

# Introduction:

## A New Look at Architectural Representations on Roman Coinage

The regular representation of the built environment on coins was a purely Roman phenomenon among the ancients. In the Greek world, architectural representation on coinage was very uncommon; when it did appear it referred directly to the local identity of the issuing state. Coins of the Persian satrapies only rarely depicted fortifications in conjunction with traditional Persian emblems of royalty, power, and shrines of the chief deities in the minting city. The Roman use of the iconography of building was fundamentally different. From the first occurrence in 135 BC through the late Roman Empire, the architectural images on coins from Rome commemorated or politicized the monument in question. By the mid-first century BC and into the Imperial period, architecture had become commonplace in the repertoire of Roman coin iconography.

The representation of monuments is one of the most beloved (and belabored) topics in studies of Roman coin iconography. It is also a theme in dire need of re-exploration. Architectural representations on Roman coins have been appreciated and studied primarily for the evidence they yield for the appearance or reconstruction of lost monuments.<sup>1</sup> This appeals to numismatists, archaeologists, topographers, and art and architectural historians. While numismatic representations may provide evidence for the reconstruction and historical study of Roman monuments, there are a number of methodological problems.<sup>2</sup> This traditional and often uncritical approach to architectural representations has treated the images as “snapshots” or “blueprints” of

1. Monograph-length treatments of architectural representations on coins include Donaldson 1859 (reprinted as Donaldson 1965); Brown 1940; Price and Trelle 1977; Hill 1989; Hefner 2008. The appeal of architectural designs on coins is widespread in the collector community as well; popular monographs are Tameanko 1999 and Stoll 2000. Popular scholarly guides on the theme include Küthmann and Overbeck et al. 1973 and Roure and Valaison 2004. Günter Fuchs produced one of the most critical monographs on architectural representation on Roman coins (Fuchs 1969). Although he tended to focus on the monuments themselves and the appearance of monuments, he also addressed historical and art historical contexts to some degree.

2. See Drew-Bear 1974 and Burnett 1999 for critiques.

lost monuments, although creating wholly accurate representations of buildings—if the building even existed at the time that the coin was minted—was not the goal of the die engravers or the issuing authorities.<sup>3</sup> Even less frequently have architectural representations been understood in the context of a moneyer's or an emperor's wider ideological or visual program as deployed on the coinage. As a consequence, the actual phenomenon of architectural representation on Roman coinage has been inadequately studied in favor of more myopic considerations.

Why was Rome the only ancient civilization to depict man-made monuments habitually on its coinage? Why did Greek urban centers with marble-clad monuments and politically charged building programs feature their great monuments on coins only *after* Roman domination? What social and cultural developments prompted Roman moneyers in the late second and first centuries BC to depict buildings on coins for the first time? What circumstances led to a lower frequency of architectural coin types in the third and fourth centuries AD until they ultimately disappeared from the Roman coinage in the fifth century? And why were these late Roman depictions more symbolic in their *lack* of reference to specific constructions? These are questions to be explored. This book departs from the treatment of the images as sources for the appearance of ancient monuments. Instead it explores the historical, artistic, social, and cultural contexts of the iconography of building on Roman coins from its emergence in the late second century BC to its disappearance in the fifth century AD.

### APPROACHING ARCHITECTURAL REPRESENTATIONS ON ROMAN COINS

Architectural coin types have the potential to inform modern society about more aspects of the ancient world than the nuances of pedimental decorations on certain temples or the minute details of a cult statue. Studies deploying numismatic evidence for architectural reconstructions can be useful, but coins provide more than visual representations of monumental constructions with varying degrees of accuracy. They are testaments to the urban world in which they were produced; they are reflective of changes in art and aesthetics, urban development, and the political and cultural values of their times.

The questions that have been typically asked of architectural coin types are symptomatic of a larger methodological “crisis” in numismatics. Like other object-oriented disciplines, numismatics emerged from the antiquarian traditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into the critical discipline that we recognize it as today.<sup>4</sup> In numismatics, scholars from a diverse range of intellectual backgrounds and traditions study ancient coins to answer different questions. Many specialists are ancient historians or philologists; others are art historians or archaeologists, and some are trained in completely unrelated fields. One's training and interests frequently color the sorts of questions asked of coins. The relevance of numismatics to the breadth of historical sciences means that no universal methodology for the application of numismatics to these fields exists; indeed, one would be difficult to formulate.<sup>5</sup> But numismatics certainly has some standard

3. On the fact that the Romans produced coins depicting buildings that were not yet or never built, see Prayon 1982 and Fishwick 1984.

4. Momigliano 1950; Clain-Stefanelli 1965; Finley 1975: 87–100; Miller 2007.

5. Breglia 1965–1967; Göbl 1972; 1978; 1983; 1984; 1985; 1987a; 1987b; Noeske 2004; R.-Alföldi 1978; von Kaenel 1994a; cf. Howgego 1995: xi–xii. For the benefits of more intense archaeological perspectives, see von Kaenel and Kemmers 2009. Sheedy and Papageorgiadou-Banis 1997 was an earlier attempt at underscoring the potential of archaeological evidence. Casey and Reece 1988 remain useful. For discussion of general aversion to archaeological, social, and anthropological theory among numismatic practitioners, but the potentials of it, see discussion in Krnčiček 2009; Kemmers 2009; Myrberg 2009. The use of precise terminology in German language denotes different types of

methods in its arsenal, such as die studies or hoard analysis, which can be applicable to scholars working in different disciplines.

Some study numismatics exclusively and tend to focus on the medium and its production contexts alone. Intense object-oriented studies have often failed to situate such work within a larger historical framework. This may isolate numismatic study from interdisciplinary applications and methodological or theoretical developments in other fields.<sup>6</sup> Some have perceived of numismatics as an inward-looking, aloof discipline rather than viewing it as a field central to other historical disciplines that contributes to a host of research questions such as Roman imperial communication, trade, economics, military activity, demographic movement, and so on. Some numismatists themselves have recognized this perception as holding some validity.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, ancient coins are multifaceted objects that possessed many dimensions during their “lifetimes” in antiquity: economic, semantic, political, personal, and ritualistic. Both numismatics and other historical sciences can benefit by approaching the material from multiple interdisciplinary perspectives. After all, coins were not produced and used in a vacuum. Coins were used and interpreted alongside other new and old coins, by the illiterate and the literate, by people who read ancient texts and inscriptions, and who experienced the monuments of Rome or another city. Coins would often remain in circulation long after the regime that produced them had passed. Coins were thus “monuments in miniature” whose functions in terms of political ideology was perhaps more effective than the construction of an arch or public monument in Rome, which could only be appreciated by those who lived in Rome and saw them firsthand.<sup>8</sup>

Very relevant to the study of Roman architectural coin types is the relationship between numismatic images and the study of Roman art. Representations on Roman coins have rarely been examined systematically. In many traditions, but especially in the British and American traditions, ancient coins have been studied most frequently by scholars trained as ancient historians or philologists, or by autodidacts. As a result, advances in art historical method and theory have not been so rigorously applied to the interpretation of images on coins. Another effect of this research perspective is that coin images have often been examined in isolation of comparative visual media such as painting or relief sculpture. Such explorations have also tended to focus on the “meaning” of a particular reverse design in its historical context. Contextualization of images in a wider visual program, whether in the broader context of state-sanctioned art or even the other coins that formed a particular emission, has been less of a concern. Until relatively recently, scholars have rarely considered the audience for whom certain designs may have been intended.<sup>9</sup>

numismatic research and their varying goals: *Numismatik* is the equivalent of numismatics, generally referring to the study of ancient coins; *Geldgeschichte* specifies the study of monetary history, how it functioned in ancient the world, and is more generally concerned with relationship between the issuer and users of coins; *Fundnumismatik* refers to the specialized study and analysis of archaeologically-recovered coin finds; *Münzforschung* is the most precise of all terms, designating the study of coins directly, often isolated from other considerations.

6. See, for example, discussion in Finley 1975: 96; von Kaenel 1994a traces two distinct streams in numismatics back to Theodor Mommsen. One embraces rigorous numismatic methodology with the application of comparative evidence from other fields, while the other is out of touch with developments in or material from other historical disciplines. Cf. Göbl 1987b: 74–75; Rebenich 2004; von Kaenel 2004.

7. E.g., Price and Trel 1977: 15; Göbl 1987a;1987b: 74–75; von Kaenel 1994a; Mattingly 2004: 1: “Unfortunately, not all numismatists are good historians, which can help discredit the discipline. Many historians are frightened of handling numismatic material, as if it were something alien and esoteric, so my attempt at combining disciplines may be welcome.”

8. On the concept of coins as “monuments in miniature”, see Cheung 1998: 58; Meadows and Williams 2001; Rowan 2012: 30–31; 2013a: 236–238.

9. Jones 1956 was critical of the haphazard way that Roman coin reverses had been studied as instruments of

Such problems are particularly apparent in the way that architectural coin types have been studied thus far. The common use of the term “*architectura numismatica*” to denote the study of buildings on coins itself indicates that this class of reverse types has been subjected to specialized and, often, isolated study. The fact that Roman coins depicted the built environment has been a subject of modern curiosity since the Renaissance.<sup>10</sup> But the first extensive inquiry aimed at treating architectural representations on coins was published in 1859 by T. L. Donaldson.<sup>11</sup> This book was useful in collating several architectural representations on Roman coins. Today, it is of limited value; the embellished drawings of architectural types were accompanied only by short and simplistic commentaries on standing remains with citations to literary sources. In the following decades, Ernst Babelon (Paris) and several German scholars argued further that representations on coins in conjunction with literary descriptions could be used for architectural reconstructions.<sup>12</sup> Since the mid-twentieth century, the study of buildings on coins has primarily been the province of American and British scholars who were very influenced by the impulse to use them as evidence for reconstructing monuments. The coordinated dissertations of Donald Brown and Bluma Trell, students of Karl Lehman at New York University, used various reverse types and textual descriptions to reconstruct or confirm temples in Rome and Asia Minor, respectively.<sup>13</sup> From the 1960s to the 1980s, P. V. Hill authored a number of short articles addressing Roman coin types with representations of various monuments on them. The articles speculated as to the identification of depicted monuments, if not already apparent, and cited passages in ancient texts that mentioned the monument in question.<sup>14</sup> His book was essentially an amalgamation of his articles on the subject.<sup>15</sup> Although the book is often cited by topographers, art historians, and archaeologists, it contains many errors regarding the description of types, the reconstruction of monuments, and is far from a comprehensive study. Seldom were any questions asked of architectural coin types other than how they could be used as evidence for monuments or their relationships to descriptions of particular buildings by ancient authors. While authors such as Hill and Trell were often literal in their interpretation of representations and exclusive in their approach to the question of architectural coin types, they certainly exposed the broader scholarly community to the phenomenon of architectural representations on Roman coinage. Günter Fuchs, whose dissertation was published in 1969 by his colleagues (five years after his death), remains a notable exception to the body of literature on the subject. Fuchs consciously alluded to the wider historical contexts in which architectural coin types emerged and touched on their relationship with other visual media.<sup>16</sup>

propaganda. He challenged numismatists who understood coin reverses as bearers of meaning to “try to determine, on internal evidence, within the general probabilities of the situation, at what classes the propaganda on coins was directed” (15). Sutherland 1959 was a reply to Jones 1956 that championed the continued study of coin iconography. He suggested that propaganda was targeted to audiences according to denominations that different social strata would handle most frequently. Metcalf 1993 and Hekster 2003 have better advanced this area of research.

10. E.g., Vico 1555: 1.1 and 2.3.

11. Donaldson 1965 (reprint of the original 1859 edition).

12. E.g., Babelon 1899–1900; Liegle 1936; Regling 1939. See Brown 1940: 3–4 for further references on the treatment of architectural coin types from Donaldson to the World War II era.

13. Dissertations: Brown 1941; Trell 1942. Abbreviated forms of the dissertations published as short monographs: Brown 1940; Trell 1945. Trell’s scholarly career revolved around reconstructing monuments portrayed on Provincial coins, see her co-authored monograph, Price and Trell 1977, and further references in the bibliography.

14. Hill 1965a; 1965b; 1978a; 1978b; 1979a; 1979b; 1980; 1981; 1983; 1984; 1985; 1987.

15. Hill 1989.

16. Fuchs 1969: esp. 1–35 and 47–91.

Andrew Burnett has recognized the limited application of numismatic evidence in the reconstruction of ancient monuments and concluded:

But we should do this in a different way from that adopted by writers on “*architectura numismatica*.” We should recognize that, except in a few instances, this contribution will not be to our understanding of the detailed elevations or appearance of buildings. Rather, it will be a contribution that is based on the attempt to see the buildings from the point of view of the people who made and used them and, by sharing their viewpoint, to catch some glimpse of the attitudes and cultural outlook of the world that produced them.<sup>17</sup>

Burnett’s observations highlight the limitations and prejudices of most studies of architectural representations on coins to date and the need for inquiries that penetrate questions deeper than a monument’s appearance.

Burnett’s methodological review drew on the potential that he had seen in various contributions regarding architectural representations on coins in the previous decade or so. Changing trends in the way architectural coin types have been treated can be discerned in some studies published since Trell’s and Hill’s respective contributions to the field.<sup>18</sup>

Sarah Cox published a die study of the Temple of Concord *sestertii* of Tiberius that showed that the general design of the temple was most “accurate” on coins from the earliest dies while later dies showed evidence of copying. The elements of the temple’s design on the coins that remained the most clearly defined were parts of the temple that would have allowed the viewer to easily identify the monument: the hexastyle porch, statuary, and the wings of the temple.<sup>19</sup> This mirrored the results of Fred Kleiner’s earlier study of the Arch of Nero in which he determined that the earliest coins from the mint at Rome showed the monument with the greatest amount of detail and proportion; coins from later dies or from Lugdunum were more stylized and showed the effects of copying.<sup>20</sup> The phenomena observed by Kleiner and Cox demonstrate the need for those who would continue to use coins to reconstruct monuments to pay greater attention to standard numismatic methods, namely die studies.

Cox later published another article that dealt with the Ara Providentiae, a monument that celebrated Augustus’s foresight in adopting Tiberius as his heir.<sup>21</sup> She cogently argued that the resurgence of the type under Vespasian looked back to the coinage program of Tiberius, who first struck the reverse type; Vespasian used this coin type to signal his intent to establish a new dynasty. Her two contributions to *architectura numismatica* reflected some undercurrents in the changing way that architectural coin types are studied. Cox did not read them as literal representations of monuments, but rather placed them within an historical and ideological context.

In 1991, Thomas Bayet completed his study, “*Architectura numismatica: iconographie et iconologie du monnayage romain à figurations architecturales de 294 à 388*,” for which he was awarded his *licencié* from the Université Catholique at Louvain-la-Neuve. In the following years,

17. Burnett 1999, 159–160. Earlier Fuchs and Drew-Bear had explored the problem of using representations on coins as evidence for the reconstruction of monuments. Although it is immensely useful, Fuchs’s chapter “Das Problem der Wirklichkeitstreue” (92–129), and especially his subsection on “Rekonstruktionsprobleme” (116–129), are not well-known among English-speaking scholars who use ancient coins as evidence for reconstructing monuments. Drew-Bear 1974 was critical of Trell’s use of coin representations to reconstruct monuments in light of contradictory material evidence.

18. Trell 1982 and Hill 1989 were their final contributions on the subject of *architectura numismatica*.

19. Cox 1993.

20. Kleiner 1985: 75–77 and 99–100.

21. Cox 2005.

he published two articles based on this research. For the most part, these were rather formalistic treatments of late Roman architectural representations on coins. The first article catalogued the varying architectural details of depictions of the so-called “Temple of Rome” types, the “mausoleum” types, and the “camp gate” types. But Bayet also commented on the symbolic nature of these representations and compared some numismatic specimens with architectural representation in other late Roman artistic media.<sup>22</sup> His second article addressed only the “camp gate” types and their symbolic nature, rehashing some older debates about what the types were meant to represent. Essentially, he concurred with Maria R.-Alföldi, who more than a half century ago argued that they evoked tetrarchic and Constantinian bulwarking of the *limes* with the construction of new forts.<sup>23</sup>

Fred Kleiner has made several contributions to the study of Roman arches and gateways with the assistance of numismatic evidence. His best-known work in this area is his monograph on the Arch of Nero.<sup>24</sup> It offered a reconstruction of the arch but also framed the design, conception, and depiction of arches on coins within the history of art and architecture. One of his articles discussed Augustan and Trajanic coins and other media that depict bridges decorated with triumphal arches, gates, and statuary in terms of the Roman concept of triumph over nature.<sup>25</sup> Here coin reverses did not serve the purpose of reconstructing monuments, but provided evidence for the concept of bridges as triumphal architecture. Another article examined a detailed depiction of a monument on Trajanic *sestertii* that he identified as a monumental gateway to the Area Capitolina.<sup>26</sup> In addition to his identification, he contextualized the coin type and Trajan’s presumed building activity on the Area Capitolina in terms of Trajanic ideology and placed the monumental archway in the wider discourse of the history of art. This article and his monograph revolved primarily around the monuments depicted. But he consciously concerned himself with the wider historical and art historical contexts. Thus we are able to gain understanding into how the coins reflect the broader ideals and values of the culture that produced them.

Since the publication of Burnett’s article, some other works have appeared that reflect changing approaches to architectural coin types. In 2001, Maria R.-Alföldi discussed architectural coin types in terms of imperial *Bildsprache*.<sup>27</sup> Although Burnett’s review is neither cited nor discussed, it is clear that she too was interested in new ways of studying the phenomenon of architectural representation on coins. Heavily influenced by historical and textual perspectives, her foray into *Bildsprache* on Roman Imperial architectural coin types explored why certain types of monuments may have appeared on Roman coins, their intended audience, and the ideas expressed by specific aspects of the architectural representation in question.<sup>28</sup>

Melanie Grunow wrote a doctoral dissertation on architectural backgrounds on coins and relief sculpture at the University of Michigan. She was primarily concerned with architectural settings and discussion frequently revolved around particular monuments. Her approach was innovative in combining numismatic evidence with imperial relief sculpture and in relating the

22. See Bayet 1993.

23. Bayet 1994; R.-Alföldi 2001a (reprint of the original 1955 article).

24. Kleiner 1985.

25. Kleiner 1991; cf. Wiegels 2000 who discussed the Augustan coin types in the context of road building and who also illuminated additional variants unknown at the time of Kleiner’s publication. Wiegels did not cite Kleiner’s article. Presumably, it was unknown to him.

26. Kleiner 1992.

27. R.-Alföldi 2001b.

28. R.-Alföldi 1999 treats *Bildsprache* in Roman art, and especially coins. She discussed representations of monuments on coins from time to time. R.-Alföldi 2001b was an extension of this research.

two artistic media. One chapter contains an interesting discussion of “depicting Rome as the center of power” in which she analyzed architectural settings in the context of imperial travels, sacrifice, *adlocutio*, and *liberalitas*.<sup>29</sup> An aspect of her doctoral research was later published as an article on the Ludi Saeculares coinage of Domitian.<sup>30</sup> She argued that attempts at identifying various temples in the backgrounds of Domitian’s Ludi Saeculares coins are misguided; die-engravers were not attempting to make a detailed depiction of a specific temple. Instead, the action of the figures provided enough detail for informed viewers to understand the event portrayed and its location. She also explored the audience for whom the coins were designed.

Interdisciplinary approaches, including comparative analyses with other artistic media and/or discussions of historical or iconographical context, have increased to some degree since c. 1990. Certainly, Burnett’s exhortations for new avenues of research must be credited with influence on the new questions asked by those researchers working on architectural representations in the twenty-first century. Scholars are starting to regard the reliability of coin depictions for reconstruction with a greater degree of skepticism and are gradually probing new questions. *Architectura numismatica* remains a subject that interests many people from diverse educational backgrounds and academic traditions.

Individual contributions since Burnett’s article have focused on certain architectural depictions and demonstrated the potential of asking new questions. But no study has addressed the phenomenon of architecture on Roman coinage as whole.<sup>31</sup> No study has sought to trace the emergence and development of architectural representations on Roman coinage and to consider the factors that affected trends. This book aims to fill that void. A three-pronged methodology is deployed to examine the use and transformation of architectural coin types in the Roman world: numismatic, art historical, and archaeological (material).<sup>32</sup> This system is then applied to the study of architectural coin types in a general chronological progression. It addresses representations from many different time periods in Rome’s history in order to answer some of the broad-ranging questions posed earlier and in view of their continuously evolving nature from their “invention” in the Middle- to Late Republic to their decline and increasing abstraction in the later Roman Empire.

## NUMISMATIC CONTEXT

One must note that the very notion of “coin types” arranged by various themes and subjects on coin reverses (e.g. buildings, ships, gods and goddesses, personifications, etc.) is an entirely modern construct. There is no evidence that the Greeks or Romans would have viewed coin designs in such a categorical fashion. Today’s numismatists who speak of “coin types” are no doubt influenced by their predecessors who began studying, systematizing, and classifying ancient coins in the Renaissance. But the concept remains useful and is unavoidable in numismatic study. The categorization of coins into types can also lead to the creation of certain artificial hierarchies. For example, we might view a denotative type that celebrated victory in war or the construction of new public building as more important than a coin that depicted a personification that connoted

29. Grunow 2002: 98–153.

30. Grunow-Sobocinski 2006.

31. The most recent monograph on architectural depictions on coins is Hefner 2008, but methodologically it is rooted in old approaches. It is essentially an illustrated catalogue, with drawings in the manner of Donaldson 1965 (reprint of the original 1859 edition), with commentary and textual references in the style of Hill 1989.

32. This methodology was detailed for the study of representations on Roman coins in general in Elkins 2009a.

an imperial quality. But such hierarchies say more about our own interests and biases than ancient reality. Richard Duncan-Jones recently questioned the communicative qualities of Roman coin iconography through a study of Trajan's reverse types, many of which depict personifications, or what he calls "religious types." He views these as less significant than more denotative "news types."<sup>33</sup> A standing representation of Concordia may be less interesting to the modern viewer than a dynamic representation of the Circus Maximus. On the other hand, representation of personifications communicated the ideals and qualities of the reigning emperor, and were relevant to a broader segment of the Roman population than representations of buildings that would have primarily benefitted those who lived in the capital.<sup>34</sup>

In general, it would be inaccurate to assert that architectural coin types (or any other denotative "news types" for that matter) had any special status in the ancient world that superseded the other coin types with which they circulated.<sup>35</sup> In fact, architectural coin types were never dominant in any period of Roman history and probably never accounted for more than 5% to 10% of coin types produced annually in the early Roman Empire.<sup>36</sup> If one treats architectural coin types as more than blueprints and attempts to answer social and cultural questions related to them, then it is necessary to view them in the context of other contemporary types and the overall visual program of a specific emperor. Attention to the visual program of the emission is particularly important in order to understand the ideological value and significance of a particular architectural reverse type.

## ART HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The art historical context is fundamental to the understanding and interpretation of architectural coin types, and must be considered alongside the numismatic context. Ancient coins were first subjected to critical art historical inquiry in the nineteenth century when scholars such as Karl Otfried Müller, Reginald Poole, Johann Overbeck, and Percy Gardner began to compare images on coins to other forms of art in a systematic way.<sup>37</sup> They focused on Greek art and coins. Roman art and coinage was typically neglected since it was widely viewed as a degenerate form of Greek art in the era's scholarly discourse.<sup>38</sup> Even Regling's book on ancient coins as works of art was biased in focusing on Greek coins with only a scant section at the end to discuss Roman coins and art.<sup>39</sup>

Franz Wickhoff was one of the first to suggest that Roman art was independent of Greek art, although he was overshadowed by Alois Riegl.<sup>40</sup> Riegl revolutionized the study of Roman art, and indeed art history as a whole, with the publication of his *Spättrömische Kunstindustrie* in 1901 (revised

33. Duncan-Jones 2005.

34. Beckmann 2009a responds to Duncan-Jones 2005. Noreña 2001; 2011 examines the importance of personifications as communicators of imperial ideals. Also of relevance are Hedlund 2008; Manders 2012; Rowan 2012; 2013a.

35. Noreña 2001; 2011 indicates that personifications, connoting various imperial virtues, were the most dominant coin types on silver coinage based on the quantification of hoard evidence.

36. Burnett 1999: 155–156. The present study, based on find evidence, suggests that architectural types were even less prominent, at least in the Flavian and Trajanic periods (see Chapter Two).

37. Müller 1848; Poole 1864; Overbeck 1871; Overbeck 1873–1878; Gardner 1883.

38. In contrast to the way Greek coins were favored for art historical study over Roman coins, Roman portraiture was advanced via comparative study of the coins and the plastic arts: e.g., Bernoulli 1882–1894.

39. Regling 1924.

40. Wickhoff 1900. Brilliant 2007: 18, n. 33: "[Wickhoff] emphasized Roman impressionistic pictorial composition, as in the historical reliefs on the Arch of Titus, which he characterized as both illusionistic and naturalistic. Although an early champion of the independent artistic merit of Roman imperial art and much influenced by late 19th-c. Impressionism, his understanding of Roman visual cultural was incomplete and untheorized."

and reprinted in 1927).<sup>41</sup> He developed the concept of *Kunstwollen*, whereby the form or style of art was controlled by a collective societal “will” or “habit” that would naturally drive current trends in society, politics, and thought. Although his study was very formalistic, he was the first to approach art as a way to understand the societies that produced it. This drew the study of art away from aestheticism and transformed it into an essential part of the historical sciences that uses art as means of understanding the past.<sup>42</sup>

After Riegl, Roman art was systematically studied in its own right and began to be viewed more independently of Greek art. Otto Brendel and Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli were influential in defining Roman art this way. Brendel found no satisfactory single definition for Roman art; he observed that many internal and external influences could have contributed to its creation and highly variable forms.<sup>43</sup> Bianchi Bandinelli defined Hellenizing and Italic styles in Roman art. Influenced by Marxism, he associated the former with the patricians and the latter with the plebeians; this in turn led to his understanding of state-sanctioned art in the later Roman Empire as heavily influenced by plebeian and provincial forms.<sup>44</sup>

Today, scholars define Roman art as a complex semantic system instead of searching after some neater “explanation” for the multiplicity of forms and styles it contains.<sup>45</sup> Tonio Hölscher is one of the primary architects of this perspective.<sup>46</sup> Stylistic and pictorial elements were chosen as part of that system to evoke certain ideas, just as different images in Roman art could denote specific ideas or connote general messages to the viewer.<sup>47</sup> It is no wonder that of all art historical theoreticians, Hölscher is perhaps the most sensitive to numismatic evidence, an effect of his understanding of Roman art as a complex visually communicative system. Paul Zanker has also emphasized the visual impact of Roman coinage and state-sanctioned art on the viewer.<sup>48</sup> In view of these developments, Richard Brilliant recently highlighted the centrality of Roman coin iconography if Roman art is to be viewed as a semantic system:

The ancient Roman world was vast, its population highly diverse, adhering to distinctions of class, local tradition, religious practice, and ethnic membership. Variety within the boundaries of programmatic consistency seems to have been a subtle and effective mechanism for manifesting the Roman presence everywhere. In order to ensure the diffusion of that unifying message, Romans resorted to burdening the coinage with an immense, proclamatory iconography, consisting of recognizable identified portraits on one side accompanied, on the other, by detailed types of representation, concisely rendered in miniature and evidently intended to be taken into account by the possessor. Numismatic imagery, being a prime medium for communication in the Roman world because of its wide diffusion, is an excellent example of efficient packaging, of putting *multum in parvo* like the modern “sound bite,” which, however concentrated, is never taken by itself but,

41. Riegl 2000 (reprint of the 1927 edition) is the latest edition with a new afterword by Wolfgang Kemp. Riegl 1985 is an English translation by Rolf Winkes.

42. For the development of art history at the Vienna School after Riegl, see Sedlmayr 2000 (translation of the 1931 article). Some more recent studies addressing Riegl’s profound influence on the development of art history include Iversen 1993; Wood 2000; Vasold 2004; Gubser 2006; Elsner 2006.

43. Brendel 1953.

44. Bianchi Bandinelli 1970; Bianchi Bandinelli 1971.

45. E.g., Brilliant 2007: 8–9.

46. Hölscher 2004, see also Elsner’s foreword on the understanding of Roman art as a semantic system.

47. Hölscher 1980; 1982; 1984; 1987; 1992; 2000; 2004; 2014. Howgego 1995: 75–77 discuss the potential of Hölscher’s theories and methods as applied to coins.

48. E.g., Zanker 1988; 1997.

necessarily, implies an expansive context familiar to the recipient. Furthermore, reduction without the loss of legibility—a fundamental principle of Roman numismatic design—proves the importance of the coinage as a purveyor of messages.<sup>49</sup>

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The art historical and numismatic contexts are of primary concern in the present study, although it is also useful to apply archaeological evidence to provide a more nuanced understanding of the semantic value of architectural types. While gold and silver coins circulated widely throughout the Roman Empire, bronze coins circulated regionally and when they went into a region they usually stayed there.<sup>50</sup> Many studies have proven this, but only recently has it been recognized that the Roman state may have, in some cases, supplied certain regions or populations in the Roman Empire with coins bearing designs relevant to their station in Roman society.

A comprehensive treatment of coin finds from the legionary fortress at Nijmegen observed an abundance of coins with martial themes. Kemmers compared the proportion of these reverse types at Nijmegen to the finds at neighboring civilian settlements and to Rome. The comparative material drew on the extensive coin finds registers from the northwestern provinces and an unpublished group of c. 70,000 coins from Rome. In doing so, she demonstrated that the Flavian legions at Nijmegen were deliberately supplied with coins bearing militaristic themes. Concentrations of such types are less common in neighboring civilian settlements and in Rome.<sup>51</sup> Kemmers's work on Nijmegen was the first exhaustive study of the coin finds from a particular site to indicate that the examination of find spots of certain types may yield evidence for targeting of the semantic system deployed on Roman coinage. The ramifications are striking. Our understanding of coin iconography could be augmented by identifying the audiences at which the Roman state targeted specific coin designs by means of find evidence.

The collation of coin find data in audience-targeting studies also allows us to quantify the frequencies of reverse types in relationship to one another. Although Roman coins are conveniently laid out in type catalogues according to changes in the iconography and legends, no matter how major or minor, we cannot seriously use type catalogues as indicators of rarity or commonness. Many factors influenced the quantity of coin production, not the least of which was the desired level of production for whatever type, and the rate at which dies could last before wearing out. A better method is to examine frequencies in hoards and finds to get a better sense of what images played greater roles in an emperor's political program.<sup>52</sup>

49. Brilliant 2007: 9.

50. Duncan-Jones has done much work on this topic via hoard analysis: e.g. Duncan-Jones 1989; 1994: 172–179; 1996; 1999. Peter 1996 does more with single bronze coin finds. Kraay 1956 examined countermarks on bronze coins in the provinces and observed that certain stamped types were confined to specific regions and connected to specific events such as military payments. Walker 1988 discovered that the coins from the Sacred Spring at Bath arrived from specific years that coins were supplied to the region. Although there are some significant methodological limitations, Hobley 1998 was an ambitious study that demonstrated some regional distribution patterns of bronze coins and conveniently organized coins by reverse type and geographical distribution. Kemmers is actively investigating regionalized coin supplies in the northwestern Roman provinces: Kemmers 2005; 2006a; 2006b; 2009.

51. Kemmers 2006a: 189–244, esp. 219–244.

52. On the problems of using type catalogues to gain impressions of frequencies, see the review by Rowan 2013b on Manders 2012, and discussion in Krmnicek and Elkins 2014. A study of buildings on Nero's coins (Perassi 2002) also uses *RIC* numbers to indicate the prominence of architectural types and, in so doing, exaggerates the importance of the types. Noreña's important studies (2001 and 2011) unequivocally demonstrate the value of finds-based quantification in determining what messages played the greatest role in an emperor's political program.

This type of work is both in its infancy and labor intensive. It is therefore not applied extensively in this book owing to the difficulty of probing the wide range of data sets, the vast chronological breadth of the subject matter explored in this book, and the difficulties obtaining access to some important data from the city of Rome. Instead, this study probes the potential for comparing the geographical distribution of architectural types and quantifying their prevalence by examining the find spots of Flavian and Trajanic finds (see Chapter Two).

### WHAT ARE “ARCHITECTURAL COIN TYPES”?

Books on the representation of architecture or monuments on Roman coinage have included a wide range of structures. This lack of definition of architectural types or “monuments” has muddled many studies of the depictions on coins.<sup>53</sup> The need for a definition is in order.

Generally, the use of the words “architecture” or “monuments” is preferable to “buildings.” The latter is a more exclusive term that might preclude large-scale structures such as bridges, aqueducts, and large columnar monuments.<sup>54</sup> The use of “monuments” in this book is restricted to the word’s sense of large and imposing structures; a broader use of the word could expand the scope of the study to smaller objects like statues, *cippi*, and small altars.<sup>55</sup> The depiction of these on coins may not have related the same messages as the depiction of larger monuments for public use, and surely these smaller objects would have been less recognizable to the viewer. Therefore, this examination is concerned strictly with architectural coin types in the most literal sense possible: any coin that shows a building or large-scale monument, or some part thereof, including monumental columns, aqueducts, and bridges, but which excludes depictions of statuary isolated from architectural contexts, *cippi*, and small altars, or funeral pyres. The exclusion of statues in a discussion of architectural coin types is natural since there are indications that the Romans conceived of statues as a different sort of monument altogether.<sup>56</sup> It is also clear that the Romans made similar distinctions between large architectural and smaller votive altars.<sup>57</sup> Size is thus one of the primary factors for the definition of “architectural” or “monumental” used here; *cippi* and small altars are more akin to objects, unlike three-dimensional architectural spaces to be experienced or a large-scale monument such as an honorary column or aqueduct that transformed a landscape

53. Hill’s often-cited, but incomplete, book devoted approximately 40% of the text (exclusive of appendices) to columns and *cippi*, altars, statues, equestrian statues, and statuary groups and reliefs (Hill 1989). Stoll 2000 included representations of ships in his book on architectural representations.

54. This understanding is similar to that of Fuchs 1969: 9–17.

55. In modern parlance the word “monument” has many meanings. In Latin, *monumentum* meant a memorial or something that commemorated an individual or an event, like a tomb or statue group. Today, it is often used to describe something from the past which is presently recognized as a great work. It can also mean an imposing, highly ornate, or expensive structure. Thomas 2007: 2–14 discussed the word’s many meanings at length. This book’s use of the word is most in line with Thomas’s statement on p. 11: “Monumentality, then, was not a quality of ruins, memorials, and disused structures, but also of buildings that had an active function in the life a community. In the classical world this was true, not only for structures such as bridges or aqueducts, where monumentality is achieved by their formal properties, but also for urban buildings such as theatres, assembly buildings, and baths, where the gatherings of a community created a context for the structure’s monumentality.”

56. Stewart 2003 made several philological arguments for different classes of Roman statues. His overall approach is similar to that employed in this study as he sought to understand the Roman “culture of statues” in the context of Roman society. For his discussion of statues on coins see pp. 208–214. Another related study of the “culture of statues” is Ma 2013.

57. Cox-Bowerman 1913: 3–8. The distinctions are etymological, based on many different Latin words that could be used for “altar.” The use of a particular term reflected the location and type of altar used (e.g., a small altar in a home or a large altar in a public rite), and thus also a specific word inherently referred to the scale and monumental quality of an altar.

or cityscape, or bettered a community's overall quality of life. The "architecture" treated here is of the same sort as those structures included by Vitruvius in his *De Architectura*: walls, fortifications, streets, temples, large altars, harbors, civic buildings, aqueducts, theaters and other entertainment venues, and an array of public buildings.

## SCOPE

Treatment of the representation of architecture on Roman coinage proceeds chronologically and addresses themes pertinent to architectural coin types in their broader historical contexts as well as their numismatic, art historical, and material contexts as far as possible. Instead of looking at architectural coin types in isolation, their communicative properties are best understood and interpreted through an understanding of the ideological program deployed on the coinage of the same emission, of the same moneyer, or of the same emperor. In some instances, comparison of architectural types with other art media will enlighten historical factors dictating the choice or types of images that appear on coins.

A problem with previous monograph-length studies of architectural coin types has been the lack of comprehensive treatment. All studies have been limited according to chronological constraints, the lack of standard type catalogues, or have chosen to include or exclude types seemingly at random.<sup>58</sup> This book examines every architectural type produced at the Republican and Imperial mints. Chapters One, Two, and Three include a discussion of all types at the beginning of each chapter. Chapter Four, which treats the Provincial coinage, is selective in the types explored due to the lack of a completed standard type catalogue and the vastness of the Provincial coinage. The comprehensive treatment of all architectural types from Republican and Imperial mints provides the source material for the trends discerned in the interpretative analysis at the end of each chapter.

Chapter One argues that the significance of architectural representation on Roman Republican coinage is fundamentally different from the infrequent depictions of monuments and buildings on Greek and Persian coinages. The emergence of architectural designs in the Roman Republic is considered within the wider framework of Roman art, namely Second-Style wall painting; urbanism, it is argued, simultaneously influenced architectural decoration on coins and Second-Style painting.

The representation of architecture on Roman coins from the collapse of the Roman Republic and the establishment of the principate by Augustus through the reign of Severus Alexander is discussed in the second chapter. Roman Imperial coin types are examined with regard to their ideological importance, which is in turn contextualized within their numismatic and historical contexts.

Chapter Three analyzes the depiction of architecture on the coinage of the "soldier emperors" through the disappearance of architectural designs on Roman coinage in the fifth century AD. After the death of Severus Alexander, the Roman Empire suffered immense political and economic turmoil as well as severe military unrest. These historical conditions led to increased coin production and also the establishment of multiple branch mints. As a consequence, architectural reverses in this period are most frequently "symbolic" or connotative in that they do not refer to specific constructions. Unlike Republican and early Imperial architectural coin types that communicated precise messages to the viewer, mass-produced late Roman types connoted more

<sup>58</sup> Chronological constraint: Fuchs 1969; lack of a standard catalogue for the Provincial series: Price and Trelle 1977; random selection: Hill 1989.

general ideas to an empire-wide audience. The late Imperial types are also examined in terms of the changing nature of late Roman art.

The final chapter differentiates between the qualities of architectural representations on Roman Provincial and Imperial coin types. While Provincial types borrowed much from the Imperial coinage, their pictorial content was directed at local users. Unlike the Imperial coinage that often celebrated the construction or reconstruction of a monument commissioned by the emperor, Provincial coins championed civic identity through the depiction of iconic monuments in the city. As architectural imagery was declining on the Imperial coinage in the third century AD, architectural types flourished in the provinces. The Roman East preserved a vibrant tradition of portraying the man-made environment on coins and, it is argued, the Provincial coinage served as prototypes for some late Roman Imperial architectural designs, allowing some insight into the practicalities of how art and iconographic content was transformed in the later Roman Empire.

This comprehensive and chronological approach to architectural coin types conveys the complexity of the subject and underscores how the designs were symptomatic of, and sensitive to, the underlying social, cultural and historical trends that affected both Roman art and Roman society at large.

