

Roman architecture: the colosseum

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The Colosseum, which is also referred to as the Flavian Amphitheatre, is an oval-shaped amphitheatre in the middle of Rome, Italy. The structure is built of stone and concrete and was the largest amphitheatre in the reign of the Roman Empire. It is believed to be the greatest work of Roman engineering and architecture. The structure could seat up to 50, 000 visitors and was used for public entertainment such as animals hunt and mock sea battles and the infamous gladiator contests. Since the purpose of the Colosseum was to be an entertainment center, it is clear that the architects did not take the environmental conditions of old Rome into consideration. It would seem more appropriate if the games were carried out when the weather and the environment were more preferable to the audience. Since it is an open structure, it was appropriate if most of the contests and games were held during a period when the weather was sunnier and cooler (Sayre 354). For that reason, in relation to the environment, using the structure would be better on the days when the weather conditions was friendlier.

The cost of building the Colosseum is not known, but the treasures from the temple of Jerusalem were used to pay for its creation. The Colosseum was designed by experienced and latest experts from Roman engineering, art, architecture and other creative professions. The structure was built quickly, efficiently and with considerably effect because of the discovery of concrete. The building was created in a skilled manner according to the highest artistic standards. Its construction involved a team of professional Roman engineers, decorators, builders, and painters who brought in the skills necessary to

build the Colosseum. Most of Roman architecture, especially the Colosseum, was mostly benefitted by two of the greatest inventions of that era: vaulted arches and concrete. Concrete was invented during the construction of the Colosseum, and the Romans were still learning to use it. The invention of concrete was so new to the Romans, to the point they did not know how long it would last or how strong it would be. They carefully combined the concrete with stone, which was made by mixing a strong volcanic substance known as *passolana* with sand, a mixture of lime and sand (Welch 234). The vaulted arches made the ceiling of the Colosseum stronger than it would have been with a flat ceiling. Without the invention or knowledge on the usage of concrete and vaulted arches, the Colosseum would not be in existence today.

The design of the Colosseum was circular. This was different from theatres that defined Greek architecture, which were semicircular with the seats arranged to face the theatre. Although there were theatres in Rome, they were used for plays, which were only attended by the elite. The creation of the amphitheatre created a formal distinction, which meant it could be used by different audience and for different activities. The Colosseum hosted diverse activities such as fighting and sporting for different social strata. The creation of the amphitheater enabled people of different classes to join in the activities. It has been described to represent, in its different seats, the elite Roman society, where the royal family was in a more privileged position; this was followed by the senators, the aristocrats, the soldiers, the common people and slaves, and in a fairer position were the women bleachers. The Colosseum was also built for other reasons, such as a gift to the Romans,

which resulted in increasing the popularity of the Flavian dynasty (Sayre 354). It was also built to showcase the latest engineering techniques of the Romans and demonstrate the power of Rome and its emperors to the world. Its classical designs borrowed from Greek architecture were a means to express that Rome was a civilized and great nation.

The construction workers of the structure worked as a team from the wishes of the then emperor, Vespasian. The purpose of construction of the amphitheater was a means for the emperor to demonstrate the power of Rome. The Colosseum was built very fast because the Flavian family was in a hurry to complete the amphitheater. A team of Roman engineers, architects, decorators, and painters, who brought in the skills necessary to build the amphitheater, designed the Colosseum. The construction also involved the skills of hundreds of stonemasons, who dealt with the design and placement of the stones. During the building, Emperor Vespasian had boundless work force, an estimate of 100, 000 prisoners who were brought to Rome from the Jewish War (Hopkins and Beard 65). The slaves were tasked with the manual labor, such as working in the quarries. It is assumed that the slaves were also used to lift and transport heavy stones from Tivoli to Rome.

The Colosseum attracts roughly three million visitors annually. The building is the ruins of the biggest amphitheater in ancient Rome, and it creates a form of familiarity to the viewers as though one knows the building even though it is their first visit. Tourists throng Rome to see the ruins because they realize it is one of the most recognizable and important creations in the world. The structure is interesting because its exterior is strange in a way that the wooden floors of the structure are gone, and hidden passageways

are revealed. None of the pre-existing seats is left, and this takes a brilliant imagination to figure out the ruins in its former glory.

Works Cited

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