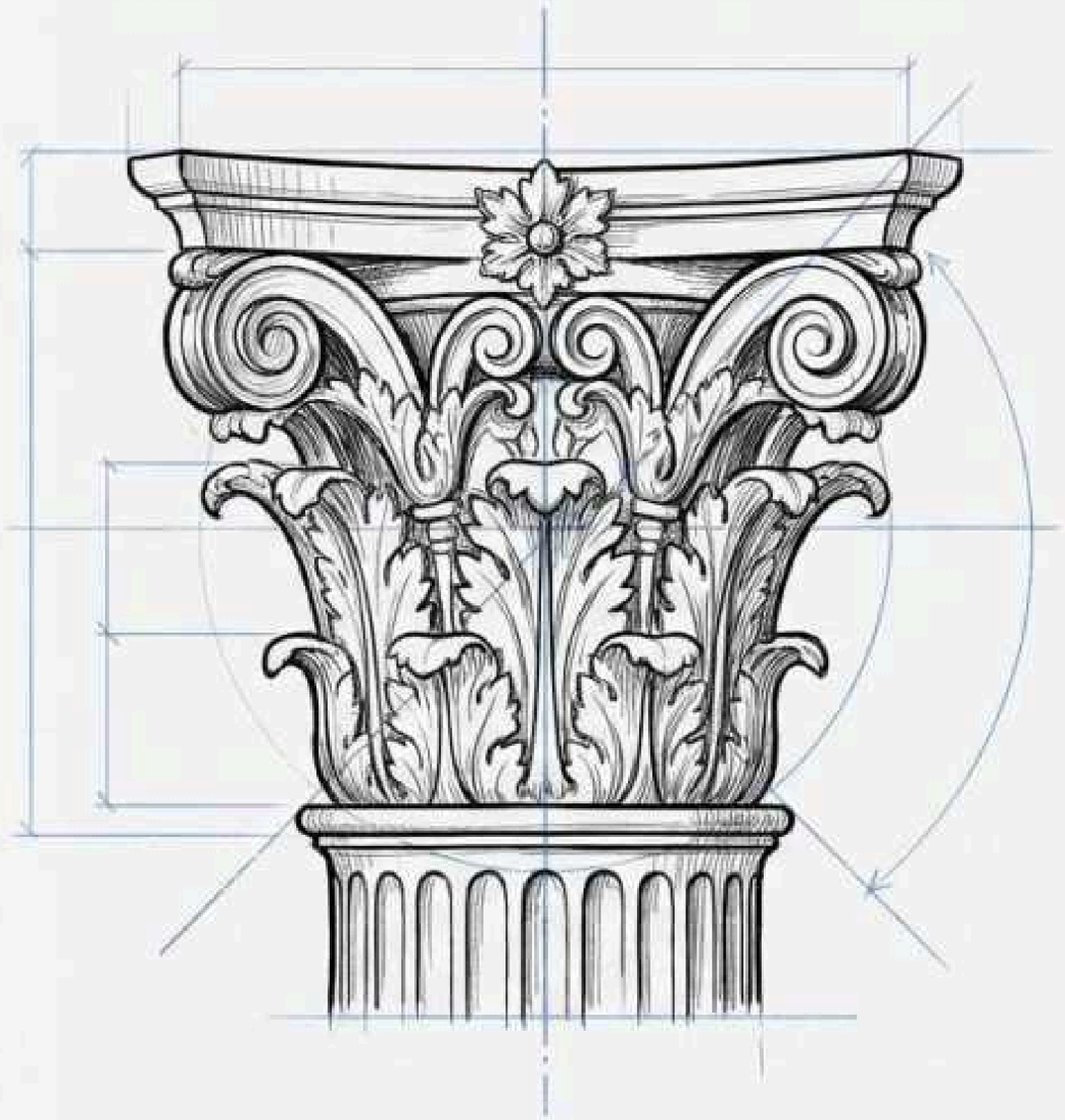
¶ 4.1



Portraits, Concrete, and Power: Ancient Rome

Lecture 4

Gemini Notebook

¶ 4.2

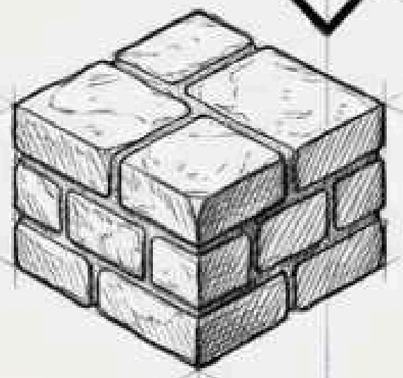
Greece (Borrowed)

Rome

Republic -> Empire -> Constantine



Lifelike Portraits



New Building Material

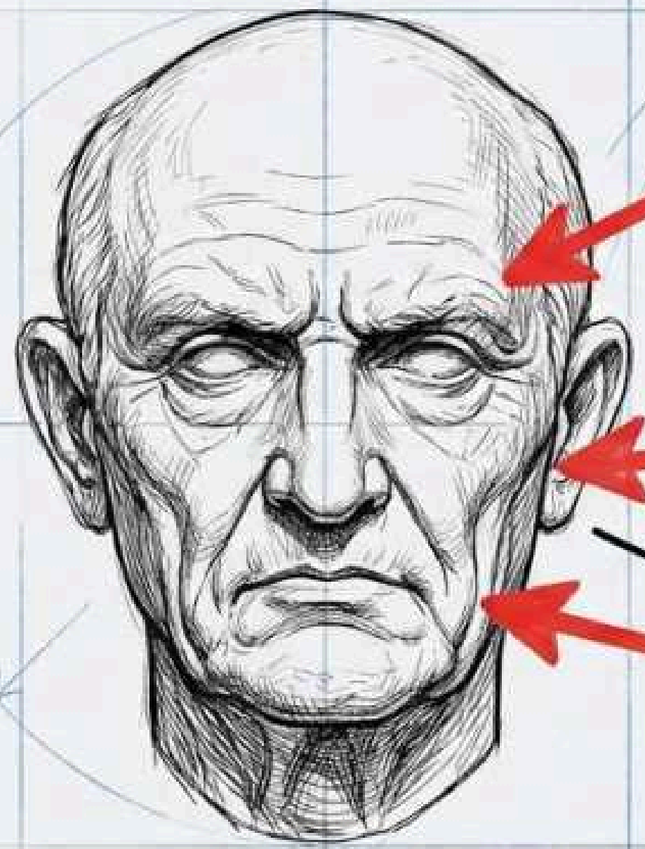


History in Stone

How do rulers use art to build loyalty and fear?

The Brutal Honesty of the Republic (509–27 BCE)

¶ 4.3



Heavy brows

Sagging skin

Verism (from Latin 'verus' = true)
Deep wrinkles

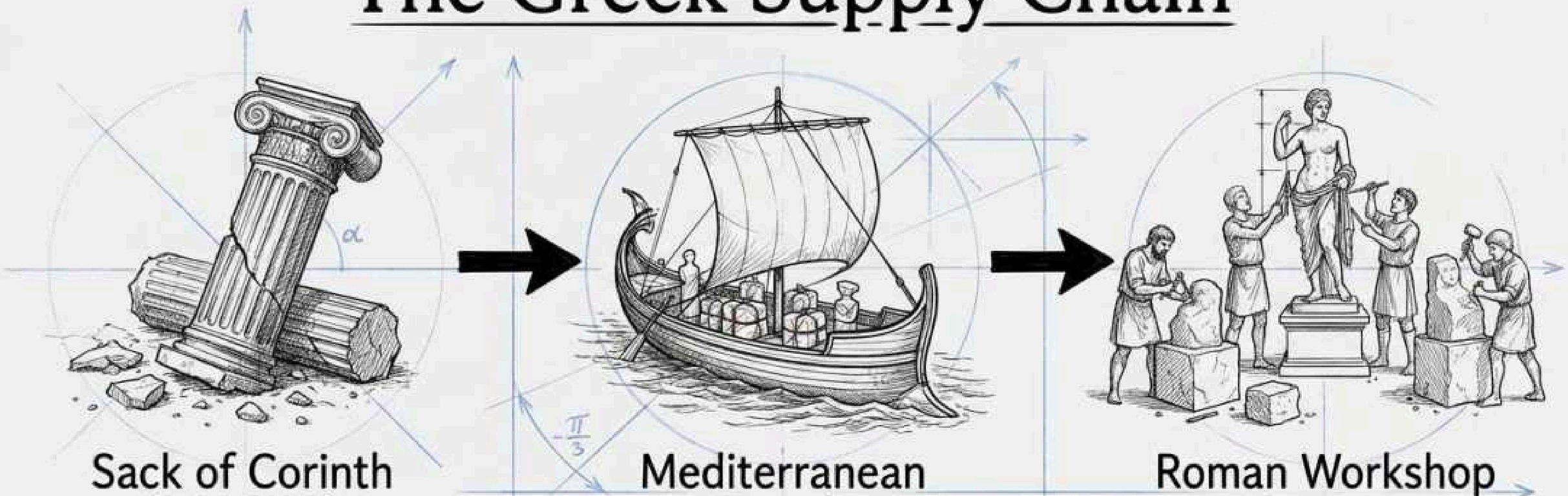
Age + Experience = Aristocratic Honor

Note: Aristocrats kept wax masks of ancestors at home and carried them in funeral processions to demonstrate enduring family honor.

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The Greek Supply Chain

¶ 4.4



Sack of Corinth (146 BCE)

Mediterranean Transit

Roman Workshop Copiers

Conquest becomes preservation.

Many lost Greek masterpieces are known to us today ONLY because Roman workshops meticulously copied them for wealthy villas and gardens.

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Augustus and the Shift to Idealization



1. **The Face:**
   Calm and ageless commander, styled after the Greek Classical ideal, rejecting Republican Verism.

2. **The Breastplate:**
   Relief carvings show a foreign king submitting and returning lost Roman standards.

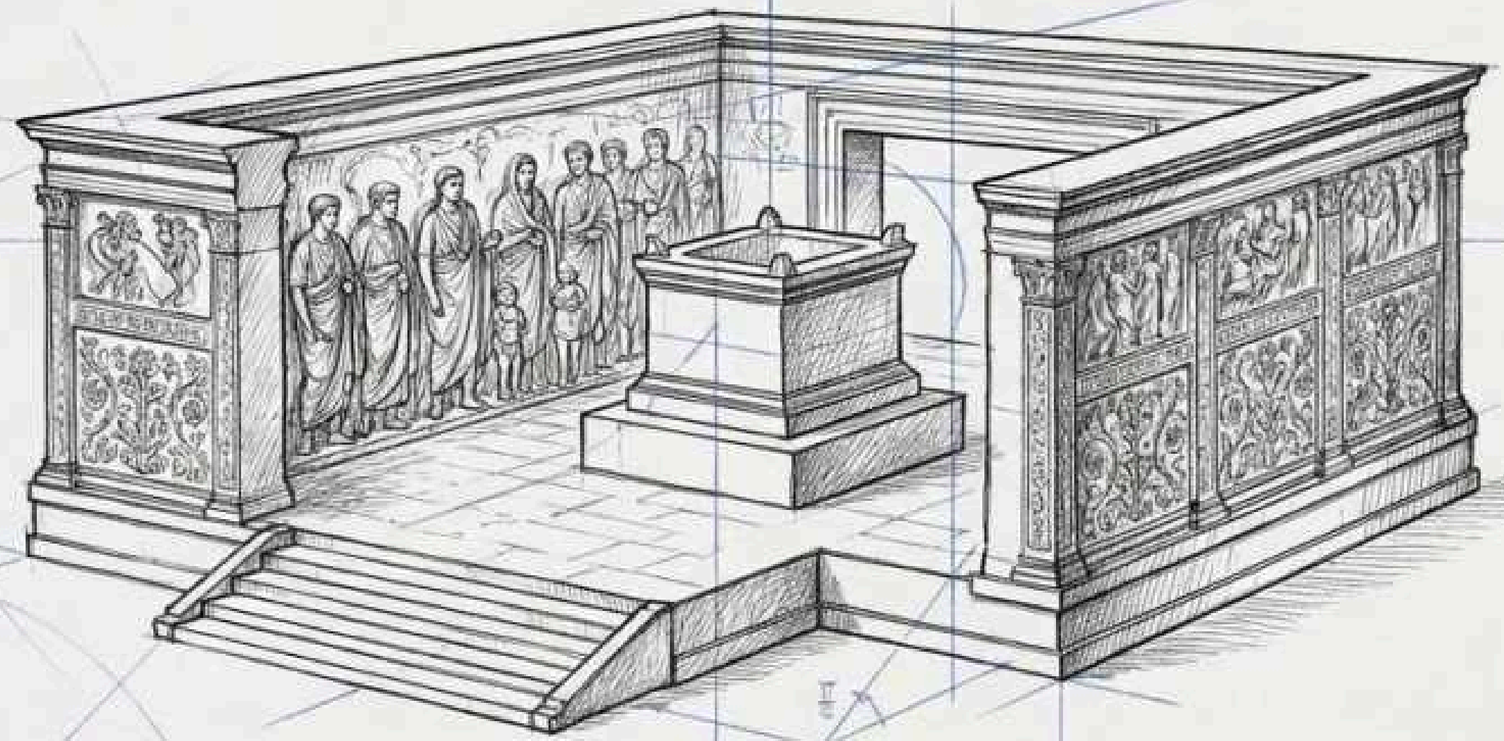
3. **The Cupid at foot:**
   Divine propaganda asserting his family's direct descent from the goddess Venus.

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¶ 4.6

Constructing the Illusion of Peace

Brick → Marble



Ara Pacis (9 BCE)

The ancient writer Suetonius reports Augustus boasted of finding Rome built of brick and leaving it made of marble.

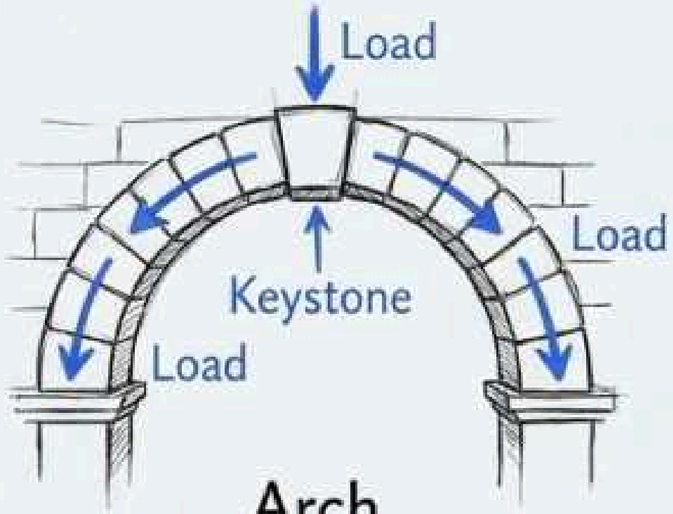
The undeniable architectural message: Peace and order come from one man.

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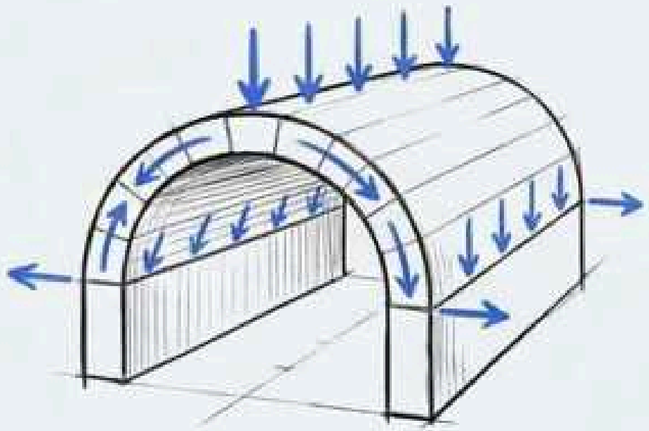
The Concrete Revolution

¶ 4.7

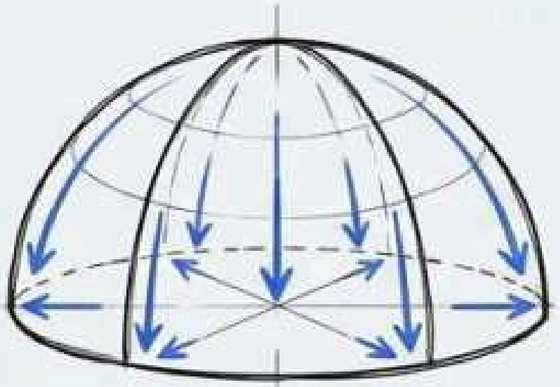
Lime + Volcanic Ash + Rubble + H_2O = Infinite Form



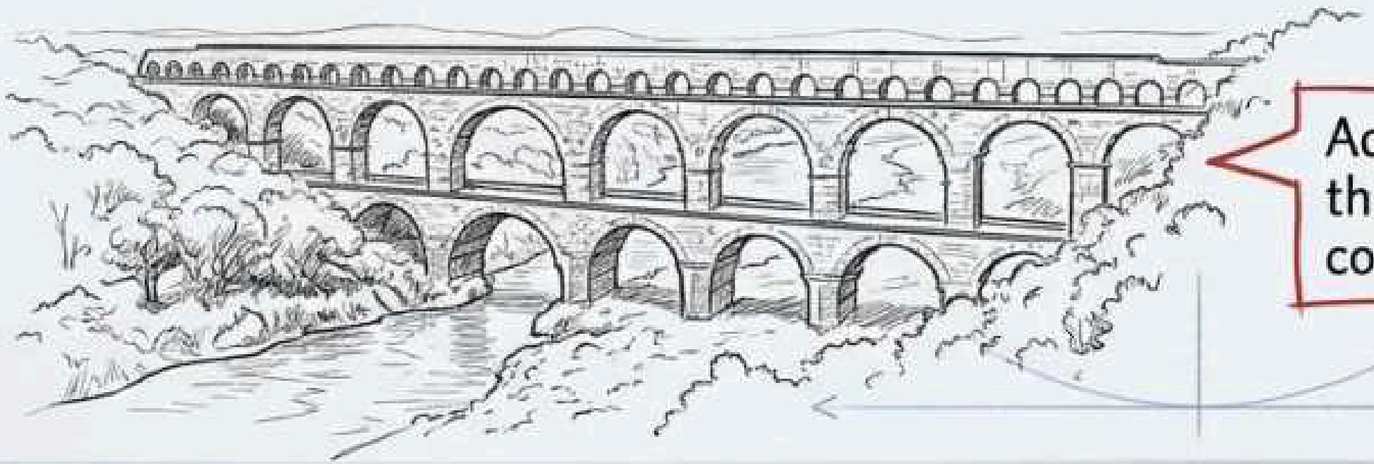
Arch



Vault



Dome

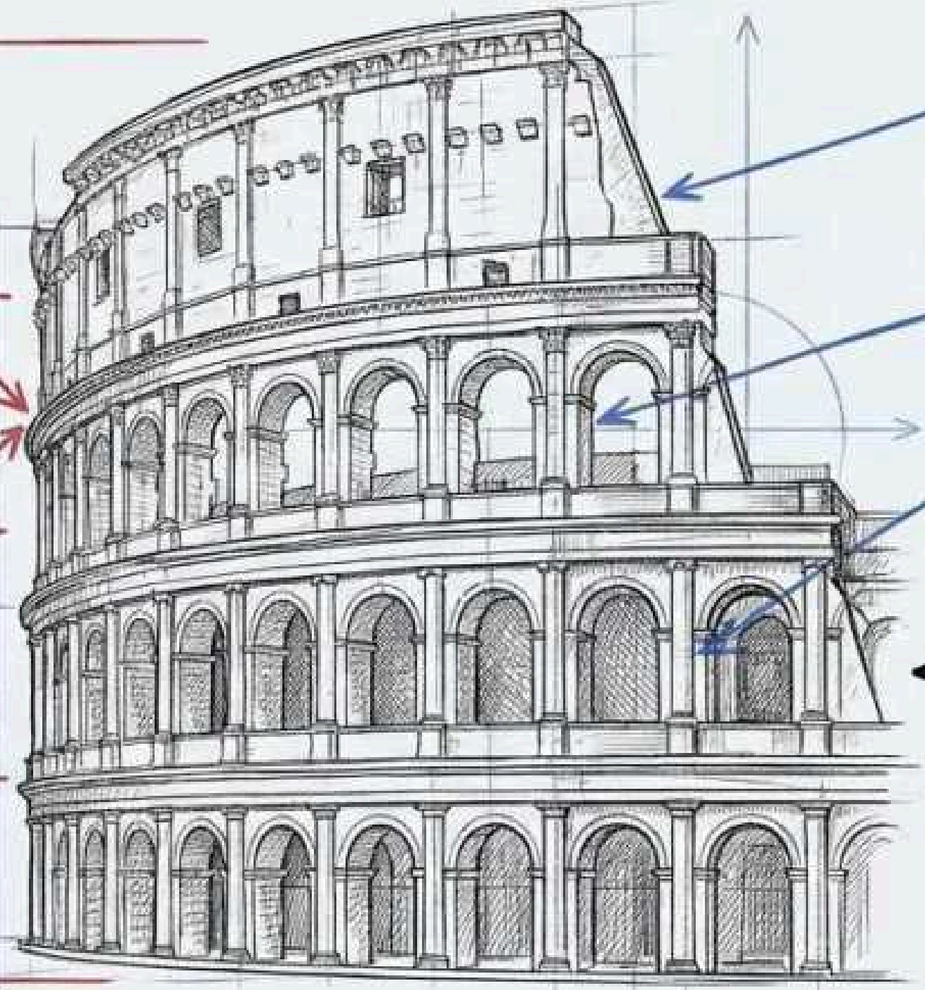


Aqueducts carried water over valleys using three tiers of arches—and because of concrete engineering, they still stand today.

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Spectacle and Structure (70–80 CE)

¶ 4.8



Attic Storey (Corinthian Pilasters)

Corinthian Order

Ionic Order

Doric Order (Base)

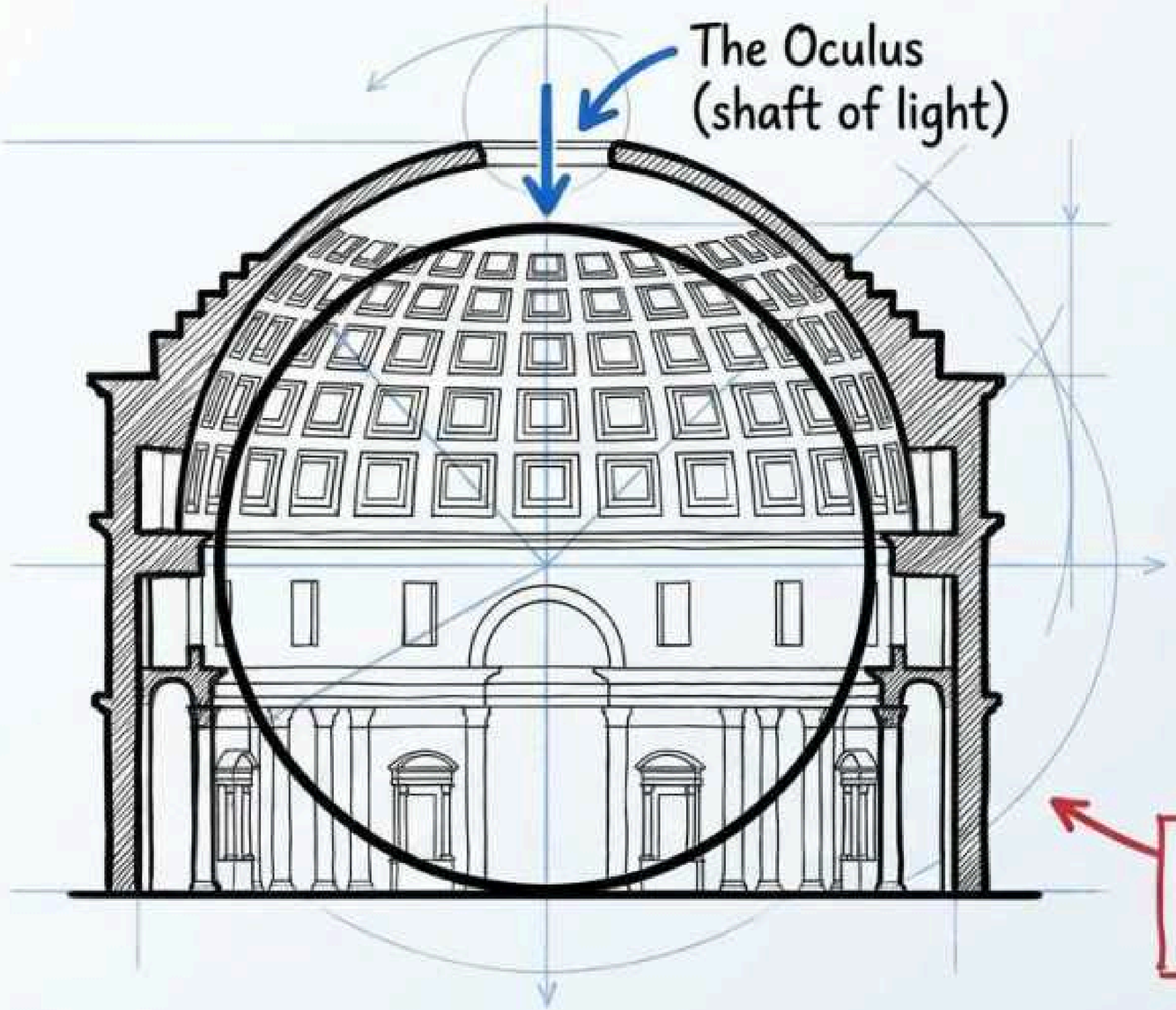
- Built under Vespasian and Titus
- 50,000 spectators
- 80 entrance arches

Core Innovation:
Greek aesthetics were applied purely as decoration onto a revolutionary Roman concrete structure built for gladiator fights and public spectacle.

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¶ 4.9

The Geometry of the Pantheon



Width (d) = 43 metres

Height (h) = 43 metres

∴ A perfect sphere fits inside.

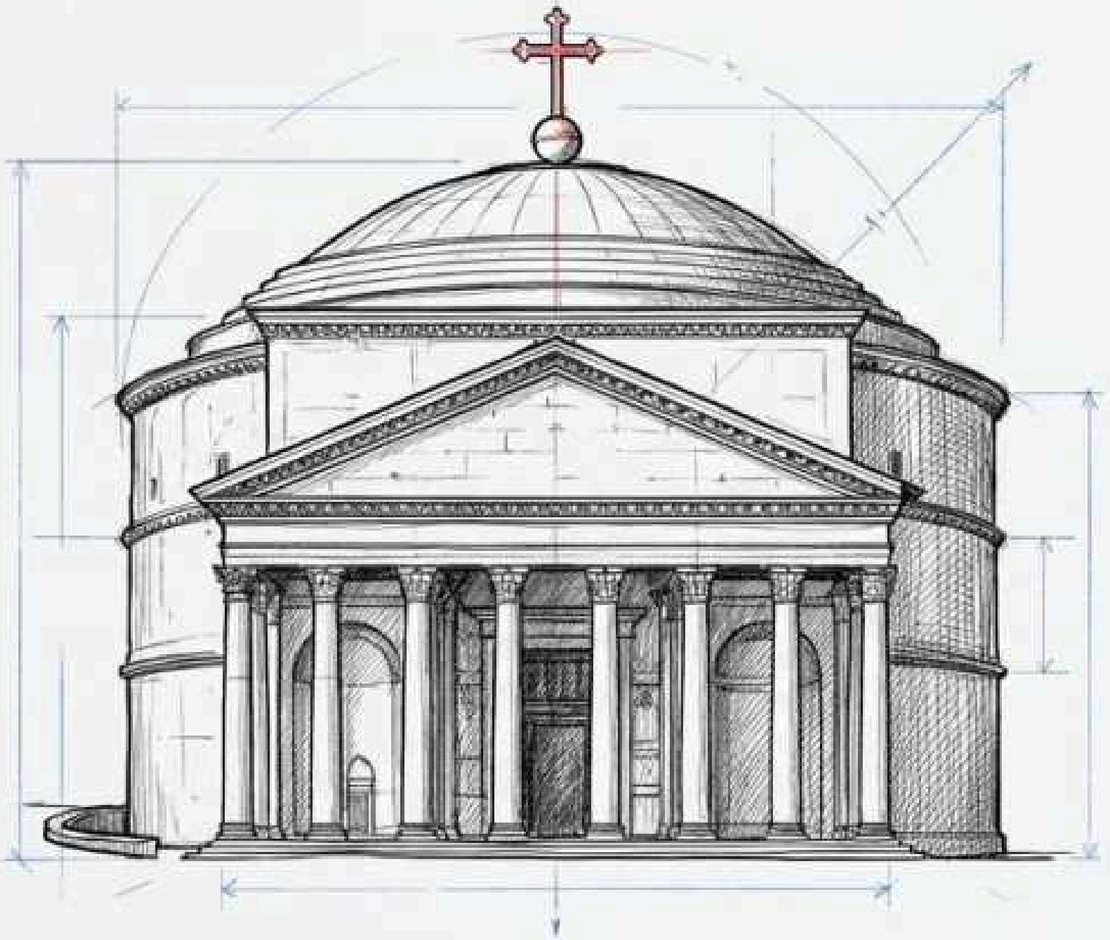
Rebuilt under Hadrian (118–128 CE).

Fact: It remains the largest unreinforced concrete dome in the world.

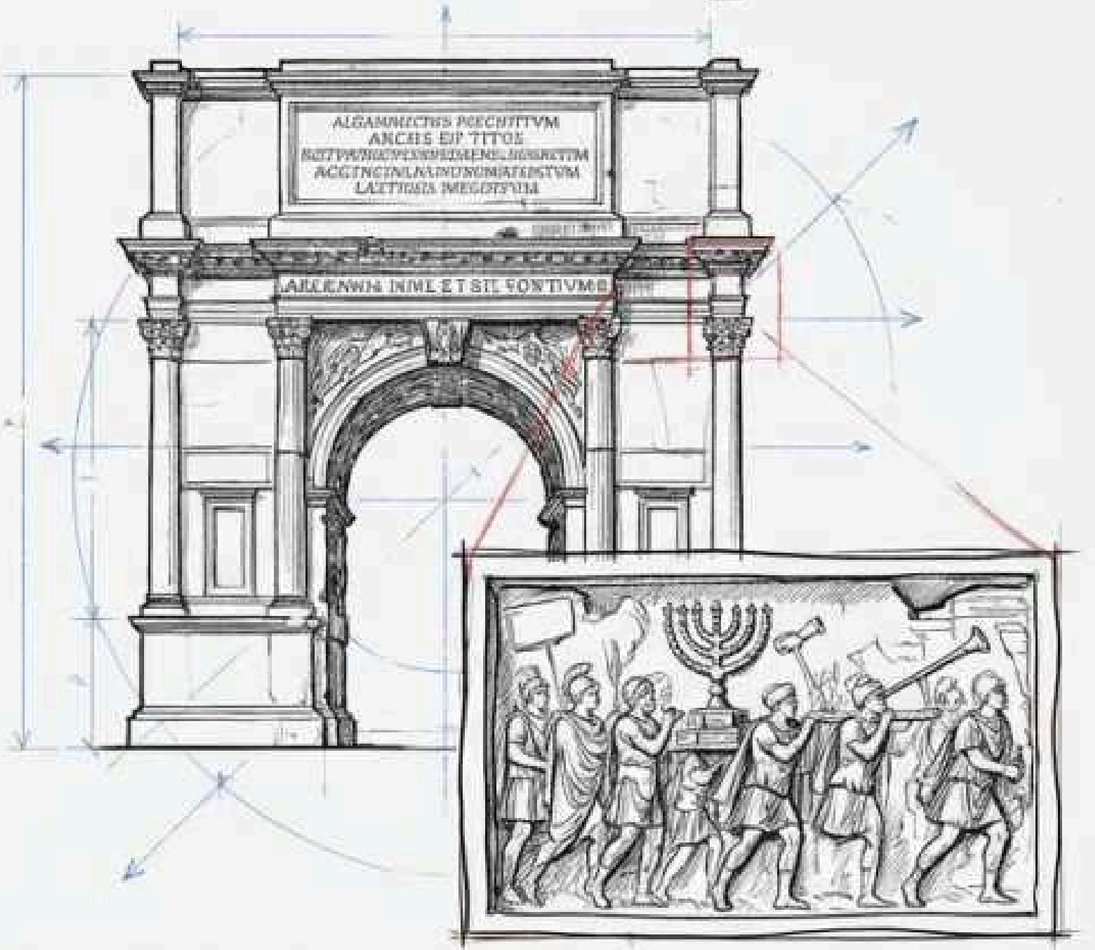
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¶ 4.10

Architectural Survival and Triumph



Survives largely intact because it was converted into a Christian church in 609 CE.

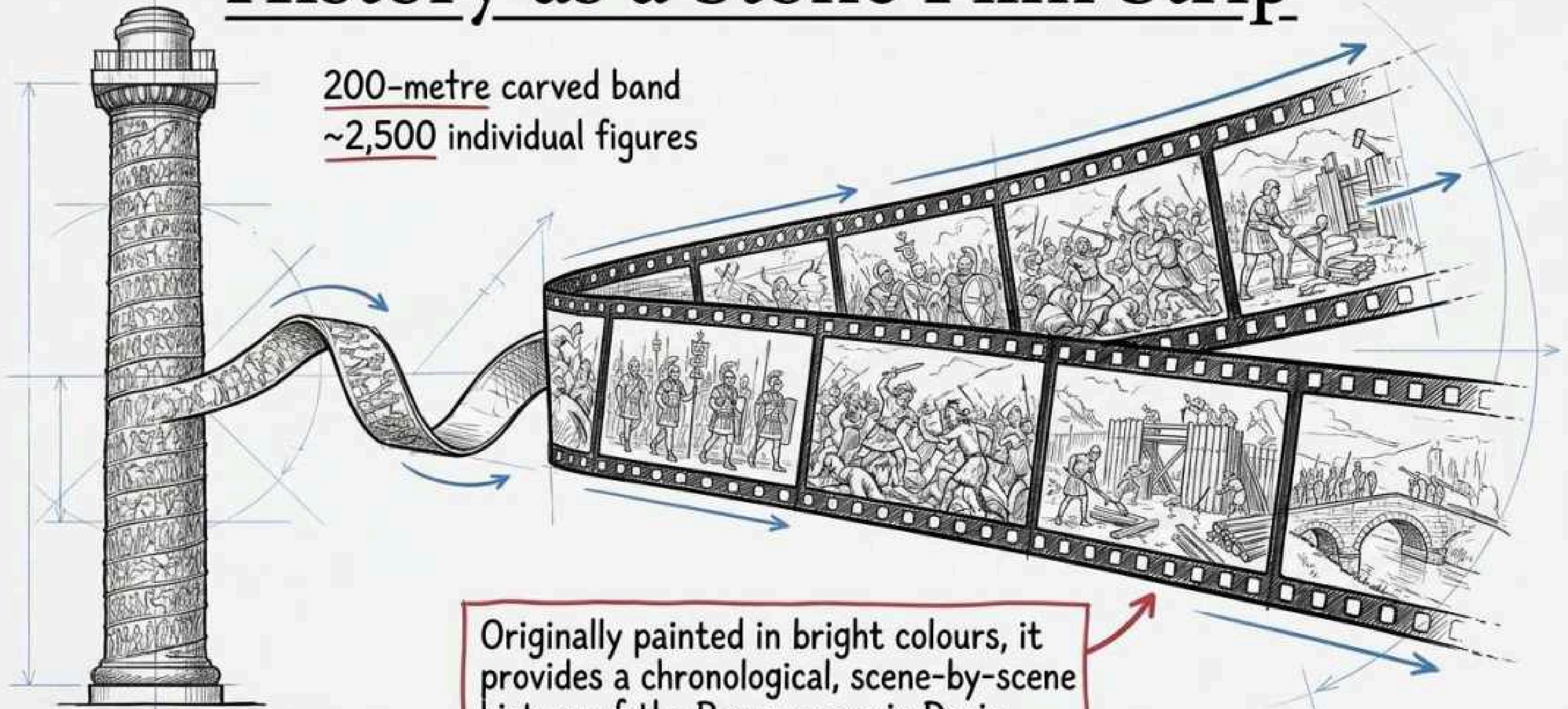


Triumphal arches celebrated military victories, built using the same bath/basilica/arena engineering techniques.

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History as a Stone Film Strip

200-metre carved band
~2,500 individual figures



Trajan's Column (113 CE)

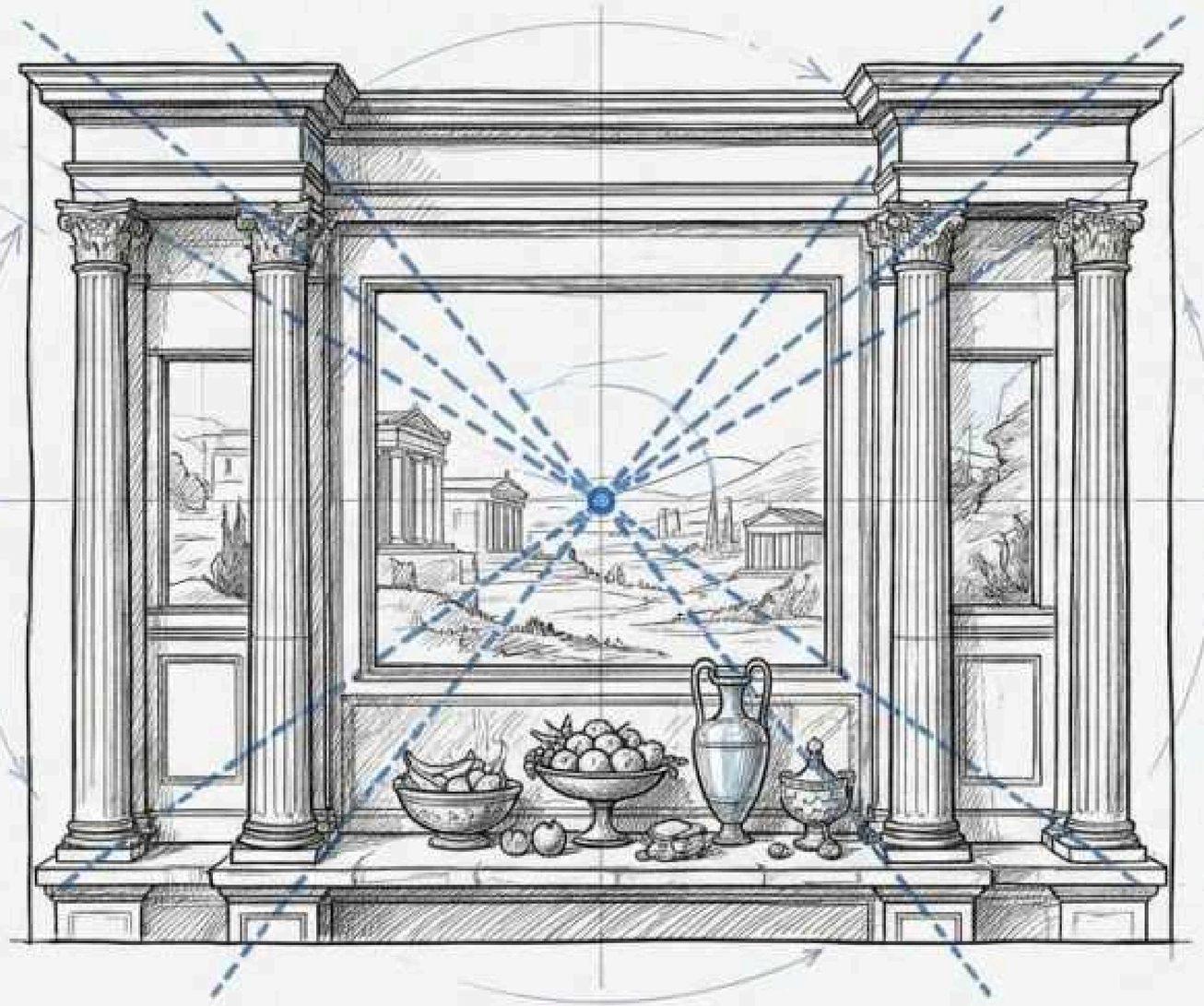
Originally painted in bright colours, it provides a chronological, scene-by-scene history of the Roman wars in Dacia.

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Pompeii and the Illusion of Space (79 CE)

Context

Mount Vesuvius buried Pompeii and Herculaneum, accidentally preserving complete houses in ash.

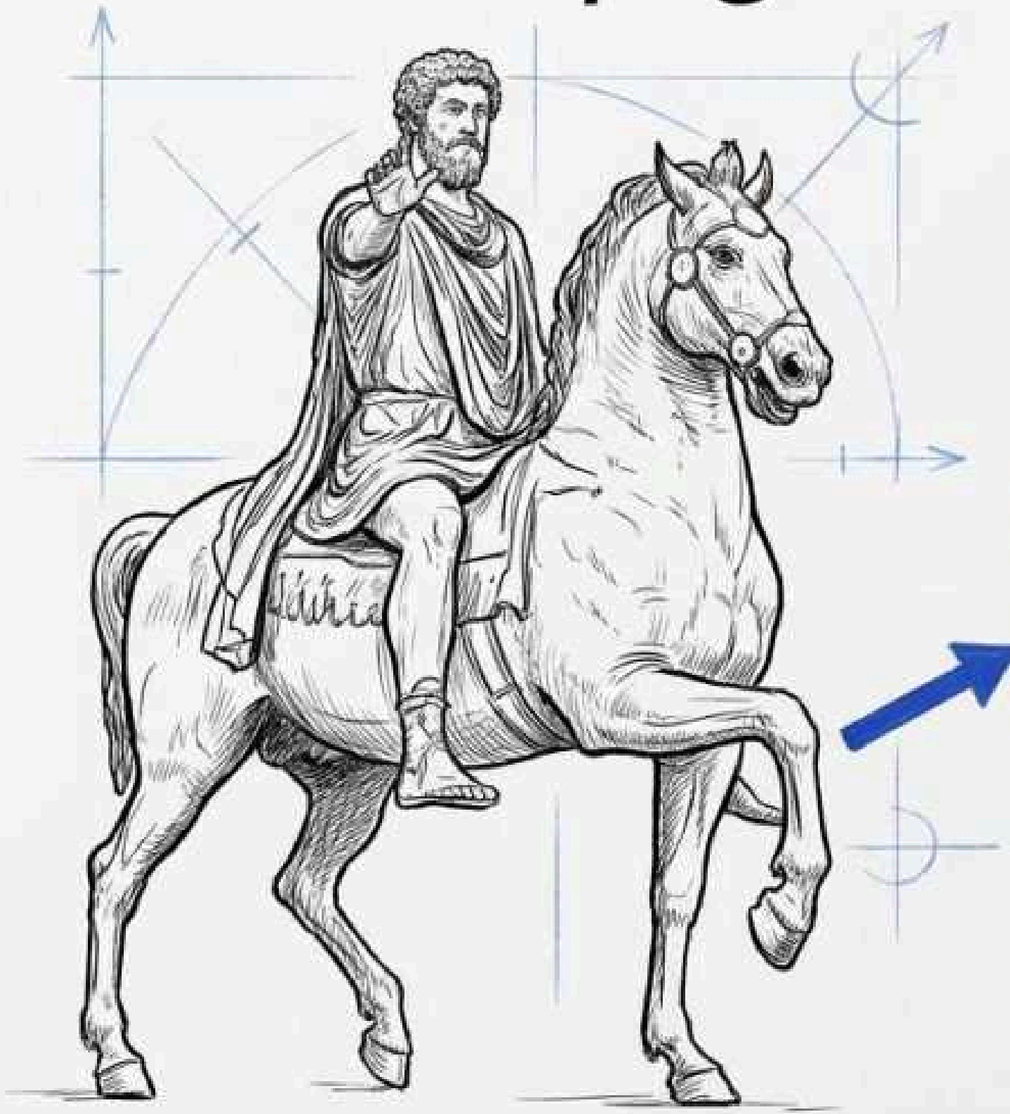


Insight

Painters used early forms of perspective to create imitation columns, landscapes, and still lifes. This preservation provides our greatest lens into daily Roman taste.

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Viral Propaganda and Mistaken Identity



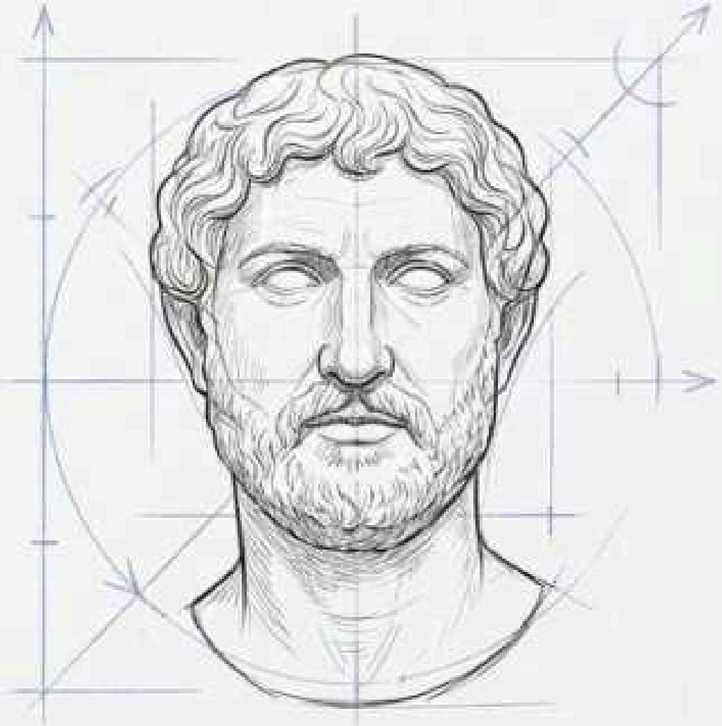
Emperors spread their faces globally through statues and coins. Hadrian introduced the Greek philosopher beard, which was copied by successors.

Statue of Marcus Aurelius → Mistaken by medieval people for Constantine, the Christian Emperor → Saved from the melting pot

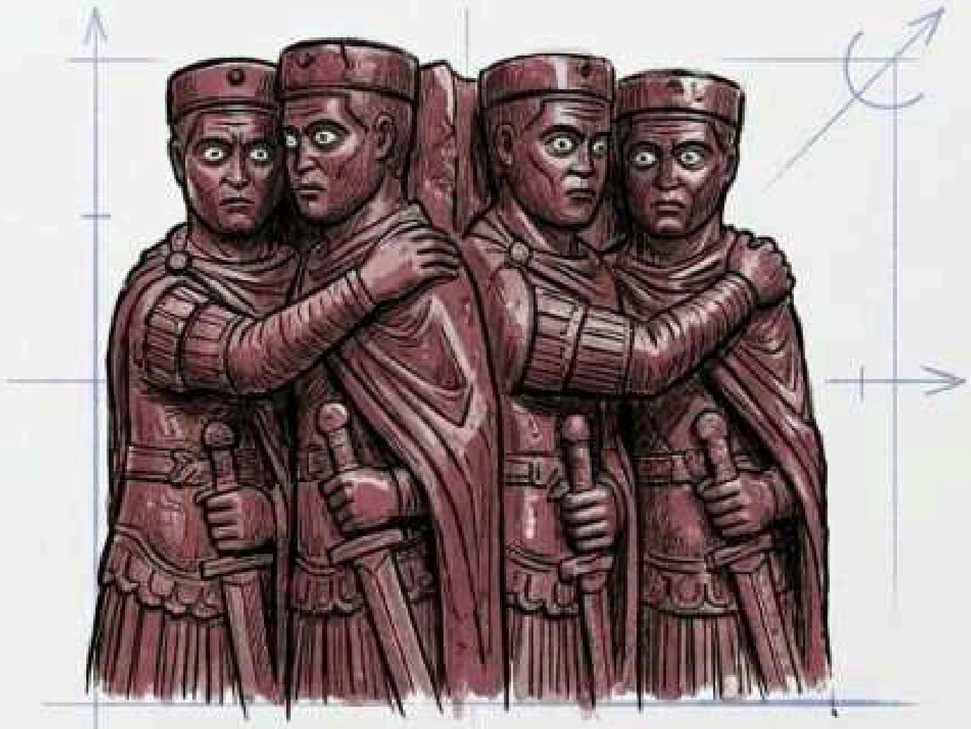
Most pagan bronze statues were melted down in the Middle Ages; this masterpiece survived entirely by historical accident.

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The Collapse of the Classical Ideal



The Fading Ideal



The Harsh Reality

Context: 3rd Century civil wars and short reigns breed harsh, tense, worried soldier-emperor portraits.

Core messaging shift: The Tetrarchs look blocky and identical because the message is UNITY, not individual character.

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Constantine and the Symbol of Power

313 CE: Edict of Milan
(tolerating Christianity)

↓

324 CE: Constantine becomes
Sole Emperor

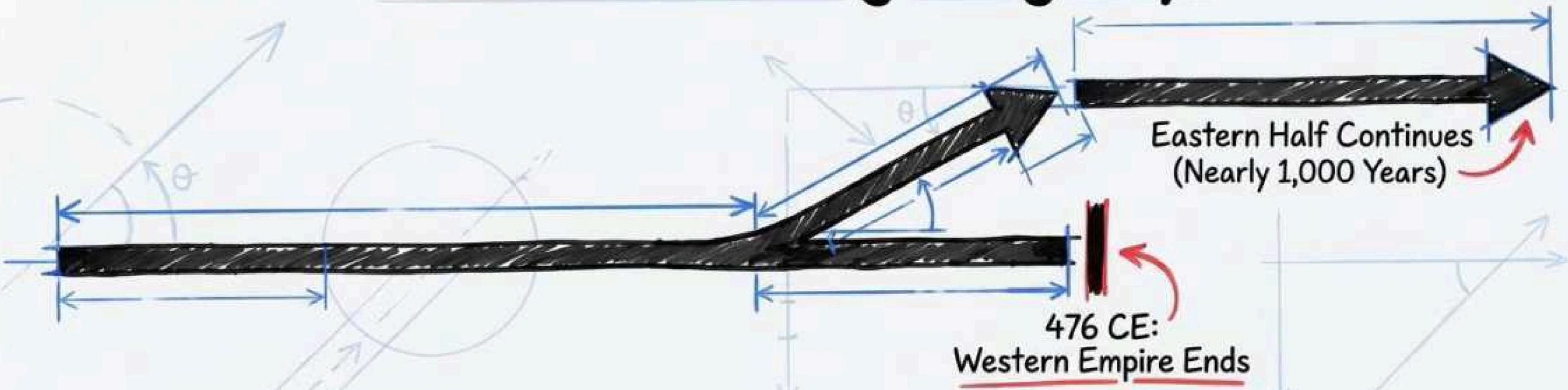
His 315 CE arch in Rome reused carved panels from earlier emperors, placing them directly beside new, simpler carvings.



Insight: The fixed, colossal gaze looks less like a human person and more like a symbol, pointing directly toward the abstract art of the Middle Ages.

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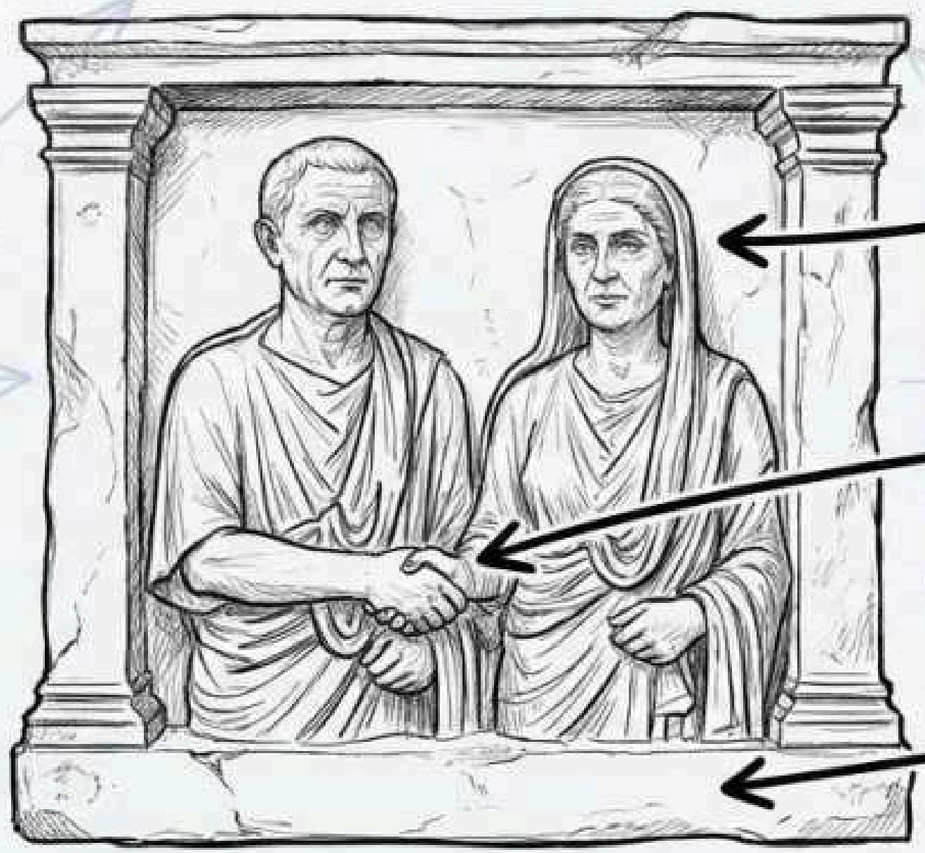
The Enduring Legacy



1. Structural Engineering
2. Concrete Mastery
3. Art as a Public Message
4. Greek Masterpieces Preserved via Copying

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The Art of the Citizens



Honest Faces

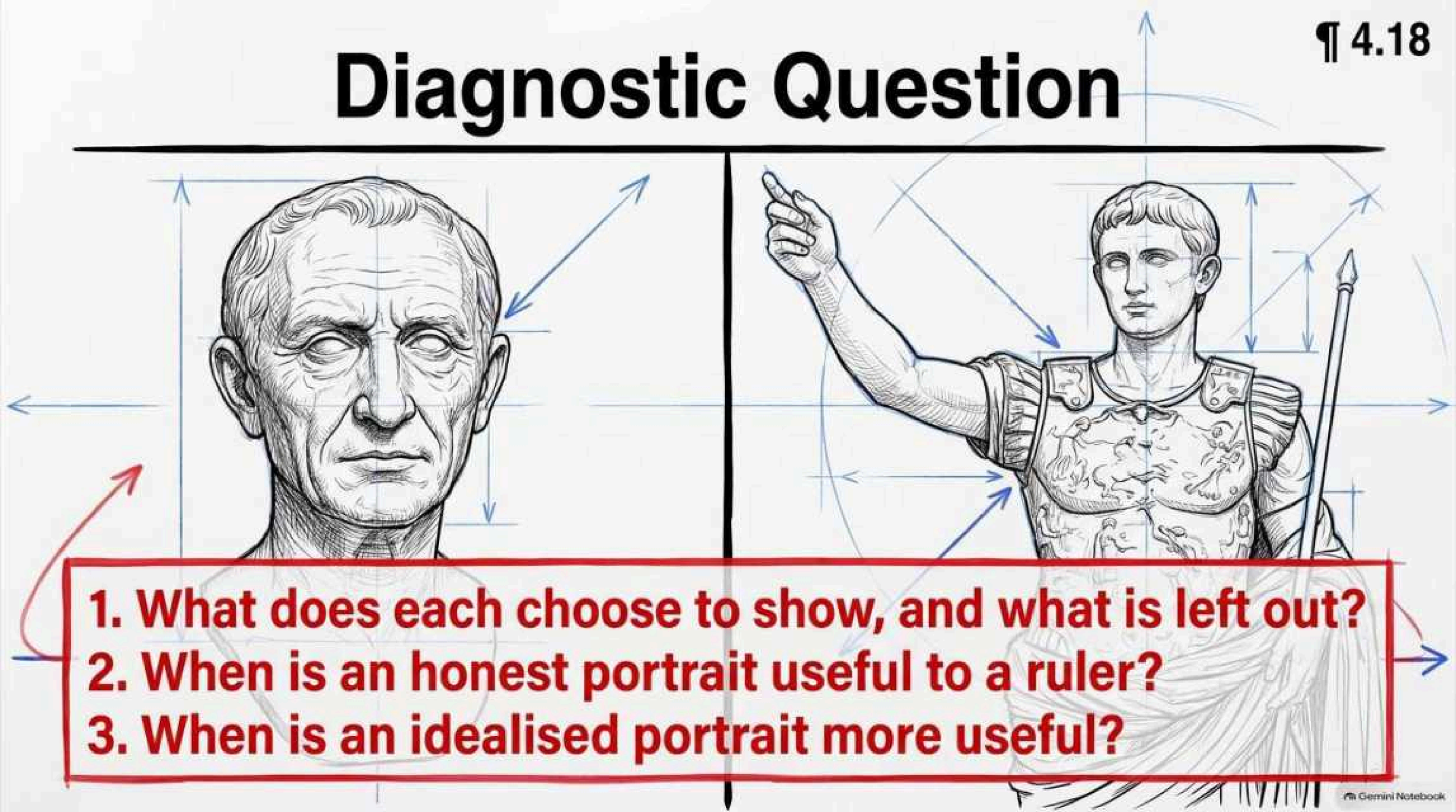
Legal Marriage

Hard-Won Freedom

Note: Rome's art wasn't just for rulers; freed slaves who earned citizenship paid for these proud, permanent statements of their humanity and status.

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Diagnostic Question



1. What does each choose to show, and what is left out?
2. When is an honest portrait useful to a ruler?
3. When is an idealised portrait more useful?

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Looking Ahead



Lecture 5: Following the Roman world as it transitions into the Christian, Byzantine, and Islamic eras.

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