Piazza del Campidoglio, Rome, Italy
The urban element that I want to analyze in this paper is the Piazza del Campidoglio in Rome. In this analysis, I will look at this place in the context of Rome—its history combined with its urban design development and the political forces that drove and influenced this development to determine the meaning of its immediate built site. I will also look into the period when this place was built to see how period’s philosophy and trends influenced the architect, or not to determine the significance of the time it was built. I will also look at the architect’s own philosophy about architecture to understand his reasons for the moves he made and the ideas he was trying to convey through this building. And lastly, I will look at this place in the context of this area, and of Rome to see how the ideas expressed in this piazza and its buildings were incorporated in the form of the area of Rome. So then we can read this piazza and its buildings within this context as an architectural text to get a better understanding of Rome at the time it was built.

First let me begin with the history of Rome to determine the significance of the location that this piazza was placed.

Recent finding suggest that Rome was first built in the middle of the 8th century B.C. at the foot of the Capitoline Hill. It first started out simply as an Etruscan colony with villages settled around the seven hills. It then grew bigger into a republic ruled by a series of kings who first inaugurated Rome’s political, religious, and military customs, then later began the early urban phases for the city with the construction of a unifying wall and the Forum—a public square—and the immense temple of Jupiter with its three shrines to accommodate Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, on top of the Capitoline Hill.

This temple was typical of an Etruscan temple with its triple cella—three chapels placed side by side inside a single colonnade. One would walk to the terrace and the sanctuary by a monumental stairway, at the foot of which was built an altar for religious sacrifices. The terrace rises above the forum and was used as a platform where an official could address the people. This method of organizing the city around the forum and its religious center called the Capitol, named after the Capitoline Hill, soon became a model for other Roman provincial cities.

In other words, the Capitoline Hill was the site where the city of Rome, and later the Roman Empire, got established. And later during its imperial years from 300 to 200 B.C., this hill, along with its temple of Jupiter, stood for Roman power and majesty as Rome set out to dominate the world.
Secondly, to know Rome, we must first know about its political system and its empire expansion. At the end the 6th century B.C., Rome gained its independence from the Etruscans as the royal house of the Tarquins was expelled under the leadership of Marcus Junius Brutus. For the next three and half centuries, the city went through a period of consolidation and expansion with its neighbors. But during the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C., Rome’s boundary increased exponentially as it became the most important and political player in the Mediterranean world due largely by its highly disciplined and sufficient fighting force.

During this expansion period, Rome waged war with its neighbors and conquered other cities in Italy, Sicily, Sardina, Corsica, and Spain, forming and expanding the Roman Empire. These victories led to a significant practice or ritual that would forever change the architectural landscape of Rome. When a general was victorious in a major battle, the Senate often recognized him as a triumphantor, and honoring him with a triumphal procession—sort of like a parade where the citizens of Rome showered him with their adulation and appreciation. Then often in return, the general with the newly acquired riches would dedicate a temple, not only to express this thanks to a protecting god but also to beautify the city, and made his own name and the name of his family known publicly—sort of like making a name for himself politically in case he might want to run for senate later on. This ritual was significant because it added a great number of monuments—temples, statues, paintings, and tombs—to its city’s architectural landscape.

Wars also increase Rome’s population as more and more of the returning soldiers chose to settle here rather than going back to their farms back home. By the 2nd century, its larger population became quite diverse, and the standard of living also rose to a more luxurious level due to the profit gained from those conquests. This also expanded the political structure within the city, and people became more aware of Rome as an important center both politically and economically. This awareness led to the beginning of an urbanistic process to transform the city into a world capital, resulting in a number of important projects like the first triumphal arches in 196, the first porticoes in 193, the first basilica in 184, the first stone bridge in 179, the first paved streets in 174, and the first marble temple in 146.

In other words, war riches not only helped build up the city infrastructure but it also helped improved its aesthetic as well, making it more beautiful and refined while at the same time, raising the people’s expectation and appreciation for beautiful buildings, especially in their public monuments like temples and public squares, which now tended to be built on a grander and a more extravagant scale. These new
building projects were also influenced by Greek architecture as Roman Empire expanded farther into the Greek territories. In fact, pillaged materials like marble roof tiles, columns, and statues from Greek temples were brought back to embellish Roman temples and other public buildings. ²

Along the major roads, the entrances into the city were also embellished. For instance, at the southern entry at the Via Appia, a new Temple of Honos et Virtus was constructed to display the war spoils brought back from the conquest of Syracuse. And on the other side of town at the Porta Fontinalis, a portico stretching from the gate to the Altar of Mars in the Campus Martius was also built. ²

Effort now was made to arrange temples in rows facing a sacred area to create a good impression. This resulted in the grouping of large number of temples at important central sites like at the Largo Argentina, at the northern edge of the Circus Flaminius, and at the Forum Holitorium. These temples formed a continuous façade acting as a backdrop like the porticoes that were now being erected all over the city.

The greatly increased population also made the land inside the city wall scare and expensive. Most of the farmland within the city limit was now being converted into developed sites for housing. In fact housing lots became a lot smaller, and the small private courtyards became a luxury only a few wealthy people could afford. The city became more and more crowded, with housing tenements rising several stories high, and making the forums and temples gathering places for most people living here. Therefore, the forum or public square became an important urban element in Roman society, not only as a commercial and religious center but also as a social center as well—a place where most people could get some breathing room, so to speak.²

To further understand Rome, we also must know a bit about some of its influential emperors whose conquest achievements not only brought Rome further riches but more importantly, whose ambitious urban building programs helped turned Rome from a disorganized city scattered with triumphal monuments into coherent one that was not only beautiful architecturally, but also was efficient to meet the needs of an ever-growing population inside its relatively small size.

Among these men, I want to mention briefly Lucius Cornelius Sulla in the late 80s and the early 70s B.C, Gnaeus Pomeius Magnus in 61 B.C, and finally Gaius Julius Caesar in the 50s B.C who perhaps was the most influential had his program come to full fruition.²
Under Sulla, the tradition of building triumphal monuments continued but at a grander scale and they began to elevate him into a role of a great man. Here monuments were no longer built to make a name for the victorious general but rather they were built to reflect and raise the status of their hero, a man worthy of tremendous respect and adulation, similar to the earlier kings of the past. The most important projects he built were the new Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus after a fire had destroyed the old one in 83 B.C., and the renovation of the Forum Romanum. The new temple had the marble columns captured at the unfinished Temple of Zeus Olympus in Athens after he conquered that city, furthering the importance of the Capitoline Hill as a dominant center of the world, a place that the Rome set out to rule over the Mediterranean world. The forum ground level was raised nearly a meter, and an extravagant pavement of marble was laid down. Its shrines were rearranged, and the square’s borders were regularized. The Curia was rebuilt along the northern side, restoring the powers to the traditional aristocracy as it dominated the Forum and the Comitium where the popular assembly met. These projects helped shape the city’s monumental center so successfully that they paved the way in the major reshaping of the entire city in later years.

Pompey built the first stone theater in Rome called Theater Pompey with its magnificent scale and glamour in the tradition of a Greek theater. But instead of nesting it against the hill and let it support the seating, here its semicircular rows of seats were supported by an artificial hill made of concrete vaulted passageways. This was significant because it conveyed the idea that buildings no longer had to be built in due to the constraint of its context—its surrounding landscape—but could be made to fit into one’s vision of a place or city to meet its people’s needs—the very concept of urban design.

The theater also played an important role in the development of Roman public architecture in the later centuries as it introduced a strong emphasis on regular enclosed spaces within vaulted walls and Greek colonnades, bringing a sense of order to these spaces.

Caesar’s plan for Rome around 45 B.C. was even more ambitious as he intended to double the size of the Campus Martius with the Forum Iulium the major element. It significance was in the fact that for the first time, a temple inside the forum, in this case, the Temple of Venus Genetrix, was placed at the rear of a sacred area bounded on three sides by colonnades—an important innovation. The Temple of Venus paid homage to the Julian family’s ancestor, and its architectural shape, deriving from Hellenistic shrines, was dedicated to the worship of kings and queens. The Basilica Iulia along the southern side of the Forum Romanum with the arch and column motif borrowed from the Tabularium, worked together with the
Forum Iulium to announce the importance and prestige of the man who built it. His plan for Rome set an important milestone in its urban development because here for the first time, it replaced the old practice of juxtaposing monuments in a random fashion with a vision to organize the city as a unity.²

So we can see from these developments that Rome has gone a long way from being a little Etruscan hill town to a world capital financed by its imperial expansion. The triumphal procession ritual was the beginning catalyst to beautify Rome and helped lead to an ambitious program to urbanize it as a coherently organized city. Buildings were no longer looked at as individual set pieces scattered around the city, but rather as necessary pieces to define places that worked to form centers organizing the entire city, and helping to define it not only in its physical shape but more significantly in its values as a society. A society that saw itself as a world leader both commercially and politically with the Capitoline Hill with its towering Temple of Jupiter as the center of the world.

Now let’s briefly look at the emergence of a new model in town planning during the Middle Ages that might help explain why the Piazza del Campidoglio was located where it is today—sitting next to the Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli built in the mid 12th century in Medieval Rome.

Throughout Europe at the beginning in the 8th century, the Church became a dominant landowner and the greatest political organization. It became the focal point of a society, making its religious buildings like cathedral, and monastery very important and establishing them the center around which a town would then developed. Then as trade picked up in the 11th century, the merchant classes and guilds developed and rose in political power, coming into conflict with the Church. As a result these two classes began to dominate the center of town, creating a new model of town planning where the Church or Cathedral and the Town Hall, controlled by the merchant classes, became the two dominant buildings in the center of town, usually built around a market square. This model was applied to most of the medieval towns from the 11th century on till the end of the 16th century at the height of the Renaissance.³

During the Middle Ages, Rome, unlike most other medieval towns in Europe with their market square as their center, had no center. The city actually was shrinking until its fora and major churches were on the outskirts of town. In the 12th century the city government decided to build a communal palace, sort of like a town hall, on the deserted site of the Tabularium on the slope of the Capitoline Hill next to the site of a church that later in 1247 would be rebuilt to become the Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli⁶ that we see there today.⁷ This decision was perhaps influenced by the historical importance of this hill, or
perhaps it was influenced by the popular town planning model of putting a secular building like this communal palace next to a church to form an urban center seen at other medieval towns.

Now let’s look at political influence of the Roman Church in Rome beginning in the 16th century that will help explain the motive behind revival of its urban building program, and help create a context in which led to the design and building of the Piazza del Campidoglio.

When Julius II della Rovere (1503-13) became pope in 1504, Rome found itself in economic hardship as the financial situation of the Papal State was in serious disarray. Taxes, collected in devalued coinage and insufficiently collected failed to replenish the Papal Treasury. The city’s security also deteriorated greatly due largely by the weakening of the central authority of Alexander VI. Pope Julius II immediately set out to restore the Papacy not only as a religious authority but also as a national, authoritarian monarchy in which the pope, he, would rule like an emperor. He wanted to be the new Julius Caesar. And he wanted to go bring the ancient Rome, the glorious Rome of Sulla, Pompey and Caesar, back to replace the medieval Rome of the moment with its dilapidated urban condition and its political instability. In fact he wanted to found a new empire in the name of Christianity and operated it as efficiently and grandly as the Rome of the 2nd century B.C.5

With ruthless determination and the help of Agostino Chigi, the greatest banker and merchant at the time, Julius II effectively reformed the tax collecting system and brought financial stability back to the Papal Treasury as early as 1505. Like the dictators before him, he felt a need to restore order, and to erect new public buildings to further enhance his name and lay a stronghold on the political system in Rome. Therefore in his eyes, his building program would play a crucial role in establishing his power, similar to the rulers of ancient Rome like Sulla, Pompey and Caesar. He saw it as the most effective way to affirm and reaffirm the Church’s authority and maintain its power—or his power. And he unabashedly looked to imperial Rome for inspiration. With these new building projects he wanted return Rome to its gloried days, the days when it was the center of the universe, the days when it ruled the world. 5

So he set out to employ some of the most distinguished artists from this Renaissance period like Bramante, to accomplish his ambitious urban plan for Rome. Although his vision was not entirely realized in his lifetime, it set a concrete direction for his successors to follow in the next century.
One of the major projects under Julius II’s watch was the rebuilding of the Papal Palace, with the Belvedere Court as its masterpiece, at the Vatican, Rome, designed by Bramante, in 1505. The new complex, with its grand scale and extravagant details, was meant to work like an imperial palace of the ancient Rome. It was significant because for the first time in Renaissance architecture, the various elements of a building were successfully organized to create a unified image of the whole. In fact, the building complex became like a stage set. Under Bramante, architecture has now become an image to be look at: it has been transformed into a painting, a spatial and architectural painting with the view specially designed and intended right from the start to allow people to see according to their station in life. Here, the pope, standing at his window, commanded a totally different view of the complex versus those allowed for common people. Bramante also drew from models of ancient temples, like the Temple of Fortune at Praeneste, to create a scene that was organized by the movement from lower to higher, from left to right. The perspective here was altered, and the space was rearranged on different levels so that their effects were achieved through a coordinated dislocation in depth, articulated and linked together by gigantic staircases which appeared as images of movement.5

In other words, this complex was designed to create a series of perfect images of harmonious unity in space governed by number and geometry, similar to the ancient method of Greek temple building, but seen through movement as one traversed the staircases—it was not a perfectly static image of a Greek temple as one obliquely approached it. Also importantly, it was built with the idea of grandeur, similar to the way monumental buildings used to be built in ancient Rome.5

The mention of this major project and Bramante is important to establish a picture of the scale and the level of sophistication in an architecture—with an emphasis on the ancient Rome and the return to the classical order of the Greeks—that has been missing from Rome since its imperial days. It also helps segue us into Michelangelo’s philosophy on architecture.

Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) has acquired a considerable amount of fame as an artist and a sculptor in Florence with the completion of the Sistine Chapel in 1512 and the ongoing design of the tomb for Pope Julius II before and after the pontiff passed away in 1513. However his architectural career did not get started until 1516 with the Medici Chapel at San Lorenzo, a major Medici monument in Florence, under the patronage of the first Medici Pope Leo X (1513-21), the successor to Pope Julius II, whose Medici family ties he was well connected with during his early years back in Florence.7
After Pope Leo passed away in 1521, Michelangelo continued his architectural work for the second Medici Pope, Clement VII who commissioned him to design the Biblioteca Laurenziana, a library at San Lorenzo in 1523. In 1534, Michelangelo left Florence and settled in Rome. Three years later on the 10th of December 1537, he was awarded Roman citizenship. His next important projects in Rome were the design and reconstruction of the Capitoline buildings starting at the end of 1537, and later, the Piazza del Campidiglio around 1540, Palazzo Farnese around 1560, St. Peter’s Cathedral in 1546. So by the time he started work on the Capitoline Hill commission, he was reasonably experienced as an architect.

Although being influenced by Bramante and the Renaissance theory on architecture at the time, Michelangelo’s idea of architecture was quite different from everyone else. At the core of this idea is an architecture based on anatomy, rather than number and geometry like other Renaissance architects including Bramante. Here the parts of the building are compared, not to the ideal proportions of the human body but to it functions, meaning the building lives and breathes as living organism. This idea was motivated by his desire to restore the indivisibility of the human form, a unity to be found in the function of its organs like the brain, the nerve, and the muscle systems, rather than in external appearances like limbs.

And unlike early Renaissance theories of proportion that tended to create buildings with ideal mathematical harmonies out of its various parts, Michelangelo wanted to create a building based on the character of its various parts or forms and the effect bought about by movement, like at Bramante’s Belvedere Court, and on the effect of light. And while Renaissance buildings asked a certain amount of intellectual capacity from the observers to appreciate their symbolic relationships, Michelangelo’s buildings demanded none of this because they were as easily identifiable to people as their own bodily functions. Architecture, to him, was no longer abstract, but organic. It no longer had to strictly follow the antique canons religiously applied by other architects during Renaissance. Furthermore, buildings now could be brought to life by an observer through his movement and through the effect of light like a statue being liberated from its block by a sculptor. In other words his buildings lacked the abstract harmony of the classical order but they were alive and expressive in details—a style later known as Mannerism.

What this also means too is that, in Michelangelo, the Piazza del Campidoglio was in the right hand. Its design recalled the grandeur of imperial Rome, but it did not attempt to elevate the complex—the piazza
and its defining three buildings—into a grand-scale project like a triumphal monument of ancient Rome with its perfect order and mathematical proportion, since its true function was quite modest—a public square to hold civic events defined by the civic buildings. Michelangelo’s design allowed the palazzi’s facades and the piazza to be completed in stages was the fund allow without disrupting their daily civic functions. His organic idea of organization also allowed the form of the various parts at this complex like the equestrian statue, the bronzes on the balustrades, and even the palazzi themselves, to be altered without affecting its unity. Sort of like substituting the affordable parts for the expensive parts without destroying the unity of the whole design in today building.

So far we have looked at the history of Rome along with its urban development from its humble beginning to its gloried days as an Empire; the significance of the Capitoline Hill as Rome’s religious, commercial, and civic center; the political circumstances at the end of the 15th century that led to the ambitious urban building program started by Pope Julius II to restore Rome to its old prominence; the brief look at Michelangelo’s architectural philosophy and career as well as his architectural influences. Now let’s take look at the Piazza del Campidiglio, the subject of this paper, in detail.

Since medieval time in the 12th century, this place has held the seat of the city government of Rome. On the east of the piazza lied the Palazzo del Senatore, the head of the city administration. On the north was the Gothic church of the Franciscans, S. Maria in Aracoeli. And facing it on the south side was the Palazzo dei Conservatoiri with the offices of the guilds on the ground floor. A steep path led down into the city from the open west side.

In his scheme, Michelangelo altered the façades of the Senatore and Conservatoiri palazzi—or buildings—but left the palazzi themselves in their original location—the angle formed between these two buildings was less than a perfect right angle but an eighty degree angle to be exact. He also made a duplicate of the Conservatoiri Palazzo called Palazzo Nuovo and placed it opposite the Conservatoiri Palazzo. With these moves, he effectively reduced the size of the piazza and successfully eliminated the church on the north side from the general view. The detail design of these buildings’ facades and the stairways leading in front of the Palazzo del Senatore, along with the three-bay loggia and a flight of steps added to the transept of the church, and finally the placing of the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius—chosen by the Pope—at its center connected to the palazzi or buildings on three side by an intricate design of the oval pattern on the piazza’s paving slowly evolved till its last stage of what we see today in 1561, three years before Michelangelo’s death in 1564—a contemplative design process similar
to Bramante, Michelangelo’s main influence. All the buildings were completed after his death by other architects based, for the most part, on his original design. The Palazzo Nuovo was not built till the 17th century, between 1603 and 1654.\(^7\)

This piazza was significant in the history of Rome urban design because here for the first time, a so-called giant order first appeared in Roman Renaissance. The eight great pilasters of the two-storied Palazzo dei Conservatori rise to bear the main cornice. This means the columns and cornices of the ground-floor loggias form a subsidiary system to the primary one, providing a solution to a problem facing architects since Alberti’s time on how to combine the antique system of columns or pilasters and cornices with the division of stories in a modern palazzo in a way that the vertical members from the ground could be able to support the cornice as in classical architecture.\(^7\)

With the use of the trapezoid in plan and the strict symmetry of the twin palazzi or buildings, Michelangelo was able to make the observer first perceive the piazza as a rectangle like a painting as he/she was walking up the steep path to the piazza. Once on the piazza, the pattern in the pavement, radiating from the equestrian statue, would then trick the observer again into thinking the piazza as a rectangle—another perfect painting—and not as a trapezoid. The pattern lines radiating and sweeping back to the equestrian statue of Emperor Marcus Aurelius helped make it look far bigger than it actually was.\(^8\)

For a modern world of the 16th century Rome, this piazza was designed and constructed to remind people of Rome in its gloried past, and to reinforce the power of the Church over the secular world. Every detail and move made in this scheme either by Michelangelo or by other architects and the Pope contributed to this aim. In other words, the Campidoglio was a monumental symbol in which the haunting dream of ancient grandeur of the ancient Rome became concrete.\(^7\)

Along the balustrades of the palazzi placed the ancient bronze statues donated to the people of Rome by Sixtus IV and Innocent VIII in the 15th century to represent the legal authority and imperial symbolism of antiquity. Among them was the mother wolf which had nursed Romulus and Remus, and the remains of the god of the Sun who held a ball in the hand to mean that Rome ruled the whole world. Other statues chosen by the Conservators for their symbolic association with Imperial Rome tended to be war trophies from ancient Roman gloried campaigns and conquests. Together with the inscriptions found on the
buildings here, they work to remind people of Rome gloried past that once here on the Capitoline Hill, it controlled the world.  

The placement of the equestrian statue of Emperor Marcus Aurelius chosen by Pope Paul III to serve as an accepted symbol of law and government. This statue also represented the ideal emperor as seen by Renaissance humanists. So by choosing this statue, the Pope intended to capitalize on the public pride in Rome’s gloried past and to imply that his rule of the Roman people and of the Papal States reflected the virtues of a great Roman Emperor like Marcus Aurelius—a great propaganda to increase and maintain the Church power during this time.  

In Michelangelo’s plan, he wanted to place Jupiter in the niche under the two stairways in front of the Conservatori Palazzo, that would have reminded the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus which had once stood on the Capitoline Hill in ancient Rome. Furthermore, a canopy over Jupiter’s head at the top of the stair also was one of the most universally used symbols of imperial power in late antiquity and in the Middle Ages. And it could also be seen as a religious symbol too in the 16th century.  

So in essence, this Piazza del Campidoglio was built to recapture Rome glory and to remind the Romans of their once proud and glorious past. And that past reminded them of their civic duty and obligation as Roman citizens—meaning the ancient Romans made sacrifices to earn that gloried past, so the Romans of the 16th century should feel obligated to sacrifice for the good of their city and restore it back to its prominence.

So if architecture could be read as text to reflect its society’s values, I’m not sure this Piazza del Campidoglio was a true reflection of Roman values in the 16th century. It might be a true reflection of the powerful Church which wanted to gain control over people’s lives in Rome and perhaps in the entire country and the Catholic world. But to interpret, in my opinion, a place designed by a very religious architect and perhaps helped funded in large part by the powerful Church and its wealthy patrons as a reflection of the society as a whole is a bit of a stretch. I believe that public architecture as a whole, even in today world, is not always a true reflection of the values held by a society—a decision made by a few representatives of a city can hardly reflect the collective wisdom of the people who elected them in the first place. That’s why I believe, after researching for this paper, that one must be very careful and skeptical when it comes to public building projects. The question one must ask oneself is: who will benefit most out of this project? Does a wealthy person who is willing to foot the bill for a project to
promote his name or a cause have a right to put up a building in a public area of a city that might be read as a reflection of the majority of the people who live in it? My answer is no. I also believe that public project like large-scaled square or park should be put to a public vote decided by the majority—at least by 60%—of the people who live in that community. No one person should be allow to speak for the entire community as if his values represent the community’s no matter how persuasive his argument can be. A true public project should have the interest of the public, meaning the majority of the people, at heart. Anything less is simply unacceptable.

So in this sense, the wealthy and the powerful—including the government and the church—sometimes get to build public projects, but their projects must be looked at with the same skepticism and with a thorough understanding of their true motive, for only then, can an accurate public meaning be understood. The Piazza del Camidoglio is a beautiful public square. Perhaps it did help restore the Roman’s sense of duty and pride in their city past back in the 16th century. But was that a good thing? Or was it just another way of manipulation by those in power to deceive the good-hearted people for their personal gains—the Church in this case? Recent history events can certainly teach us a few things on this point.

This paper has helped me look at public building a bit more critically because what one sees in the building is not always what it was intended for one to see. Without reading about the hidden motive, either economically or politically, behind it, one can easily be deceived of its true public meaning. And when this happens, it can no longer be considered a public building, for there’s nothing public about it but a front to hide the motive of a few who stand to gain from it? For example: is a neighborhood park truly a public place, built to bring value to a community, or is it simply a means by a wise developer to increase his property’s value that just happens to be built around it?

I have not been to Rome but I can only wonder if architecture can be read as text to understand a society or culture’s values. What can one learn about Rome’s values if one visits it today? Are the ruins in every corner of Rome being preserved today simply as a means to attract tourists for economic gains, rather than to reflect the true values of its citizens? Why would you want to go to Rome, if its ruins—the Coliseum, its quaint Piazza, its charming fountains, its nice Renaissance collection of religious art—probably yawned by those who are not religious—are no longer there? What kind of intelligent conversation can you possibly have with a Roman who still bask in the glory of the city’s gloried past, and who naively believes that Rome ruins are truly the best gifts the people of Rome can offer to the world—you have to remember your history, they say—that’s what museums are for, I would reply?
In conclusion, I think in researching and reading for this paper, I have learn to see building—when put in context of other buildings—as text, whether its true meaning can immediately be understood or not, that can contribute to my understanding of the society that builds it, whether this understanding can later be challenged and altered with new information. But I think it helps make the reading of an architectural work, like a work of art, more true because a building is not always what it seems at first glance, is it? Every individual building has a story to tell or not tell by the way it’s built and the way its’ being juxtaposed within an urban context. Therefore good architecture should be clear and coherent in its intention, especially in an urban context, for failing to do so could do serious harm to its society because of its wrongly sent messages and ambiguous meaning.

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