is in Rimini (27 b.C.). It features only one fornix, which is slightly higher than wide.

This height-width ratio gives the structure a sense of balanced strength which was also the main feature of Augustus as a person.

Augustus himself was not so Augustan, though. The front of the Arch of Augustus in Rimini resembles a temple. The attic above the tympanum features an inscription dedicated to the Emperor. The crenellation was obviously to be added during the Middle Ages.

In the Campus Martius in Rome Augustus had the Ara Pacis built in his praise (13 b.C.). The altar was to symbolize Augustan Peace, the peace established on the territories that had been conquered (mainly Hispanic and Gaul). The Ara Pacis was the clearest example of imperial propaganda based on the power of images. Opened in 9 b.C., it is an 11.65m x 10.62m rectangular marble enclosure placed on top of a podium and open on the longer sides. The altar proper is inside this rectangle, whose outer walls have 2 bas-relief bands (the bottom one featuring acanthus leaves, the top one human figures) separated by a meander. The most interesting scenes are the parades and rallies on the shorter sides, which feature great plasticity thanks to the accurate sequence of the characters on 3 lower-relief depth plans. All in all, it is no longer Greek and not yet Roman. The monument was later modified according to modern standards and canons, which raised a lot of perplexity over whether one should preserve the authenticity of the style of the age in question or integrate it with works from other sources.

During those years, namely in 11 b.C., Augustus completes the building of the Theatre dedicated to his nephew Marcellus, who had died in 23 b.C. It is one of the most ancient Roman theatres made of stone.

Unlike Ancient Greeks, who built the caveas of their theatres on natural slopes, Ancient Romans were able to build their theatres even right above plain ground, thanks to innovative building materials such as concrete and successive arches placed rhythmically in a sequencing fashion - a structure visible even from the outside.

In the inside, Roman theatres were no different from Greek ones, apart from a grandiose scaena frons which characterized the former.

In the Theatre of Marcellus arches are sided by semicolumns whose architectural orders follow a sequence which would become a standard - Tuscan, Ionic and Corinthian from the bottom up.

The Theatre of Marcellus lost its top order as a result of Orsini Palace being built right upon its pre-existing structure.

The attic of the Theatre of Marcellus was structured so as to have hosted women, almost like a matroneum in church. The Vatican Archives enshrine the Forma Urbis Antiquae Romae, which tells us the exact location of most monuments and statues.

The outer attic wall used to feature bronze shields that celebrated victories.