

CIVILTÀ ROMANA

Rivista pluridisciplinare di studi su Roma antica
e le sue interpretazioni

III - 2016



Edizioni Quasar



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III - 2016



ISSN 2421-342X

€ 40,00

V'è quindi, nel discorso inaugurale del Lanciani, sicuramente un «riconoscimento delle culture altrui» non così facilmente immaginabile nei successivi anni Venti e Trenta, ma allo stesso tempo forse non così «pieno», dal momento che esso si svolge nella constatazione che quelle culture derivano pur sempre da Roma antica, di cui l'Italia moderna – nel contesto internazionale cui si è sopra accennato – è l'erede. La Mostra Archeologica si conferma quindi, dal punto di vista dell'idea di Roma, quale momento “anfibia” tra il Liberalismo in cui essa è calata e le correnti nazionali che la innervano anche grazie a giovani come lo stesso Giglioli e che saranno destinate a confluire nel Fascismo.

Il vero spartiacque tra l'idea di Roma e di Augusto nella Mostra Archeologica, nel Museo dell'Impero Romano ed infine nella Mostra Augustea della Romanità non è però naturalmente rappresentato dal Fascismo, ma ben prima di quest'ultimo esso affonda le sue radici nella guerra italo-turca del 1911-'12 ed infine nel primo conflitto mondiale. La guerra italo-turca, infatti, rappresenta la definitiva adesione dell'Italia alla politica di potenza ed in generale, per quanto concerne la dinamica dell'evoluzione dell'idea di Roma anche al di là di quella illustrata dalle collezioni su cui ci si è soffermati, essa comporta un correlativo e definitivo abbandono dell'idea repubblicana e democratica di Roma di derivazione risorgimentale. La prima guerra mondiale invece rappresenta, volendo invocare il contemporaneo Ernst Jünger, il passaggio dai *Ludi africani* attraverso le *Tempeste d'acciaio*, dalle quali l'idea di Roma uscirà trasformata, come il resto del mondo, e solo allora pronta per incontrarsi con il Fascismo appena sorto¹⁹⁷.

ENRICO SILVERIO

¹⁹⁷ I cambiamenti portati dalla guerra italo-turca possono registrarsi già attraverso le pagine della rassegna delle celebrazioni del 1911: vd. ad esempio URIEL (= U. FLERES), *Tripoli italiana*; R. PARIBENI, *La Tripolitania e l'esposizione di Roma*; ANONIMO, *In tema di Tripolitania*; U. FLERES, *Aquila ferita*; G.L. FERRI, *L'Africa romana*, tutti in «Roma. Rassegna illustrata della esposizione del 1911. Ufficiale per gli atti del Comitato esecutivo. Arte Archeologia Etnografia Storia», rispettivamente II (1911), 19, p. 1, pp. 2-5, p. 18; 20, pp. 7-9; 23-24, pp. 2-3. Vd. anche E. LAVALLE - LA DIREZIONE, *L'arco e le statue romane di Tripoli*, in «Roma. Rassegna illustrata», III (1912), 3, pp. 54-57. In entrambi i casi si tratta sempre dello stesso periodico, il cui sottotitolo variò dopo la chiusura delle feste cinquantenarie del 1911. Quanto al Fascismo, esso rivendicherà un legame diretto ed esclusivo con il Risorgimento nazionale anche per il tramite dell'idea di Roma, intendendo a sua volta integrare e superare quell'ideale in una nuova sintesi. Saranno la fine del Fascismo e la seconda guerra mondiale a generare il lungo e forse definitivo oblio dell'idea di “terza Italia” e con essa dell'idea di “terza Roma”, gettando così molto più che un'ombra sia sulle celebrazioni del Centenario del 1961 che su quelle recenti del Centocinquantesimo del 2011: vd. E. GENTILE, *La Grande Italia*, cit., pp. 73-225; ID., *Né Stato né Nazione. Italiani senza meta*, Roma-Bari 2010; ID., *Italiani senza padri. Intervista sul Risorgimento*, a cura di S. Fiori, Roma-Bari 2011.

All Roads Lead to Rome: the Universality of the Roman Ideal in Achille Funi's incomplete fresco cycle for the Palazzo dei Congressi in EUR, 1940-43

Introduction

Rome as eternal city, as *fons et origo* of *Romanità*, was central to the Italian Fascist government's social, cultural and imperial policies. This historical, visual and urban ideal was at the foundation of the planned Rome universal Expo of 1942 (E42), whose theme was to be the «Olympiad of Civilisations». Later renamed as EUR (Esposizione Universale Roma) and left incomplete by the Second World War and the fall of the Fascist regime, it is now a thriving suburb and directional centre to the south-west of the city (*Figure 1*). Its urban plan, its architecture and the artworks integrated within would combine to create an image of an ideal Fascist city, built on a clean slate without the “inconveniences” of history. At EUR, artists and architects were directed to reference select historical figures, concepts, events and monuments of Rome's ancient, Medieval and Renaissance history to best express the Fascist ideal of civilisation. Mosaics, frescoes, statues and *bas reliefs* reinforced both the universal idea of Rome and the idea of Rome's universality through their style, narrative, motifs and their placement both on the outside and inside buildings. This was an attempt to close an ever-widening gap between the fantasy of rule and the reality of global war turning EUR into a «haunting counter-site of pure desire»¹. It was not an Expo or even a city it was an alien simulacrum, «a fictitious dream-world where the maniacs of Classicism would like to exercise their lunatic cultural ostentation»². As far as «Casabella» editor Giuseppe Pagano was concerned, regime architect Marcello Piacentini had been able to “monumentalise” Rome's future expo in a way that could only thrill the set designers of popular operettas³.

The topic of how the art and architecture of EUR interacted, the many artworks and their artists and the many vicissitudes behind their conception, creation and, for the most part, partial execution is material enough for an entire book. This article will limit the discussion to a fresco by Achille Funi, planned for the main reception atrium of the *Palazzo dei Ricevimenti e dei Congressi* (PRC) first designed by Adalberto Libera in 1937 and eventually completed in 1954 (*Figure 2*).

Libera entered the competition for the PRC in 1937, his project was one of six selected for a second round and a largely modified version was selected as winner in 1939. The jury were taken by the project's large, square cross-vaulted hall rising above a cantile-

¹ A. KALLIS, *The third Rome, 1922-1943: the making of the fascist capital*, Basingstoke 2014, p. 244.

² G. PAGANO, *Potremo salvarci dalle false tradizioni e dalle ossessioni monumentali?*, in «Costruzioni-Casabella», 157 (gennaio 1941), pp. 2-7. Reprinted in C. DE SETA, *Giuseppe Pagano. Architettura e città durante il fascismo*, Roma-Bari 1990, pp. 68-82 (73).

³ *Ibidem*.

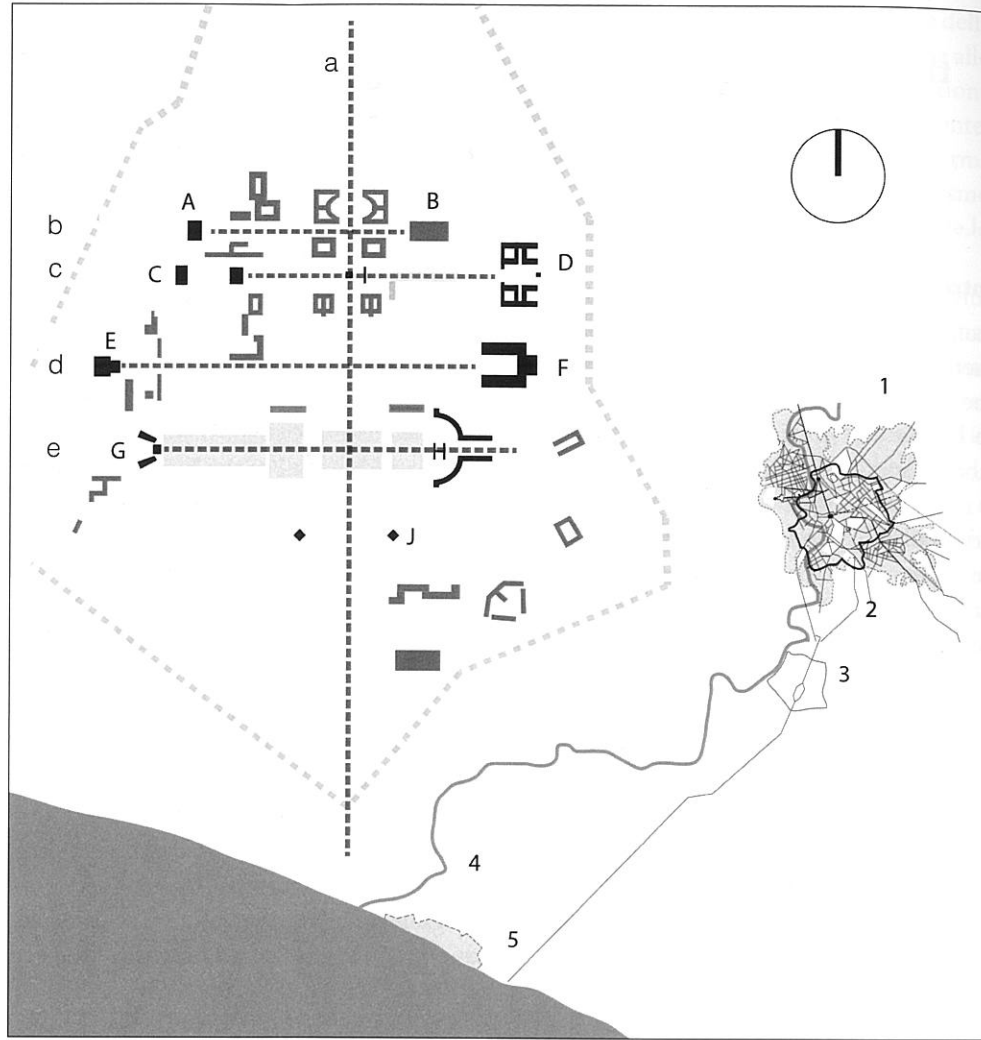


Fig. 1. Schematic plan and context map of EUR. Image: Brandon Gardiner.
 (1) Rome with the Aurelian Walls shown in black, (2) Via Imperiale (now via Cristoforo Colombo), (3) EUR, (4) Ancient Ostia, (5) Modern Ostia.
 (A) Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, (B) Palazzo dei Ricevimenti e dei Congressi, (C) Imperial Theatre, (D) Mostra della Romanità, (E) Chiesa dei SS. Pietro e Paolo, (F) Armed Forces Complex, (G) Theatre, (H) Exhibitions, (I) Obelisk di Guglielmo Marconi, (J) Arch (to Peace).
 (a) Cardo - Via Imperiale, (b) Axis of Civilisation, (c) Axis of Empire, (d) Axis of Society, (e) Axis of Entertainment.

vered portico seemingly held up by a curtain wall of glass. Libera placed an atrium either side of the central hall and connected them with wide corridors like the side aisles of a basilica (Figure 3).

Funi's work was to cover 560 square metres of wall space of the main atrium and was divided into three main narrative themes that wove together Rome's imperial and Christian heritage by foregrounding emperors and popes against an architectural backdrop (Figure 4).

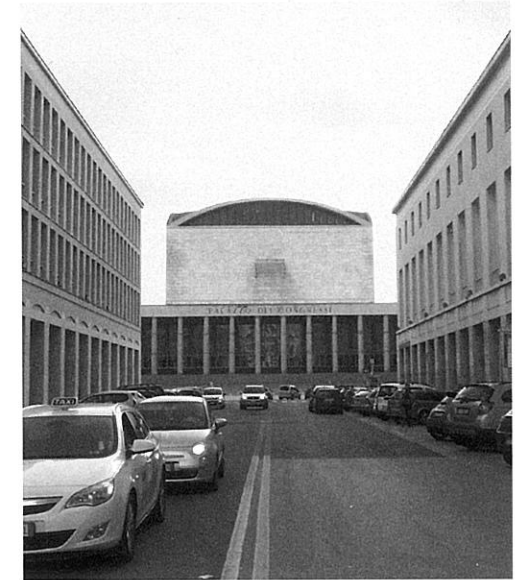
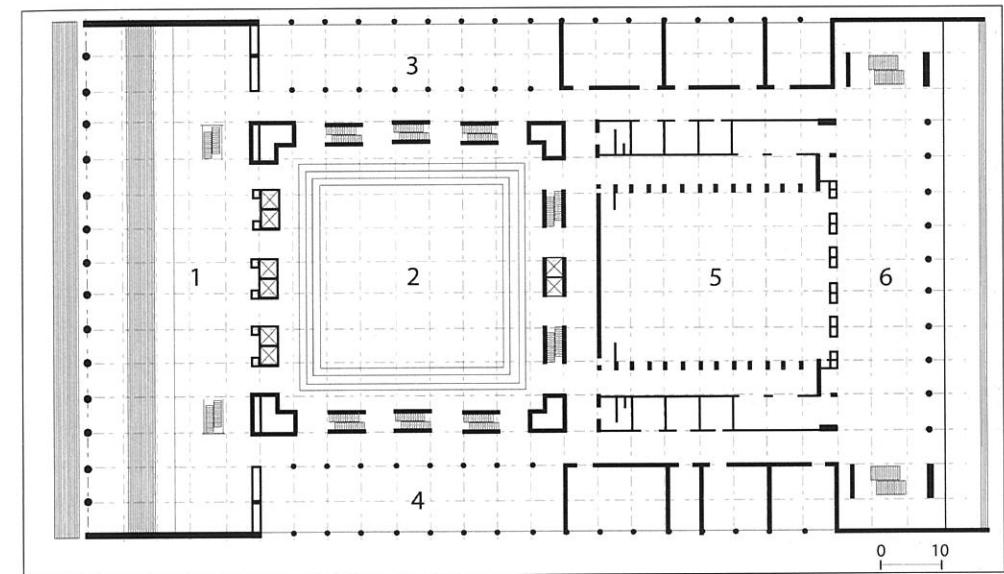


Fig. 2. Palazzo dei Ricevimenti e dei Congressi. Adalberto Libera, 1938-54. Image: Martin Passi.

Fig. 3. Plan of the Palazzo dei Ricevimenti e dei Congressi. Adalberto Libera, 1938-54. Image: Brandon Gardiner.

(1) Reception Foyer, (2) Main hall, (3) North portico (painting), (4) South portico (literature), (5) Conference hall, (6) Conference foyer.



The central theme: "All Roads Lead to Rome" was dominated by the figure of the Goddess Roma enthroned in front of a walled city reminiscent of a medieval apse mosaic. Marching towards Rome/Roma from the left would have been the "Triumph of Augustus" and, approaching from the right, the "Triumph of Caesar". Inserted between these three principal subjects were mythical and biblical stories related to the city's origins (Figure 5).

The fresco deserves more attention than has so far been accorded not so much as an example of Italian 20th Century art than as an example of the crucial role of public art within



Fig. 4. All Roads Lead to Rome and Episodes of Profane History. Achille Funi, 1939-41, incomplete fresco as executed. Atrium of the *Palazzo dei Ricevimenti e dei Congressi*. Image: Martin Passi.

Fascist propaganda. As co-signatory of Mario Sironi's *Manifesto della pittura murale*, Funi also believed in the importance of public art as a tool for communicating at all levels. Artists who worked on integrating art into the public architecture of the Fascist regime began their careers either as Futurists or under the umbrella of Margherita Sarfatti's *Novecento* movement. Funi belonged to the second group and got his first opportunity to dedicate his art to the greater good of public education at the 4th Exhibition of Decorative arts in Monza (1930) and the 5th Milan *Triennale* (1933) where he worked alongside Sironi and other mural artists to revive the ancient technique of fresco in the main atrium and staircase of the new Palazzo dell'Arte by Giovanni Muzio. From there he was awarded commissions to decorate major buildings by the regime's most influential architect Marcello Piacentini: the Church of Cristo Re in Rome (1935) and the Palazzo di Giustizia in Milan (1932-40)⁴. Working with both biblical and mythological themes he was able to develop a human version of the overtly monumental Classical style that dominated public art at the time.

Unlike Sironi, whose ideological messages verged on the militant, Funi's aims were more subtle. By presenting the public with well-known historical figures, stories and leg-

⁴ E42. *L'immagine ritrovata. Catalogo dei cartoni e degli studi per la decorazione*, a cura di M. Pignatti Morano - N. Di Santo - P. Refice, Roma 1990, pp. 151-152.

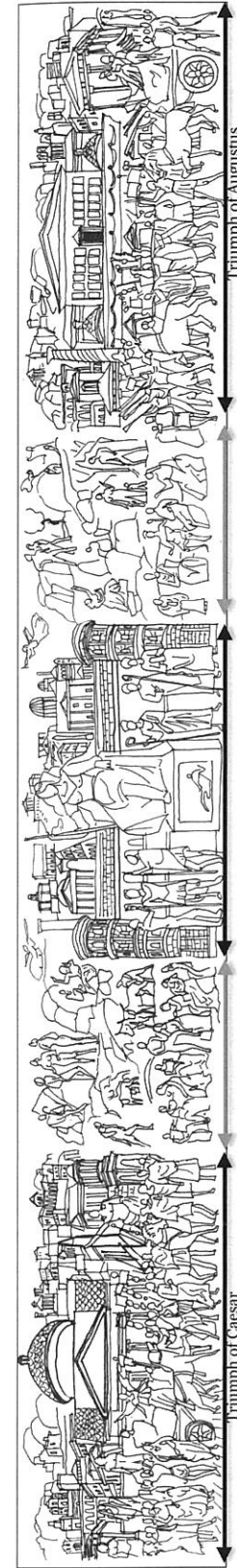


Fig. 5. Reconstruction of full fresco. Image: Author and Brandon Gardiner (based on cartoons by Achille Funi).

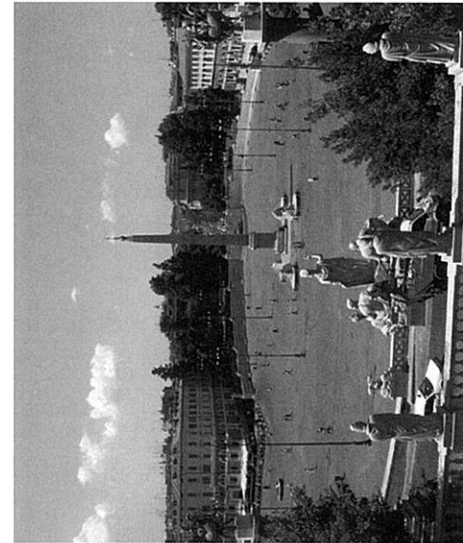


Fig. 10. Piazzas of Rome: (left) *Piazza San Pietro*, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, 17th C. Image: Valyeg. CC-BY-SA-3.0; (centre) *Piazza del Popolo*, Giuseppe Valadier, 19th C. Image: Wolfgang M. CC-BY-2.0; (right) *Piazza del Campidoglio*, Michelangelo Buonarroti, 16th C. Image: Cezar Suceveanu. CC-BY-SA-4.0.

ends against the backdrop of an idealised Eternal City, he could remind them of their common cultural heritage and therefore provide a direct means for celebration and collective pride. The historical characters and events were also chosen to suggest the inevitability of the Fascist era thus adding a teleological layer to the fresco. Mussolini was the contemporary version of Julius Caesar and Augustus whose triumphs foretold both the March on Rome on 28 October 1922 and the "Conquest" of Ethiopia in May 1936.

Although Funi had only completed about one third of this fresco when the regime fell in 1943, it is still possible to conduct a contextual, compositional, historical and thematic analysis of the intended work by looking at the completed portion together with preparatory sketches, photographs cartoons and correspondence with Funi held primarily in the State's Central Archives. The location, theme and style of Funi's incomplete fresco cycle for the Palazzo dei Congressi in EUR allows us to: illustrate that the universalist idea of Rome was central to the ideological, figurative and architectural program of EUR; argue that the long standing tradition of public art broadened social participation in cultural production and, thirdly, highlight how rhetorical possibilities of reception were exploited to communicate ideological messages.

By offering the citizens of Rome an image of their social, cultural and historical visage, the fresco would generate on the one hand a sense of belonging and on the other the acceptance of an overarching power/wisdom to reinforce the universal and civilising power of Rome's ancient and Christian history as base narratives for the contemporary successes of Fascist society.

The fresco's urban, architectural and artistic context

EUR is a part of Rome where grand, monumental buildings stand along even grander and more monumental roads where pedestrians feel small and the architecture's overt classical gestures are best read from the speeding comfort of a car. The original layout of the Expo was designed in 1937 by Piacentini together with a team of other architects that included Pagano and urban planner Luigi Piccinato. It was a modernist vision of a new town with curved roads, a naturalistic lake and glass skyscrapers reminiscent of German modernism. It was conceived through a collaboration that expressed the new spirit while at the same time connecting ideally to the examples of the glorious past that would herald 1942 as the "Spring of Italian architecture"⁵. When Piacentini took over the E42 Architecture office he also took over the design of the plan and it soon became more axial, more rigid, more "Roman" and more expressive of the hierarchy and discipline of the regime. He also intervened in the results for the architectural competitions that were held for all of E42/EUR's major buildings. By calling for second rounds, obliging winners *ex aequo* to work on a further solution and intervening directly with his pencil on the winning designs he ensured that every building contained a suitable amount of arches and columns to communicate an over-arching *Romanità*⁶. This situation forced a

⁵ G. PAGANO, *L'esposizione universale di Roma, 1941-1942*, in «Casabella», 114 (giugno 1937), pp. 4-15. Reprinted in C. DE SETA, *Giuseppe Pagano*, cit., pp. 42-47 (47).

⁶ A. MUNTONI, *E42, i concorsi*, in *E42. Utopia e scenario del regime*, Catalogo della Mostra di Roma, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, aprile - maggio 1987, II, *Urbanistica, architettura, arte e decorazione*, a cura di M. Calvesi - E. Guidoni - S. Lux, Venezia

number of architects towards hybrid results born of a compromise between their own Rationalist tendencies and the regime's neo-Classical demands⁷.

The Rome Expo of 1942 was conceived in 1936 when, thanks to the invasion of Ethiopia, Mussolini was able to declare Rome to be, once more, the capital of an empire. According to the schedule of the *Bureau Internationale des Expositions*, it was due to be held in 1941 but Italy was able to shift the date to 1942 to coincide with the second *decennales* of the March on Rome when Mussolini "took power". This was typical of the Fascist's regime's desire to revive the rituals and *mores* of ancient Rome through the commemoration of important historical anniversaries.

"The Olympiad of Civilisations" would also celebrate Italy's many achievements in the realms of art, culture, literature, science, technology and archaeology⁸. This was evidenced in the revival of epigraphy, another Roman practice that further capitalised on the rhetorical possibilities of reception in art and architecture. The parapet of E42's most emblematic building, the *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana* (PDCI) (Figure 6), displayed a quote from Mussolini's famous speech on 2 October 1935 that referred to the Italian people as:

A NATION OF POETS OF ARTISTS OF HEROES / OF SAINTS OF THINKERS OF SCIENTISTS / OF NAVIGATORS OF MIGRANTS⁹.

These areas of "human achievement" were supplemented at a later stage by buildings dedicated to the three branches of the Armed Forces, an Exhibit on Racial Purity and an Ethnography Museum that reflected the regime's increasingly militaristic and anti-Semitic nature.

The concept of civilisation was associated with permanence and the legacy of history, an idea not necessarily befitting the ephemerality of a World Expo. It was therefore decided to make many of the expositions permanent museums after the close of the fair and to use the infrastructure as a basis for a new, Third Rome. This ideal Fascist City, built on a clean slate, would feature 20th C interpretations of the city's most important ancient and Christian monuments arranged on a strict hierarchical grid that followed the techniques of Rome's surveyors, the best tradition of the Roman colonial project and was also inspired directly by recent excavations of the nearby ancient Ostia¹⁰. On another level, its plan shows marked resemblances to 16th Century representations of pre-Republican Rome as founded

1987, pp. 83-100.

⁷ A. MUNTONI, *Roma tra le due guerre 1919-1944. Architettura, modelli urbani, linguaggi della modernità*, Roma 2010, pp. 189-190.

⁸ E. GARIN, *La civiltà italiana nell'esposizione del 1942*, in *E42. Utopia e scenario del regime*, Catalogo della Mostra di Roma, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, aprile - maggio 1987, I, *Ideologia e programma dell'Olimpiade delle Civiltà*, a cura di T. Gregory - A. Tartaro, Venezia 1987, pp. 3-16.

⁹ UN POPOLO DI POETI DI ARTISTI DI EROI / DI SANTI DI PENSATORI DI SCIENZIATI / DI NAVIGATORI DI TRASMIGRATORI. This quotation was extracted from Mussolini's speech delivered from Piazza Venezia on 2 October 1935. B. MUSSOLINI, *Il discorso della mobilitazione*, in *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXVII, *Dall'inaugurazione della Provincia di Littoria alla proclamazione dell'Impero (19 dicembre 1934 - 9 maggio 1936)*, a cura di E. e D. Susmel, Firenze 1959, pp. 158-160 (160).

¹⁰ J. RYKWERT, *The idea of a town: the anthropology of urban form in Rome, Italy and the ancient world*, Cambridge, Mass., 1988, pp. 49-60.

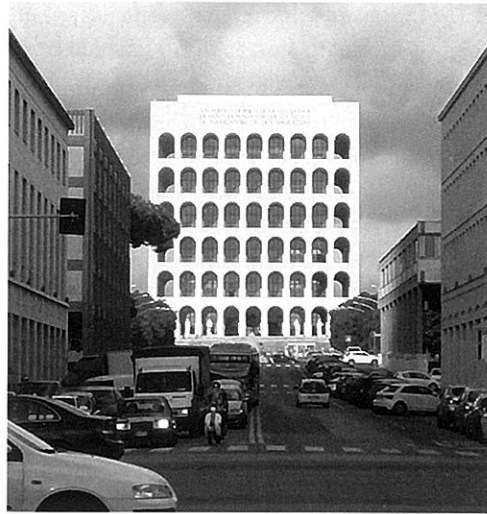


Fig. 6. *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana*. Giovanni Guerrini, Ernesto La Padula and Mario Romano, 1938-43. Image: Martin Passi.

Fig. 7. *Palazzo degli Uffici*. Gaetano Minnucci, 1939. Image: Author.



by Romulus¹¹. At the same time it would help drive Rome's development towards the new town of Ostia, expanding the city beyond its fatal hills towards the *mare nostrum* of ancient glory. A quote by Mussolini reinforcing the realisation of Rome's destiny was emblazoned on the *Palazzo degli Uffici* (Figure 7) where visitors lining up to buy tickets could read it at their leisure:

THE THIRD ROME WILL SPREAD OVER OTHER HILLS ALONG THE BANKS OF THE SACRED RIVER AS FAR AS THE BEACHES OF THE TYRRHENIAN SEA¹².

¹¹ A. MUNTONI, *Roma tra le due guerre*, cit., pp. 136-137.

¹² LA TERZA ROMA SI DILATERÀ SOPRA ALTRI COLLI LUNGO LE RIVE DEL FIUME SACRO SINO ALLE SPIAGGE DEL TIRRENO. This quotation was extracted from Mussolini's famous "Nuova Roma" speech, delivered at the Campidoglio on 31 December 1925. B. MUSSOLINI, *La nuova Roma*, in *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini*, XXII, *Dall' attentato Zaniboni al discorso dell' Ascensione* (5 novembre 1925 - 26 maggio 1927), a cura di E. e D. Susmel, Firenze 1957, pp. 47-49 (48).

Visitors to the Expo as well as future residents and workers of EUR would leave the old Rome behind through purpose built arches in the 4th Century Aurelian wall just south of the Baths of Caracalla. Travelling at high speed down the *Via Imperiale* (re-named after the fall of the regime to *via Cristoforo Colombo*) they would have entered this new, Third Rome through one of its seven gates thus evoking the original city's seven hills and could continue through on this north-south axis (*cardo*) all the way to the sea. The *cardo* was intersected at four main points by east-west axes (*decumani*) each representing themes related to the exposition (cf. Figure 1). The first was the Axis of Civilisation defined at one end by the PDCI to the west and the PRC to the East. Next was the Axis of Empire that was to be defined by an imperial Theatre at its eastern end (never built) and the *Mostra della Romanità*, now *Museo della Civiltà Romana*, to the West. Its intersection with the *Via Imperiale* was marked by a monumental obelisk dedicated to Marconi by Arturo Dazzi, framed by four museums whose destination changed a number of times throughout the planning of the Expo to finally contain Ancient and Modern Art, Popular Tradition and Ethnography.

The third *decumanus* was the Society Axis that culminated on its eastern side with the *Chiesa dei SS. Pietro e Paolo* and was framed at its western end by a building complex that was originally going to host the Telecommunications exhibits but was later changed into the Armed Forces buildings. The fourth axis was defined the Expo's artificial lake and park, framed at one end by an open air theatre and at the other by an exhibition on Fascism's highly successful land reclamation projects. The park was to boast a monumental arch (to Peace) whose presence marked the edge of E42 as a citadel and acted as Gate to the Sea¹³. The focus point of this area was a Palace of Water and Light whose position on one of the high points of the existing topography was to hark back to the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline Hill¹⁴.

This strictly hierarchical order of streets, gardens and monuments connected by porticoes narrowed both the street's physical space and visual axis thus altering the perception of the buildings making them appear smaller¹⁵. Re-evoking Baroque concepts of spatial progression, the subsequent widening of the piazza in front of each the building placed the viewer up close to what became a surprisingly large building thereby accentuating an imposing and awe-inspiring effect.

The impact of the idea of Rome in Funi's fresco arguably begins when the visitor leaves behind the old Rome to come to the new one. As we saw above, echoes of Rome and its idea began at the entry point to the Expo. Before turning left along the Axis of Civilisation towards the PRC visitors would have been presented with a view along the *Via Imperiale* framed by seemingly endless porticoes with the Marconi obelisk in the foreground and the monumental arch as backdrop (Figure 8). From the shaded porticoes they would have arrived onto a bright paved piazza flanked with fountains to be met with a row of massive

¹³ A. MAGGI, *Architecture of Light and Water at the Universal Exhibition of Rome*, in *Architecture of Great Expositions 1937-1959. Messages of Peace, Images of War*, eds. R. Devos - A. Oterberg - V. Paperny, Farnham 2015, pp. 106-108.

¹⁴ A. MUNTONI, *Roma tra le due guerre*, cit., p. 131.

¹⁵ A. MUNTONI, *Il Palazzo dei ricevimenti e dei congressi. Il progetto*, in *E 42. Utopia e scenario del regime*, II, cit., pp. 320-322 (322).

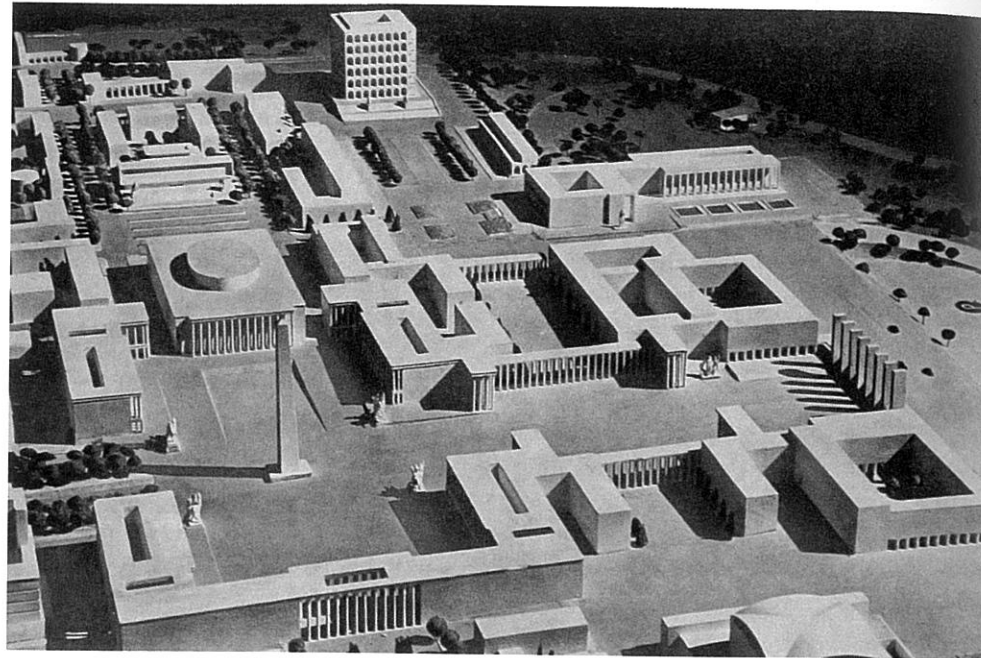


Fig. 8. Detail of a 1938 model of EUR showing the entry gates to the right, the *Piazza Imperiale* with obelisk on the left and the *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana* in the background. Image: «L'Illustrazione italiana», no. 51, December 1938.

12 metre high granite columns creating a pattern of light and shade across the portico space before passing through a set of glass doors into the ceremonial atrium (cf. *Figure 2*). The colonnade of Doric columns with no capitals at the front was not Libera's decision, Piacentini forced his hand to add them for the building's main entry to match better with the unitary character of the Expo as a whole¹⁶.

The rigidity of the overall plan was accentuated by the architectural character of its main buildings. Placed strategically as endpoints to the main axes coinciding with the high points of the topography, their unitary character recalled the most significant monuments and urban spaces of First and Second Rome. This was further accentuated by the repeated motif of the arch – from the many windows of the PDCI to Libera's monumental gateway. This was further reinforced by the selection of specifically Italian plantings like olives, oaks and cypresses that featured heavily both in the iconography and in the gardens of the ancient Romans. The whole ensemble was then tied together by the porticoes that Piacentini envisaged either as open colonnaded walkways connecting buildings or as narthexes and porticoes flanking and fronting almost every building to give the Expo an «absolutely Mediterranean appearance»¹⁷ to evoke and re-evolve the universal idea of Rome.

¹⁶ A. LIBERA, *La mia esperienza di architetto*, in «La Casa», 6 (giugno 1959), pp. 171-175.

¹⁷ M. Piacentini in *Esposizione universale di Roma 1942, anno XX E.F.*, a cura del Commissariato generale, Livorno 1939, p. 35.



Fig. 9. Origin and interpretation: (left) *Trajan's Market*, Apollodorus of Damascus, 2nd C. Image: Matthias Kabel. CC-BY-SA-2.5; (right) *Palazzo dell'INA*, Giovanni Muzio 1938-52. Image: Blackcat. CC-BY-SA-3.0.

EUR as a Third Rome would have its own set of monuments that both matched and re-interpreted the principal monuments the existing city in a Fascist key. As Piacentini stated:

In a city where in the past, groups of buildings have been built like the Forums and the Baths, like the Basilicas and the Christian convents, like the Campidoglio, the Quirinale and Piazza Navona; and it remains, a difficult and awesome task to think about buildings with a new beauty and a new harmony. But this is what we have had to face and still have to face, this is what the greatness of our times commands of us. And the new Fascist generations will demonstrate that they have drawn on this greatness¹⁸.

The First Rome of the Caesars showed the original monuments on which those of the Third Rome were based. The PDCI stood for the Colosseum with echoes of the *Tabularium*, the Exedras immediately preceding the civilisation axis echoed the markets of Trajan and alluded, at the same time, to Bernini's hemicycle colonnades for St. Peter's¹⁹ (*Figures 9 & 10* [cf. p. 155]). The designs for the *Teatro Imperiale* would evoke the great theatres of Pompey and Marcellus and the *Mostra della Romanità*, now *Museo della Civiltà Romana*, acted as a lively reminder of the Imperial Forums²⁰. The PRC was presented as the 20th C interpretation of the Pantheon and is, in fact, large enough to fit the Pantheon inside it (*Figure 11*). At the same time, it recalled the formal arrangement of a Christian basilica with a central nave and preceding narthex²¹.

Dazzi's Obelisk had a multi-valent symbolism connected to Rome's most significant eras (*Figure 12*). Firstly, to the original transfer of the Egyptian obelisks to Rome by Augustus to signify his rule over Egypt. Secondly, to the re-use and restoration of the obelisks as directional markers for pilgrims and as symbols of the triumph of Christianity over Pagan-

¹⁸ «In una città dove nel passato sono stati innalzati gruppi edilizi come i Fori e le Terme, come le Basiliche e i conventi cristiani, dove si sono create piazze come quella del Popolo e di San Pietro, come il Campidoglio, il Quirinale ed il Circo Agonale [Piazza Navona], era, ed è, ben arduo e terribile pensare a nuove bellezze e nuove armonie. Ma è pur questo che si è dovuto e si deve affrontare; è questo che la 'grandezza dell'epoca' comanda; è a questa grandezza che le nuove generazioni fasciste dimostreranno di aver attinto». M. Piacentini, *ibidem*, pp. 47-48.

¹⁹ A. MUNTONI, *Roma tra le due guerre*, cit., p. 150

²⁰ M. Piacentini, cit. p. 49.

²¹ M. Piacentini, cit., p. 52.



Fig. 11. Origin and interpretation: (left) Pantheon, 2nd C. Image: Martin Falbisoner. CC-BY-SA-3.0; (right) Palazzo dei Ricevimenti e dei Congressi, Adalberto Libera, 1938-54. Image: Alberti 1492. CC-BY-SA-4.0.

ism in the late 1580s under Sixtus V. Finally, to two obelisks connected to the Fascist era – the new one dedicated to Mussolini in front of the new sporting complex to the north of the city and the Stele of Axum, brought over from Ethiopia that stood in front of the Ministry of Italian Africa and marked the route to E42 for both travellers coming along the Via del Mare from Piazza Venezia or along the Via dei Trionfi past the Arch of Constantine.

The Second Rome of the Popes is less represented. Relations between the State and the Vatican had been re-established in 1929 but the Cult of the Duce and Fascism as political religion were to be given prominence²². The *Chiesa dei SS. Pietro e Paolo* recalls the two basilicas dedicated to Rome's patron saints at the Vatican and along the Via Ostiense (Figure 13). The secular aspect of the Papal city was supposedly evoked with the *Piazza Imperiale* whose unitary architectural quality is a direct reference to the on the typology of grand Roman piazzas like Piazza San Pietro, Piazza del Popolo and Piazza del Campidoglio with their colonnades, unified architectural character and central vertical element (cf. Figure 10).

Funi's fresco – location and compositional analysis

Funi's fresco was part of an overall decorative scheme for the PRC that included: a roughly 7-metre high bronze Victory chariot by Francesco Messina²³ on the front façade, a mosaic cycle for the main hall, frescoes by Afro Basaldella in the rear atrium, mosaics by Angelo Canavari in the restaurant and a careful selection of coloured marble from all over Italy for the walls and floors. While the other artists were selected via a competition process, Funi was brought in directly by his friend Cipriano Efisio Oppo, director of the Rome Quadriennale and artistic supervisor of the E42/EUR. He was invited to execute a fresco about Rome but its specifics had not yet been determined.

Located in the ceremonial entry atrium of the PRC Funi's fresco was in a prime position to maximise its visual impact since the long, thin volume of the atrium did not allow the

²² G. BERGHAUS, *The ritual core of fascist theatre*, in *Fascism. Critical Concepts in Political Science*, III, *Fascism and Culture*, eds. R. Griffin - M. Feldman, London 2004, pp. 83-86. See also E. GENTILE, *Il culto del Littorio. La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista*, Roma - Bari 2009.

²³ See M. DE LUCA, *Francesco Messina. Quadriga*, in *E42. Utopia e scenario del regime*, II, cit., p. 331.

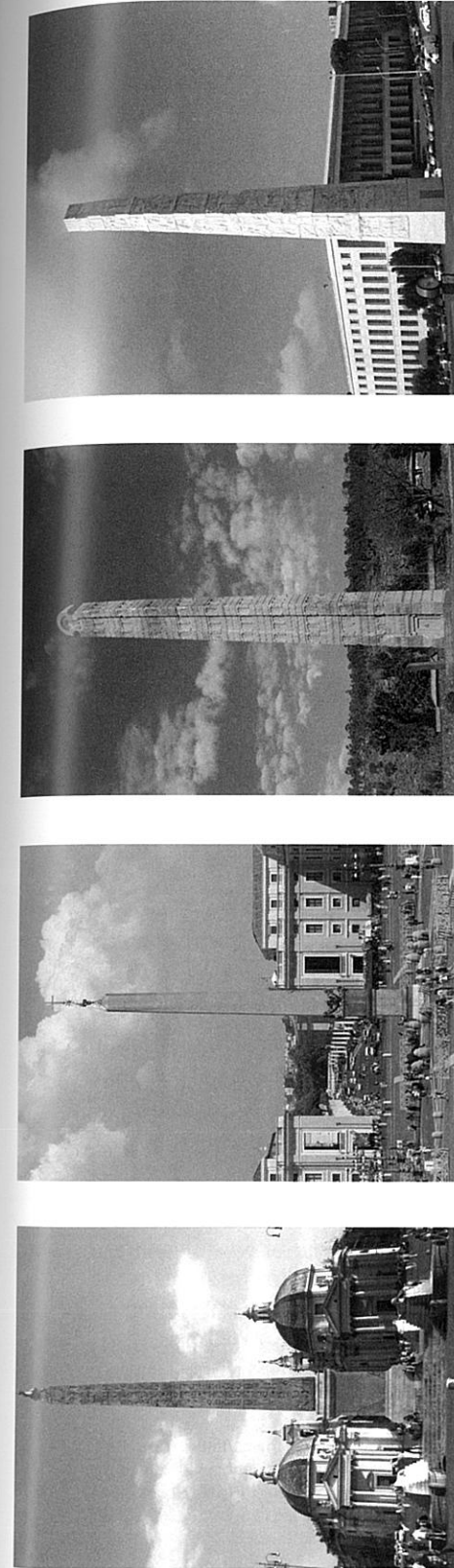


Fig. 12. Genealogy of obelisks: (from left to right) Obelisk of Ramses II, Piazza del Popolo (relocated), Image: Jean-Christophe Benoist. CC-BY-2.5; Obelisk of Augustus, Piazza San Pietro (relocated), c. 30 BCE. Image: Jebulon. CC-Zero; Stele of Axum, Axum (repatriated), 4th C. AD. Image: Ondřej Zváček CC-BY-2.5; Obelisk of Guglielmo Marconi, EUR c. 1939 Arturo Dazzi. Image: Author.

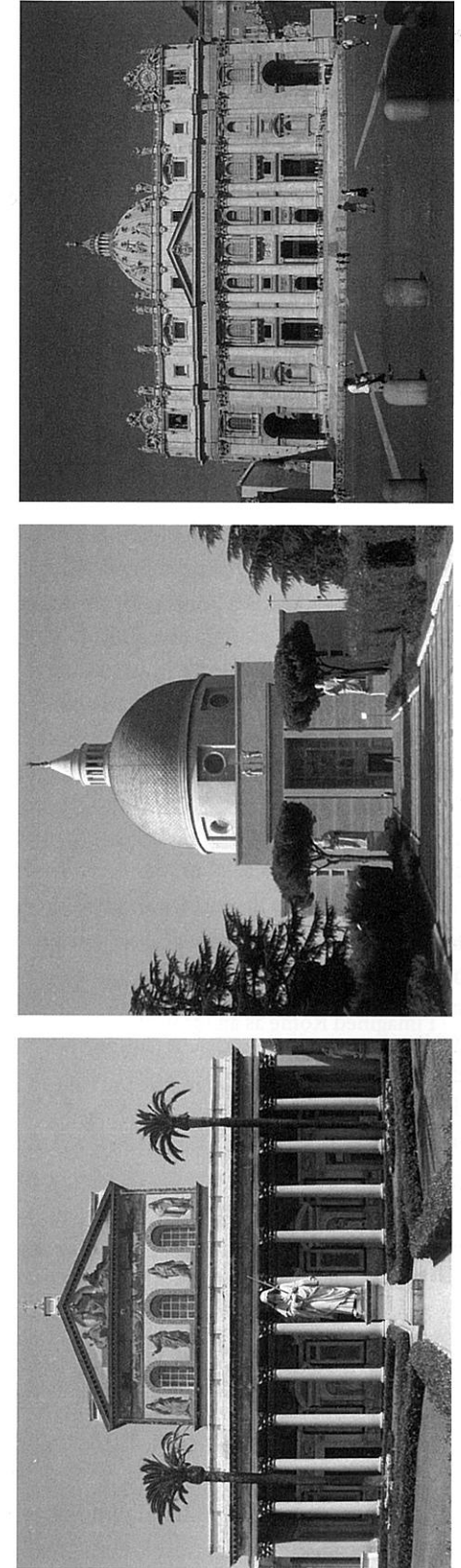


Fig. 13. Origins and interpretation: (left) Basilica di San Paolo fuori le Mura, 4th C. AD. Image: Berthold Werner; (centre) Basilica dei Santi Pietro e Paolo a Via Ostiense, Arnaldo Foschini, Alfredo Energi, Vittorio Grassi, Nello Ena, Tullio Rossi and Costantino Vetriani, 1939-55. Image: Author; (right) Basilica di San Pietro, Donato Bramante, Michelangelo Buonarroti, Carlo Maderno, c. 16th C. Image: Jolly Janner.

viewer to move back far enough to take in the whole composition (cf. *Figure 4*). The 15m x 15m x 75m space was destined for ceremonies and its walls were in white Calacatta marble cut and laid so as to accentuate the geometry of its diagonal green veins. This was echoed in the Verde Alpi and Carrara white marble of the floors²⁴. Two 5-metre wide corridors either side led to the rear atrium of the building set aside for conferences and conventions (cf. *Figure 3*). After contemplating this triumphal representation of Rome and the many roads leading to it, visitors proceeded through one of four doorways into the main cross-vaulted space whose decorative scheme was the work of several artists that told the history of Rome from its origins through its great Imperial and Christian eras before culminating in the Rome of Mussolini²⁵. Just as the atrium acted as a spatial prelude to the magnificence of the grand hall Funi's fresco therefore acted as a visual prelude to its mosaic cycle. From there, visitors could either exit the same way or proceed to the rear atrium to be greeted by a series of allegorical figures clad in classical robes and representing different aspects of civilization from art to agriculture, from family life to physics²⁶. This theme was mirrored in the many 3 and a half metre high marble statues by various artists that were planned to stand in each arches of the PDCI on the opposite end of the axis²⁷ (cf. *Figure 6*).

The proportions of the ceremonial atrium (five times as long as it is wide) presented Funi with a few problems – how to devise a fresco that tells a story of Rome onto an area 7.25 meters high and 75 meters long? How to devise themes, narrative and a compositional schema onto a such a strongly linear area? It is almost as if Funi conceived of the fresco as an ancient Roman book scroll whose giant unrolled pages had been attached to the wall like wallpaper (cf. *Figure 5*). This idea of an unrolled book was also at the basis of Trajan's column and was adopted by Publio Morbiducci in his bas relief for the *Palazzo degli Uffici*²⁸ (*Figure 14*).

Funi knew that he had to choose a story with a monumental quality that at the same time retained popular appeal. He sent his first cartoon to Oppo in July 1940 with the following description:

I imagined Rome as an ideal city; the true city, the land whose traditions and legends all flow towards it to create the Roman world. [...] In order to make the work easily understandable to everyone, I have tried to give the composition a popular aspect so I used legends that have already become our common heritage²⁹.

²⁴ F. DAL FALCO - G. ARDITI, *Stili del razionalismo: anatomia di quattordici opere di architettura*, Roma 2002, pp. 344 e 350.

²⁵ F. MARCELLO, *The Idea of Rome in Fascist Art and Architecture: The Decorative Program of the Palazzo dei Congressi in EUR*, in *Rome in Interspaces: Art + Architectural Exchanges from East to West*, eds. F. Marcello - A. White, Melbourne 2010.

²⁶ See M. PIGNATTI MORANO, *Il Palazzo dei Ricevimenti e Congressi*, in *E42. L'immagine ritrovata*, cit., pp. 18-55 (44-55).

²⁷ M.S. FARCI, *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana. La decorazione*, in *E42. Utopia e scenario del regime*, II, cit., pp. 361-366.

²⁸ F. MARCELLO, *The Norme of 1932 and the Fascist Concept of Monument. Publio Morbiducci's The History of Rome Through Its Built Works*, in *The Venice Charter Revisited: Modernism & Conservation in the Post-War World*, ed. M. Hardy, Cambridge 2009. F. COARELLI, *La Colonna Traiana*, Roma 1999, p. 11.

²⁹ «Ho immaginato Roma come città ideale; la vera città, e la terra con le tradizioni e leggende che confluiscono tutte e servono a formare il mondo romano. [...]. Ho cercato anche, perché la cosa sia comprensibile ad ogni persona, di dare alle composizioni un aspetto popolare per cui ho dovuto usare quelle leggende che sono ormai di patrimonio comune». Letter from Funi to Oppo dated 7th August 1940. ACS, EUR, SA, "Achille Funi", fasc. pers. Quoted in S. Lux, *Achille Funi*.



Fig. 14. The History of Rome through its Built Works. Publio Morbiducci, 1939, bas relief on *Palazzo degli Uffici*. Image: Author.

With the subject matter approved, Funi went ahead with the details of the narrative and the composition only to be told by Oppo in December that EUR's supervising archaeologist Carlo Cecchelli had made a list of specific elements and stories that were to be included in order to make explicit connections to contemporary uses of Roman and Christian history for Fascism's political propaganda. Funi was to paint subjects to communicate the teleological project of Fascism's inevitability and reinforce the rhetorical possibilities of reception. Cecchelli wanted events like Romulus witnessing the seven eagles on the Aventine and the March on Rome. There to be needed Roman leaders like Scipio and Caesar Augustus (next to the *Ara Pacis*) alongside Medieval and Renaissance figures like Gregory the Great (or Petrarch) and

Marcantonio Colonna surrounded by the Legions of Today. Eagles connected the Fascist era both to the myth of Rome's foundation by Romulus and to Imperial Rome. Along with Victory and the magisterial *fasces*, they were a common element in Fascism's iconographical repertoire. Scipio was a name on everyone's lips as the adventures of the Roman general and consul who conquered Hannibal in the second Punic War had been recently made into a blockbuster film by Carmine Gallone. Obvious parallels were drawn between him and the Fascist military leaders who had recently "conquered" north-eastern parts of Africa thereby adding Ethiopia - Abyssinia to their colonial holdings in Lybia, Eritrea and parts of Somalia. The *Ara Pacis Augustae* was also strongly present in common consciousness as its many pieces had recently been excavated, reassembled and reconstructed in a purpose-built pavilion right next to the mausoleum of Augustus as part of the 1937-8 bi-millennial celebrations of his birth. The second group brings us through to the present with the figure of the 9th Century doctor of the Church Gregory the Great; the 14th C Tuscan poet Petrarch and Colonna the admiral who in the 16th C affirmed superiority over the Mediterranean against the enemy Turks up to Mussolini's "conquest" of Rome in October 1922.

Funi refused to comply even when Oppo threatened to replace him with a more compliant colleague and he was able to continue work more or less on his own terms by proposing that Cecchelli's rather intricate narrative be replaced by the triumphal parades of Julius

Trionfo di Augusto - Tutte le strade conducono a Roma - Trionfo di Cesare, in *E42. Utopia e scenario del regime*, II, cit., pp. 331-335 (333).

Caesar and Augustus³⁰ (Figures 15 & 16). This tied in with the triumphant atmosphere of empire, linked Mussolini to the two great leaders of which he was heir and eliminated what would have been close repetition with the decorative scheme for the main hall.

The result was an essentially symmetrical composition divided into five sections and based, like the architecture of the PRC, on the module of a square (Figure 17). It appears

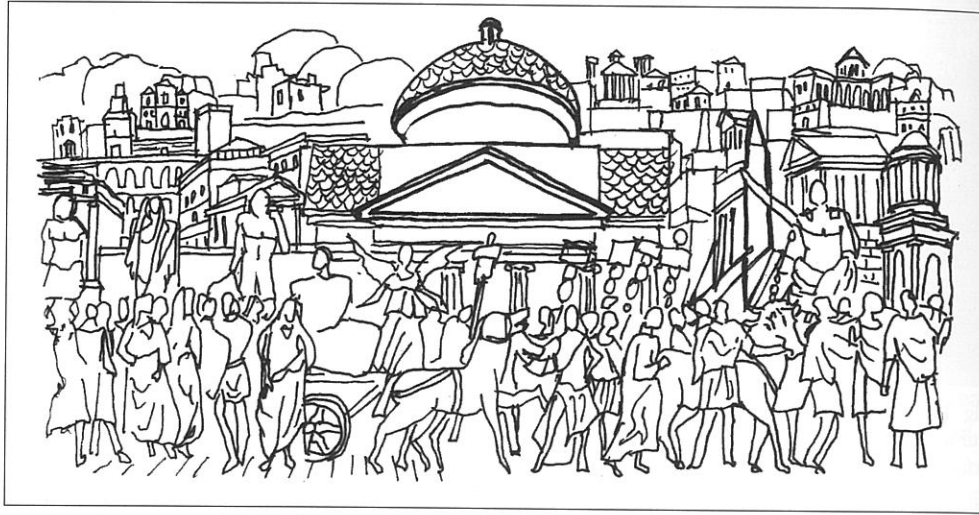


Fig. 15. Schematic composition detail of the Triumph of Caesar. Image: Brandon Gardiner (based on cartoons by Achille Funi).

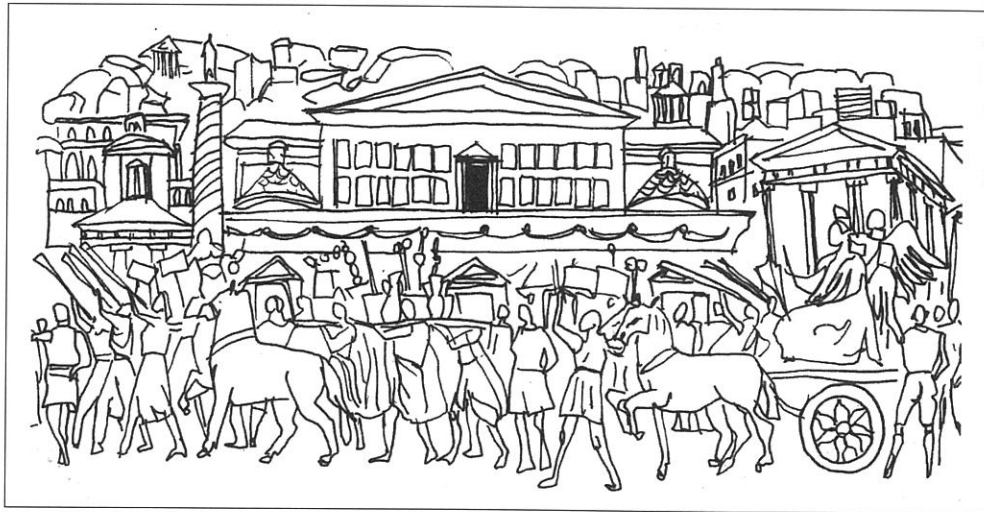


Fig. 16. Schematic composition detail of the Triumph of Augustus. Image: Brandon Gardiner (based on cartoons by Achille Funi).

³⁰ S. Lux, *Achille Funi*, cit., pp. 333-334.

that Funi divided the long thin area of wall space into 8 squares with the fourth and fifth overlapping by one third of their length in the centre of the composition. This overlap of the two central squares (4 and 5) acts as the fulcrum of the composition and is occupied by *Roma* on her throne (Figure 18). The First Rome of Empire and figures of the three Caesars (4) occupy the rest of the square on the left while the Second Rome of Christianity and figures of three Popes (5) are placed in the rest of the square to the right. The square to the left of Imperial Rome (3) contains episodes of profane history related to the origins of Rome and is based on a combination of Greek mythology and Virgil's *Aeneid*. The square to the right of Christian Rome (6) contains episodes of sacred history based on the Old Testament. Squares 1 and 2 on the extreme left show a triumphal parade of Julius Caesar while the last two squares of the extreme right (7 and 8) show Augustus in a victory chariot preceded by his triumphal cortege (cf. Figure 17).

Although the overall composition is quite flat in terms of its visual planes, its five sections follow a distinct hierarchy. *Roma* on her throne with the walled city behind is of primary importance. The two triumphs occupy the second most important position while the two historical sections, rate third. In turn, each square is divided into three horizontal registers giving a definable foreground, middle ground and background both to the fresco overall and to each of its sections. The lower, foreground is dominated by human figures: Julius Caesar, parade participants, Apollo and his muses, Emperors, Popes, Patriarchs of the church, more parade participants and Augustus. The middle ground is principally architectural interspersed on either side of Rome's fortified walls and earthly episodes. The topmost background register is a continuous landscape of rocks and hills punctuated in the centre by the principal monuments of the imperial and papal cities (Figures 19 & 20, cf. Figure 18).

The fresco's visual narrative weaves together myth and history in the best Roman tradition, a tradition that was taken to a new level by the Fascist propaganda machine. The central portion of the fresco operates on reinforcing Rome's dual identity as capital of ancient Imperial and Christian Rome through architecture and singular figures of leaders. These representations are presented as precursors to the Fascist Rome that has just been physically experienced throughout EUR and that was about to be visually and spatially experienced in the planned the mosaic cycle of the great hall. Architecturally, it was Rome as ideal walled city, a backdrop for the enthroned goddess whose monuments were mirrored by those of EUR. In terms of leadership it was shown by the figures of popes and emperor-generals to whom Mussolini was heir in, particular Augustus and Julius Caesar who appear a number of times throughout the fresco. Their triumphal parades acted as precursors of supposed triumphs of the Fascist era – the March on Rome in 1922 when Mussolini "took power" and the march on Addis Ababa in 1936 when Italy was re-declared an empire.

The art of EUR and the art of the regime

The art of EUR was given the same overall unitary character as the architecture. This was in accordance with Bottai's campaign for the 2% law that would guarantee that 2% of the

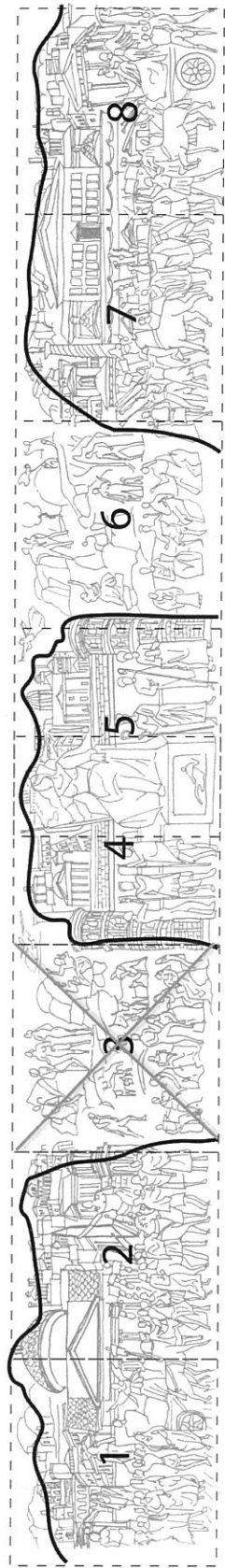


Fig. 17. Schematic composition of fresco. Image: Brandon Gardiner and Author (based on cartoons by Achille Funi).

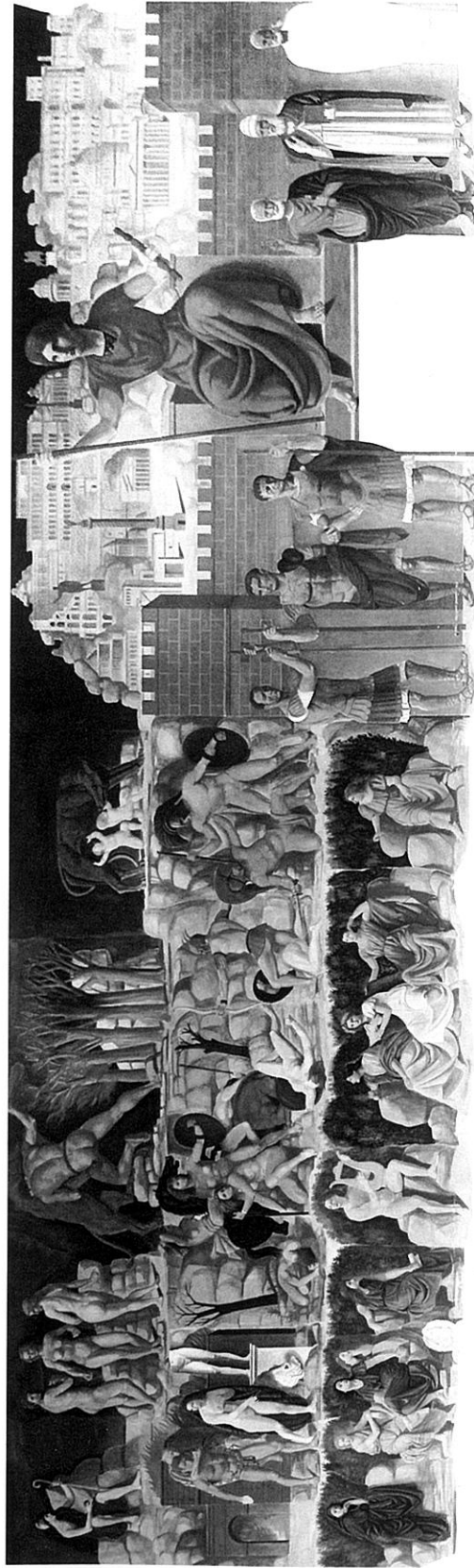


Fig. 18. Achille Funi completed fresco: (centre) *Roma* on her throne with six male figures in the foreground, (left) episodes of Profane History. Image: Martin Passi.

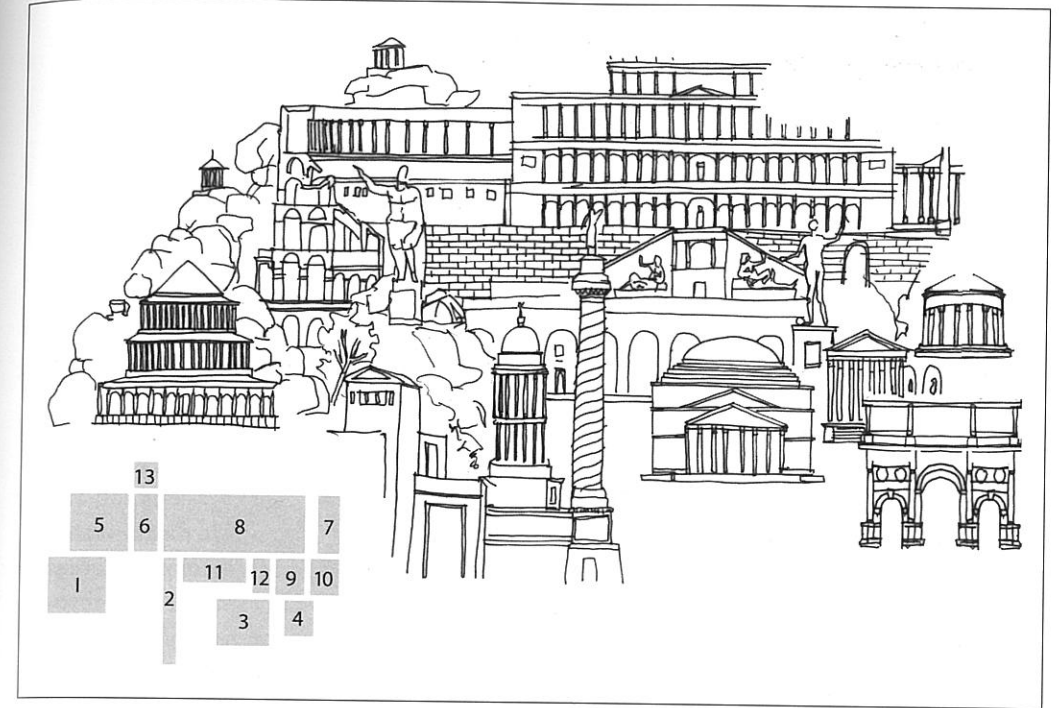


Fig. 19. Schematic composition detail of Imperial Rome. Image: Brandon Gardiner (based on cartoons by Achille Funi). (1) Mausoleum of Augustus, (2) Column of Trajan/Marcus Aurelius, (3) Pantheon, (4) Arch of Constantine, (5) Section of the Colosseum, (6) Augustus of *Prima Porta*, (7) Obelisk (unidentified), (8) Tabularium, (9) Temple of Venus, (10) Temple of Vesta, (11) Fountain of *Palazzo Senatorio*, (12) Unidentified Statue, (13) Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus.

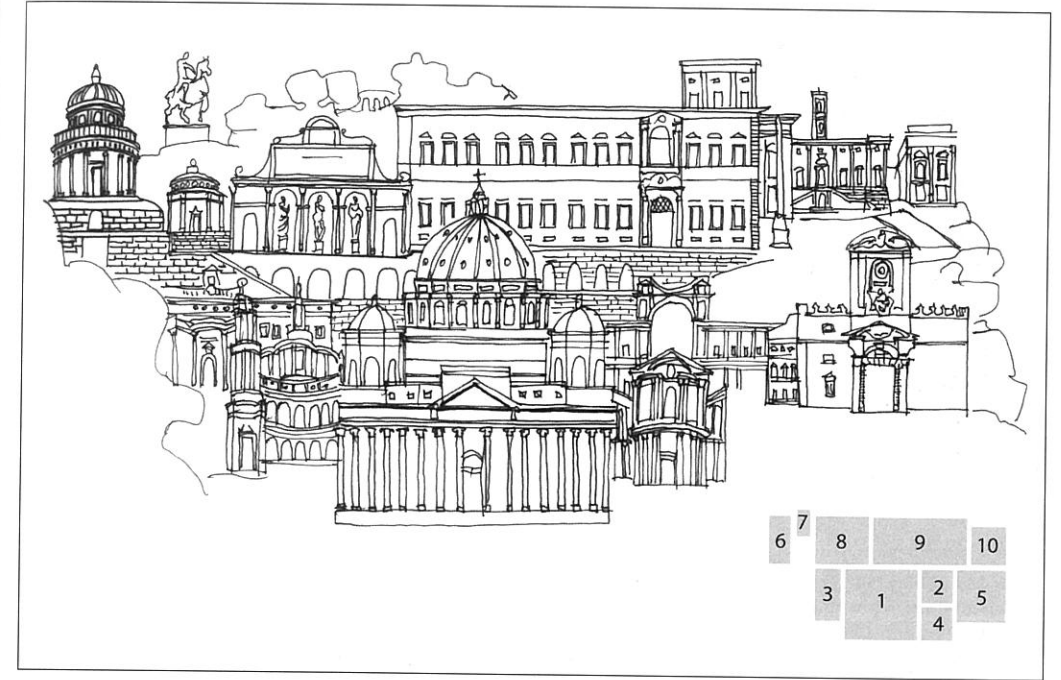


Fig. 20. Schematic composition detail of Papal Rome. Image: Brandon Gardiner (based on cartoons by Achille Funi). (1) *Basilica di San Pietro*, (2) *Belvedere Courtyard*, (3) *Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza*, (4) *Santa Maria Della Pace*, (5) *Porta Pia*, (6) *Tempietto*, (7) *Statue of Giuseppe Garibaldi*, (8) *Fontana dell'Acqua Paola*, (9) *Quirinal Palace*, (10) *Campidoglio*.

budget of a public building be spent on its art³¹. Visitors and residents would walk around an exposition conceived by Oppo as an open air museum, a permanent exhibit of all the great contributions Italy had made to civilisation. Art, exhibition and museum were presented as a continuum where the relationship between art and architecture, history and tradition became pure metaphor³². The architecture of EUR played a key role in this continuum of relationships because frescoes, mosaics, stained glass windows and bas reliefs took physical form in the interfaces between the walls of buildings and the spaces they defined. This can be seen throughout the whole of EUR. In Funi's work and the many other frescoes planned for its other buildings, in Giulio Rosso's windows on astronomy for the Museum of Science, in Morbiducci's bas relief for the *Palazzo degli Uffici* and the pair of monumental mosaics by Fortunato Depero and Enrico Prampolini that flank the avenue between the *Piazza Imperiale* and the *Mostra della Romanità* depicting the Arts and Professions and The Corporations³³ (Figure 21, cf. Figure 14). Statues existed in a spatial interface that operated on an urban scale as was the case for the Victory chariot on the PRC or the colossal statues of Castor and Pollux by Publio Morbiducci on either side of the PDCI (Figure 22) or Fausto Melotti's bronze groups showing the Foundation of Cities and Redemption of the Lands planned for the armed forces complex³⁴. Together, these artworks acted on the interior and exterior spaces of EUR to reinforce a multitude of visions, references and interpretations of Rome's universality to communicate a political message³⁵ and reinforcing their crucial role in the rhetoric of reception.

The fulcrum and centre of the composition is the Goddess *Roma* and the ideal cities of the Caesars and the Popes (cf. Figure 18). Departing from the usual iconography of coins which shows a side view and accentuates military aspects such as cuirasses and statues of Victory, Funi depicts her centrally on a throne with a staff in her left hand and a sceptre in her right. It is supposed that Funi created her as a conflation between three related pagan goddesses: Hera, Magna Mater and Cybele. She sits in front of a walled city reminiscent of those seen in illuminated manuscripts³⁶, 16th C engravings and, most prominently, medieval apse mosaics. As the walls contain two distinct cities of high symbolic importance it is not a large leap to think of the symbolic cities of Bethlehem and Jerusalem as seen in S. Prassede (9th C) or the city shown behind Jesus in S. Pudenziana (5th C) (Figure 23). The inclusion of multiple sources from a variety of eras reinforced the uninterrupted status of Rome as universal centre of art, religion and civilisation.

³¹ L. 839, 11 May 1942. For Giuseppe Bottai's role see: V. ZAGARRIO, *Primato: arte, cultura, cinema del fascismo attraverso una rivista esemplare*, Roma 2007, pp. 133-140.

³² S. LUX, *Storie diverse*, in E42. *L'immagine ritrovata*, cit., pp. 9-12 (12).

³³ For more information on each of these works see the following pages in E42. *Utopia e scenario del regime*, II, cit. Prampolini: pp. 386-388, Depero, pp. 407-410, Rosso, pp. 412-414, Morbiducci, pp. 307-310 & F. MARCELLO, *The Norme of 1932*, cit.

³⁴ See in S. LUX, *Achille Funi*, cit., p. 331, M.S. FARCI, *Publio Morbiducci. 2 gruppi di Dioscuri. Marmo / Alberto Felci. 2 gruppi di Dioscuri. Marmo* & E. COEN, *Fausto Melotti. Si redimono i campi - Si fondano le città*, in E42. *Utopia e scenario del regime*, II, cit., pp. 366-368 & pp. 431-436 respectively.

³⁵ E. GENTILE, *Il culto del Littorio*, cit., pp. 178-181.

³⁶ S. MADDALO, *In figura Romae: immagini di Roma nel libro medioevale*, Roma 1990.

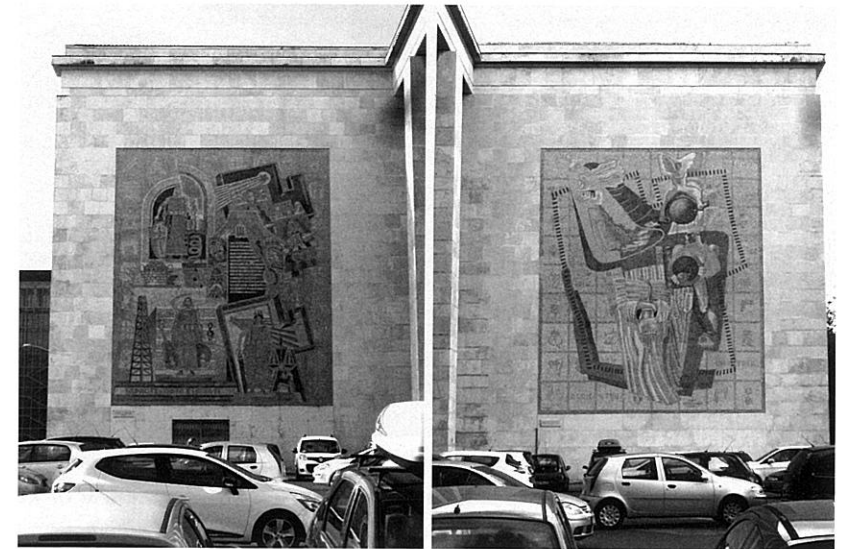


Fig. 21. Monumental mosaics at the *Piazza Imperiale*. *Arts and Professions* by Fortunato Depero and *The Corporations* by Enrico Prampolini. Image: Author.



Fig. 22. Monumental statues at the *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana*. Castor and Pollux by Publio Morbiducci. Image: Author.

The image of the city that takes up the top third of the fresco's two central squares is not based on topography but on select monuments visually arranged to represent Imperial and Papal Rome (cf. Figures 18, 19 & 20). The reconstructed Mausoleum of Augustus, the Pantheon and the Arch of Constantine are Imperial Rome's three most prominent and recognisable monuments. The mausoleum continues the prominence afforded Augustus, the Pantheon is simply iconic, is connected to the PRC and makes specific reference to the original version built by Augustus' nephew Agrippa. Of Rome's three extant triumphal arches, Constantine's

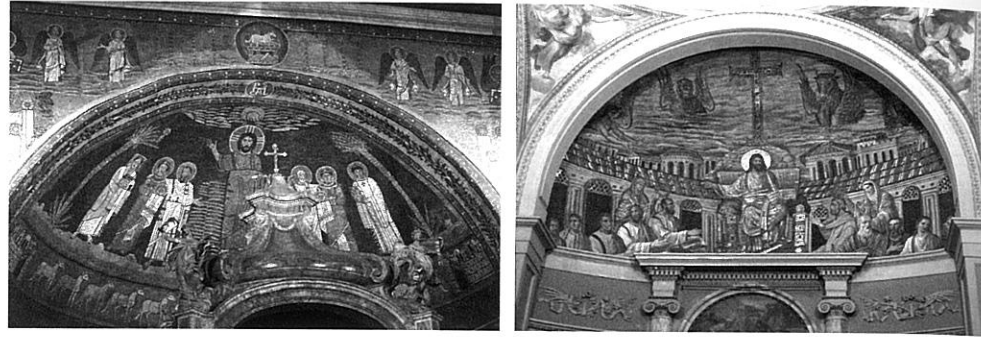


Fig. 23. Symbolic Cities, apse mosaics of *Santa Prassede* (left), Rome, 9th C, and *Santa Pudenziana* (right), Rome, 5th C. Images by Welleschik. CC-BY-SA-3.0.

was chosen as it depicts genealogy of rule with *spolia* from monuments dedicated to Trajan, Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius, all famous for their roles in waging war or keeping peace. It also acted as harbinger of Christian Rome given Constantine's conversion to Christianity. The Colosseum which is shown as a cutaway section completes the set of major imperial monuments and connects to its square counterpart, the PDCI (cf. *Figure 22*).

Two statues, an honorary column and an obelisk vertically punctuate the composition. The first statue is quite clearly the Prima Porta statue of Augustus while the second, omitted from the final version of the fresco, is too sketchy to identify. A copy of the Prima Porta statue in bronze had also recently been ordered by Mussolini to be placed in front of Augustus's newly excavated and restored forum (*Figure 24*). The column could be either Trajan's or Marcus Aurelius's, they are considered equivalent and both include a reference to Christian Rome, as the small statue shown on top could easily be the St. Peter or St. Paul placed there by Sixtus V in the late 16th C. The obelisk operates on a multiple symbolic levels it connects to the one by Dazzi that visitors would have seen on their way to the PRC as well as to those of the imperial, papal and Fascist eras cited earlier (cf. *Figure 12*).

Although Imperial era monuments dominate in this vision of Rome, Funi includes buildings from other eras to emphasise the uninterrupted thread of Rome's religious, architectural and artistic dominance (cf. *Figure 19*). The *Tabularium* represents the Republican era and, like the Colosseum is echoed in the PDCI while the Temple of Vesta and the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline represent the era of the Kings. At the feet of the *Tabularium* is the fountain of the Palazzo Senatorio on the Capitoline Hill which although built in the 16th C includes a 3rd C statue of Minerva re-interpreted as *Roma* and two 2nd C River Gods, one of whom was modified in the 16th C to represent the Tiber. Although this may initially appear as a bizarre anachronism on Funi's part it further reinforces the idea of Rome's continuity given that the *Palazzo Senatorio's* foundations are built on those of the *Tabularium* and it incorporates a number of its columns into the façade towards the Forum.

Unsurprisingly, Papal Rome is dominated by the façade of St. Peter's and a perspectival view of the Belvedere courtyard that appears to be taken directly from an 18th C engraving by Giuseppe Vasi. Funi plays an interesting visual game by flanking St. Peter's with S. Ivo alla Sapienza on the left and S. Maria della Pace on the right whose concave and convex fa-



Fig. 24. Statues of Augustus and Julius Caesar in front of their respective forums on via dei Fori Imperiali. Image: Author.

ades give movement to the bottom section of the composition (cf. *Figure 20*). S. Ivo makes reference to Rome's first university, La Sapienza, and its historic Biblioteca Alessandrina. S. Ivo's symbolism was based on the concept of divine knowledge and a universal idea of Rome needs to be founded in education and knowledge. The inclusion of Santa Maria della Pace also shows an impressive genealogy of Italy's most important artists and architects with contributions by Bramante, Raphael, Baldassare Peruzzi, Pietro da Cortona and Carlo Maderno. The façade of Porta Pia, important as much for its design by Michelangelo as in its role in the 1870 Battle of Porta Pia when Rome officially became part of the Kingdom of Italy occupies a prominent position further to the right. The top half of the composition also features Bramante's Tempietto along with two other monuments associated with the Janiculum hill on which it stands: the equestrian statue of Garibaldi and the *Acqua Paola* Fountain³⁷. Built in the courtyard of S. Pietro in Montorio, the Tempietto supposedly marks the spot where St. Peter was crucified thereby placing further importance on the St. Peter as the first pope. Giuseppe Garibaldi, who later played an important role in unifying Italy, is there to represent the *Risorgimento* battlegrounds of the Janiculum connecting symbolically to Porta Pia on the bottom right of the composition. Both these *Risorgimento* episodes were an attack on the Pope's temporal power so their inclusion in a fresco for the Fascist era is a clear message about where the balance of power lay.

To the right of the *Acqua Paola* which, as a restoration of the ancient *Acqua Traiana* shows the continuity of Rome's technological prowess, we have the Quirinal Palace and the *Campidoglio*. The first is obviously identified as the palace built by a succession of popes between the 1570s and the and the 1740s as a residence in addition to the Vatican. For the contemporary viewer, however, the Quirinal was the royal palace and currently the home of

³⁷ This has been identified by Pignatti Morano as the *Acqua Felice* Fountain but I believe that the bracket details around the parapet and its location in the fresco so close to the Tempietto and Garibaldi identify it more closely with the *Acqua Paola*.

Victor Emanuel who had recently also been named emperor of Ethiopia. The *Campidoglio* completes the scene and connects us back to the top corner of the Imperial Rome composition with the first known building on that hill: the Temple to Jupiter.

Standing at the feet of *Roma's* throne are six male figures: three emperors and three popes (cf. *Figure 18*). The Emperors, on the left, have been identified as Julius Caesar, Augustus and either Trajan or Marcus Aurelius³⁸. It probably does not matter as both held significant military prowess and both were connected to the honorary column depicted above. Holding spears and modestly dressed in leather cuirass and sandals they appear at rest. Only the figure of Augustus, whose head is modelled on the Prima Porta statue in the Vatican featured above, holds attributes of power with a sceptre in his right hand and the globe of universal rule in his left.

Corresponding to the three rulers of the first Rome are three rulers of the Second Rome who stand to the right of *Roma's* throne. Two have been identified as Gregory the Great and St. Peter while the third has been defined as a lawmaking pope thanks to the book in his left hand³⁹. Gregory stands to the edge of the city wall and even though Funi only painted his face his identity is confirmed by the dove resting on his shoulder. The inclusion of the dove is interesting as it is connected to the speech and dictation of homilies and Mussolini was powerful through his speeches. St. Peter has his right hand raised in a gesture of blessing and holds the key to heaven in his right hand and is further reference to his standing as first pope, first apostle and as the rock upon which Christ built his church.

Second in hierarchical importance within the fresco are the Triumphs of Caesar and Augustus. As these portions of the fresco were never carried out, our analysis is based on extant cartoons. The triumph of Julius Caesar which we could say is on a road leading to Rome from the right hand side features him on a chariot alongside a winged victory and followed by groups of citizens (cf. *Figures 5 & 15*). Preceding the chariot are soldiers with *vexilla*, a sacrificial bull (most likely accompanied by priests) and other figures in togas standing around an altar which reminds us of the bas reliefs for the *Ara Pacis*. The procession would be occurring somewhere along the triumphal route that wove its way around the city starting from the Campus Martius and ending on the Capitoline at the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Behind the procession are a series of statues that call to mind statue of Hercules at rest, the Augustus of Via Labicana (dressed as pontifex and holding a *patera* in his left hand) there is also a *doriphoros* and what is very likely Julius Caesar to echo the bronze copy recently placed by Mussolini in front of Caesar's newly excavated and reconstructed forum (cf. *Figure 24*). It does not appear that Funi had any definitive ideas about which section of Rome to show as backdrop at this stage. Four of its hills are easily discernible leading us to think that the parade may already be on the Via Sacra in the Valley of the Forum. The monuments are clearly inspired by the Pantheon, funerary monuments similar to the Mausoleum of Glanum, now in Provence, to make clear reference to Caesar's triumphs in Gaul and the Fortune Primigenia complex in Palestrina.⁴⁰

³⁸ M. PIGNATTI MORANO, *Il Palazzo dei Ricevimenti e Congressi*, cit., p. 19.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ My thanks to Dr. Francesca de Caprariis at the Musei Capitolini for her topographic proficiency in identifying the statues and monuments from the two triumph cartoons.

Funi has been similarly generic for the Triumph of Augustus, approaching Rome from the right (cf. *Figures 5 & 16*). The monuments in the background recall sections of the Palatine as reconstructed in Gismondi's famous model that was exhibited for the first time at the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità*. The temple bears a strong resemblance to the Temple of Portunus but for some reason Funi painted Ionic instead of Doric columns. Like his adopted uncle, Augustus also rides on a chariot but this time Victory stands behind him holding the laurel crown over his head. They are followed by soldiers with *vexilla* and preceded by others who appear to be carrying spoils and holding signs indicating the conquered cities. Leading the triumph are trumpeters closely followed by more soldiers with signs and others holding the trophy armour of the conquered enemy. Although clearly occurring a century later we can suppose that Funi derived much of his information about the elements and arrangements of the triumphal parade from the accounts of Flavius Josephus, the bas reliefs of the Triumph of Titus and Vespasian from the memorial arch of Titus and a triumph of Marcus Aurelius in the Capitoline museums. It is likely that these famous *bas reliefs* were not his only source. There was the Tomb of the Haterii that showed elevations of some of the Forum's major buildings, the Marcus Aurelius panels incorporated into the Arch of Constantine and then the thousands of plaster casts from all over the world at the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità* that Funi would have surely visited⁴¹. This exhibition, one of the many events staged to celebrate the bi-millennial of Augustus' birth, gave primary importance to Rome's first citizen. A number of Augustus' qualities were also assigned to Mussolini including his "modesty" around the senate insistence that he take sole rule, his merging of religious and imperial power by taking on the position of *Pontifex Maximus* and his status as a living God. The exhibition also made much of the coincidence between the age of Augustus and the birth of Christ thus weaving together Rome's Christian and pagan histories.

Funi's fresco also weaves these two histories together through a series of visual and conceptual parallels between the episodes of sacred and profane history that occupy the third hierarchical level of the fresco's overall composition, much in the same way as the painters of the 1480s frescoes in the Sistine Chapel depicted the episodes of the lives of Jesus and Moses opposite each other. As he said in his letter to Oppo, Funi used well-known and popular themes that could on one level relate to an over-riding theme of Origin and on another be easily connected to contemporary Fascist society. Funi changed some of the specific subject matter of these sections under direct or indirect influence from Oppo and the powers that be or, we can surmise, simply because some scenes fitted better into the overall visual narrative. The most definite changes can be seen in the profane history section as it was virtually finished while the changes in Sacred history sections are only documented by successive cartoons and other documents.

Profane history starts with the the Judgement of Paris as the catalyst event for the Trojan War that brought Aeneas to flee his burning city and sail across the seas to found Rome (cf. *Figure 18*). The shepherd could also be Faustolus who found Romulus and Remus suckling

⁴¹ See F. MARCELLO, *Mussolini and the Idealisation of Empire: The Augustan Exhibition of Romanità*, in «Modern Italy. The Journal of the Association for the Study of Modern Italy», XVI (2011), pp. 223-247 & J. ARTHURS, *Excavating modernity: the Roman past in fascist Italy*, Ithaca 2012, pp. 91-124.

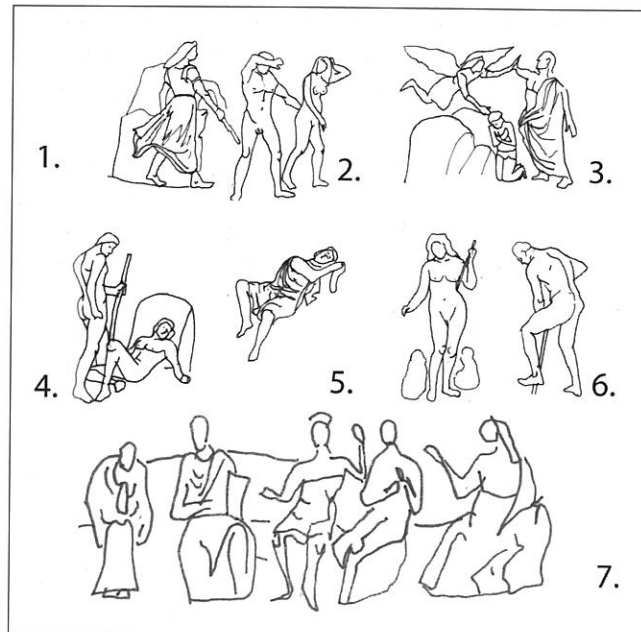


Fig. 25. Reconstruction of episodes from Sacred History. Image: Brandon Gardiner (based on cartoons by Achille Funi).

(1) and (2) Expulsion from Eden, (3) Sacrifice of Isaac, (4) Cain and Abel, (5) Jacob's Dream, (6) Adam and Eve working, (7) 5 Patriarchs of the Church. Image: Brandon Gardiner.

the she-wolf and brought them up as his own sons. Sacred history starts with the Expulsion from Eden, the catalyst event that forces Adam and Eve to work the land and leads to Mary conceiving Jesus to redeem Eve's sin and bring the Son of God to Earth to redeem the sins of Mankind⁴² (Figure 25). The image of Adam and Eve working the land would have resonated in the minds of contemporary views as it linked to Fascism's extensive land reclamation campaign that had its own exhibition at EUR and connected to Melotti's sculptures in front of the Armed Forces complex.

While executing the fresco Funi replaced the seated female figure from the original cartoons with Hercules defeating the Nemean Lion. This is a curious choice as it does not quite fit the rest of the narrative. Pignatti Morano suggests that Funi has mixed Hercules' first labour with his tenth which explains the presence of the burning woods painted to the right of the scene⁴³. Alternative reasons for the inclusion of the lion are suggested by the mosaics at the Foro Mussolini that feature Star sign of Leo (Mussolini's birthday was in August) and the Lion of Africa in submission to Fascist troops invading Ethiopia. On another, it connected to the Round Temple of Hercules at the newly cleaned up and excavated *Forum Boarium* that many visitors would have driven past on their way towards the *Via del Mare* from *Piazza Venezia*.

The cartoons show the second register of Profane History starting with Aeneas's flight from Troy followed by the She-Wolf suckling Romulus and Remus then Romulus founding Rome. The fresco as executed shows the She-Wolf moved to the top register and the

⁴² M. PIGNATTI MORANO, *Il Palazzo dei Ricevimenti e Congressi*, cit., p. 31.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

foundation scene replaced by the episode of the warrior-virgin Camilla from the *Aeneid* and a gladiator fight (cf. Figure 18). The inclusion of a heroic female warrior is curious as the role of women during Fascism placed clearly in the home as mothers⁴⁴. The substitutions give this section of the fresco a more martial air that correlates with the increasing war-mongering atmosphere in the lead up to the Italy's imminent entry into the Second World War. A more violent aspect was also given to the second register of Sacred History. Funi substituted Moses receiving the tablets of the law with the fratricide of Cain and Abel. This directive demonstrates the effects on art of anti-Semitic policies that came as a result of Italy's alliance with Nazi Germany. The other two scenes of the Sacrifice of Isaac and Jacob's dream remained.

Conclusion

Funi's fresco clearly demonstrates the crucial role played by public art within the processes and techniques employed by the Fascist regime to fabricate and retain consent. The more tenuous the hold on power seemed the more urgent was the need to employ bombastic and extreme measures to retain it⁴⁵. Although working under more or less strict directives on theme and content, Funi was able to straddle the divide between creating (and being paid for) official art and retaining a certain level of artistic freedom.

The fresco operated within a broader urban, architectural, spatial and decorative context whose over-riding message was a universalising concept of Rome as city, as idea, as political rhetoric. Rome's universality was further demonstrated through the interweaving of pagan and Christian myths, histories, monuments and singular leaders that acted as teleological representations of the myths, histories, monuments of Fascism and its divine single leader.

The fresco's narrative, composition and choice of specific subject matter exploited the rhetorical possibilities of reception and offered its viewers an image of their social, cultural and historical visage in order to reinforce Rome's universal and civilising power under the growing spectre of global war and crumbling consent.

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⁴⁴ One exception is the monument to Anita Garibaldi on the Janiculum where she is shown on a galloping horse wielding a gun with a baby suckled at her breast.

⁴⁵ K. DOVEY, *Framing places: mediating power in built form*, London 1999, pp. 12-17.