

## This Is Why I Have Trust Issues: Variances in the Sculptural Program of the Colosseum in Flavian Art and Their Ideological Significance

Many images of architecture and sculptural display in Roman art are used as evidence for the forms and decoration of buildings or extent of sculptural assemblages that no longer survive. But evidence suggests that a number of factors led to images in art that varied from their models. In some cases simplification or other artistic decisions could account for the variances, as for example on the famous wall painting of the riot at Pompeii that simplifies the paintings along the arena wall. Recent scholarship has argued that ideological concerns informed architectural depictions in Roman public art (Thill 2010, 2018). In two Flavian examples, however, it seems more likely that ideological priorities led to the variances in the sculptures seen in the façade of the Colosseum.

Close examination of the monument relief of the Tomb of the Haterii and the Colosseum coinage of Vespasian and Titus shows sculptures in the second and third story arcades on the façade of the Colosseum. The Colosseum coins include what appears to be a sculptural display of the Judaea Capta group found on the reverses of the coins struck under Vespasian and Titus. No other images of the Colosseum or the few fragments of sculpture that remain from it provide supporting evidence for any Judaea Capta imagery. In contrast, the sculptures on the Domitianic Tomb of the Haterii include at least two, possibly three, images of Hercules, the hero with whom Domitian conflated his identity in public art in Rome including prominent examples in the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline and in the throne room of his palace on the Palatine Hill. I conclude that these variations of the Colosseum were not accurate reflections

of the actual sculptures, but images selected to reinforce the public imagery of the respective emperors under whom they were created.

### Bibliography

Thill, Elizabeth Wolfrum, 2010. "Civilization under Construction: Depictions of Architecture on the Column of Trajan." *American Journal of Archaeology* 114.1: 27-43.

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