

***“Focusing on the Forum”
Walk across the Roman Forum
from the Capitol Hill
(Campidoglio) to the Colosseum
and back***

- *Enhancing a photographic archive through tracing thematic routes*
- *The case of the Archive of the General Directorate of Antiquity and Fine Arts (MPI)*





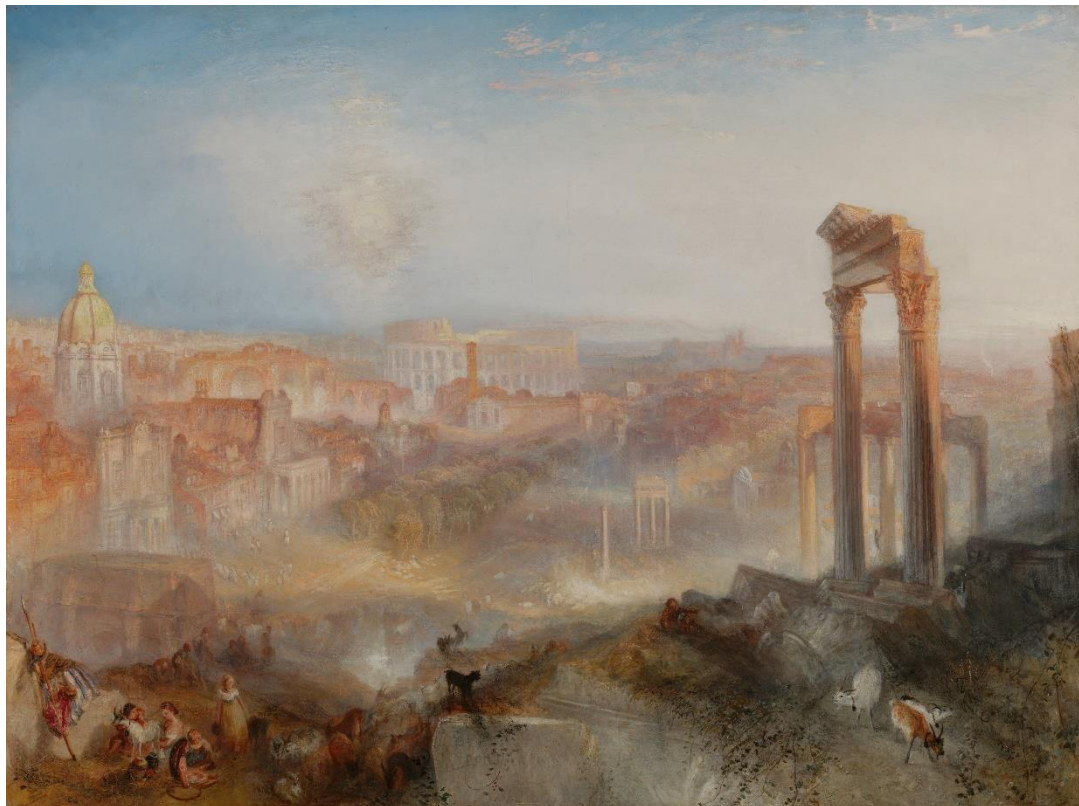
Claude Lorrain, Campo Vaccino, 1636, Paris, Louvre





G.B. Piranesi, *Campo Vaccino*, etching, around 1750, Rome, Senate of the Republic





W. Turner, *Campo Vaccino*, 1839, London, Tate Modern

The monuments of Rome have represented an irresistible attraction for researchers of any nationality for centuries. The city was the favorite and final destination of the **grand tour**, the long trip around continental Europe that rich European aristocracy (later also American) and artists would take, starting from the XVII century until the XIX century, with the purpose of improving their knowledge. The length of the trip was not well-defined, and usually the final destination was Italy, and particularly Rome. Travelers were yearning for Rome because of its classical beauty but also for its medieval, Renaissance and Baroque monuments.





General view of the Roman Forum from Senatorial Palace, gelatin silver print, before 1900

The whole area of the Forum appears under excavation. The works brought the Forum to its original construction level. Part of the houses between the Curia Iulia and the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina have already been demolished.

The view is wide and includes in the foreground, three columns of the Temple of Vespasian and Titus, on the right the Temple of Saturn, on the left the Arch of Septimius Severus. The column of Foca is almost located on the central vertical axis of the picture.

Within the **Photographic Fund of the General Directorate of Antiquity and Fine Arts** of the Ministry of Education, in the R partition- Rome toponym, there is a significant group of photographs and photographic series depicting symbolic places of Ancient Rome. The photographs were taken during approximately one century, from the beginning of photography until about the year 1960.

The photographs that we will look at in these slides belong to a period of time which goes from the second half of the 1800s until about the year 1920/30.

The shots belong to photographers who usually founded commercial ateliers that worked with extended public which was mainly composed of travelers.

The shots tend to repeat some favourite points of view, already used in pictorial, graphic and chalcographic iconography.

Shots from innovative, unusual and unconventional points of view are rare.

The **Forum** represents the topic by excellence, whose views contributed to create the image of Rome in a broad sense.





Carlo Baldassarre Simelli, View of the Roman Forum facing the Capitol hill, albumen print, circa 1880-1890., (Becchetti Collection).

The photographs for the reproduction of Rome's monuments gave birth to the specific sector of Archaeological photography. This sector permitted, through the images, the comparative study of the monuments. The first one who started producing this kind of photographic documentation was the roman photographer **Carlo Baldassarre Simelli**, with his catalogue on Rome's christian antiquities (1864).





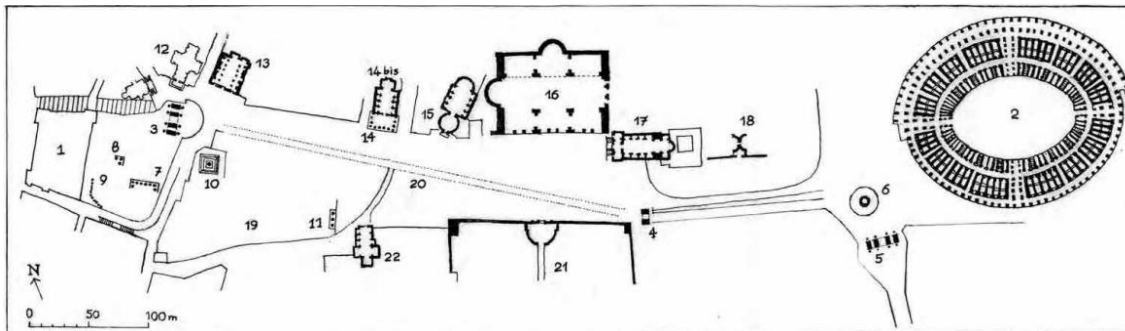
Carlo Baldassarre Simelli, View of the Flavian Amphitheater, albumen print, circa 1860-1875, (Becchetti Collection).

John Henry Parker was the researcher who managed to organize an actual photographic campaign of all the archaeological monuments of Rome and surroundings. The campaign lasted over ten years, and for the realization of this expensive and ambitious project, Parker worked with many local prominent professionals like Baldassarre Simelli, who with him worked for a long time. Critics suppose that Simelli himself could have inspired this magnificent photographic-archaeological project. ICCD stores memory of Parker's work in two different photographic funds: the Becchetti collection and the GFN –Tuminello fund.



PIANTA DEI MONUMENTI PRINCIPALI DEL FORO ROMANO
(SITUAZIONE AL 1880 CIRCA)

1. Palazzo Senatorio costruito sui resti del Tabularium.
2. Anfiteatro Flavio (Colosseo).
3. Arco di Settimio Severo.
4. Arco di Tito.
5. Arco di Costantino.
6. Meta Sudans.
7. Tempio di Saturno.
8. Tempio di Vespasiano e Tito.
9. Portico degli Dei Consenti.
10. Colonna di Foca.
11. Tempio dei Dioscuri Castore e Polluce.
12. Chiesa dei Santi Martina e Luca.
13. Curia - Sant'Adriano.
14. Tempio di Antonino e Fustina.
- 14bis. Chiesa di San Lorenzo in Miranda.
15. Tempio del Divo Romolo - Chiesa dei Santi Cosma e Damiano.
16. Basilica di Massenzio.
17. Chiesa di Santa Maria Nova (San Francesca Romana).
18. Tempio di Venere e Roma.
19. Area della Basilica Giulia.
20. Tracciato della Via Sacra.
21. Orti Farnese sul Palatino.
22. Chiesa di Santa Maria Liberatrice.



Map of the main monuments of the Roman Forum (situation around 1880)

After 1870, Pietro Rosa, appointed by the new government, started the excavation of the Roman Forum, bringing to light the entire Basilica Giulia, part of the Temple of Castor and Pollux, the Temple of Caesar and the Column of Foca; in 1872-73 he also uncovered the middle layer of the Forum, where he found the **Anaglyfa Traiani** (Plutei of Trajan) stuck under a medieval tower, to which they served as base.





View of the Forum taken from the Capitol Hill facing east, albumen print, circa 1870.

In the image we can still see part of the row of trees of Campo Vaccino, which was later completely cut down to allow archaeological excavations in the whole area of the Forum. On the left, between the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina and S. Maria Nova church, some buildings are still standing: they will be soon demolished. We can still see the road which passed behind the Temple of Saturn, demolished around the year 1880.

From the Senatorial Palace to the Colosseum (crossing the Forum from west to east)

One of the most recurring shots for nineteenth-century photographers: the emblem of the Forum. We don't have previous paintings or graphics with the same composition. The **Temple of Saturn** in the foreground; on the left, through the Temple's columns, and particularly between the last two columns on the right, the portico of the **Temple of Antoninus and Faustina**. In the background in the center, sequentially from left to right: the **Colosseum**, the belltower and the façade of **S. Maria Nova church**, **Arch of Titus**, the three columns of the **Temple of Castor and Pollux**.





View of the Forum and of the via Sacra facing the Colosseum, the chiesetta degli Amanti di Gesù e Maria al Monte Calvario (church of Lovers), the Basilica of Maxentius and the church of S. Maria Nova, albumen print, before 1877.

View of the Forum and via Sacra facing the Colosseum

Rare and emblematic image of carts transporting the leftover earth from the excavation of the Roman Forum. The demolition of the buildings backed against the Temple of Romulus and the Basilica of Maxentius have started, including the house close to the small church on the left which is being demolished by workers. A significant element which helps dating, is the presence of the small **chiesetta degli Amanti di Gesù e Maria al Monte Calvario (church of Lovers)**. The church will be soon after demolished (1877) and only two columns in front of the main entrance will remain.





G. Brogi, *View of the Forum from the Capitol Hill*, albumen print, 1877-1878.

General view of the area of the Forum from the Capitol Hill. The shot is facing north-east

This typology of view is the most common adopted by nineteenth-century photographers (horizontal panoramic format) as general image of the Forum facing the Colosseum.

In the foreground the structures of the Portico of the Consenti and the road which passes through the columns of the Temple of Vespasian and Titus on one side and, on the other side, the Temple of Saturn and the Arch of Septimius Severus. The road was built to replace the one which passed on the opposite side of the Temple of Saturn.



The Arch of Septimius Severus and the Curia – S. Adriano

Partial view of the Arch of Septimius Severus towards the Colosseum. On the left S. Adrian church, which used to be the Curia Iulia (ancient seat of the Roman Senate, located at the end of the short side of the Forum). On the right we see the area of the Basilica Giulia, while, the most peculiar aspect of this shot is the view of the Arch of Titus, framed inside the central opening of the Arch of Septimius Severus. The first photographers liked to frame important monuments inside the opening of another monument in the foreground (we'll see more examples).



Anderson, Arch of Septimius Severus and the Curia Iulia taken from Campidoglio road, albumen print, before 1899.





Anderson, Partial view of the north western area of the Forum, taken from the Capitol Hill with the church of Luca and Martina, the Arch of Septimius Severus and the columns of the Temple of Vespasian and Titus, albumen print, around 1870 ?

**View of the north western area of the Forum
taken from the Capitol Hill**

On the left we see part of SS. Luca e Martina Church, in the center the Arch of di Septimius Severus and the columns of the Temple of Vespasian and Titus in the foreground.





Anderson, Roman Forum, Plutei of Trajan, albumen print, after 1872.

Plutei of Trajan

Found in 1872, both plutei remained in the Forum before being transferred inside the Curia Iulia where they are still preserved today. In this shot, the first pulpit is represented, which illustrates *The distribution of food* by the Emperor. The detail of the façade of S. Maria Nova church is peculiar: the church is framed within the interruption of the balustrade.





Roman Forum, Excavation at the church of S. Lorenzo in Miranda (already Temple of Antoninus and Faustina), albumen print, 1876.

Excavation near the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina – S. Lorenzo in Miranda church

The shot shows the area of the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina, before the demolition of the wall in front of the temple. The wall was demolished to clear the façade. The works took place in 1876.





Roman Forum, Excavation at the church of S. Lorenzo in Miranda (already Temple of Antoninus and Faustina), albumen print, 1876.

Excavation near the Temple of Antonino and Faustina – S. Lorenzo in Miranda church

The shot shows the façade of the Temple by then cleared from the wall which covered its view.

The photograph is shot from the same point of view of the previous photo-type, with the obvious purpose to document the area, before and after the excavations.



View of the Arch of Titus, belltower of S. Maria Nova church and Colosseum, gelatin silver print, circa 1900.

Southern view of the Arch of Titus

This shot is different from the classical framing of the Arch of Titus, usually taken facing its front, from west to east.





(Ed. Alinari) N. 27039. ROMA - Foro Romano. Arco di Tito - Particolare del centro con veduta del Colosseo.

Alinari, Arch of Titus framing the Colosseum, detail, gelatin silver print, 1890-1910

The Arch of Titus from west, framing the Colosseum through its main arch

This typology of shot, was introduced later. Twentieth century photographers, like Luciano Morpurgo, will take shots from this point of view.





Brogi, View of the Colosseum, Meta Sudans and Arch of Constantine from the slopes of the Palatine, albumen print, before 1878.

View of the Colosseum and the Valley, Meta Sudans and Arch of Constantine taken from the slopes of the Palatine

Partial view of the western area of the Forum.

Headstone of Pope Pius IX placed in 1852 on the second ring, north-western side, in memory of the restoration works carried out by the pope previously, that same year.





Brogi, View of the Colosseum, northern side, albumen print, before 1878.

The Colosseum in its magnificence, taken from the northern side which preserves, in its entirety, the external upper ring. To the far left end, the western spur made by Raffaele Stern.



Anderson, View of the Arch of Constantine from the Colosseum square, albumen print, before 1899.

Northern view of the Arch of Constantine

The arch is photographed from the side of the Colosseum. In the background S. Gregorio road takes to the Circus Maximus, on the right: the Palatine Hill.





Arch of Constantine facing Colosseum square, albumen print, circa 1875.

Arch of Constantine facing Colosseo square

This shot shows a Southern view of the Arch of Constantine taken from S. Gregorio street. The Colosseum is on the right side, out of the shot; on the left the Palatine Hill. In some similar views, the shot includes the Colosseum on the right.

The Arch is shot from the front, the point of view is slightly moved to the right (east). Through the central arch the Meta Sudans is visible.





General view of the Forum taken from the belltower of the church of S. Maria Nova, albumen print, 1880-1900.

Walk across the Forum from east to west (from the Colosseum to the Senatorial Palace): general view of the Forum taken from the belltower of S. Maria Nova church (or S. Francesca Romana)

The privileged point of view offers the entire panorama of the area of the Forum with all its monuments and ruins. Some elements are particularly significant to understand the purpose of the shot, which presumably was aimed at testifying the situation of the Forum after the excavations of the last quarter of 1800. The fact we can see the Church of S. Maria Liberatrice still intact, close to the median area of the Forum, tells us that the photograph was shot before the year 1900, when the church was demolished to uncover the church of S. Maria Antiqua.





Arch of Titus taken from east with the bastions of the Farnese Garden in the background, albumen print, circa 1870.

Eastern view of the Arch of Titus

Behind the arch, the balustrade of the Farnese Gardens (Orti Farnesiani), is very well visible; it will be demolished around 1882-1883 to allow excavations in that area of the Forum (within the greatest project of reunification of Palatine-Forum-Capitol Hill ever made). The monumental gate by Vignola was dismantled and reassembled a long time after, around 1959, on S. Gregorio street, to be placed as entrance gate for the archaeological area of the Palatine.





Alinari, Arch of Titus taken from east, albumen print, circa 1890.

Eastern view of the Arch of Titus

In the background the balustrades of the Farnese Gardens (Orti Farnesiani) are no longer present, they were demolished around 1882-1883



Arch of Titus from south-east, albumen print, circa 1870.

South-Eastern view of Arch of Titus

In the background, we can see the tower of the Senatorial Palace framed within the Arch. The presence of the trees, the famous row of trees, planted by Pius IX, catches the eye. On the right we can still see the buildings in the direction of the Temple of Divus Romulus and the Basilica of Maxentius, amongst which the church of the Lovers.



South-eastern shot of the Arch of Titus, gelatin silver print, after 1927.

Arch of Titus taken from south east

Compared to the previous photograph, this shot is almost frontal and the view within the arch is clear. Through the Arch in the background, the Senatorial Palace is framed. In front of it, the columns of the Temples of Saturn Vespasian and Titus, as well as the Column of Foca. The buildings on the right, which were in the direction of the temple of Romulus, have disappeared. The chariot on the top of Victor Emmanuel II National Monument are a dating element. The two bronze chariots were lifted on top of the Monument in 1927. The construction of the Monument dedicated to Victor Emmanuel II, king and father of Italy, as well as national symbol, started in 1885 and were completed in 1935. However, the monument was inaugurated and opened to the public already in 1911.





Western area of the Forum with the temple of Septimius Severus and the Senatorial Palace, albumen print, circa 1872.

North-eastern shot of the Western area of the Forum, with the Temple of Septimius Severus and the Senatorial Palace in the background

Wide view which includes the newly rediscovered Plutei of Trajan, the column of Foca, the Temples of Saturn, Vespasian and Titus, the Portico of the Consenti, as well as the Arch of Septimius Severus which are beyond the road passing over the Temple of Saturn, later demolished. The plutei are still placed on this side of the road, while later they will be positioned at the base of the Arch together with the Column of Foca which was also moved back.





Anderson, Arch of Septimius Severus with the Pulpits of Trajan, albumen print, before 1899.

Arch of Septimius Severus

The photograph was taken after the demolition of the road which passed between the front of the Temple of Saturn and the Arch of Septimius Severus. The Pulpits of Trajan have been moved in front of the Arch. On the right we can see the façade of the church of SS. Luca and Martina, on the left is the column of Foca, moved back in relation to the previous shot and now located closer to the Arch.

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