The Capitol of Panem, of the Hunger Games dystopian universe, is a technologically advanced urban center where the nation’s most wealthy and powerful live. The Capitol is the seat of Panem’s power and is located in the western Rocky Mountains, surrounded by twelve districts over which it rules absolutely.
The dystopic world of Panem reflects its brutal, totalitarian government, that take heed from the classical Roman influence. The overall look of the Capitol is inspired by the Neoclassic designs of 1930, an architectural style used also by the fascist architecture, expressed through the interest in symmetry, columns and gold accents.

No other society has left such a lasting message of power and unity like the ancient Romans Rome’s power. (It is not surprising that we still repeat the saying ‘All roads led to Rome’…). Ancient Rome was a powerful civilization, which has had a profound influence on all later western societies.
The architecture of The Capitol is an updated adaption of that from Ancient Rome, in order to signify the city’s power and prestige. The theme here is size and grandeur: “we built incredibly large buildings to reflect our enormous empire”. Even the name of the country, Panem, comes from the old latin phrase for “bread and circuses”, a policy adapted by the Emperors to appease the masses.

In architectural terms, one of the most popular forms of Roman architecture is the triumphal arch, built to commemorate a great event. The use of spectacular arches across the Roman roads (like the Triumphal Avenue of the Capitol), enabled the Ancient Romans to achieve the construction of imposing structures for public use. The grandeur of their architecture reflected the social changes of the people of Rom.
The heart of a Roman city was the forum: a public square, typically paved and surrounded by the city’s principal civic buildings.

Even the arenas for the Olympic Games were supposed to convey the idea of the games in Ancient Rome. The ancient games provided entertainment whilst pronouncing the power and the wealth of their empire was exemplified by the brutal blood sacrifices of men. And while bloody games exist only in the realms of fiction today, the gladiator games in Ancient Rome were the precursor to the Hunger Games.
Of course, the Capitol is set in the future, but needs its own past. So the city had to have a sense of history. *Hunger Games* director Gary Ross says the buildings in The Capitol are inspired by Brutalist architecture from the last century. Through a massive and monumental architecture, the Capitol expresses its power as an architectural influence of the darkest times in humanity’s history. Mussolini, Stalin and Hitler utilized an architectural style, that was very similar to the ancient Roman style and reflected the values of Fascism through large and symmetric structures.
“In five years,” Benito Mussolini proclaimed in 1925, “Rome must appear marvelous to all the people of the world: vast, ordered, as powerful as it was in the time of the first emperor, Augustus.”
Some of the buildings in the Capitol, including President Snow’s neoclassic mansion, seem to be direct homages of Stalin’s distinct Soviet style. In the 1930s, Stalin planned on building an enormous Palace as a tribute to the Soviet strength, inspired by the Neoclassic designs.

No totalitarian style embodied that more than Hitler’s unique Nazi architecture. Dominated by the German architect Albert Speer, Hitler’s architectural style stressed the importance of the “mass experience” and emphasized size, straight lines, and uniformity.
The bleached-out blue palette, the wooden shacks, the muddy roads create atmospheric moments, but there are also a few contemporary architectural references in the film. For example, the Cornucopia reminds a little too hard-edge Frank Gehry’s architecture…
or the Zaha Hadid-esque ramps at the skylit Capitol train station (except the fact that the ramps are symmetrical to fit the overall neoclassicism, which Zaha would never do!)

Another element from today: Seneca Crane’s circular control room is outfitted with white Herman Miller Sayl chairs, designed by Yves Behar.
... and of course, the great scene in which Johanna Mason strips in the glass elevator, that was filmed in Atlanta Marriott Marquis Hotel, designed by John Portman (1985).
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