History of Design 1

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Observational Essay

The Piazza del Campidolgio, located in Rome, Italy, directly voices and fits its contextual aspects, which are environment, culture, and history. Capitoline Hill and the Piazza del Campidolgio are at the center of Roman history (Chou, 2008.) although it is the rockiest and the highest of the seven hills of Rome, Capitoline Hill is not only sacred, but also the heart of Rome’s history (Heiken et al., 2013.) the Piazza is laid on the top of Capitoline Hill and in between the Forum and the campus Martius. Capitoline Hill is also known as one of the most important of Rome’s seven hills, and the first up-to-date square to be designed in Rome. The hills in Rome are not away from each other, but rather they are just a chain of ridges that eroded from a plain. The square in the Piazza faces directly in front St Peter’s Basilica which is the political center of Rome. Inside the square is three buildings, Palazzo Nuovo, dei Conservatori and Sentario. These were redesigned so that the square could work together in a better way (Sariah, 2005.)

Opposed to the Roman Forum, a major element in Capitoline Hill is the Tabularium which is filled with different Roman laws and official deeds. The Piazza del Campidoglio used to be a sacred place to praise Roman Divinities, but now it is known for being the main headquarters of the Italian government. The program is mainly to provide great views through Eternal city and holds the Capitoline museums (Sariah, 2005.) These museums compose two of the buildings which is located on the Piazza del Campidoglio; the Palazzo dei Conservatori on the right side of the square, and on the left side of the square, the Palazzo Nuovo (Jstor Michelangelo at the Campidoglio.) These two structures are mansions, and is a direct link to the Galleria Lapidaria, which takes you under the Piazza del Campidolgio without having to exit the museums (Jstor Michelangelo at the Campidoglio.) The Palazzo dei Conservatori contains new illustrations by Michelangelo and is known as the Capitoline art Museum (Heydenreich, 1996.) The Palazzo Sentario is the seat of the city municipality, and the Palazzo Nuovo not only has different drawings by Michelangelo, but also is known for being the museum that holds Hellenic and Roman masterpieces. Adding on to its program, the Piazza is also where people go to view, She-Wolf. This well-known statue contains the twins Romulus and Remus.

The Piazza del Campidoglio contains a flight of stairs that is very calm and doesn’t slope steep to the top of Piazza del Campidogio (Chou,2008.) These characteristics of the stairs signify two main things. First, it is the calmness of the stairs has a severe difference with the steep stairs of the Santa Maria of Araceoli, which is adjacently set to the Piazza (Chou,2008.) This contrast has been inferred to the struggle between the longing to ascend to power and attain fortune and the desire to reach spiritual aspirations. While reaching wealth and power was seen easier (symbolizing the serene steps of the Piazza), reaching spiritual objectives always calls maximum effort (symbolizing the steep steps of the Santa Maria of Araceoli) (Chou, 2008.) Realistically, the calm sloping stairs were there to make the flow of people easier. Which the Piazza del Campidoglio is initially designed to keep the flow of the people and meant to be enjoyed by the Romans making it easy to reach from the roads beneath. The piazza’s balance goes from the end of the stairway, and through the square pointing the viewers towards the Palazzo Senatorio. The Palazzo Senatorio uses secular government offices and is serving as the mayor’s office (Heydenreich, 1996.) Both the Palazzo dei Conservatori and the Palazzo Nuovo are used as museum collections holding much of Michelangelo work. The Palazzo dei Conservatori is not only used as a museum, but it also includes Roman civic offices. Finally, the square in itself is being used for many wedding parties and political protests. Today, the Piazza symbolically operates as the most important in world politics. The Piazza is the location for signing the first European Union Constitution by twenty-five EU nations. In 2002 the Piazza de Campidoglio was serving as a site where the Nobel Peace Laureate meetings were held (Saraih, 2005.)

The project is in provision of the patron’s wants and goals. The patron is known as the Pope, and in becoming the Pope, Alessandro wanted to revive the city with the initial goal of returning it to its glory and placing the cathedral as the center of Roman civil participation. Piazza del Campidolgio is where he focused everything to. He wants to express both religious representation and the greatness in the squares restructure. He did all this just to impress the Holy Roman Emperor (Heydenreich, 1996.) He wants to reform the entire place to form a big square. The issue to this was that Michelangelo only got to work with the components available to specifically meet the Pope’s demands (Heydenreich, 1996.) He focuses on the parts of symmetry by using the Statue of Marcus Aurelius as the epicenter of the plan. Doing this, he was able to rearrange the squares existing components into a unified design. The figure of Marcus Aurelius that is in the Piazza del Campidoglio is just a copy, the original figure lies away inside the Capitoline museums (Heydenreich, 1996.) This figure is a cause of two misconceptions. The first one is that one of the few works in bronze that had survived the Middle Ages, and the second is linked to a legend that states that the cry of the small owl sitting between a horse is going to proclaim the end of the earth (Heydenreich, 1996.) In the end, it is clearly shown that he used many different components for a specific goal and purpose.

There is several different elements of the Piazza del Campidoglio that seems to be working to be able to come together in numerous ways that stimulates one’s reactions. By being able to see the way Michelangelo arranged the Campidoglio, one could easily convey the modern-day design as the authentic imitation of his original plan (Civitatis Rome, 2020.) With him altering the preexisting buildings, Palazzo Senatorio and Palazzo dei Conservatoris’ shows an artistic result. The only issue with this is that the two buildings are pulling away from each other at an angle of 80 degrees. Michelangelo now decides to design a third building, the Palazzo Nuovo, at the same angle (Heydenreich, 1996.) This gives the Piazza del Campidoglio a trapezoidal shape which completes this section of the hill. The main focus of attention is the access to the Senator’s Palace. This provides Michelangelo’s plan of doubling the stairs with its associated sculptures. Doubling the stairs at the entrance of the Palazzo Senatorio is all Michelangelo was able to live to see because of how slowly everything developed. The Piazza del Campidoglio was completed in the 17th century with its structure remaining constant to its previous design (Heydenreich, 1996.) You were able to see how the old traditional design resembled much of today’s more urban and contemporary design.

The construction of the Piazza del Campidoglio is very complex and complicated. To reach the top, one must climb its main feature, the stairwell, also known as the Cordonata (Sariah, 2005.) Before you start walking up, you see two black Egyptian lion sculptures that are turned into fountains which are used as urns collecting streams of water (Sariah, 2005.) Although it was originally meant for decoration only, the two sculptures of the black Egyptian lions are now understood to show the impressive power of Rome. The two other structures at the top of the Cordonata, are the Dioscuris Castor and Pollux (Chou, 2008.) Taking a deeper look into ancient Roman mythology, these two structures are the children of Zeus which is the God of Rome (Chou,2008.) They are purposely placed at the entrance of the Piazza del Campidoglio where they are seen to be the defenders and saviours of ancient Rome. Beside of the railings are where the two figures of Constantine and his son, Constantine II are held. Once one has reached the top of the square, there are the three buildings all facing the middle which contains the main statue of Marcus Aurelius. Standing directly in front is the Palazzo de Senatorio leading off with a triangular staircase toward the entry. In front of the staircase are two statues that represent the Tigris and Nile river which previously belonged to the baths of Constantine (Grundmann, 2007.) Adding on, there is a representation of the goddesses Minerva and Roma forming a fountain. The Palazzo dei Conservatori and Palazzo Nuovo resemble large columns that spread higher than one story.

Being an important social and cultural center in Rome, there are two other things that sparked his intrigue in the Piazza del Campidoglio (Chou,2008.) First off, his home, which is located near the Victor Emmanuel Monument, and he wanted a better view of his house. Second, he wanted to impress the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Michelangelo was told these two interests of the Pope and he used the space he was given to communicate the vital role of the church and government in the city’s revival (Burroughs, 1993.) With all the odd space given, Michelangelo was able to make do with what he had and restructure the two abnormally shaped buildings and create a third gives it its trapezoidal shape (Heydenreich, 1996.) With using spatial symmetry and organization, he was able to make the Piazza del Campidoglio into a square. Michelangelo beneficiaries were able to fill in the gaps of the Piazza according to what they thought was right (Heydenreich, 1996.) The eight pilasters of the Palazzo dei Conservatori rises up high to stand as the main cornice. This became a problem on how to connect the outdated system of columns with the separation of stories in a up-to-date and urban Palazzo with all the diverse openings and string courses, in a certain way that the vertical structures rising from the floor would be able to support the cornice just like they do in classical architecture (Heydenreich, 1996.) Although the Piazza del Campidoglio was not able to be complete by the time the Roman Emperor arrived, the structures design symbol upon completion and the Popes expectations were met.

On another note, The Piazza del Campidolgio acts as a major spiritual purpose through temples such as Iovis Optimi Maximi Capitolini, The Temple of Jupiter, and the Capitolino Temple (Chou,2008.) Even though Capitoline Hill was left in wreck in the middle ages, the ancient significance proves that its contextual importance is nothing new. The extreme changes and developments were needed for reconstructing the building to its ancient glory. In doing so, Michelangelo needed to alter the facades of the Palazzo of Senatorio and the Palazzo dei Conservatori. The Pope then had the funds for the Piazza and ordered a repair of the Palazzo of Senatorio (Heydenreich, 1996.) Marcus Aurelius was then changed again. A new façade of the Palazzo dei Conservatori was worked on by Michelangelo patrician friend, Tommaso dei Cavalieri (Heydenreich, 1996.) Everything that was commissioned by the Pope was all based on the plan that Michelangelo came up with.

The structure and materials worked extremely well and had no complications in the way it stood. One can notice how for the Piazza del Campidoglio is mostly comprising of load bearing walls, and with this there is no issue. The buildings have pilasters and columns, and the pavement of the square consists of paving stones and pieces of travertine and marble (Sear, 2002.) Adding to this, the contrasting colors on the floor is used to create the drawing of the pavement. Everything may have not been structurally built according to plan, but it has been able to stay upright through this entire time, with no complications

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