

Train Stations as Mussolini's Vessel for Fascist Symbolism

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Introduction:

Many individuals on this earth want to leave a legacy. Some even think the pursuit of a lasting legacy should be one's top priority in this life, and the methods of achieving this status trump all else. Italy's own dictator Mussolini wanted to put Italy, and more importantly himself, on a path that would award him with renown. The path, though essentially reaching Mussolini's goal, also secured his place on the wrong side of the history books.

While solidifying his control of the nation, the dictator implemented fascist architecture into the center of Italy's infrastructure, most importantly the train stations. The existing stations, and subsequently, the train stations that he ordered to be built, gave him an easy way to leave his mark on the public. The train stations created, and/ or redesigned during his reign of power (or narcissism, if you'd rather) includes the Milano Centrale railway station (Milan), the Firenze Santa Maria Novella railway station (Florence), Venezia Santa Lucia railway station (Venice), and the Rome termini as Mazzoni designed it. This list includes designs that provide opulence and represent immediacy and totality, it represents a modernization of design that aligns with the shift in technology, and it displays the political messaging and fascist intentions for the structures.

The train stations follow a few important design principles, including but not limited to totalitarianism, symmetry, monumentalism, and symbolism. This made them prominent structures both for the urban fabric of Italy in their respective cities, and as architectural spaces of their own. Mussolini and the chosen architects designing these train stations during the fascist regime used these design principles strategically to create a lasting effect on the Italian public,

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presenting a facade of strength and power over citizens during a time of uncertainty. These decisions were made intentionally to further progress the power Italy and Mussolini were gaining, and live in the context of the tragedies that took place under his control and in World War II.

Analyzing these railway stations in the context of looking for the areas that Mussolini was involved in the design, identifying the attitudes towards the designs in both history and present day, creates an intensive analysis of the railway stations in Italy as functional structures and political ideas. The modernization of these railway stations is a large shift in the style of architecture in Italy and comes politically charged with Fascist messaging from the National Fascist Party. This had ramifications in the fascist era at the time and has continued to prove relevant in today's political and design climate as well.

To make these designs meaningful for the fascist regime, Mussolini appointed his son-in-law's father to oversee the modernization of train stations and other public works. Feeding off of the pompous and rich designs that Mazzoni was partial to, inspired by the strong motifs and how they stand out, they chose to make their designs very meaningful. In a meaningful way, the modernization represented a new era and a step forward, associating fascism and Mussolini with technological advancements and superiority.

Although Mussolini inaugurated several railway stations in Italy, promoting a connectivity of Italy and a new age, he accidentally weakened the impression of strength he wished to portray, specifically on the architects he was working with. After cherry-picking the teams of architects to work on the projects, and speaking to them himself, he changed his mind about design several times during the process. He would second guess the design choices and

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confuse the architects, and the lack of proper communication led to an unstable relationship between the employer and employed. Quite a bit of this type of indecision and inconsistency is directly linked to Mussolini's relationship with Hitler and his need to impress Adolf Hitler. It can be assumed that Mussolini grew jealous of the public attention Hitler began to accumulate, and his way of boasting and grasping for notoriety was through Italy's main transportation system: the trains.

Looking at these designs of the railway station in the present day, we must be careful with the attitude we take towards the train stations due to the tragedies they coincide with. There were people trafficked under the railway stations off to prison camps and to be killed. The railway stations were inaugurated for things that coincide with one of the most horrible times in history. The Ostiense station was created for Hitler's arrival to Italy and for Mussolini to make a strong impression for the Italians in Hitler's eyes. People still say that Mussolini made the trains run on time, and these are the things that people need to think about when looking at the railway stations and singing praise. The literature that follows will demonstrate how to respect the tragedies surrounding the structures while analyzing the designs.

Even more so, the explorations of the political and urban contexts of the designs of the train stations will unveil why it is so important to look specifically at the train stations. The train stations themselves are pieces of public infrastructure that are required for the country of Italy to be able to solidify itself. And in this way, this prominent and required infrastructure of train stations, are means of political propaganda and a vessel to communicate fascism in an inescapable way. The architects and Mussolini himself, as well as the others involved in this mission, were playing games with the peoples' minds in Italy while incorporating fascist propaganda into all of their designs so that the public could go nowhere without feeling the

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presence of el Duce, consciously and in an obvious manner, as well as in more subtle aspects of the fabric of the cities and railroad stations.

Prominent railway stations in Florence, Venice, Rome, and Milan were instrumental in Mussolini's plan for Italy. Even to this day, they are still prevalent in the study of modern and fascist Italian architecture, proving to have lasting influence despite the historical context in which they were designed. To understand its importance in history, as well as an aspect of the study of architecture, together we will further delve into the design aspects and intentions in context to Mussolini's history in Italy and the rise of modernism and fascist architecture in the development of Italian architecture.

Propaganda and Politics:

“Fascists did not invent lighting fixtures and train stations. They did attempt, however, to imbue them with a specific political theme: the inspirational importance of Benito Mussolini and the Fascist Party.”

(Doordan, 1997)

Famously, fascists were not a timid group, they were essentially a cult of the leader, Benito Mussolini. Mussolini was a man of the people according to himself. (*Benito Mussolini* |

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Biography, Definition, Facts, Rise, & Death | Britannica, n.d.) He grew up poor and struggling in school, with a rather absent father. When he was 19 he moved to Switzerland to study. Mussolini threw himself into learning everything he could about philosophers, all the while jumping from job to job. He earned a reputation as a political journalist and called for violent action to be taken by trade unions, producing propaganda in the local papers. The shock value pulled eyes to Mussolini, and he felt he finally found his path. When he returned to Italy, even the Roman newspaper had begun to give him some attention that he was very much seeking. Inspired and persuaded by Karl Marx, Mussolini began taking the philosophies he had studied and manipulated them into a new regime, making speeches that were in favor of war. With that, fascism was born and swept over Italy in many waves with force. Mussolini rose to power, quickly coming into an ideal situation to foster his fascist agenda.

For fascism to be successful and transform Italy in the way that Mussolini needed it to, it needed to be ingrained in every aspect of Italy. Every city, every building, every street, every conversation. With the eyes of politics and press upon him, he thrust Italy's resources into supporting his ideologies. The use of the arts gave Mussolini the ability to communicate his importance to the general public by subliminal (and not so subliminal) renderings of his image. To consume media in the likeness of one man – who specifically wanted to control not only the political environment, but also the movement of Italian culture – all day, every day, is a great way to subtly indoctrinate the public, not just in Italy, but also in a global context.

One example of Mussolini's image and messages being slipped into Italian art consciousness is a bust sculpture of the man created by the futurist artist Renato Bertelli. The piece, titled "Continuous Profile," depicts Mussolini's portrait in 360 degrees, driven into metal with minimalist ridges and shapes meant to depict his features with machined harshness. If

viewed the piece without knowledge or context of its subject, one might not think they were seeing a sculpture at all, but instead a part of some machine. This semblance was not invoked by mistake – Mussolini’s image and platform heavily relied on a feeling of industrial progress, something that gave many Italians hope for their country in that era of time. Mussolini bound his image with that ideal and spread it through Italy’s arts and culture to further manipulate and control its people to his benefit. “A second image of Mussolini, however, provides a different perspective on propaganda campaigns and the cult of the leader in Italian Fascism. In a portrait bust of Mussolini entitled ‘Continuous Profile,’ the Futurist sculptor Renato Bertelli employed the avantgarde concept of simultaneity. He multiplied Mussolini's image by rotating his stylized profile 360 degrees. The result is a whirling profile of the Duce rendered simultaneously abstract and representational. Looking more like a machine part or a bullet than a man's head, nothing could be farther from the comfortably familiar world of official portraiture than this dynamic Futurist piece. The cult of the leader was inextricably woven into the fabric of Fascism. Images of Mussolini, the charismatic Duce (leader) of Fascism appeared everywhere and in a bewildering variety of forms and styles. Few modern political leaders can match Mussolini in terms of the shrewd manipulation of his own image” (Doordan, 1997)

Figure 2
Bronzed terra-cotta, "Continuous Profile of
Mussolini" by Renato Bertelli, 1933.



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Design Issues: Volume 13, Number 1 Spring 1997

Doordan, D. P. (1997). In the Shadow of the Fasces: Political Design in Fascist Italy. *Design Issues*, 13(1), 39–52. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1511586>

"Storytelling requires subject matter, of course. Slowly, the new stories, myths, and fables of Fascism emerged. Events such as the founding of the Fascist Party in 1919, or the 1922 Fascist march on Rome that brought Mussolini to power, provided the new 'creation myths' further propagated by artists and designers. Governmental programs such as the so-called "Battle for Grain" (an effort initiated in 1925 to increase the production of wheat and other cereals), or the campaign to achieve economic autarky (launched in 1935 following the punitive sanctions enacted by the League of Nations against Italy), served as the new stories waiting to be told. Alongside the new stories,

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distinctive signs and emblems, endowed with a particular power to represent Fascism, appeared.”

(Doordan, 1997)

Mussolini did everything he could to tie his story of fascism and Italy into the fabric of the country's infrastructure. He believed so highly of himself and his ideals that he became blinded by his own image of himself. Through the beginning of his reign, he very quickly figured out that he needed to find as many ways to force his mission on to the people of Italy as he could. When looking for places to insert himself and his vision, he found the infrastructure of Italy to be full of potential. As he began ordering designs to be materialized, he found that he could easily make the symbolism inescapable. “The presence of this Fascist icon in multiple scales meant that you could stand-literally stand-in the shadow of the fasces and also hold it in your hands. What one could not do was avoid it. Modern political culture is not only pervasive, it is invasive; in every identifiable realm from the domestic to the civic and, in every imaginable scale from the intimate to the monumental, political signs and messages are inserted.” (Doordan, 1997)

Mussolini successfully made such images and spaces that were invasive and no one could run from, and when you tried to run, and get to the train stations, the symbolism is there as well. “Citizens of the post-war Italian Republic and visitors from around the world still interact, live, work, learn, and relax in environments built during the Fascist era.” (Doordan, 1997) While we can look at it now and feel that there was a rather cohesive vision for how Mussolini forced his fascist regime on the people of Italy thoroughly through architecture, there are opposing views that shed light to the fact that Mussolini was not an architect. He may not have been the Michelangelo he thought he was.

In a book speaking about Mussolini as an architect, the author very tactfully pulls from information provided by architects and the political climate to create an image of what it might have been like for Mussolini to make these decisions. Nicoloso talks about Mussolini “zigzagging” forward in collaboration with the architects. Mussolini had erratic behavior and was constantly changing his mind, which confused the groups working with him. He all of the sudden decided to move away from Rationalist architecture, an architecture style that he had endorsed previously, because his new friend Hitler condemned that kind of architecture. And Italy was not to have any architecture that Hitler would not respect. “Mussolini’s erratic behaviour also confused his collaborators, as Alfredo Rocco privately expressed to Ojetti. The former Minister of Justice, and now Rector of the University of Rome, was very close to Mussolini, and also followed him as concerned the developments in the Città Universitaria. Rocco said that ‘Mussolini was changing his mind on Rationalist architecture.’ He believed that the change was also ‘the effect of Hitler’s condemnation of this type of architecture: he does not want Italy to take in what Hitler doesn’t want.’ Ojetti was skeptical about giving Mussolini’s words too much importance, wondering whether he would change his mind once more; but Rocco replied that ‘Mussolini always moves forward, but not in a straight line. He zigzags forward, giving opposite sides the impression, alternately, that he is getting closer to them; but he is actually following his own path instead.’ Come 1934, Mussolini’s path as concerned architecture remained unclear.” (Nicoloso, 2022) While building the relationships he counted on to create a seamless fascist country, he stumbled upon building a relationship with Adolf Hitler.

Though Mussolini- very literally- wanted people to stand in his shadow, there is one man that even Mussolini himself couldn’t hold a candle to. Popularly dubbed as the vilest man to have lived, Hitler’s notoriety outshone Mussolini’s own massively. Few know that Hitler himself

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was a painter, and this could be the reason Mussolini drew a connecting line between themes in art (and the art of architecture) and achieving fascist agendas. Despite his efforts, Hitler was a failed artist, and then a failed architect. Hitler believed in the power that architecture held against people and his right hand man was an architect, harboring an overall negative opinion surrounding it, as his paintings are devoid of human and plant life. Hitler's work was literally lifeless. This is relevant to his view of humanity, as he only painted buildings with a sense of permanence and didn't grasp the temporal aspects of humanity and nature and how beautiful and instrumental that could be. Mussolini sought to rise to Hitler's level, and after their interactions increased Mussolini fell further down the rabbit hole, and his treatment specifically of those he employed. This was yet another relationship that contributed to the rise and fall of fascism in Italy, and Mussolini's obsession with the infrastructure that he was imposing onto Italy. Hitler, however, was not the only person Mussolini surrounded himself with and listened to when making decisions about Italy's architecture and forcing fascism onto the public.

Mussolini tended to reserve positions of power for the people close to him. Such is the case for Minister Benni, his son-in-law's father. Benni was put in place to supervise the repair and revampment of train stations, post offices, and other infrastructural facilities in the country. Benni's career in engineering began at the turn of the 20th Century in an apprenticeship under a man named Ercole Marelli, who owned a small workshop in Milan. In just a few years, Benni and Marelli would leave to construct a large manufacturing facility in the municipality of Sesto San Giovanni in Milan. He began to develop more industrial and commercial experience as the global conflicts created a high demand for magnets, which he started producing with Marelli in 1915. As time went on, he became successful in his field and continued to work with Marelli,

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Fiat, Pirelli, and many other people whose names are still relevant to manufacturing and global consumerism today. While he was climbing ladders of corporate manufacturing success, he was also participating in campaigns that benefitted Mussolini. In 1923 Benni participated in one of Mussolini's political campaigns where the industrialists self-taxed themselves on the capital of their companies in order to support propaganda efforts of the fascist regime. In this, by 1924 Benni was elected to be a deputy within the Fascist list. He was elected by popular vote again in the Fascist list of 1929. In 1933, Mussolini appointed Benni to be the Minister of Communications on behalf of the fascist government. This role also consisted of supervising the modernization of the railroads and other public works that were prevalent to the fascist regime. Benni had this job for four years, until 1939, and then Mussolini had him arrested for treason, but according to Benni, he was unaware why Mussolini would want him arrested. (*Bènni, Antonio Stefano Nell'Enciclopedia Treccani - Treccani - Treccani*, n.d.) This goes to show that Mussolini had surrounded himself with people who understood engineering and manufacturing, as well as how to run a company, much like developing and running a country.

Although the people surrounding Mussolini were highly influential to the decisions that were made for Italy and the rise of the fascist regime as well as the continuation of fascist architecture, Mussolini still viewed himself as the primary source of inspiration that Italy was in such a dire need for. As he made progress in building Italy up into the fascist state he wanted it to be, he had to rewrite history, and he believed he was doing this single handedly. Mussolini viewed his inauguration of these sites as creating them himself; he himself was the one building Italy in his eyes. "Mussolini went to Littoria, currently Latina, at least eight times to reinvent the myth of the 'founder of cities.' He followed its development step by step, from the laying of the first stone to the completion of the sugar refinery, the railway station, the

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Palazzo di Giustizia (Palace of Justice).” (Nicoloso, 2022) He believed in perpetuating the message with his own presence, so he did not limit himself in his travels and inaugurations of the buildings and stations that he could be at.

There is much more to say about Mussolini and the ways he himself forced fascist ideas on to the people of Italy, but there is also much to say about the designs that continued his vision and made Italy an inescapable vessel of propaganda. The designs that contributed to this theme that we will be analyzing are those that people relied on to travel Italy and to attempt to escape the message or further the message. Whether people gathered at train stations for fascism or to escape fascism, train stations were some of the main arteries of political propaganda that Mussolini utilized.

Train Stations:

If we start by looking at one of the train stations being built at the beginning of Mussolini's railroad involvement, we can find Milan Centrale Station. While the general architecture style is that of liberty, art deco, and classical inspired, it is still covered in fascist symbolism and has the message of Mussolini of all of the decorative elements of the structure. "The exemplarity of Milano Centrale also consists in how it represents a sort of tangible manifesto of the level of excellence reached by the scientific and engineering culture of the time" (Garda et al., 2018) Because Milan Centrale is one of the primary stations in not only Italy, but all of Europe, the design and function of the train station is very important, and is a great opportunity to supply lots of symbolism to the general public with any intended message. In this case, Mussolini took advantage of this and mandated lots of fascist symbolism. The version of the station that was inaugurated in 1931 was meant to replace the station that was from 1864 that could not handle the amount of travelers as it needed to.



(Central Station, n.d.)

Although it wasn't inaugurated until 1931, the design was approved in 1924. The design was a product of Stacchini's project, and because of the changing political climate and recent advancements in technologies, there were some variations to the original design. The variations included "the replacement of the shelters on the tracks foreseen in the original project and the introduction of the large iron canopies built according to the design of the engineer Alberto Fava. The free span of the main arch reaches 72 meters and is the largest built in Italy, the canopies reach a length of 341 meters, covering an area of 66,500 meters squared." (*Milano Centrale*, n.d.) The technological advancements of the time made new assembly techniques possible. The metal structural work of the Milan Centrale Station, as well as the reinforced concrete, made the load bearing structures able to be a magnificently larger size in order to create a huge open atrium style terminal. The advancements also made it possible for the designs to be updated from having regular metal covers over the tracks to having cantilever roofs that were able to reduce toxic fumes from the train cars and reduce noise pollution. (*Central Station*, n.d.) These technological accomplishments contribute to the overall feeling being in the future, a feeling that the fascists did try to incorporate into most of their designs, but these were not the only features that communicated the message of the regime.

"At the insistence of Mussolini's fascist regime the station building was decorated with symbols demonstrating strength and power. The roofs were adorned with bombastic sculptures of muscular animals from mythology: winged horses, lions, bulls and eagles."

- Arjan den Boe (*Central Station*, n.d.)



(Central Station, n.d.)

"The corners of the building were decorated with fasces: bundles of rods tied around an axe, in Roman times symbolizing united strength and authority. Mussolini selected this ancient symbol as a logo for his fascist party. The letters SPQR, applied on the station in several places, were an acronym of Senatus Populusque Romanus, the official Latin name of the Roman Empire. The Italian fascists liked to refer to the golden age of the Roman era." - Arjan den Boe *(Central Station, n.d.)*



(Central Station, n.d.)

These additions to the design that the fascists made sure were included are ways that they could force fascism on the public. As previously mentioned, the Milan Centrale Station is an important station and is one of the most utilized stations in Europe. It would be utilized for evil things during the war as well. The station played a major role during the Holocaust in Italy, when Jewish inmates from the San Vittore Prison, previously captured in northern Italy, would be taken to a secret track, Binario 21, underneath the station to be deported to extermination camps. *(Milano Centrale, n.d.)* The fascists were not subtle in their weaponization of the Milan Central Station.

The Santa Maria Novella Station in Florence was a more rationalist and subtle take on the fascist messaging that Mussolini had inflicted on the public of Italy through maintaining a strong

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presence in all places that people could frequent. The design was originally going to be one of Angiolo Mazzoni. His vision was not as rational and as deliberately fascist as the regime wanted however, so a competition was formed for architects to send in their designs for one of the next most influential stations in Italy during Mussolini's regime. The competition generated five hundred different design possibilities made by ninety-eight participants, and Mussolini chose Gruppo Toscano, a team that included Giovanni Michelucci, Nello Baroni, Pier Niccolò Berardi, Italo Gamberini, Sarre Guarnieri and Leonardo Lusanna. This was a controversial choice however, the mayor of Florence did not approve of this design and there was much debate about the proposal.



(Korey, 2015)

Ultimately, Mussolini made the final decision to go with the design, and the mayor's opinion was overruled by the fascist regime. (Korey, 2015) In 1933 the Gruppo Toscano was awarded the bid and by the end of October in 1935, the train station was able to open. The lead architect, Michelucci, was a major advocate for the rationalist style, the architect himself declared that the building of Santa Maria Novella was born "in massima libertà, da tendenze

diverse, con vari contributi che non rispecchiano un unico stile” (in total liberty, from different trends, with different contributions that don’t reflect one single style). (Korey, 2015)

“The new train station had to work within certain limitations. An adjacent post office and an essential floor plan already defined by Mazzoni were part of it. And the architects had to deal with the extreme closeness of the Gothic church of Santa Maria Novella, whose apsidal side is across from the station entrance. Their solution was of course criticized, but their explanation was that their solution of an accentuated horizontality and modernity expresses, on the one hand, a sense of being a terminal, the end of a journey, but is also intended to not rival the monumental verticality of the earlier building.”
(Korey, 2015)



(Firenze S. M. Novella, n.d.)



(Firenze S. M. Novella, n.d.)

As seen in the images, the exterior of the building uses solid and basic stones with some large iron framed windows that is what makes the station recognizable and unique. The waterfall of glass on the station is 2.4 meters high and is a primary source of natural light, illuminating the entrance, main hallway, and the area the trains arrive behind it. (Korey, 2015) On the inside of the station, the stripes in the marble are similar to the stripes in the gothic church across the street. The urban placement of the station contributes to the idea of forced fascism because of where it is situated in the city. Florence's church is an important part of the city that people would flock to, and that also means that people had to go to the train station. The train station

itself was also an important place in Italy that people went to and arrived at. The non intuitive layout of the station with the rails running perpendicular to the station contributes to the layout affecting the movements of the people using it.

“The building presents a low horizontal mass, bare and compact. It was conceived as a modern equivalent of Florence’s city walls, which Michelucci had celebrated less than a year earlier for their simple, pure surfaces (Etlin 1991, 310). In both design and materials—it employs unpolished pietra forte, the typical stone used for Florentine civil architecture since the Middle Ages—the new station harmonized with its context, despite its undisputable modernity. Michelucci also explained in a letter that the building created a balance of masses in the square, because through its horizontal movement it emphasized the vertical movement of the adjacent church of Santa Maria Novella (Conforti et al. 2016, 26). The only element that interrupts the uniformity of the façade is the glass window composed of seven sections, the so-called waterfall of glass, which ‘flows’ over the building from one side to the other.” (Billiani and Pennacchiotti, 2019)

Because of the plain facade that is without any decorative design features, there is a perpetuation of the rationalist and functional fascist aesthetics. Billiani and Pennacchiotti describe it well; “Three monumental fasci littori, emblem of the regime, placed on the Eastern corner of the façade and removed after the fall of the regime were the only exceptions to this rule. Inside, the building is also marked by an antimonumental and anti-rhetorical style, visible, for instance, in the elegant lettering of the signs indicating the different parts of the station.” They also note that the station is also adorned with artworks that realize the fascist ideas and educate citizens through the artwork. Although it seems like a more subtle design endorsed by the fascists, the understanding that the fascist message is delivered through the architecture of the

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station is still present and the public is still unable to escape the fascist regime messages and symbolism in this design that Mussolini himself chose.

In Venice, another modern train station was built to be yet another vessel of fascism to inflict upon Italy. The Venetians were not immune to the inescapable fascist regime, even on the water at the Grand Canal. The Venice Station is still one of the only modern buildings facing the Grand Canal, and perpetuating the rational design of the fascists.

Angiolo Mazzoni presented design plans for this public work of architecture in 1924, but the political regime was shifting and moving forward with the plans had to be postponed. Mazzoni had lots of other public spaces being built for the fascist regime at the time, studying for over 15 years, and presenting many other variations during that time. Eventually, a competition was held in 1934 for the construction of the railway yard. An architect named Virgilio Vallot won but the project remained suspended for another two years. Minister Benni, employed by Mussolini, finally entrusted the project to Vallot and Mazzoni in collaboration and then again to Mazzoni when renovations were needed. (*Venezia S. Lucia*, n.d.)



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(Venezia S. Lucia, n.d.)

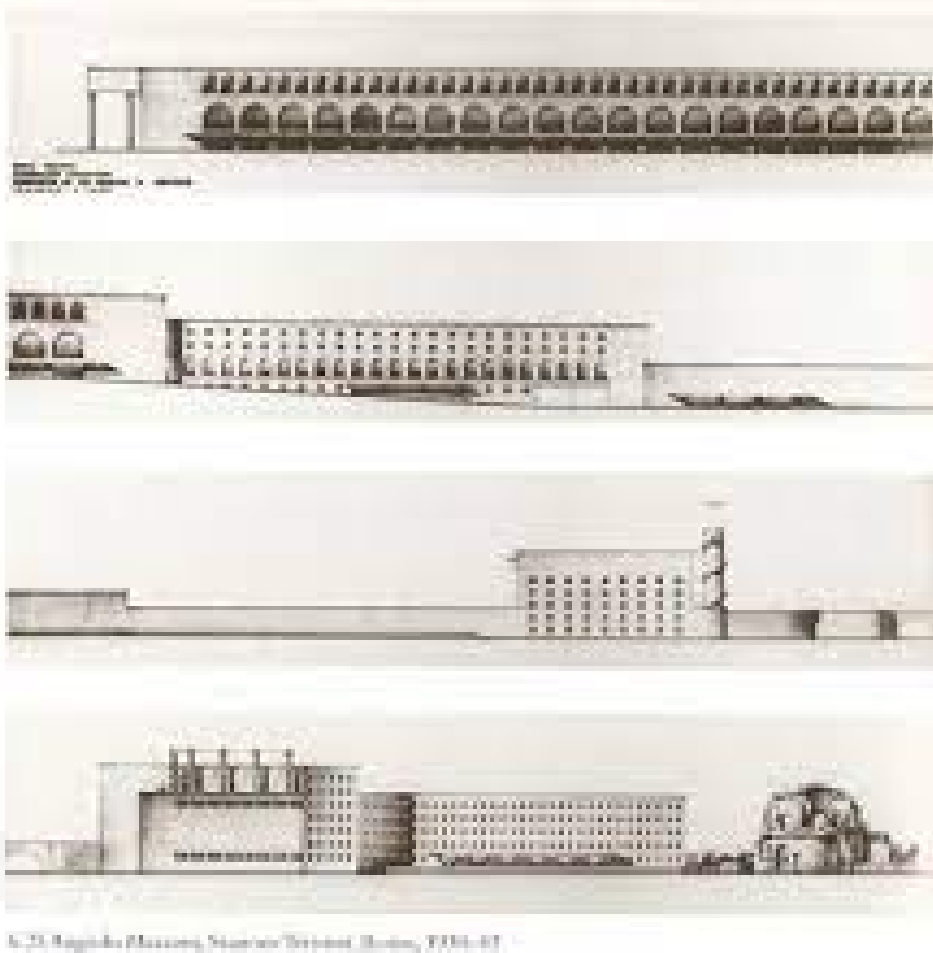
As it sits now, the building was completed after the Second World War by Paolo Perilli, as the political climate was once again shifting and the fascist regime no longer had the authority to promote Mazzoni's involvement in the development of the railway station.

The railway station itself sits very low to the ground with a rather long and wide facade so that it does not dominate its surroundings. Next to the station, along the Grand Canal, is a church with a lot of height. This weighed into the design choice of making the station less obvious on the canal, and having it blend in as if it was maybe always there. This strategy is one way that the fascists could further attempt to rewrite history using the urban environment, filling in the gaps in the city with modern architecture that did not obstruct the historic surroundings, complimenting the buildings that made Italy feel like Italy. Once again, the fascist regime utilized public architecture in order to control and invade the masses of Italy.

The Rome Termini as Mazzoni designed it was a collaboration of himself, Minister Benni, and Mussolini. The project was supposed to be an expansion of the old train station. The first few designs envisioned the station underground to cross the city below the surface, meeting at the Termini. Mazzoni begged for a design that embodied classical architectural styles, with large open spaces and massive arches, an atrium spanning an inconceivable distance, and an "imposing temple gate" to filter people from the streets into this palace-like structure. Mazzoni understood the implications of how important a train station could be for transporting people from the physical location to feeling like they were small and part of a larger philosophy or ideal, an idea that the fascists would count on. While the ideology was one that Mussolini supported,

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he could not sign off on the classical dream that Mazzoni had, he still wanted something more modern. More rational. More fascist.



(Devos et al., 2016)

The final product was a compromise for Mazzoni, but he was still able to utilize precious marbles to cover the walls and floors, suggesting the power and opulence of the fascist regime and this new Italy. The train station is understood by the fascist regime and by Mazzoni as a vessel for suggesting fascist propaganda to the people and creating something that is inescapable. This design was unable to be completely realized due to the war and Mazzoni having to flee to

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Columbia. The design of the current Roma Termini is a commission of the Montuori Vitellozzi group from after the political climate shifted again.

It is clear in each of these designs that the understanding of the train station as a vessel to communicate the fascist agenda and propaganda was evident to the fascist party and Mussolini himself. The process of these designs were intricate and strategic, each plan laid out tactfully to serve one man. That man being Mussolini.

Public Affairs and Conclusion:

Architects' interest in Mussolini was not one sided. Mussolini was also interested in them. He constantly wanted architects in his entourage everywhere that he traveled and visited in Italy, and he wanted them all to be working on ways to incorporate himself into their designs. He was inspired by their craft. Although Mussolini was formerly a journalist, he still considered himself a "Michaelangelo of followers" or an architect of people. (Nicoloso, 2022) As time went on however, he began to become insecure and was difficult to work with. He became erratic and was changing his mind about what style of architecture to endorse, looking at it in a way that was very telling that he cared A LOT about what Hitler thought of him.

LeCorbusier is an example of an architect that originally wanted to support Mussolini with urban design and architecture because he believed in Mussolini's mission of using fascist architecture to spread his message and conquer other countries to create new and improved cities. "Had Le Corbusier's sketch for the colonial capital of Addis Ababa been realized, it would have been one of the most ruthlessly planned cities of the twentieth century. On the 19th of August 1936, Le Corbusier wrote to Mussolini to offer his technical services and to comment on the appropriate design for the new cities of Africa Orientale Italiana, the Italian colonial empire. The design, which accompanied the letter, would show 'how a city for modern times is born' The new country, considered by Mussolini's architects to be a 'virgin territory' waiting to be transformed into Italian territory, was nothing less than the articulation of the ultimate ability to plan a society." (Woudstra, 2014)

When we hear about how inspired prominent architects were about this exciting new practice of forcing the regime down the throats of citizens through architecture and Mussolini's

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goal of bringing back the power of the great Roman Empire and their use of design to manipulate the citizens, it makes us think about the mental state that we have when we are in our own environments. Are we still influenced by these decisions today? We eat, sleep, walk, work, and live in propaganda. We are designing for propaganda unconsciously. “Do these environments still "celebrate" the regime that created them? If not, what do they mean or evoke for those who experience them today? What, for that matter, is the purpose of doggedly collecting, carefully preserving, and professionally displaying the emblems and artifacts of Fascism (or National Socialism or Communism) as the Wolfsonian Foundation now does?” (Doordan, 1997) The mind games that the fascist regime successfully played on the public of Italy, and eventually the globe, can not be undermined. Doordan continues to describe it accurately as “Italian Fascism was extraordinarily successful in creating a politically charged culture. It was a political culture that required constant maintenance in order to insert itself as a substantial element of the larger, enduring habits and patterns of Italian culture. The regime was driven to generate an ever more pervasive image of Fascism as inextricably woven into the fabric of daily life.” (Doordan, 1997)

“Fascists did not invent lighting fixtures and train stations. They did attempt, however, to imbue them with a specific political theme: the inspirational importance of Benito Mussolini and the Fascist Party.”

(Doordan, 1997)

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