

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

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A great advantage of our Master of Science in Historic Preservation (MSHP) curriculum is the opportunity for students to spend a semester in Rome. While there, graduate student Eric Stalheim produced an urban design and conservation plan for the Forum Boarium, an area including the Temple of Portunus, the Temple of Hercules, and the Arch of Janus. Eric was so taken with the Eternal City, and Roman antiquities in particular, that he decided to pursue a thesis project based there in the Spring of 2017.



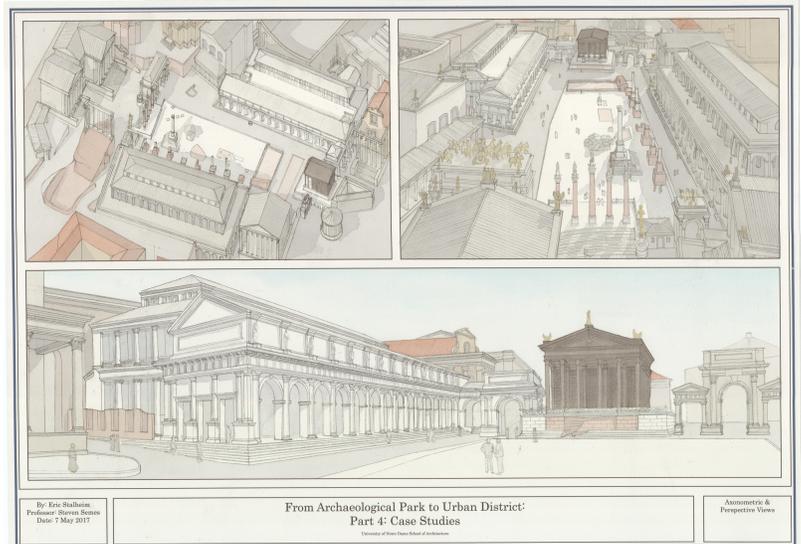
A Master's thesis in architectural and urban conservation set in the heart of ancient Rome, a World Heritage Site, raises many complex questions:

- How might the Roman Forum, now a gated tourist attraction isolated from the modern city and unusable by the city's citizens, become once again a center of civic life for residents, tourists, and scholars alike?
- If bringing new economic and cultural functions to the Forum would involve potential reconstruction of ancient structures, what criteria should be followed in deciding if this is appropriate and feasible, and under what conditions?

- What does international guidance on conservation have to say about restoration and reconstruction of monuments, and what precedents can we study to understand the potential benefits and hazards of this approach?
- Eric tackled these and other questions after completing extensive research on the Forum itself, on ancient Roman architecture and construction, and varied treatments of ancient monuments around the world. The research and the designs based on it were documented in a 289-page thesis book and a dozen large watercolor-rendered drawings, which he presented on May 9, 2017.

Eric focused on two case studies for more detailed investigation: the Basilica Aemilia, and the Temple of the Divine Julius Caesar. He found that the amount of original material and documentary evidence for the Basilica is comparable to that supporting the reconstruction of the Stoa of Attalos in Athens by the American School of Archaeology in the 1950s. This prompted him to propose a reconstruction of the basilica based on available physical and documentary evidence and attempting to reconcile differing graphic reconstructions proposed by archaeologists.

Eric's reconstruction, incorporating and building upon existing archaeological remains, would house a Museum of the Roman Forum while also being a means to interpret the history, design, and construction of the monument. Materials and building methods would be those used originally in order to train artisans in these specialized crafts and incorporate surviving ancient materials into a sympathetic new structure.



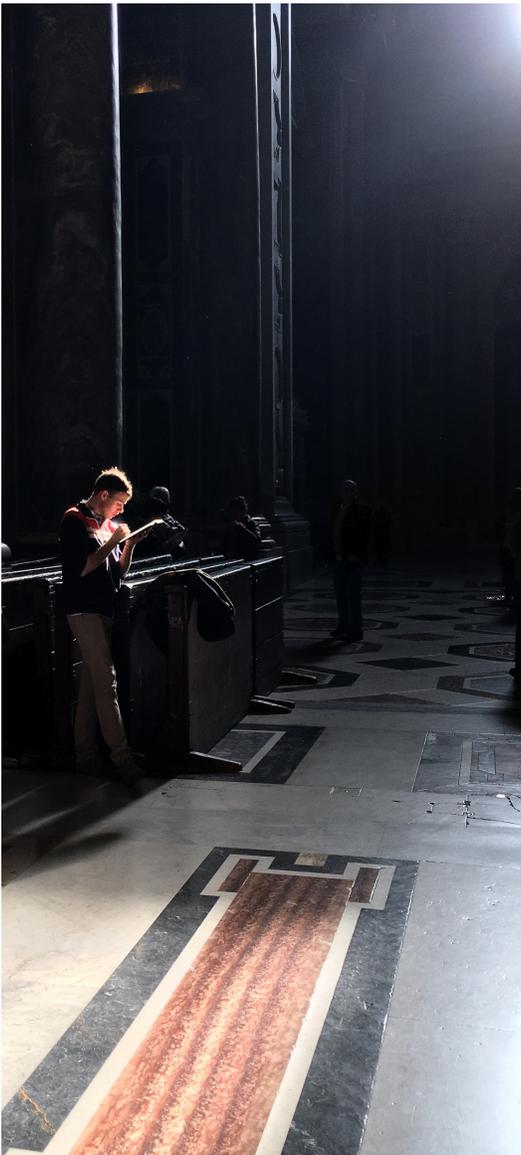
Because so little is known about the temple, Eric chose to protect the existing foundations in their current state and construct a new structure above them, occupying the same volume as the original temple and in a similar classical style, but employing modern materials like cast metal and glass. The new structure would protect the archaeological remains below while making possible a new civic use of the site, representing the previous volume of the temple and its podium without attempting to render its original material or detail.

Reconstruction remains highly controversial in the conservation field and was all but prohibited by the international Venice Charter of 1964. Part of Eric's research was to study the sequence of international Charters and other agreements, which have in recent decades allowed greater flexibility on this issue but still within narrow limits. Eric therefore approached his proposal as a hypothetical project: One can best understand the limitations of such a treatment by proposing it and, in the process, learning what we know and don't know about the site. One can then judge what it would take to accomplish a reconstruction that might be justified by that knowledge.

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This thesis study advances the intentions of the MSHP curriculum in several ways:

- Maintaining a view of the specific site's role in the city as a whole;
- Testing the limits and conditions of various conservation treatments by proposing them hypothetically and evaluating the potential consequences;
- Using graphic reconstruction as a tool for understanding a monument, its materials and construction, and its changes over time;
- Undertaking research combining physical and documentary evidence with knowledge of the architectural culture that produced the site and, in the process, bringing together the knowledge and skills of the historian, conservationist, and designer; and
- Maintaining an international outlook on conservation practices and norms, drawing on the experience and reasoning of academics and professionals from around the world.



In addition to the School of Architecture faculty, Eric also benefited from meetings with experts and professionals in conservation based in Rome, including Professor Paolo Vitti of the University of Roma Trè, who conducted an intensive tour of the Castel Sant'Angelo where he has been researching the original structure of the Mausoleum of Hadrian, much of which remains in place though hidden by later construction.

An Iowa native, Eric took his undergraduate degree in architecture from Iowa State University College of Design before coming to Notre Dame, where he earned the first Master of Science in Historic Preservation to be conferred in this new degree program.

He hopes to continue his engagement with conservation of antiquities through additional study and professional work in Europe.

To learn more about this thesis project or the MSHP program, please consult our website at architecture.nd.edu/mshp

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