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Roman Representation: From Stockholm to Peru

By Sarah Smith

Ancient Rome serves as a prototype and pattern; it provided the reason for erecting a monument, and fills the monument with meaning.

-Marten Snickare

As the epigraph states, the ancient architecture of Rome serves as an archetype for those seeking to build in a monumental scale or endow their works with symbolic meaning. The manifestation of Roman architecture and design speaks to modern nations' desire to evoke classical ideals and power. For example, the city of Stockholm, Sweden underwent an extensive renovation and rejuvenation in the seventeenth century. This architectural overhaul can be largely attributed to Nicodemus Tessin the Younger: his central plan for the city included the use of the traditional grid system and featured architecture reminiscent of Rome.¹ In an even more politically charged allusion, Tessin modeled Stockholm's Hall of State on the Roman senate building.² The presence of Roman influence is not isolated to the continent of Europe; the colonial architecture found in Lima, Peru points to Rome and sought to convey the supremacy of the Spanish over the native Peruvians.³ Both the Lions and Dragons Fountain and the Equestrian Statue of Philip V are symbolic of imperial power, a message that is reinforced by their classical design. The palimpsests of Stockholm and Lima capitalized on the politically charged symbolism and design of Rome; architects evoked classicism in order to raise their work to the height of monument.⁴

Marten Snickare's "*The Construction of Autocracy: Nicodemus Tessin the Younger and the Architecture of Stockholm*," argues that the presence of Roman influence was a result of the politically significant motives for building: "Tessin shows an awareness of the significance of public space

in a political and ideological context.”⁵ He reinforces his argument by providing several architectural examples charged with political import and reminiscent of some of Rome’s greatest monuments. Perhaps the most notable example is Tessin’s central plan for the city of Stockholm.⁶ The gridded plan called for all political buildings to be located around the palace. This political complex would be integrated into the larger city through a series of large bridges and roadways, which provided easy access to public squares and buildings.⁷ The highly ordered and axial structure of Tessin’s plan recalled Roman city planning, and spoke to the political climate of Stockholm. That is, as the capital city of a country ruled by absolutist monarchs, Stockholm’s architectural design was an emblem of royal power: “[The architecture’s] character of austerity and order, of something immovable and enduring, was consistent with the vision of an eternal, absolute monarchy established by God.”⁸

Tessin’s plan for the Royal Funerary Church in Stockholm accurately represents the larger plan for the city. This church was to replace one already in existence; however, the new church would be directly opposite the north facade of the royal palace.⁹ The Church and the Palace became the anchors for a new plaza, but more importantly their position signified the intrinsic connection between the church and the absolutist monarchy.¹⁰ Further, the symbolism of the Royal Funerary Church was heightened by its clear architectural connection to Rome. Like the Pantheon, the church featured a portico and a dome. A tympanum featuring relief sculpture as well as a traditional entablature were classical design elements common in European architecture. Tessin linked his church more directly to the architecture of Roman temples by placing engaged columns around the perimeter of the church.¹¹ The combination of these architectural components lent the church an ornate and powerful presence. The classical influence and overtly symbolic nature of Tessin’s design was ideal for a

church that was intended to forever house the remains of Swedish absolute monarchs.

Stockholm's ties to Rome are further strengthened by Tessin the Younger's design for the Hall of State in the Royal Palace.¹² No longer content to draw inspiration from Rome, Tessin wished to recreate it: "Tessin sought sources for a return to a truer picture of antiquity... [t]hus Tessin seems to have modeled the Hall of State on the Roman Curia."¹³ Architectural similarities between the two buildings are ubiquitous; however, the marked difference between the Hall of State and the rest of the Royal Palace shows Tessin's dedication to Roman reproduction.¹⁴ Unlike the rest of the rooms in the palace, the Hall of State features a flat ceiling.¹⁵ Since vaulting was the mode of the day and Tessin's preferred style, his departure from these norms shows his dedication to accurate duplication.¹⁶ The interior of the Hall also featured classical design: statues, ornate carvings, columns, and entablatures all add to the feeling of reproduction. The blatant duplication of the Roman Curia was significant for more than its artistic merit; it was a symbol of the absolutist regime and cast Sweden's government as the "heir to the ancient Roman institution."¹⁷

In reality, the absolutist monarchy and the need for a centralized government within the country facilitated Tessin the Younger's entire plan for the city of Stockholm.¹⁸ Centuries earlier, Rome's expansion can also be tied to a dominant political influence: the Pope. The Pope's presence in the city of Rome facilitated and dictated what needed to be built: "When Popes returned permanently to Rome in the early fifteenth century... the city began to grow and prosper... the expanding papal court fostered a building boom of churches, palaces, and villas."¹⁹ While Roman building was geared towards pilgrims; Sweden was more interested in conveying power. In Stockholm, Gustavus Adolphus's concern was the portrayal of such power, which in his case translated to military might. The grid, in which the city of Stockholm was laid out, showed both

the power the monarchy had in orchestrating and carrying out plans and the importance of the military. Straight streets make for easy mobilization: “the straight street also facilitates the movement of troops, and war machines like artillery.”²⁰ The expansion of a city depends largely on the established political power. Subsequently, the building that occurs within cities reflects the priorities of its ruler. Tessin’s design for the city of Stockholm serves as a lasting monument to monarchic ambition and might.

Evidence of Roman influence from classical to baroque is not confined to Europe alone; Francisco Stastny’s “*From Fountain to Bridge: Baroque Projects and Hispanism in Lima*” provides numerous examples of the presence of Roman design.²¹ The Fountain of Lions and Dragons designed by Pedro de Noguera was built to symbolize Spanish domination over the native Andean peoples.²² Like the Peruvian fountain, the Romans used columns or arches to signify their dominance over conquered lands. The top of the fountain of Lions and Dragons features the female personification of fame. She flaunts the coat of arms of Castille and León, and serves as a marked reminder of Spain’s imperial power.²³ The position of fame and the state crest of Castille and León at the highest point of the fountain symbolically stands above any other design elements that represent the pagan world. The hierarchical placement of the symbolic elements of the fountain reflect the social and political hierarchy of the colonized world. Its great height also clinched its position as a city landmark. Lima’s gridded city plan and long straight streets made the fountain an easily recognizable landmark; its position in the center of the square known for social and political activity secured its status as a monument.²⁴

However, the sheer size of the Fountain of Lions and Dragons was not the reason for its ideological significance. Symbols – similar to the position of the Spanish state crest above all else - are the vehicle by which political and religious overtones manifest themselves in Noguera’s fountain. The

most overt symbol appears at the base of the fountain: “eight groups of emblematic animals. Victorious on top of each is the Spanish lion, symbol of Christ, virtue, and strength. Underneath, forcibly subdued, are dragon serpents, representative of evil in Christian iconography in the colonial context.”²⁵ The forcible, even violent, symbolism of the conquered creatures truly spoke to the way in which the Andeans were subjugated: through the brute strength of the Spanish. It helped that they believed God justified their actions: converting pagans and bringing civilization to an untamed land were worthy causes in the eyes of the Spanish colonials. The Spanish were eager to secure their hold over the native peoples of Peru, and building in the European style in a monumental way was one way in which they were able to publically demonstrate their power.

Bravo de Lagunas’ Equestrian Statue of King Philip V was also built as a symbol of Spanish imperial power, and served as an ominous reminder of the absolute control the Spanish wished to possess.²⁶ In fact, the Marquis of Villagarcía’s patronage of the statue can be directly linked to the desire to maintain power over an unruly and rebellious native populace: “[Marquis of Villagarcía’s] reaction to the unrest was a primary reflex: to demonstrate a visible assertion of the power of the crown.”²⁷ The statue gains prestige because of its position on top of a triumphal arch; both the statue and the arch are indicative of Rome, and represent absolute imperial power.²⁸ The classical design features of the arch and the equestrian statue add both to the allusion to Rome and the visual strength of the monument. The arch features traditional Doric entablature and the stance of the equestrian statue is reminiscent of the Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius.²⁹ The arch appears heavy, an immovable testament to established Spanish government. Atop the bulk of the arch is the substantial, but more active looking equestrian statue. The King perched on horseback seems capable of action, a reminder to the Peruvians of royal power and perseverance.

Perhaps more interesting than the Equestrian Statue itself, was its status as a landmark and bridge between the city and surrounding countryside.³⁰ Directly opposite the statue on the opposite side of the riverbank, Bravo de Lagunas had an avenue of trees, known as the Alameda de Archo, installed.³¹ This avenue of trees expanded the equestrian statues' ability to preside over the city and the city's outskirts. The statue became the first thing one saw when entering, and the thing one imagined while approaching the colonial city of Lima.³² The avenue symbolically extended King Philip's sovereignty over the undeveloped countryside of Peru. Like Tessin's reproduction of the Roman Curia, the Equestrian statue of Philip V sought to evoke the traditional architecture of Europe in order to suggest Spain's preeminent and lasting hold over the New World capital of Lima.³³

Stockholm, Sweden and Lima, Peru serve as examples of the far-reaching influence of Roman architecture and design. The urban form established by the Romans stood for order, power, and authority; something governments still find worthy of emulating. The idea of the public space serving as a form of propaganda was highly beneficial to leaders and governments striving to establish or parade power. Whether or not the cities were able to realize the motives and ideologies they were created to express, they serve as testaments to patrons, creators, time, and the ideas for which they were conceived. Among others, Tessin the Younger's building plan and Noguera's Fountain of Lions and Dragons are permanent monuments to absolutism in both political and religious terms. The ability to transcend the constant state of flux in which cities exist characterizes the works of Tessin, Noguera, and Lagunas as monuments. After all, the cities of Lima and Stockholm are palimpsests precisely because monuments have endured and represented their various symbolic and overt meanings despite the continuous imbrication of conflicting and newly minted ideologies, motives, buildings, and monuments.

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- ¹ Marten Snickare, "From *The Construction of Autocracy: Nicodemus Tessin the Younger and the Architecture of Stockholm*," in *Circa 1700*, ed. Henry A. Millon (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 71.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Francisco Stastny, "From *From fountain to bridge: Baroque Projects and Hispanism in Lima*," in *Circa 1700*, ed. Henry A. Million (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005) 207.
- ⁴ David Harvey, "From *contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Form*," in *The City Reader*, ed. Richard T. Legates and Frederic Stout (London and New York: Routledge) 230.
- ⁵ Snickare, "From *The Construction of Autocracy: Nicodemus Tessin the Younger and the Architecture of Stockholm*," 65.
- ⁶ Ibid., 71
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid., 73-74.
- ⁹ Ibid., 71.
- ¹⁰ Ibid
- ¹¹ Ibid., 73.
- ¹² Ibid., 70.
- ¹³ Ibid., 71.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., 66.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 71.
- ¹⁹ Loren Partridge, *The Art of The Renaissance in Rome: 1400-1600* (New Jersey: Pearson, 1996), 16.
- ²⁰ Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History* (New York, Boston, London: Bulfinch Press, 1991), 232.
- ²¹ Stastny, "From *fountain to bridge: Baroque Projects and Hispanism in Lima*," 207.
- ²² Ibid., 209.
- ²³ Ibid., 207.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 210.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 214.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 215.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 217.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 218.

³¹ Ibid., 219.

³² Ibid., 220.

³³ Ibid., 215.

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