Main Features Of Roman Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture

The Roman Empire displayed a characteristic that distinguished it from any other civilization; a multicultural character. The Roman civilization consisted of numerous people with a variety of different backgrounds. People of different languages, beliefs, and races lived within the borders of the Roman civilization and contributed to the powerful makings of Roman art and architecture. What's special about the art and architecture of the Roman Empire is that many remains of its monuments still stand today. Roman buildings are used as the center of modern houses, stores, museums, etc. Unlike any other civilization, these remains are large and numerous. Ancient Rome has been broken down into four empires: Republic (509-27BCE), Early Empire (27BCE-96CE), High Empire (96-192CE) and Late Empire (193-337CE). Each empire developed special temples, sculptures, paintings, and portraitures that forever influenced the world of art.

The Republic Empire was the beginning of a turning point for Roman art. As the Romans became more exposed to Greek and Etruscan art, they were influenced and developed a taste for similar creations. Greek antiques and Etruscan paintings, sculptures, and buildings were considered eye candy to Roman artists and architectures. Many creations during the Roman Republic have many mixing characteristics of both the Greek and Etruscans. Temple of Portunus (ca. 75 BCE) located in Rome, Italy is a mixture of the two civilizations. The Republican temple follows a basic Etruscan structure; a high podium, flight of steps, and standing columns around the temple. The width of the temple and stone used to build the temple are relevant to Greek art. Temple of Vesta (ca. Early first century BCE) located in Tivoli, Italy is a Republican temple that is heavily influenced by the Greek. Temple of Vesta is a round temple with several characteristics similar to the Greeks such as columns held by ox heads.

Republican sculpture was used to create portraits of ancestors from old and distinguished families. These portraits were almost always depicted as men. These sculptures were created and displayed in homes and funerals for family of the ancestors. Portrait of a Roman general from Sanctuary of Hercules, Tivoli, Italy (ca. 75- 50 BCE) displays a life-size portrait of a general and is 6' 2'' high. The Republican sculpture is influenced by Greek sculptures where the head is disconnected and sits above a younger body.

Paintings in Republican Rome were very special to the Romans and were displayed in may homes, temples, and churches. Many wall paintings were "Frescos". A Fresco painting is when colors are applied while the plaster was still wet. During the Republic times, there were four styles of paintings used to transform the interior of many buildings and homes. If a painter used the first style, his aim was to create marble look-alikes to decorate the walls of churches, libraries, and corporate meeting rooms using painted stucco relief. These paintings were used to imitate expensive marble decors. Second style painting brought interior walls to life by transforming them with the "illusion of a three-dimensional world" (Kleiner, pg. 189). Dionysiac mystery frieze (ca. 60- 50 BCE) is a second style painting inside The Villa of Mysteries, Pompeii, Italy. This painting displays figures across the walls imitating Dionysiac rites. Third style painters were very different from the first and second style painters. Using just one color as a background, Third style painters sketched the walls with linear images. Lastly, the fourth style

of painting was very similar to the second style. Instead of one fantasy that covered the interior walls, there was a crowded mixture of architectural views.

Most arts during the Early empire were mostly portraits and architecture. Portraits were made of Roman emperors and empresses. These portraits were followed by role-playing. Empresses were sculpted as young regardless of their age. It was common for imperial women to be displayed on coins as goddesses or as embodiments of feminine virtue (Kleiner, pg. 196). Men emperors were often displayed in the form of heroic portraits. Portrait bust of Livia (ca. Early first century BCE) from Arisino, Egypt displays the latest Roman goddess, despite her being 80 years old she never aged in any of her portraits. Every portrait is sculpted as a younger version of herself. Portrait of Augustus (ca. 20 BCE) from Primaporta, Italy models Augustus as general, wearing an armor-clad.

The High Empire was known for reaching its greatest extent under the power of Trajan. Trajan was so popular that several architects and buildings were honored in his name. The column of Trajan (ca. 112 CE) located in Rome, Italy is a long spiral that tells the story of Decian wars in 150 episodes throughout the column. Many beautiful architects were created during the High empire such as Canopus and Serapeum (ca. 125- 128 CE) Hadrian’s Villa, Tivoli, Italy. This is a personally designed architect in Hadrian’s villa.

The late Empire following the death of Constantine was a period of many portraits. Many of which were of emperors such as Trajan, Caracalla, and Constantine. Coins, portraits, and architecture were made in honor of Constantine. Arch of Constantine (ca. 312- 315 CE) is a sculptured pathway in Rome, Italy. Previous sculptures of emperors were removed and replaced with Constantine’s features. Constantinian coins (ca. 307-315 CE) were coins that displayed Constantine as either youthful or bearded and aged.

Throughout the period of Roman art, there were many architectural innovations in which some are still used in today’s world. Some of the architects include the arch and the vault, domes, public buildings, domestic architecture, roads, and welfare (coins). Romans used many new materials but particularly used concrete, groin, and silver.