Twitter Thread by Gareth Harney



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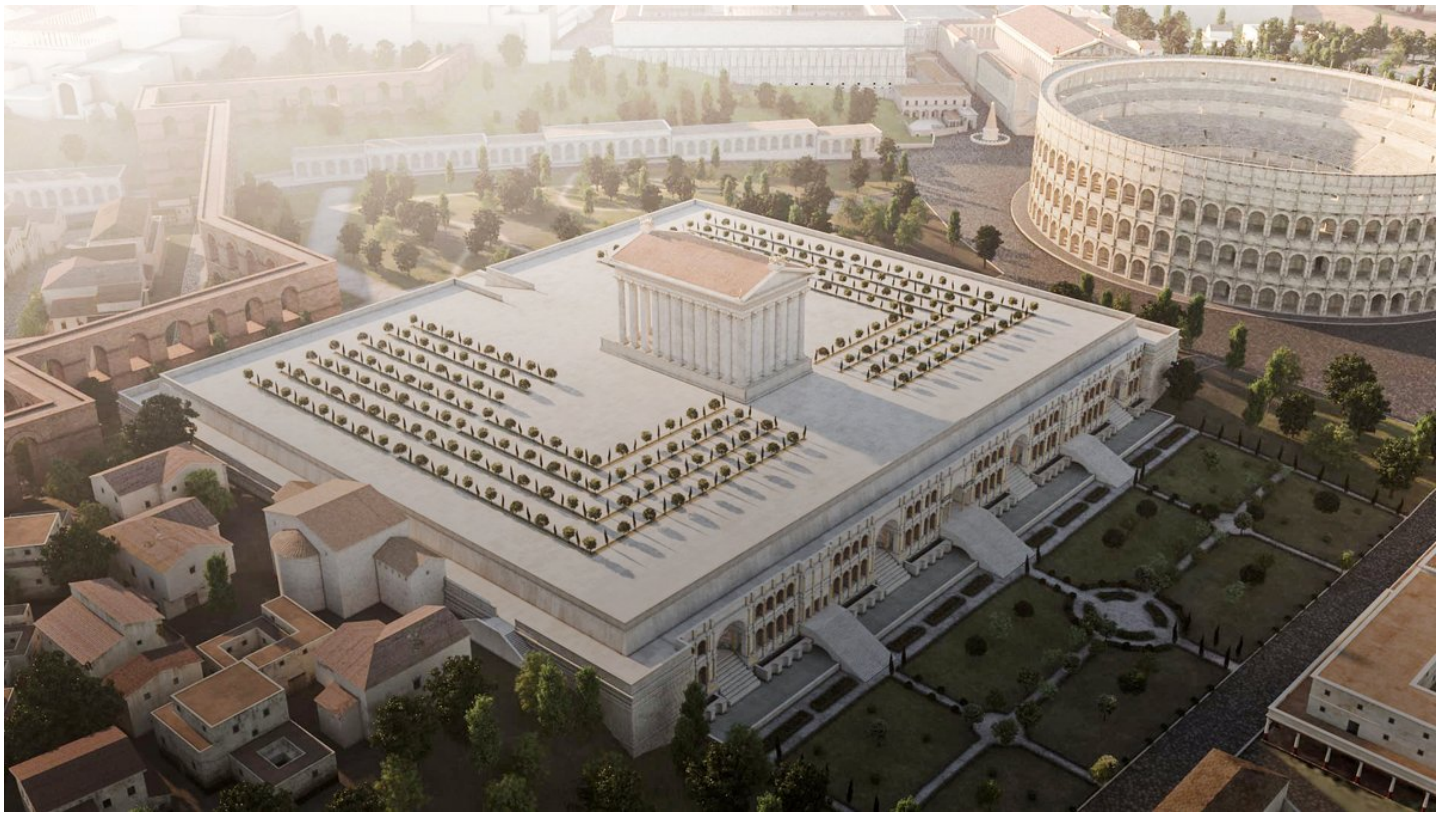
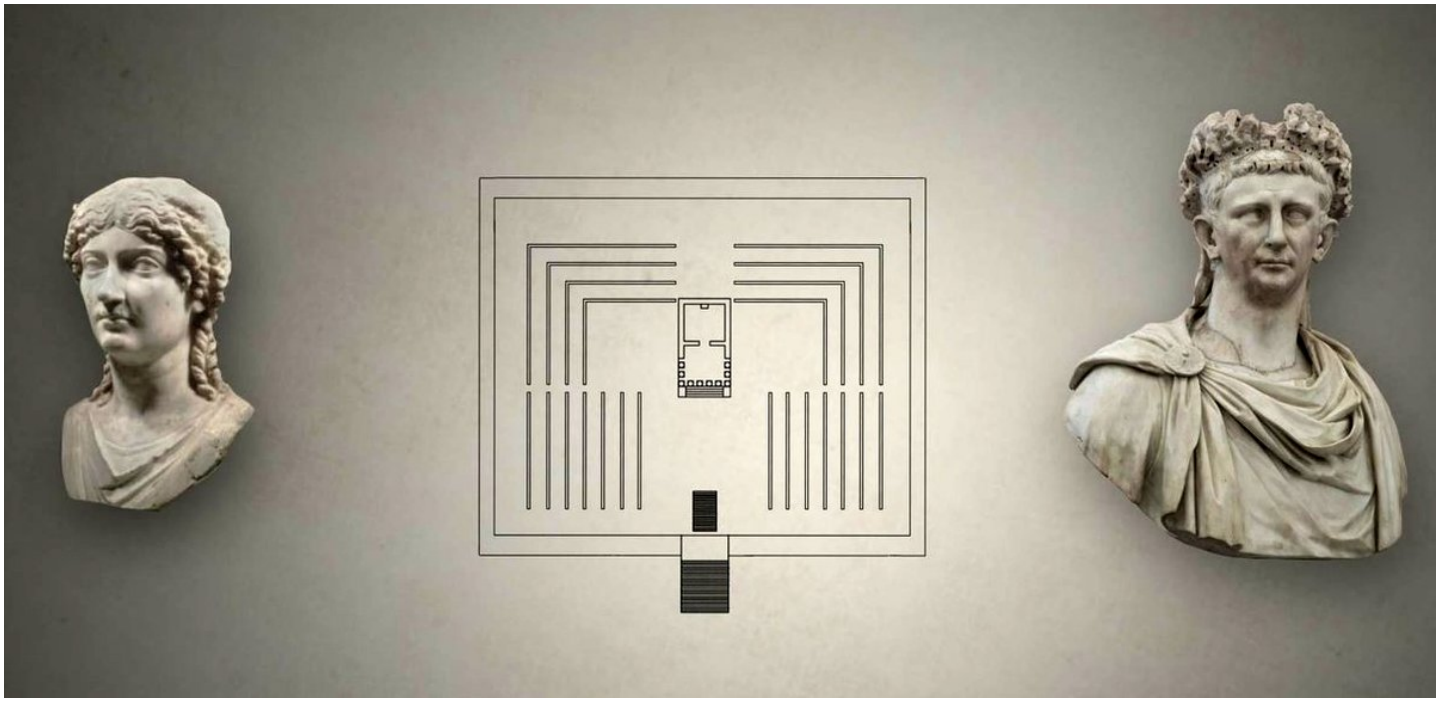
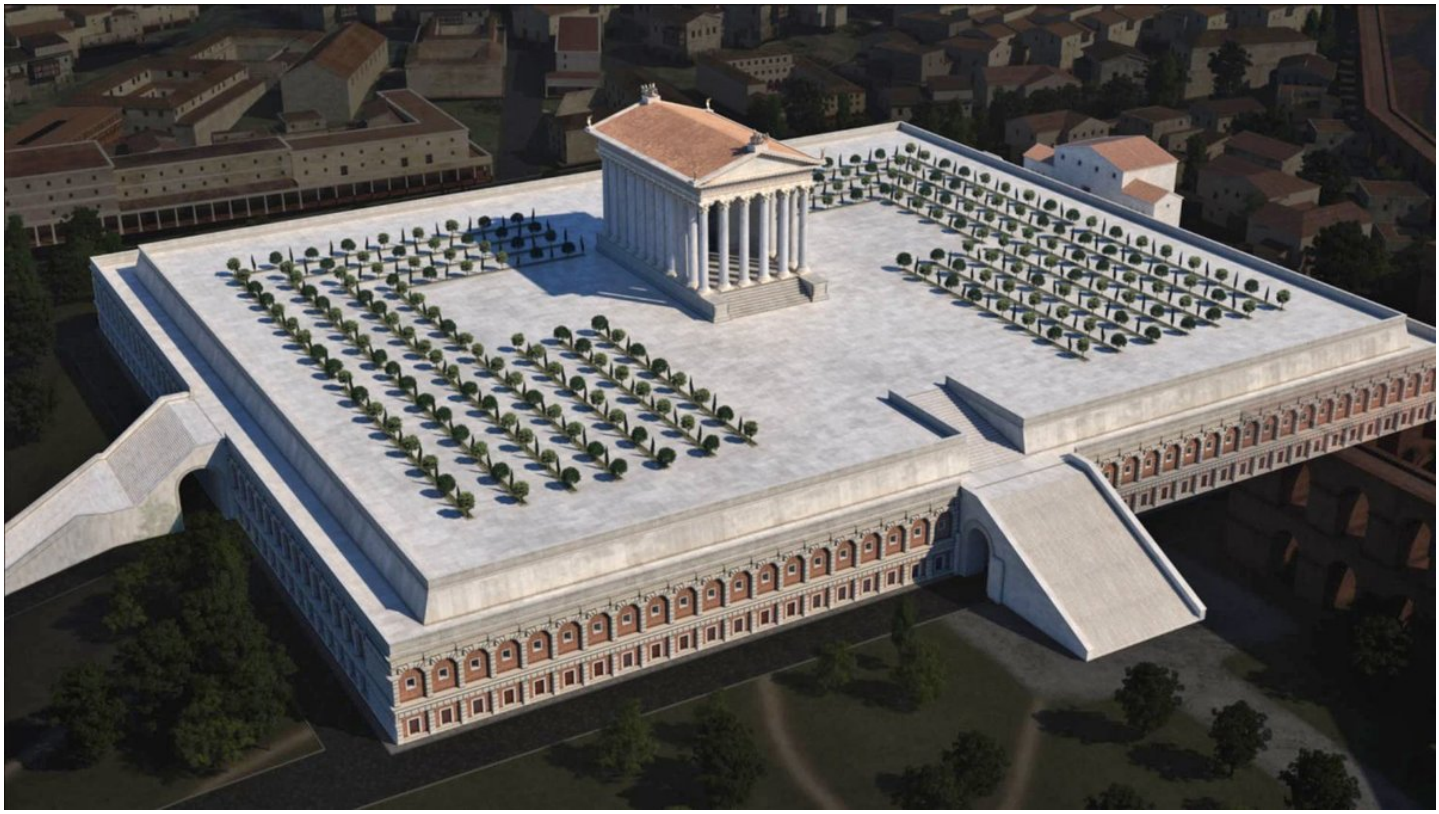
1) The Temple of the Divine Claudius was a vast temple complex on Rome's Caelian Hill, overlooking the valley that would later be occupied by the Colosseum. Though almost nothing now remains of the structure, its scale and grandeur once rivalled anything in the city.. #LostRome



2) The 'Claudium' was intended as a sacred complex to revere Claudius and the imperial cult. Construction began soon after the death and deification of the emperor in 54 AD, initiated by his widow Agrippina who was likely responsible for his supposed death by poisoning. #LostRome



3) The sprawling temple complex sat on a gigantic podium that spread across the Caelian Hill, measuring 180 x 200 metres; with towering retaining walls of travertine that raised the structure 20 metres above the valley below. #LostRome



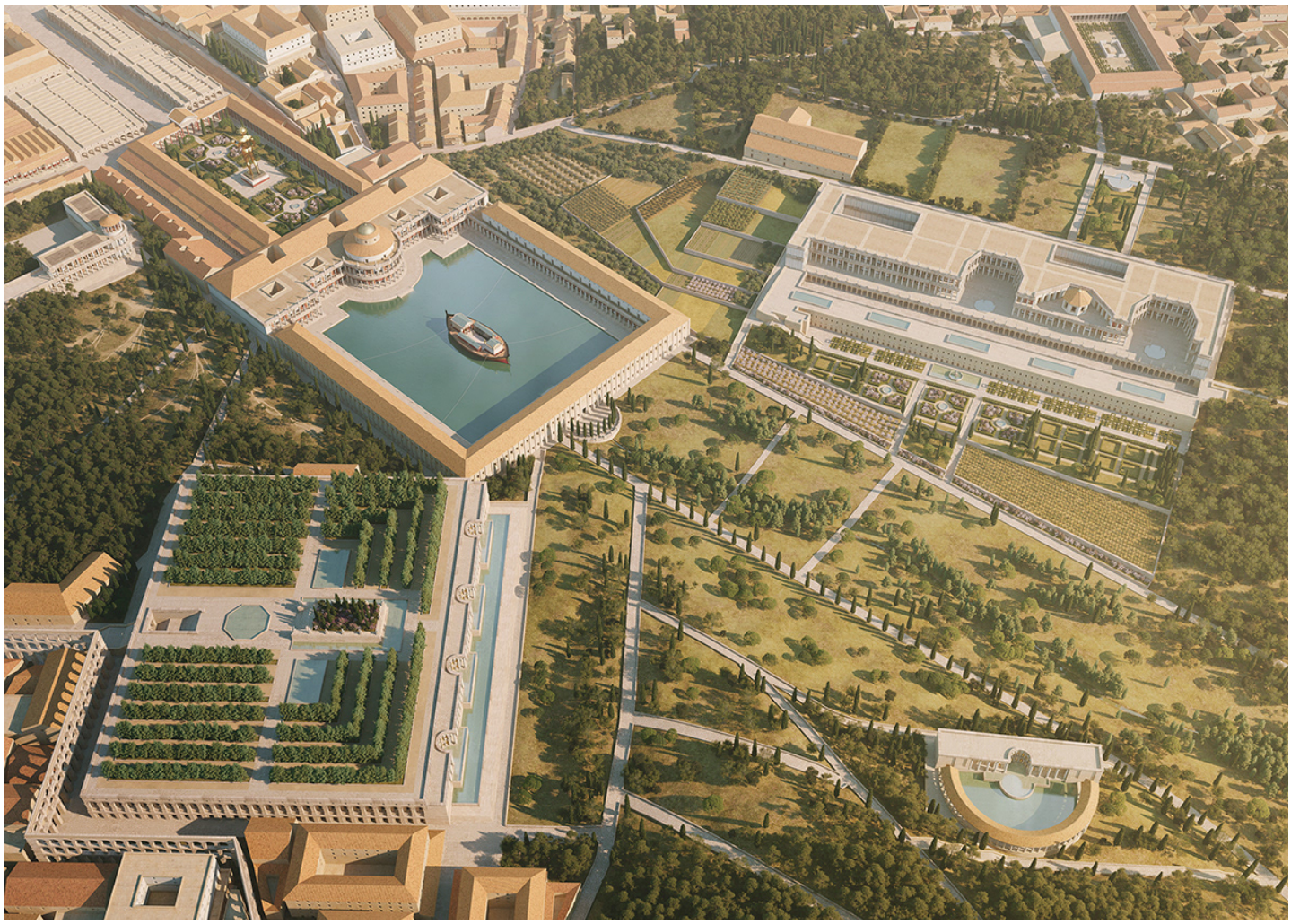
4) The elevated sacred area was likely entered by steps facing the temple on the west side. The temple itself had a projecting hexastyle porch and was surrounded by gardens and a grand portico, probably the 'porticus Claudia' mentioned in Martial's 'On the Spectacles'. #LostRome



5) Statues of both Agrippina and Claudius' ill-fated young son Britannicus, sculpted in sumptuous dark Egyptian greywacke, were discovered among the ruins on the Caelian Hill in 1651 – and had almost certainly been displayed in the temple precinct. #LostRome



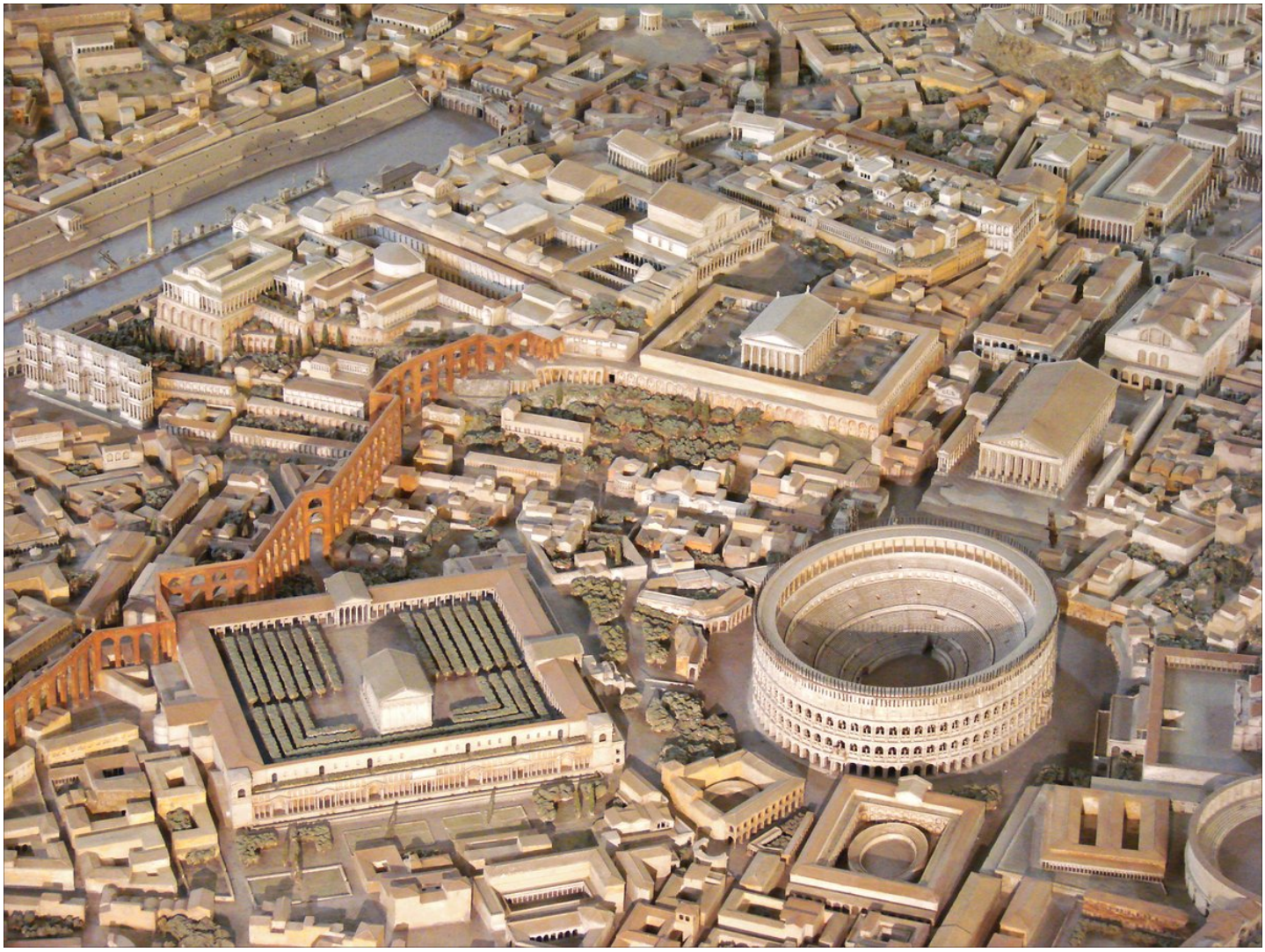
6) Upon Nero's murder of his mother Agrippina in 59 AD, the temple seems to have been partially demolished and after the Great Fire in 64 AD the massive structure was fully repurposed, incorporated into the grand designs of his Domus Aurea palace as a huge nymphaeum. #LostRome



7) The entire 200-metre eastern face of the podium was turned into a lavish nymphaeum, with water fed by a new branch of the Aqua Claudia cascading into four long basins, which then in turn fed the huge artificial lake (stagnum Neronis) at the heart of Nero's palace. #LostRome



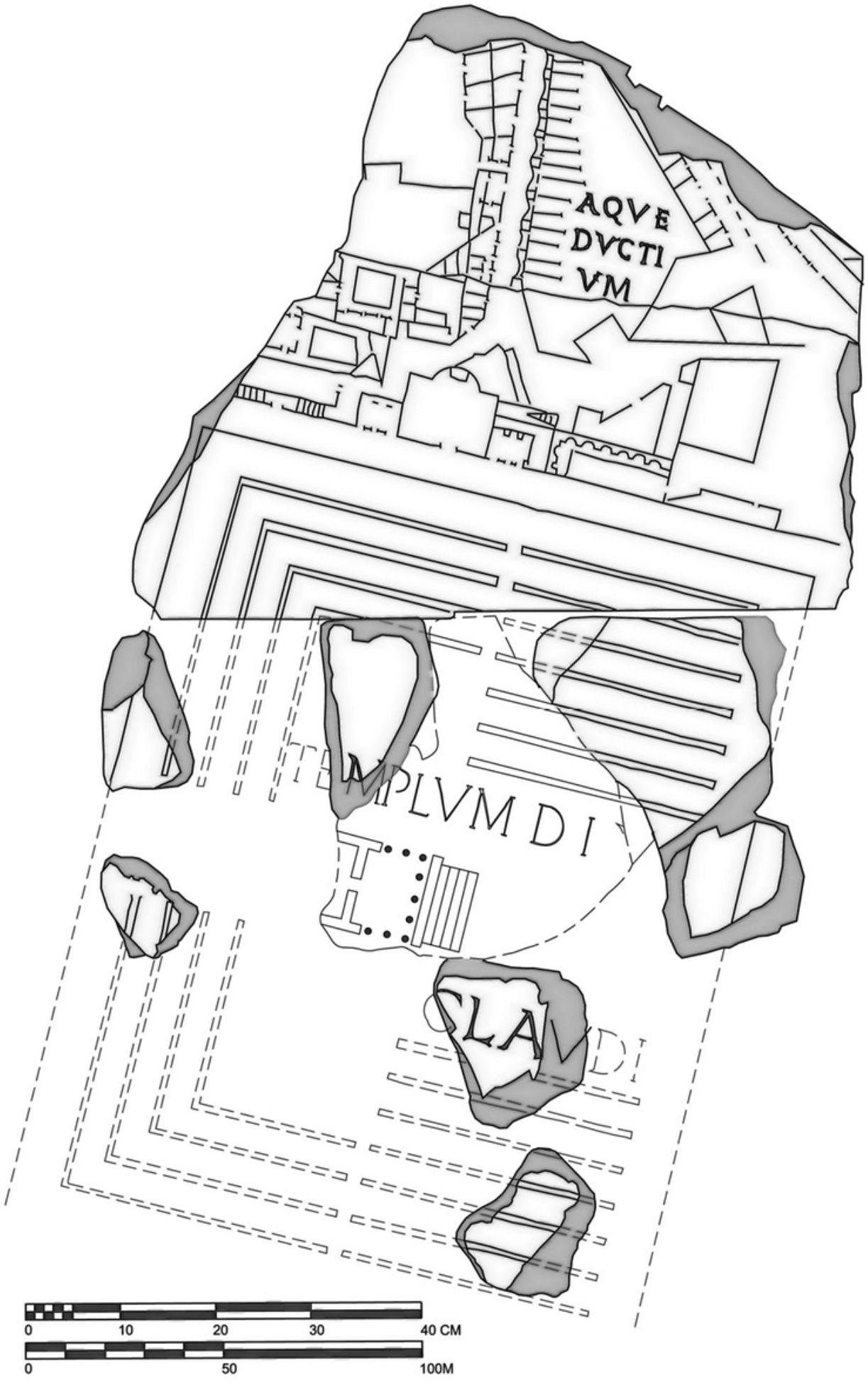
8) After the fall of Nero, Vespasian set about reclaiming the urban centre of Rome for the people - most famously filling in Nero's lake for his new Flavian Amphitheatre. Vespasian had thrived under Claudius and they had even shared a consulship in 51 AD.. #LostRome



9) Vespasian therefore restored the Temple of Claudius and reinstated the cult of the Augustales in the complex, while keeping the nymphaeum built under Nero. For the rest of its history the temple overlooked the Colosseum from its prominent position on the Caelian. #LostRome



10) Considering the size and prominence of the complex, ancient references to the Claudium are surprisingly sparse, with few literary mentions and apparently no coin depictions; a few fragments of the Forma Urbis Romae have helped in reconstructing the general layout. #LostRome



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11) By the 4th century the structures of the Claudium were already being scavenged for building materials, with column capitals taken for use in an early-Christian church built at the temple's south-west corner - later to become the Basilica of Saints John and Paul. #LostRome



12) It was here in 1099 that a bell tower was added to the basilica, using as foundations a surviving corner of the Claudium's travertine enclosure wall. This section of wall is still preserved in the base of the campanile today. #LostRome



13) Quarrying of the temple site for building materials continued through the centuries; in the mid 1400's a large amount of stone was taken from the Claudium by the future Pope Paul II to build his palazzo, today known as the Palazzo Venezia. #LostRome



14) The famed artist Piranesi etched these surviving travertine arches from the substructures of the Claudian temple around 1760, mistakenly identifying them as animal cages associated with the nearby Colosseum. #LostRome



15) The arches can still be seen today under the Passionist monastery on the Caelian Hill, one of the few visible remnants of the enormous ancient complex. Tunnels through the substructures of the Claudium have also recently been mapped by

Italian authorities. #LostRome



16) A final view of this incredible ancient Roman building complex, constructed on a truly epic scale. The Temple of the Divine Claudius was once a key feature in the Roman skyline, proudly standing opposite the Colosseum - but today almost nothing remains. #LostRome



Image Credits: Digital reconstructions by "History in 3D", please see their Facebook page for many more wonderful visualisations. Other reconstructions by the Katatexilux Project https://t.co/Tk3A8tPWxY. View of the Domus Aurea by JR Casals @jr_casals. Thank you to all artists.

Explore the hashtag #LostRome for my previous threads on now-vanished architectural wonders of Ancient Rome. ■■