A Decade of Il Duce, A Century of Progress: Exhibiting Italian Fascism from Rome to Chicago

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Abstract

This thesis evaluates and compares three different contributions made by the Italian Fascist regime in the area of exhibition and spectacle in the early 1930s. I analyze the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution (Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista) held in Rome in 1932, Italian participation at the 1933-34 A Century of Progress International Exposition held in Chicago, and a mass flight led by General Italo Balbo across the Atlantic, landing alongside the fairgrounds on Lake Michigan.

The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution celebrated Fascism's first decade in power. Historians have identified this exhibition as a key example of Fascist self-representation, making it an important source when evaluating Italian Fascist exhibitions. Opening less than one year later, the aviation-inspired Italian pavilion and other exhibits contained some of the same subject matter that had been present at the Mostra. Other themes exploited in Chicago emphasized Fascist Italy's connection to ancient Rome and the Fascist regime's achievements in the field of technology.

The mass flight of Italo Balbo as investigated through a comparison of the American and Italian media presents a different picture of Chicago's role. Some American sources emphasized Balbo's presence at A Century of Progress, while the Italian side depicted Chicago as just one stop along a much longer route, culminating with the return to Italy as the primary focus. Balbo achieved a high level of celebrity in the United States in his role as goodwill ambassador from Fascist Italy, giving a world audience a glimpse of Fascist spectacle.

These examples serve to demonstrate that the Italian Fascist regime attempted to present Fascism in the United States as capable of providing a viable, effective form of technological modernism.

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Introduction

Twelve men in uniform wearing shiny metallic helmets and holding rifles stood at attention alongside the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome waiting for the bugle to sound. At the first note, they marched in careful formation toward the building's main entrance. At the top of the first landing of the main stair, the men took their place one by one, replacing those who had been standing guard previously, evenly spaced over the span of the large entryway. There they proudly stood, as though on a serious mission. At the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution (Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista), this changing of the guard took place several times daily.[1] These men were not trained militiamen, however, but volunteers, and there was nothing to protect except the appearance of Fascism itself.[2] This highly orchestrated changing of the guard was just one of many rituals that guaranteed that the mass Exhibition would encompass so much more than just a physical space in Rome (See Figure 2.1).

The Mostra was the first mass exhibition of its kind in Italy and would set a precedent in Italian Fascist exhibition culture. It was an all-encompassing avant-garde cultural exhibition, containing the juxtaposition of photomontage, artifacts, and relics of Fascism. Opening on 29 October 1932, the Mostra was held in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome, the event that cemented Mussolini's status as Il Duce.

[1] Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 119.

[2] Volunteers signed up well in advance to be called to stand as part of this Fascist honor guard, whose ranks would rise to 11,442 individuals over the course of two years. See Jeffrey T. Schnapp, "Epic Demonstrations: Fascist Modernity and the 1932 Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution," in *Fascism, Aesthetics and Culture*, ed., Richard J. Golsan (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992), 17. As Marla Stone explained in, *The Patron State: Culture and Politics in Fascist Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 173, "Alpine guides, dock workers from Genoa, Milanese municipal electrical workers, Fascist militia units, army and navy units, doctors' fraternities, and members of the Italian Academy all guarded the doors to Fascism's great exhibition."

According to the Fascist calendar,[3] year X had just come to an end, and the Fascist regime planned a series of celebrations in honor of its decade in power.

Less than one year later, on 27 May 1933, the Century of Progress International Exposition opened in Chicago.[4] It was an attempt during the Great Depression to showcase recent innovations in technology. Truly a *world's* fair, many countries were extended the offer to open and operate a pavilion, an opportunity that Italy eventually accepted and embraced. Italy was represented with its own large, modern pavilion, constructed to resemble an airplane, many external elements of which were readapted from the façade of the Mostra. The pavilion's position on the edge of Lake Michigan made the building itself appear as though it were a seaplane landing,[5] directly representing General Italo Balbo's Air Armada that would make a milestone mass-formation flight from Italy to A Century of Progress, landing on 15 July 1933. A Century of Progress and Balbo's mass flight to the United States provided the Italian State the opportunity to showcase to an American public the progressive and technologically advanced, yet peaceful intentions of Mussolini's regime.

This thesis sets out to compare the Mostra with Fascist Italy's presence at A Century of Progress in Chicago. The opening date of each event occurring less than one year apart ensures both exhibitions as ideal case studies in evaluating the Italian Fascist regime's exhibition culture during the early 1930s. Before doing so, Chapter One will set the stage, detailing historian Emilio Gentile's theory of Fascism as a political religion, whose work

[3] In 1927 Mussolini retroactively ruled that "Year One of the Fascist Era, " marked by Roman numeral 'I' would begin with the March on Rome, October 28, 1922. For a discussion of the Fascist calendar, see Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, 50-52.

[4] While the Chicago exposition's official title is 'A Century of Progress International Exposition,' I often refer to the event as simply 'Century of Progress' or 'the World's Fair,' and use the names interchangeably.

[5] Richard A. Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture, 1890-1940* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), 295.

has served to decode Italian Fascist myths, rituals and symbols. Gentile's work is particularly helpful in this case because such Fascist iconography appeared visually at the Mostra and with Italian participation in Chicago. Additionally, I explain the development of Fascist Italy's cultural bureaucracy, making possible the regime's sponsorship of exhibitions at home or abroad. I also provide the reader with a brief history of international expositions, explaining the precedents set as early as the first ever example held in London in 1851. Chapter Two pertains to the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista (MRF), revered by scholars as a key example of Fascist self-representation. After providing a thorough history of the Mostra as well as its key aesthetic attributes, I will show the ways in which certain elements of the Mostra made their way overseas to Italy's pavilion and exhibits in Chicago, the focus of Chapter Three. While, of course, the different nature of the events necessarily implied that different themes would be emphasized in each, certain aesthetic and thematic elements were exported from Fascist Italy for foreign consumption. For example, the Italian Pavilion retained a dramatic façade with a large *fascio* not dissimilar from that at the Mostra. Exhibits in the Italian Pavilion itself as well as other shared exhibition spaces contained examples of Fascist improvements in all modes of transport, the restoration of the ancient landscape of Rome and land reclamation efforts. In lieu of representing the 'Fascist revolution,' Italian Fascist presence at A Century of Progress served to reinforce the idea of Mussolini as the ruling heir to ancient Rome and to promote Fascist Italy as capable of providing a materially modern life. I will argue that it was, in fact, Balbo's dramatic trans-Atlantic Air Cruise, the subject of Chapter Four, that contributed the spectacle to Italy's presence at the American World's Fair. Hundreds of thousands lined Lake Michigan to catch a glimpse of the impressive choreographed landing of Balbo's air squadron of twenty-four Italian engineered hydroplanes. The event secured positive press for the Fascist regime in the United States, elevating General Italo Balbo to celebrity status.

The undisputed success of the Mostra, whose doors were still open when the Chicago Fair premiered, allowed Italy the confidence to showcase itself at a time when Fascism was relatively stable. One prominent aim of the Fascist state that emerged time and again on Italian soil was to convince its countrymen that it was leading the way into an entirely new civilization. In the United States, Italian Fascist presence was not, of course, meant to transform Americans into Fascists, but to demonstrate examples of Fascist achievement. In sum, if the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution attempted to show that Italy pioneered a totally new system of social, political, and economic life, able to formulate a "new man," via aesthetic modernism, then in Chicago, the regime contributed a modern building and examples of Fascist achievement in order to demonstrate its technological modernism.

Chapter One: Explaining Fascist and International Exhibitions

This chapter will serve to provide the necessary background information before being able to proceed to an analysis of the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista (MRF), the Italian contribution to A Century of Progress World's Fair, and Italo Balbo's trans-Atlantic mass flight. Before such a study is possible, I will demonstrate that the Fascist regime created an apparatus that would oversee all art and cultural events, representing its complete infiltration into this sphere of Italian life. The regime sponsored contests for commissions, and even debates about what form art should take under the auspices of Fascism. The corporatist bureaucracy of the regime developed the means necessary to be able to host mass exhibitions capable of attracting thousands of visitors per day, and millions in total. Once possible on Italian soil, the regime then found venues to represent Italy abroad as evidenced by frequent Italian participation in large international expositions throughout the 1930s. Such large international expositions followed a formula much different from the realm of even the largest art exhibitions seeking not to attract individuals, but rather masses.

In sponsoring exhibitions at home and abroad, Fascist designers and artists developed a visual language to represent events that took place throughout Fascism's history. This means that designers and exhibition planners found ways of representing certain symbols, rituals and myths propagated by the Fascist regime. Historian Emilio Gentile's theory of Fascism as a political religion has established the framework most useful for explaining such iconography. While I am not concerned in this essay with Fascism's connection to religious symbols and rituals in their own right, Gentile's theory provides a basis in understanding the meaning behind such practices that were then translated via Fascist exhibition practices into a Fascist aesthetic.

Gentile's contribution

Emilio Gentile fully developed the ways in which Fascism came about at a time and place when the proper ingredients met the "fertile terrain, where it found sustenance to develop."[6] Gentile explained a pre-Fascist environment in Italy during which young avant-garde and intellectual groups eagerly vied for their own brand of "modernist nationalism." Not only Futurists, but also the *Associazione Nazionalista Italiana* and intellectuals centered around the journals *La Voce* and *Leonardo,* just to name a few, strove to contribute to a cultural revolution through which a "new man," who could "comprehend and confront the challenges of modern life,"[7] would be born. As a young fascist movement gained adherents in the late 1910s and early 1920s, many of the young intellectuals involved in these groups would pledge support to it in the hope of being part of the revolution promised by ideologues. Along these lines, Fascist Italy emerged in an environment of, and was supported by, competing modernisms, in which World War I created the conditions suitable for the birth of a political religion.[8] Gentile defines *political modernism* as "those ideologies and political movements that arose in connection with modernization and tried to make human beings capable of mastering the process of modernization in order not to be overwhelmed by the vortex of modernity."[9] The Great War provided the opportunity for such nationalisms to exercise their fervor. "[T]he myth of violence as regeneration" was a prevalent theme.[10] A "new man," if not found via cultural means, would be born from struggle and sacrifice.

[6] Emilio Gentile, "Fascism as Political Religion," *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, No. 2/3 (May-Jun 1990): 233.
[7] Emilio Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism.* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 46.
[8] Ibid, 58.
[9] Ibid, 1, 44.
[10] Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, 15.

During and after the transformation from fascist ideology into the Fascist State, Party ideologues explained their system of government as a revolution able to instill faith in all Italians in the way that religion might have previously done.[11] It was through what Gentile terms the "sacralization of politics" that the state unabashedly exercised the Fascist revolution.[12] In the *Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, Gentile sets out to explain the "formation and institutionalization of the "Fascist religion" as a collective cult seeking to involve the whole Italian people in the myths and rituals of the régime."[13] Such myths and rituals entailed constant celebration and commemoration of State appropriated events as though one would celebrate holy days in a traditional religion. For example, worship of a cult of martyrs exercised a key role during early years of fascist ideology continuing until the last days of the regime. After the Great War had ended, all of those who fought were elevated to a 'hero' status, while those who died were martyrs for the nation.[14] Years later, whoever died believing in Fascism, would become installed in the regime's collective memory.[15]

Gentile also wrote about a prevalent Fascist myth based around the city of Rome. The Fascist cult of *romanità* did not look back to an ancient Rome with nostalgia but rather sought to use the former imperial seat to imbue Fascist rituals with meaning. Fascism "sought a mix of ancient and modern, the resulting whole to be a celebration of the lictorial cult in the Eternal City, one that showed Fascism to be the inheritor and culmination of the Roman tradition."[16] Using Rome as a model of historic importance, Mussolini attempted to not only imply Fascism's greatness, but also adopted ancient Roman symbols for a modern treatment. As will be demonstrated later in this thesis, some elements of Fascist exhibitions

[11] Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity*, 234.
[12] Ibid, 248.
[13] Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, x.
[14] Ibid, 14-18.
[15] Gentile, "Fascism as Political Religion," 244.
[16] Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, 76.

sought to forge a connection to ancient Rome through the use of various symbols and visual cues.

The Formation of a Cultural Bureaucracy in Fascist Italy

Historian Marla Stone has outlined three phases of Fascist patronage[17] in categorizing certain trends in the cultural sphere of Italian Fascism. She defines the years 1925-1930 as the "period of stabilization," best characterized by the establishing of a new bureaucracy to be in charge of cultural production. In 1925, once Mussolini passed from elected leader to dictator, there was a concerted effort to create a cultural infrastructure. In line with the larger process of corporatization of all types of work, the Partito Nazionale Fascista created a syndicate for the arts. Since the 1920s were a time when the Fascist government worked toward building what the Liberal government had been unable to provide, party officials played upon both real and imagined shortcomings of the previous government.[18] Just to name one important effort, at the end of March of 1925, Fascist ideologue Giovanni Gentile organized the First Congress of Fascist Culture, attended by approximately 250 intellectuals. The result of this meeting was a "Manifesto of Fascist Intellectuals," which attempted to challenge the claim that Fascism had no culture.[19] The state-sanctioned intellectuals formulated the document "in order to address those in Italy and abroad who wish to better understand the National Fascist Party's doctrine and policies".[20] Giovanni Amdendola, first to use the word "totalitarianism" to describe Fascism, and Benedetto Croce responded less than a week later with a "Manifesto of the

[17] Stone, 7.
[18] Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 5-7.
[19] Schnapp, "Epic Demonstrations," 1.
[20] "Manifesto of Fascist Intellectuals" in Jeffrey T. Schnapp, ed., *A Primer of Italian Fascism*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 303.

Anti-Fascist Intellectuals," with forty-one signatories in all. The authors of this document hoped to disclose the many fallacies and faulty reasoning of the Fascists:

> The manifesto itself, in its mute eloquence, confronts the unbiased reader with an incoherent, bizarre mish-mash of demagoguery and appeals to authority, vows of reverence for the law, ultramodern concepts and mildewed old rubbish, absolutist stances and Bolshevik tendencies, expressions of unbelief and flattery of the Catholic Church, blasts against culture, and sterile nods in the direction of a culture devoid of the necessary premises, mystical swoons, and cynical utterances.[21]

While this document would have touched upon many of the morally and ethically unsound aspects of the regime, it does not seem to have caused any direct, prolonged reaction that the regime was not able to keep under wraps.

Having built an initial framework, the regime was in the position to act as patron to cultural institutions which it had itself either established or allowed during the second phase (1931-1936). As no official aesthetic was assigned, and no style of art was explicitly banned (unless, of course, its subject-matter was explicitly anti-fascist), Stone defines this phase as "the high point of aesthetic pluralism".[22] The third and final phase, from 1937-1943, is best characterized by a splintering of the pluralism that was allowed to flourish in the previous phase into hardened cultural camps. The influence of German National Socialism, which disdained and even outlawed modern art, encouraged the Italian Fascist regime to take a stronger stance toward its more avant-garde elements. Such a stance angered many Italians who had a strong sense of pride that Italy had maintained a level of artistic freedom, unlike Nazi Germany.[23]

In general, artists and cultural figures initially did not oppose working under the new corporatist system, defined by Fascist philosopher Ugo Spirito as: "a hierarchical communism that denies both a leveling state and an anarchic individual, that opposes

[21] "A Reply to the *Manifesto of Fascist Intellectuals (1925),*" in Schnapp, ed., *A Primer of Italian Fascism,* 306.
[22] Stone, 7.
[23] Günther Berghaus, *Futurism and Politics: Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction, 1909-1944* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 253.

bureaucratic management but bureaucratizes the nation (turning every individual into an official), that resists private management and assigns a public value to the work performed by individuals".[24] The government secured work and pay in a time of financial necessity. In many ways, it was a mutually beneficial agreement: the regime was able to benefit from a steady, strong and prolific cultural output, and artists were able to work relatively free of constraints.[25] Of course, since people in many sectors of society would have welcomed the financial security of the regime, the system had the potential to create willing participants out of initial skeptics.[26] In many ways, an artist or cultural figure could participate without enthusiastically supporting the regime, but participated more actively than would have been present under coercion.[27] For some Italian cultural figures who were ideologically opposed to Fascism, but who dared not protest outwardly, participation required comforting oneself with the idea that one's own idea just happened to concur with those of the regime.[28] In line with Gentile's work, the history of this collaboration further demonstrated that Fascism was not a strictly top-down phenomenon.

A Fascist Art

After the boom of European modernisms in the visual arts in the 1910s, many artistic trends coexisted in Italy. The notion, however, was threatened when in October of 1926, Mussolini delivered a speech at the Academy of Fine Arts in Perugia in which he called for a new Fascist art: "We must not remain solely contemplatives. We must not simply exploit our cultural heritage. We must create a new heritage to place alongside that

[24] Ugo Spirito, "Corporativism as Absolute Liberalism and Absolute Socialism," in Schnapp, ed., *A Primer of Italian Fascism*, 152.
[25] Stone, 6.
[26] Piero Melograni, "The Cult of the Duce in Mussolini's Italy," *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, No. 4 (October 1976): 232.
[27] Stone, 9.
[28] Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 23.

of antiquity. We must create a new art, an art of our times: a fascist art."[29] Heeding Mussolini's call, Giuseppe Bottai, then undersecretary of the Ministry of Corporations, initiated a debate over the direction and definition of "Fascist art" within the pages of the journal that he founded, *Critica Fascista*. Between October 1926 and February 1927, Bottai solicited the comments of many Fascist cultural figures published over the course of several months, followed by a concluding essay authored by Bottai himself. Anton Bragaglia, representing the Futurist avant-garde wrote about the need to return to Futurism, which had been prevalent before the First World War, as practiced by the young of Italy. "Open the windows! Those who catch pneumonia will die, it is true. But only the old will catch it!"[30] Curzio Malaparte took a much different stance as a supporter of the antimodern Strapaese movement. He advocated an art that was "popular (in the true sense) rather than the academic and insolent" and purely of "home-grown" origin. While Malaparte does not explain further what this art would look like, it should be "an art pervaded with the spirit of the revolution".[31] Based on such definitions, it is no wonder that Bottai was not able to declare one true "fascist art":

> It is not yet possible to pass judgment on the essence of fascist art. Nonetheless, it is ready to burst forth from the deepest roots of the consciousness of the new Italian: the fascist Italian...All this makes it easier for us to say what fascist art should *not* be, rather than what it *should* be. It should not be fragmentary, syncopated, psychoanalytic, intimist, crepuscular, and so on, because these artistic forms are nothing but diseases of art.[32]

In a society in which art was elevated to a high status, with many practitioners who deeply cared about its direction, it was increasingly difficult to come to an agreement about what the Fascist aesthetic should be - perhaps the reason why one was never decided upon. This unanswered debate, in which a single Fascist aesthetic was not declared, changed the nature

[29] As quoted in "Nine Selections from the Debate on Fascism and Culture. *Critica Fascista* (1926-27)," in Schnapp, ed., *A Primer of Italian Fascism*, 207.
[30] Ibid, 224.
[31] Ibid, 225-226.
[32] Ibid, 233-234.

of the relationship between artist/designer and the State in two ways: (1) the uncertain state of affairs encouraged an atmosphere of competition among artists and cultural figures and (2) the regime took to supporting almost all of Italy's prominent stylistic genres as evidenced by bringing such artists and cultural figures together for the design of the Mostra.

This is not to say, however, that there were never attempts of particular groups to assert their authority as purely and wholly representative of Fascism. In 1931, the Movimento Italiano per l'Architettura Razionale (MIAR), a group of Rationalist architects officially under the umbrella of the National Syndicate of Fascist Architects, held a Second Italian Exhibition of Rational Architecture.[33] The Rationalists included in this exhibition a 'panel of horrors' in which certain works not sufficiently modern were placed, as though on a wall of shame. Additionally, MIAR published a manifesto proclaiming their works to be allied with Fascism:

> The architecture of the age of Mussolini must respond to the character of masculinity, of force, of pride in the Revolution. The old architects are emblems of an impotence that we cannot accept. Our movement has no moral purpose other than serving the Revolution in hard times. We invoke Mussolini's confidence so that we will be able to realize this.[34]

These actions, however, only served to embarrass and enrage the Syndicate whereby the Rationalists alienated themselves from their fellow Fascist architects, for at least a short time until issuing an official apology and reforming into a more inclusive group.[35] This episode further illustrates the existence of an artistic plurality during Fascist Italy of the early 1930s: despite the enthusiastic claims made by MIAR, the remainder of the Syndicate did not permit the Rationalists to declare themselves superior. It was in the context of this unresolved debate about the nature of official Fascist art in the recent background that the

[33] The first such exhibition took place in 1928. Rationalism was Italian equivalent of the international style as espoused by Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus school.
[34] "Manifesto" of the Second Italian Exhibition of Rational Architecture, in Cennamo, ed., *Materiali* (1976), 103-4, as quoted in Etlin, 386.
[35] Etlin, 386-387.

Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista in Rome and the Italian Pavilion at the Chicago World's Fair opened in 1932 and 1933, respectively.

Exhibition Culture in Fascist Italy

Art exhibitions were certainly nothing new to Italy when Mussolini came to power in 1922. During the nineteenth century, the majority of art exhibitions in Italy functioned at the regional level among high society. After a long history of independently run regional art networks, in the late-1920s, the Fascist bureaucracy took to acquiring such pre-existing prominent cultural events to mold them for their own purposes.[36] In latching onto events and organizations with a history, the Fascist cultural bureaucracy was able to enter cultural life more easily than if they had disrupted all former events in favor of new ones.[37] One prime example of this is the way in which the regime reformed the prestigious Venice Biennale of International Art starting in 1928. As an upper-crust biannual exhibition featuring the best of European art since 1895, the regime infiltrated one of Italy, and Europe's, premier cultural events.[38] A series of measures taken by the Fascist administration between 1928 and 1931 systematically replaced personnel and ensured an autonomous financial structure with money doled out from the state's budget.[39] Under the Fascist administration, participation in the Biennale was predicated on an artist's participation and success in a series of smaller, regional (yet, official, state-sanctioned) exhibitions.[40] Once this apparatus was in place, that Italian State sponsored several large exhibitions both at home and abroad in the 1930s. Mass exhibitions under Italian Fascism, whether at home or abroad, combined the mass appeal of large international expositions,

[36] Stone, 30.
[37] Ibid, 31.
[38] Ibid, 33-38.
[39] Ibid, 36.
[40] Ibid, 42.

targeting mass audiences "without distinction"[41] and merged this concept with the aesthetics invented by Bauhaus and Russian Constructivist designers.[42] Lissitzky's "Press Pavilion" at the 1928 Cologne Press Exhibition presents one example in which the Italian art world would have come into contact with such displays,[43] as Italy had also erected a pavilion there.[44] Especially in the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, parallels emerge between Constructivist exhibition design and that of Fascist aesthetic modernism.

International Expositions

As the first major international exposition in the world,[45] London's 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations presented a forum for the display of industry, in addition to artwork. For many visitors and exhibitors alike, the exhibition hall itself, Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace, was the main attraction. The large glass and iron structure comprised of prefabricated components would later serve as a precedent in world architecture, not to mention future international expositions. As one scholar explained, many fairs afterward attempted to imitate London's success.[46] The host country of later world expositions would from this point forward attempt to introduce a new, wondrous attraction. The 1867 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris was the first to sponsor national pavilions – that is, pavilions constructed and financed by an individual country or national

[41] Ibid, 132.
[42] Ibid, 129.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Jeffrey T. Schnapp, "Flash Memories: (Sironi on Exhibit)" in *Donatello among the Blackshirts*. eds. Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 226 wrote, "Mild-mannered by comparison with El Lissitzky's dazzling Soviet counterpart, with its graphic conveyor belts and wall-size photomontages, the Italian pavilion proposed a distinctive fusion of metaphysical/neoclassical elements with properly Futurist and Rationalist ones – a stylistic merger whose moment of glory would come in the early '30s."
[45] Paul F. Norton, "World's Fairs in the 1930s,"*Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 24, no. 1 (March 1965): 27. Norton explained that before the Crystal Palace, all expositions had been national.
[46] Paul A. Tencotte, "Kaleidoscopes of the World: International Exhibitions and the Concept of Culture-Place, 1851-1915," *American Studies* 28 (Spring 1987): 7.

group.[47] As John E. Findling elucidated, large international exhibitions have been "amongst the most extravagant cultural enterprises ever staged."[48] This statement seems especially accurate when taking into account that the Eiffel Tower provided the main focal point of the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889, at the time the tallest man-made structure in the world. While the Eiffel Tower would receive mixed reviews, the strong structure set precedents in building with iron.[49] Such exhibitions attracted millions of visitors, unlike even the most popular art shows attracting thousands.[50] In devising a new aesthetic adapted to attract and manage a large mass audience, exposition designers utilized techniques from advertising, such as slogans and large murals to showcase new innovations.

After the First World War, such large-scale exhibitions resumed, however, with a decidedly technological and imperial focus.[51] The interwar period on both sides of the Atlantic saw a large number of international expositions, even after the effects of the Great Depression presented extreme financial challenges to exposition organizers. Such expositions, especially in the United States, gave government, business, and intellectual leaders an opportunity to demonstrate by example the promise of a better economy through their examples of technological modernity.[52] Robert W. Rydell has written extensively about world's fairs during and after the Great Depression, in which he stresses the lengths attempted by scientists to do whatever necessary "to restore popular faith in science and

[47] Tencotte, 9.
[48] John E. Findling, *Chicago's Great World's Fairs* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), viii.
[49] David P. Billington, *The Tower and the Bridge: The New Art of Structural Engineering* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 62.
[50] Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New: Art and the Century of Change* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 11.
[51] Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 7.
[52] Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 9.

industry" during this period.[53] All told, as products of a modern, industrialized world, such large events provided the opportunity for host country and presenters alike to be seen by millions.

[53] Robert W. Rydell, "The Fan Dance of Science: American World's Fairs in the Great Depression," *Isis,* Vol. 76, No. 4 (Dec., 1985): 525.

Chapter Two: The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution as Fascist Self-Representation

The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution sought to provide Italian Fascism with a visual aesthetic. It would not only demonstrate, but actually sought to recreate the history of Fascism, beginning in 1914 with the onset of the Great War covering the period chronologically until 1922. Ten years after the birth of Fascism as a regime, in honor of the March on Rome,[54] the Mostra brought together a disparate group of artists and designers to represent Fascism in visual form. It was not a theater piece, a painting, or a political rally, but rather, a combination of all such elements. As a historical source, the Mostra is of extreme importance in studying Italian Fascist exhibitions. Historian Marla Stone wrote, "As the cultural event chosen to depict Fascism's self-understanding and to render visually its present and future, the Mostra della rivoluzione fascista is central to an understanding of the cultural formula advanced by Fascism in the early 1930s and abandoned by it at the end of the decade."[55] Along these same lines, Jeffrey Schnapp stated that "[s]uch unparalleled success rendered the exhibition the de facto answer to debates that had been raging since 1926 over the nature of Fascist art. It marked a decisive, albeit momentary, victory for the forces of cultural modernization and a defeat for their antagonists."[56]

Taking into account the Mostra's status as an early and key example of a Fascist mass exhibition, I propose to use the Mostra as a paradigm, the key example for the visual appearance of Italian Fascism in Italy in the early 1930s, against which Italian participation in Chicago can be compared. A key source upon which I have based my analysis is the

[54] Mabel Berezin, "The Festival State: Celebration and Commemoration in Fascist Italy," *The Journal of Modern European History* 4, no. 1 (2006): 66. The March on Rome had become an official holiday on October 28, 1923, on the one-year anniversary of the event.
[55] Stone, 134.
[56] Schnapp, "Flash Memories," 232.

Guida storica, or the Mostra's official guidebook published for the event (See Figure 2.2).[57] Director Dino Alfieri and deputy Luigi Freddi's text is no average exhibition guide. Containing two hundred and fifty-eight pages, the authors offer in painstaking detail not only the history of the planning of the MRF itself, but also a short section called "Mussolini and the Revolution" providing the history of key moments leading up to the March on Rome. This is to say that first Alfieri and Freddi offer a Fascist interpretation of events before moving on to a description of those same events as represented in visual form. Published by the Partito Nazionale Fascista, the *Guida storica* is the Fascist government-sanctioned publication espousing the regime's official interpretation of the MRF's aesthetic.

The 'Fascist revolution,' as the exhibition's name implied, represented not simply another political system, but rather a system that would transform the lives of all Italians. Inherent in the notion of revolution was the idea that the regime was able to garner enough willing participants who sought a place in the regime, wanting to be part of a new force that would overturn the former disorganized system. As explained in Chapter One, Italian fascist ideology and Fascism as a regime had many willing supporters often in the form of young intellectuals and artists. By the 1930s, many such young intellectuals were members of the regime's cultural bureaucracy promoting several projects, albeit ones in their infancy. For example, the regime had just founded the Reale Accademia d'Italia in October of 1929, the University of Rome was in the planning stages,[58] and the Biennale and other major exhibitions had recently been co-opted under the guise and structure of Fascism and were organized as State events. The Mostra opened amidst this environment of cultural undertakings.

[57] Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista, guida* storica. (Roma: Partito Nazionale Fascista, 1933). The guidebook was not prepared in time for the Mostra's opening. A temporary pamphlet was issued until the guide was finally ready a few months later. Schnapp, "Epic Demonstrations," 17.

[58] The construction on the University buildings did not start until the 1933, ending in 1935.

Alfieri, then president of the Milanese Istituto di Cultura, planned an earlier incarnation of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution to commemorate the ten-year anniversary of the first *fasci de combattimento*.[59] By late November 1928, however, the Party directorate successfully persuaded organizers to transfer the exhibit to Rome. As organizers continued to extend deadlines, they eventually restructured the exhibit altogether to be held in honor of the anniversary of the March on Rome.[60] Alfieri then selected Antonio Monti and Luigi Freddi as deputy directors to help coordinate all of the artists and historians working on the project.[61] Freddi was the head of the Historical Office, overseeing activities pertaining to the documentary materials.[62] It would only be in early 1932, however, that preparations truly began, as the team of thirty-four artists and ten historians[63] finally established a headquarters in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni.[64] Due to a large exhibition commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Garibaldi's death scheduled to take place in the same building, hundreds of workers had to construct the exhibit in a three-month period; a feat which was a source of great pride when it was accomplished.[65]

The *fascio littorio*

When it was clear that the exhibition had changed directions and moved to Rome, Adalberto Libera[66] and Mario De Renzi redesigned the Beaux-Arts façade of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni solely for the Mostra, as the classic design was deemed inadequate to

[59] Schnapp, "Epic Demonstrations," 6-9. Alfieri's original idea for an exhibition was enough to ensure that he was promoted from a regional Fascist deputy to undersecretary of corporations from 1929-1932.
[60] Ibid, 8-10.
[61] Claudio Fogu, "To Make History Present" in *Donatello among the Blackshirts*, eds. Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 40.
[62] Stone, 138.
[63] Fogu, 40.
[64] Stone, 136; Alfieri and Freddi, 52.
[65] Schnapp, "Epic Demonstrations," 13.
[66] Libera was of the Rationalist school of architecture inspired by Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus. Stone, 145.

convey the proper revolutionary spirit.[67] The designers made use of a symbol that had become appropriated by the Fascist regime from ancient Rome: the *fascio littorio*.[68] First utilized in the visual arts, and then incorporated into architecture, the *fascio* was a bundle of rods bound together around an ax carried by ancient Roman lictors to represent the power of their magistrate. Depending on how the *fascio* is stylized, its visual appearance can alter the interpretation of the ancient symbol. For example, if the ax blade is enlarged, its creator may be attempting to highlight the *fascio*'s former role as an instrument used for punishment,[69] not justice. Nevertheless, the Fascist regime declared the *fascio* the official emblem of the Italian state in 1926 by Royal Decree, which was then converted into law in June 1927.[70]

In the case of the façade of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, the *fasci* were stylized, abstract, twenty-five meter tall forms (See Figure 2.3). Rather than being able to distinguish within each bundle several rods bound together, their surfaces were smooth. The four large forms stood column-like, with their sharp axe-like blades positioned outwards high above the viewer. The official exhibition guide published by the PNF praised the façade: "There was a need in Rome of such a gesture of salutary violence…The great merit of the new façade for the exhibit is that of marking a moment…in this longing for the creation and definition of new expressions that carry the taste and character of Fascist times and that represent its inimitable spirit."[71] Centered above the main entrance was the exhibition's name in large red block letters accompanied by large X's, representative of the Fascist calendar's year ten, flanking the sides. In utilizing what had

[67] Etlin, 407.
[68] See Dennis P. Doordan, "The Political Content in Italian Fascist Architecture during the Fascist Era," *Art Journal* 43, No. 2 (Summer 1983): 123, for a discussion about the ways in which the Italian Fascist regime transformed political symbols into architectural forms for use with exhibition pavilions.
[69] Etlin, 404.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Alfieri and Freddi, 65-66, as reproduced in Etlin, 412-413.

become a familiar symbol of Italian Fascism in a novel way, the designers invented a distinctly Fascist modernist aesthetic when they appropriated and modernized the ancient Roman *fascio*.

The Exhibition Rooms

Mussolini presided over the opening ceremony of the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista on October 29, 1932, whereby the entire Fascist party directorate was positioned on the staircase to the building's main entrance. Militiamen with polished helmets and bayonets "guarded" the doors, and would continue to do so for the duration of the Exhibition (See Figure 2.1).[72] Mussolini led a procession while the Party members followed behind in silence. When the Duce arrived at one of the larger, central halls, he delivered a brief speech. This highly ritualized event has caused one scholar to declare that it was "reminiscent of a *via dolorosa* in which the faithful retrace the steps of the Christ's passion,"[73] reinforcing Emilio Gentile's notion of Fascism as a political religion. No fewer than 23,784 special opening-day invitations were sent to members of the military and justice system, members of the royal family, the *sansepolcristi*, journalists and all members of the Italian Royal Academy.[74] While it was primarily a symbolic gesture, the organizers wanted to ensure the monumentality of the experience with well-known faces in attendance.

Once inside, fifteen rooms (labeled A through Q)[75] arranged in a counterclockwise rotation presented the visitor with a historical narrative of the time between 1919 and 1922, not the entire Fascist period to date (See Figure 2.4). The emphasis toward the March on

[72] L.U.C.E., the Fascist state media agency, provided press coverage throughout the duration of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution showing the changing of the honor guard. See for example, Giornale Luce B0210, B0333, B0348 and B0389.
[73] Libero Andreotti, "The Aesthetics of War: The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution," *Journal of Architectural Education* 45, No. 2 (Feb, 1992): 76-77.
[74] Schnapp, "Epic Demonstrations," 17.
[75] There were no rooms labeled "J" or "K".

Rome signified its importance as the event that saved Italy from dissolution and civil war.[76] Four thematically based rooms (R through U) then followed along the building's central axis: a Hall of Honor, the Gallery of the *Fasci*, the "Mussolini room," and a shrine dedicated to Fascist martyrs. These nineteen rooms comprised the entire ground floor of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni. Five exhibition rooms on the second floor (a room representing Italian Fascists abroad, a library, and three rooms dedicated to the regime's accomplishments in the areas of labor, agriculture, transportation, industry and commerce), have received scant mention by scholars, not to mention in the *Guida storica* itself. A comparison of the floor plan before and during the Exhibition shows that designers changed significantly the structured, rectangular floor plan.[77] Dummy walls served to make rooms asymmetrical, with sloped ceilings and occasionally sharp angles.[78] A collage style fusing oversized documents, sculpture, and artifacts plastered the walls in most of the twenty-four rooms of the Exhibition.

Room O, the "room of the year of the insurrection"[79] is worth mention for the design of Rationalist architect Giuseppe Terragni, and historical content provided by Arrigo Arrigotti. Terragni utilized photomontage on a very large scale paired with sculptural elements. Part of the chronological sequence, this room told the story of large gatherings that preceded the March on Rome, thus demonstrating early support for the Partito Nazionale Fascista. The guidebook defined this period as the time when the State finally confronted it opponents, revolutionarily, with an attitude of conquest.[80] From a visual standpoint, many of the materials used were shiny and reflective,[81] mirroring at times,

[76] Stone, 136.
[77] See Fogu, 37 for a sketch of the how the floor plan of Palazzo delle Esposizioni typically appeared without alterations to the rooms.
[78] Schnapp, "Epic Demonstrations," 27, 35-37.
[79] Alfieri and Freddi, 191.
[80] Ibid, 176.
[81] Fogu, 45.

visitors' own faces, further incorporating the visitors' existence into the exhibition. Along one wall, often referred to as the "Adunate" photomontage (See Figure 2.5),[82] three dimensional turbines overlaid with the photographs taken at mass rallies depicting anonymous faces blended into hundreds of stylized, plaster hands giving the Roman salute that the Fascists so ardently adopted, which soared toward a large X on the ceiling.[83] This representation of a large gathering set alongside the graphically whirling turbines represented the Fascist momentum gaining speed at this time. A diagonal wall chronologically presented events "in the chaotic political life of 1922," from which, the reader of the guidebook is told, "preannounced the formation of the "fascist State" in the will and mind of the Duce."[84] Along this wall, Terragni created a metallic profile of Mussolini made only with an outline, followed by the outline of the shape of Italy and black triangular pennants, which as Alfieri and Freddi explained, represented the necessary combination of three elements to represent the spiritual unity between "Duce-Italia-Fascismo."[85] In one corner appeared a large steel spider web, representing the strikes and labor disputes that trapped Italy from moving forward.[86] Display cases contained bloody artifacts from early martyrs of Fascism.[87] The use of metallic surfaces and beams reinforced an industrial aesthetic, while signs with large, block letters emphasized Fascist authority.

The next room (Room P) that followed was the one dedicated to the March on Rome, designed by painter Mario Sironi, originally known for his Novecento easel works.[88] Much different from Terragni's busy aesthetic, this room utilized several large sculptural

[82] "Adunate" refers to the meetings that preceded and prepared for the March on Rome.
[83] Alfieri and Freddi, 189.
[84] Ibid, 178.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid, 185.
[87] Ibid, 180. Described here are "artifacts of note," for example, the bloody shirt of Walter Branchi, killed in Parma, along with his Fascist Party membership card.
[88] For more information about Sironi's role in the MRF see Schnapp, "Flash Memories (Sironi on Exhibit)," 223-240 and Emily Braun, *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism: Art and Politics under Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 132-157.

elements in which each dominated a wall, such as a Fascist eagle carrying the word "MARCIA" (march) on its wing and an extremely oversized Roman short sword in the process of breaking through a heavy red chain.[89] A display case of documents pertaining to the organization of the March aligned one wall. Other then these elements, however, very little attention was dedicated to the quadrumvirate, or the group of leaders who Mussolini appointed to lead the March on Rome. Italo Balbo was one such leader, who although received little more than a mention in the *Mostra* would become known for his trans-Atlantic mass flights and is the focus of Chapter Four.

Room Q ended the chronological sequence with a space dedicated to "recall and celebrate the conquest of the State on the part of the victorious fascist Revolution."[90] Rooms R through U did not follow a chronological pattern as each was based around a theme. Sironi designed the Hall of Honor (room R). Like Room P, again Sironi utilized a sculptural aesthetic. Two large rectangular columns supported a large X. On the opposite wall, a sculptural figure of Mussolini appeared above the word Dux, Latin for Duce. The Fascist mottos of "order, authority, justice" and "believe, obey, fight" were inscribed on large plaques to the side.[91] Below the plaques sat a reconstruction of Mussolini's first editorial office at *Il Popolo d'Italia*, with large printing press rollers acting as columns.[92] The following room, also designed by Sironi, The Gallery of the Fasci (room S), was a vertical corridor lined by five pairs of buttresses, between each of which protruded pennants of the original Fascist organizations.[93] This space ended in a rectangular portal, through with the visitor arrived at the "Mussolini Room" (room T), designed by journalist and painter Leo Longanesi. This room provided visual documentation of Mussolini's biography

[89] Alfieri and Freddi, 195.
[90] Ibid, 204.
[91] Ibid, 212-213.
[92] Ibid, 214 and Schnapp, "Flash Memories," 231.
[93] Alfieri and Freddi, 216-218.

through images and relics,[94] and arguably appears the most like a traditional museum setting with a line of equally sized display cases in the center of each wall. With the collaboration of so many artists and styles, the *Mostra* itself appeared as a large avant-garde collage, triggering Futurism founder F.T. Marinetti to claim that the avant-garde had won in the end.[95] The regime, however, refuted such claims, denouncing the existence of any one Fascist aesthetic.

The last room on the ground level (room U), the *Sacrario dei Martiri* (Shrine of the Martyrs), presented an overt example of what Emilio Gentile described as the sacralization of politics – or the way in which Fascists represented themselves as an entity to which others should bestow their undying, unwavering faith (See Figure 2.6). Designed by Libera and stage designer Antonio Valente, an imposing metal cross of over thirteen meters in diameter and seven meters in height stood in the center of a large, cylindrical darkened room. A red light shone up at the cross, on which white luminous letters read "PER LA PATRIA IMMORTALE!" (For the immortal fatherland). Six polished-metal rings rounded the walls, with the word "Presente!" in three lines, illuminated through backlighting. Below this, barely visible, were banners bearing the names of the "martyrs" of Fascism. The design was the visual representation of a funerary right that would have been performed in honor of martyrs: mourners gathered in a circle around the body of the dead and performed a roll call – each answering upon hearing his name.[96] When the name of the deceased was called, the others would answer "Present" on his behalf. Softly, from above, one could hear a barely audible choral version of the Fascist hymn "Giovinezza,"[97] which told the story about the path from the innocence of youth into death on the battlefield.[98]

[94] Ibid, 221.
[95] Stone, 157.
[96] Andreotti, 84.
[97] Alfieri and Freddi, 229.
[98] Schanpp, "Epic Demonstrations," 30.

A second level of exhibition space rounded out a full tour, although there is reason to believe that many visitors to the Mostra ended their experience after viewing the Shrine. Despite healthy scholarly interest in the Mostra's main level, a dearth of discussion exists for the second level's rooms, in which one scholar's only mention described them to be "in every sense anticlimactic."[99] The four exhibition rooms and a library on the second floor pertained to recent Fascist accomplishments, a technological survey rather than spectacle. It is the content of these rooms most important for a comparison with Italian presence in Chicago. Content not pertaining to the history of Fascism until 1922, but rather what had been achieved by the regime since that time comprised the type of content that appeared at A Century of Progress. Still in its role as prime example of Fascist self-representation, the Mostra's second level rooms presented an opportunity for the Fascist regime to decide which of its completed projects it wanted to portray. According to Alfieri and Freddi's guidebook, the last three rooms of the upstairs were to be further developed and represented in a future "Exhibition of Achievements of the Fascist Regime," and were admittedly only a sketch.[100]

A similarity present in Rome that will appear in Chicago is reference to inventor Guglielmo Marconi. In the center of one of the upstairs rooms, a large model made of wood and metal stands atop a pedestal. A sphere with "Marconi" written across horizontally is surrounded on all sides by aluminum rods, representative of radio waves.[101] Of course, this is not a model of Marconi's invention, but rather a sculpture in honor of Marconi's achievements. The next room was dedicated to agriculture, maritime and air transport and navigation. Large wall murals offering statistics pertaining to sea and air transport filled the

[99] Diane Ghirardo, "Architects, Exhibitions, and the Politics of Culture in Fascist Italy," *Journal of Architectural Education* 45, no. 2 (Feb., 1992): 70.
[100] Alfieri and Freddi, 246. It is not clear, however, whether such an exhibition ever took place.
[101] Ibid, 249.

room: number of passengers serviced, kilometers traveled, and total tonnage. Another wall gave information about the regime's reforestation and grain growing efforts.[102]

The final room of the Mostra's second floor was dedicated to labor. Rather than regaling the visitor with information about production statistics under Fascism, the room emphasized the benefits of the Fascist *Carta del Lavoro,* and the ways in which the charter "developed the foundations of a national working life."[103] A list of incidents such as labor strikes, lockouts, sabotage and "class struggle" were on a wall opposite the benefits provided by the Fascist State, namely class collaboration, portrayed as eliminating all disputes. All in all, on this second level, supposedly a work in progress, the main aesthetic was provided by wall murals and decorations, with few, if any, artifacts. Using these rooms alone to reach a conclusion about the main achievements of the Fascist regime, the designers emphasized improvement in all modes of transport, agriculture and labor.

Over the course of its history, the Mostra would receive 3,854,927 visitors.[104] The closing date was twice postponed due to the high demand.[105] Some individuals across the continent treated the Exhibition as a pilgrimage site, which helped to grant even more media attention to the spectacle. Unique about the *Mostra* was its success in combining art, drama, propaganda and entertainment into a total experience - a Fascist *Gesamtkunstwerk.*[106] When Mussolini declared the Exhibition permanent in 1933, only some of the Exhibition's original elements were reincorporated into a new space twice before the regime's end. [107] The new tone of the exhibition placed far less emphasis on the

[102] Ibid, 250-252.
[103] Ibid, 255.
[104] Schnapp, "Epic Demonstrations," 5.
[105] Ibid, 18. While originally supposed to close after only six months, the MRF remained open first one year after the opening date, then was extended another year, finally shutting its door in October of 1934.
[106] Stone, 130.
[107] Ghirardo, 70. In 1937, in conjunction with the Mostra Augustea, the MRF was reassembled in the National Gallery of Modern Art in Valle Giulia, still in Rome. The

revolutionary aspects of Fascism and much more on its prowess as an imperial force.[108] For example, what had previously been contained in a large room was reduced to a single display-case of a few artifacts, therefore removing the experience of attending, and eliminating the revolution altogether. Ironically, what was meant to be the permanent manifestation of the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista actually eliminated the spectacle and sense of participation that made the revolution possible. In the years after the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, there were a few other attempts at large-scale mass exhibitions between 1936 and 1939 at a special venue built for the purpose called the Circus Maximus, located in Rome.[109] None, however, captured the 'revolutionary' character of the Mostra.

The Sacralization of Politics at the Mostra

The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution fulfilled the role of giving the Italian Fascism of the early 1930s a visual aesthetic. It's retelling of the history of Fascism through a Fascist lens sought to renew symbolically the origins of the Fascist Revolution. Most important was the fact that the Exhibition was successful in acting as a living monument. Not a static museum, it was a mobilizing force. The aesthetic itself was fresh, modern and lively to an extent rarely ever sanctioned by any state regime. The MRF attempted to instill in visitors the sensation of reliving the depicted events, hence drawing closer the gap between past and present making the Exhibition itself an example of action. The rituals employed, such as the honor guard, and the sacred spaces, such as the Shrine of the Martyrs, served to sacralize Fascist politics even when they were reenacted in an exhibition space.

Exhibition was updated to include material covering event that happened since the closing in 1934 of the first incarnation of the MRF. A second MRF opened in 1942 in again in the National Gallery of Modern Art.

[108] The exhibits themselves did not attract a large public and have little in common with the original Mostra. For a discussion of the later renditions of the Mostra, see Ghirardo, "Architects, Exhibitions, and the Politics of Culture in Fascist Italy," *Journal of Architectural Education* 45, No. 2 (Feb., 1992).

[109] Stone, 226.

Not only was the *Mostra* itself already a decennial commemoration of the March on Rome, but the Fascist apparatus saw to it that even such events within the Exhibition were ritualized and celebrated. The popularity and excitement that the *Mostra* generated was a one-time phenomenon. Much like Emilio Gentile's concept of a "fertile terrain" into which the seeds of Fascism were planted, the *Mostra* had its success due to a ripe environment for growth. At that time, the regime's foundations had been established, many artists' names appeared on the payroll of the State, and the effort of Italian artists to create an official "Fascist art" was at a high. The occasion to celebrate an important State anniversary coupled with economic incentives and travel rebates issued to visitors[110] created a unique environment in which the *Mostra* could – and did – flourish.

In October of 1932, when Mussolini gave permission for participation in the Century of Progress Exposition, to open the following spring in Chicago, he and his appointed representatives had to decide which facets of Fascism to portray for a foreign audience. It was an exhibition to promote Chicago's centennial, but would feature many examples of recent American technological innovation. The Fascist contribution to the World's Fair would emphasize achievements of Italy's past ten years. The regime would send much material, communicating with its contribution examples of technological modernism in the fields of science, medicine, agriculture, transport, urban planning and innovation.

[110] See Schnapp, "Epic Demonstrations," 17-18, for more information about visitor incentives.

Chapter Three: Fascist Italy in Chicago

Italy's contribution to A Century of Progress in Chicago 1933-34 focused primarily upon its achievements of the ten years previous, since the March on Rome of 1922. The Italian Pavilion and Italian participation in the other exhibition halls displayed Fascism's achievements with a distinct emphasis on transport and scientific innovation. Unlike the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, described by scholar Emilio Gentile as a key example of the sacralization of politics, which painstakingly displayed each phase in the transformation from fascist ideology into a Fascist state, from fascist ideology into Fascism as a political religion, Italy's contribution to A Century of Progress made only passing references to the Fascist revolution. Promotional literature and pamphlets handed out at the Italian Pavilion's information booth mentioned the phrase "Fascist revolution," but without ever elaborating the concept. The Chicago World's Fair gave the Fascist Italian regime the opportunity, a specific venue, in which to display Fascist achievements to a foreign audience. With the exception of two small Italian press and book exhibits in Cologne (1928) and then Barcelona (1929),[111] Italian Fascist presence in Chicago would be the first of four exposition pavilions at international expositions, and hence the regime's first major effort to exhibit Fascism abroad.[112] In this chapter, I will argue that Italy's contribution to the Chicago World's Fair emphasized its connection to a technologically modern state and to ancient Rome to a greater extent than it offered any explanation of how Fascism transformed the social, political, and economic life of Italians. In fact, the Italian contribution to A Century of Progress displayed Fascism with Mussolini as its leader as a

[111] Etlin, 407.

[112] Franck M. Mercurio, "Exhibiting Fascism: Italian Art, Architecture and Spectacle at the Chicago World's Fair, 1933-1934" (M.A. thesis, Northwestern University, 2001), 5. Fascist Italy also later erected pavilions for the *Exposition Universelle et Internationale Bruxelles* (1935), the *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* in Paris (1937) and the New York World's Fair (1939).

logical continuation of the ancient Roman Empire, a new age of greatness for all Italians with Rome again as the center of the world.

The Idea Behind the Century of Progress International Exposition

American civic leaders and fair organizers planned the 1933-1934 Century of Progress Exposition to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of Chicago. The former frontier settlement had come a long way, standing at the time of the Fair's opening as the fourth largest city in the world.[113] Chicago was an impressive and powerful American city, but one known also for political corruption, racial tension and mob violence.[114] Like most places in the United States, by the early 1930s, many of Chicago's population had lost their jobs and life savings, so planners first envisioned a large-scale fair as an event to inspire civic pride in Chicago as well as the rest of the United States. Such a large-scale endeavor would undoubtedly present a challenge, but the final result, if successful, would demonstrate that even in the direst of times, cooperation and collaboration would lead the American people to a better future. The World's Fair would stand as a symbol of optimism and the modern world's ability to supersede even the most difficult of obstacles.[115]

Unlike the last international world's fair to take place in Chicago, the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition featuring its 'White City' in the Beaux-Arts style, the team of architects who worked to design the Century of Progress fairgrounds sought a modern

[113] Cheryl Ganz, "A New Deal for Progress: The 1933 Chicago World's Fair" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 2005), 3.
[114] Findling, 41-42.
[115] Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 9. Depression era fairs in the United States were "designed to restore popular faith…in the ability of government, business, scientific and intellectual leaders to lead the country out of the depression to a new…promised land of material abundance."

aesthetic.[116] The overall design of the fair was one of modern architecture featuring current industry. Fair organizers intended the overall message of modernism to inspire confidence in the future, allowing fairgoers to envision new opportunity in the face of the Great Depression. One fair slogan read: Science Finds - Industry Applies - Man Conforms,[117] offering an intimidating impression of mankind as a puppet in the hands of its technological master. According to architectural historian Dennis Doordan, "the promoters, organizers, and designers of the Century of Progress Exposition wished to produce an exposition that engaged the visitor in a visceral experience as well as in the cerebral contemplation of progress."[118]

The name "Century of Progress" came in 1929 only after one of the primary fair organizers, Charles Dawes, called a meeting of influential potential investors who requested a name change from "Chicago World's Fair Centennial Celebration".[119] Historian Charles A. Beard, who cooperated with the fair's Exhibits Department to author some writings on their behalf,[120] also wrote the introduction to the 1932 American publication of Cambridge Professor J.B. Bury's *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into its Origin and Growth*. Originally published in England in 1920, Bury's work explained the evolution of the concept of progress, stemming from the ideas that made the concept possible. According to Bury, it was in the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century that the "soil was

[116] Lisa Diane Schrenk, "The Role of the 1933-34 Century of Progress International Exposition in the Development and Promotion of Modern Architecture in the United States" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1998), 1-18. These pages of Schrenk's introduction clarify how modern architecture was defined in the United States in the late 1920s and early 1930s.
[117] *Official Guide, Book of the Fair, 1933, with 1934 Supplement* (Chicago, 1934), 11.
[118] Dennis P. Doordan, "Exhibiting Progress, Italy's Contribution to the Century of Progress Exposition." In *Chicago Architecture and Design, 1923-1993: Reconfiguration of an American Metropolis*, ed. John Zukowsky (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1993), 221.
[119] Ganz, 73.
[120] Ibid, 75.

being prepared in which the idea of progress could germinate."[121] He then traced chronologically the evolution of this concept through to Darwin's theory of evolution. In ending with Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), however, Bury implicitly defined progress as a nineteenth century phenomenon. The 1851 Great Exhibition held in London, represented for Bury not only the public recognition of material progress but also the growing power of man over the material world.[122] Beard's introduction to this work, written to coincide with the opening of the World's Fair, sought to update Bury's work by specifically emphasizing the role of technology within the idea of progress in the United States.[123] Beard believed that technology was the idea "most pertinent" to the concept of progress.[124] Implicit in his notion of progress, via technology, was a necessarily on-going, expansive process. It is no wonder, then, that the American fair planners utilized this concept that not only emphasized technology but also contained promise of a more prosperous future.

Securing Foreign Participation

Despite the Fair's opening at the height of the Great Depression, many private entities covered all of their own expenses, as this was the first large international exposition of its kind to seek private funding.[125] While engineers, architects, and builders, for example,

[121] J.B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into its Growth and Origin* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1960), 35-36.
[122] Ibid, 329.
[123] Charles A Beard, "Introduction," in *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into its Growth and Origin*, xxxv. "With a society secular in motive, dynamic in economy, scientific in intellectual interest, it was inevitable that its political institutions should reflect these dominant drives."
[124] Ibid, xxi.
[125] Paul Warren Mason, "Ephemerality, Modernity and Progress, Architectural Light and Color at Chicago's "A Century of Progress International Exposition, 1933-34," (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin at Madison, 2004), 6. Up to this point, the host country's government typically underwrote and sponsored the exposition.

attempted to cut costs wherever possible,[126] the cost to construct a pavilion at the fair would be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Another step taken to reduce cost was to sponsor an environment of shared thematic pavilions.[127] For example, a Hall of Science was built to feature all science exhibits, independent of the contributor. In that way, an entity that did not want to or could not afford an independent freestanding pavilion could perhaps still purchase a smaller exhibit space. Fair organizers appealed to foreign countries, many of which dropped out of participation as soon as they realized the extent of the cost involved. While many countries sent small displays to be included in the Hall of Science or some of the other general exhibition halls, only Czechoslovakia, Japan, Sweden and Italy paid to construct their own pavilions.[128]

Financial considerations were not taken lightly by Rufus Dawes, the Fair's main organizer, nor by the United States government. While the Exposition was to be financed strictly through the state of Illinois and private entities, fair planners still needed to secure a joint congressional resolution on the federal level and have it enacted by the President to be able to invite other nations to participate.[129] Congress worried that the organizers would not come up with enough capital to support a successful endeavor. Charles Dawes, brother of Rufus and also Vice President of the United States, assured Congress of the exposition's future success. Shortly before leaving office, President Coolidge signed the resolution to support the fair in February of 1929 and President Herbert Hoover, almost immediately after entering office in March gave the go-ahead for foreign participation.[130]

The money raised for the fair would need to cover a wide array of costs. All pavilions not financed directly by a private entity had to be provided for. Even if all money

[126] Ganz, 89. She discusses the ways in which architects and builders utilized new materials and eliminated windows to cut down material and construction costs.
[127] Ibid, 84.
[128] Mercurio, 9.
[129] Ganz, 57.
[130] Ibid, 59.

would be made back by selling exhibition space, the upfront costs were numerous. Pavilions such as the Hall of Science, the Travel and Transport building, and Radio and Communications building, just to name a few, were such collective exhibition spaces. An article from the *Chicago Daily Tribune* written just a few days before the opening of the fair emphasized the grand scale of the event: "There are some sixty buildings given over to free exhibits, with a total corridor length or walking distance of 82 miles."[131]

Italian Participation

The qualities of optimism and modernism that A Century of Progress espoused were also ones that Mussolini's regime came to see as relevant to advertising Italian achievements to a primarily American public. The Italian government's decision to participate, however, was not overwhelmingly positive from the outset. It was only after considerable time, effort and persuading that Italian officials came around to the idea of having a presence in Chicago. A series of many meetings between various fair representatives and Italian officials both in the United States and in Europe over the course of a couple years beginning in 1931 presents a complicated network of communications.

It appears that the very first efforts by fair officials to encourage foreign participation occurred in February or March of 1930, with the sending of promotional literature.[132] By the end of 1930, the fair organizers had established an office in London headed by Sir Henry Cole to encourage European participation and later to manage relations with the European countries that would be sending exhibits to Chicago. The London office originally sought from potential European participants exhibits/pavilions resembling traditional villages that would have comprised a section of the fairgrounds called "Old Europe." Such an example is directly communicated by John S. Sewell, director of the

[131] "Fair So Vast It Takes Weeks to See It All," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 23, 1933; 1.
[132] Chronology of the Chicago and London Century of Progress offices; CPR-UIC, Government Correspondence Series, Folder 2-1106.

Exhibits Department for the Century of Progress in February 1931 to Cole, in which he wrote that the contrast of an Old Europe next to the modern architecture of the rest of the fair would emphasize Europe's origins, stating "This Old Europe idea is probably the last singularly fitting opportunity to record the great achievements of its past generations."[133] In this way, fair organizers relegated to old-fashioned scenery their prospective foreign participants, sending the message that they needed not represent progress as long as they provided an attractive amusement. As one scholar explained, "not surprisingly, foreign nations displayed little enthusiasm for playing the role of quaint custodians of a picturesque past."[134]

The first round of visits to Rome to encourage Italian participation took place in March of 1931. Cole and Mr. Gordon Paddock convened in Rome on the tenth of the month, first at the American Embassy to see the Ambassador, who then introduced them to Count Pagliano, the Chief of the section for American affairs at the Italian Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In their reports, both Cole and Paddock exclaim that they thought it strange that rather than being directed initially to a representative of the Italian government, they were encouraged to test the waters first at the American Embassy.[135] Pagliano made it clear that he would have to consult first with the Finance Minister before proceeding, after which he would then meet with a Signor Grandi, who would then, if satisfied, present the

[133] Memorandum from John S. Sewell to Henry Cole, Feb. 24, 1931; CPR-UIC, Foreign Participation Series, Folder 11-144.
[134] Doordan, "Exhibiting Progress," 222. Apparently fair organizers were not willing to part with the 'Old Europe' idea. For the 1934 season of a Century of Progress, a group of Chicago-area investors formed the "Italian Village, Inc.," having no connection whatsoever to Italy's official pavilion. See pages 229-230 for further discussion of the Italian Village.
[135] "Visit of Sir Henry Cole and Mr. Gordon Paddock to Rome, March 1931" and letter from Gordon Paddock to Colonel H. Maud, March 16, 1931; CPR-UIC, Government Correspondence Series, Folder 2-1106.

matter to Premier Mussolini. Despite this chain of bureaucracy, both Cole and Paddock remarked that the Italian foreign office seemed to be "favorably disposed."[136]

On June 12, 1931, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported to the U.S. Embassy in Rome of the Italian government's refusal of the invitation to participate in A Century of Progress.[137] It is clear that the fair organizers were either surprised by this negative response, or not convinced by Italy's rejection, so they initiated a series of attempts to encourage Italy to come back into the fold. For instance, the Italian Ambassador in Washington, Signor Di Martino, requested insistently to Rome that Italy participate as a result of the appeals made to him by Major Felix Streyckmans, director of the fair's Office of Foreign Participation.[138] Then later, in August of 1931, the Italian Consul General in Chicago, Giuseppe Castruccio, paid a visit to Rome to meet with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to speak again about participation in Chicago.[139] It was not again until March 1932 when a series of meetings were scheduled in Rome between Major O.J.F. Keatinge, the advisor to the Fair's vice-president and general manager, and Streyckmans, with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Corporations, Giuseppe Bottai. Only after a fourteen-day visit in Rome, and Keatinge's return a month later for a period of ten days, did the London representatives report optimism at Italian participation. During the March visit, Dr. Rossi, the head of the American Section at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, revealed to Keatinge and Cole that Italy had refused participation, not due to the financial burden that they cited, but rather because they were concerned about the

[136] Letter from Gordon Paddock to Colonel H. Maud, March 16, 1931; CPR-UIC, Government Correspondence Series, Folder 2-1106.
[137] Enclosure No. 2 to dispatch No. 907 of June 15, 1931 from the Embassy at Rome, Note Verbale; CPR-UIC, Government Correspondence Series, Folder 2-1106.
[138] Memorandum from Major O.J. F Keatinge to Sir Henry Cole, March 10, 1932; CPR-UIC, Government Correspondence Series, Folder 2-1106.
[139] Press Release dated October 13, 1932; CPR-UIC, Government Correspondence Series, Folder 2-1106. This document mentions an August 1931 visit of Castruccio to Rome to urge "his government accept President Hoover's invitation to participate in the Century of Progress Exposition."

Chicago Fair's ability to be successful when hampered by the burdens of the Great Depression.[140]

Once the matter of participation in A Century of Progress was brought before Mussolini in April of 1932,[141] the Premier desired to gauge the level of interest amongst various Italian industries and deigned to provide an immediate answer. While it is not clear exactly how many visits or meetings took place in Rome between March 1932 and Italy's official acceptance of participation on October 13, 1932,[142] it is known that other individuals representing the fair appeared before various representatives of the Italian government, and even at least once before Mussolini himself,[143] during this time.

This entire multi-year process of meetings reveals some unexpected conclusions about both the United States' position and that of Fascist Italy. For one, it became clear that the United States found Italian participation extremely valuable, so valuable, in fact, that they took considerable measures to woo Italy back to the Fair after their official refusal. When Italy refused participation, fair organizers could have accepted the reply and concentrated efforts elsewhere, but they chose to pursue the matter. Whatever the intentions of either country, Italy did not jump immediately at the chance to represent itself in the United States. The decision had to be weighed and evaluated carefully. Additionally, this process brings to light a unique opportunity to see the bureaucratic workings in the Fascist Italy of the early 1930s that serves to dispel the notion that Mussolini, and only Mussolini,

[140] Memorandum from Major O.J.F. Keatinge to Sir Henry Cole, March 10, 1932; CPR-UIC, Government Correspondence Series, Folder 2-1106.
[141] Memorandum from Major O.J.F. Keatinge to Sir Henry Cole, April 21, 1932; CPR;UIC, Government Correspondence Series, Folder 2-1106. While it is likely that Mussolini had knowledge of the Fair before this date, this is the first period of time in which it was certain he was consulted.
[142] Note Verbale, Enclosure No. 1 in a letter from Alexander C. Kirk to the Secretary of State, October 14, 1932; CPR-UIC, Government Correspondence Series, Folder 2-1106.
[143] Letter from Lieutenant Commander E.D. Langworthy to Fulvio Suvich, Enclosure No. 3 in a letter from Alexander C. Kirk to the Secretary of State, October 14, 1932; CPR-UIC, Government Correspondence Series, Folder 2-1106. In his letter, Langworthy expressed gratitude for the opportunity to meet with Mussolini.

made all decisions with an iron fist. While his approval was needed to be able to proceed, Mussolini's own process of gauging interest among the corporations' representatives shows an approach in which matters such as participation in an international fair were circulated and discussed among various branches of the Fascist state apparatus. This process also demonstrates that while Italy was reluctant to participate initially, once the decision was made, they proceeded to participate at a high level.

The Italian Pavilion: The Building and Exhibits

Once Italy decided to participate in A Century of Progress, the government grappled with whether to build a freestanding pavilion or simply contribute exhibits to one of the themed exhibition halls, explained a final report of the Chicago World's Fair written by the Royal Commissioner assigned to oversee Italy's participation.[144] According to the Commissioner, Prince Ludovico Spada Potenziani, the Italian government decided on the former because despite the added cost, they wanted a space in which to be able to express the new Italian spirit.[145] In actuality, however, the Italian government decided on both options, as they contributed exhibits also to the Adler Planetarium, the Hall of Science, and even the Museum of Science and Industry.[146] The next step then was to select a specific project for construction.[147] Some early building ideas suggested a reconstruction of Columbus' house in Genoa and the replication of a Venetian palazzo;[148] such designs, however were dropped in favor of something that would represent "the character of the new

[144] Ludovico Spada Potenziani, *L'Italia all'Esposizione Mondiale di Chicago* (Roma: no publisher, 193?), 12. This report appears to be quite rare, but can be found in the general collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC or at the Italian Cultural Center Library, Stone Park, IL. As evidenced by the citation, the publication is lacking a page with publication information.
[145] Ibid, 13.
[146] Ganz, 160. Later Italy would donate the vast majority of its exhibits to the Museum of Science and Industry, as reported in a Letter from G. Castruccio to Mr. C. W. Fitch, September 15, 1933; CPR-UIC, Government Correspondence Series, Folder 2-1104.
[147] Potenziani, 12-13.
[148] Ibid, 13-14.

Italy."[149] Even several months before officially accepting the invitation to Chicago, Italian Foreign Ministry officials informed Keatinge and Streyckmans of their intention to erect a pavilion "entirely modern in character" and that "it was no use thinking [Italy] would go in for reproductions of old buildings which would give a false impression of the high degree of modern efficiency which had been reached by the Italian nation."[150] This stress on wanting to build in a modern style, then, was not unique to that of the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista. At this time, even though the MRF had not yet opened to the public, its plans were very much in the works, as it would open just two weeks after the definite confirmation to participate in Chicago. As evidenced by the Mostra and the Chicago pavilion, there is no doubt that, at this time in the early 1930s, Italian cultural leaders and Mussolini alike thought that a modern aesthetic best portrayed Italian Fascism in a visual form. It was the style that they wanted to portray both home and abroad.

After official participation was granted, the Sindicato degli Architetti sponsored "an urgently carried out" competition in which young architects could submit designs for an Italian Pavilion.[151] Potenziani proclaimed that "by happy coincidence…the winners of the frenzied competition are the same architects De Renzi and Libera, authors of the façade of the Exhibition of the Revolution, and Valente author of the Shrine of Fascist Martyrs of the same Exhibition".[152]

Potenziani, a former governor of the city of Rome, was appointed by Mussolini to his post at A Century of Progress, whose task it would be to oversee the entire course of events in Chicago.[153] He was not shy about making known during the Pavilion's opening

[149] Ibid, 14.
[150] Memorandum from O.J.F. Keatinge to Henry Cole, March 10, 1932; CPR-UIC, Government Correspondence Series, Folder 2-1106.
[151] Potenziani, 14.
[152] Ibid.
[153] "Chief of Fair for Italy Will Arrive Today," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb 6, 1933. The article further reported that Potenziani was "[a] noted sportsman and an unknown quantity

ceremony on June 3, 1933 that the purpose of the Italian Pavilion was to "demonstrate…what our country has done, not in the 100 years but in the last ten years – that is, during the Fascist era, under the rule of Mussolini".[154] In this way, Fascist Italy redefined the notion of progress offered by the Fair: the Regime rejected the notion of displaying achievements over an entire century, while it chose to emphasize the achievements of the ten years since Fascism had come to power.

The Pavilion itself, initially designed by architects Adalberto Libera, Mario de Renzi, Antonio Valente and completed by Chicago-based Italian architect Alexander Capraro, was a large symmetrical building designed to resemble an airplane (See Figure 3.1). A staircase before the main entrance led visitors underneath a horizontal metallic wing with a forty-meter span that also served as the entrance's awning. Additionally, the Pavilion featured a large illuminated glass and steel *fascio*, with a single large ax blade rising approximately 15 meters above the entrance.[155] Unlike a traditional Roman *fascio*, a bundle of several sticks, this was one single stylized, abstract element not unlike the *fasci* at the entry of the Mostra. Centered on the wing, above the entrance read "ITALIA" in block letters, also similar aesthetically to that which had been utilized to spell the name of the MRF. Especially since De Renzi and Libera had only just designed the façade for the Mostra, it is clear that their design for the Chicago Pavilion retained the same overall

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in politics, he was named governor of Rome in early 1927 by the council of ministers. Fascism was his only interest in a political way. When the doctrine first came into being he became one of its proponents." It is likely that the Fascist regime thought Potenziani a capable figure for his position as Commissioner at A Century of Progress as he had also previously visited the United States in 1928 and had even met President Coolidge. "Italy: Strange Fascination," in *Time*, Jun. 11, 1928, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,881039,00.html?artId=881039?contType=article?chn=us. Accessed April 27, 2010.

[154] Virginia Gardner, "Italian Pavilion at the Fair, Tribute to Fascism, Opens," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jun 4, 1933. Potenziani also expressed a similar statement in *The Italian Pavilion: A Century of Progress, 1933* (Chicago: The Cuneo Press, 1933), 6.

[155] Francesco Garofalo and Luca Veresani, *Adalberto Libera* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), 67.

similar design scheme. *Architectural Forum* reported before the pavilion had even opened in June of 1933 that, "one theme returns again and again in the new Italian architecture, the fascist ax…it dominates. It is the signature of a reigning idea."[156] The promotional literature also attempted to explain the Fascist symbol for an audience unfamiliar with its meaning: "The Fascist emblem, a cluster of rods bound together…is the bond of modern Italy. This emblem in ancient Rome was a symbol of power, law, order, justice and supreme authority. Premier Mussolini revived it as an emblem for the Fascist party, with the same significance it held in ancient Rome."[157] As seen by this description, the regime forged a connection between itself and ancient Rome, asserting that Fascist Italy had the right to reclaim the diplomatic symbol of the bygone era. When compared with the description in the official PNF literature about the *fasci* of the MRF, which prized the fact that the facade "carrie[d] the mark and character of the fascist time" and represented "an unmistakable spirit",[158] it is shown that in Chicago the *fascio* is much more closely connected to its historical meaning, rather then its contemporary connotation.

The main entry, a large glass portal, led into a large grand hall, sometimes referred to as the Auditorium, meant as a space for receptions and large gatherings, with long corridors, or wings, on either side to house exhibits. Porthole windows and skylights adorned the wings. In the central hall, opposite the main entrance, the wall was rounded similar to that of a church apse, giving the overall floor plan the appearance of a church or basilica.[159] The curved wall featured a ribbon of windows facing Lake Michigan.[160] Opposite the apsidal space, photographs of the interior of the Pavilion reveal a speaker's

[156] "Mario de Renzi, Adalberto Libera, Architects: Chicago Exposition, Italian Pavilion,"*Architectural Forum* 58 (June 1933): 495.
[157] *The Italian Pavilion: A Century of Progress, 1933*, 8.
[158] Alfieri and Freddi, 66.
[159] Garofalo, 68. The floor plan is reproduced here.
[160] Ibid, 67.

podium/rostrum on an upper balcony.[161] While typically, windows would not represent such a specialty, they were in this case. The designs for the majority of other fair buildings purposely excluded any windows as a cost-cutting measure.[162] These design features, revealing plenty of natural light would have set the Italian Pavilion apart from other buildings on the fairgrounds.

Rufus Dawes described the primarily white and red Pavilion, at its dedication on June 3, 1933 as, "a symbol of [Fascism's] initiative and energy."[163] Set against the green grass, one article recalled that together the scene displayed Italy's national colors.[164] While the building was unique, references to architectural design inspired by aeronautic design had precedents in both Le Corbusier and Italian Futurism of the 1930s.[165] Le Corbusier published *Vers une architecture* in 1923 in which he had a chapter devoted to the functionality and the adaptability of airplane design, stating that such innovation should be transferred to buildings.[166] While the Italian pavilion does not directly follow this line of thought, Le Corbusier inspired throughout Europe the idea of buildings as machines. Additionally, the new wave of Futurists emerging in the 1930s practiced *aeropittura*, an art inspired by the technology and motion of flight.[167] Interestingly, the official pamphlet handed out to visitors to the Pavilion described thoroughly the building's interior, but only provided two sentences about the building's exterior.[168] Perhaps this was because, as Potenziani's final report explained, one of the Pavilion's primary merits was that it represented a concrete work of art, one that was not obscure, as many Americans simply

[161] Italian Pavilion photographs; CPR-UIC, Iconographics Series, Box 20 Folder 17.
[162] *Official Guide. Book of the Fair 1933*, 22-23; Ganz, 89.
[163] Virginia Gardner, "Italian Pavilion at Fair, Tribute to Fascism, Opens," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 4, 1933, 9.
[164] "Fascist Italy Tells Its Story," *World's Fair Weekly* (3 June 1933): 30.
[165] Mercurio, 19-20.
[166] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (Oxford: Butterworth Architecture, 1989), 105-127.
[167] Mercurio, 20.
[168] *The Italian Pavilion: A Century of Progress, 1933* (Chicago: Cuneo Press, 1933), 16.

referred to it as "the airplane."[169] This is to say that while the building's exterior presented a modern aesthetic, it was also recognized as representing a modern machine, and not part of the realm of the avant-garde meant to deliberately evade representational parallels. The visitors, then, were left to associate Fascist Italy with aviation, a correlation made even more direct by Italo Balbo's Italian Air Armada, to be discussed in the next chapter.

Despite the building's outward appearance, the interior of the Pavilion did not feature any exhibits pertaining to Italian airplanes or aviation. The floor of the main assembly hall remained empty except for a model of the Italian ocean liner "Rex" and a few chairs.[170] On the curved wall in the main hall, below the ribbon windows, was a large painted transport-themed mural (See Figure 3.2). The artist(s), never named, featured in the center of the mural a profile portrait of Mussolini alongside a *fascio* and a Roman mile marker with the inscription "Roma Caput Mundi" (Rome, Capital of the World). A large "XI" painted at the bottom of the center of the mural referred to year eleven of the Fascist calendar. As the mural continued along this curved wall on either side of the axis, speeding vehicles demonstrating Italy's breakthroughs in transport sped toward large stylized maps not dissimilar to those in the first room of the upstairs of the Mostra, Fascist Italians abroad. [171] At the Mostra, artist Angelo Della Torre featured wall-sized map murals featuring black flags that marked "particularly in Western Europe" the location of Fascists abroad.[172] On one wall in particular Africa figured prominently (See Figure 2.7). Stylistically very similar depictions of the African continent were also present in Chicago (See Figure 3.3). The mural continued along the north and south walls of the main hall, each side depicting the Western and Eastern Hemisphere, respectively, although the African continent was repeated

[169] Potenziani, 14-16.
[170] Ibid, 22.
[171] Mercurio, 25-26.
[172] Alfieri and Freddi, 238.

on both sides. An unnaturally large Italy is depicted adjacent Africa, alluding to the Fascist regime's territorial ambitions on a continent in which Italian colonies already existed.[173]

Below the painted mural, a row of five photomurals each depicted a famous site in Rome: the Colosseum, the Roman Forum, the Capitol, the Via del Mare, and the Foro Mussolini – a sports complex still under construction at the time. This is to say that the first two photomurals depicted sites representative of ancient Rome, the third, the Capitol, was "an achievement of Michelangelo and one of the finest examples of Renaissance architecture in Europe,"[174] and the last two photomurals demonstrated Fascist government undertakings. The creator of such photomurals utilized clever technology as the enlarged photographs were printed on translucent panels, illuminated by natural light from behind, cited as being the first of their kind.[175] The image of the Colosseum, for example, depicts in the foreground a column from 1932 marking the inauguration of the Via dell'Impero,[176] created during the wave of urban design projects undertaken for the tenth anniversary of Italian Fascism (See Figure 3.4). In this way, the photomural juxtaposed ancient and new iconography, emphasizing the point that the new avenue was a logical and natural addition to the ancient Roman setting. Especially when taken together, these works presented key examples depicting Mussolini's Fascism as the next leader of Italy ancient, medieval and modern.

The exhibits featured within the Italian Pavilion showcased recent improvements made by the State. One oft-mentioned exhibit was devoted to the Fascist government's recent land reclamation projects, especially the draining of wetlands necessary to make the

[173] Prior to World War I, Italy operated colonies in Eritrea, Libya, and what is today called Somalia. The Fascist regime, however, coveted Ethiopia in its entirety, which was captured in October of 1935 and made a part of Italian East Africa.
[174] *The Italian Pavilion*, 13.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Doordan, "Exhibiting Progress," 226. The Via dell'Impero is today's Via dei Fori Imperiali.

land arable and suitable for building. Arrigo Serpieri, Undersecretary of Land Reclamation, explained such efforts as a total venture: "…numerous tracts of plain, and hilly or mountainous lands, outside the swampy districts, either unproductive or only slightly productive, will be reclaimed, and that a new land organization will be introduced in the country responding more closely to the demands of the life of the Nation."[177] The Regime hailed an act of December 1928, called the Mussolini Act, as "the greatest effort of the State towards the full development of the land and the greater efficiency of rural life,"[178] as it served to combine previous legislation under one large policy. By the time A Century of Progress opened, many of the projects planned had been carried out and were a source of great pride for the State. As the promotional literature exclaims, the "land reclamation exhibit will impress upon you more than anything else the epoch-making progress of Italy during the last few years."[179]

In the 1934 season of A Century of Progress, a model displaying recent urban planning measures taken by the Fascist regime received noted attention in Potenziani's report.[180] Potenziani described the model of the "zona monumentale di Roma" as having reproduced "the Rome of the Caesars resurrected by the will of the Duce."[181] Such measures to modernize the city included the creation of the aforementioned Via dell'Impero and the *sventramenti*, or vast clearing operations, in which the monuments and ruins of ancient Rome were uncovered irrespective of what buildings and structures existed nearby.[182]

[177] Arrigo Serpieri, "Integral Land Reclamation" in *What is Fascism and Why?*, ed. Sillani, Tomaso. (London: E. Benn Ltd., 1931), 74.
[178] Ibid, 75.
[179] *The Italian Pavilion: A Century of Progress, 1933*, 14-15.
[180] Potenziani, 44.
[181] Ibid. "…riproducente…la Roma dei Cesari risorta per volontà del Duce…"
[182] Etlin, 391.

Italian contributions to the Hall of Science filled their own wing of the large general exhibition building. Enrico Bompiani, commissioner appointed to install the exhibits, dealt with a wide array of disparate exhibit materials as examples of Italian achievement, which spanned from ancient Rome to the present. As if neglecting many of the older objects, Bompiani proudly reported, "So rapid has been Italian advancement under Fascism that the public outside of Italy is scarcely aware of it. We wish to make known the new truths about Italy."[183] A large section focused on Italian contributions to aviation, especially that of a military nature.[184] Additionally, a model of ancient Rome, "modeled in plaster and perfect in every detail,"[185] was meant to show the early ingenuity of Roman design. Other exhibits included: a medical section featuring both ancient and contemporary medical instruments, an exhibit called "The Eternal Leader" honoring Italian inventors, a section called "The Five Pillars of this Century of Progress," presenting the achievements of five Italian scientists from the nineteenth century, an exhibit featuring ball bearings, another featuring water turbines and even a model of what was at the time the world's longest tunnel spanning from Bologna to Florence. Guglielmo Marconi's "latest apparatus for short wave transmission" featured prominently "for the first time in America."[186] The inventor, *marchese*, and senator of Italy, was himself personally honored at the fair on Tuesday, October 3, 1933, during a special reception at the Italian Pavilion.[187] All told, not all of the exhibition material pertained to achievements of the Fascist regime, but all of the material *was* portrayed as culminating in Fascist triumph.

The Italian Pavilion proved to be a success at A Century of Progress. Total turnout figures reported in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reveal that the Pavilion alone received

[183] "Fascist Italy Tells Its Story," 30.
[184] Mercurio, 31.
[185] *The Italian Pavilion: A Century of Progress, 1933*, 17.
[186] "Fascist Italy Tells Its Story," 31.
[187] "Italy Transmits a Starbeam to Illuminate Fair," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct 3, 1933, 7.

approximately five and a half million visitors at the close of the 1933 season, one of the most popular private pavilions.[188] The main hall hosted many large events over the course of the fair, helping to increase attendance numbers. Wildly popular in its first season, the Fair opened again in the spring of 1934 for a second season. Before the state of Illinois granted officially a second season, Consul General Castruccio offered the Italian Pavilion as a semi-permanent culture and entertainment center, stating that the building "has been built in steel; it is very beautiful and it could stand for many years."[189] When it was clear that the Fair would be open for another season, not only did Italy retain its pavilion, but even built an addition to accommodate space for more vendors.[190]

Fascism Exhibited in Chicago

In the previous chapter, a thorough review of the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista demonstrated that the Exhibition successfully represented in a visual format the "Fascist revolution". This chapter has presented the story of Italian participation in A Century of Progress Exposition and to point out that the ideals of the Mostra were not carried across the Atlantic. As demonstrated, Fascism was still present, only its ability to transform Italians, so commonly reported in Italy, was not the goal: in Chicago, Fascist State improvement projects prevailed over Fascist ideology. Despite the Regime's eventual decision to participate in the fair and Potenziani's later claim to demonstrate what Italy had accomplished during the "Fascist era," the nature of the venue when combined with a

[188] "Total Attendance at Principal Fair Exhibits is Shown," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 12, 1933, 2. As a point of comparison, other figures include: 7,000,000 visitors to the Sears Roebuck pavilion; 6,500,000 at the Czechoslovak pavilion; 5,000,000 at the Streets of Paris exhibition; 3,000,000 to the Swedish pavilion; and 2,550,000 to the Japanese pavilion.
[189] Letter from G. Castruccio to C.W. Fitch, September 5, 1933; CPE-UIC, Government Correspondence Series, Folder 2-1104. Castruccio dated all of his letters with the Roman numerals representing the Fascist calendar.
[190] *Padiglione Italiano alla Esposizione Mondiale di Chicago, 1933-34* (Rome, 1934); Chicago Public Library, Century of Progress Records, Box 3, Folder 25.

representation of Fascism suitable for attracting tourists, contributed to the notion of Fascism as stable and safe, rather than cutting-edge and revolutionary.

In lieu of the Fascist revolution, the Regime chose to emphasize two main facets: (1) Fascism's technological modernity, confirming that it could present an alternative, yet legitimate form of political modernity and (2) Fascist Italy under Mussolini as a natural successor to ancient Rome, hence implying the dawn of a new Roman empire. In many ways, the image that the Fascist government presented of itself mirrored what American business and industry attempted to prove of itself: political modernity through technology and innovation. As a symbol of technological modernity, the airplane was Italy's contribution to the ideal of progress as expressed by the World's Fair. It was one area in which Fascist Italy felt they could compete with the United States. The building of the Pavilion as an airplane, then, was a way of infusing modern architecture with modern industry, while Balbo's flight would attempt to imbue the Pavilion with meaning.

Chapter Four: Italo Balbo's Italian Air Cruise

On July 15, 1933, hundreds of thousands[191] of visitors to A Century of Progress lined the fairgrounds around the Italian Pavilion and alongside the lake awaiting the landing of General Italo Balbo and his Italian Air Armada. Balbo's and another twenty-three Savoia Marchetti S55 hydroplanes would be landing on Lake Michigan after approximately 6,100 miles and eight days of flight, 47 hours, 52 minutes of which was spent in the air (See Figure 4.1).[192] At 5:40 p.m., the first planes were sighted, and within an hour, all had landed. Forty-two United States Army planes, having escorted the Italian aircraft from Canada, then spelled "Italia" in the air while the Italian squadron disembarked.[193] What had lasted less than an hour for the spectators was part of a much larger, multi-stage phenomenon. From Orbetello, Italy the squadron flew to Amsterdam, Londonderry, Reykjavik, then made the longest jump to Canada, stopping in Cartwright, Shediac, and Montreal, before landing in Chicago.

The squadron and its flight received much front-cover media attention both in Italy, where the event was known as the *Crociera aerea del Decennale*, and in the United States, which hailed the event as "the greatest mass flight in the history of aviation."[194] Press about the upcoming event months in advance meant that when he arrived successfully,[195] Balbo became an instant hero at the Century of Progress Exposition. Before the air squadron's June 30th departure from Orbetello, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that Balbo's planned flight "is the greatest mass flight of its kind ever attempted," especially in that the

[191] "Chicago Hails Balbo Fleet: Italy's Intrepid Flyers Reach Goal of Victory," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 16, 1933, 1. Reports of this figure differ wildly. Doordan, "Exhibiting Progress," 227, cites this figure as "an estimated one million people" which seems impossibly high.
[192] "100,000 at Chicago Greet Balbo Fleet," *New York Times*, July 16, 1933, 1.
[193] Doordan, 227.
[194] "Chicago Hails Balbo Fleet," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 16, 1933, 1.
[195] Balbo, for example, was featured on the cover of *TIME* magazine for the week of June 26, 1933.

planes would cross the Atlantic twice.[196] During just three days in Chicago, he adhered to a rigorous social schedule and was even presented with a doctoral degree of laws and honorary status as chief of the Sioux tribe.[197] The short time in Chicago was followed by a longer stint in New York City, one day of which Balbo and thirty-five of his men spent in Washington, DC for a luncheon in their honor at the White House with President Roosevelt.[198]

In this chapter, I will argue that in showcasing Balbo and the air squadron, the Fascist regime attempted to create a Fascist spectacle to complement its architectural presence at the Century of Progress International Exposition. In being able to associate an impressive feat and charismatic figure with Italy, for anyone who had visited the Pavilion at the World's Fair, or even read about it, the Fascist country became associated with triumph in aviation. Additionally, I highlight the fact that Italian film sources pertaining to Balbo's air cruise placed much more emphasis on the flight preparations before leaving Italy, time spent in New York City, and the triumphant return to Rome, than any of the stops along the way, including Chicago.

The Man and the Mission

Italo Balbo had been one of the leaders of the March on Rome in 1922, a status that provided for his rapid ascension within the Regime.[199] After serving as Undersecretary of

[196] "Bad Weather Forces Italians to Delay Hop," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 25, 1933, 1.
[197] "Chicago Fetes Balbo Heroes in Heroic Style," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 17, 1933, 3. This article mentions Balbo's honorary Sioux chief status, while discussion of the presentation of the doctoral degree is mentioned in "5,000 Acclaim Balbo Flyers at Italian Dinner; Throngs Mass on Michigan Ave. to See Airmen," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 17, 1933, 2. At a large banquet dinner on July 17, the President of Loyola University conferred upon Balbo the degree of doctor of laws.
[198] "Washington Plans Honors for Balbo," Special to the *New York Times*, July 19, 1933, 3.
[199] "Balbo, Italo" in *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy*, ed., Philip V. Cannistraro (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 57. Despite appearances, Balbo was not a Fascist of the "first hour." He is cited as "still actively campaigning for republicans" until the winter of 1920-21. He began his Fascist career only when he accepted an appointment in

the Regia Aeronautica,[200] Mussolini appointed Balbo Minister of Aviation in 1929. A Fascist regime-approved official pamphlet of Balbo's flight printed for the Chicago World's Fair portrayed Balbo as singlehandedly resurrecting the disgraceful Italian air force and re-establishing "an aeronautic conscience among the people," then later inventing the concept of the mass flight.[201] In early 1931 Balbo had led twelve aircraft and fifty men on his first trans-Atlantic flight terminating in Rio de Janeiro, during which five flyers lost their lives.[202] Despite this tragedy and the overall difficulties involved, it was right after the flyers returned from Brazil that Mussolini announced that another mass flight to Chicago would take place in two years time.[203]

More than just a feat in aviation, Balbo's operation required thorough communication and organization. Each of the twenty-four planes carried not only its pilot, but also a co-pilot, radio operator and mechanic. At each stop along the route, safety ships and planes awaited the squadron. Radio networks conveyed information about weather and wind patterns.[204] A special emergency base was established on Greenland. All branches of the Italian armed forces became involved, as two submarines would trail the armada as they

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Ferrara as political secretary of the *Fasci di Combattimento*." Balbo was listed later as a possible heir to Mussolini.

[200] Mercurio, 33.

[201] *Official Book of the Flight of Gen. Italo Balbo and his Italian Air Armada to a Century of Progress, Chicago – 1933* (Chicago: Cuneo Press, 1933), 5. While no one author is listed, Consul General Castruccio issues his seal of approval on the third page.

[202] Claudio Segrè, *Italo Balbo: A Fascist Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 215.

[203] *Official Book of the Flight of Gen. Italo Balbo*, 12. While it is known that a second air cruise over the Atlantic was planned shortly after returning from Brazil, Chicago was not necessarily the initial destination. At this time, in early 1931, the Italian regime was not even close to declaring participation in the World's Fair and would have had no reason to choose Chicago. An article from *Time* reported that Balbo had originally planned to fly around the world. ("Aeronautics: Masses Like Infantry," *Time*, Jun 26, 1933. http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,882165-1,00.html. Accessed May 2, 2010.

[204] *Official Book of the Flight of Gen. Italo* Balbo, 7.

flew over the north Atlantic.[205] A few mechanics even arrived in New York City two months early with four hundred cases of equipment and spare parts to be dispersed as needed.[206] One article even mentioned that an Italian yacht and steamboat carried "newspapermen and supplies."[207] The *Official Book* displayed pride in the planes themselves, incidentally the same "glorious airship of the first Atlantic flights"[208] with some improvements especially to the motor.[209]

On Solid Ground in the United States

Since the Chicago Fair was the terminus of the flight to the United States, the landing there received a large amount of media attention. The National Broadcasting Company, for example, arranged to transmit live the arrival of the air armada to A Century of Progress. Announcers either in planes or posted at other high points, such as the Sky Ride tower on the fairgrounds, broadcast the progress and arrival of the hydroplanes.[210] After the squadron landed, an elaborate greeting ceremony followed. Italian Consul General Castruccio proceeded to give a radio speech, broadcast to Italy.[211] As fifty automobiles escorted the air squadron onto the fairgrounds, crowds covered the length of the route. The procession terminated at Soldier Field where a large crowd of approximately 60,000 awaited their arrival.[212] Chicago's Mayor Kelly proclaimed the renaming of Seventh Street after Balbo, a city resolution meant to express thanks "to the Italian nation, to its illustrious premier, Benito Mussolini, and to its representatives".[213] Balbo then gave a

[205] "Bad Weather Forces Italians to Delay Hop," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jun 25, 1933, 1.
[206] "Balbo Mechanics Arrive," *New York Times*, April 18, 1933, 9.
[207] "Bad Weather Forces Italians to Delay Hop," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jun 25, 1933, 1.
[208] *Official Book of the Flight of Gen. Italo Balbo*, 27.
[209] Segrè, 235.
[210] "Chicago to Mark Italo Balbo Day," *New York Times*, Jul 15, 1933, 3.
[211] "Chicago Hails Balbo Fleet," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 16, 1933, 1.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid. While "Balbo avenue" is the street name reported by the Mayor, the roadway was named "Balbo Drive."

speech in which he stated the purpose of the air squadron's mission: "to bring a message of friendship from the new Italy of Mussolini to the United States,"[214] a concept he would repeat often while in the United States.

Throughout the duration of the next three days, event after event was planned in honor of the Italian flyers. At a luncheon for the squadron the day after their arrival held in the Trustees' Lounge in the Hall of Sciences, a reporter for the *Chicago Daily Tribune* expressed an atmosphere of enthusiasm and excitement: "So carried away were most of us that if we had known the words we would have joined in the Fascist hymn when the flyers and other Italians sang it so lustily."[215] The song was the "Giovinezza," compelling enough to encourage participation even by an American audience.

Following lunch, Balbo gave a speech from the rostrum of the Italian Pavilion with his squadron positioned behind. In looking down at all of the guests standing in the main hall, Balbo proclaimed:

> This flight is but an incident in Italy's technical development of modern aviation. Far more important than the fact that two continents and an ocean have been spanned in mass flight for the first time is the fact that in the tenth year of the Fascist revolution, we have been able thus to bring a message of friendship to the United States, the mother of aviation, and to this marvelous Century of Progress.[216]

To take Balbo's words at face value, however, neglect the fact that the mass flight certainly was meant to awe and inspire in a demonstration of Fascist greatness all those who would follow the course of events. If the only message to draw from the event was one of friendship, then having the Italian Pavilion at the fair would have provided that function. Balbo's presence should be seen as espousing the type of spectacle typically presented by Italian Fascists on Italian soil, absent up to this point at A Century of Progress. Balbo's

[214] Ibid.
[215] India Moffett, "Century of Progress Officials Drink Toast to Flyers in Water: Beer Glasses Empty When President Dawes Proposes Honor at Fair Luncheon," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 17, 1933, 13.
[216] "5,000 Acclaim Balbo Flyers at Italian Dinner; Throngs Mass on Michigan Ave. to See Airmen," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 17, 1933, 2. Balbo gave his speech in Italian, which was later translated into English by Italian Consul General Castruccio.

position as a new hero, speaking from the rostrum of his country's pavilion, to an audience in awe of his presence created an environment in which the specific words he used were less important than the fact he was issuing them.

Another example of Italy's false modesty appeared in the *Official Book of the Flight*, which posed and answered the following question:

> Why did the Italian government make such an enormous investment in money, time, men and airplanes? Not for the glory of Italy – though Italy now will forever stand in the very forefront of progress in aviation. Not for the glory of General Balbo – though history will ring with his great achievement. This was done in the interest of all the peoples of the world – to secure facts, data, and experience that would make international communication by airplane easier and better and more certain of ultimate success in regular flights.[217]

Unconvincing in its own right, the answer to the question is also belied by the fact that only just a few pages later, the author praised the specific aircraft used for the *Crociera* as a "powerful war instrument which forms the sturdiness of Italian aviation for large sea bombing planes."[218] While "success in regular flights" may have also been a priority, the military nature of the aircraft should not be overlooked.

Furthering the sense of Fascism as a political religion, at a banquet not long after Balbo's speech at the Italian Pavilion, a symbolic roll call, represented in the Shrine of Martyrs at the MRF in visual form, was held in which each of the flyers stood upon hearing his name. The final name to be called was that of Sergeant Mechanic Quintavalle, killed landing in Amsterdam on the very first leg of the trip.[219] Upon hearing this name, the members of the squadron answered for him: "Present".[220] The next morning, that of July

[217] *Official Book of the Flight of Gen. Italo Balbo*, 20-22.
[218] Ibid, 27.
[219] Ibid, 16. "General Balbo expressed sorrow at the accident…But he did not consider it in any way an ill omen. Such things, though effort and forethought be given to preventing them, were almost to be expected in such a stupendous pioneering venture. Every great cause in history has had its martyrs who cheerfully gave up their lives that their comrades might achieve ultimate success."
[220] "Chicago Hails Balbo Fleet," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 16, 1933.

17th, a large mass was held at the Cathedral of the Holy Name in honor of Balbo and the air squadron. Throughout the duration of the more than two hour mass, the men stood at attention. A chronicler of the occasion from the *Chicago Daily Tribune* wrote of Balbo: "But what a readiness in him! He will fight you a duel, help capture an ancient capital - as he did; organize a ministry of state, be right hand man - as he is - to an autocrat in the rejuvenation of a kingdom; plan and execute transoceanic flights, or gayly crack a bottle of wine with you."[221] This statement shows the extent to which Balbo's feats not only as aviator, but also as a leader of the March on Rome, translated to his status as an overall idol, able to succeed in any situation. Up to this point, other than a quick mention of Balbo as "one of the outstanding leaders of the Fascist Revolution,"[222] overshadowed by other details of his life, materials published for A Century of Progress portrayed Balbo as a capable and brave aviator, omitting his earlier role as Fascist revolutionary.

All of these events demonstrated the extent of Balbo's popularity after the landing. The continuous hustle and bustle around him elevated the general to a short-term celebrity status.[223] A celebration of Balbo, representative of the Italian Fascist regime, was hence a celebration of Fascism, although the American audience proved naïve when speaking about Fascist symbols. During one occasion in which Balbo and the squadron entered a banquet in uniform, Moffett of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported the following situation: '"Where are their black shirts?" whispered one [young woman]. "They're wearing black ties, instead," we answered, not knowing until Vittorio Liebman, Prince Potenziani's aid, told us

[221] James O'Donnell Bennett, "Chicago Fetes Balbo Heroes in Heroic Style," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 17, 1933, 3.
[222] *Official Book of the Flight of Gen. Italo Balbo*, 4.
[223] "Balbo, Italo" in *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy*, 58. "The *crociere* lifted Balbo from the status of provincial politician to an international celebrity who ranked with Lindbergh, Amelia Earhart, St. Exupèry, Francesco De Pinedo and other heroes of aviation's "Golden Age" of record flights."

later that the army and navy in Italy don't wear the Fascist shirts."[224] Other than anti-Fascist circulars dispersed in downtown Chicago and near the fairgrounds bearing "the signatures of the Italian Socialist Federation and the Italian League for the Rights of Man," there were no other reported protests against Balbo and the "good-will emissaries."[225] The United States government, and especially the branches of the military, showed no lack of enthusiasm in welcoming Balbo in all of the American cities to which the Italians flew.[226]

There may not have been a World's Fair in New York City when Balbo and the air armada landed there after their stay in Chicago, but New Yorkers lined every possible surface to see the flying formation.[227] Like Chicagoans, New Yorkers were equally eager to celebrate the new hero, Balbo. On more than one occasion, Balbo and the flyers arrived to an event, greeted by a band playing the Fascist hymn, "Giovinezza." As in Chicago, Balbo continued to praise Mussolini. During an interview, Balbo explained to New York's Mayor John P. O'Brien: "The love which we bear for our chief is more than discipline; more than devotion. It is a true religion. We have arrived here because he so commanded us – to bear a message of good will from the new Italy."[228] Describing himself as a representative of Italian Fascism merely executing orders, Balbo, in his role as ambassador of sorts, ensured that he attributed ultimate credit to the Duce, confirming the notion of Fascism as a political religion.

[224] India Moffett, "Century of Progress Officials Drink Toast to Flyers in Water," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul 17, 1933, 13.
[225] "100,000 at Chicago Greet Balbo Fleet," *New York Times*, July 16, 1933, 1.
[226] As just one of many possible examples, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported a message from a retired Admiral who was part of a committee to meet Balbo in New York. He praised the air cruise as "an achievement worthy of ancient Rome," and also as "magnificent diplomacy." See "Balbo Feat 'Worthy of Ancient Rome,' U.S. Admiral Says," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul 16, 1933, 2.
[227] "Moors in Jamaica Bay: 75,000 Cheer Spectacle as 24 Planes Circle and Alight on Water," *New York Times*, July 20, 1933, 1.
[228] "Italian Flyers Win New Acclaim Here; Honored by Mayor," *New York Times*, July 22, 1933, 1.

Italian Coverage of Balbo

It is clear that the *Crociera aerea del Decennale* signaled an occasion of great pride in Italy. For one, the insertion of "decennale" into air cruise's name implied that the flight was part of the celebration of ten years of Fascism, despite it taking place well after the majority of events. Significant media attention depicted events even before the squadron departed. A couple of L.U.C.E. newsreels portrayed careful preparations by the flyers in Orbetello, including a heartily sung group rendition of the "Giovinezza" before take-off.[229] The footage also reviewed closely the planes themselves, providing the Italian audience with a close-up view of the aircraft. The final scene depicted the air squadron setting off for its journey in group-formation.[230] A longer L.U.C.E. documentary named *Crociera aerea del Decennale* after the event itself told the full story of Balbo and his flyers to the United States and back to Rome.[231] Despite not being directly related, the opening frame of the film showed an animation of planes flying above the easily identifiable façade of the Mostra della Rivoluzione, with its characteristic *fascio* framing the foreground.[232] In opening with this scene, I suggest that the filmmaker was doing more than simply referencing the time and place of both events: Rome of the *Decennale*. There was no reason the image of the Mostra had to appear at all. In juxtaposing the Mostra with a film about Balbo, the filmmaker alluded to the fact that Balbo's flight was only possible because of the Fascist revolution, this is to say, under the auspices of Fascism as the ruling regime. The idea that Fascism made technological achievements possible was also expressed in the *Official Book*, in which the author stated:

[229] Luce, Giornale Luce B0299 and B0300.
[230] Luce, Giornale Luce B0300.
[231] *Crociera aerea del Decennale.* Roma. Directed by the Instituto Nazionale Luce, 1933. http://www.archivioluce.com/archivio/jsp/schede/schedaCine.jsp?decript&findIt&theId=SUwzMDAwMDg3MTc3&db=Y2luZW1hdG9ncmFmaWNvRE9DVU1FTlRBUkk%3D. Accessed May 3, 2010.
[232] At the time Balbo would set off, the MRF was still wildly popular, having its closing date postponed once already.

> This is the most perfect combination of material: Italian hydroplanes, Italian motors, Italian instruments for navigation; the whole animated by the inflexible will to risk and to succeed which today constitutes the essence of the new soul of Fascist Italy which, in the glorious tradition of Rome of the Caesars, conquered its place in the world in the name of the Soldier King under the auspices of the Duce.[233]

The large amount of media attention and communications infrastructure by World's Fair, however, encouraged the interpretation that the landing on Lake Michigan was the air cruise's pinnacle. While it was the end of the first leg across the Atlantic, each stage of the flight from the very beginning attracted a large crowd and garnered attention at Fascist Italy's display of prowess. When Balbo's air armada landed even in the small town of Shediac, New Brunswick, for example, a "great crowd was on hand to welcome the flyers as their planes swooped down after circling the bay…Bright sunshine and the coming of the air armada brought thousands of visitors into this seaside resort."[234]

In *Crociera aerea del Decennale*, a Century of Progress was depicted as just a single stop along a much longer route, in which more emphasis placed on the squadron's time in New York City, where Balbo is shown in a parade down Broadway en route to Madison Square Garden, where he is then depicted giving a speech in front of a large cheering crowd. At every stop along the entire route, large cheering crowds were shown greeting the air armada, no different than in Chicago. While the film depicted the landing in Chicago and a short clip of the welcome parade, its creator omitted any reference to Balbo's speech at Soldier Field or any other events planned in his honor. Balbo and the flyers returned to Italy on August 12, 1933, greeted enthusiastically by their countrymen. The landing and post-landing celebration are depicted in a number of L.U.C.E newsreels in addition to the documentary.[235] Futurist F.T. Marinetti made a live radio broadcast proclaiming the arrival

[233] *Official Book of the Flight of Gen. Italo Balbo,* 30.
[234] "Italian Air Armada Hops 800 Miles: Flyers Land at Shediac, N.B.; Montreal Next," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 14, 1933, 1.
[235] See Giornale Luce B0313, B0314 and B0315.

of the air armada.[236] A grand procession the following day along the Via dell'Impero featured Balbo and Mussolini marching together under the Arch of Constantine to the Palatine Hill,[237] after which Mussolini presented Balbo with the cap of first Air Marshal.[238]

The Commemoration of a Hero

In 1934, on the anniversary of Balbo's flight, "Italian Day" at the fair commemorated the previous year's epic spectacle. A parade inaugurated the event, terminating at the Italian Pavilion. Many visitors crowded around the site as Balbo broadcast a speech over the radio from Rome (See Figure 4.2).[239] Balbo spoke of themes similar to those that he expressed during his original visit: friendship between Italy and the United States, the flight as a bridge between the old world and the new, and the glory of Rome.[240] In an attempt to give "modern aviation" an Italian origin, Balbo explained that it was "discovered by the Italian Leonardo da Vinci and realized by the American Wright brothers."[241] This comment exaggerated the connection, but grabbed at the chance for a forged bond between Italy and the United States. An ancient Roman marble column was also unveiled, a gift from Mussolini to the people of Chicago.[242] The column was one of two recently excavated in Ostia, Rome's ancient port city. It was placed facing the site

[236] Segrè, 255.
[237] Mercurio, 36; "Italy: Sweet and Easy," *Time*, Aug 21, 1933. http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,753905-1,00.html. Accessed May 2, 2010. *Time* reported: "Then began a march on foot down Rome's new Via Trionfale (laurel-carpeted) beneath the Arch of Constantine, unused for such purpose since the ancient Romans paraded through it on returning from the wars."
[238] Segrè, 258. All of the flyers who participated in the *crociera* received promotions according to their rank.
[239] Potenziani, 46-50. Balbo's speech is replicated here in full. Potenziani notes that Italian Ambassador Rosso later translated the message into English.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid, 48.
[242] "Ancient Roman Column to Rise at World's Fair," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jun 24, 1934, 6.

where the twenty-four hydroplanes anchored.[243] Weighing about four tons, the large artifact included an inscription at its base referencing Balbo's flight "which with Roman daring flew across the ocean in the eleventh year of the Fascist era"[244] complete with a carved *fascio*.[245] This act of commemoration, the cementing of Balbo's flight as a special occasion, contributed to Fascism as a political religion even though those in attendance would not have necessarily recognized it as such.

Despite his efforts on behalf of the Fascist Regime, Balbo's celebration in Italy after his return was short-lived. At the time of his speech to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the mass flight, Balbo had had to make a special trip to Rome from Tripoli, where Mussolini had appointed him Governor. Not long after this "promotion", which effectively removed Balbo from the center of Italian life,[246] his plane was later shot down accidentally at the beginning of the Second World War on June 28, 1940 by Italian fire near an Italian military base at Tobruk in eastern Libya. The fact that the vast majority of the details of the assault on Balbo's plane have been pieced together has not prevented the circulation of conspiracy theories alleging a deliberate onslaught.[247]

Many conclusions can be drawn from Italian aviator and Fascist leader Italo Balbo's presence in the United States. For one, Italo Balbo heightened Italy's media presence at the World's Fair with a mass spectacle and record-breaking feat as the largest mass flight ever to cross the Atlantic. In choosing the medium of aviation, Italy supplied the message that they would be a contender in the future of aviation progress. The continued visits made by Balbo and the air armada in New York City and Washington D.C., further legitimated their presence in the United States. The planning of the *Crociera aerea del Decennale* to

[243] Ganz, 162.
[244] Doordan, 219, n.1. This is the only object left standing today from the World's Fair site.
[245] Mercurio, 36.
[246] Segrè, 281-282.
[247] Ibid, 392-407. The official story remains that Italian bombers mistook Balbo's plane for a British bomber and, hence, fired upon the aircraft.

coincide with A Century of Progress – the mass spectacle paired with the architectural presence – provided evidence of Fascism as a sacralizing force, attempting to cement in action what was portrayed visually. Throughout the duration of the flight from Orbetello and back, two casualties resulted in the formation of Fascist martyrs. The following year, the event was recalled in a highly ceremonial fashion contributing to the desire of the Fascist regime to cement events in history. In keeping with the connection present in the Italian Pavilion between ancient and Fascist Rome, the marble column stood as a symbol of Fascist permanence. Without the air armada's presence and attention garnered from every sighting of the hydroplanes, Italy's presence at A Century of Progress lacked the notion of spectacle and commemoration that was typical of Fascism as a political religion. Balbo's choreographed mass flight served to endow with meaning the airplane-shaped pavilion. Rather than just an exhibition space, Italy's building came to stand as a symbol of Fascist modernism, innovation, and achievement.

Conclusion: Exhibiting Italian Fascism from Rome to Chicago

Fascist Italy would go on to erect exhibition pavilions throughout the 1930s in Brussels, Paris and New York, indicating that the regime found its efforts abroad worthwhile.[248] Italy's Padiglione del Littorio for the Brussels International and Universal Exposition in 1935, again designed by Adalberto Libera, was also characterized by towering modern *fasci*.[249] This feature came to characterize Fascist Italy both home and abroad, especially in the early 1930s. As evidenced first by the MRF and then "the airplane" in Chicago, the *fascio*, this is to say, a modern Fascist interpretation of the ancient Roman symbol, stood column-like, monumentally announcing the Fascist presence. The modern exterior of the Italian Pavilion in Chicago would have been for a large number of visitors a first glimpse at what Fascist Italy looked like in visual form. Despite the lack of a clear resolution in the search for a "Fascist art" in the late 1920s, just a few years later, by virtue of the projects on which he worked, Libera's aesthetic became associated closely with Fascist Italy. Exhibitions sponsored by the Fascist regime in the early 1930s demonstrated that they chose to project an aesthetically modern image.

Taking into account the evidence present in the correspondence, it is doubtful that the Fascist regime would have participated in A Century of Progress if bound by the "Old Europe" village scheme first adapted in early 1931 by John Sewell, the director of the Exhibits Department. The expressed early desire to propose building a modern pavilion, to represent "the high degree of modern efficiency…reached by the Italian state," reveals much about the way in which the Fascist regime wanted to be known and understood: as modern.

[248] See note 112.
[249] Mercurio, 39.

The content present in the Pavilion's exhibits depicts a regime proud of its recent accomplishments in transportation and land reclamation, and of course, Il Duce. As the center of the main mural explicitly showed, the Fascist regime proudly proclaimed "Roma caput mundi" written alongside a profile of Mussolini[250] as "Dux," Latin for Duce, alluding to Fascism as a logical extension of ancient Rome. As Gentile has explained, the Fascist regime's references to Rome, however, were not in the vein of a passive nostalgia, but rather the unique mixture of an idealized power-worshiping image of Rome narrowly filtered through Fascist ideology. It was as though a feeling of national grandeur linked the ancient past to the Fascist present, independent of the actual time separating events. As seen in the example of the photomural depicting the new column inaugurating the Via dell'Impero alongside the Colosseum, the Fascists believed that their contribution to the city not only belonged next to the emblem of ancient Rome, but that their symbol was a logical addition, reinvigorating a past grandeur that had been lost.

It is through a comparison of the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista with the pavilion in Chicago that a lineage can be traced from the content of the altogether forgotten upper level rooms of the MRF, to much of the content that made its way to Chicago. While the rooms were not replicated exactly in Chicago, the content is more similar to what appeared in Chicago than it is to what appeared on the main level downstairs. Spatially removed from the rest of the Mostra, the content's message was different from that of the main level: having no role in exploring themes in Fascist history up till 1922, hence, the Fascist revolution, the content emphasized feats accomplished in maritime and air transport,

[250] As evidenced by the cover of the *Mostra* guidebook, the metallic outline in 'Room O,' and the mural in the Italian Pavilion, the Duce was often depicted in profile. As explained by one scholar who has also noticed this about Mussolini, the profile was "a venerable mode of representation especially popular on Roman coins and Renaissance portraits." Gerald Silk, '"Il Primo Pilota": Mussolini, Fascist Aeronautical Symbolism, and Imperial Rome," in *Donatello among the Blackshirts*. ed. Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 71.

agriculture, and labor. All of these themes were exploited in Chicago. As the guidebook mentioned, the rooms were just preliminary workings for an upcoming Exhibition of Accomplishments of the Fascist Regime, and did not "claim even remotely to offer the visitor the [full] vision of accomplishments made within the first ten years of the Fascist regime."[251] This goes to show that the rooms, albeit not fully developed, depicting Fascist accomplishments at home also represented a viable option when Italian Fascists wanted to present themselves abroad.

The mass flight led by Italo Balbo presents a unique example of Fascism both home and abroad. In comparing Italian press coverage with that created specifically for A Century of Progress, a distinct shift in emphasis on the landing in Chicago exists. While the Chicago press made it seem as though Balbo traveled the 6,100 miles just to make it to A Century of Progress, the Italian press portrayed Chicago as just one stop among many. Perhaps it is only natural that in Italy, the air squadron's return home represented the most important aspect, but that does not explain the Italian coverage's fascination with New York City. Whatever the reason, Balbo's flight, encompassing the space taken up by the MRF and A Century of Progress, can be seen as a moving exhibition of sorts. Everywhere he and the air squadron went, masses gathered to catch of glimpse of Balbo and the aircraft. Media coverage on both sides of the Atlantic were concerned with every aspect of the flight down to minute details of the hydroplanes, and of course, Balbo himself. Despite Balbo's role as quadrumvir, chosen by Mussolini as one of the leaders of the March on Rome, press coverage surrounding the *Crociera aerea* recognized Balbo most for his role as a brave pilot. Balbo's act brought a true Fascist spectacle across the Atlantic.

The comparison of the MRF with Italian presence at A Century of Progress also revealed which Fascist rituals and symbols were showcased in Chicago. One recurring

[251] Alfieri and Freddi, 246.

ritual present in all the events discussed is the making and commemoration of Fascist martyrs. Whether via the Shrine of the Martyrs at the MRF or during Balbo's stay in the Windy City, the "Giovinezza" was sung along with the accompanying roll call of the dead. As Emilio Gentile has explained, the remembrance of Fascist comrades who lost their lives dated back to the martyrs who served the nation in the Great War. Additionally, Balbo's many speeches, especially in Chicago and New York, in front of tens of thousands, in which he always made mention of Mussolini, served to pay homage to a distinctly Fascist Italy, which was credited with making his accomplishments in the field of aviation possible.

More than just about the events themselves, the evidence presented in this thesis speaks to the theme of modernity in Italian Fascism. As evidenced by the Italian Pavilion and Balbo's flight, the Fascist regime exhibited itself as a modern regime, aesthetically and especially technologically. In the MRF, the exhibition was designed so that the source of Fascism was the history of Fascism itself; whereas in Chicago, the content looked to ancient Rome as a source of Fascist legitimacy and inspiration. The Mostra represented fascism as growing and evolving into the Fascist state, an apparatus capable of creating a "new man." In Chicago, while there was no discussion of the new man, he appeared in the form of Balbo; someone who could exceed all expectations. If the Mostra represented Fascism as a revolution, then Italian presence at the Chicago World's Fair represented the effects of what the regime promised would come afterward: technology capable of conquering the modern world.

Appendix: Images

Figure 2.1
The Honor Guard at the entrance to the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista
Source: Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* (Rome: Partito Nazionale Fascista, 1933).

Figure 2.2
Cover of Alfieri and Freddi's *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* guidebook

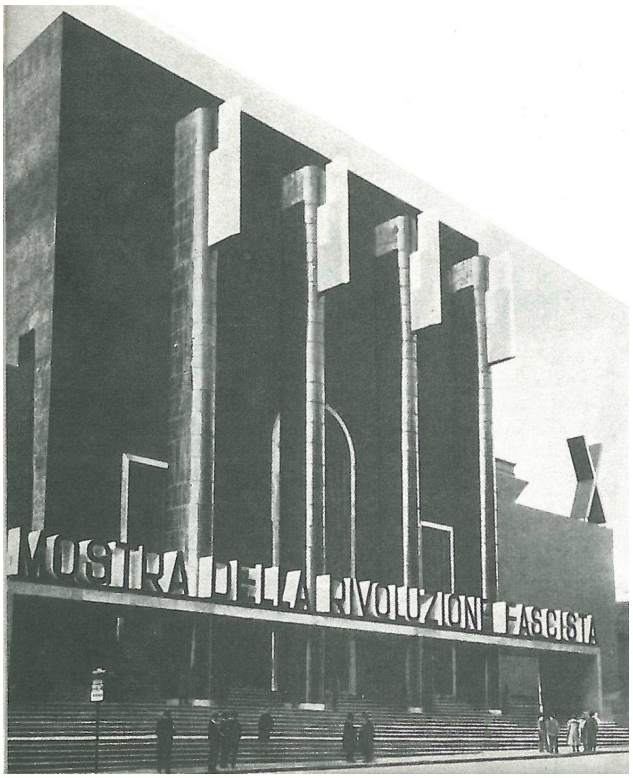

Figure 2.3
Façade of the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista
Source: Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *MRF*

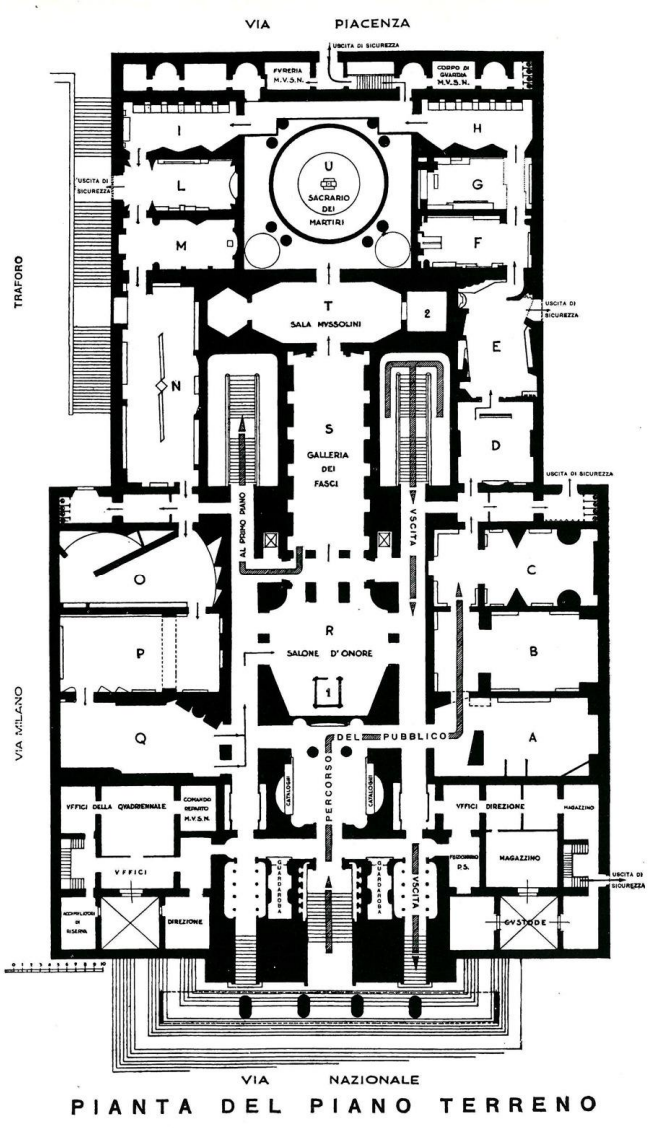

Figure 2.4
Floor plan of the Ground Floor of the MRF
Source: Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *MRF*

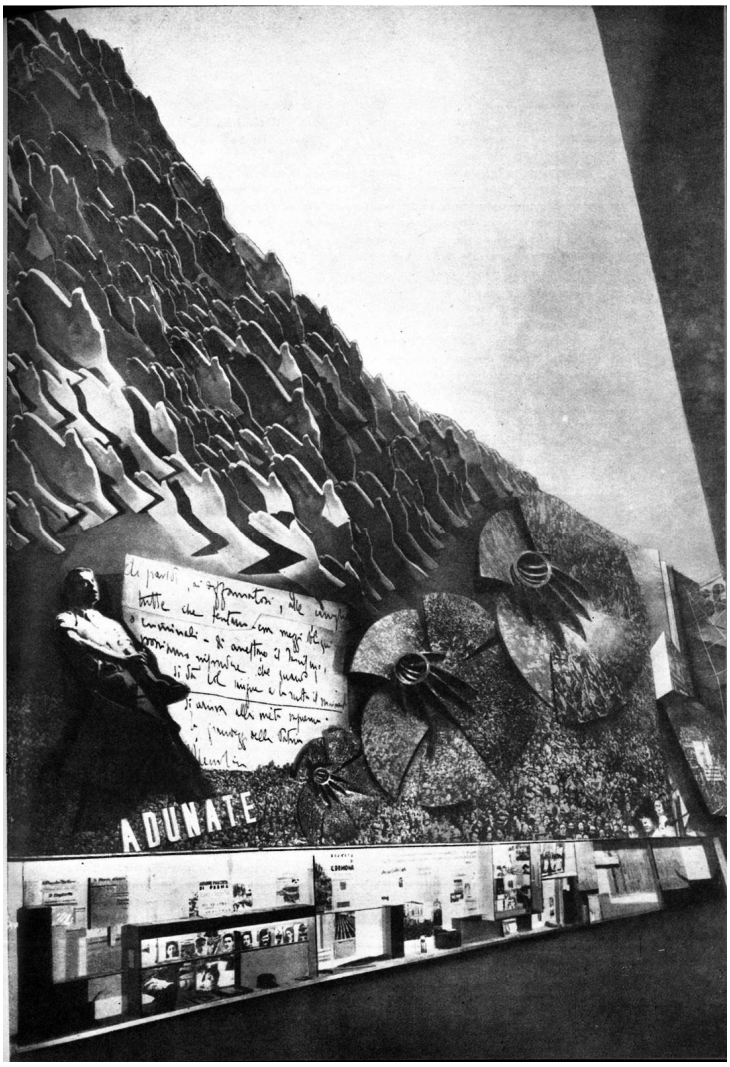

Figure 2.5
Room O – *Adunate* photomontage
Designed by Giuseppe Terragni
Source: Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *MRF*

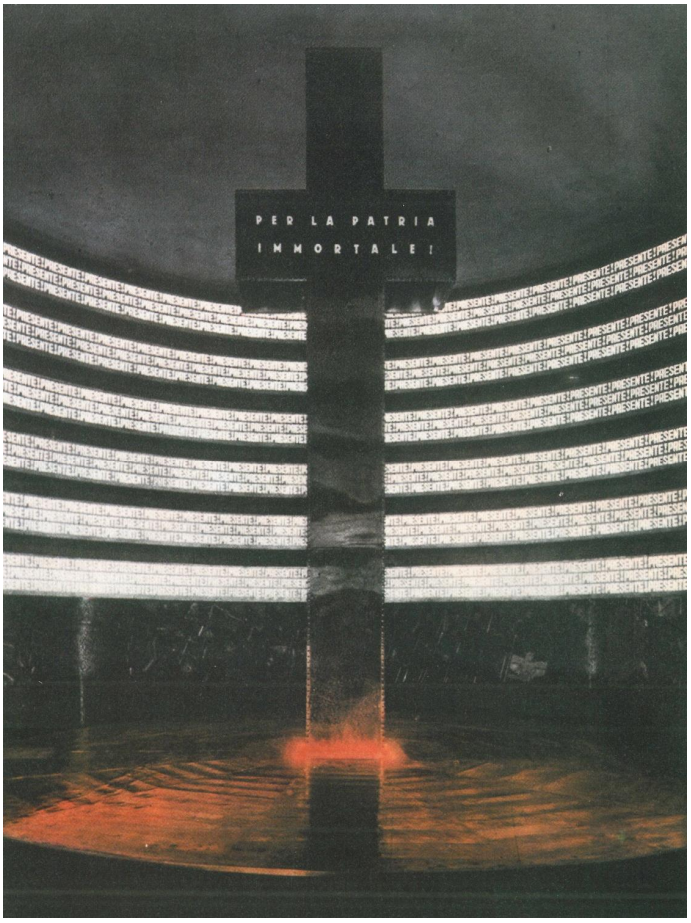

Figure 2.6
Room U – Shrine of Martyrs
Designed by Adalberto Libera and Antonio Valente
Source: Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *MRF*

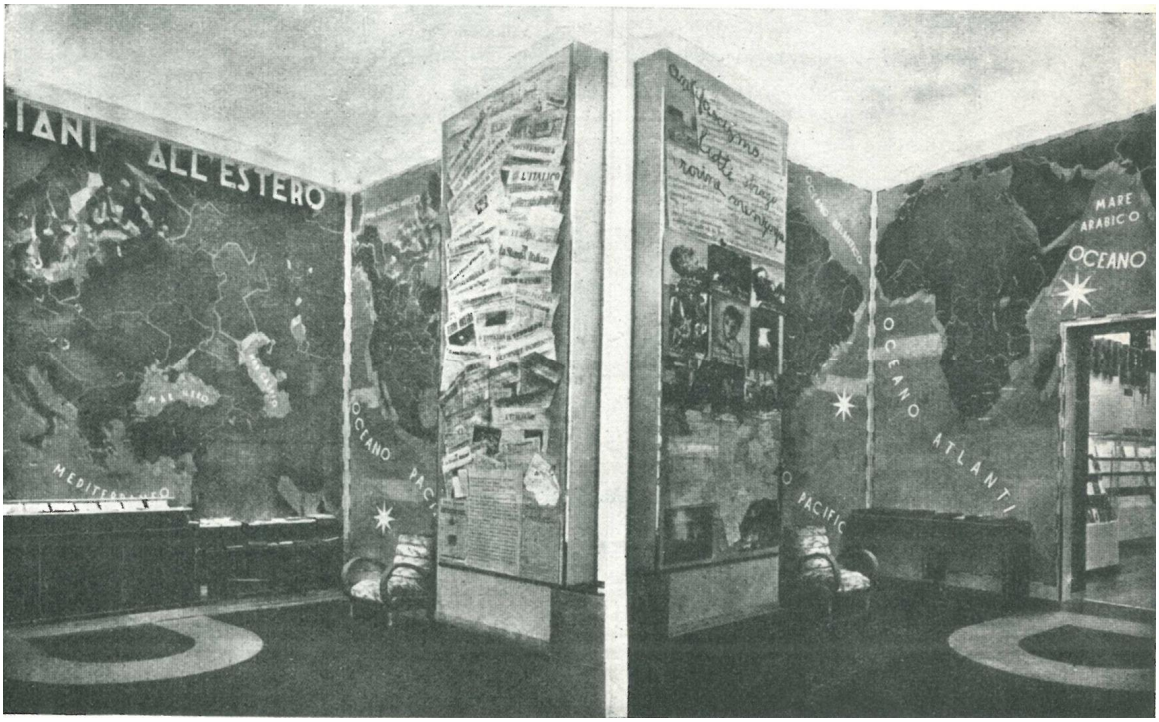

Figure 2.7
Maps in the room dedicated to Fascist Italians abroad at the MRF
Source: Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, *MRF*

Figure 3.1
Italian Pavilion at a Century of Progress World's Fair
Source: CPR-UIC, Series XVII: Iconographics, Italian Pavilion Photographs

Figure 3.2
Mural in the main hall of the Italian Pavilion, A Century of Progress World's Fair
Source: CPR-UIC, Series XVII: Iconographics, Italian Pavilion Photographs

Figure 3.3
Left-hand side of mural in the main hall (detail)
Source: CPR-UIC, Series XVII: Iconographics, Italian Pavilion Photographs

Figure 3.4
Photomural of the Colosseum and the pillar inaugurating the Via dell'Impero
Source: CPR-UIC, Series XVII: Iconographics, Italian Pavilion Photographs

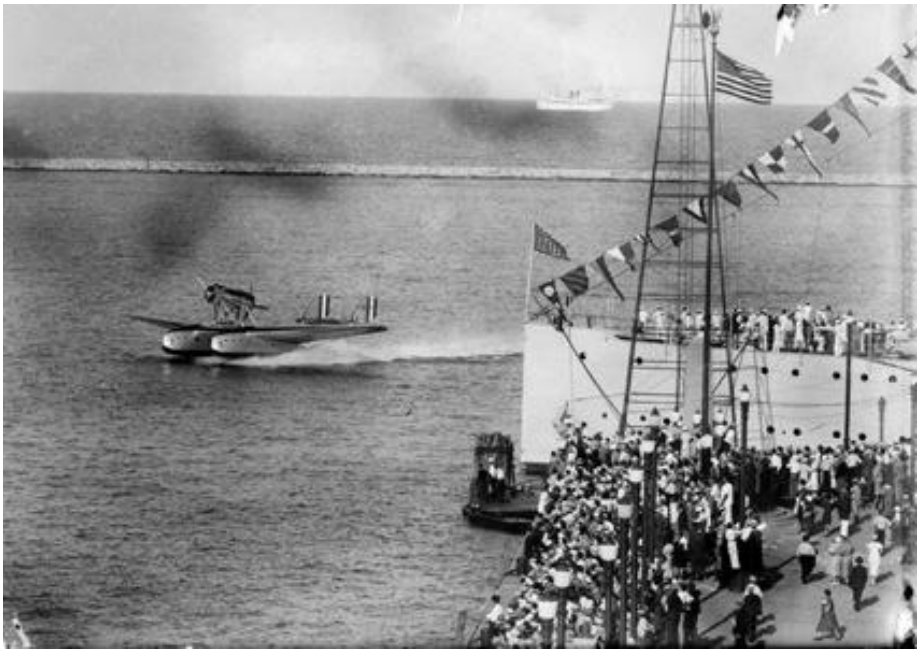

Figure 4.1
Balbo's plane skimming the water on Lake Michigan, July 15, 1933
Source: *Chicago Daily News* negatives collection, DN-0011317, Courtesy of Chicago History Museum (obtained from the American Memory online database of the Library of Congress)

Figure 4.2
Italian Day at A Century of Progress, July 15, 1934
Source: CPR-UIC, Series XVII: Iconographics, Italian Pavilion Photographs

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