

ROBERT ADAM ROME SCHOLARSHIP IN ARCHITECTURE

The Robert Adam Rome Scholarship in Architecture is dedicated to the greater understanding and relevance of the tradition and evolution of classical architecture today.

From the Roman republic, through to the last Christian Emperors, from the Renaissance to neo-classicism, up until the twentieth century and the present, classical architecture has been an ever-present and enduring tradition. Like all traditions, it connects to its past but adapts and develops as ideas and culture change. In each era, architects looked to the traditions of classical architecture but also created something new and distinctive, adding to the tradition. Rome has been at the centre of this evolution of classical architecture for 2,500 years.

New classical or traditional architecture can always learn from its history. From particular innovations to why changes come about, from the sophistication of detail to adaptation to technology, and much more. There is always something to be discovered in the evolution of classical architecture that can inform the practice of architecture today. Studies can: understand how new features and details added to the tradition and suggest how this can continue today; undertake in-depth studies of key buildings or eras to take that knowledge forward to current practice; analyse the relationship between architecture and urban design and apply this knowledge to modern urbanism; examine changes in the social, political and economic background to inform how our architecture might respond to new changes; concentrate on how detail and symbolism were expressive of their time and how the modern world can similarly respond; and many other subjects. The only limit is the imagination and commitment of the scholar.

Here is a very brief outline of the great range of classical architecture over the centuries to be found in Rome.

THE EVOLUTION OF CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE AND THE CITY OF ROME

While the origin of classical architecture is recognised to be ancient Greece, from the earliest days of the Roman Republic in the 6th century BCE, new buildings were built in a version of classical architecture. The earliest identified style was called 'Tuscan' and had influence from Greek settlements in southern Italy and Sicily and local Etruscan temples.



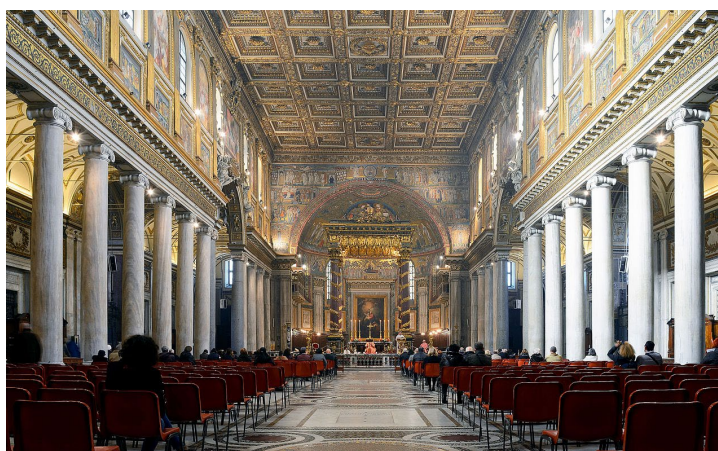
Etruscan Tomb of the Lionesses, c 520 BCE, illustrating Etruscan architecture

In the following nine centuries, classical architecture evolved to include many of the features we identify today as distinctly classical: the arch, the vault the dome, and the identification and invention of distinct types or Classical Orders. New construction methods and materials were used and influenced this evolution, most notably cement, brick and marble veneers. New classical building types were developed, such as the basilica, the amphitheatre and the villa. This was accompanied by a rich decorative tradition that changed over the centuries.



The Pantheon, Rome, c 126 CE

With the decline of the Roman Empire and the identification of the city as the centre of western Christianity, churches and other important buildings continued to be influenced by or seek to emulate the status of the many surviving Imperial buildings. In many cases, materials and decoration were re-used from ruined or redundant structures. This period became the foundation of the style, now known as Romanesque (or in the Roman manner), that continued across Europe until the 12th century.



Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, 434 CE

Following a turbulent Middle Ages when other Italian cities became more prominent as city states and a disputed Papacy was located in Avignon, in France, in the early 15th century an undisputed Pope returned to be firmly located in Rome. This ended the medieval decline of the city and the revival of building and urban planning. This was the period of the early renaissance, when classical architecture was rediscovered in its historic form and contemporary building types were added, such as the urban palace. Either from misunderstood interpretation or simple invention, more features we regard today as distinctly classical were included, such as decorative rustication and the balustrade.



Palazzo della Cancelleria, Rome, 1489

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Rome became the centre of new developments in classical architecture. Some of the key buildings in the Mannerist style can be found in Rome, characterised by deliberate invention and complexity, intentionally unlike the rational and orderly interpretations of ancient architecture in the High Renaissance. Important new features such as the giant classical Order, containing other smaller Orders, or decoration like folded leather, were added to the vocabulary of Classical architecture. Mannerism led to the Baroque, an architecture that introduced a new complexity, fragments of classical features combined in elaborate convoluted plans, and were often built at an impressive scale with long urban vistas to maximise their impact.



Palazzo dei Conservatori, Piazza del Campidoglio, Rome, Michelangelo, designed 1564

In the 18th century, the final throes of the Baroque became the lavish originality of the Rococo, with extravagant decoration, ever more complex plans and intricate urban projects designed like stage sets. Towards the end of the century and into the nineteenth century, a more austere neo-classical architecture emerged throughout Europe. Although inspired by the rediscovery of ancient Greek architecture, in Rome, recent discoveries in Pompei and the ever-present remains of the ancient city, led to a distinctive Roman neo-classicism. This was sometimes combined with a pioneering application of imaginative illustrations of Pompei with new materials such as cast iron and plate glass.



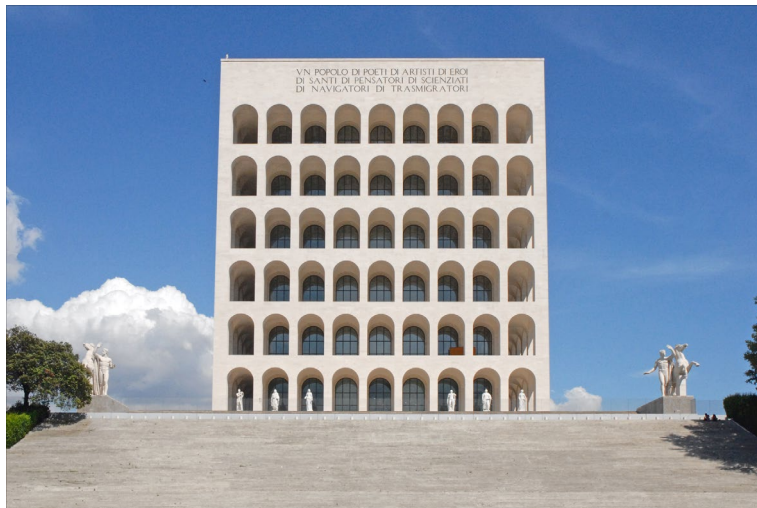
The Spanish Steps, Rome, Francesco de Sanctis, 1725

The unification of Italy, the end of the Papal States and the establishment of the city as the capital of the new nation in 1871, led to a burst of building activity that makes up a great deal of Rome today. Planned expansion with new boulevards and public squares held highly original eclectic classical architecture and more restrained interpretations of the renaissance palace to serve as civic, commercial and apartment buildings to cater for the growth of administration and population. By the end of the century and into the 20th century, more grandiose buildings revived and created a distinctive interpretation of the Baroque which, together with domestic architecture, often included classicised references to Fin de Siècle and Art Nouveau architecture.



Victor Emmanuel II Monument, Rome, Giuseppe Sacconi, designed 1885

In the inter-war period, the Fascist government's association with status of ancient Rome joined with the simplified, often austere and inventive, interpretation of classical architecture throughout Europe to create original and sometimes monumental designs. The construction of some of these buildings lasted until the end of the 1950s when the idea of architecture in Rome was transformed by the Modernist designs for the 1960 Olympics.



Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, EUR, Rome, Giovanni Guerrini, Ernesto Lapadula and Mario Romano, designed 1937, completed 1953

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SOME SUGGESTED READING

SOME CITY GUIDES

The Architecture Lover's Guide to Rome, Elizabeth Heath, White Owl, 2019

The Companion Guide to Rome, Georgina Masson, Companion Guides, 2009

Blue Guide Rome, Alta Macadam & Annabel Barber, Blue Guides, 2020

SOME MORE SPECIALIST PUBLICATIONS

Rome (Oxford Archaeological Guides), Amanda Claridge, OUP, 2010

The Principles of Roman Architecture, Mark Wilson Jones, Yale University Press, 2000

Early Christian and Medieval Rome: A Guide to the Art and Architecture, Cecily J. Hennessy, Cecily Hennessy Publications, 2017

Early Medieval Architecture, Roger Stalley, OUP, 1999

The Renaissance in Rome, 1400-1600, Loren Partridge, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996

Emulating Antiquity: Renaissance Buildings from Brunelleschi to Michelangelo, David Hemsoll, Yale University Press, 2019

Architectural Invention in Renaissance Rome: Artists, Humanists, and the Planning of Raphael's Villa Madama, Yvonne Elet, Cambridge University Press, 2018

renovatio urbis: Architecture, Urbanism and Ceremony in the Rome of Julius II, Nicholas Temple, Routledge, 2011

Baroque Architecture: 1600-1750, Frédérique Lemerle & Yves Pauwels, Flammarion, 2008

Roman Baroque, Anthony Blunt, Pallas Athene Arts, reprint available from 3 April 2024

Italian Architecture 1750-1914, Carroll Louis Vanderslice Meeks, Yale University Press, 1966 (out of print)

Mussolini's Rome: The Fascist Transformation of the Eternal City, Borden Painter, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005