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Collins Center

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## The Disneyfication of Rome: Spectacles of Nature and Urban Theme Parks

Modern social scientists have coined the term 'Disneyfication' to refer to the repackaging and virtualization of space for the purposes of tourist-friendly commercialism and propaganda. In this paper I examine the trend of recreating natural settings for gladiatorial combat and animal hunts during the Julio-Claudian and Flavian regimes of the 1st Century CE. I look at the description of elaborate hunts in a temporary amphitheatre in the poet Calpurnius Siculus, the artificial game reserve created by Nero for his 'Golden House' palace complex in the middle of the city of Rome, and the Flavians' conversion of Nero's private estate into a public 'theme park' (featuring the Colosseum) as celebrated in the poet Martial's "On The Spectacles". I argue that the development of such artificial spaces in the center of Rome may be read as a commodification of imperial ideology. By displaying their control over nature in a context of public munificence, Roman rulers transformed and domesticated nature as a microcosm of empire.

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