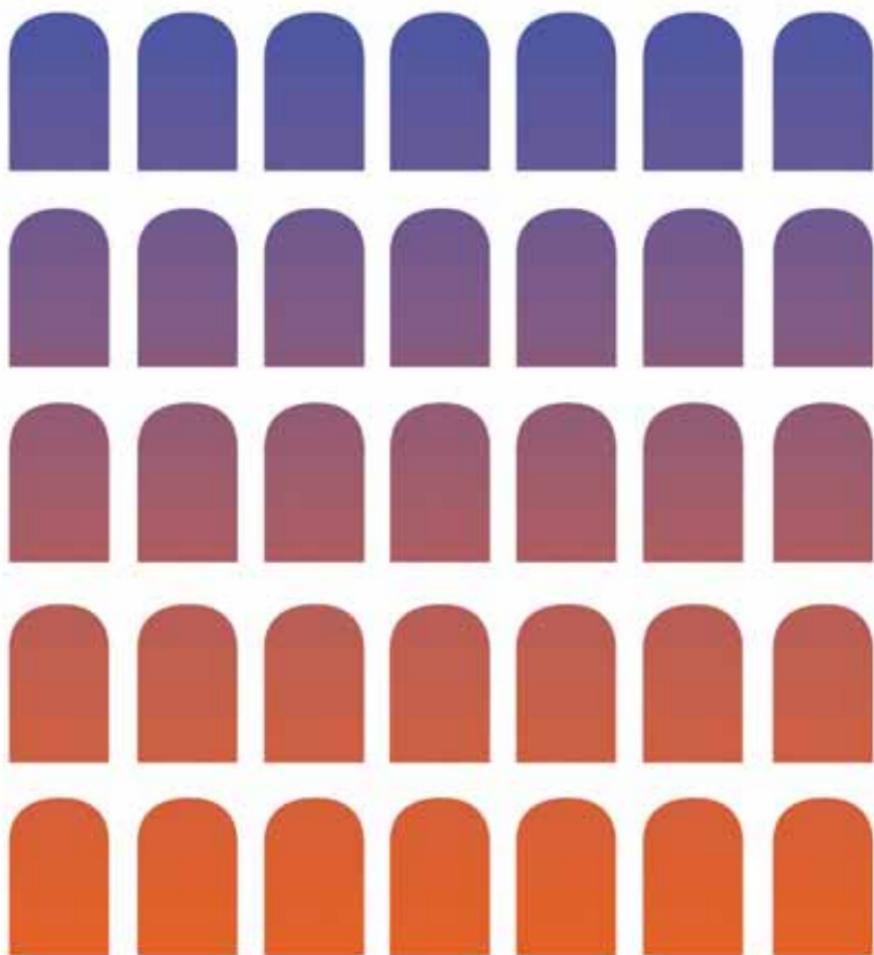


A NATION OF POETS ARTISTS HEROES  
SAINTS THINKERS SCIENTISTS  
NAVIGATORS VOYAGERS



*Exploring*

**EUR**  
*Euro*

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Editorial realization  
by the Publishing Department of the APT of Rome  
in collaboration with  
the Communication and Institutional Relations Section of EUR SpA

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Archives of the APT of Rome  
EUR SpA

Printed by:  
Stilgrafica srl - Rome

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*Eur S.p.A., formed on March 15, 2000, takes the place of the Eur Authority of 1936, whose purpose was to host the Universal Exhibition of Rome in 1942.*

*The company (Ministry of Finance 90%, Municipality of Rome 10%) has a capital of 645.248.000,00 Euro, consisting of buildings, areas for rental, parks, and areas designated for construction.*

*Its principal function is to enhance and manage this important heritage. Eur S.p.A. offers an array of services having the objective of inserting Eur, recognized as a "historic city" by the new general town planning scheme, in the social and cultural community, both national and international, because of its specific qualities; the significant historical and architectural value of its buildings and green areas intended for the recreation of the general public.*

*A fundamental goal of the company is to make it possible for other companies, citizens, institutional and private investors to find adequate solutions for their requirements and to increase the social and economic heritage of the city and nation.*

#### **Eurtour. History, Art and Architecture**

*Eur S.p.A. aims to revive the most modern area of the city by promoting and managing cultural and tourist initiatives to favour knowledge, access to the area and communications.*

*Eur S.p.A. has undertaken the task of emphasizing the role of Eur in the urban setting by developing the promotion of what the area has to offer, namely its receptivity and opportunities.*

*By working together with operators and institutions involved in tourism, the company proposes to obtain a favourable economic return for the local community and those involved, but above all, to launch a new image of the company, area and city.*

*Eur S.p.A. has chosen the Rome Tourist Board (APT) as its technical partner to develop this stimulating cultural initiative called "EURTOUR", which consists of three itineraries for the discovery of the historic and artistic beauties of the area: buildings, designer furnishings, mosaics and ...hidden treasures.*

"Eur is a very congenial neighbourhood for those whose profession is representing images"

*Federico Fellini*

The area designated for the residential neighbourhood known today as EUR had been chosen since 1936 as a venue for the Universal Exhibition of Rome, to be celebrated in 1942 on occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the March on Rome, which never took place owing to the outbreak of World War II.

In addition to its urban layout, elaborated between 1937 and 1938 by architects Pagano Piacentini, Piccinato, Rossi, Vietti, and then from 1938 on by Piacentini in collaboration with the Technical Office of the Autonomous Board for the Exhibition, considerable traces of the original structure are still in existence as clear indicators of both the initial intentions of the planners and the importance and scope of the entire operation.

The difficulties and differences emerging out of issues such as the time factor and the approaches to the creating of the new exhibition area led to an extensive debate that eventually touched the central themes of modern architecture. The design and construction of the Universal Exhibition (named E 42), provided an occasion to re-examine the entire spectrum of Roman and national architectural culture. The various positions caused disagreement and offered the pretext for a confrontation of hypotheses that remained vital for decades. At any rate, the conflict between modernity and tradition had been a feature of the architectural ideology of the Italian fascist movement already since the early 1920s.

The neighbourhood, completed only after the dramatic events of World War II, maintains some of the most emblematic buildings of the "idea of a city" that Italian architecture was in the process of defining on the threshold of the 1940s, in opposition to the contemporary rationalist

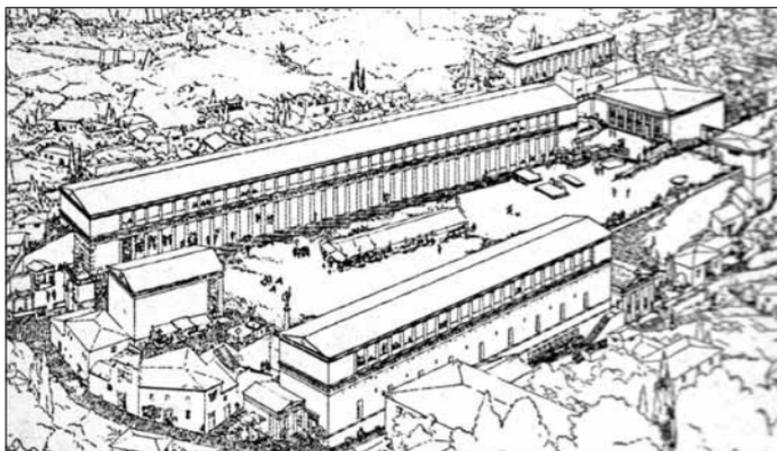
and internationalist tendencies predominant elsewhere. Architect Marcello Piacentini was the great spokesman and the great mediator of the entire affair. The original idea of E 42 consisted of a southward expansion of the city of Rome, an expansion that was intended to have a strong urban identity: the “fusion” of the existing city with the new settlement, according to Piacentini, should have been “so logical” as to not be perceived as a fracture in the fabric of the city. The intent was to reestablish the typically Roman concept of architecture: the new buildings had to be imposing and their solemn form had to express and transmit the greatness and power of a nation fully aware of its heritage. The layout featured wide streets where individual, well-separated buildings were arranged and organized with regularity and rhythm, so as to enhance the different architectures. An extensive urban nucleus was created ex



*Acropolis of Selinunte*

novo, organized according to monumental and representational models derived on one hand from classical town planning and on the other from the more numerous contemporary works. Reference to classical models is evident in the planimetric layout, that follows the prototype of the city already elaborated by the Greeks, the Etruscans and ultimately by the Romans, and based on a system of main orthogonal axes, as in the Acropolis of Selinunte. The planners of E 42 specifically repropoed the Roman town planning scheme: a broad central avenue with a north-south orientation (*cardo*), corresponding at present with Via Cristoforo Colombo, intersected by secondary streets (*decumani*) and dividing the area into rectangular blocks.

Classical origins also inspired the architecture of the propylaea and the exedrae that, according to the architects, were to frame the main views and lead to the most representational buildings. The large central square with museum buildings (today Piazza G. Marconi), once again recalled, owing to its dimensions and composure, the broad spaces of the agoras of Hellenistic centres, such as Assos in ancient Greece, and the Forum of Pompeii.



*Agora of Assos (modern Turkey)*

The classicism of the E 42 architecture, aside from the world of ancient Rome and Greece, also derived from the typically Renaissance myth of the ideal city: a perfect city, ordered

and rational, conceived with a ruler and a compass, with a rigorously geometrical plan and exemplary architectural precision. It was an intellectual and theoretical city, as described accurately in the treatises of the period, from those by Leon Battista Alberti, Filarete and Francesco di Giorgio Martini, to those by the great architects of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, including Leonardo Da Vinci. Classical inspiration was supported by the idea that Italy was experiencing a new “Renaissance” of its civilization.

Many existing buildings of exceptional symbolic value as well as figurative and typological interest still maintain the layout of classical derivation: the Building of Italian Civilisation, designed by Guerrini, La Padula and Romano, the Building of Offices by Gaetano Minnucci, the Museum Buildings, by Fariello, Muratori, Quaroni, Moretti and others, the Post Office Building designed by Banfi, Belgioioso, Peressutti and Rogers, the INA and INPS Buildings, by Muzio, Paniconi, and Pediconi, Official Restaurant by Ettore Rossi, the Square and the buildings of the Armed Forces designed by Mario De Renzi and Gino Pollini.



*Plastic model of EUR with the Building of the Armed Forces in the foreground and the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in the background*

The Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul by Paolo and Arnaldo Foschini, with its central plan, large dome and disposition of volumes deriving from the Roman post-Renaissance classical experience charged with symbolical references, is one of the

finest examples of Roman religious architecture.

The building that was nonetheless designated, already in the minds of the planners, to assume the role of symbol and figurative and territorial pivot of the entire exhibition, was the Building of Italian Civilisation. Its diaphanous pure monumentality and sequence of arches apparently detached from social reality, recalls the works of Giorgio De Chirico in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although there is no ascertained evidence of a conscious architectural derivation from the painting of De Chirico, the *Enigma of the Hour* of 1911 presents an image that recurs often in the projects for E 42: the extreme simplicity of the forms, the particular perspectives in which the urban setting is presented, and the dilated, “metaphysical” aspect taken on by space stand out as key elements in some of the significant buildings of the exhibition area.

This painted architecture seems to capture a timeless classical spirit, a pure form that nonetheless maintains everything that the classical must have: harmony, rhythm, proportion, equilibrium. The De Chirico-like structure of the portico may evoke Florentine architecture, including the Spedale degli Innocenti and the Corridoio Vasariano, but is reduced to the essential, to a pure geometrical form, without any superfluous decoration that might identify it stylistically.

Against the perspective background of the same “decumanus”, opposite the Building of Italian Civilisation, stands the Building of Receptions and Congresses, the masterpiece of Adalberto Libera and evidence of the maturity achieved by Italian architecture at the time. Although he subscribed to the same ideal principles that inspired the other constructions of E 42, Libera found the occasion to experiment, through the taste for detail and fine technological choices, as well as elements of theoretic investigation. The building, constructed in reinforced concrete and representing the formal synthesis of E 42, presents itself to the world as the contemporary monument to be compared with historical ones.

Libera himself defined the building as “a basilica vast as a temple” with reference to its architectural plan, complete with a frontal narthex.

Aschieri’s experience in stage design, that had made this architect famous for his creations in the field of film and theatre, turns into authentic architecture in the Museum of Roman Civilisation and provides strength and expressiveness to a container of great urban personality.

In the Post Office Building, the Milanese group BBPR comprising the architects Banfi, Belgioioso, Peressutti and Rogers, detaches itself conspicuously from the contemporary experiences of the Roman architects, by adhering more closely to the methods and language of other young northern masters.



*Plastic model of Eur with Piazza Imperiale in the foreground and the Lake in the background*

It is once again Marcello Piacentini, in his scenographic layout of the area of the Lake, who reestablishes the connection with the past by reinterpreting episodes of classical late Renaissance architecture in a modern key.

This is a further example of how models derived from highly important periods in the history of Italian architecture, as the Roman villas of

the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Villa Borghese and Villa Aldobrandini, are interpreted with a modern approach and presented as qualifying elements in the new fabric of the city.



## **The symbolical and propagandistic value of 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture.**

### **Undiscovered EUR: the Building of Offices**

The Building of Offices, headquarters of the Autonomous Board, instituted in 1936 with the task of supervising the carrying out of the Universal Exhibition of 1942, was the first and in fact the only building to be built and completed in every part, including the furnishings and decorations, before the outbreak of World War II. Designed by Gaetano Minnucci towards the end of 1937, the building was already fully in use by the middle of 1939. It was intended to stand by the main entrance of the Exhibition and according to the tender awarding commission was to have “ a representational but also, within limits, a monumental character.” According to the explicit indications of Carlo Efisio Oppo, responsible for the project, the large building was conceived in an extremely functional manner, thus differentiating it from the classical, timeless language that was to feature in the entire area.

The complex was articulated into two perpendicular structures, connected to each other and faced with travertine. The structure, located at the corner of Via Ciro il Grande and Viale della Civiltà Italiana, has a square plan and a courtyard and was intended to house the seat of the Commissioner’s Office. It was thus closely connected to the neighbouring section that was to be the venue of the Exhibition. The main facade and the large square at the entrance became an actual part of Viale della Civiltà Italiana and a monumental backdrop for the long avenue leading from the artificial lake (the present Viale Beethoven).

The structure that develops along Via Ciro il Grande, at present the Hall of Fountains, with access today through the monumental portico, was intended to house ticket booths for the public. The imposing volume of the great rectangular hall with its double height, has gigantic French windows along the main front to guarantee interior lighting and allow the entrance of many visitors.

The Building of Offices, constructed in accordance with diverse building solutions, offered the occasion to experiment with new technologies. Advanced materials were used, new patents were issued for the realization of utility systems, in particular for the electric power plant, the heating plant, hydraulic devices for the fountains, the telephone switchboard and pneumatic dispatch system. The floor above the Hall of Fountains, reserved for the Board planners, featured a *shed* covering system that was constructed according to a special German patent, a splendid example of aesthetic research in the field of industrial architecture. Gaetano Minnucci, displaying great mastery and accuracy of design, also supervised the design of the interior spaces, and awarded the project for the furnishings and the artistic direction of their execution to architects Guglielmo Ulrich and Giuseppe Gori.

In the broad square in front of the Hall of the Fountains, that maintains the inscription *THE THIRD ROME WILL EXPAND OVER OTHER HILLS ALONG THE BANKS OF THE SACRED RIVER UP TO THE SHORES OF THE TYRRHENIAN* – an indication of Mussolini's plan to extend Rome towards the sea – there is a large fountain. The sides of the three rectangular basins display 18 black and white mosaic panels made by **Gino Severini**, **Giovanni Guerrini** and **Giulio Rosso** in 1939. On the sides of the central basin, Severini represented, on the avenue side, *Hercules and Cacus*, *Italic Youth and Victory*; on the side facing the building, *Sylvan*, *Time* and *Flora*. On the sides of the basin facing south, Rosso represented, on the section facing the avenue, *Reclamation*, *Construction* and *Armed Forces*, facing the building, *Art*, *Works of Charity* and *Mechanics*. On the basin on the north side, on the side facing the avenue Guerrini represented *Eneas Lands at the Mouth of the Tiber*, *Rome Goddess of the Seas* and the *Destruction of Carthage*, facing the building, the *Adriatic*, the *Mediterranean* and the *Tyrrhenian*.

A statue by **Fausto Melotti** stands by the fountain and represents a nude youth holding a stick. It was part of the sculpture group entitled *The Fields are Redeemed*, made by the artist for the front of the building of the Armed Forces (today seat of the State Archives).

Via Ciro il Grande is dominated by a bronze statue by **Italo Griselli**, that initially represented the *Spirit of Fascism*. Modified after the war by adding wrestling gloves, the statue now stands for the *Spirit of Sports*. The wall right of the Commissioner's Entrance displays a bas-relief in travertine executed by **Publio Morbiducci** in 1939. The artist, drawing on the tradition of the Roman historical relief and, in particular Trajan's Column, represents the history of Rome through its buildings, from its legendary origins to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many buildings of ancient and modern Rome are recognizable in the frieze (Colosseum, Pantheon, St. Peter's Basilica, the Campidoglio, the Victor Emmanuel Monument) as well as some of the main characters of Roman history, including Romulus and Remus, the Emperor Octavian Augustus, Giuseppe Garibaldi and Benito Mussolini.

In front of the Entrance for the Authorities, in Viale della Civiltà del Lavoro, stand marble sculptures depicting *Chimaera fighting against the Minotaur*, and the *Chimaera fighting against the Centaur*, executed by **Dino Basaldella** in 1942.

The Building of Offices houses a large plastic model of the area made in occasion of the Olympic Games of 1960.

The first floor, along its corridors and in some of the rooms, still maintains parts of the original facings, floors, fixtures and furnishings, such as the ashtrays and benches designed by **Guglielmo Ulrich**.

The Meeting Room, that still has doorknobs and tables designed by Guglielmo Ulrich for the Public Hall displays the painting of *The Founding of Rome* by **Giorgio Quaroni**. Executed around 1940, the work was severely damaged at the end of World War II, when the building was occupied

first by English troops and later by Dalmatian refugees. In 1945, a panel of plywood was placed over the painting to protect it from further deterioration and tampering, and removed only in 1986.

The mural painting, in mixed technique, largely tempera, measures four metres by seven and shows Romulus in the foreground in the act of tracing the “primal furrow” along the perimeter of the city. The mythical founder of Rome holds a plough share in his hands, drawn by a white ox. Numerous men, standing on the sides, follow the event with great attention and await the order to start building the wood and mud barrier along the furrow that will establish the sacredness and inviolability of the newly founded city. The episode takes place in the presence of a deity, not precisely identifiable, perhaps the goddess Roma, armed with a shield and spear. The scene is constructed according to the central vanishing point and shows evident analogies with the work of Piero della Francesca, greatly admired by Quaroni, as may be seen in the perspective structure, the range of colours, the nude figures, the tree on the right and the rocks on the left.

The Study of the Commissioner houses a work of inlaid marble made by **Francesco Coccia** circa 1940. A green marble border with white inlay representing the profiles of the most significant constructions foreseen for the Exhibition of 1942. In addition to the celebrated Buildings of Italian Civilisation, Congresses and Museums, the work also shows the Imperial Theatre and the Outdoor Theatre that were never erected. The centre of the inlay originally held an aerial perspective view of E 42, in stucco, that was destroyed during the war and substituted with a photograph illustrating the model of the entire exhibition level.

The first level of the basement that once housed the utility systems (the electric power plant, the thermal plant, the hydraulic devices for the fountains, the telephone switchboard and pneumatic dispatch system) now holds

five bronze heads, two of which represent King Victor Emmanuel III, and the other three Mussolini. Made with the lost wax method, they were intended to be placed in some of the rooms of the building. Two of them in particular were displayed on the shelves that are still visible on the side walls of the Hall for the Public; both wore a helmet, decorated in front: the king's shows the Savoy coat of arms, while Mussolini's has the imperial eagle.

An **air-raid shelter**, built in 1939, is still preserved in the second level of the basement of the Building of the Board. It was situated in a barycentric position in relation to the entire building and still maintains all the specific features of an air-raid shelter, and on the walls are signs indicating the corresponding services on the upper floors. It occupies 475 square metres and is in reinforced concrete, with metallic anti-gas hatches made by the Gambarotta Aeronautical factory in Turin. The walls of the shelter are about 20cm thick and it is completely independent from the structural system of the entire building and isolated around its outside wall by an air space of 125 cm. A double dynamo, still visible today, had the purpose of activating the ventilation and lighting system in the rooms of the shelter, so that employees could spend many days there.

The interior of the **Hall of Fountains** temporarily displays two panels, part of cycle of paintings made by Gino Severini on occasion of the Agriculture Exhibit in 1953.



ARTISTI DI EROI  
DI SCIENZIATI  
DI IMMIGRATORI

2



## The historical centre of EUR.

### The masterpieces of the metaphysical district

The **Official Restaurant** building (see itinerary n. 1), is located in Viale della Civiltà del Lavoro, behind the Building of Offices.

Constructed between 1939 and 1942 according to Ettore Rossi's project, it was designed to house the catering area for the entire staff of the Autonomous Board instituted in 1936 to supervise preparation for the Universal Exhibition that was to be held in 1942. Consequently the original internal division of the space corresponded to the division into categories of its users: on the ground floor, a bar and two restaurants for visitors and "minor staff", on the first floor a restaurant was reserved to the Board executives, and the second floor had a large hall that was used as a restaurant for the Board management and Italian and foreign commissioners.

On the outside the building presents an open gallery of double height, supported by slender fluted pilasters and resting on a base that follows the variations in the ground level. The structure is in reinforced concrete and covered with slabs of white travertine on the base and white marble on the colonnade.

Only some of the many decorations of the interior of the building are still visible in the bar on the ground floor: a mural in tempera by Franco Gentilini, and a marble marquetry by Eugenio Fegarotti. The tempera was executed in 1940 for the "antechamber of the Commissioners" and represents a *Roman Carnival*, whereas the polychrome marble work, also of 1940, depicts *Still Lives* and *Imaginary Architecture*.

In 1940 a polychrome marble mosaic by Angelo Canevari was placed on the outside wall of the restaurant for executives, on the first floor.

In the 1960s the work was split into two parts and placed on panels in the bar Building of Congresses where it can still be seen.

At the end of the Viale della Civiltà del Lavoro, stands the **Building of Italian Civilisation**, architectural icon of 20<sup>th</sup> century Roman architecture and model for the monumentality of the entire area. Better known as Building of the Civilisation of Labour or square Colosseum, it was built between 1938 and 1943 according to a project by architects Giovanni Guerrini, Ernesto Bruno La Padula and Mario Romano. Fifty metres tall, shaped almost like a cube, the building stands on a podium with steps on opposite sides. Each of its four identical facades has nine arches on every one of its six floors.

On the upper section of every side there is an inscription that reads: A NATION OF POETS ARTISTS HEROES SAINTS THINKERS SCIENTISTS NAVIGATORS AND TRAVELERS.

Four equestrian groups on high bases stand at the corners of the upper section of the podium. The work of Publio Morbiducci and Alberto Felci, they represent the *Dioscuri*, two mythical Greek heroes, sons of Zeus and Leda.

The building is an authentic “outdoor sculpture” and its ground level is decorated with twenty-eight statues illustrating arts and crafts. They measure around 3.40m in height and were made in 1942 by eight companies from the provinces of Lucca and Massa Carrara specialized in marble work. Starting from the left and proceeding clockwise from the entrance door, they represent: *Heroism, Music, Craftsmanship, Political Genius, Social Order, Labour, Agriculture, Philosophy, Commerce, Industry, Archaeology, Astronomy, History, Creative Genius, Architecture, Law, Leadership in Navigation, Sculpture, Mathematics, Genius of Theatre, Chemistry, Press, Medicine, Geography, Physics, Genius of Poetry, Painting and Military Genius.*

From Viale della Civiltà del Lavoro it is possible to take Viale Beethoven and half way down it find Piazzale Asia, site of the **Building of the Post Office, Telegraph and Telephone**, built between 1939 and 1942 by architects

Gian Luigi Banfi, Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti and Ernesto Nathan Rogers. The architectural structure consists of a lower body at the front, set on a base of peperino, and a taller one at the back, perforated by the closing frames, placed further back than the structural grid. The frontal body, with a structure in masonry and a central spine of reinforced concrete pilasters sustaining the roof and its large skylights, has no windows and the front and its blind facade is interrupted only by the tall entrances to the halls of the postal, telegraph and telephone services. The four storied building has wooden mobile walls on the inside and on the outside a thick structure of prefabricated reinforced concrete pilasters and beams that highlight the distinction between the load-bearing structure and the external walls, alternating opaque and transparent surfaces, that correspond to various functional necessities and interior distribution of rooms.

Viale Beethoven leads to Viale Europa with the **Church of Saints Peter and Paul** as a backdrop of the most elevated section of the area. The church, designed by architect Arnaldo Foschini, in collaboration with Tullio Rossi, Costantino Vetriani and Alfredo Energici, was raised to the rank of basilica in 1965. The definitive project was approved in September 1938 and construction began in April 1939. A long staircase provides access to the building that stands at the centre of a vast square flanked by two pavilions with open galleries having round arches.

These buildings were to have housed exhibits on the expansion of the Catholic church and on the iconography of Peter and Paul and were subsequently used as offices and services for the rectory. Two large statues of the saints, respectively by Domenico Ponzi and Francesco Nagni, stand at the top of the staircase.

The four arms of the cross, designed to house the parochial offices, the secondary entrances, the sacristy and the baptismal fount, present large rectangular niches

on the external facades that are decorated with bas-reliefs of episodes in the lives of the saints (by Giovanni Prini, Carlo Pini, and Venanzio Crocetti). The bronze door on the main facade by sculptor Giovanni Prini also represents scenes in the lives of the same subjects.

The hemispheric cupola in reinforced concrete has a diameter of 32 metres and is one of the most important in Rome. It is covered with gray slate scales in harmony with the lower structure in "Chiampo paglierino di Vicenza" stone and Roman travertine, and has a lantern with a conical covering at the top crowned by Carmelo Abate's bronze angel. The interior of the church holds valuable works by artists such as Duilio Cambellotti who made the two bronze ambos decorated with the main episodes in the preaching of Peter and Paul.

Above the main altar, the apse is decorated with a mosaic by Sergio Selva representing the martyrdom and glory of the apostles Peter and Paul, and is dominated by the figure of *Christ Triumphant*, by the artist's father, the sculptor Attilio Selva.

The long telescopic perspective of one of the three main axes crossing Via Cristoforo Colombo ends with the **Buildings of the Armed Forces** and the Piazza degli Archivi, backdrop of the same avenue.

The competition announced in 1938 for the project of the buildings designated at first to house the Armed Forces and later the Autarchy, Corporativism and Social Security Exhibition, was won *ex equo* by Mario de Renzi and by Milanese architects Gino Pollini and Luigi Figini.

The central building, seat of the Corporativism Exhibition, initially intended as a "compact" structure, without openings, was actually constructed as a cage of pilasters and columns, featuring a colonnade on the ground floor and by two orders of open galleries on the upper floors. The imposing access staircase to the first floor, added later, completely altered the facade of the building.

Along the sides of the vast square, similar to a Greek *agora*,

stand the buildings that in 1939 were intended to house the Autarchy and Social Security Exhibition. The structures are identical and have a ground floor decorated with a series of low pilasters and an upper floor with an open colonnade on each of their four sides. All the pilasters and columns are in travertine as are the slabs covering the entire structure.

The central building remained unfinished owing to the war and in 1952 it became the seat of the Central Archives of the State that were moved there in 1960.

The Building for the Spirit of Rome Exhibition, today **Museum of Roman Civilisation**, looks onto Piazza G. Agnelli and can be reached by proceeding along Via dell'Architettura.

The architectural complex was designed by architects Pietro Aschieri, Cesare Pascoletti, Enrico Peressutti and Domenico Bernardini in 1939. It consists of two symmetrical buildings and was designated to be the venue for the permanent display of the material presented at the Augustan Exhibition of the Spirit of Rome at Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Via Nazionale in Rome, between 1937 and 1938.

The two buildings were commissioned anonymously by the FIAT company of Turin and were designed as museum spaces but were also to provide a scenographic backdrop for the large Piazza della Romanità, thus celebrated through monumental architecture that was close to the model of the ancient Roman Forums. Construction work was concluded by 1952 and in that same year the display of the material was set up in the rooms of the Museum of Roman Civilization, opened to the public in 1955.

The architectural complex consists of two imposing parallel structures with immense blind walls connected at one end by a portico with travertine columns, raised over a flight of steps. The two blind walls are interrupted at the centre by two emphatic monumental entrances, hidden by narrow corridors and flanked by imposing smooth travertine columns. The facades are covered with blocks of dark tufa in ashlar-

work and surmounted by a travertine cornice. The backs of the buildings, a secondary part of the project, are finished in simple plaster.

The static character of the external space creates a contrast with the markedly dynamic interior space, articulated in a sequence of irregular rooms of different structure and size. The layout of the interior rooms, in line with the monumental entrance, in particular the vestibule, the large atrium and the hall, recalls the disposition of the bath complexes of imperial Rome. Of the works planned for the decoration of the rooms only the preparatory cartoon of a fresco by Valerio Frascchetti for the back wall of the hall of honour has survived, illustrating *The Origins of Rome*.

Viale della Civiltà Romana leads out from Piazza G. Agnelli and at the end turns into Via Montaigne and then to Piazza J.F. Kennedy, the last stop on the itinerary. On one side stands the majestic, elegant **Building of Receptions and Congresses**, the masterpiece of Adalberto Libera.

The building was conceived as a venue for “Congresses and large Official Receptions” to be held during the Exhibition and was constructed only in part between 1939 and 1942. After the interruption of the war, it was completed in every part and inaugurated in 1954.

Located at the end of the first orthogonal decumano to the Via dell’Impero (today Via Cristoforo Colombo) and visually connected with the Building of Italian Civilisation, on the opposite side, the building is among the most significant works of the Italian 20<sup>th</sup> century. It consists of two parts set against each other, with autonomous entrances that allow access from one side to the Reception Hall (Piazza J.F. Kennedy) and on the other to the Congress Hall (Via della Pittura). The side of the building facing Piazza Kennedy is preceded by an open space flanked by two terraced fountains. The facade has fourteen granite columns, without capitals or bases, which conceal a large atrium decorated with a fresco by Achille Funi. The unfinished painting represents

the *Goddess Rome* and mythological scenes. The atrium is closed toward the outside by a glass wall for its entire height, supported by iron grid pilasters shaped like spindles. The covering of the atrium is surmounted by the marble wall of the large main structure with its projecting marquee on which was to be placed a bronze chariot drawn by four horses by the sculptor Francesco Messina but never executed. The central section, a monumental cubic space surmounted by a cross vault with glass lunettes, houses the Reception Hall (or Culture Hall). The structure represents the synthesis of Libera's studies on central plan buildings and is conceived according to strong geometrical rigour: the cube is almost 40 metres tall and "could exactly contain the Pantheon".

The room is surrounded by a double system of walls containing three superimposed galleries served by a complex disposition of staircases. The marble floor forms a lowered central area, defined by a continuous band of wide steps. Direct lighting in the hall is provided by the glass sections of the vault.

The Congress Hall (or Auditorium), with a capacity of 800 seats, completes the structure of the building, along with the atrium at the rear, perfectly symmetrical to the one at the front. After a fire that damaged the supporting frames and destroyed the furnishings, the room was restored in 1992 by Antonio Gallo Curcio and Paolo Portoghesi.

The atrium contains the abstract panels on masonite by Gino Severini on occasion of the Agriculture Exhibition of 1953.





3

## The urban landscape

### Parks and large monumental squares

The itinerary starting from Piazzale K. Adenauer offers a chance to promenade through the neighbourhood parks and the monumental squares that open along Via Cristoforo Colombo.

Since in the intention of its organizers the area of the Exhibition was to be “the most modern villa in Rome”, the town planning scheme of 1937 reserved great attention to the setting up of the numerous green areas. A special commission composed of architects and technical staff with a specific background in landscape architecture and that included among others, Alfio Susini, Maria Teresa Parpagliolo and Guido Roda, was appointed for this purpose.

The two **Parks of Valfiorita**, the Park of the Nymphaeum and the Park of Tourism, were among the first to be designed as part of the works for the Universal Exhibition of 1942 that did not take place owing to World War II.

Located in the northern section of the exhibition area that had not been reserved for building, the two parks were already perfectly designed by 1939. Tall trees were planted the following year but were severely damaged during the war. Starting from 1951 Raffaele de Vico, appointed to restructure and complete all the green areas of EUR, had to deal with defining the elements of the architectural decoration as well as substituting most of the plants. The two parks are separated by Viale G. Murri and are among the richest green areas in the neighbourhood in both the undergrowth (laurel, cherry-laurel, butterbush and laurustine) and the tall trees (pine, linden, cypress, cedar, yew, oak, magnolia, robinia, etc.). Flowering plants are rare. Various stele in relief are placed along the avenues of both parks and were created by various artists, including Araldo Bellini. These works were made to decorate the base of the Building for the Agriculture and Reclamation Exhibit scheduled for the

Universal Exhibition of 1942. As the building was never constructed, the stele were abandoned in the area of the Ministry of the Merchant Marine and were set up in the park by Raffaele de Vico only in the 1960s.

Piazzale Adenauer leads to the **Park of the Nymphaeum**, named after the fountain located at the back of the Building of Offices. Made in 1940 of rigorously symmetrical geometrical forms, it is placed at the centre of a square space, defined by low shrubs and by linear seating. The fountain has a round basin surrounded by a double border in travertine.

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Walking along Viale del Turismo we reach Viale R. Murri, past which we find the **Park of Tourism**, featuring the monumental stele fountain by Ercole Drei representing *Work in the Fields*. Originally intended to adorn the building of the Agriculture and Reclamation Exhibition, it was conceived and made mostly between 1940 and 1942. Only in 1962, after the laying out of the park, was the stele completed and placed in its present setting. The carvings at the front show figures intent at their agricultural activities (corn harvesting, olive picking, grape harvest, sowing, milking, ploughing) and craftsmanship. The fountain is in the lower section and has a large rectangular basin fed by four bronze spigots. The back shows the twelve signs of the zodiac and the four seasons, whereas the lower section has an inscription with the verse by Horace celebrating the charm of rustic life: *TU NIDUM SERVAS EGO LAUDO RURIS AMOENI / RIVOS ET MUSCO CIRCUMLITA SAXA NEMUSQUE* (Ep. I). Ercole Drei's style adheres entirely to the principles of Italian sculpture between the wars - devoid of intellectualism, fully figurative with a solid sense of masses and simplified volumes.

Backtracking along the parks of Valfiorita, it is possible to reach Via Cristoforo Colombo and the large *Piazza delle*

*Esedre*, today **Piazzale delle Nazioni Unite**.

The piazza, with the two monumental buildings conceived as an architectural backdrop for the Imperial Gate that was never built, was designed in 1939 to receive visitors arriving from Rome for the Universal Exhibition of 1942. The first urban planning for the Exhibition included a square with access from the north and a system of porticoes with columns along the road that was to end in the heart of the Exhibition itself, the nearby Piazza Imperiale (Piazza G. Marconi today).

Of the two buildings, the eastern one belongs to the National Insurance Institute and the western one to the National Social Security Institute. They were initially intended for shows and exhibits and were then to be used as offices and private homes.

In 1939 Board for the Exhibition approved the project presented by Giovanni Muzio, Mauro Paniconi and Giulio Pediconi. The three architects, inspired by Trajan's Markets, designed a square with two opposite exedrae, facing the Via Imperiale. The *Piazza delle Esedre* could have thus fulfilled its function as an enclosed, circumscribed space, ideal to welcome visitors arriving from Rome. The buildings were thus conceived as a single block that gave the square a unitary, homogeneous aspect.

A veritable access "atrium" to the exhibition area, Piazza delle Esedre was conceptually derived from classical Roman architecture and intended to have a system of ticket booths, accessible through the porticoes with columns. Construction of the two buildings, begun in 1940 and suspended because of the war, was completed only after it. The two structures are covered with slabs of marble from the Apuan Alps, and both present an order of pilasters on ground level and a double order of arabesqued marble columns on the upper floors. The walls of the interior of the portico are covered with slabs of Portasanta marble.

Four bas-reliefs, made in 1941, are placed at the extremity

of the buildings. On the INA building they represent the *Conquest of the Seas*, by Oddo Aliventi and the *Fascist Empire* by Quirino Ruggeri; the INPS building shows the *Maritime Republics* by Mirko Baldasella and *Rome against Carthage* by Giuseppe Mazzullo. The composition of the bas-reliefs is conceived according to the same principle, with the main allegorical figure at the centre, standing and dominating all the others.

From Piazzale delle Nazioni Unite it is simple to reach **Piazza G. Marconi**, previously named *Piazza Imperiale*.

Designed by architects Francesco Fariello, Saverio Muratori, Ludovico Quaroni and Luigi Moretti, the Imperial Square was, according to the tender of 1937, intended to be the central nucleus of the Exhibition of 1942. It was in fact designed to house the museum of ancient art, the museum of modern art, the museum of popular arts and traditions, the museum of universal science, along its north, south and east sides, and a theatre cinema that was never built along the west side. The exterior of the buildings looking onto the square is faced in Carrara marble, without decoration and consists of a portico with pilasters, surmounted by an open gallery with columns of monolithic drums in cappellaccio cipollino Aprano.

In the plan of the Universal Exhibition it had been decided that the Ethiopian obelisk from Axum, transported to Rome on occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the March on Rome, was to have been erected at the centre of the square. In the project of 1938 it was considered inappropriate in the context of the symbolical significance of the place and consequently transferred to Piazza di Porta Capena, in front of the Ministry of the Colonies, present seat of F.A.O., where it remained until 2003.

In 1939 the Ministry of Popular Culture appointed Arturo Dazzi to create a new monument dedicated to Guglielmo Marconi, to be set up at the centre of the *Piazza Imperiale*. In the sculptor's project the work assumed the shape of a

stele, to recall the radio antenna invented by the scientist from Bologna. It was designed to have a reinforced concrete framework decorated with ninety-two panels with high reliefs in Carrara marble representing dancing, singing and prayers thus rendering eternal homage to the extraordinary invention. The war interrupted Dazzi's work when he had completed only the two lower sections. After the war the new Ministry of Public Works suggested the destruction of the obelisk for economic reasons but it was never torn down. In 1959 Arturo Dazzi completed the work on a shaft about 45 metres tall, which represents *Dancing, Guglielmo Marconi, Hunting, Voices on the Radio, Holy Saturday and Love Songs*.

Along the north-east side of the square stands the **Building of Popular Arts and Traditions**, designed in 1938 by architects Massimo Castellazzi, Pietro Morresi and Annibale Vitellozzi.

It was initially intended as the seat of the Ethnography Exhibition that was to document the origins and development of popular art as a primordial and essential need in the life of man. In 1939 the Ethnography Exhibition was substituted by the Exhibition of Popular Arts and Traditions that was given a permanent seat where the collections of ethnographer Lamberto Loria could be definitively displayed. The Building of Popular Arts and Traditions consequently acquired the role and aspect it has maintained to this day. The building mirrors the structure that at present is the seat of the Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum "Luigi Pigorini" and consists of a colonnade suspended over a portico with pilasters. A monumental architectural backdrop of columns connects the two museum buildings. The external facade looking onto Viale della Civiltà Romana is decorated with a mosaic made by Enrico Prampolini in 1942. It represents *The Corporations*, and is placed opposite the one representing *Arts, Trades and Professions* by Fortunato Depero for the Science Museum. The two mosaics, located

at the extremities of the exterior of the buildings, together with the porticoes, provided a decorative link between the “Italian city of corporative economy” and the “art city”, symbolically represented by the two structures.

The mosaic, made with tiles in soft colours, shows four anthropomorphic figures that allude to the union corporations of the Fascist Confederacy of Workers, constituted in Bologna in 1922. Against the background of a geometrical network containing the symbols of the corporations, it represents *Credit, Commerce, Industry and Agriculture*.

Prampolini, who had adhered to the Futurist movement in 1914, conceived an almost abstract composition that nonetheless has great communicational impact and succeeds not only in requalifying the urban area characterized mainly by architectural structures, but also in celebrating the new collective and social myths.

The building opposite the Building of Popular Arts and Traditions is the **Science Building**, seat of the National Prehistoric and Ethnographic Museum “Luigi Pigorini” and the National Museum of the Early Middle Ages.

Constructed between 1938 and 1943 according to a project by architects Luigi Brusa, Gino Cancellotti, Eugenio Montuori and Alfredo Scalpelli, the building was intended to initially house the Universal Science Exhibit as part of the Universal Exhibition of 1942 and later to be the seat of the Museum of Universal Science.

The architects established that the decorations of the building should consist of a few “grandiose” works highlighting the main features of the complex. The outer wall of the structure, facing Via della Civiltà Romana, was consequently decorated with a mosaic in polychrome stone, glass and enamel representing *Arts, Trades and Professions*.

The work designed by Depero, measures 122x100 metres and was made by the Cooperative of Mosaicists of Rome. It represents allegorical figures set against a background

squares with the symbols of professions. A long inscription, uncovered by an orange drape, recalls the arts, trades and professions celebrated in their progress.

For the interior of the building Cipriano Efisio Oppo, vice president and person responsible for the choices of the artistic service of the Exhibition of 1942, commissioned the decoration of the two walls of the atrium with encaustic paintings representing *Technical Applications of Science* and *The School of Galileo*, to Valerio Frascchetti.

At the top of the great staircase a large polychrome glass window made by Giulio Rosso in 1942 was finally put into place in 1986. Composed of over 50 panels, it represents *Decorative Elements Connected with Astronomy*.

The hall on the first level has a large floor in marble and natural coloured stones made; the inlay by Mario Tozzi shows *Decorative Elements connected with Science*.

Returning to Via Cristoforo Colombo and continuing southward, we arrive at the beautiful **Central Park**, created between 1951 and 1962 by architect Raffaele de Vico, general consultant for the parks and gardens of the Universal Exhibition since 1939. The idea of creating a park in this green area had nonetheless already emerged in 1939, in the context of the project for the Exhibition of 1942.

The focus of the entire plan was the project for the central area, where the *Via Imperiale* was meant to come to an end and that at present is the site of the "Central Park of the Lake". The presence of a natural depression was exploited already in the project of 1937 that indicated the creation of a broad basin with irregular contours. In 1938 architect Marcello Piacentini decided to make the perimeter of the lake regular according to a rigorously geometrical outline, with the goal of "providing it with an aspect more in harmony with the spirit of the great classical Italian villas". Work on the park was interrupted because of the outbreak of the war and taken up again only in 1951 under the

direction of architect de Vico.

The present layout of the Central Park, with the extensive gardens surrounding the Lake, is the result of a skillful equilibrium between a rational and geometrical criterion alternated with more irregular solutions, in accordance with an “English” taste. The imprint of “classic rusticity” visible in the essential quality of the overall design, along with the use of rustic materials, defines the style of the whole. Numerous winding paths bordered by trees and hedges of various types, converge onto the main avenue, that sinuously skirts the perimeter of the lake. Its itinerary is known as the “Japanese Promenade” owing to the presence of over a million cherry trees, a gift of the city of Tokyo.

The **Artificial Lake** is a vital part of the central park and was completed in 1960 in occasion of the Olympic games of Rome, along with the Sports Palace, Cycle-Racing Track and the Swimming Pool of the Roses.

The lake measures about one kilometre in length and 150 metres at its widest point. It has a rectangular shape but the long sides are not perfectly straight but have projections and indentations that give movement to its perimeter. The borders are bounded by imitation rocks interrupted by small waterfalls that provide water for the large basin. The point in which it reaches its maximum width is exactly in line with Via Cristoforo Colombo which forks when it reaches the lake and then crosses it by means of two vehicular bridges that reunite behind the Sports Palace. The central section of the park, named for Raffaele de Vico, develops along a vast slope, defined at the extremes by cypresses and cedars and divided at the centre by a series of straight paths that delimit geometrical hedges with low butterbush shrubs. A lively venue for sports and leisure activities, the lake has a capacity of 220,000 cubic metres of water and also represents an important supply in case of fires, and also stabilizes the microclimate. The underground section of the park is accessible from Viale Oceania and can be visited on

request. It houses the Machine Room where the power plant for raising the water level is installed.

The itinerary cannot but come to a conclusion in the evocative **Garden of the Waterfalls**, designed by Raffaele de Vico between 1951 and 1962, extending between the Lake and the hill, and dominated by the low cylinder of the Sports Palace.

Its location provided a perspective backdrop to the *Via Imperiale*, today Via Cristoforo Colombo, the main road of the area where the complex of the Universal Exhibit of 1942 developed starting from 1937. The axis of the road was intended to be flanked by a series of monumental squares providing a scenographic effect and converging into the arrangement of the grandiose backdrop. Great attention was given to the layout of this area from the start, as it was intended to be the most spectacular feature of the entire Exhibition. It was initially established that the area in front of the *Via Imperiale* should be “set up in the style of a monumental Italian villa, rich in gardens, fountains, staircases, etc. with a waterfall at the centre dropping from a height of 25 metres. The events of the war did not allow the carrying out of the project. In the 1950s Raffaele de Vico could finally devote himself to the arrangement of the green area and created a simple composition of great scenographic effect. The Garden of the Waterfalls was conceived by the architect as a combination of the Italian tradition of Renaissance and Baroque villas with the rustic and monumental character of the whole, enhanced by the use of materials such as crags, natural stones and plants left to grow spontaneously.

The water provided by the two large waterfalls is collected in a central canal consisting of a series of six basins descending gradually towards the lake and fed by two rows of jets on the sides. At the extremities, from an elevated position, two series of parabolic jets pour water into streams flowing onto a bed of rocks amidst low hedges before they

converge in the large basin.

The grandiose complex, apparently conceived according to the criteria of irregularity and spontaneity typical of the English taste, is actually firmly anchored to the scenographic language of the Baroque, celebrated above all through the fascinating "water theatre".

"Marvellous and miserable city, you have allowed me to experience that unknown life until I discovered what, in everyone, was the world..."

*Pier Paolo Pasolini*