

Essay on comparing the pantheon to los angeles city hall

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



The Pantheon in Rome, Italy is the ultimate symbol of imperialistic power and control. Its name means "to every god," and was created by Marcus Agrippa in order to provide a temple to all of the Ancient Roman Gods; rebuilt in 126 AD, it is a monument to godly power and the capabilities of an entire empire. While this is one of the most famous examples of the might of an empire, City Hall in Los Angeles is a similar symbol of the capabilities of a modern, imperialistic empire - the United States of America. Located in the Civic Center district of downtown in Los Angeles, it was created in 1928 and towers above the rest of the immediate area, standing out as the center of power in the city of Los Angeles. Both buildings are indicative of the ability of each respective body of power (the Roman empire, the city of Los Angeles) to create impressive, awe-inspiring bodies of architecture. By demonstrating this ability, the might of each government is demonstrated, and each building provides unique evidence that their respective empires are forces to be reckoned with.

The Roman Pantheon is an example to the rest of the world for how buildings should be presented, if they are to impress and inspire. The Pantheon has been used as a seat of governmental power, a tomb, and a tourist spot, respectively, and its goal has changed tremendously as time has passed. Los Angeles City Hall, on the other hand, has remained largely as a primary seat of power for the officials of Los Angeles, from the mayor to the heads of major departments. The building itself has also been featured in a number of movies and television shows, memorializing it and immortalizing it as a formidable piece of modern architecture that still stands strong to this day.

The use of the Pantheon as a symbol of Rome's might as an empire, and the ability of Los Angeles City Hall to show just what money and power can accomplish in the modern United States, are indicated through the various aspects of each building's architecture. The Roman Pantheon is a circular building, with a few dozen Corinthian columns providing a portico around the main building, supporting a pediment. Connecting the rotunda to the porch, there is a rectangular vestibule, lying under a dome that is made of concrete, and coffered, offering an oculus that opens up to the sky. Not only does this show Rome's influence on earth, which is accomplished through having such a large building at their disposal, the openness of the oculus demonstrates a tremendous respect and deference to the Roman gods. The palace was meant to be both an indicator of fealty to the gods and an example of Rome's godly power in spite of the gods' ultimate might (Cowan, 1977). Though the Roman empire paid homage and respect to the gods of old, they still wished to demonstrate their power in equal measure through the construction of such a mighty building.

No matter what the original purpose of the Roman Pantheon was, the overall use and utility of the building has changed dramatically over the years. After the fall of Rome, the Pope Boniface IV took it over and converted it into a Catholic church; thus the Pantheon was stripped of its pagan origins and changed into the seat of Christian worship. This was a dramatic change from the place where Christians were formally persecuted; turning it into a place of Christian worship shows the ever-changing nature of the Pantheon, and the ability of history to re-appropriate buildings and change their purpose.

This is something that defines the Pantheon: not only what the Romans intended it to be, but what it became to the generations and civilizations that used it afterward.

The interests that lie behind the Los Angeles City Hall construction are much more secular than with the Roman Pantheon, but the overall intention is largely the same. With 32 floors and standing at 454 feet high, this skyscraper was constructed in an era when the skyscraper was new; the Empire State building was a very recent phenomenon, leaving all other major cities to construct skyscrapers of their own. In the 20th century, and in the wake of the First World War, America was becoming a world power of its own, and it wanted to demonstrate that by having buildings that literally reached up to the sky. The Los Angeles City Hall is the largest base-isolated structure in the world, which was accomplished to keep it protected from the earthquakes that often are found in the California area. The building itself, especially the tower's concrete, was constructed of sand from all of the 58 counties of California, and mixed with water from the 21 historical missions that the state possesses (" Architecture," 2012). This made the structure uniquely Californian, making its very makeup representative of the state as a whole. The building itself was based on the Mausoleum of Mausolus, and was heavily influenced by the appearance of the Los Angeles Public Library. While the Roman Pantheon demonstrated the might of both the gods and the Roman Empire, the goal of Los Angeles City Hall was to show just how mighty the individual Californian, and the state as a whole, could be.

One of the most important cultural distinctions that Los Angeles City Hall has is its tremendous influence and exposure through the world of film. California is the home of Hollywood, the 20th century mecca where motion pictures are made by major studios and shown to the entire world. The building itself has been used to stand in for many other buildings in films over the years, and that helps to cement just how important it was to the city and the film culture that it helped to administrate. From films like War of the Worlds (in which the building is destroyed to demonstrate the power of the alien menage) to The Bad News Bears and television shows like Dragnet and Adam-12, as well as Perry Mason. Its status as a very photogenic building has been used to add spectacle and bigness to motion pictures and television shows, demonstrating just how important the film business is to the city itself. Having such a tall, grandiose building at their disposal permitted film crews to squeeze more production value out of their local Californian shoots. As a result, millions of people have seen the Los Angeles City Hall building, whether or not it acted as the real thing, giving it a cultural importance and ubiquity that the Pantheon could not quite claim to those who had not seen it.

The differences between the Roman Pantheon and the Los Angeles City Hall are not as great as one would think at first glance. Looking at both buildings, they are meant to be impressive, awe-inspiring, and a little thought-provoking. Their overall goal was to instill pride in the eyes of those who could call that building theirs - the Pantheon church and the Los Angeles tower are both still impressive sights to see, and they are meant to

demonstrate just what the bodies that built it are capable of. The functions, by now, are completely different; Los Angeles City Hall is still a working body of power, where government is run and things are accomplished. The Pantheon, on the other hand, is a museum piece, known for its antiquity more than anything else. In its prime, however, one could see just how important the sacred was to the Romans; they wished to demonstrate just how powerful the gods were, and how strong the Roman Empire was as a result of worshipping said gods. This is why the oculus is open to the sky, to show all around them that the gods spoke through the Romans to do their bidding.

The messages that both buildings send to their populations are very prescient and intriguing to observe. For the Roman people, the Pantheon was a humongous building dedicated to the worship of the gods, as well as a seat of government. Los Angeles City Hall stands as a monument to the majesty of the United States, and the endless possibilities and imagination of the film industry. They are both large, grandiose buildings meant to show the might and the capabilities of the people who built them, and to worship the various idols (the Roman gods/Catholic God and the film industry/capitalism, respectively) that each culture reveres. Both buildings have a tremendous amount of history, and stand the test of time as buildings which define their cultures. While the Pantheon has much more universal appeal, due to its grand history and the centuries of time it has had to ingrain itself into the minds of those who know of it, the City Hall building in Los Angeles is also a

local legend, as well as an ill-recognized but often seen landmark in motion pictures that reach audiences of millions.

In conclusion, both the Roman Pantheon and Los Angeles City Hall exist to serve vastly different purposes, though their overall goal is the same. The Pantheon was a church, then a mausoleum; it was meant to show the Roman's might through their fealty to the gods. Los Angeles City Hall, however, is a product of a time when mankind literally reached for the stars, and a young country sought to show the world that it could rise higher than anything else. To that end, City Hall is still home to the main bodies of government, and it is meant to show that the materials that make up the great state of California can be combined to create a single building that stands for the whole state. These two buildings demonstrate the overall power of great city- and nation-states, whose great ability to command large material resources leads to superior architecture that eclipses all around it in great size and scope.

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