



S. Clemente  
May 29, 2017



Pompeii  
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# Rome Studio: Place Context and Response

ART 3650




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## Introduction



# Ancient Rome

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Inside the Colosseum

## The Colosseum

The Colosseum, for me, has always been what I think about first when I think about Rome. I never really understood its significance or really anything about until I got to college. Before going to Rome, I had taken two art history classes that discussed the Colosseum. Those left me with a better understanding about its history and its significance. After getting to see the Colosseum in person and getting to study it even more, I now feel like I have a very good understanding of its history and significance.

The Colosseum was one of the first sites we went to in Rome. We often used the public transportation to get to where we were going so, we took one of the the buses to get here. At this point we hadn't been in Rome for very long and I didn't know much about the city and its layout. I knew the Colosseum was going to be big so I assumed we would be able to see it from a distance. I was wrong. The buildings in this city are so close together and there are not many difference in their heights that it's hard to see anything in the distance. If you're not familiar to the area, you have no idea how close you are to the Colosseum until you turn a corner and then it's sitting right in front of you. At first glance, I was I awe and I couldn't believe what I was looking at. You can read about how massive it is in a book but, you cannot fully grasp that massiveness until you see it in person.



Exterior of the Colosseum



Before coming to Rome I knew that the Colosseum had been built over emperor Nero's lake to celebrate him no longer being in reign, but I didn't really understand how that was possible. I learned that the lake had been filled with concrete, therefore, there are forty meters of solid concrete that the Colosseum is standing on top of and that is why it is still standing today. One of the interesting facts I learned was the the Colosseum was originally called the Flavian Ampitheater. Romans today still refer to it by the Flavian Ampitheater but, only tourists and everyone else that isn't from Rome refer to it as the Colosseum.

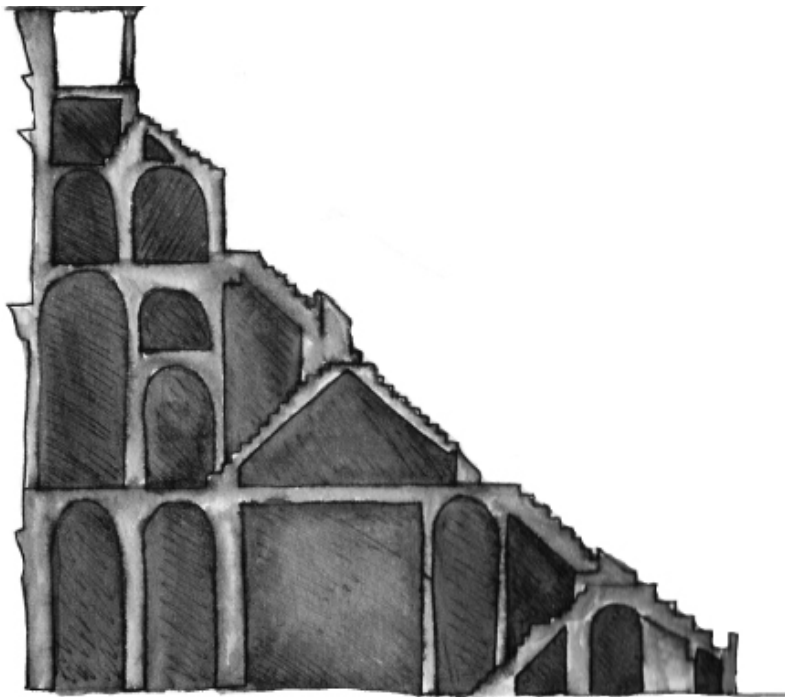
Upon entering the Colosseum, we entered through the south gate. The south gate was the former emperors only entrance that took them directly to their seats. While walking through this entrance, I was trying to imagine what it would have been like to be an emperor at that time and getting to walk through the once marble covered entrance and being able to hear all the sounds and see the thousands of people sitting around you once you got to your seat. Aside from this entrance, the entire building would have been covered in marble. You can tell this because of all of the little holes that are currently in the travertine. Those little holes were where marble was attached at to cover the travertine. There are also some holes that are much larger and those are from where scaffolding was place when it was being built.

Even though the Colosseum looks huge from it's exterior, it looks even bigger from the interior. There are only a couple of areas where you can still see the seating but most of it is now gone but, you can easily see where the seating was placed. It's estimated that there was enough seating for up to 80,000 people and every seat had a good view of the stage.



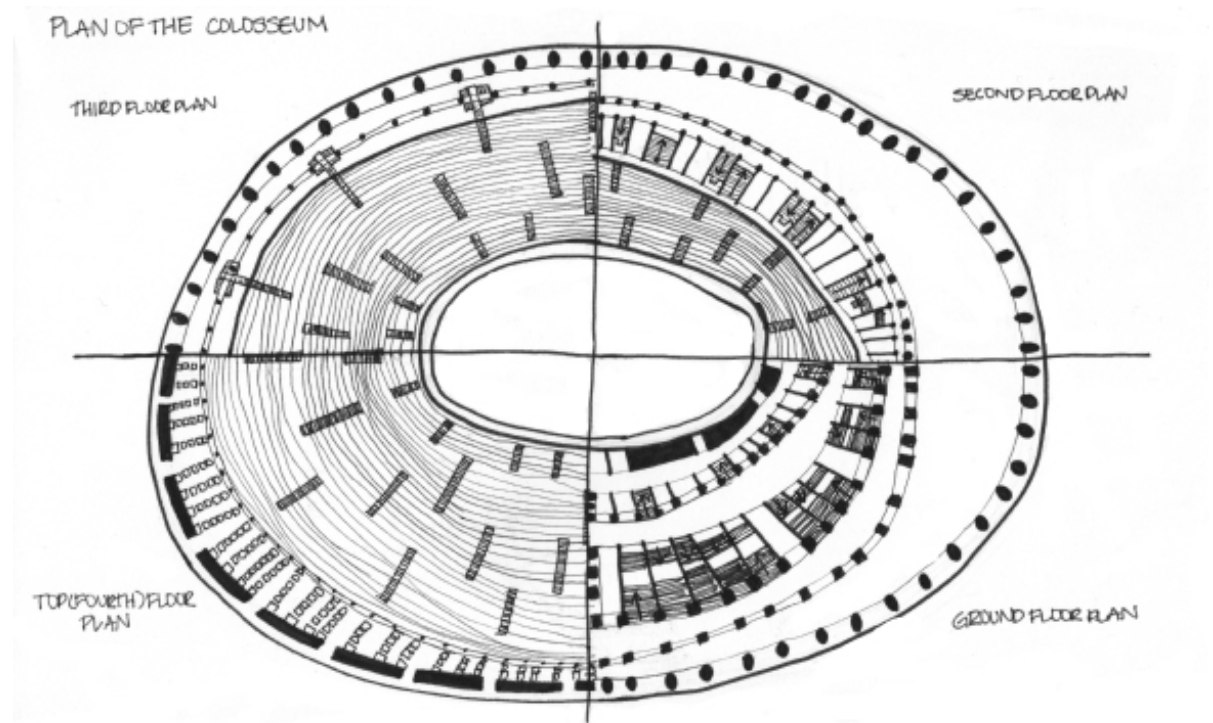
Exterior of the entire Colosseum in Rome, Italy

Aside from the size of the Colosseum, I found the stage to be one of the most interesting features. Although you can't see it today, there is a small portion of it that has been recreated. The stage was originally covered in the Romans called Arena sand and that is how arenas got their name today. The stage also featured trap doors for hunting animals and gladiator fights, it also had the ability to be flooded to recreate naval battles. Underneath the stage is the basement, which is still visible. Mostly the animals imported from Africa and the gladiators would stay down here. I think all of the features of the stage were very advanced for the time of Ancient Rome.



Section of the Colosseum

Since this was in the first week and we didn't have much experience with using the public transportation yet, I later realized that the bus we often took would take us around the Colosseum everyday. Getting to see the Colosseum almost everyday for a month seems like something you might get tired of looking at but, every time I saw it, I was in awe and with the feeling I had the first time I saw it.



Plan view of each level of the Colosseum



Oculus of the pantheon

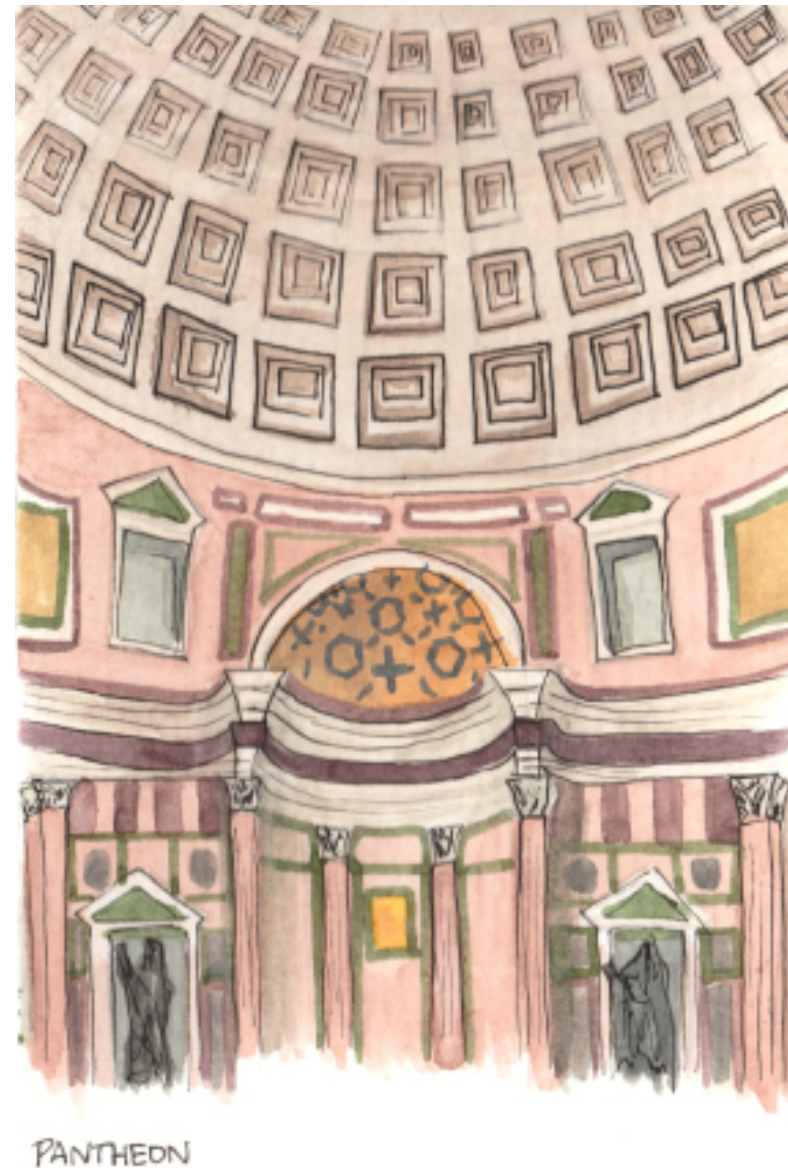


## The Pantheon

Like the Colosseum, the Pantheon was one of the first sites we went to and it was the site I was looking forward to visiting the most. I first learned about the Pantheon in my first art history class my freshman year of college. The professor spent almost an entire class talking about it and he couldn't find words to express how amazing it was to get to actually see it and walk inside. Ever since that day, I knew I would eventually somehow make my way to Rome to see the Pantheon. Little did I know that would be less than two years later.

Similar to the Colosseum, the Pantheon is surrounded by many other buildings so it's hard to know if you're close it until you're right beside it. My class and I were lead to walk the district and it's narrow streets that surround the Pantheon to get to it. After walking through many narrow and winding streets, we ended up in a piazza. The first thing I saw there was a corner of a building that looked much different and in rougher condition than all of the buildings we walked past to get there. As soon as I saw that corner, I knew it was the Pantheon.

Also similar to the Colosseum, I have seen many pictures of the Pantheon but, I was still in awe of how big it was and also the appearance and texture of it's exterior stone, travertine. I think its exterior appearance fascinated me so much because it was completely different from any other of the buildings we had seen yet and you could tell it was ancient by just looking at it. It almost looks similar to the appearance to some of the ruins that are at the Forum but instead of ruins, it's a fully intact building.



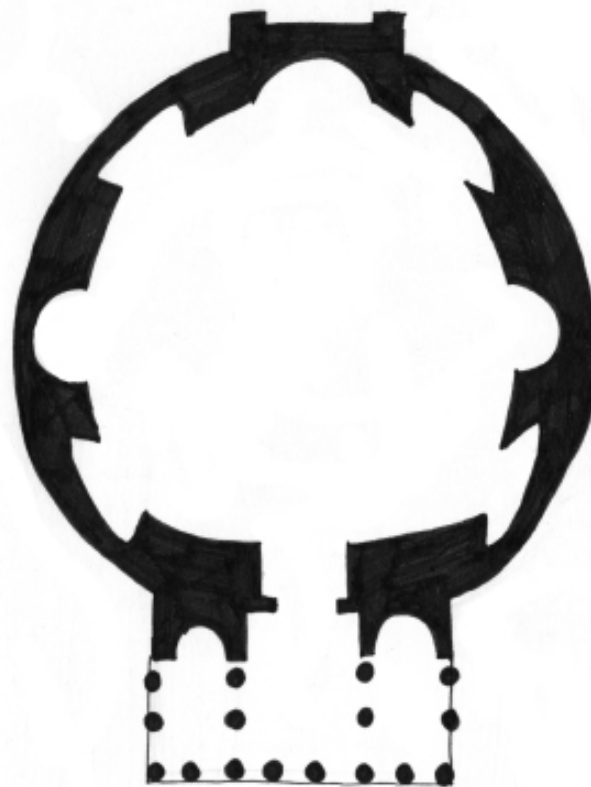
Interior view of the apse of the Pantheon

When I first walked into the ancient temple, after I got past the awe and shock I felt looking around the interior and the oculus, I couldn't help but think how it could have been possible for it to have been built, especially the dome and oculus, in the year 27. It's hard to imagine constructing something of that size with the difficulty of the dome without having the tools and machines that we use today.



12 Oculus shining light on the Saint that is honored for the month of May

The term Pantheon means all gods. Therefore, the Pantheon is a temple dedicated to all gods. The main part of the Pantheon is all rounded, from the shape of the floor, to its walls, and then to its dome. Around the walls are statues of twelve gods, representing all gods. Each god represents a month. For each month, the sunlight coming through the oculus illuminates the god that that month represents throughout the duration of that month. Aside from the construction of the building itself, I find it amazing that the Ancient Romans were able to do the calculations to get the oculus to perform this function.



Plan view of the Pantheon



When I first learned about the Pantheon in that art history class I couldn't help but wonder, of all things, what happens when it rains since the oculus never closes. I learned that answer on my visit. While admiring the patterned marble flooring, I noticed a few floral-like holes in the floor. Those holes are part of the drain system that the Ancient Romans installed to get rid of the water when it would rain. The marble flooring is also sloped towards the center (directly under the oculus) to allow water to flow downwards to the drains. I also find this feature to be amazing as well, especially since we still use technology similar to this today. Sometimes in bathrooms or in any other rooms that have the capability of soaking the floor, usually at commercial locations, there are slightly sloped floors that lead to drains to allow excess water to escape.

Although the domed ceiling is beautiful to look at today, I can only imagine what it would have look like when it was first built because, it used to be completely covered with bronze. This was until pope Urban VIII had the bronze melted down to use it to make the baldacchino at St. Peter's Basilica. The bronze was also used to make 80 cannons for Castel Sant' Angelo. The Romans considered this removal an act of vandalism. I find it interesting that the pope found it acceptable to do this because, the Pantheon was such an important building to the Romans at one point in time.

The Pantheon has stood on its own for nearly two-thousand years and it's amazing to think that it may stay that way for eternity considering the buildings we build today often don't last between 20-30 years and if their lucky, they may last between 50 and 60 years.



Exterior view of the Pantheon in Rome, Italy

# Early Christian

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Domed ceiling of one of the side chapels of Santa Maria Maggiore

## Santa Maria Maggiore

At this point in the trip, Santa Maria Maggiore had been the largest basilica we had seen so far. Its beautiful façade hints at its height by showing multiple stories and stretching wide across the piazza. Its façade is one of the only facades in Rome that is in its original state if not slightly altered. This is unlike many other facades in Rome because most of them were altered to match with the current style of that time period.

It is said the basilica is placed here because in the 13th century the Virgin Mary came to Pope Liberius in a dream in the beginning of August. She apparently told him that he needed to build this church and in the morning they would find a patch of snow to show the area where the church should be built. Sure enough, the next August morning there was a patch of snow and construction began. To this day, every year in August, mass is held here to honor the snowfall.

When entering the basilica, you walk into the nave and you are overwhelmed with its size and all of the detail it holds. The ceiling of the nave is what I found most impressive and is my favorite feature of this basilica. The ceiling is covered in highly detailed squares with large flowers in the middle. It is completely gilded with gold including all of its details. What I find also very interesting about this ceiling is that it is said this gold is the first gold that was brought back from the Americas by Columbus. The gold was gifted to Rome by the Spanish pope Alexander VI. To match the ceiling, there are many other gold embellishments throughout the nave.

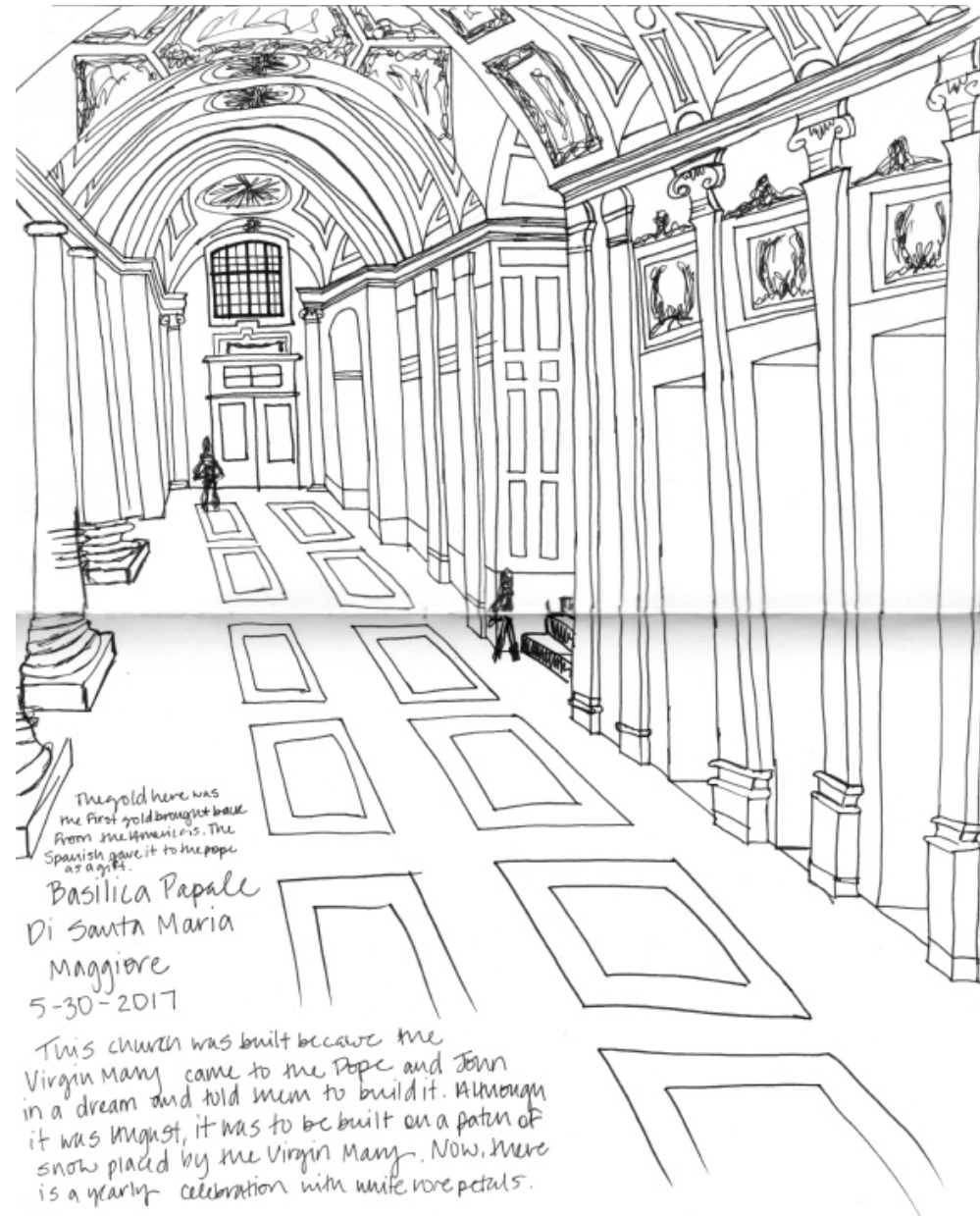


Facade of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, Italy



The nave of Santa Maria Maggiore also holds the boldaccheri. Of all the boldaccheris we saw in the numerous basilicas we saw throughout the trip, this one stood out to me the most. What stood out to me was the four columns made of porphyry. I first learned about porphyry in my first art history class. I knew that it was a very rare and also a very expensive. It was only for royalty or for things that were very important. I knew it wasn't something that could be found here in the United States so, I thought it was something I would never be able to see. Therefore, when I saw this stone, I spent a lot of time studying it and admiring it. This boldaccheri was also detailed with gold, like the ceiling, and it also a dark green stone at the top. I thought these three colors went together very well the gold complimented the dark green and dark purple very nicely.

The nave had a side aisle on each side of it. These side aisles were still very detailed but yet, they were simpler. The barrel vaulted ceiling was white and it had some gold detailing. I found the pattern of the gold detailing very interesting and its repetition made me even more fascinated with it. I think I liked this are so much because it was a nice contrast from the nave and it didn't feel as heavy. The barrel vaulting here was also had soft lighting throughout the entire aisle and this lighting also made the side aisle feel lighter. To match the repetition of the columns between the side aisles and the nave, the other side of the side aisles had doorways to the side chapels. Each doorway was lined up with one of the columns on the other side of the aisle. I liked the side aisles so much, that I spent almost two hours drawing one of them.



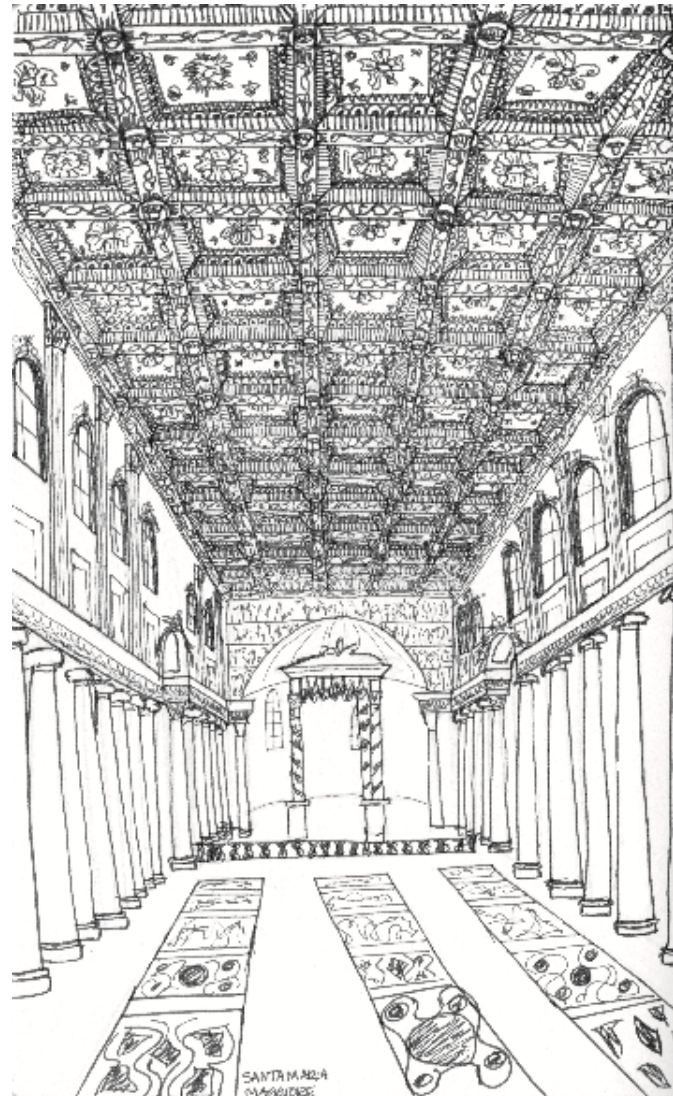
Side aisle of Santa Maria Maggiore

The side chapels off of the side aisles were probably the most detailed parts of the basilica. The walls and the flooring covered in patterns of different colored stones. The walls also had many also highly detailed Corinthian pilasters with matching stone carvings around the rest of the walls. Throughout the walls, there were also many stone and some gold statues and also many frescos. Each of the side chapels was topped with a small dome. All of the domes were almost completely covered in frescos. If there wasn't fresco work, there was gold detailing in it's place. Like the side aisles, the side chapels felt light than the nave. The domes had windows around their bases and there was a window on each wall of the side chapel to allow natural light to come in.



Boldaccheri of Santa Maria Maggiore

Through the many basilicas I saw throughout this trip, Santa Maria Maggiore continued to stand out to me all way from the reason it was built to all the the details and material inside it.



Nave of Santa Maria Maggiore



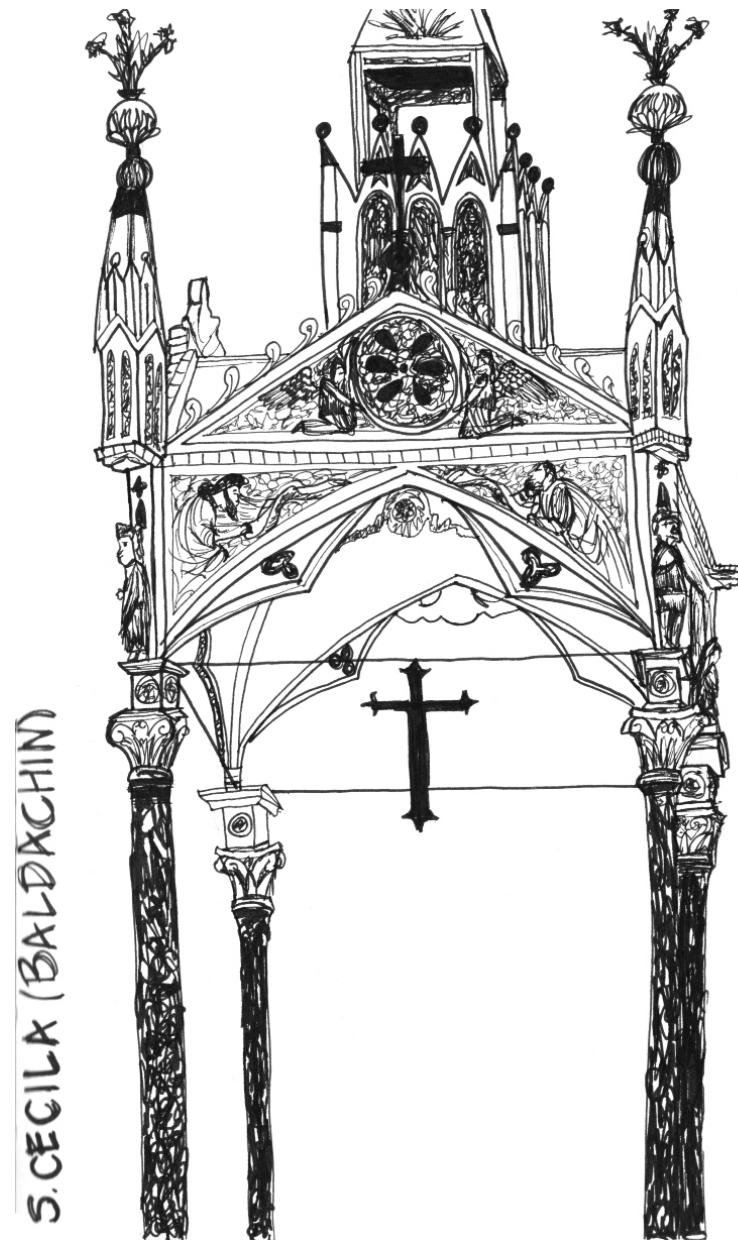
Facade of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Italy



## Santa Cecilia

When first walking up to Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, its façade makes it seem like it's a fairly small church. Fortunately, that is far from the truth. Santa Cecilia actually has three floors. The ground floor of the church is the nave, the main part of the church. The floor before the nave, or the basement, is the crypt. The floor above the ground floor is the Benedictine Convent that holds frescos by Pietro Cavallini. The church also has its own Convent for nuns and that is what the buildings are for to the right and left of the church.

Santa Cecilia is built where St. Cecilia's house was formerly located. Cecilia was a woman who was punished for converting her husband to Christianity. Her punishment was to be killed. The first attempt to kill her was by drowning her and that did not work. Since drowning didn't work, she was to be beheaded but, the person who was doing the beheading did a terrible job. Instead of killing her instantly, she lived for three days afterwards. After her body was found she became a Roman saint and was the saint of music.



Boldacchieri of Santa Cecilia



When walking into the church, we first went to the top floor that held the frescos. The frescos by Pietro Cavallini belong to the convent that resides at the church. Therefore, we were watched very carefully by the nuns to make sure we were not taking pictures or doing anything to alter the frescos. The room was pretty small and it overlooked the nave of the church. Although we couldn't take pictures we were still allowed to attempt to draw the frescos. My favorite part of the frescos were the colorful wings of the angels. I attempted drawing them but, I just couldn't do them justice. I also attempted drawing Christ that was in the center of the frescos. I was really proud of this drawing because I usually try to avoid drawing figures because I find them to be more difficult than drawing architecture. This was my first figure drawing that I thought actually looked like a figure.



Drawing of Christ in one of the frescos in the convent of Santa Cecilia

After looking at the frescos, we went down to the basement in the crypt. The crypt was rather large and it had many different rooms you could go into. It is believed that the crypt was formerly two Roman houses that were joined together and then later used as the crypt. It is possible that one of those houses could have Cecilia's home. At first the crypt didn't seem like anything special. It was completely made of grey stones and had a few remnants of the tile flooring and wall details. When I got to the very last part of the crypt, everything about it changed completely. I walked into this grand room that almost royal and that it could hold some kind of treasure or something. It was completely detailed from the floor to the ceiling. This part was completely decorated in deep, rich colors, like red, purple, blue, and gold, in the tiles and the stones. It didn't have very bright lighting so that plus the colors almost made it feel mysterious to walk into. My favorite part of this part of the crypt was the groin vaulted ceiling. Instead of the large groin vaults like I was used to seeing, these groin vaults were very small in comparison. The webbing of the vaults had very intricate detailing. The detailing was very similar between all of the vaults but, some were slightly different. I could have spent hours looking at and walking through this part of the crypt but, it was time to go upstairs to the main part of the church.



Crypt of Santa Cecilia



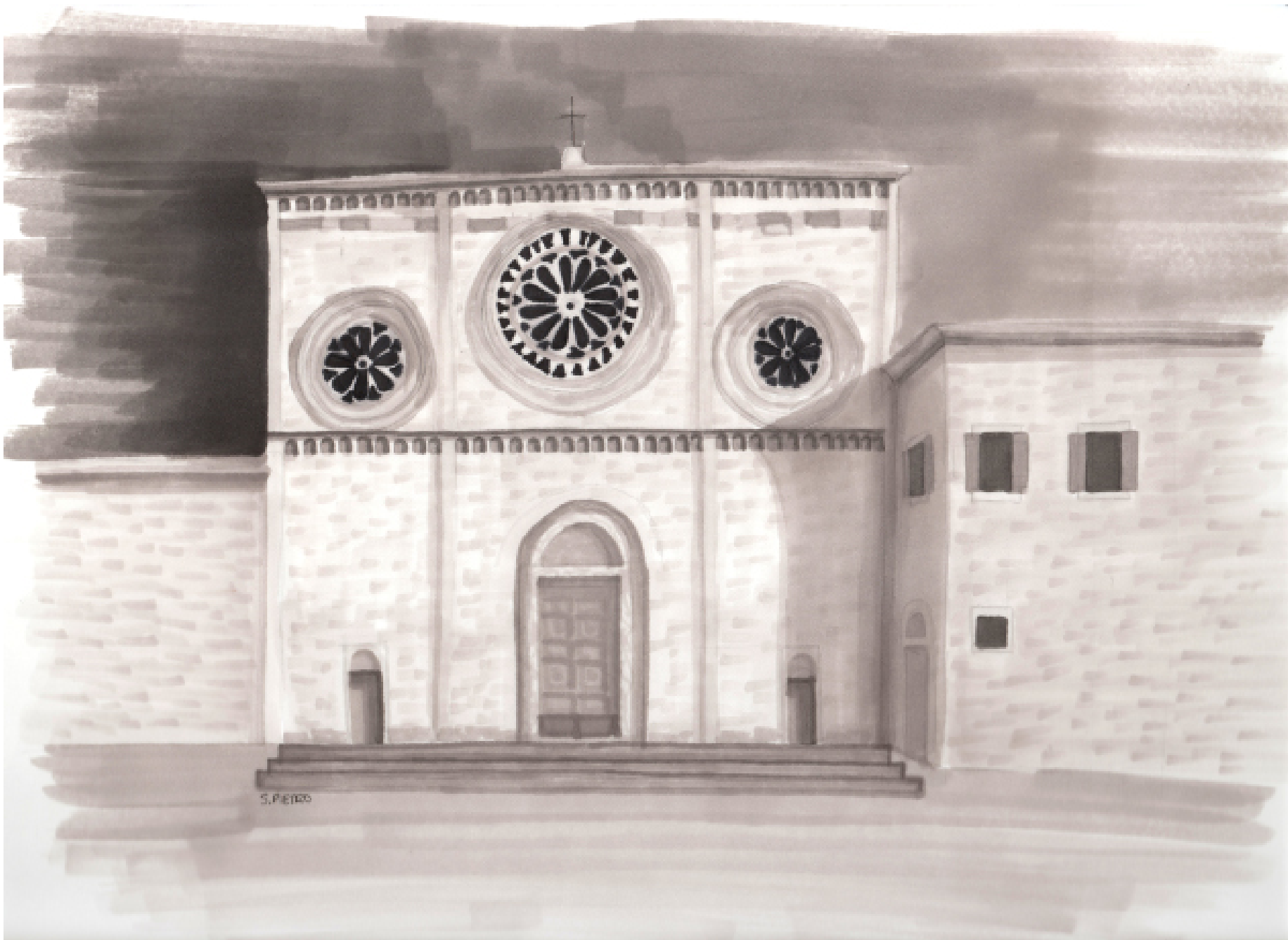
As I walked into the nave of Santa Cecilia, the first thing I noticed was the apse. This apse was something I recognized from my art history class and it was another thing that I couldn't believe that I was looking at in person. The apse contains a mosaic that depicts Christ blessing by the Greek rite. He is surrounded by St. Peter, St. Valerian, St. Agatha, St. Paul, St. Cecilia, and St. Paschal. The palm trees on each side of the apse represent the Garden of Eden. Below Christ and the saints are twelve lambs that represent the twelve apostles coming from Bethlehem with Lamb of God in the center. Below the lambs there is an inscription. The inscription is Paschal I describing the finding of S. Cecilia's body and the work he put into decorating the church. The nave also holds a gothic baldacchino and beneath that is a carving of how St. Cecilia was found dead. The carving holds her remains and also shows the slash on her neck from being beheaded.



Nave of Santa Cecilia

Medieval

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Facade of Santa Pietro in Assisi, Italy

## Santa Pietro

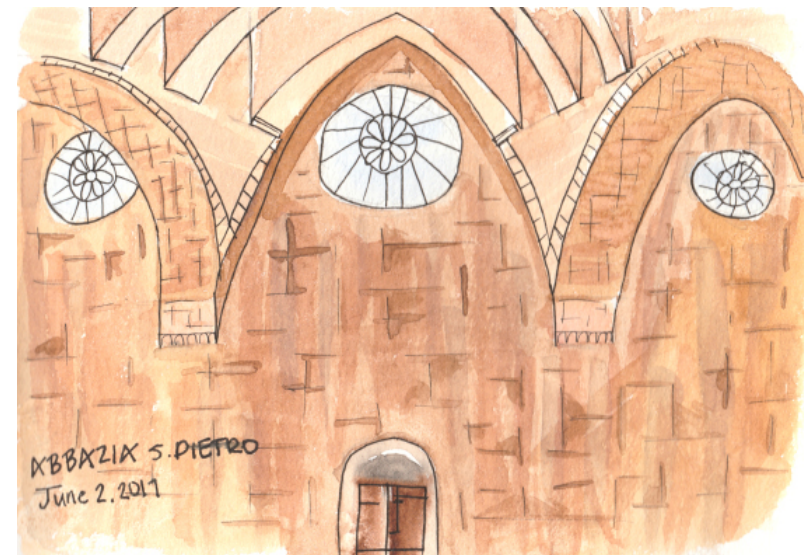


Nave of Santa Pietro





Santa Pietro's dome



Interior entrance of Santa Pietro



Apse of Santa Pietro