

A Difficult Heritage: Afterlife of Fascist-Era Architecture (Rome, 11–12 Mar 19)

Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte and American Academy in Rome, Mar 11–12, 2019

Carmen Belmonte, Università degli Studi di Padova

A Difficult Heritage: The Afterlife of Fascist-Era Architecture, Monuments, and Works of Art in Italy

Concept

Many urban projects realized during the Ventennio remain part of the Italian landscape and, together with architectural monuments and works of art, create a constellation of surviving images of Fascist visual culture in contemporary Italy. As part of the national cultural heritage these artefacts are protected by preservation laws. However, in the ambiguous process whereby Italy confronts its Fascist and colonial past, they have also become a nexus of critical debate and political struggle.

The conference focuses on the material history of Fascist-era works of art, monuments and architecture in Italy, and examines their afterlife and reception in the *longue durée*. In order to frame the contemporary debate, a transdisciplinary approach and a historical perspective will take as its starting point the iconoclasm following the Fall of the Regime (July 25th, 1943). Papers will explore the ambiguous transition from Fascism to the Republic and the dynamics of postwar censorship. Moreover, the critical examination of artistic historiography, together with the main narratives of the history of Italian art, aims to underline elements of continuity throughout the 20th century. It also permits a re-examination of the *damnatio memoriae* implicating some of the artists close to the Regime and the role played by private collections in the preservation and survival of Fascist-era works of art.

Probing the theoretical concept of 'difficult heritage' in relation to the peculiarities of the Italian case, and in a comparative perspective with other nations, the conference addresses issues of restoration, display, and critical preservation of Fascist-era artefacts located in public and institutional spaces. The event aims to foster a discussion open to different disciplines such as History, History of Architecture, Heritage Studies, Literature, Philosophy, and Anthropology, and to examine the potential contribution of Art History to the topic. Strategies of memorialization and the role of contemporary art interventions will be discussed in an open dialogue with artists focusing on political monuments and multilayered memories in public space.

Program

MONDAY, 11 MARCH

Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte

10.00 Welcome

Tristan Weddigen, Bibliotheca Hertziana, MPI

10.10 Introduction

Carmen Belmonte, American Academy in Rome

Fascist-Era Artefacts in Italy: From Iconoclasm to Critical Preservation

10.30-11.45 Works of Art and Historiography

Chair Peter Benson Miller, American Academy in Rome

- Giuliana Pieri, Royal Holloway, University of London

Fascism and the Arts: A Difficult Legacy

- Michele Dantini, Università per Stranieri di Perugia/ IMT Scuola di Alti Studi, Lucca

Religioni politiche. Amnesia e rimozione nella storia dell'arte italiana postbellica

11.45 Break

12.00-13.15 The Multiple Lives of Buildings

Chair Lynne Lancaster, Ohio University/American Academy in Rome

- Rosalia Vittorini, Università degli Studi di Roma 'Torvergata'

Architettura e fascismo: vita e destino delle opere per il regime

- Hannah Malone, Freie Universität Berlin

Questioning the Idea of Italy's Fascist Architecture as Difficult Heritage

13.15 Lunch

14.15-15.45 Monumentality

Chair Maria Bremer, Bibliotheca Hertziana, MPI

- Andrea Pinotti, Università degli Studi di Milano

The Negation of the Monument. Contemporary Strategies of Memorialization

- Nina Fischer & Maroan El Sani, Berlin

Projection of Freedom of Movement, short film, 2018

16.30-17.30 On-site visit to L'Italia tra le Arti e le Scienze by Mario Sironi (speakers only)

with Eliana Billi, Sapienza, Università degli Studi di Roma.

TUESDAY, 12 MARCH

American Academy in Rome

10.00 Welcome

John Ochsendorf, American Academy in Rome

10.15-11.30 From Fascism to the Republic

Chair Carmen Belmonte, American Academy in Rome

- Ester Coen, Independent scholar, Rome

Corrado Cagli 1935 Race of the Barber Horses: Restoring and Interpreting

- Joshua Arthurs, West Virginia University

Revolutionary Iconoclasm and Damnatio Memoriae after the Fall of Mussolini

11. 45 Break

- Franco Baldasso, Bard College, New York

Fear of Freedom. Carlo Levi and Alberto Savinio on the Legacy of Fascism in Early Postwar Italy

Lunch 13.00

14.00 - 15.15 Politics of Memory

Chair Jim Carter, University of Michigan/American Academy in Rome

- Flaminia Bartolini, Cambridge Heritage Research Centre, University of Cambridge, UK

From Iconoclasm to Heritage: Mussolini's Legacy, Display and Politics in Contemporary Italy

- Liza Candidi T.C., Humboldt-Universität Berlin/Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca

Architettura e arte monumentale pubblica. Politiche di memoria, le due Germanie e il post-89

15.15 Break

15.30 - 16.45 Political Monuments and Contemporary Art

Chair Lindsay Harris, Independent scholar, Rome

- Alessandro Gallicchio, ELEMMe, Aix-Marseille Université

Relations Between Italian Architectural Modernism and Contemporary Art in Tirana (Albania) through the Prism of the 'Unwanted Heritage'

- Karyn Olivier, Tyler School of Art, Temple University/American Academy in Rome

Witness

Discussion

18.00 CONVERSATIONS/CONVERSAZIONI

Dell Upton / Adachiara Zevi

Are Monuments History?

- Dell Upton (2019 AAR Resident) is chair of the Department of Art History at the University of California, Los Angeles, and professor emeritus of architecture at University of California, Berkeley

- Adachiara Zevi is an architect, art historian, and president of Fondazione Bruno Zevi

Conference organized by Carmen Belmonte, 2019 Italian Fellow, American Academy in Rome

Presentations will be held in English and Italian. The conference and the discussion are open to the public. No registration required.

The project is made possible in part by the Fellows' Project Fund of the American Academy in Rome.

Reference:

CONF: A Difficult Heritage: Afterlife of Fascist-Era Architecture (Rome, 11-12 Mar 19). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 26, 2019 (accessed Apr 9, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/20252>>.