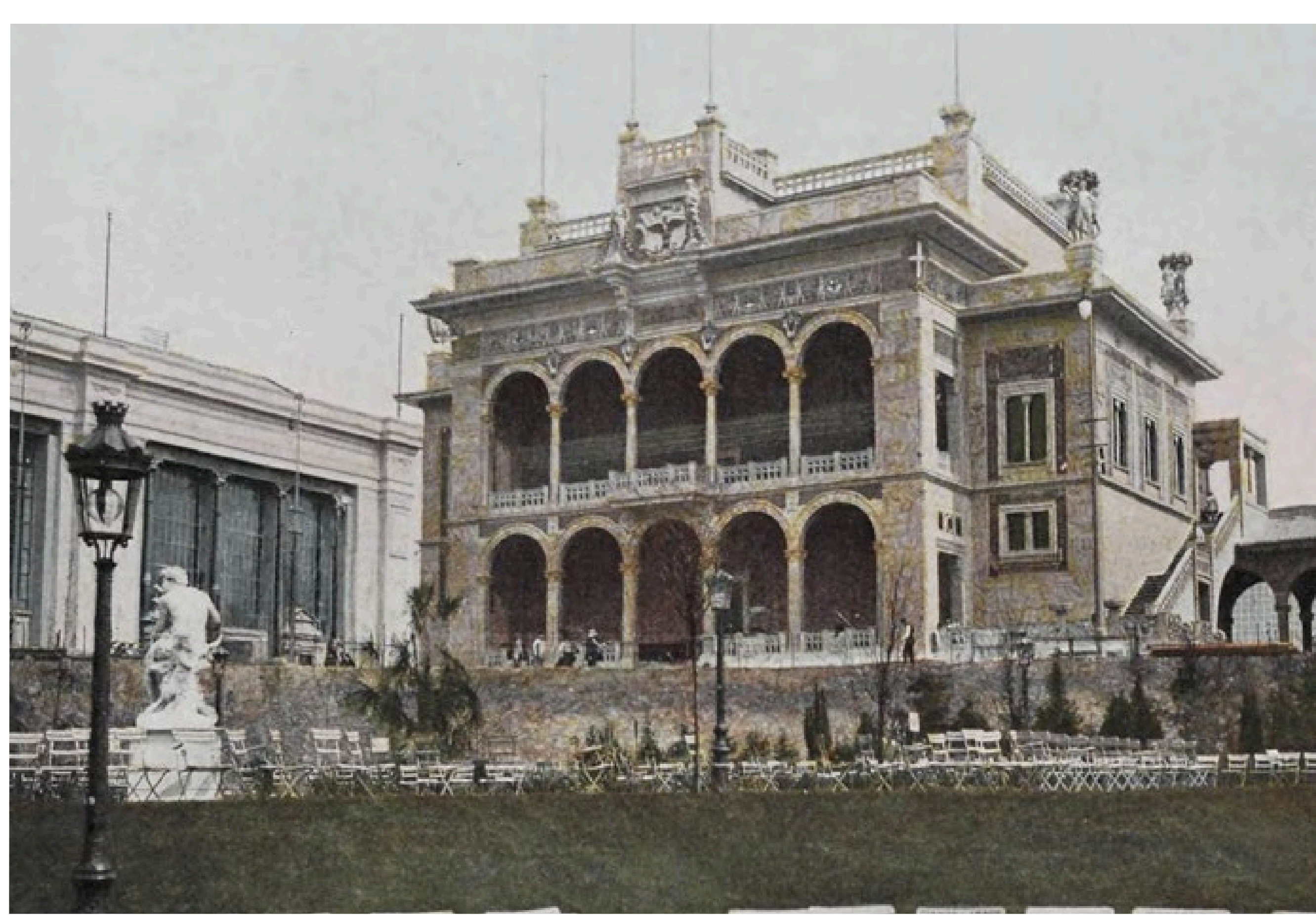


# THE SCHOOLS AT THE WORLD FAIR

In 1910, the schools of Montesca and Rovigliano participated in the World Fair in Brussels, showcasing their innovative educational approach to an international audience for the first time. This initiative, born from the pioneering vision of Alice Hallgarten, aimed to spark international interest in an innovative and complex educational project designed for the children of Umbrian farmers, many of whom started school without even knowing their own surname. Among the wonders displayed in Brussels, visitors from around the world could view the pupils' notebooks as well as teaching materials developed by Alice Hallgarten's two small rural schools. A catalogue outlining their educational curriculum guided the reader in their exploration of the exhibit. At the World Fair, the schools were awarded a gold medal and a *diplôme d'honneur*.

The exhibition *Alice in Brussels*, hosted at the Municipal Art Gallery of Città di Castello, revisits this participation and reconciles two seemingly incompatible aspects of the project: on one hand, the very modest size of the two rural schools, established by a woman in the early twentieth century to improve the prospects of the children of local tenant farmers; and on the other, the grandeur, complexity, and global reach of an event such as the World Fair. Hallgarten used the 1910 "Universal and International Exhibition", the official event name, as a platform to disseminate an educational project that originated from her tireless research. This project took her across Europe and the United States, where she sought collaborations with other women experts in science and established connections with some of the most prestigious intellectuals and pedagogists of her time.



In this context, the gap between the "local" and "rural" on one hand, and the "international" and "universal" on the other, appears much narrower. This gap is further diminished when considering the interest her work garnered from leading figures in education, such as Maria Montessori. After visiting Montesca for the first time in 1908, Montessori conducted her first teacher training course there in 1909, introducing her now world-renowned "method". Similarly, in 1923, Giuseppe Lombardo Radice implemented several innovations developed in Alice's schools across all elementary schools in the Kingdom of Italy. These innovations included the "Subject of the Month," the "Daily Diary", and the "Calendar," which became known as the "Monthly Illustrated Composition," the "School Life Diary", and the "Montesca Calendar", respectively.

The teaching approach in the Franchetti schools was built off the physical and geographical characteristics of the Umbria region. Additionally, it drew from the local cultural, which provided a familiar foundation upon which international pedagogical techniques were introduced, many of which were inspired by Anglo-Saxon educational models. This blend of local traditions, regional insights, international influences, and State educational requirements enabled Hallgarten and her collaborators to craft a remarkably cohesive, innovative and holistic learning approach. Their achievement stands as a testament to their profound and meticulous educational efforts.

The park of the Franchettis' Villa played a central role in educational activities, so much so that La Montesca became known as "the school without books". However, in this "school in the park", books were indeed present, sourced from many different countries, and sometimes specially translated by Hallgarten herself. Today, with the ever-growing academic focus on environmental sustainability and ecological concerns—alongside a world increasingly shaped by locally sourced products and global connections—Alice's century-old school project remains more relevant than ever.