

# Example of roman portraiture essay

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



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## **Introduction**

There is a civilization in human history that inspires wonder and admiration among its descendants, evokes envy and the desire to imitate - and that is Roman Empire. Roman Empire This collocation almost invariably conjures images of power and grandeur, of mighty armies and fearsome gladiators, of marble cities and far-flung roads. And it is not surprising, because few countries have left in the history of world civilization such a bright trail and bequeathed to the posterity a cultural heritage of such enormous size and of its greatest importance. The significance of the Roman Empire is truly prominent taking into account the amount of knowledge obtained by the rest of the world from the Roman Empire. From now on I will concentrate on major, in my judgment, landmarks and milestones of Roman Empire after 27 BC that represented the history of it in the best manner.

Roman portraiture - is one of the most significant periods in the development of art of world portraiture covering about five centuries (1st

century BC - 4th century AD) that is characterized by an extraordinary realism and the desire to convey the character of the depicted image (person). This genre occupies one of the first places among other genres of Ancient Roman visual art.

Roman portraiture is notable not only for its great cultural value distinguished by subtle proficiency of its authors but also for significant historical value, as some pieces of this specific art supplement written historical sources, demonstrating us the faces of the participants of important historical events of that era. Moreover Roman portraitists were the first who tried to resolve the problem, which is ultimately facing contemporary artists - a problem of conveying not only the external appearance of a certain individual, but also of the distinctive features of his character.

The emergence of the Roman portrait art is closely related to the development of ancestor worship in Rome, rooted in the religion and customs of the peoples who inhabited Italian territory before its incorporation in Rome. The first were the Etruscans which cult of the dead played an extremely important role in the development of future Roman portraiture. In the depiction of the deceased Etruscan sculptors pursued to achieve foremost iconographic similarities that are well noticeable at the picture underneath demonstrating us Etruscan anthropoid sarcophagus.

2 The Sarcophagus of the Spouses late 6th century BC. Terracota. National Etruscan Museum, Rome

The impact of the Greek, mainly Hellenistic art, for the first time manifested during the period Late Republic (147-30 BC) and henceforth, provokes an

interest in the inner world of human being while maintaining maximum accuracy in the guise of the portrayed person.

Starting from the establishment of the Roman portraiture as an independent and original artistic phenomenon in the beginning of the 1st century BC alongside with the inception of the period Roman Republic the Roman portraiture has faced many changes in tendencies, modernizations, and developments that were affected by the periods of the ancient Roman civilization. The reign of the Emperor Octavian Augustus (63 BC - 14 AD), for example, was a period of golden age of the Roman culture that is characterized by the simplicity and rigor, restraint and clarity of form and the desire to generalize, combined with the traditional desire for documentary accuracy. Moreover, his personal portraits were “ designed to present the image of a godlike leader, a superior being who, miraculously, was eternally youthful” (Kleiner 67) proof to which is a following image:

The transitional period from the above mentioned Classicism of Augustus, greatly idealized, to the portraiture during the reign of Flavian dynasty (69 AD - 96 AD), characterized with enormous picturesqueness, was the period of Nero during which, precise idealization used to appear in a great manner in sculptures before, ceased to be present in the works of Roman sculptors giving place to the aspiration of achievement of the maximal similarity of human inner world.

Many controversies are caused among scholars with the question of what was the most unique and fruitful period in the age of Roman Empire for the portraiture, but all of them will unanimously agree that Ancient Roman

portraiture laid the foundation for the subsequent development of European realistic portrait, the statement of which I`m also a supporter.

## **The Roman Law**

Another aspect of cultural heritage of the Roman Empire that left a memorable mark in the development of the world civilization and civil life of most of the world`s population nowadays is the Roman Law that was developing till the fall of the Byzantine Empire serving later as a template and a foretype for the further development of the system of law of many nations and the historical basis of the Roman-Germanic legal family.

The first extant sources of written law of Rome are the laws of the Roman kings. Among them one of the most significant sources is the Law of the Twelve Tables that has incorporated many of the provisions of the Laws of Solon (middle of the 5th century BC). The Law of the Twelve Tables was a result of a specially created committee of 10 people and represented a set of laws that governed virtually all industries of everyday Roman life. The most significant result of adoption of this code of laws was the introduction of money in the life of Roman citizens that affected exchange relations as well. One of the most influential Roman jurists - Gaius (floruit AD 130-180) wrote a commentary on the Law of the Twelve Tables, a treatise on the praetorian law and the "Institutions" (AD 161) - a textbook for students of law. Later in the times of Byzantine Empire its emperor Justinian I (482-565) created the main source of of the written law in the Eastern Roman Empire (successor of the Roman Empire`s historical fame) - the Corpus Juris ("Body of civil law"). Alongside with other Ancient Roman works on law it became an important source for development of law as a science endowing "the Roman legal

system with a formalism that lasted for more than 1, 000 years" (Halsall, "Ancient Roman Law").

## **Roman military strategies**

Perhaps all the peoples of the globe tried to employ achievements of the glorified ancient empire by imitating the Roman customs, copying state institutions or, at least, constructing in the same architecture style of the Roman Empire. The only thing brought to perfection by the Romans that was very difficult to copy by other states was the army.

Maxfield stated that the growth and stability of the Roman world depended, to a large degree, on the continuing success of its armies that was attained through vigorous training and discipline and through a sophisticated system of punishment and rewards (14). Foreign policy of this empire was characterized by incessant wars and was based on the famous principle of "divide et impera" (divide and rule). This factor compelled the state to organize and maintain proficient and deterring army.

During the heyday of ancient Rome overall size of the army was usually up to 100 thousand people, but could be increased up to 250-300 thousands or more. The Roman army had the best weapons for that time, possessed of experienced and well-trained team composition, differed with strict rules of discipline and subtle generalship that used the most advanced methods of warfare and considered war from the view point of science. All these factors mentioned caused continuous achieving of a complete and resounding defeat of the enemy by the Army of the Roman Empire.

The main arm of the service was the infantry. The Navy was applied in combats as well for warfare at the coastal areas and the transfer of the Army

to the enemy's territory by sea. The whole Army was divided into smaller parts for which purpose such notions defining the branch and quantity of troops were implemented: legion, legio, manipule, turma, centuria, contubernium and others.

Two fundamental reasons, in my point of view, for the might and effectiveness of the Roman Army were wide use of various military tactics and irrecusable compliance with the discipline by the Roman warriors. For example, with the help of the well known testudo (tortoise) formation a victory over not only one army of those days was handed.

## **Construction in the Roman Empire**

The development of this aspect of Roman civil life is tightly connected with the landmark analyzed above. As a result of the aggressive policy of the Ancient Rome, by its enriching through the war, construction engineering, luxury mansions, palaces, temples, houses and public buildings construction were developing in tandem with the development of the Roman art of war. According to Dunstan, the Romans ruled what now constitutes parts of more than forty modern countries, with frontiers extending from Britain in the west to Armenia in the east and from North Africa and Egypt in the south to the Rhine, the Danube, and the Black Sea in the north (1). This illustrates that Romans were totally self-sufficing in the matter of capabilities for engineering as all needed materials (basically limestone, concrete, water, and sand) were abundant on those areas, as well as sources of slaves necessary for construction works were practically never-ceasing.

All over the ancient world, Roman architecture has got no parallel in history in the proficiency of engineering, diversity of types of constructions, and the

scale of construction. The Romans introduced engineering structures (aqueducts, bridges, roads, harbors) as architectural objects in urban, rural and landscape ensemble that left its mark on the civilization of the Ancient Romans.

Architecture of ancient Rome made a huge contribution to the world culture. During this historic period, the Romans were building mainly for a practical purpose - city walls, roads, bridges, aqueducts, basilicas, warehouses, circuses, amphitheatres - were building with a view to dozens of centuries ahead and for the forthcoming generations` sake. So far, the Appian Way that was built in 312 BC is functioning connecting Rome with southeast Italian provinces, the first Roman aqueduct Aqua Appia is still soaring over the Italian land reminding of the faded but well remembered glory of the Roman Empire, the Roman authorities up today take advantages of the one of the world`s first sewage systems - Cloaca Maxima by operating it as a storm drainage, and one of the most famous and one of the greatest buildings of the ancient world - the amphitheatre Colosseum keeps attracting millions of tourists every year to its millenary limestone walls. The Romans marked the beginning of a new era of world architecture, in which the principal place belonged to the social construction that embodied the idea of state power and was designed for a great number of people. The thing that I`m really admired with is that Romans met practical needs, not only of the ruling class but also of the average Roman citizens and visitors of the Roman Empire.



## **Conclusion**

All of those landmarks are just a little part of the majestic culture of the Roman Empire, complete study of which will take incredibly much time, much more than may be esteemed due to the diversified nature of cultural development of this historical period in the history of mankind. Roman Empire, as I have made certain, greatly affected the world succeeding its fall. Its heritage for thousands of years will encompass every one of us as such fundamental achievements of the human thoughts and aspirations constituting Ancient Roman Empire cannot simply disappear without a trace.

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