Art and Text in Roman culture

- The Res Gestae was composed by Augustus as a first person record of his achievements.
- One version of it was inscribed on a pair of bronze pillars flanking his mausoleum at Rome.
- This original has not survived.
- However, copies of it were set up across the Roman empire, some of which have survived, including a copy (in both Latin and Greek translation) inscribed on the inner and outer walls of a temple to Augustus in Ancyra (in modern Turkey).

- There has always been a symbiosis between the will to power and monumental display.
- Monuments have the capacity to spread propaganda.
- Unlike the scholars, Mussolini grasped the essentially monumental quality of the Res Gestae as a text designed to be inscribed on or in from of buildings.
- Augustus used art, politics and propaganda to establish the first image of a new political system.
- The instructions on the images, which gave one an idea of how those should be read, were crucial in directing people in a certain way and ensure that a certain idea was passed on.
- While the role of inscriptions germane to the minimalistic propaganda of Augustus and is in own right a central aspect of the Augustan programme of self-presentation.
- The crucial significance of the Res Gestae as Augustus’ own comprehensive autobiography inscribed on a monument in midst of his other monuments in Rome has been underplayed.
- The Res Gestae served as a more than a visual representation of the emperor and empire within Rome: it was exported, translated, and inscribed on the walls of temples and dedicated to the imperial cult in the provinces.
- Like coins, these Romanocentric texts and images served as the common currency of Roman territories whose inhabitants had never been to the city, so the the Res Gestae imposed upon the inhabitants of citizens in Asia Minor an uncompromisingly Roman picture of the the city, the emperor and the world.
- In Rome, the Res Gestae stood as the inscription for the Mausoleum in the northern Campus Martius which housed the remains not only of the emperor but also of the imperial family.
- The very little of the inscription signals the apotheosis of Augustus → there are the Res Gestae Divi Augusti, the achievements of the deified Augustus.
- On top of the Mausoleum, as Strabo reports was a ‘bronze image of Augustus Caesar’. So that the Res Gestae were visually related to the statue of the man whose self-image the yexy propagated.
- The Horologium and the Res Gestae coincide in the text inscribed on the base of the Horologium obelisk which announces that Augustus brought Egypt under the dominion of the Roman people, emulating the text of the Res Gestae.
- Nicolet: brilliantly shows how the inscription evokes the conquest and subjugation of thw known world, with its list of no less than 55 geographical names collected in a taxonomy of dominion.
- The Res Gestae’s implicit injunctions about viewing, in the context of the new political order, parade the monumental and three-dimensional strategy by which Augustus invented an imperial system in Rome,