



Inscriptions in Stone

The dedication inscribed across the tall attic storey above the arch opening reads: “The Senate and the Roman People to the Deified Titus Flavius Vespasianus Augustus, son of the Deified Vespasian.” The Romans typically recorded historic occasions and identified monuments with solemn prose

and beautiful inscriptions in stone. The perfectly sized and spaced Roman capital letters – meant to be read from a distance and cut with sharp terminals (serifs) to catch the light – established a standard that calligraphers and font designers still follow.

2. Arch of Titus, Rome, c. 81 CE (restored 1822-1824), concrete and white marble, height 50' (15.24 m).

GLOSSARY

capture: conquista.
deified: divinizzato.
chariot: carro (trionfale).
crush: schiacciare.
looted: saccheggiarono.
carted off: portarono via su carri.
occasion: momento.

flaunting: mentre ostentano.
booty: bottino.
boisterous: chiasmata.
sharp terminals: estremità marcate.
serifs: graziature.
font designers: disegnatori di caratteri di stampa.

The Arch of Titus

When Domitian became emperor in 81 CE, he immediately commissioned a triumphal arch to commemorate the capture of Jerusalem in 70 CE by his brother and deified predecessor Titus. The Arch of Titus, constructed of concrete and faced with marble, is essentially a large free-standing gateway whose passageway is covered by a barrel vault. Applied to the faces of the arch are Composite columns (see “Roman Architectural Orders,” p. 22). Originally the 50-foot-high (more than 15 m) arch served as a giant base for a monumental bronze statue of a four-horse chariot and driver, a typical Roman triumphal symbol.

Titus’ capture of Jerusalem ended a fierce campaign to crush a revolt of the Jews in Palestine. The Romans looted and destroyed the Second Temple of Jerusalem and carted off its sacred treasures to display them in Rome during Titus’ triumphal procession. A relief on the inside walls of the arch, capturing the drama of the occasion, depicts Titus’ soldiers flaunting this booty – prominently a huge menorah, or seven-branched lamp holder – as they carry it through the streets of Rome. Viewing this crowd as through a window, the observer can easily imagine the boisterous scene. The varying depth of relief sculpture creates the impression that the marchers are moving toward the viewer and then turning to move away at the right through a distant arch, producing a clear illusion of deeper and more complex space.



COMPREHENSION 3

Complete the sentences.

- Domitian commissioned a triumphal arch to
- The arch was built out of
- The arch was originally used as
- The impression that marchers in one relief seem to move forward is due to

ART GLOSSARY

triumphal arch: arco di trionfo.
free-standing gateway: arcata isolata.
Composite: d’ordine composito.
menorah: candelabro a sette bracci sacro per la religione ebraica.
depth: profondità.
nave: navata centrale.
aisles: ali, navate laterali.
apses: absidi.

3. Spoils from the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, relief in the passageway of the Arch of Titus, Rome, c. 81-96 CE, marble, height 6’ 8” (2.03 m).