



Monumentality and the Roman Empire: Architecture in the Antonine Age

By Edmund Thomas

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The quality of 'monumentality' is attributed to the buildings of few historical epochs or cultures more frequently or consistently than to those of the Roman Empire. It is this quality that has helped to make them enduring models for builders of later periods. This extensively illustrated book, the first full-length study of the concept of monumentality in Classical Antiquity, asks what it is that the notion encompasses and how significant it was for the Romans themselves in moulding their individual or collective aspirations and identities. Although no single word existed in antiquity for the qualities that modern authors regard as making up that term, its Latin derivation - from monumentum, 'a monument' - attests plainly to the presence of the concept in the mentalities of ancient Romans, and the development of that notion through the Roman era laid the foundation for the classical ideal of monumentality, which reached a height in early modern Europe. This book is also the first full-length study of architecture in the Antonine Age - when it is generally agreed the Roman Empire was at its height. By exploring the public architecture of Roman Italy and both Western and Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire from the point of view of the benefactors who funded such buildings, the architects who designed them, and the public who used and experienced them, Edmund Thomas analyses the reasons why Roman builders sought to construct monumental buildings and uncovers the close link between architectural monumentality and the identity and ideology of the Roman Empire itself.

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Review

"Thomas's work is a sign of a new maturity in the study of Roman architecture.... Few... have related literary sources to extant buildings so successfully. His connections illuminate and convince.... he has given us a new approach to understanding the motives and expectations of Roman imperial builders."--James E. Packer, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*

About the Author

Edmund Thomas is Lecturer in Ancient Visual and Material Culture, University of Durham.

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