

# Analysis of the Relationship between High Points and Urban Sculptures in Urban Green Squares

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**Abstract:** In conventional urban sculpture construction, excessive emphasis is often placed on the purely artistic functions of sculptures, while their roles in spatial layout and functional division within environmental spaces are frequently overlooked. Urban sculptures, by occupying specific points or lines in spatial layouts, serve to divide and organize space, becoming vertical focal points in the visual landscape. This highlights their role as spatial landmarks. In modern urban squares, expansive vertical spaces are complemented by architectural high points. These high points, typically represented by towers, monuments, and commemorative pillars, share characteristics such as pronounced verticality, large scale, and strong three-dimensional presence. In classical Western squares, high points have consistently served as dominant spatial symbols. Their influence extends beyond the physical dominance of space to include subtle implications for social relationships, such as hierarchy and subordination.

**Keywords:** Square, High Point, Urban Sculpture.



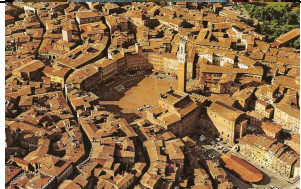

## 1. Introduction

"An artist should not first complete a sculpture and then consider where to place it; rather, the conceptualization process should inherently connect the work to a specific external world, spatial form, and local context," philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel emphasized regarding the relationship between sculpture and space. High points in squares, such as towers, monuments, and commemorative pillars, exhibit strong verticality, significant scale, and a

pronounced three-dimensional presence. In classical Western squares, these high points have consistently served as the focal emphasis of spatial symbols. Their influence extends beyond physical spatial dominance to subtle implications for social relationships, reflecting hierarchies and subordination within society.

## 2. Analysis of the Spatial Impact of High Points

**Table 1.** Comparison of High Point Positions and Roles in Four Renowned Squares

Square Name	Base Shape	Center of Gravity Position	High Point Position	Spatial Features	Bird's Eye View
Place Vendôme, Paris	Regular square	Center of the base	Center of the base	Stable, highly oriented	
St. Peter's Basilica Square (partially designed by Bernini)	Regular ellipse	Between the two focal points of the ellipse	Between the two focal points of the ellipse	Rich in tension, highly oriented	
Piazza del Campo, Siena	Fan-shaped	Center of the fan	Near the center of the fan	Strong orientation, stable yet flexible	
Piazza San Marco, Venice	"L" shape	Bend of the "L"	Bend of the "L"	Dynamic with spatial variation, quiet yet lively	

The spatial impact of high points is primarily achieved through their control of the "center of gravity" in squares. This "center of gravity" is not merely a geometric concept but also encompasses the psychological spatial center created by spatial potential and guidance. Studies of classical Western square layouts reveal that the majority of high points are positioned at the center of gravity, dominating the square through their height and volume, creating a "field effect" that governs the space. Table 1 provides a detailed comparison of the positions and roles of high points in four famous squares.

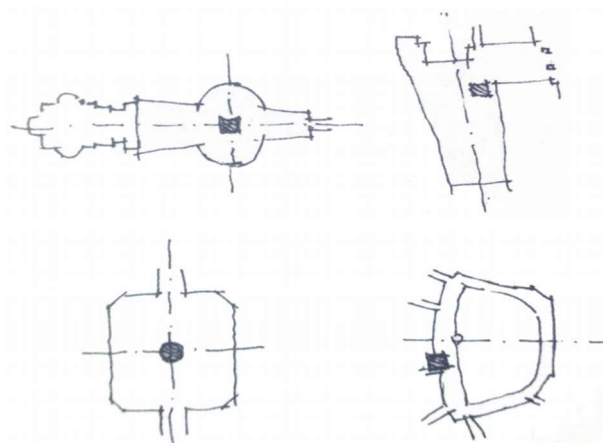
The four case studies illustrate that square layouts vary, with some being symmetrical and others asymmetrical. However, regardless of the layout type, high points consistently occupy the center of gravity of the square, anchoring the entire space like a "nail." This demonstrates that the position of the high point is the most critical factor influencing its spatial impact on the square. When designing high points in squares, the location of the high point should align as closely as possible with the square's center of gravity.

In squares with dominant buildings, high points often "compete" with the dominant structures for visual attention (except when the high point itself is part of the dominant structure). When both the dominant building and the high point are aligned on the square's central axis, the high point reinforces the axis's directional focus, enhancing the dominant building's control over the square, as exemplified by St. Peter's Basilica Square. Conversely, if the high point deviates from the square's central axis, the dominant building's ability to guide the flow of people is weakened, leading to dispersion and creating a dynamic, multi-directional spatial experience.

### 3. Analysis of the Social Implications of Height

The social implications of height can be analyzed from a human psychological perspective. When an individual looks down from a high point, it often evokes a psychological sense of superiority and control. Conversely, when one looks up from a lower position, it tends to generate feelings of humility and insignificance. This psychological dynamic of "high and low" has been historically employed, such as by ancient Chinese emperors, to create a strong sense of hierarchy and

social stratification through spatial positioning.



**Figure 1.** The Relationship Between High Points and the Centers of Gravity in Four Different Types of Squares

During the rule of ancient Chinese feudal dynasties, the hierarchical system was often manifested through the utilization of high points. This practice was not unique to China; ruling classes in many Western countries also strategically incorporated high points into urban construction to reinforce hierarchical effects. Consequently, in the study and design of urban squares, high points can be employed to help audiences clearly perceive the social attributes of a square.

### 4. Relationship between High Points and Urban Sculptures

The relationship between high points and urban sculptures primarily refers to high points in small urban squares, often represented by urban sculptures. In special circumstances, such as small green squares with one or more tall trees (usually ancient trees) or other architectural structures, the dominant building of the square changes, along with the square's social connotations. The role of urban sculptures differs depending on the type of high point dominating the square, which also influences the size and content of the sculptures. Specific recommendations are detailed in Table 2:

**Table 2.** Suggested Urban Sculpture Designs Corresponding to Different High Points

High Point	Spatial Features	Point Location	Square Characteristics	Sculpture Function
Urban Sculpture	Directional	Square Center	A themed square with a recreational focus	Acts as the square's main feature; large in scale
Ancient Trees	Tension and vitality	Inside the square	A themed square centered around greenery and ancient trees for preservation	Echoes with vegetation; medium in scale
Architectural Structures	Directional	Square Periphery	A subsidiary square complementing the dominant architectural structure	Enhances the architecture; small to medium in scale

From this, it can be seen that high points in urban squares significantly influence the square's theme, thereby affecting the positioning, theme, and scale of urban sculptures within the space. Therefore, high points are a critical factor to consider during the site selection and design stages of urban squares. However, while emphasizing high points, it is also essential to ensure alignment with objective factors. This approach ensures that urban sculptures harmonize organically

with the spatial environment, forming an integrated whole.

### 5. Conclusion

High points play a crucial role in shaping the spatial and social attributes of urban squares, serving as dominant elements that guide spatial organization and influence human perception. Their positions, whether at the center of gravity or along the periphery, determine their impact on the square's

functionality and symbolic meaning. High points, such as urban sculptures, ancient trees, and architectural structures, not only enhance the aesthetic value of the square but also reinforce its thematic focus.

Urban sculptures, as vertical visual landmarks, interact dynamically with the high points of the square, influencing their placement, theme, and scale. This interplay underscores the importance of carefully considering high points during the planning and design stages of urban squares. Properly designed high points can effectively align with the surrounding environment, fostering an organic integration of sculptures and space, and creating a balanced and meaningful urban landscape.

Ultimately, the strategic use of high points in urban squares enables the space to communicate its social, cultural, and aesthetic significance to the public, emphasizing the need for thoughtful and context-sensitive design approaches.

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