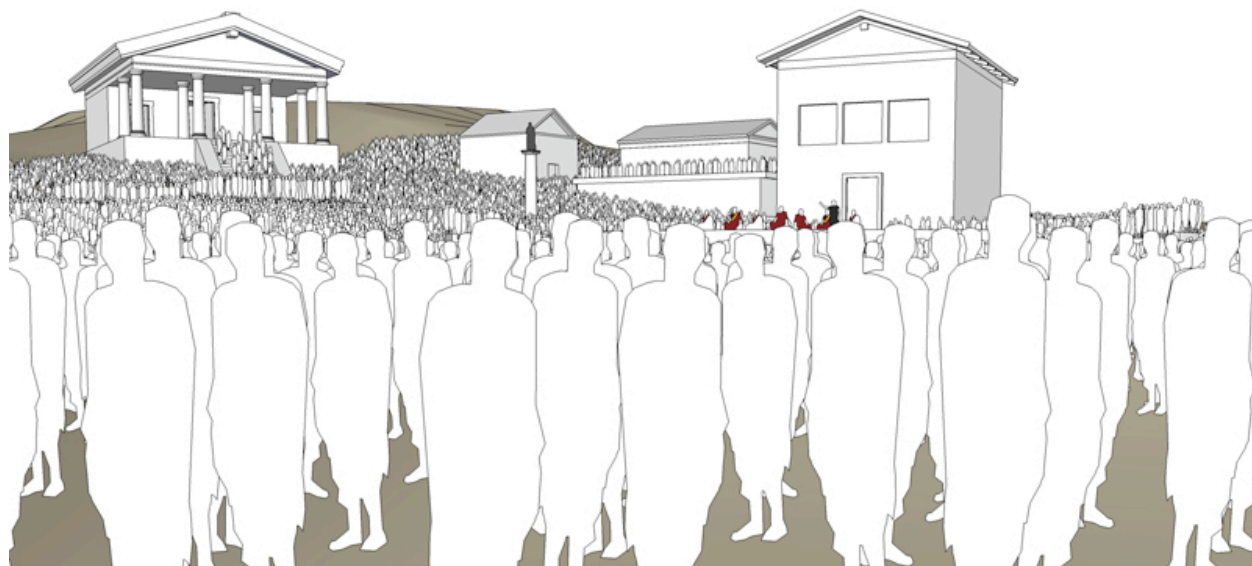


I. Overview of the Discipline-Specific Project

The Roman aristocratic funeral of the Republic was an incredible show. It packaged the Roman spectacular trifecta, the procession, the eulogy and the subsequent games, which comprised gladiatorial and dramatic performances. While each of these components of the funeral has received individual treatment—in the case of the gladiatorial games, extensive—no detailed, comprehensive discussion of the aristocratic funeral of the Republic exists. Moreover, before gladiatorial games were held in the Colosseum and before dramatic performances were staged in a monumental theater, they were first held in ad hoc venues in the heart of Rome. No attempt has been made to situate the phenomenon within its surrounding context, the Roman Forum. My current digital/analog manuscript project, *Spectacle in the Forum: the Roman Aristocratic Funeral of the Middle Republic*, offers the first attempt to study the mid-Republican funeral in its totality and, in so doing, examines the most significant aspects of spectacular stagecraft of the Roman Republic.



II. The Intellectual Problem

Spectacle has received considerable attention in recent years, but its study has been marred by deficiencies in method. Classics scholar Richard Beacham pinpoints the problem: “Spectacle is three-dimensional and sequential, realized by taking place over a period of time, and its place, circumstance, and unfolding fundamentally shape what an audience both expects and experiences.”¹ Ritual parades, political speeches, and religious rites are well described in ancient texts and frequently depicted in art. Yet, most spatial and spectacular analyses attempt to reconstruct the monuments, imagery, actors and audience, which are inherently kinetic and multi-dimensional (changing over space and time), by means of textual description and two-dimensional plans.

¹ Beacham, Richard C. 1999. *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome*. New Haven: Yale University Press: 24.

The impact of monumental structures on Roman performers and their audiences, what could and could not be seen during their performance, as well as the significance of *monumenta memoriae*, directly affected the shows when first performed, and the reading and interpretation of the records subsequently examined by scholars. Performance “stages” of the mid-Republic were ephemeral: extant temple podia, elevated balconies, and hillsides, might serve as *caveae*. Simple temporary structures may have been all that was needed to mount a production.

Three-dimensional digital models offer a partial solution. For this project I create a multiplicity of possible reconstructions, each with internal variables for stage size, location, audience arrangement, and blocking. This project interrogates the spectacular performance spaces of the Middle Republic to ask how and where were Roman plays, orations, and gladiatorial performances staged in the Roman Forum, and how did the setting (or settings) affect the meaning and reception of these events.

III. The Methodological Approach

The project uses a digital laboratory for phenomenological investigation *and* a digital publication platform that allows for multi-dimensional, geo-temporal argumentation.

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL LABORATORY. There are now a growing number of projects that have used computerized reconstructions to visualize Imperial Rome. There have been very few similar attempts to represent the Republican city, and hardly any that make scholarly arguments set within the digital reconstructions. Most reconstruction projects tend to focus on the creation of the digital model informed by scholarship as the ultimate goal.² Instead, my project uses hypothetical reconstructions as a digital laboratory. By injecting historical context—the performers and the audience—into the digital environment, I transform the quantifiable elements of the ephemeral experience of ancient spectacle into a digital object fit for experiential analysis. I use the hypothetical reconstructions (many of which have already been built and deployed in various real-time environments and online publications) as a digital laboratory, within which I explore the staging of Roman spectacle and develop the digital toolset necessary for scholarly interrogation and publication of spatial and experiential arguments.

GEO-TEMPORAL ARGUMENTATION. Though one can use a laboratory built out of virtual world infrastructure to experiment, a researcher cannot (yet) “publish” the entirety of a laboratory experience and call it scholarly communication. Rather, the laboratory is the space where the research occurs; the results must be woven together into a narrative in order to engage with the larger scholarly conversation. Nonetheless, a text and image narrative is insufficient to convey the totality of the proposed kinetic and temporal subject matter. When the experience and creation of kinetic transitions are fundamental to an understanding of an argument the reader must, quite simply, walk in the footsteps of the authors in order to participate in the debate, critique the result, and modify the

² For a detailed analysis, see Johanson, Christopher. 2009. Visualizing History: Modeling in the Eternal City. *Visual Resources: An International Journal of Documentation*. 25(4): 403-418.

conclusions. Most important, in order to validate and verify the experience, the argument must be situated within an environment rooted in a geographic coordinate system. The coordinate system functions in a fashion similar to the citation of a source text in a more traditional, text-based historical argument; it is a means to be used by the reader for testing and refuting. For example, one can claim that surveyed plans made by experts are the basis for a visualization of the in situ remains, but there is no guarantee that this is so. In the world of texts, an author can cite a source, produce the original text with apparatus criticus, translate to demonstrate what he or she thinks it means, and then comment on it. In the visual world of digital modeling, with multiple types of source material, the GIS is a step toward a similar methodological system.

IV. The Technology and the Collaborative Project

As is always the case, digital humanities projects are collaborative endeavors. My “manuscript” project provides the domain-specific area of inquiry, but the digital platforms that facilitate the research are part of two, larger collaborative efforts of which I am but one of a number of co-investigators.

VIRTUAL WORLD RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT: Our multi-university research consortium, formed from winning entries in Harnessing Virtual Worlds for Arts and Humanities (<http://bit.ly/9FiaTD>), has selected OpenSim as the primary virtual world development platform. The project builds on a robust database of previously constructed digital models at UCLA and at collaborating institutions. New digital models of the Republican Forum are being built in Sketchup, Presagis Creator, Rhino, and 3Ds Max. In addition, individual, moveable components representing avatars, temporary stages, temporary seating, and statuary, are being created. Using Nugraf 3D translation software the old databases and the new constructions will be merged to form the core content for the digital laboratory.

GEOTEMPORAL PUBLICATION PLATFORM: The research results and assessment will be published within HyperCities, a geo-temporal content aggregation and publication platform (<http://www.hypercities.com>). Rather than create an entirely new digital humanities tool, “chapters” from my manuscript are being used as case-studies to guide the development of 3D narrative and mark-up tools within the HyperCities platform that will facilitate exploration of the data and publication of this new form of scholarly inquiry. We anticipate a mid-summer release of the working 3D system.

V. Project Samples

- For the geo-aware 3D content, (Google Earth Required):
<http://www.etc.ucla.edu/research/projects/UCLAETC.kml>
- For a rough, sample narrative: <http://hypercities.ats.ucla.edu/#collections/8641>
- An experiment in geo-temporal argumentation is now available in the inaugural issue of a new hybrid print/digital issue of the *JSAH*:
<http://caliber.ucpress.net/doi/abs/10.1525/jsah.2010.69.1.12>