

Un Popolo Diviso: Memories of Italy's Imperial Past(s) within the
Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana

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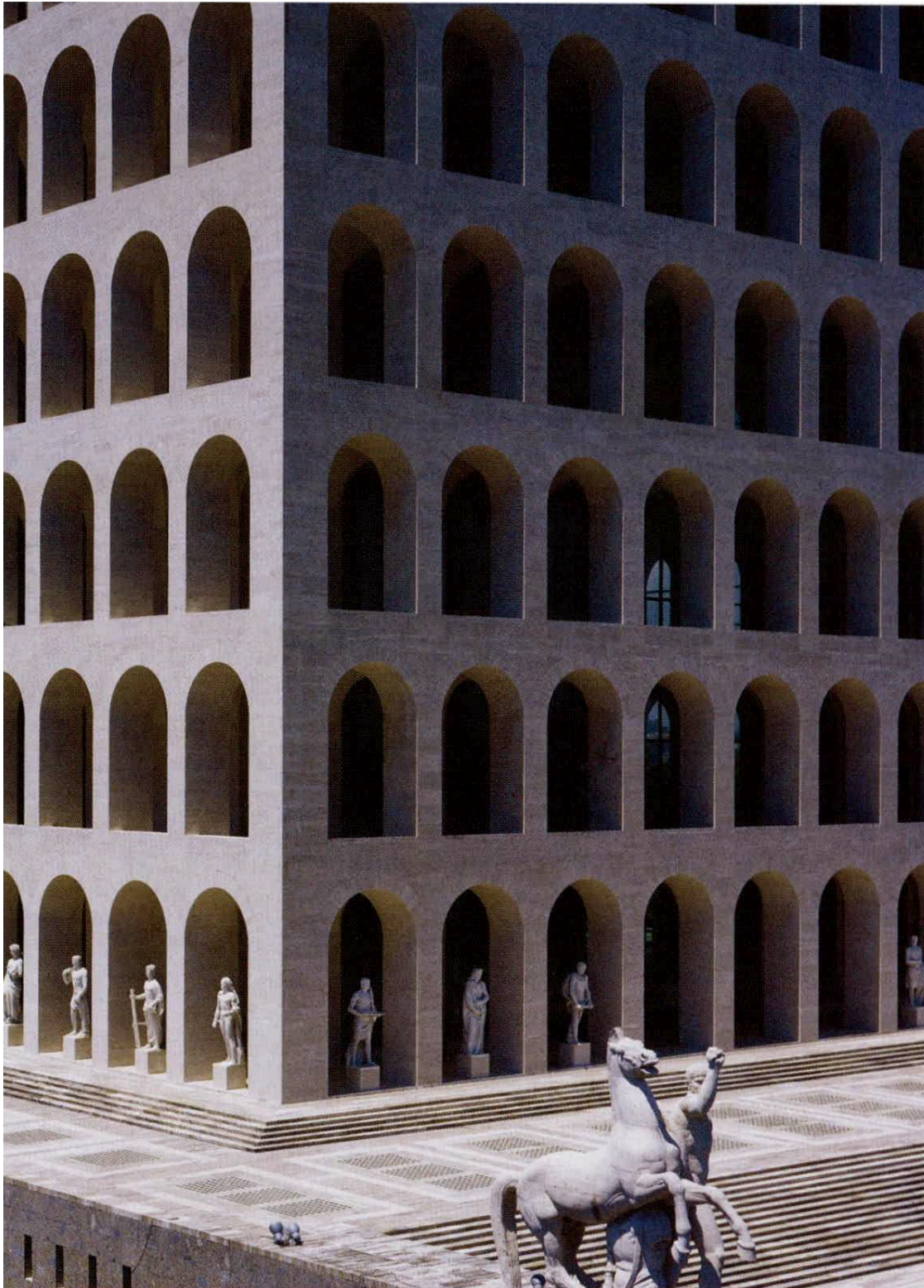


Figure 1. *Palazzo della Civiltà*, Hélène Binet. Credit: Hatherley.¹

¹ Owen Hatherley, "Fendi Vidi Vici," *Architectural Review* 237, no. 1417 (March 2015): 16–17, 17.

In October of 2015, luxury fashion house Fendi inaugurated its new headquarters in Rome within the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, marking a radical new shift in the trajectory of both the brand and the infamous structure. Across interviews with *Women's Wear Daily*, then chairman and CEO Pietro Baccari celebrated the move as “thinking outside the box” while remaining “very Fendi... It all fits with Fendi and is an inspiration for the brand. The building was created to honor Italian excellence, and Fendi is entirely made in Italy.”² Silvia Venturini Fendi has similarly lauded the Palazzo as “one of Rome’s symbols,” recasting the new headquarters as “a natural stage... Romans love this building and we wanted to return it to the city.”³ Absent from either interview is any reference to the original purpose and provenance of the building, reducing the building's purpose to a sterilized, historically empty notion of “honoring Italian excellence.” While neither Fendi nor Baccari is incorrect about the *iconicity* of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana as a symbol of Rome, the palazzo’s true history is more complex, nuanced, and multi-layered than what can be articulated through pull-quotes in a press article. Originally commissioned by Benito Mussolini to serve as the centerpiece for the *Esposizione Universale* of 1942, the classically inspired building has been placed in dialogue with numerous imaginations of Italy’s political past and present; Memories of imperial Rome, Fascist dictatorship, and postwar democratic republicanism have all materially shaped and imprinted upon the palazzo’s form. Throughout its existence, the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana has been rendered a site for (mis)remembering Italy’s past, and it is only by parsing apart these crowded layers of representational debate that we can understand exactly what the palazzo stands for today in a modern Rome.

² Luisa Zargani, “Fendi’s New Roman Headquarters,” *Women's Wear Daily*, May 13, 2015.

³ Luisa Zargani, “Fendi Unveils Roman Headquarters” *Women's Wear Daily*. October 23, 2015.

Construction of the palazzo began in 1938 as part of Mussolini's plan for a new urban district outside Rome, known as EUR after its original function as the stage for the 1942 *Esposizione Universale Roma*. The new district was imagined as a *Terza Roma* adapted to the needs of the modern fascist state, designed to maximize space for motorized transport and triumphant fascist parades in imitation of Germany's model with the city of Nuremberg.⁴ Costs for land acquisition and construction of the EUR exceeded 1,460 million liras before construction efforts had to be postponed with the beginning of World War II.⁵ Nine other monumental buildings make up the 400-hectare campus south of the historic city center. The entire project was abandoned by 1943, just months before the collapse of the Mussolini regime.⁶ It is perhaps ironic, then, that the palazzo was originally imagined as a symbol of Italy's imperial strength, vitality, and political stability. After the Italian defeat in Ethiopia, Mussolini planned to shrug off this imperial insecurity by using EUR as an exhibition for the superior greatness of Italian civilization, bridging the ancient past with the present.⁷ The ground floor of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana was the culmination of this exhibition space, with the *Sala Mussoliniana* as the central multimedia display of this glorification of *Il Duce* and his expansionist vision of Rome.⁸ The palazzo was both the spiritual and physical center of Mussolini's triumphant display of his fascist imperialist message, becoming the very logo for the entire exhibition.

Planning for the new district began in 1936, and construction of Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana would take four years to complete after it was initiated in 1938 [Figure 2]. The building

⁴ Víctor Alemany Caro, "Augustan Propaganda in Late Fascist Italian Architecture," *Anales Del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* 45, no. 122 (2023): 101–25, 105.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 114.

⁷ Jelena Loncar, "F Is for ... Fluctuating Symbolism: The Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana and Its Shifting Meaning," essay, in *The Routledge Companion to Italian Fascist Architecture: Reception and Legacy*, ed. Kay Bea Jones and Stephanie Pilat, 1st ed. (London, UK: Routledge, 2020), 92–110, 93.

⁸ Nick Carter, "'What Shall We Do With It Now?': The Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana and the Difficult Heritage of Fascism," *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 66, no. 3 (2020): 377–95, 383.



Figure 2. The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana under construction, Getty Images. Source: British Vogue.

was imagined by a team of Mussolini's favorite architects, with designers Giovanni Guerrini, Ernesto Bruno la Padula, Mario Romano, and consultants Giuseppe Pagano, Luigi Piccinato, Ettore Rossi, Luigi Vietti, and Marcello Piacentini.⁹ The building was designed as a stone cube of four identical facades, each adorned with a six-by-nine grid of arches that "codifies" the name 'BENITO MUSSOLINI' into the very structure.¹⁰ The arched facades create what political sociologist Jelena Loncar describes as "an ongoing M. C. Escher-esque reversal of figure and ground", where the hollowed-in niches of each archway create a perceived *permeability* in the overall structure.¹¹ This hollow transparency serves to contrast the durability of the palazzo's built material; Travertine, marble, and granite connote not only expensive luxury but architectural permanence.

The palazzo's obsessively symmetrical, rational, and devoid-of-ornament facades are a direct reflection of the Littorio style in which both the palazzo and the larger EUR complex were built. The style first emerged as part of the Po Valley's Eclecticism movement before being filtered through a Fascist blend of Modernism, Futurism, Classicism, Rationalism, and Novecento styles.¹² The name for this style even emerged from its Classicist origins, deriving from the word '*lictor*,' the name of the official who carried Fascism's titular *fascies* behind Roman magistrates as a symbol of both bound unity and authority.¹³ Mussolini believed that the "decency" and "morality" of the Italian people could only be expressed through a purely Italian architectural style, encouraging a purging of all foreign (and therefore *inferior*) styles and influences.¹⁴ This is why the palazzo - and the EUR complex at large - implore many vernacular references to ancient Roman city planning in both design and layout. Only by returning to the

⁹ Loncar, "F Is for ... Fluctuating Symbolism," 93.

¹⁰ Ibid., 94.

¹¹ Ibid., 98.

¹² Alemany Caro, "Augustan Propaganda in Late Fascist Italian Architecture," 112.

¹³ Ibid., 110.

¹⁴ Ibid., 116-7.

Italian peninsula's previous, ancient exports of architectural style could Italy reclaim its prominence as a global superpower.

The palazzo's design and location continue to fortify this reference to classical Rome. Even the spatial arrangement of the site and the larger EUR complex attempt to harken back to classic precedents, creating a Fascist reinterpretation of the Forum of Augustus.¹⁵ The severe, monochromatic white stone facade recalls the widespread use of Carrara marble in construction projects under Augustus, made famous in the canon of Roman urban history by the famous words attributed to Augustus by Suetonius: "I found Rome a city of brick and left a city of Marble."¹⁶ The raised steps that elevate the building above the Viale della Civiltà del Lavoro recast the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana as the contemporary parallel to Augustus's Temple of *Mars Ultor*. Historian of fascist architecture Víctor Alemany Caro notes how Mussolini made a concerted effort to link his image (and his regime at large) to that of Augustus:

It was easy to [construct] a parallel between Augustus and Mussolini. As with Mussolini, Augustus had been the bridge between a republic and an undeclared monarchy... the fascist minister of culture and education, Giuseppe Bottai, promoted the view that Mussolini was following the model of Augustus in his ambition to save the country from decay in his 1937 book *L'Italia di Augusto e l'Italia di oggi*. In Bottai's view, the country was devastated by wars and by an inefficient government. The dramatic situation required drastic measures and that justified a change of system to achieve a new Golden Age.¹⁷

Mussolini continued to stress this connection between himself and Augustus as Italian rulers.

According to the fascist author Emilio Balbo, the two *Dioscuri* that flank either side of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana [Figure 3] are meant to represent Mussolini and Augustus as symmetrical saviors of the Italian state from crisis.¹⁸ After the outbreak of World War II and the

¹⁵ Ibid., 118.

¹⁶ Ibid., 116

¹⁷ Ibid., 104.

¹⁸ Ibid., 121.



Figure 3. *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana Dioscuri Statue*, Alex Mann, 2015. Credit: Loncar.¹⁹

¹⁹ Loncar, "F Is for ... Fluctuating Symbolism," 96.

abandonment of the 1942 *Esposizione Universale*, Mussolini renamed the EUR district as the *Olimpiade delle Civiltà in Esposizione della Pace*.²⁰ Under this renaming and reimagining, the EUR serves as an altar to this mythical *Pax Mussolini* on the outskirts of Rome, becoming Mussolini's own version of the *Ara Pacis Augustae*. The palazzo becomes the sacred, propagandistic core of the larger project of EUR as a shining beacon of this new Golden age in Italian history.

The district's location outside of Rome serves to further connect Mussolini's modern imperial project with that of Augustus. The site's sea-facing position was also selected as a reference to Mussolini's desire to see Roman imperial ambition once again turn its gaze across the Mediterranean Sea.²¹ With the EUR and the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, Mussolini hoped to reawaken Italy's colonial ventures across the Mediterranean in North Africa, an ambition made especially enflamed after his defeat in Ethiopia. The district remained on the outskirts of the city as a means of connecting the ancient, historical city centre with the ruins of Ostia Antica, 20 kilometers southwest, in order to further cement this founding fascist myth of a return to *Romanità*.²² These two sites of historic imperial glory would be linked through the modern infrastructure axes of Mussolini's Via del Mare and Via dell'Impero, with the EUR serving as urban mediator between Roman past/Fascist present. Mussolini's expansion of Rome via the EUR district is hoped to be imagined in parallel with Augustus' incorporation of Campus Martius into the city. The EUR site acts as a perfect mini-cosmos of Mussolini's imperial vision, detached and self-contained from the rest of the city as it offers its imperial vision of the Italian future.

²⁰ Alemany Caro, "Augustan Propaganda in Late Fascist Italian Architecture," 114.

²¹ Ibid., 105.

²² Loncar, "F Is for ... Fluctuating Symbolism," 94.

However, all of these architectural references to ancient Rome are distinctly filtered through Fascist memory and its accompanying rhetorical edits. As the Littorio style creates an austere oversimplified gesture towards Roman architectural vernacular, it reflects a larger oversimplification within the fascist reading of the Roman past. Alemany Caro labels this “rereading” as

Intentionally partial. It was an uneducated idealisation of Rome which consciously avoided confronting Roman prostitution, the regular massacres in festivals for citizens’ amusement, slavery and other matters that can be considered morally problematic... It is thus a twentieth-century interpretation of the Roman past, different from the real Roman past.²³

Mussolini diverged from following the exact blueprint of Roman imperialism both ideologically and aesthetically in his construction of EUR. The complex’s obsessive repetition of arches and blinding white travertine and marble seeks to merely invoke and emulate the grandness of ancient Rome. After all, these structures, too, were imagined to be destined to last centuries as symbols of Italian might, like their ancient predecessors. For Mussolini, it was not enough to merely replicate ancient Rome as it was; instead, it needed to be filtered through his modern, fascist vision to outshine and *surpass* its former glory. The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana and the EUR complex at large act as affirmations of Mussolini’s promises in his *Opera Omnia* that “the past glories [of Italy] are surpassed by those of the future.”²⁴

This glorious future dreamed for the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, however, was soon interrupted by Mussolini’s political ousting and execution. During the war, the building became subjected to the decay of time, weather, and looting. It was a tactical site of refuge for both Allied troops and nearly 10,000 displaced Romans. Immediately after, the palazzo was used by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) as a shoe factory,

²³ Alemany Caro, “Augustan Propaganda in Late Fascist Italian Architecture,” 106.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 122.

offering employment to nearly 150 refugee workers from nearby centers.²⁵ In 1945, Piacenti was given a six-month suspension by the Italian epuration commission for Fascist apologism; however, this was reduced to a mere censure.²⁶ For many years after the fall of Fascism, the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana remained in a static state of decay and unoccupied abandonment in the imagination of Italy, acting as what Loncar describes as “a fascist shadow skulking at the edge of Rome.”²⁷ Post-war, the EUR began to be seen as a “monument to national stupidity,” a “lifeless corpse,” and “full of unfinished and absolutely useless monuments.”²⁸ The Italian imagination of the palazzo is best captured by its depiction in Roberto Rossellini’s *Roma Città Aperta* (1945), where the building is presented as both symbol and site for the military defeat of totalitarian Fascism by Italian Resistance fighters.²⁹

The WWD articles publicizing the new Fendi headquarters play upon this popular imagination of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana as an abandoned site in line with Italy’s abandonment of fascist ideals. The articles label the 75-year-old site as “never-occupied” and *neglected*.³⁰ However, this is yet another filtered lens of history, as the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana has actively occupied the imagination of Italian politicians and architects throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. After the war and under the leadership of Christian Democrat Alcide De Gasperi, EUR (renamed from E42 led by Virgilio Testa) was recognized as an autonomous restoration/preservation agency to both prevent restitution claims from former landowners and maintain the area’s special status as *separate* from the municipality of Rome.³¹ Testa fought hard

²⁵ Carter, “‘What Shall We Do With It Now?’” 386.

²⁶ Ibid., 381.

²⁷ Loncar, “F Is for ... Fluctuating Symbolism,” 101.

²⁸ Carter, “‘What Shall We Do With It Now?’” 386.

²⁹ Paola Somma, “The Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana: From Fascism to Fashion,” essay, in *The Routledge Companion to Italian Fascist Architecture: Reception and Legacy*, ed. Kay Bea Jones and Stephanie Pilat, 1st ed. (London, UK: Routledge, 2020), 79–91, 80.

³⁰ Luisa Zargani, “Fendi’s New Roman Headquarters,” *Women’s Wear Daily*, May 13, 2015.

³¹ Somma, “The Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana: From Fascism to Fashion,” 82.

for the EUR complex to not become an inactive, abandoned site to be gazed upon from the highway to Ostia. Instead, he sought to transform the former fascist site into a vital artery of Rome's suburban sprawl, writing:

The history of good human sense [...] teaches that the next generations have used without too much nose wrinkling what was left to them by preceding generations. They have tarnished works started under other suns and with other ideals [...] Luckily, the preconceived dislike against 'E42' which entered in many (too many!) repudiations of what was done or planned between 1922 and 1942 has now ended. And with that have vanished the criminal proposals to 'sell everything' or 'liquidate everything' or assign to demolition (as one does for a ship no longer in use).³²

Testa believed EUR could become a bustling suburb to help relieve the congestion problems of “old” Rome, acting as a triumphant symbol of Italian postwar modernization and recovery that could fully shrug off the spectre of its fascist past.³³ Testa's vision saw materialization in the expansion of the metro line to EUR for its use as a sporting hub in the 1960 Rome Olympics and as a conference venue, including for the Partito Comunista Italiano's 1956 National Congress.³⁴ The construction of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana was only ever finally completed in 1956, with the installation of the final statues by fascist sculptor Publico Morbiducci.³⁵ Many buildings, including the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, were transformed into government office blocks, becoming renamed for a second time. The palazzo became the Palazzo della Civiltà *del Lavoro*, with accompanying *Quadrato della Concordia* and *Viale della Civiltà del Lavoro*, as it was used as offices for the Federazione Nazionale dei Cavalieri del Lavoro, Federazione dei Maestri del Lavoro d'Italia, and the Associazione Nazionale Lavoratori Anziani di Azienda.³⁶ Despite

³² Carter, ““What Shall We Do With It Now?”” 387.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 388.

³⁵ Somma, “The Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana: From Fascism to Fashion,” 82.

³⁶ Carter, ““What Shall We Do With It Now?”” 390.

popular imaginations of the palazzo as an occupied site of Fascist shame, the entire EUR complex has been consistently utilized and reimagined following the fall of Mussolini.

Yet the site was never fully scrubbed of its fascist origins in its reutilization. What was able to be easily and cheaply destroyed, removed, or obscured disappeared from the site, while more structurally integral elements remained. This is why all of the statues and inscriptions of Mussolini remain in their original buildings.³⁷ The majority of the buildings within the EUR complex, including the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, were placed under protection by Silvio Berlusconi's government in 2001-2006, formed in coalition with neo/post-fascist Alleanza Nazionale.³⁸ The visual popularization (and normalization) of the EUR, with the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana as its emblematic icon, quickly emerged in the propagandistic imagination of Italy's neo-fascist parties [Figure 4]. The Lotta Studentesca youth wing of far-right Forza Nuova used the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana in promotional posters in 2013, while Berlusconi again used the palazzo as a site for his election video "*Meno male che Silvio c'è*," with a crowd surrounding the building cheering his name.³⁹ By 2006, the Ministry for Cultural Activities listed the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana as worthy of cultural interest, starting a 40 million euro renovation effort that would last until 2011. During this time, there was even a further substantial increase in the number of images of the palazzo featured in publications following the election of Alleanze Nazionale member Gianni Alemanno as mayor of Rome in 2008.⁴⁰ Fascist architecture had reached the age of consideration for legal heritage protection, and now these once-ambiguous and possibly impermanent sites were formally affirmed into the urban landscape of modern Italy.

³⁷ Ibid., 385.

³⁸ Ibid., 382.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Somma, "The Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana: From Fascism to Fashion," 84.

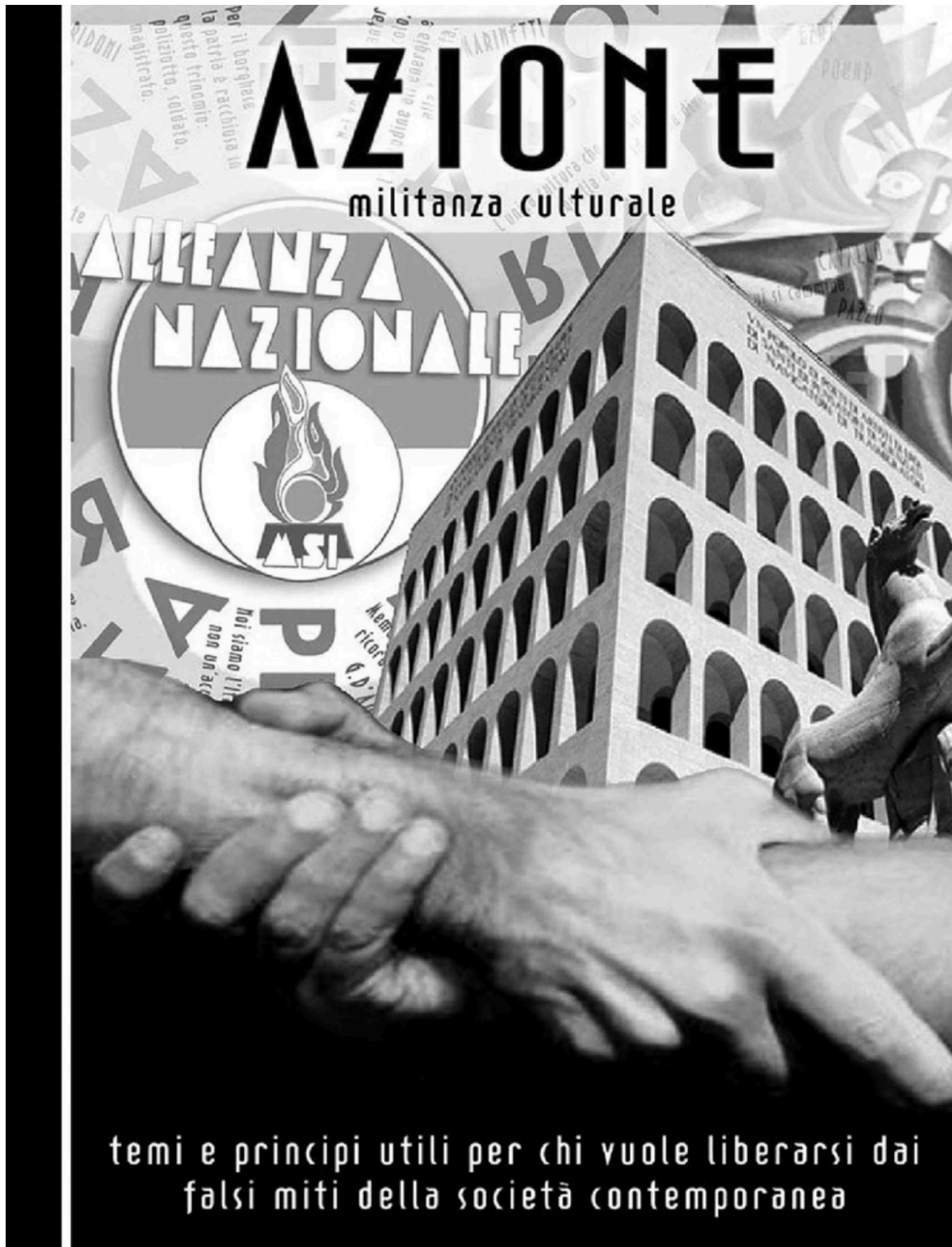


Figure 4. Campaign poster for Alleanza Nazionale. Credit: Somma.⁴¹

⁴¹ Somma, "The Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana: From Fascism to Fashion," 85.

The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana entered the latest phase in its storied history in 2013, when Giorgio Armani used the site as an event space for his “One Night Only Roma,” featuring 700 celebrities, including Sophia Loren and Minister of Foreign Affairs Emma Bonino.⁴² Armani’s incorporation of the palazzo into the tangible landscape of fashion and design helped to add another layer of memory and association to the building, paving the way for Fendi’s eventual acquisition of the building as the site for their new headquarters. While the National Property Agency suggested an annual rent of 4.5 million euros for the palazzo, LVMH ended up only paying 2.6 million annually for the lease, an offer which urban planning and design professor at Università Iuav di Venezia Paola Somma argues was likely accepted after the CEO of the EUR s.p.a was arrested during the investigations of the criminal network Mafia Capitale.⁴³ Renovations on the palazzo were led by architect Marco Costanzi and took an additional 18 months to add an additional 19,000 square meters of office space for Fendi’s 450 employees. The building was finally reopened on October 22, 2015, inaugurated into its new role as fashion headquarters.⁴⁴

Before renovations on the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana were even completed, Fendi had already begun to associate and merge their editorial image with that of the palazzo. The brand’s Spring/Summer 2015 ready-to-wear runway show in Milan was staged on a set that mimicked the travertine arches of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana.⁴⁵ Multiple editorials for that season featured the structure, or some allusion to it [Figure 5]. Then creative director Karl Lagerfeld used the building as a set for Fendi’s Autumn/Winter 2015 Campaign entitled *Roman Arches* [Figure 6]. This repeated association with the palazzo’s arches has continued throughout Fendi’s

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Loncar, “F Is for ... Fluctuating Symbolism,” 98.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 99.

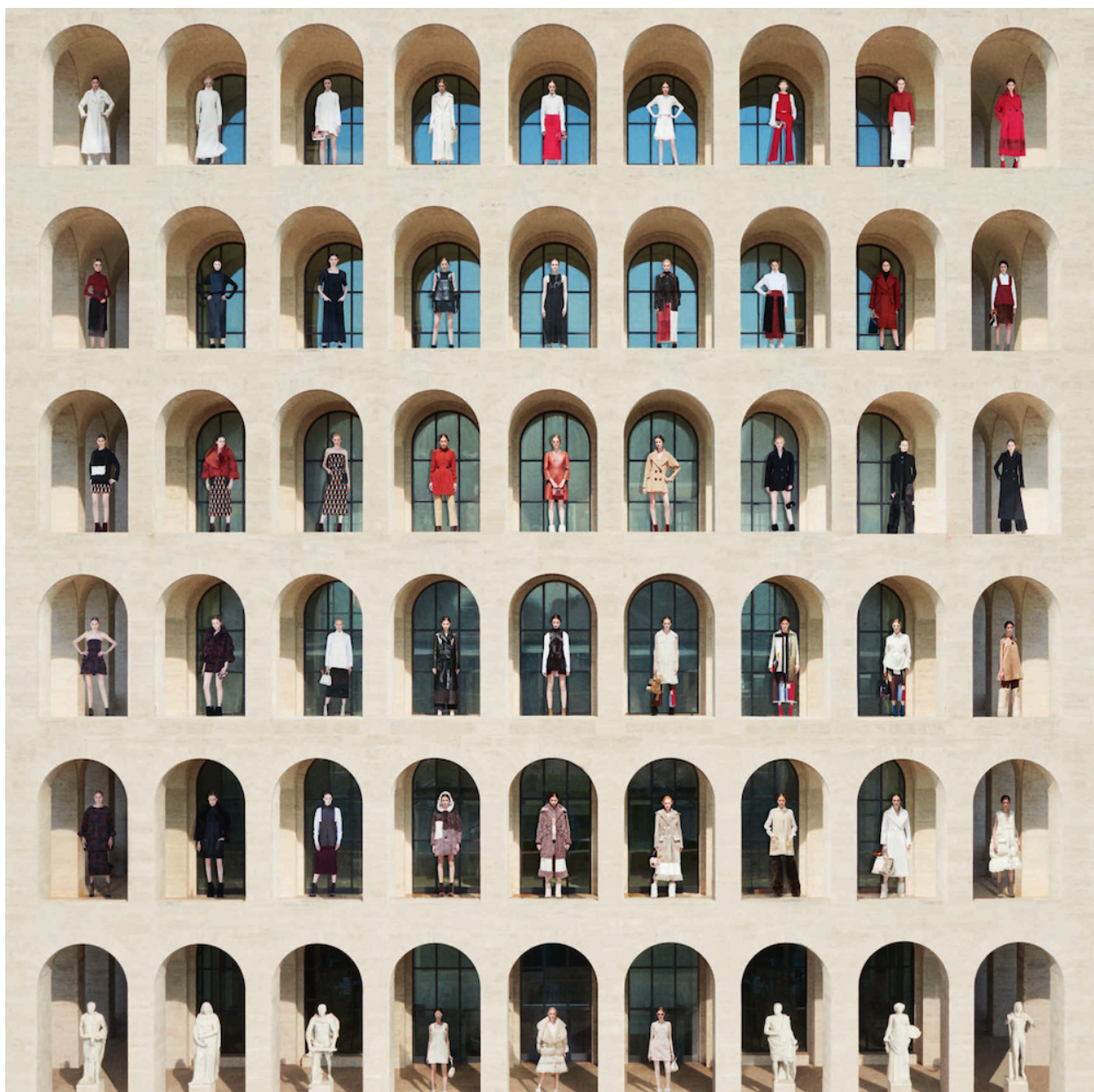


Figure 5. "Follow the Leader," Philip Sinden, Harper's Bazaar, 2015. Credit: Fendi sceglie Roma, il cuore della sua moda, MVC Magazine.

merchandising and advertising across the years [Figure 7]. The repeated arch facade of the palazzo has been mimicked and replicated in numerous Fendi flagship stores and pop-ups across the globe; The Madison Avenue flagship store in New York designed by Peter Marino, The Ginza Six Flagship in Tokyo designed by CURIOSITY design studio, the new Rome flagship, a Harrod's pop-up designed by Andrea Mancuso and Emilia Serra, and a pop-up in Selfridges for Fendi's "Flowerland" bags all used mimicked representations of the palazzo's now iconic facade all within 2 years of the building's inauguration in 2015.⁴⁶ The incorporation of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana into Fendi's brand imagery coincided with their key efforts in 2013 to notably "Romanize" the brand, designing a new logo that featured the word 'Rome' for the first time in the house's history.⁴⁷

But this brand incorporation of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana comes without a full embrace of the palazzo's past. During the building's inauguration in October of 2015, Fendi held an exhibition on the ground floor entitled *Una Nuova Roma. L'EUR e il Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana*, which featured a two-page history pamphlet that outlined the history of the Palazzo's design and architectural significance. However, this pamphlet notably omitted any mention of Mussolini, Fascism, or World War II.⁴⁸ Beccari declared, "For Italians and Romans, it is completely deloaded, empty of any significance of that period. . . . We never saw it through the lens of fascism."⁴⁹ On the eve of the palazzo's opening, he announced, "This building is beyond a discussion of politics. It is aesthetics. It is a masterpiece of architecture."⁵⁰ The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana is recast as an aesthetic site stripped clean of its ideologically problematic

⁴⁶ Ibid., 103.

⁴⁷ Fernando Moral-Andrés, "The Definition of an Urban and Global Icon. Public-Private Strategies for the Regeneration of the Museum 'Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana, Rome,'" *Revista de Arquitectura* 21 (October 2019): 254–59, 256.

⁴⁸ Carter, "What Shall We Do With It Now?" 394.

⁴⁹ Loncar, "F Is for . . . Fluctuating Symbolism," 92.

⁵⁰ Carter, "What Shall We Do With It Now?" 394.

origins, retrofitted in service of a new politics of style. As numerous campaigns and editorials associate the visual brands (and histories) of Fendi with the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, additional layers of meaning are added to the palazzo's image that are completely divorced from the building's original fascist context: "Posts on the [@fisforfendi] account claim that 'F' is also for 'Funk,' 'Fighter,' 'Freaks,' and 'Freedom;' F is for anything but fascism."⁵¹ According to Loncar, the palazzo's weight of ideological association has merely been shrugged from totalitarian Fascism to neo-liberal consumerism.⁵²

Arguments similar to Loncar's — that emphasize the significance of recognizing the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana's complicated, Fascist past — are frequent in contemporary Italy.



Figure 6. *Roman Arches*, Fendi Autumn/Winter 2015 Campaign, starring Nadja Bender and Ashleigh Good, photographed by Karl Lagerfeld. Credit: [Mylifestylenews magazine](#).

⁵¹ Loncar, "F Is for ... Fluctuating Symbolism," 103.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 101.



Figure 7. Fendi Autumn/Winter 2021 Campaign, starring Rianne van Rompaey and Tianna St. Louis, photographed by Craig McDean. Credit: [The Impression](#).

Architectural journalist Owen Hatherley wrote in *Architectural Review* that the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana would forever remain “tainted” by its Fascist origins. He argues that the ideological evils of Fascism can not be exorcized from the site as long as it is used in service of the similar “good taste” touted by luxury fashion: “shamelessly elitist, wilfully sinister, hierarchical, Classical, its apparent minimalism belied by an obsession with the finest possible material and the severest cut.”⁵³ In her analysis of the ethics of Fascist architecture and luxury ventures, architecture professor at Curtin University, Annette Condello similarly argues for the foregrounding of this history, asking:

Do clean goods within a transformed unethical existing building ultimately produce an ethical or ‘cleansed’ space? One wonders if these contemporary specimens of spatial luxury still resonate as such in our

⁵³ Owen Hatherley, “Fendi Vidi Vici,” *Architectural Review* 237, no. 1417 (March 2015): 16–17.

world, one where luxury is now mass-produced and no longer the exclusive backdrop of fashionistas.⁵⁴

The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana is not the only remnant of Italy's Fascist past to receive this scholarly scrutiny in the modern era. Historian of fascism and authoritarianism Ruth Ben-Ghiat has outspokenly critiqued the restoration and urban re-integration of numerous Fascist sites. She argues that these buildings and memorials function to normalize Fascism as something non-violent and *compatible* with a democratic Italy.⁵⁵ Even Somma writes that the building is often rendered narratively and visually as “built in fascist times rather than as fascist architecture.”⁵⁶ It is clear that the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana will never be able to fully escape the implications of its Fascist past; it is also clear that the building, along with the total EUR site, is here to stay as an increasingly vital appendage to modern Rome. As the site accumulatively (mis)remembers the different, chronologically disparate imperial projects it associates itself with, it creates an ambiguous place for its current rhetorical function in the Roman landscape. Perhaps the faulty memory inherent to the site was built into its very stylistic foundations as a revisionist revival of Roman classicism. As long as the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana and the EUR complex continue to find occupation and global conglomerate investment, it is important to remember the site's original significance. However, it is also important to remember that Fascism is just one layer of history and association packed into this ambiguously potent site. It is only by understanding — and *recognizing* — the full breadth of the Palazzo della Civiltà's past that the site can be renegotiated and contextualized within the urban fabric of a modern Rome as something both beyond and greater than its ideological origins.

⁵⁴ Annette Condello, “Willful Forgetting: Luxury, Ethics and Fascist Architecture,” *Archithese* 45, no. 4 (August 2015): 18–25, 24.

⁵⁵ Carter, ““What Shall We Do With It Now?”” 378–379.

⁵⁶ Somma, “The Palazzo Della Civiltà Italiana: From Fascism to Fashion,” 85.

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