Emperors and Personnages

Septimius Severus: African-born emperor 193-211. Paid little heed to Senate, much to the army. Campaigned in Syria and England. Triumphal arches at Rome (203) and at his hometown of Lepcis Magna (ca. 203-207) commemorate his Persian victories. A small and ornate arch dedicated by the Argentarii (silversmiths) survives in Rome; it has passageway reliefs which depict the Severan family sacrificing. Septimius built much in North Africa, especially at Lepcis Magna. In portraiture continued qualities described above under Commodus.

Caracalla: Brutal son of Septimius Severus, ruled 211-217. Granted citizenship to all males in Empire in 212, built Baths of Caracalla at Rome 212-216. His images show him glowering.

Alexander Severus: Emperor 222-235; his mother Julia Mamaea actually ruled in his stead. When killed with her in 235, 50 year period of Civil Wars began (235-283).

Philip the Arab: Emperor 244-249. His portrait in the Vatican is a justly famous example of the abstracted, momentary and impressionistic images which attempt to show spirituality during the "Age of Anxiety" (235-283).

Gallienus: Ruled 253-268 (until 260 co-emperor with his father Valerian). His portraits show a mixture of 3rd century style (the "spiritual" eyes) with a revival of the classicistic imagery of imperial portraits of the early empire.

Diocletian: Ruled 283-305, retired to his palace at Split. His reforms revitalized the Late Empire and kept it intact for another century and a half. Made the emperor into an absolute autocrat and semi-god. Rebuilt the Curia in the Forum, built huge baths at Rome (298-306) and his retirement palace at Split at Yugoslavia (ca. 300-306).

Tetrarchy: Diocletian's attempt to solve the administrative and military problems faced by the Late Empire, and also to insure the peaceful succession of imperial rule. There were two Augusti (East and West), each with a younger Caesar to assist him. In theory, each Caesar would eventually replace the Augustus and choose a new Caesar. Established in 293, it began to break down soon after Diocletian's retirement in 305 and was defunct by 313. Portraits of the Tetrarchs stress their unity by making them look alike, and often use symbolic materials like porphyry (a purple stone). The style of the period of the Tetrarchy (ca. 283-313) is notable for its cubic, symmetrical, powerful and generic qualities (Porphyry bust of "Licinius", Venice and Vatican Tetrarchs).

Constantine the Great: Ruled western empire 312-324, both halves of empire 324-336. In 330 officially founded a new capital at Constantinople. Known for the Arch and Basilica dedicated in his name in Rome, imperial palace and other structures at Trier in Germany (306-325). His portraiture imitates that of Trajan in a generic way (i.e. the large marble Head from the Basilica of Constantine, Rome), and seems to have fostered a classicistic revival. Converted in Christianity, at least nominally, in 312, baptized on his deathbed.
Theodosius I: Ruled 378-395 from Constantinople. Issued Edict of Milan in 390 outlawing sacrifices to the pagan gods (which made Christianity the official religion of the Empire). "Theodosian Classicism" is a term often used to characterize the smooth, superficially Classical and elongated figures found in Roman art of the second half of the 4th century, and can be seen on Theodosius' missorium of 388. His column base in the Hipodrome at Constantinople (390-393) shows a similar facial style, although the figures somewhat stumpy proportions and frontality remind one of the Arch of Constantine.

Plotinus: Neo-Platonic philosopher of the 3rd century A.D. who believed that divine essence controlling the cosmos could be experienced mystically through study and contemplation. This belief inspired the philosopher sarcophagi common during the third century A.D. (see the sarcophagus from Sidamara in Asia Minor; consular procession sarcophagus from Rome--the so-called sarcophagus of Gordian III). A "soul" portrait which may depict him survives.

Buildings in Rome and Environs

Baths of Caracalla: Built 212-216 on a huge scale. Brick-faced concrete on the exterior, the interior was opulently decorated with much sculpture and mosaics. Plan is very symmetrical, but shows the Roman interest in provocative interior spaces, especially the huge Frigidarium and the circular Caldarium.

Baths of Diocletian: Huge baths built 298-306 in Rome. Even larger than the Baths of Caracalla, whose plan they closely follow. Diocletian's Baths are, however, less daring in their creation of curvilinear rooms.

Basilica of Constantine: Begun by Maxentius beside the Temple of Venus and Roma at the eastern end of the Forum in 307. Finished and dedicated in Constantine's name in 314. The enormous vaults of the Basilica recall the frigidaria of imperial baths. One apse contained the famous colossal seated statue of Constantine whose fragments are now in the Conservatori Museum.

Catacombs: Underground tunnels cut into the soft rock around Rome. These tunnels contain tomb niches (locali) and chambers (cubicula). Catacombs were the most common burial grounds at Rome during the 3rd and 4th centuries; a number of them are Christian and preserve painted decoration.

House of Cupid and Psyche, Ostia: A small private house built ca. 300 and notable for its elaborate decoration of multi-colored stone paneling. Has a large fountain room (nymphaeum) and a statuary group of Cupid and Psyche kissing.

Old St. Peter's, Rome: Five-aisled timber-roofed basilica begun by Constantine on the site of St. Peter's tomb. Completed ca. 400, it had a transept above the tomb roofed at the same height as the nave to allow more space for pilgrims. The church proper was preceded by a colonnaded entry court called the atrium.

Santa Costanza, Rome: Round mausoleum built for Constantine's daughter Constantina ca. 340 by the Church of St. Agnes. Of brick-faced concrete, with a central dome framed by a vaulted aisle, it clearly derives from the Roman traditions of vaulted architecture. Also preserves
interesting aisle mosaics of immortality motifs taken from pagan art. Her porphyry sarcophagus has relief decoration of Cupids making wine.

Provincial Places of Interest

**Thessaloniki**: City in northern Greece where Galerius erected a triumphal arch and Mausoleum ca. 300. Latter later became a church; the arch preserves interesting scenes of Galerius' eastern campaigns in a hierarchical style.

**Lepcis Magna**: City in modern Libya where Septimius Severus was born. Already very rich by the end of the 2nd century, Lepcis throve under Septimius' patronage (196-211). He built a large forum and basilica complex (the Severan Forum), a new harbor, and had a triumphal arch there. The artisans who worked on these buildings came from the eastern empire.

**Baalbek**: Great Sanctuary in Syria dedicated to Jupiter Heliopolitanus (actually the local Ba'al). Huge peripteral temple to Jupiter was built by A.D. 60, then a large rectangular *atrium* was added to the complex in the second century. The complex was completed by a propylon (gateway) with a hexagonal court in the early 3rd century. Next to the Sanctuary of Jupiter is the Temple of Bacchus (2nd century) which features an elaborate treatment of its interior walls similar to the screen facades popular in Asia Minor. Across a street from the two temples, a small and elaborate circular temple of Venus was built during the mid-3rd century.

**Ephesus**: Great city on the west coast of Asia Minor. The Library of Celsus (ca. 120) featured an elaborate screen facade, a type of decorative front favored in the architecture of Roman Asia Minor.

**Constantinople**: City founded by Constantine in 324 on the site of Greek Byzantium on the Bosporus (the narrow strait separating the Black and Aegean Seas). The capital was moved there in 330. Intended to be the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, it quickly surpassed Rome in importance and became the "New Rome" which led the Byzantine Empire (ca. 400-1453).

**Trier**: City on the Moselle River in Germany, from 293-312 a Tetrarchic capital city. Constantine built an imperial palace there in the early 4th century, including a notable brick audience hall (*Aula Regia*, so-called Basilica) and baths. He may also have built a monumental city gate (the *Porta Nigra*, or Black Gate).

**Split**: City on the west coast of Yugoslavia, site of Diocletian's fortress-like retirement palace built ca. 300-306. It is notable for the extreme symmetry of its layout.

**Piazza Armerina**: Sprawling villa in central Sicily built ca. 320. Notable for its mosaic floors by artists from North Africa. These include many hunting scenes (Loading an Ostrich, and The Master of the Hunt), but also mythological and genre scenes (the "Bikini Girls") in a lively, expressionistic style.

**Dura Europus**: Small city on the Syrian border which was part of the Roman Empire from 165 to 256, when it was destroyed by the Sassanians. Contained one of the earliest Christian churches, including painted walls, and a synagogue painted with scenes of the Old Testament.

**Names and Monuments Useful for Roman Art, A.D. 193-400**
The style of both is non-naturalistic and based on the hieratic Near Eastern style, with little real space and hierarchical proportions.

**Peoples and God**

**Parthians**: Rulers of the Persian Empire from ca. 165 B.C. to A.D. 222. Frequently in conflict with the Roman Empire.

**Sassanians**: Rulers of the Persian Empire after 222. Caused much trouble for the Romans in the 3rd century, notably capturing the Emperor Valerian in 260.

**Serapis**: Egyptian savior god, patron of Septimius Severus, whose portraiture after A.D. 200 shows Serapis' characteristic three corkscrew locks over his forehead.

**Stylistic term**

**Late Antique Style**: A transitional style from Roman to Early Medieval Art. First seen in the later 2nd century (Column of Marcus Aurelius), characterized by disinterest in natural proportions of the human body, changes in scale and non-naturalistic, symmetrical, or hieratic compositions (such as frontality) to depict the relative status of characters, and the use of the "black and white" style (heavy use of the running drill to create strong pictorial effects of light and dark) in sculpture.

**Monuments**

**Arch of Sepimius Severus, Rome**: Arch at west end of the Forum dedicated in 203 which celebrated Severus' Parthian campaigns. Relief panels have "narrative" of campaigns in a Late Antique Style akin to that of the Column of Marcus Aurelius; star lumpy, stumpy figures.

**Arch of Septimius Severus, Lepcis Magna**: Four-way arch (quadrifrons) erected ca. 203-207 in Septimius Severus' home town to commemorate his eastern campaigns and virtues. Most important reliefs are on the attic, which show Late Antique traits such as frontal poses, increase of scale of important personnages, and hieratic compositions (i.e. central and most important figure framed by a figure to either side). Style, however, is rather classicistic (compare to Arch in Rome); done by eastern sculptors, probably from Aphrodisias.

**Badminton Sarcophagus**: Once in Badminton House in England, this sarcophagus of ca. 220 shows frontal nude personifications of the Seasons framing a central figure of Bacchus (Dionysos) on a panther. Despite the high polish and virtuoso "black and white" style treatment of the crowded composition, the figures' anatomy is spongy and shows the decline of the Classical feeling for the human anatomy.

**Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus**: Large sarcophagus of ca. 250 which shows a general waving goodbye as he rides unconcerned through a turbulent battle. Style Late Antique and expressionistic; the composition illustrates the increasing Late Antique unconcern for pictorial reality and concern for a dominant and obvious message.
Philosopher Sarcophagi: Common in the third century; illustrate the Neo-Platonic belief that study can achieve a mystical knowledge of god (see Plotinus above). Generally show the deceased enthroned reading, or are combined with a consular procession to illustrate status as well as learning.

Good Shepherd: during the third and the fourth centuries, catacomb paintings and sarcophagi depict the parable of the Good Shepherd as an allegory of Christian salvation.

Arch of Galerius, Tessaloniki: Triumphal arch c. 300 notable for the Late Antique style of its friezes, which look like sarcophagi stacked on top of each other..

Arch of Constantine, Rome: Dedicated to Constantine's victory over Maxentius in 312, finished by 315. Constructed mostly of materials scavenged from 2nd century monuments, including much sculpture. Lower zones of the Arch have Constantinian sculpture of Late Antique Style.

Faiyum Portraits: Portraits painted on wood to cover the faces of the deceased on mummies found in central Egypt from the late 1st century to the 4th century. Although of a rather generic character, they closely follow the development of contemporary imperial portraiture and illustrate the breadth of Classical style during the 2nd century. An interesting circular painting survives also from Egypt which shows the Severan family ca. 200; it is the only extant representative of what must once have been a common type of painting.

Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus: Christian sarcophagus of the Prefect (Mayor) of Rome, who died in 359. Shows stumpy but vaguely classicizing figures between columnar frames illustrating scenes of the Old and the New Testament. Much easier to "read" visually than earlier 4th century Christian sarcophagi, which have as style closer to the Constantinian work of Constantine's Arch and very crowded compositions.

Missorium of Theodosius I: Gilded silver dish presented to Theodosius in 388. Shows an elongated and elegant Theodosius enthroned in his palace with his sons (he's the big guy in the middle). Below reclines Mother Earth, a symbol of the fertility inspired by T's rule.

Column of Theodosius I: Base for an obelisk set up in the hippodrome (chariot racing stadium) in Constantinople ca. 390. Has relief depictions showing the frontal emperor watching the races and receiving tribute from the empire's enemies. Composition Late Antique, figures done in the surface classicism characteristic of so-called "Theodosian Classicism."

Great Plate, Mildenhall Treasure: Gilded silver tray found in England, dates to the second half of the 4th century. Depicts a Bacchic rout. Style fairly classicizing; illustrates the continuing strength of Paganism up to the end of the 4th century.