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## Urban Imagery and Visual Narrative: The Campus Martius in the Age of Augustus

### *Abstract*

After centuries of Republican civic dormancy, the Campus Martius is well-attested as an imposing monumental district throughout the imperial period. While successive emperors augmented the Field of Mars, it was Augustus Caesar who provided the crucial impetus for urban transformation. In this paper, it is my intention to investigate the existence of a formulated symbolic urban image in Rome's northern flood plain. Utilizing architectural form, decor and layout, it is essential to consider if the princeps and his aids imposed a consciously planned visual narrative upon the Campus Martius in the dissemination of Augustan ideology. In promulgating the Pax Augusta, aureum saeculum and person of the emperor, did a wilfully created urban image pervade the district's monumental, topographical and ornamental appearance? While Rome's ad-hoc layout restricted architectural ventures within the Republican cityscape, the essentially unexploited Campus afforded Augustus the rare opportunity to create a planned urban text from scratch. Exploiting aesthetic form, conceptual symbolism and the region's recreational focus, a defined urban image had the potential to influence Rome's diverse populace, irrespective of social rank or nationality. Engaging and appreciable to all intellects, it would have functioned as a dynamic means of persuasion in the fulfilment of Augustan propagandistic objectives.

### Introduction

“Here everything is so crowded, one upon another, that the rest of the city seems only incidental”<sup>1</sup>

Such was Strabo's wonderment at the architectural transformation of the flood plain north of Rome. Dedicating a third of his discussion of the Augustan city to its assessment, the urbanization of the Campus Martius embodied the architectural

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<sup>1</sup> Strabo, *The Geography*. 5.3.8

grandeur of the age. In this paper, it is my intention to ascertain whether the Field of Mars signified a consciously planned, conceptually emblematic region at the advent of Empire (fig.1). Applying a detailed critique of the district's structural form, topographical layout and thematic content, I will test the supposition that an aesthetically unified, ideologically engaging urban image pervaded the Campus. In doing so, underlying issues such as the civic perceptibility of Rome's populace and Augustan urban jurisdiction will be investigated. It is well-attested that the Campus Martius represented the solitary locale to be comprehensively redesigned during Augustus's reign. Conversely, its status as a wilfully designed district symbolic of Augustan ideology necessitates analysis.

In the *Moralia*, Plutarch succinctly alludes to the significance of urban form and imagery in the ancient world: "A city is like a living thing ... a united and continuous whole"<sup>2</sup>. Essential in the dissemination of predetermined ideas, beliefs and policy, its effective utilization affirmed the perceived stature of the foremost cities in antiquity, notably Alexandria, Pergamon and Augustan Rome itself<sup>3</sup>. In contrast to an independent work of art or architecture (capturing a chosen scene in a single visual image), an urban environment signifies a comprehensively dynamic, evolving entity. Altered by climate, construction, demolition and a fluctuating populace, it is appreciable from numerous viewing angles and on various sensorial levels<sup>4</sup>. A truly interactive experience, the implementation of a directed visual narrative has the potential to influence the attitude, outlook and even behaviour of urban viewers.

Contrasting with the inherently ill-planned cityscape of Republican Rome<sup>5</sup>, the undeveloped Campus Martius afforded Augustus the opportunity to inaugurate an integrated urban programme from scratch. Susceptible to flooding from the Tiber River during the Republic, Pompey's palatial theatre-residence (Theatrum Pompei) was the single monumental structure adorning the Campus pre-Actium<sup>6</sup>. Hindered by an ad-hoc civic layout and irregular, winding streets in his regeneration of the Eternal City, it is seemingly impractical that Augustus would have spurned the chance to formulate a unified civic narrative in the Field of Mars? Aside from its enduring self-status, an engaging, integrated Campus would have aptly detracted from the urban shortcomings of Rome itself.

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<sup>2</sup> Plutarch, *Moralia*. 599. in, Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*. 1

<sup>3</sup> Transforming Rome into a city symbolic of empire, Augustus was inherently aware of this principle.

<sup>4</sup> Favro, *Reading the Augustan City*. in, Holliday, *Narrative and Event in Ancient Art*. 231

<sup>5</sup> Livy, *The Early History of Rome*. 5.55      "The work of reconstruction was ill-planned" .... "All the work was hurried and nobody bothered to see that the streets straight; individual property rights were ignored, and buildings went up wherever there was room for them"

<sup>6</sup> Julius Caesar initiated construction of the Saepta, but this would be completed after his assassination by Agrippa. K.Kraft (Historia, 1967) asserts that Octavian began construction of the Mausoleum in 32 B.C.

## Augustan Visual Imagery: The Intended Audience

Akin to other ancient civilizations, the Romans were skilled interpreters of their civic surroundings. With illiteracy common, even uneducated plebeian citizens had formulated proficient perceptual abilities. Just as the patrician ranks were well versed in comprehending political messages proliferated throughout the city, so the plebeian masses required efficient visual acuity to traverse Rome and its environs. Contrary to the non-stop, high-speed society of the modern era, it should be remembered that civilians navigated the Augustan Campus as pedestrians or passengers in slow-moving vehicles. Able to assess and re-examine the urban fabric at their leisure, every viewing individual was able to formulate a personal perception of the transformed region. Theoretically, this signified the *idea*, or more explicitly, the *urban image* of the Campus Martius<sup>7</sup>. Possessing the ability and the opportunity, onlookers thus found themselves susceptible to the imagery they encountered on both topographical and ornamental levels.

Evidently then, a structurally integrated, conceptually unified Campus would have sought to engage Rome's entire populace, irrespective of social rank or nationality<sup>8</sup>. I would suggest that the region fulfilled this objective by presenting multiple components both appreciable and appealing to the divergent intellects of viewers. While plebeian comprehension was inevitably limited, they would have marvelled at its monumental structures, abundant parkland (*horti*) and leisurely ambience. Likewise, the educated elite, many of whom enjoyed unrestricted views across the Field of Mars from their opulent villas on Rome's hills<sup>9</sup>, would have wondered at Agrippa's hydraulic works, the district's orthogonal layout and the intricate detail of the Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace). Above all, Augustus' rejuvenation of Roman society was universally intelligible, his status as city father (*pater urbis*) explicitly propagated throughout the region. Conversely, the colossal stature and imposing form of the Campus would have instilled awe and respect within foreign observers; "the greatness of its power (Rome) might likewise be attended with distinguished authority in its public buildings"<sup>10</sup>. From the striking form of the Mausoleum Augusti (Mausoleum of Augustus) to the obelisks of a vanquished Egypt, the dual ascendancy of the Eternal City as imperial master and of Augustus as first citizen were explicit. An all-pervading theme of Rome's regenerated cityscape beyond<sup>11</sup>, it is seems certain that the Augustan Campus would have been equally dynamic.

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<sup>7</sup> Refer to APPENDIX 1 for how an urban image is formulated by a creator and comprehended by viewers.

<sup>8</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 112

<sup>9</sup> Favro, *Reading the Augustan City*. in, Holliday, *Narrative and Event in Ancient Art*. 248-9

<sup>10</sup> Vitruvius, *De Architectura*. 1.pref.2

<sup>11</sup> Dio, *The Roman History*. 52.30

## The Augustan Architectural Prerogative

Contrary to the inactivity of the Republican era, the Augustan Age witnessed the erection or restoration of some thirty-two structures in the Field of Mars. Readily attributed to the *princeps* and his aids, the plausibility of a 'planned' Campus is inherently dependent upon an Augustan architectural prerogative. Although the urban works-repairs of the emperor were officially conducted under senate authority (*auctoritate senatus*), Augustus's unrivalled influence suggests it signified a mere constitutional charade<sup>12</sup>. Unintelligible as it may appear, the explicitly pro-Augustan Ara Pacis was conceived as a senatorial votive for instance<sup>13</sup>. Literary evidence provides further verification. Recorded in Suetonius, the *princeps* encourages S. Taurus, M. Philippicus and L. Cornificus to build or repair works for the benefit of the city<sup>14</sup>. While attracting rare praise from Tacitus<sup>15</sup>, it crucially highlights how Rome's urban policy was subject to imperial jurisdiction. Likewise, it suggests the ventures of others had to augment the majesty of the city exclusively; "he (Augustus) was constantly mindful of the public good, but grudged no one the fame which resulted from these public benefactions"<sup>16</sup>. This leads to the deduction that architectural self-aggrandisement had become the sole preserve of the emperor himself, the Augustan Mausoleum an emphatic demonstration of this concept<sup>17</sup>.

After centuries of relative inactivity, it is irrefutable that the foresight of the imperial house instigated the Campus Martius's transformation. The unswerving loyalty of the *princeps*'s loyal aid, Marcus Agrippa, is a point of great significance in this respect. From the completion of the Aqua Virgo (19 B.C) to his overhauling of Rome's drainage system, it was Agrippa's comprehensive efforts that prepared the Field of Mars for expansive urbanization<sup>18</sup>. Assuming a truly proactive approach in the regeneration of Rome's city infrastructure<sup>19</sup>, it is likewise probable he was a pervasive influence in the development of the Campus until his death in 12 B.C. Granted immense authority by the *princeps*, his staunch allegiance once more alludes to the centralization of civic authority under the emperor. Indeed, the magnificence and practical benefit of Agrippan projects adorning the region reaffirm this belief<sup>20</sup>. While affording him great prestige, their principle

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<sup>12</sup> This relationship appealed to the renowned Augustan boast of constitutional equality; "After this time I excelled all in influence, although I possessed no more official power than others" (*Res Gestae*, 34)

<sup>13</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. 123

<sup>14</sup> Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, Augustus. 29

<sup>15</sup> Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*. 3.72

<sup>16</sup> Dio, *The Roman History*. 56.40

<sup>17</sup> It seems likely that majestic structures attributed to others (notably the Porticus Octavia, Theatrum Balbi and the works Agrippa) would have enhanced Augustan urban authority. Aspiring to the beautification of the city, it assisted the *princeps* as it was his recognized duty in rejuvenating Roman society.

<sup>18</sup> The construction of a lake (Stagnum Agrippae) and canal (*euripus*) in the Campus alleviated the problem of flooding by functioning as a collecting tank and run-off.

<sup>19</sup> Dio, *The Roman History*. 49.43

<sup>20</sup> These included the Thermae Agrippae, Agrippan Pantheon and the Saepta Julia, completed and dedicated by Agrippa in 26 B.C.

objective was to glorify the person of the emperor and the Golden Age he founded; “he (Agrippa) gave Augustus advice on the most humane, the most ambitious and the most advantageous projects, but did not claim even the smallest share in the glory that they earned. Instead, he used the honours that Augustus conferred upon him not for personal gain or enjoyment but for the benefit of the emperor himself and the public at large”<sup>21</sup>. Explicitly emblematic of the *princeps*, it seems certain they were integral components in the region’s revitalised urban narrative. Loyal subordination to the emperor<sup>22</sup>, Agrippa can justly be perceived as the underlying force in the preparation and realization of a monumental, Augustan Campus.

Irrespective of the civic sway held by Augustus, the role of the architect warrants brief consideration. While our knowledge of architects from the period is alas limited<sup>23</sup>, could they have influentially effected the region’s aesthetic and structural development? Whilst conjectural, the obligatory focus of Augustan propaganda would have in all probability denied them the opportunity. Instead, it is my view that imperial mandate superseded individual expressionism. Evolving over a period of decades, the *princeps* undoubtedly understood the persuasive potential of an urbanized locale, especially in disseminating his image and achievements to viewers. Likewise, he would have recognized that this was inherently reliant upon architectural-conceptual organization, principles easily undermined by the divergence or spontaneity of independent thought. Consequently, expediency would have made the restricting of architectural freedom a genuine necessity. Instead, the authoritative guidance of a select few, principally Agrippa and Augustus himself, was far more conducive to a focused, uncompromised urban image.

### A Recreational Forecourt to Rome

Contrary to the structural density<sup>24</sup> and ad-hoc layout of Rome<sup>25</sup>, Augustus transformed the Campus Martius into a distinguished municipal district. Implementing an orthogonal plan to the central area, the marshy, low-lying plains, dilapidated buildings and unsafe streets of the recent past were replaced by opulent marble structures, verdant parkland (*horti*) and a newly paved highway (Via Flaminia)<sup>26</sup>. Indeed, it is plausible that the renowned Augustan boast; “I found Rome built in bricks; I leave her clothed in

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<sup>21</sup> Dio, *The Roman History*. 53.23

<sup>22</sup> A distinguished figure, Agrippa had already been a praetor and consul before loyally acquiescing to Octavian’s request to become aedile in 33 B.C. Despite the office’s constitutional modesty, Agrippan influence in the revitalization of Rome’s city infrastructure was comprehensive.

<sup>23</sup> Other than Vitruvius and his treatise, little is known of architects from the Augustan period. Indeed, we don’t know the name of a single architect responsible for the illustrious monuments of Augustan Rome (Anderson, *Architecture and Society*. 44).

<sup>24</sup> Strabo, *The Geography*. 5.3.8

<sup>25</sup> Livy, *The Early History of Rome*. 5.55

<sup>26</sup> The district now corresponded with celebrated cities of the Hellenistic east, such as Alexandria, Athens and Pergamum, for centuries Rome’s aesthetic superiors.

marble<sup>27</sup> denoted a more pertinent description of the renovated flood plain than of Rome itself. Linked to the city through geographical proximity, it has been suggested that the region functioned as a forecourt to Rome. Akin to the atrium in a Roman house<sup>28</sup>, one can imagine its commanding structural appearance forcefully reiterated the martial renown of the Eternal City beyond. Passing from Rome to the Tiber River, the Via Flaminia would have visually substantiated this association. Dissecting the Campus from the north, its elevated course meant observers enjoyed uninhibited views of the expansive urban text below. Furthermore, it is conceivable the *princeps* wilfully manipulated the Flaminian Way with structures appositely positioned along the route. In ensuring onlookers perceived them in a consciously determined sequence, it would have operated as an integral viewing device<sup>29</sup>. Symbolically culminating the numerous tombs lining the approach to Rome, the location of Mausoleum Augusti is a case in point. Visually emblematic, it would have emphatically affirmed Augustus's status as 'first citizen' to viewers. Likewise, civilians encountered frequent statuary representations of the *princeps* along the route. From atop the Mulvian Bridge at the Tiber River to "the bronze statue of the Emperor Augustus"<sup>30</sup> at the summit of the Augustan Mausoleum, it seems certain such omnipresence dynamically disseminated his stature as *pater urbis* in Rome's physical and moral regeneration. Explicit to all onlookers passing along the Via Flaminia, it guaranteed an extensive viewing audience as Rome's primary access route.

A unified urban image functions upon intrinsically linked practical and symbolical levels. It is my assertion that the Augustan Campus fulfilled the former criterion as a planned centre of recreation. Incorporating theatres, baths and luscious *horti*, the tangible benefit of leisure to all Romans must have recalled the peace and stability of the age. Enhancing the sense of community at Rome with numerous games, festivals and theatrical performances<sup>31</sup>, Augustus ensured the Field of Mars could satisfy the collective ethos. In doing so, Republican structures (Circus Flaminius) and the works of contemporaries (Amphitheatrum Tauri) were incorporated into the Augustan urban narrative. In addition to the theatres of Pompey and Balbus, the *princeps* erected the Theatre of Marcellus (Theatrum Marcelli) in 13 B.C<sup>32</sup>. A project initiated by Julius Caesar<sup>33</sup>, it was dedicated in honour of Augustus's deceased son-in-law, a youth who had promised unprecedented greatness<sup>34</sup>. In doing so, it glorified the entire Julian family (*Gens Julia*) in accordance with numerous Augustan monuments pervading the cityscape. While the Theatrum Pompei remained Rome's premier model, the existence

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<sup>27</sup> Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, Augustus. 28

<sup>28</sup> Favro, *Reading the Augustan City*. in, Holliday, *Narrative and Event in Ancient Art*. 237-8

<sup>29</sup> Concurrently, the Via Flaminia was aided by eye-directing objects such as obelisks, casting sight-lines toward specific monuments from the raised highway (Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*. 209).

<sup>30</sup> Strabo, *The Geography*. 5.3.9

<sup>31</sup> Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*. Augustus. 43

<sup>32</sup> IBID. 29 & Dio, *The Roman History*. 54.26

<sup>33</sup> Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*. Caesar. 44

<sup>34</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid*. 6.870-72 "The gods in heaven have judged that the Roman race would become too powerful if this gift were theirs to keep"

of three theatres in such close proximity would have been conceptually significant<sup>35</sup>. With civil war at an end, uninhibited leisure could abound in the transformed Field of Mars. Recalling the ambience of the Golden Age (*aureum saeculum*), Augustan renown as *pater urbis* was visibly reaffirmed to Rome's indebted populace.

Establishing a precedent for ensuing imperial bath buildings, the Baths of Agrippa (Thermae Agrippae) (fig.2) reinforced the recreational focus of the Campus. Flourishing upon completion of the Aqua Virgo, it incorporated landscaped areas for exercising, pools for swimming and wondrous art works<sup>36</sup> as the capital's earliest bath complex. Left to the Roman populace free of charges after Agrippa's death<sup>37</sup>, its accessibility to all citizens reiterated the all-encompassing nature of leisure in the Augustan Age. Equally, the broader horticultural transformation of the region would have enhanced the visual narrative considerably. Advancing upon the efforts of Pompey and Julius Caesar, the Augustan Campus adhered to the Hellenistic principle that a great city required attractive *horti*<sup>38</sup>. Sustained by the capital's renovated aqueduct system, it is conceivable the lush vegetation of the Agrippan baths, Mausolean funerary gardens and nearby Campus Agrippae fulfilled dual objectives. Aesthetically linking monuments throughout the district, the abundant foliage encouraged conceptualisation of the sustained growth and prosperity of the *aureum saeculum*. Enabling city-dwellers to escape the hustle-and-bustle of Rome beyond, the Field of Mars was emblematically transformed into a verdant, tranquil parkland.

### Underlying Aesthetic Principles

Underlying aesthetic principles are essential in formulating a unified urban image. Providing a definite physical order to a built-up environment, their systematic implementation instigates the effective conveyance of predetermined concepts and ideology. Material application represents an especially prominent theme, one adhered to in the Augustan Campus through the widespread utilization of marble. Imparting immediate visual impact, it indubitably propagated far-reaching symbolic connotations to onlookers passing through the Field of Mars. Adorned with gleaming marble structures, Rome's architectural parity with Hellenistic capitals was affirmed. Similarly, commanding form and the presence of colourful foreign marbles drew attention to the imperial stature of the Eternal City<sup>39</sup>. With its glistening surface reflecting sunlight, viewers would have been pertinently reminded of the wondrous *aureum saeculum* attained and upheld by the *princeps*<sup>40</sup>. Marble's adaptability must have enriched the urban experience. From the

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<sup>35</sup> In accordance with Rome's broad disdain for Hellenistic culture in the early-mid Republic, it should be remembered that the *Theatrum Pompei* was the first stone theatre to be built in Rome.

<sup>36</sup> Pliny, *The Natural History*. 34.62 & 36.118

<sup>37</sup> Dio, *The Roman History*. 54.29

<sup>38</sup> Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*. 178-9

<sup>39</sup> Macdonald, *Empire Imagery in Augustan Architecture*, in, Winkes, *Age of Augustus*. 143

imposing form of the Mausoleum Augusti, to the ornamental décor of the Ara Pacis Augustae, it assumed a conspicuous prominence throughout the Campus on monumental and decorative levels. Valuable, durable and visually impressive, it potently promoted Rome's rejuvenation and the image of its first citizen.

Huge scale had long accorded with superior status in the ancient world. Confronted by a crowded Republican cityscape and an inherently conservative society, the city of Rome offered Augustus limited scope for civic ventures of immense size<sup>41</sup>. Accordingly, the *princeps* ensured the Campus Martius boasted colossal structures exceeding those of contemporaries and ancestors alike. Just as the Theatrum Marcelli possessed a larger diameter and capacity than its immediate rival, the Theatrum Balbi, so the Thermae Agrippae overshadowed existing bath buildings<sup>42</sup>. Likewise, the district housed the Diribitorium, described by Dio as; "the largest building housed under a single roof"<sup>43</sup>. Dominating views of the northern Campus, the Mausoleum Augusti was a particularly commanding structure (fig.3). Dwarfing other Roman tombs, its colossal size would have conveyed the permanence of the *princeps* in life and death. Indeed, it has been suggested that its scale and magnificence elevated him above preceding *summi viri* such as Romulus, Sulla and Caesar in the minds of contemporaries<sup>44</sup>. With Marcellus laid to rest there in 23 B.C<sup>45</sup>, the structure's visual solidity and endurance credibly alluded to the longevity of Julian rule. With a statue of the *princeps* adorning the Mausoleum's summit, Augustan omnipresence was explicitly propagated. Highly conspicuous from a distance, viewers would have encountered the first citizen when entering or leaving the Campus. Hugely symbolic, the *princeps's* singular ability to secure and preserve a peaceful Rome was evident to all onlookers<sup>46</sup>.

Constructional cohesion is another discernable theme of the regenerated Campus. In enhancing the region's status as a monumental district, it is plausible that structures were consciously assembled in close proximity. Maximising the viewing potential of the Via Flaminia, such groupings would have represented defined urban ensembles. The Horologium Augusti, Mausoleum Augusti and Ustrinum Domus Augustae signify a prominent example (fig.1), the construction of walkways and a public park augmenting structural association and internalised unity<sup>47</sup>. Likewise, it is credible that vertical and

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<sup>40</sup> In this respect, marble would have reiterated Augustus's integral association with the sun god, Apollo.

<sup>41</sup> In his '*restoration of the Republic*' Augustus was compelled to adhere to Republican stylistic values. Distinguished by a 'cool propriety' (Macdonald, *Empire Imagery in the Age of Augustus*, in, Winkes, *Age of Augustus*,137) the use of marble and increased scale ensured Augustan works displayed an 'enhanced familiarity', (Favro, *Urban Image of Augustan Rome*. 192), a progressive, if not radical departure from the Republican era.

<sup>42</sup> Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*. 182

<sup>43</sup> Dio, *The Roman History*. 55.8

<sup>44</sup> Only Rome's most illustrious citizens could be buried in the Campus Martius. Cited as the place where Romulus lost his life (Livy, *The Early History of Rome*. 1.16), it seems probable that the Augustan Mausoleum would have invoked Augustan associations with Rome's founder (Coarelli, *Roma Sepolta*. 142).

<sup>45</sup> Dio, *The Roman History*. 53.30

<sup>46</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. 76

<sup>47</sup> Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*. Augustus. 100



horizontal alignment predominated on programmatic and visual levels. Topographically prominent, the Via Flaminia would have cast an eye-catching, defining line through the Campus. Similarly, structural devices such as porticoes represented an aesthetically explicit device. Incorporating those of Octavia, Octaviae and Philippi, the region housed an elongated façade stretching some 290 metres<sup>48</sup>. It is undeniable that observers would have been visibly and physically drawn towards this impressive edifice, so influencing the movement of civilians navigating the district.

Structural configuration of this type indubitably disseminated Augustan ideology to onlookers. It is alleged that a predetermined sight line existed between the Augustan Mausoleum and the Agrippan Pantheon (fig.4)<sup>49</sup>. Recalling the visual acuity of Rome's diverse populace, its conceptual importance would have been hugely significant; while monarchical constraints restricted the physical placement of the *princeps* within the Pantheon during his lifetime<sup>50</sup>, it cogently implied he would achieve apotheosis like Romulus and Caesar before him in death. Similarly, the Mausoleum Augusti is thought to have functioned as part of a tripartite complex with the Ara Pacis Augustae and Horologium (or Solarium) Augusti (fig.5a). Although constructed over a period of twenty years, their topographical proximity and isolation from other structures affirms they were visually, ideologically and programmatically linked. Erected in 10 B.C, the Horologium was a huge sundial (*solarium*) incorporating a massive bronze grid at the base of a towering Egyptian obelisk some thirty metres tall. Functioning as a gnomon, the obelisk cast a shadow towards predetermined monuments associated with the *Gens Julia*. North to the Mausoleum Augusti, south to the Agrippan Pantheon and east to the Ara Pacis Augustae, the familial connotations would have been explicit to viewers. The definitive moment was realized on the autumnal equinox when the shadow extended inside the Ara Pacis (fig.5b), the structural manifestation of the *aureum saeculum*. The date was September 23<sup>rd</sup>, the birthday of the *princeps*. A conscious act of symbolism, it ensured Augustus's reign of peace was annually celebrated as a predestined celestial event.

### Propagating the Pax Augusta

Basking in the ambience of the *aureum saeculum*, it was essential for the Augustan cityscape to convey the inherent duality of the Augustan Peace (*Pax Augusta*). War and peace were intrinsically linked in Roman ideology, the sustained stability of the age being realized and maintained through its conceptual opposite, Roman imperialism<sup>51</sup>. As Virgil records; “Your task, Roman, and do not forget it, will be to govern the peoples of the world in your empire. These will be your arts – and to impose a settled pattern upon

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<sup>48</sup> Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*. 173

<sup>49</sup> Castagnoli, *Il Campo Marzio nell'antichità* in, Davies, *Death and the Emperor*. 140

<sup>50</sup> Dio (*Roman History*. 53.27) records how Agrippa intended to place a statue of Augustus within the Pantheon. Upon Augustan rejection, a statue of the already deified Julius Caesar was erected there instead.

<sup>51</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*. 26

peace, to pardon the defeated and war down the proud"<sup>52</sup>. While popular will craved for peace post-Actium, it coalesced with an ingrained ambition for unremitting military ascendancy. *Pax* represented peace, but peace on Rome's terms; "It was not an idyllic peace but the peace of Roman imperialism"<sup>53</sup>. While the Forum Augustum signified an imposing 'Roman Valhalla'<sup>54</sup> propagating the city's military might, it is credible that the *princeps* ensured viewers comprehended the *Pax Augusta* when navigating the Campus Martius<sup>55</sup>. Throughout the historically martial region, imposing architectural form was adeptly counterbalanced by luscious *horti* and an all-encompassing leisurely aura. The Mausoleum Augusti and Ara Pacis would have been especially significant in this respect. While propagating divergent concepts, it is highly plausible that their geographical closeness and dynastic association visually affirmed the binary nature of *pax*.

In conjunction with the Horologium Augusti, the Augustan Mausoleum commemorated the *princeps's* Actian triumph through manifest references to Egypt. Obelisks represented a prominent motif. Erected by Egyptian kings; "when they had subdued nations in war"<sup>56</sup>, Augustus' imitation ostensibly memorialized the vanquishing of Egypt itself. While the obelisk of the *solarium* boasted an inscription at its base honouring the would-be secular miracle, two colossal obelisks fashioned of Egyptian red granite flanked the entrance to the Mausoleum (fig.3). A visually explicit sight throughout the Field of Mars, it is foreseeable that they reaffirmed the Battle of Actium as the founding event of the Augustan Age. Emblematic and enduring, it should be remembered that the Mausoleum's imposing presence and colossal scale would have similarly disseminated Rome's mastery over Egypt and the barbarous east<sup>57</sup>. As a manifestation of Augustan authority, the emperor's underlying role in Rome's imperial prowess was explicitly propagated.

In fulfilling the *Pax Augusta*, the *princeps* had, as Tacitus remarks; "attracted everybody's goodwill by the enjoyable gift of peace"<sup>58</sup>. Explicit in name, the Ara Pacis Augustae was the primary urban declaration of this principle, an eye-catching tribute to the *aureum saeculum* (fig.6). While pacification of the empire motivated its inception<sup>59</sup>, its premeditated location one mile from the *pomerium* characterized the stability of the age<sup>60</sup>. Exquisitely ornamental, the décor adorning the enclosure walls was in all

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<sup>52</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid*. 6.851-3

<sup>53</sup> Weinstock, *Divus Julius*. 267

<sup>54</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. 213

<sup>55</sup> Located in the adjacent Campus Agrippae, the Porticus Vipsania housed a map of the world (Pliny, *Natural History*. 3.17), allowing Romans and foreigners alike to survey Rome's imperial power.

<sup>56</sup> Ammianus, 17.4.6 in, Davies, *Death and the Emperor*. 62

<sup>57</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*. 27

<sup>58</sup> Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*. 1.1

<sup>59</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*. 12; "On my return from Spain and Gaul in the consulship of Tiberius Nero and Publius Quintilius [13 B.C] after successfully arranging affairs in those provinces, the senate resolved that an altar of Augustan Peace should be consecrated next to the Campus Martius in honour of my return"

<sup>60</sup> Military (*imperium militiae*) and domestic authority (*imperium domi*) transferred at the *pomerium*. Placed

likelihood appreciable on a diversity of intellectual levels. From the sacrificial procession of the Imperial Family to the emblematic Tellus frieze, an indubitable physical and conceptual unity pervaded the monument. In reference to the former panel, educated observers would have discerned the collegial arrangement of priests (fig.7a), coupled with the dynastic ordering of the imperial family in line to the succession (fig.7b)<sup>61</sup>. Wearing laurel branches symbolic of peace, viewers would have recollected how Rome's continued safety rested with that of the *Gens Julia*. Indeed, the appeal of Ovid; "May the house which guarantees peace, in peace last forever"<sup>62</sup> probably accorded with the prayers of the depicted priests and those of Roman society. Leading the sacrifice, Augustus was nevertheless its focal point (fig.7a). While the Julian family was depicted in idealized form, observers would have distinguished the *princeps* from the harmonious whole<sup>63</sup> in his Prima Porta Guise<sup>64</sup>. Doubtlessly, this would have reiterated how Augustus had initiated the *aureum saeculum*, the definitive foundation of a glorious Julian future.

Covering over half the enclosure wall, the sculpted vines and garlands of the Ara Pacis disseminated immediate visual impact. Representative of growth and prosperity, it is conceivable that even uneducated plebeians could have identified the allusion to Rome's societal rejuvenation. Simultaneously, their careful, symmetrical arrangement was equally influential, modern theory asserting a wilful recollection of moral restoration in the Augustan Age (fig.6)<sup>65</sup>. In accordance with imperial propagation of the *aureum saeculum*, the Tellus-Italia frieze explicitly conveyed fertility and abundance to onlookers (fig.8). A motif frequently recalled in Augustan poetry<sup>66</sup>, the reclining female figure would have evoked a number of life-giving goddesses among observers, including Ceres, Tellus and Venus. Indeed, it is possible she may have been interpreted as a personification of *pax* itself<sup>67</sup>. Bearing children, her maternal nature was clearly illustrated. Surrounded by a pastoral backdrop of animals, stalks of grain and oversized foliage, one imagines viewers were compelled to recall the aforementioned abundance of the era. Intelligible to the learned viewer exclusively, the flanking *aurae* of Greek mythology reinforced this principle<sup>68</sup>. Facing the goddess, it is plausible they were

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near to this boundary, the *Ara Pacis* paralleled the inherent link between war and peace. A combination of its ornamental imagery and the tranquility of the Augustan Age ensured the latter influence prevailed.

<sup>61</sup> With the children of the *Gens Julia* located in the foreground, viewers were visibly informed that Rome's glorious future depended upon the youth of the imperial house. The mindful ordering of priests likewise reiterated how the *aureum saeculum* had superseded the in-fighting of the late Republic.

<sup>62</sup> Ovid, *The Fasti*. 1.719.

<sup>63</sup> Figures including the veiled Agrippa, Drusus and the young Germanicus would have been perceivable to viewers. Yet with the former cast in a typical Republican guise, Augustus was the undoubted focal point.

<sup>64</sup> Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy*. 71

<sup>65</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. 181

<sup>66</sup> Horace, *Carmen Saeculare*. "Let the earth, so fertile in crops and cattle,  
deck Ceres with a wheaten wreath:  
may the wholesome breezes and rains of Jove  
sustain the new-born".

<sup>67</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. 174

<sup>68</sup> The *aurae* represented the winds of land and sea.

perceived as her servants, even the accompanying dragon tamed in the new epoch of peace. In its entirety, the Ara Pacis visually affirmed the aura of the era. Containing imagery comprehensible to patrician and plebeian alike, apposite location near the Via Flaminia shrewdly maximized its propagandistic potential to an extensive viewing audience.

## Conclusion

The presence of a defined urban image in the Augustan Campus Martius is an intriguing concept. While P. Zanker has dismissed the existence of an Augustan propaganda network<sup>69</sup>, the unprecedented development of 'architecture as propaganda' under Rome's first emperor makes it a decidedly realistic prospect in my view. In maintaining his unrivalled ascendancy, the *princeps* comprehended the necessity to disseminate his image, achievements and associated themes to Rome's wide-ranging populace. Constrained by the ad-hoc layout of Rome's Republican cityscape, why would Augustus and his aids have urbanized the undeveloped Campus along unplanned lines? Guided by an Augustan architectural prerogative, it is rational that the *princeps* would have sought to maximise region's propagandistic potential by formulating an aesthetically consistent urban programme. After all, it is only sensible that a cohesive urban fabric is exclusively capable of promulgating an engaging, focused ideology. In highlighting the visual acuity of Rome's diverse populace, I have demonstrated that the Augustan Campus was comprehensible to all civilians, irrespective of intellect, social rank or nationality. Likewise, it is evident that the district cogently propagated the *Pax Augusta*, the *aureum saeculum*, and the image of the emperor. In doing so, it was imperative for the *princeps* to formulate a unified, engaging urban image. Signifying a defined visual narrative, it represented a dynamic, all-embracing means of persuasion. Exemplifying Rome's civic transition from Republican city to Imperial capital, historical circumstance afforded Augustus a rare opportunity. Creating an urbanised locale worthy of his renown, the person of the *princeps* emerged as its enduring, all-pervading theme.

## *Appendix*

### *Defining an Urban Image: Formulation and Comprehension*

What, then, is an urban image and how can an influential visual narrative be composed? When traversing a cityscape, every onlooker forms a mental picture of their civic surroundings. Affected by the immediacy of sensorial recognition (particularly sight) and pre-existing beliefs, this personalized perception signifies the *idea* of the city, or more specifically its *urban image*<sup>70</sup>. An urban image thus represents an *abstract concept*; an idea *directed* by the creator (with the creation of a unified, ideologically engaging visual

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<sup>69</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. 3

<sup>70</sup> Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*. 1

programme), yet ultimately, *conceived* in the minds of each viewing individual. In seeking communal influence, it is evident that the creator must aspire to the beliefs and mentalities of every onlooker. Formulating a defined concept and associated themes both recognizable and favourable to his civic audience, the creator ensures that they pervade the layout, design, and scale of the urban fabric in a cohesive visual narrative. Encountered by all observers, the all-inclusive recollection of the predetermined concept and themes substantiates the innate unity of the urban image. Captivating, and even inspiring on a personal level, it has the potential to condition the mind-set of the collective populace in the fulfilment of the creator's propagandistic objectives.

The aforementioned theory is particularly relevant to Rome at the advent of Empire. After decades of bitter civil war, Roman society yearned for peace post-Actium. Accordingly, Augustus ensured that Rome and the Campus Martius propagated the sustained tranquillity of the *aureum saeculum*, moral restoration, religious devotion, and the *Pax Augusta* patently clear to onlookers. Concurrently, the *princeps* secured a ubiquitous presence throughout the urban fabric, statuary representations and monuments venerating his image, achievements and status as *pater urbis*. Afforded the effectual authority of a king, Romans revered Augustus as founder of the Golden Age. Subject to his explicit omnipresence, all viewers would have formed an emphatic urban image, the *princeps* its undoubted subject.

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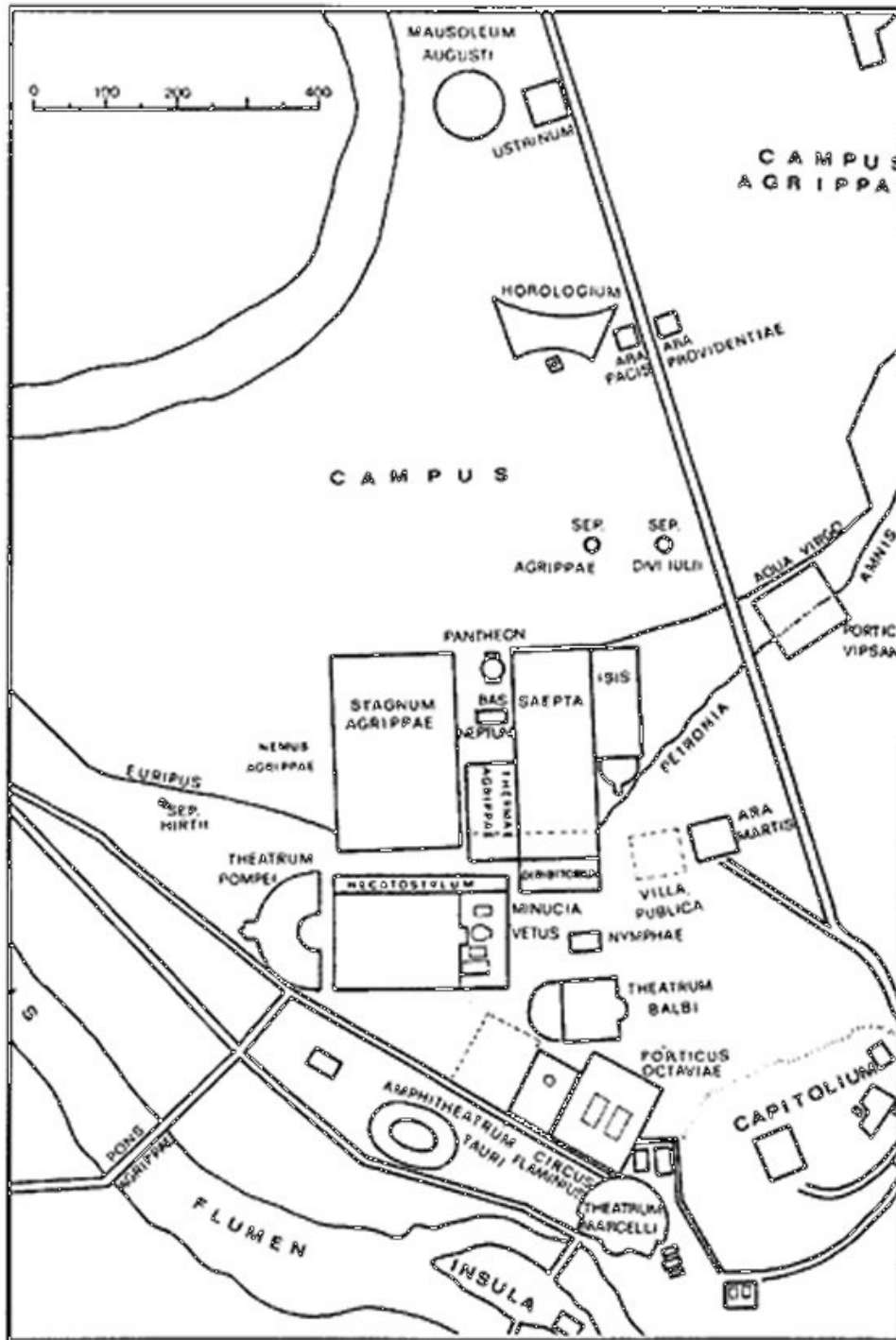


Figure 1. Plan of the Campus Martius, Augustan Rome.  
By permission of Penelope Davies.

Figure 1

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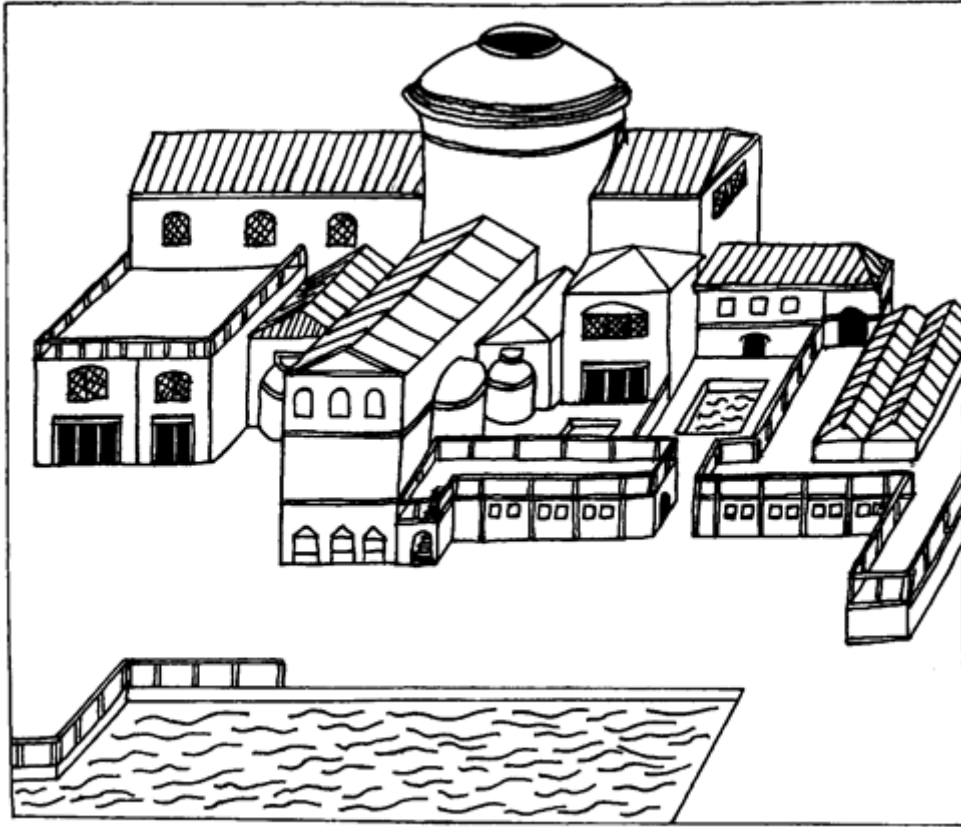


Figure 2. Reconstruction of the Baths of Agrippa, seen from the west. 'Stagnum' in the foreground. Drawing: Simon Wood, after C.Hulsen. From Ernest Nash, A Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome, figure 1228.

Figure 2

**Figure 2:** Reconstruction of the Baths of Agrippa, seen from the west. 'Stagnum' in the foreground. Drawing: Simon Wood, after C. Hulsen. From Ernest Nash, A Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome, figure 1228.

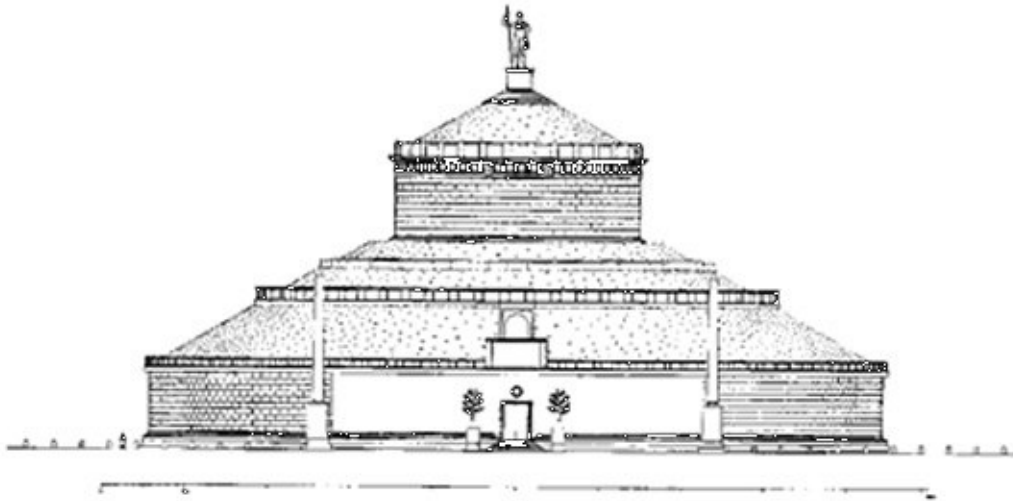


Figure 3. Reconstruction of the Mausoleum of Augustus, by H. von Hesberg. By permission of Henner von Hesberg. From Penelope Davies, *Death and the Emperor*, figure 4.

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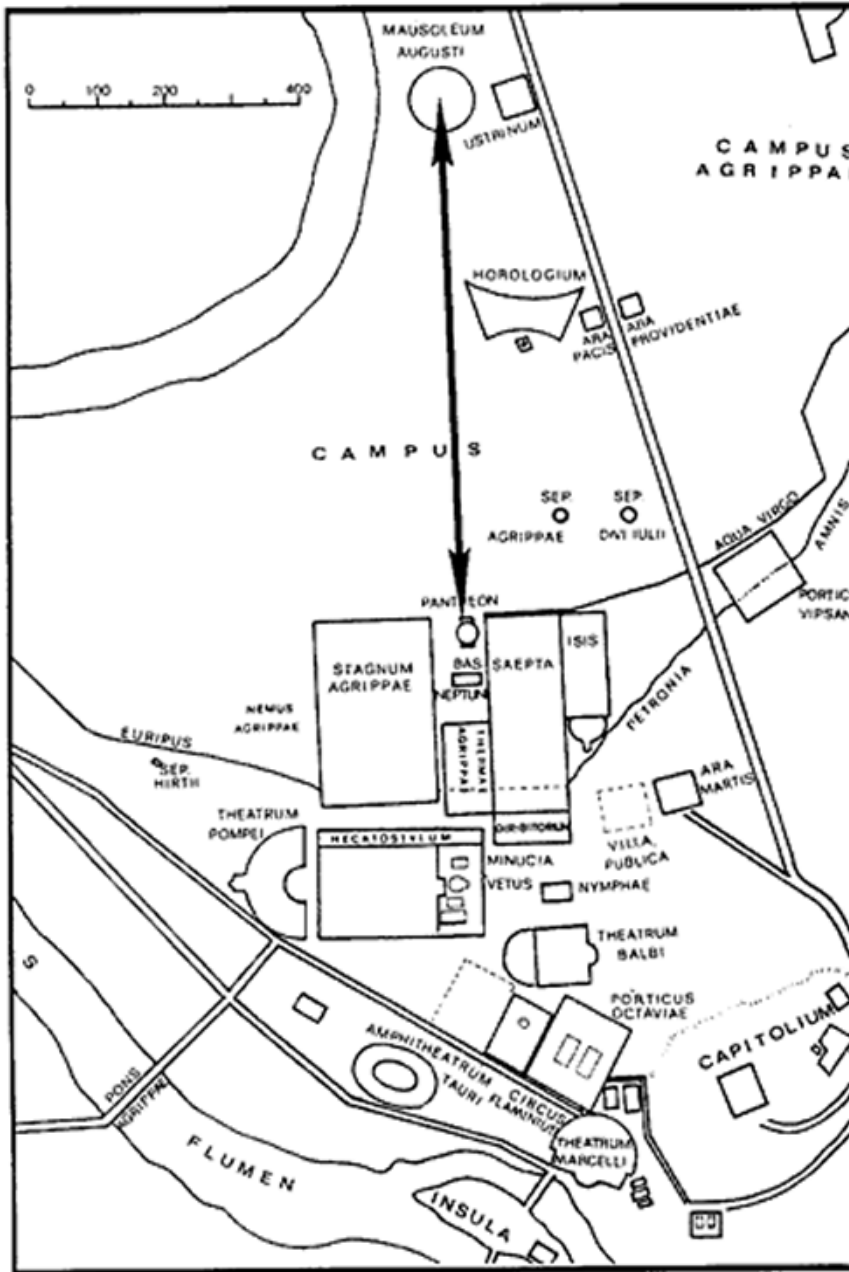


Figure 4. Plan of the Campus Martius, Augustan Rome, showing the sight-line from the Pantheon to the Mausoleum of Augustus. By permission of Penelope Davies.

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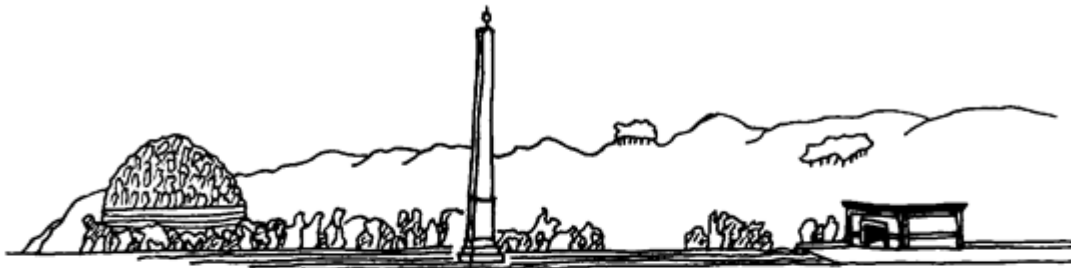


Figure 5a. Reconstruction of the northern Campus Martius, from right to left: the Ara Pacis, obelisk of the Horologium Augusti, and, in the distance, the Mausoleum of Augustus. Drawing: Simon Wood, after Edmund Buchner. From, Diane Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*, figure 109.

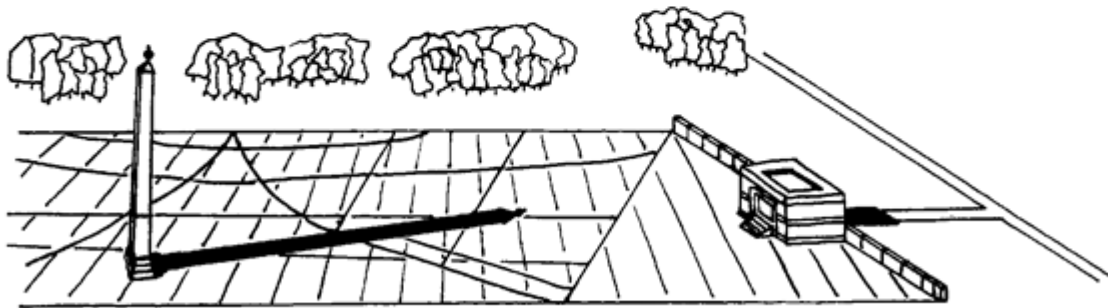


Figure 5b. Reconstruction of the Horologium Augusti; birds-eye view from the south. The shadow pointed toward the Ara Pacis on September 23, the birthday of Augustus. Drawing: Simon Wood, after Edmund Buchner. From Diane Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*, figure 108.

Figures 5a and 5b

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Figure 6. Ara Pacis: main (east) entrance in enclosure wall.  
By permission of Niels Hannestad.

Figure 6

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Figure 7a. Ara Pacis: south side, Augustus and the procession of priests.  
By permission of Niels Hannestad.

Figure 7a

**Figure 7a:** Ara Pacis: south side, Augustus and the procession of priests. By permission of Niels Hannestad.



Figure 7b. Ara Pacis: south side, Agrippa with veiled head, behind him, members of the imperial house. By permission of Niels Hannestad.

Figure 7b

**Figure 7b:** Ara Pacis: south side, Agrippa with veiled head, behind him, members of the imperial house. By permission of Niels Hannestad.

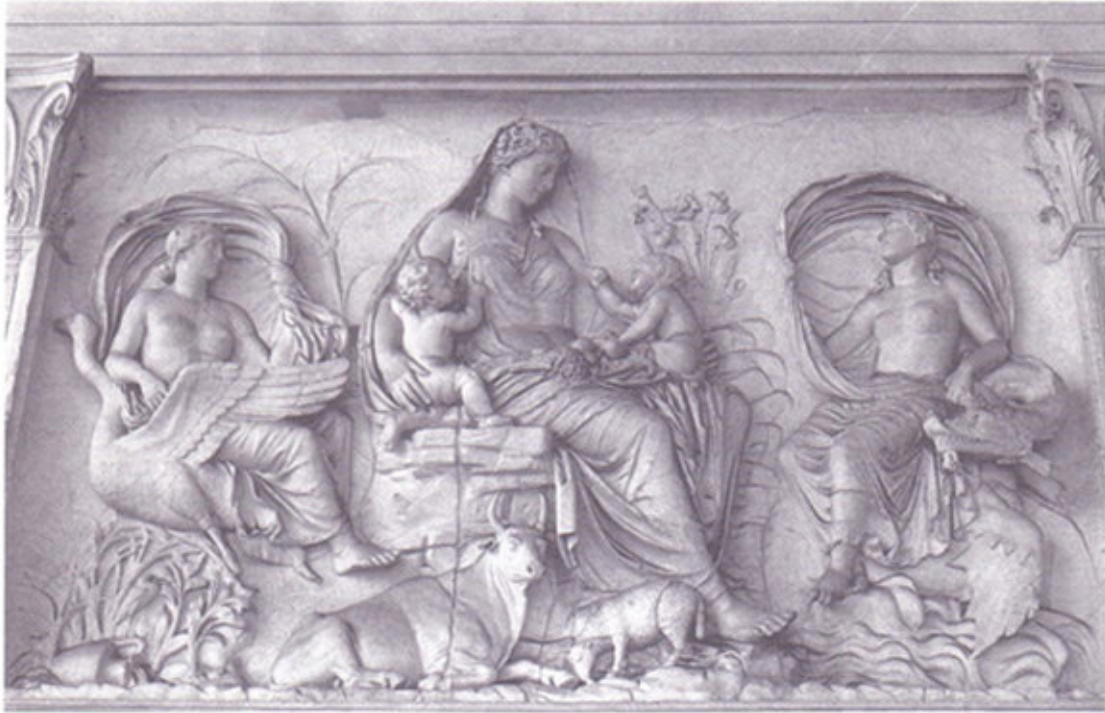


Figure 8. Ara Pacis: Tellus/Venus/Italia panel. By permission of Penelope Davies.

Figure 8

**Figure 8:** Ara Pacis: Tellus.Venus/Italia panel. By permission of Penelope Davies.