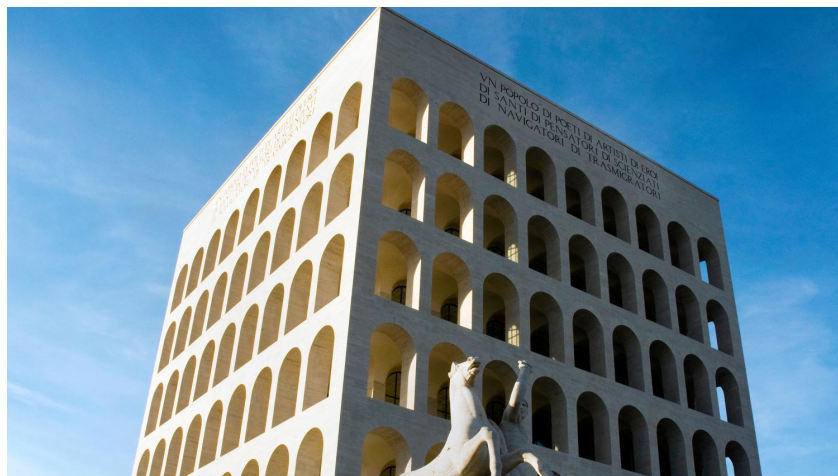


Website puts Italy's fascist monuments on the map

Project aims to highlight the far right's cultural influence today

Philip Willan, Rome

Monday November 28
2022, 4.15pm GMT,
The Times



The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana in Rome is one of the examples of fascist architecture that is being mapped by website
ALAMY

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Despite its striking façade of white marble arches, the

Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana in Rome was criticised by many as a poor choice for the luxury fashion house Fendi to base its headquarters.

The building, better known as the Square Colosseum, is an example of classic fascist architecture and still bears an inscription drawn from Benito Mussolini's speech announcing the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935.

[Italy](#) has often been criticised for its failure to purge the symbols that evoke its fascist past and is today led by a prime minister who can trace the political roots of her party back to the former dictator.

Now a website has been created to map the [monuments and place names](#) that commemorate fascism and track their influence in contemporary society.

The project, which started four years ago and can be found at luoghifascismo.it, announced it had discovered more than 1,400 sites commemorating fascism.

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“This is the first project that tackles a subject matter that is partially unknown,” Giulia Albanese, a historian from Padua University who is co-ordinating the project, said. “It’s important to reflect on it and to reconstruct our

history.”

The organisers are convinced there are many more buildings to map and have invited members of the public to suggest additional listings.



Giulia Albanese, a historian from Padua University, said the retention of plaques and artworks linked to fascism was not politically neutral

A BRUNI/GETTY IMAGES

The project is backed by the Istituto Ferruccio Parri, a research institute based in Milan and named after an anti-fascist partisan.

The choice of street names and the retention of plaques and artworks linked to fascism is not politically neutral, Albanese said. Some of the names have even been added since the end of the Second World War, denoting a failure to repudiate a violent, dictatorial regime.

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Italo Balbo and Michele Bianchi, for example, were founders of the fascist movement more than 100 years

ago and still have streets named after them around the country.

“There’s a lack of knowledge of the celebrative value of these monuments throughout Italian society. Italians are often not bothered by their presence, regardless of their political orientation,” the historian said.

While the far right worked to commemorate and rehabilitate figures associated with fascism, the rest of society was indifferent to the phenomenon, she said. “It doesn’t mean that Italians are nostalgic, but they think of fascism as a mild regime. They have difficulty recognising it as violent and oppressive.”

Albanese said she did not expect the project to run into difficulty with the new government. [Giorgia Meloni’s](#) Brothers of Italy party is an offshoot of the Italian Social Movement (MSI), which gave a postwar home to many of Mussolini’s supporters, but the new prime minister has repeatedly stressed that she has no connection to fascism.

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“This is an opportunity for them to demonstrate that they are fully democratic. There is a problem of coherence, a need to recognise the criminal aspects of

the regime, which in some ways provided inspiration for Hitler's Germany. Italian society can distance itself definitively from that now," Albanese said, adding that it was important not to forget the political context in which it was created and the idea of society of the totalitarian regime that underpinned it.

Many of the buildings have manifest artistic merits. "Fascism wasn't great at urban planning, demolishing important vestiges of the past, but it combined innovation and tradition in architecture with results that can still be appreciated today," Michele Annesi, a Rome-based architect, said.



The Mussolini obelisk still stands in Rome
ALAMY

"Much of the architecture from that time has been re-evaluated and the judgment is generally positive. Setting aside the celebration of the regime, the quality of the buildings was excellent."

He cited the Foro Italico sports centre in Rome — originally the Foro Mussolini — where marble statues of male athletes decorate the arenas that today host international tennis tournaments. The structures were at

said.

“The buildings in Piazza Augusto Imperatore have mosaics that are 100 years old and are still in perfect condition. Today you can have problems after five years,” he said.

Bent on modernising and unifying Italy, Mussolini set his stamp on the public architecture of railway stations and post offices, as well as the massive “palaces of justice” that reinforced the coercive power of the state.

Fascist monuments in the northern city of Bolzano have proved particularly contentious. A triumphal arch designed by Marcello Piacentini celebrates Italy’s victory in the First World War and the Italianisation of an originally German-speaking part of the country. Nearby is a tax office bearing a gigantic bas-relief celebrating the rise of fascism and depicting Mussolini on horseback.

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Local authorities defused the tension by creating a museum in a crypt underneath the arch to address the area’s divisive history, with an LED-illuminated quote from Hannah Arendt, the political philosopher and Holocaust survivor, emblazoned across the fascist frieze.

Written in the region's three official languages, German, Italian and Ladin, the projected light reads: "Nobody has the right to obey."

"The victory arch became a focus for protests by radical Italian and German-speaking groups, but placing the buildings in their historic context has halted the polemics," Albanese said. "It has shown how you can put an end to these things."

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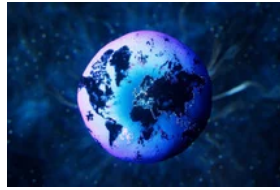
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Philip Willan



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It is not classic Fascist architecture. It is classic Art Deco architecture.

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Si

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AOT Le Snarque

15 HOURS AGO

JP Creighton

T

14 HOURS AGO

...

Many years ago saw that Palazzo from a distance from the train heading into Rome from the airport and, without knowing its history, just thought it was a striking and quite beautiful piece of architecture.

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C

...

Snap! I just pretty much the above before seeing your post. I remember being surprised that it doesn't appear on the regular tourist trail. I only discovered it **Torch by the Battery Boy** by accident.

16 HOURS AGO

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G

...

There no such thing as "fascist art" or "fascist" architecture. There are different and interesting forms of architecture that flourished during the twenty years of the fascist regime, most of them the result of the modernist trends of the first two decades of the XX century, of which there is an interesting pictorial revue these days at the Royal Academy of Arts. Whereas in Germany the regime strictly controlled the arts, and banned many forms of it, like the expressionists, in Italy Fascism is one of the most astonishingly creative periods in architecture, thanks especially to the many initiative of the governements, central and local, in the filed of urban modernization. **Guido Benvenuto** that will give you an incredible experience of an open museum of this, with a huge part of its city center made of rationalist, sometimes dreamlike (De Chirico, in painting), and at time monumental architecture. Gio Ponti, who worked from 1920 to 1970 left 40 buildings in Milan signed by him. By looking at them, one goes through fifty years of architecture. The demonization of Fascism in all fields is the result of the leftist monopoly on culture in Italy after the war. It makes much more sense to look at some of those masterpieces without an ideological point of view. Sorry for my spelling mistakes, I am Italian.

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J

...

You may be partly right, but certainly not entirely (there is a descriptive article online, Fascist Architecture, Architecture-History .org).

The Fascist architect Giuseppe Terragni realised the Sala O in the Palazzo degli Esposizioni in Rome in 1932. In it the principles of Fascism were articulated thus:

'The Sacralisation of the New Man's Total Politics through the Arts.

Shaping the New Man's Reality by Fashioning National Myths.

7 HOURS AGO

Monumentalism: Visualising Subjectivity and Objectivity'.

That was a pretty clear statement.

Though there may not have been state directives, there was a fairly clear aesthetic, which is apparent today when you see see Fascist, or Fascist era architecture today in Italy. Whether unconscious, or adhering to the principles the the brave new Fascist world is for historians to analyse. But in Mussolini's Italy you were expected to toe the line. Let's be clear, Fascism was not a walk in the park, even less so under the vile RSI, and that must never be forgotten, if we are not to repeat it,

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M

...

You're quite right.

Regrettably, there is such a thing as propaganda, also recognised for attempting to force square pegs into round holes for abstruse political purposes, which is tainting so much of our lives today.

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MR

1 HOUR AGO

R

...

Funny how a website and a movement are set up to warn of the pitfalls of extreme fascism when the inevitable consequences of far-left totalitarian systems are conveniently ignored.

Oh what joy to have been be in the USSR-gulags, collective poverty, censorship, mass-murders, ethnic cleansing-the list goes on!

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○

This comment violated our policy.

Richard Baker

R

10 HOURS AGO

...

Was responding to the unstated but nevertheless apparent disdain of the article and the quoted Albanese for anything perceived as right of centre. And absolutely not conflating Italy with the USSR-merely that both systems typically end up being the same in effect.

Subject to correction Stazione Centrale in Milan is another striking edifice from the Mussolini era.

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Richard Baker

14 HOURS AGO

R

...

No country should destroy its cultural heritage, good or bad. Only the woke and extremists (like the Taliban) want to do so.

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D

...

Whatever its intellectual or philosophical origins, the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana is one of the coolest buildings in Italy. It didn't hurt anybody.

Richard-In-Willesden

12 HOURS AGO Reply · ☆ Recommend (10) · Share

S

...

History should be respected for what it is and its vestiges should be kept intact as far as possible, as a testimony of the past whatever its positive or negative implications. Obliterating twenty years of Italian architecture developed under the Fascist regime would not erase Fascism but would simply erase an important page in the development of architecture. As Michele Annesi rightly points out there are many valuable buildings built during the regime, amongst them the "Casa del Fascio" in Como by Giuseppe Terragni, which, as most Architects would agree, constitutes a turning point in the history of modern Architecture. Italo Balbo was famous not so much for ~~Silvio Marescotti~~ rather for his accomplishments as an aviator as Claudio G. Segre points out in his biography and as the street named after him in Chicago, Balbo Drive, confirms.

12 HOURS AGO
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J

...

There's no such thing as 'Fascist Architecture'

The architecture itself is defined as rational, based on Vitruvian proportion and is a less articulated though harmonious expression of the classical language of architecture.

Much has survived essentially because it isn't daubed in fascist slogans and the like. Much of it is also very well-designed and with first-rate materials.

The Casa del Fascio in Como and the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana in Rome are great examples.

James Hill

(Edited)

13 HOURS AGO

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C

...

I remember seeing the square coliseum with my own eyes for the first time while passing in a taxi. It was one of the most fascinating buildings I'd ever seen and has long been one of my favourite buildings in the world. the whole EUR district has some striking buildings.

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M

...

Colosseum.

~~The Coliseum~~
The Coliseum is on St Martin's Lane.

15 HOURS AGO
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↳ 2 replies

C

...

The suburb of EUR is well worth a visit when in Rome.

Mr N D

Get there on the Metro and see striking minimalist architecture. The Square Colosseum and the Obelisk are the best known landmarks but there's a lot more to see on a leisurely walk around EUR.

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