

Terragni and La Casa del Fascio: Rationalism and Fascism
an essay reconciling modernism and fascism in Terragni's Casa del Fascio

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Giuseppe Terragni is a world renowned Italian architect who practiced mostly in the city of Como from the 1920s to the 1940s. The combination of the period and the place where Terragni worked is unique for two principal reasons: modernism and Fascism. Terragni's combination of those two ideologies culminated in the creation of *La Casa del Fascio* in the central piazza of Como. The building itself was practically the house of the fascist party in Como - a historically nationalist city in northern Italy tightly related to fascism. The building's location and function are important in understanding how Terragni managed to get the project approved by the local leading figures of the fascist party. Such a radical building in reactionary fascist Como meant that in order for it to have been constructed, it had to be widely accepted by the Italian fascist party. The fascist endorsement therefore indirectly implied it was one of the best expressions of Fascism in the architectural form. The building however was at the same time modernist in spirit. Terragni's architecture is defined in Italy as Rationalism – a modernist evolution of the Italian Futurism of the 1920s. The semantics are important in that modernism *per se* was not what the fascist party aspired to architecturally. Modernism was presumably a highly egalitarian and international architectural movement. Italian fascism represented the political opposite of these values. Architecturally however the formal expression of modernism coupled with sizeable amounts of monumentality was everything Fascism could have asked for. The combination of architecture and politics in the *Casa del Fascio* are therefore important in understanding the arranged marriage between modernism and Fascism. The objective of this endeavor is therefore to understand how Terragni was able to create an example of modernist architecture highly praised by fascist ideology in the context of inter-war Europe.

The plan of argumentation takes two paths: the theoretical architectural dialectic in the historical context of fascist Italy and the practical comparison between modernist and fascist values as interpreted by Terragni at *La Casa del Fascio*. The first argumentative path is an attempt to explain the interplay between the remnants of 19th century architecture and Italian rationalism in the light of Fascism. It is important to note that even in the late thirties the fascist regime was still undecided as to what architectural movement to endorse.¹ While perfectly capable of illustrating the fascist manifesto through architectural values, the rationalist movement was in a constant theoretical public debate with other principal architectural movements in fascist Italy.² The dialectic between the two prevailing movements – rationalism and neoclassicism – erupted in a long public polemic which stemmed from Terragni's *Casa del Fascio*. The rationalists were represented by Terragni and the *Gruppo 7* rationalist movement while the neoclassicists were a continuation of the *Novecento Italiano Group* initiated by Gio Ponti. The infamous controversy that played out in the Italian press is a prime example of a public clash between the two movements. The abundant primary sources – both from national newspapers and foreign literary interventions - attest to the importance of *La Casa del Fascio* to this architectural clash not only in the local context of Como but in the wider international perspective of inter-war Europe. It is therefore important to establish an understanding of the historical context as well as the accurate form of the polemic before delving into the exploration of the specific arguments and counter-arguments presented by neoclassicists and rationalists.

¹ Schumacher, p.23

² D'Amia, p.67

The polemic originated from a number of articles and counter-articles in different Northern Italian newspapers – more specifically the main newspapers of Piedmont and Lombardy. Giorgio Ciucci's chapter on La Casa del Fascio provides an extensive explanation of this verbal conflict:

"All' origine della polemica sulla Casa del Fascio di Como puo ritenersi un articolo di Ugo Ojetti apparso sull "Corriere della Sera" dell 8 novembre 1936 e intitolato "Supplica alla fantasia". L'invito alla fantasia e diretto agli architetti che "copiano le facciate delle case dalla tavola pitagorica".³

Ojetti's article was directed at the group of architects who were preparing propositions for the Italian pavilion at the 1941 World Fair which was to be held in Rome.⁴ Ojetti argued that the example to be followed was Piacentini's Italian pavilion at the 1937 Paris World Fair: a strange combination termed *simplified neoclassicism* which attempted to create a monumental amalgam of Novecento neoclassicism and Gruppo 7 rationalism.⁵ While mildly successful in fascist circles, simplified neoclassicism was not the future architecture which would represent Fascism according to Terragni and the Gruppo 7 rationalists. The blending of neoclassicism and modernism was repudiated by a number of articles written by the Gruppo 7 rationalists. These articles were followed by an anonymous editorial⁶ which claimed that the rationalists were creating mere copies of modernist buildings found elsewhere in Europe. The attack was specifically directed at Terragni and La Casa del Fascio:

³ "The origin of the Casa del Fascio of Como polemic can be traced back to an article of Ugo Ojetti – published in the "Corriere della Sera" on the 8th of November 1936 – titled "A Supplication for Fantasy". The invitation to Fantasy is directed at architects that according to Ojetti: "copy the facades of structures from the Pythagorean table". Ciucci, p.174

⁴ Ciucci, p.174

⁵ Ciucci, p.174

⁶ Ciucci, p.175

"...questo capolavoro è copiato senza pudore da costruzioni tedesche e
 cecoslovacche"⁷

The anonymous author was referring respectively to the Asylum for Elders in Kassel by Haesler and the Vesna Housewife School in Brno by Fuchs, both completed before Terragni's building. As a reply to this affront Sartoris – a close friend of Terragni as well as a member of Gruppo 7 – sent to both international architects a picture of *La Casa del Fascio* explaining the accusations and asking for their frank opinion in the matter.⁸ Both architects reply excluding any wrongdoing from Terragni's part. Fuchs claims that the two structures are so different in their essence that they cannot even be considered a derivation of one another let alone a direct copy. He believes what unites the buildings is their proud modernist spirit.⁹ Haesler states that both works are rooted in a need for ideological architecture which

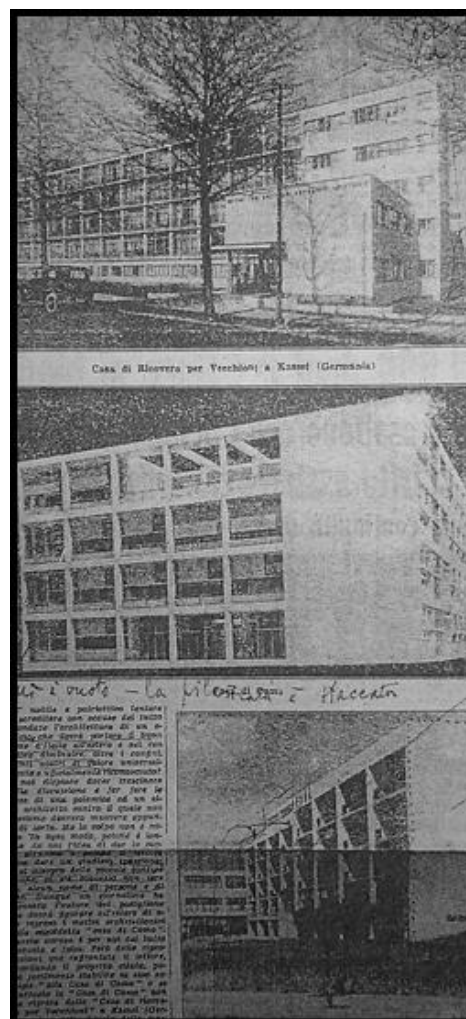


Figure 1 - Asylum for Elders, Casa del Fascio and Vesna School

can clearly represent German Nazism and Italian Fascism.¹⁰ The idea of political similarity in the architecture of Haesler and Terragni suggested by the former is an interesting concept which illustrates how architects in another country with a relatively

⁷ "...this so called masterpiece (referring to La Casa del Fascio n.d.) has been shamelessly copied from Italian and German constructions" Ciucci, p.174

⁸ Ciucci, p.177

⁹ Ciucci, p.178

¹⁰ Ciucci, p.177

similar political ideology were fighting a parallel and analogous war with prior architectural movements. It is also an example that allows the argument to escape the local provincial connotations of Como architecture and give it an international European character. The polemic afterwards mutated into a series of articles and counter-articles which illustrate attempts to appeal to fascist ideology by both neoclassicists and rationalists. Both movements were vying for official support by the party leadership in order to finally resolve this long conflict. While both neoclassicists and rationalists claimed to have numerous objective arguments on their side, for the sake of conciseness and clarity the main three arguments from each movement are described and analyzed in the following paragraphs.

One of the main arguments presented by the neoclassicists was that Fascism looked back to ancient Rome and a period of nationalistic strength for Italy. Therefore ancient Roman classical architecture should serve as an inspiration for the new nationalist Italy. Ideologically called the ancient triumphant past by the Fascist regime, the Roman period produced innumerable examples of widely imitated classical architecture. Neoclassical architecture would therefore be a logical choice in representing the regime. The call to the triumphant ancient past should have been translated – according to the neoclassicists – to a call for ancient classical architecture. Mussolini's march to Rome was what energized Italy and united the fascist movement and therefore a similar aspiration would be essential in creating a consolidated architectural movement. The problem with this argument however was also inherent to fascist ideology. Architecturally a lot of ancient structures had been copied in the recent past. Fascism claimed to be a modern movement which constituted a sharp break with

the recent past. It was therefore difficult to try and integrate fascist ideology into new structures which were essentially copies of buildings from the hated recent past. Neoclassicists opposed the counter-argument by claiming that neoclassicism would represent a new form of classicism which would be distinguished from prior local architecture. This however was definitely a hard sell considering most of the population did not have the preparation necessary to make such a subtle architectural differentiation.

The related main rationalist argument was that a sharp break with the past needed to happen in order to make the identification of ideology simple in the architecture of fascist Italy. The rationalists believed that Fascism needed a new and distinctive architectural movement which was easily identifiable and helpful in translating the idea of political ideology to architecture. Mantero claimed that the fascist idea would be clearly expressed in visual as well as material terms through rationalist architecture.¹¹ The modern technology widely used by the European modernist was slowly but steadily making its way to Italy. Furthermore the exploration of new materials by the rationalists would produce distinguishing architecture of which there were very few examples in Italy. In this discussion about ideology and architecture it is important to shortly glance at the relationship between ideology and architect. Terragni was a utopian fascist. He truly believed in the ideas and concepts which permeated Fascism in the pre-war period.¹² Nevertheless he was careful not to confound politics with architecture. He believed political expression should be of a subtle kind. It should be embedded within the architecture rather than exposed in its façade through symbols

¹¹ Mantero, p.130

¹² Schumacher, p.48

and banners. Fascist ideology lived within the building, not on its exterior walls according to Terragni. This made him extremely inflexible in spite of the multiple demands made by some local traditionalist fascists during the construction of *La Casa del Fascio*. It was only in 1932, after years of designs and iterations that the provincial party secretary approved Terragni's project for the new fascist home in Como.¹³ His strategy in achieving a rationalist building which intelligently concealed all direct references to Fascism will be discussed more in depth later in the essay.

The second neoclassical argument was closely associated with the properties of visual grandeur and extreme monumentality – both concepts highly sought after by Fascism. The neoclassicists claimed that their movement created an architectural form which was properly suitable to Fascism. Relating it to their first argument of historical triumph, images like the *Roman Colosseum* were visually monumental, conveying a great sense of respect to populations and therefore being more appropriate for Fascists than any kind of modernist building. The neoclassicism that stemmed from the *Novecento group* argued for the idea of a “Third Rome” – a third triumph of the city following the ancient Empire and the Rome of the 17th Century Counterreformation Papacy.¹⁴ The reconfirmation of the city as an international power would be accompanied by a resurgence of classical architecture – a style which was highly esteemed during both prior mentioned time-periods. The problem of this argument which was widely attacked by the rationalists was the narrow vision of grandeur by the neoclassicists. The rationalists believed that while monumentality of structures might have been judged by its size in the past, current modern society expected a more

¹³ D'amia, p.14

¹⁴ Schumacher, p.23

intelligent and appropriate vision of greatness - one which was not simply related to the size or visual architectural form of buildings.

The argument of rationalist monumentality was one of the most complex yet most interesting arguments offered by the *Gruppo 7*. A concept of grandeur through size was superseded by the rationalists with architecture the monumentality of which was embedded – in true modernist spirit – to its functionality and overall architecture rather than its sheer size.¹⁵ Terragni believed therefore that monumentality would be embedded within the architecture like fascist ideology. He did not believe that a show of force through simple visual stimuli would appropriately reflect what Fascism was trying to convey to the people through architecture. The political message would be better communicated from a strictly modern interpretation: one which by using the modern material of glass would convey a structure which was transparent yet stable.¹⁶ The rationalists believed in an architecture which used monumentality as a metaphor for its regularity and strict formalism; an architecture which avoided the typical high Littoria tower – a common element of Party buildings in the Fascists era.¹⁷ The provincial fascist milieu of Como however widely expressed their disappointment at the lack of such typical elements as the Littoria tower and the speeches pulpit which were missing from most rationalist architecture including *La Casa del Fascio*.¹⁸ Rather than understanding the monumentality expressed in the type of modern materials and the message of austerity and sincerity stemming from the building, some of those local

¹⁵ Mantero, p.14

¹⁶ D'Amia, p.64

¹⁷ D'Amia, p.65

¹⁸ D'Amia, p.67

leaders tried to cling at prior and much simpler conceptions of monumentality and grandeur.

The third argument used by the neoclassicists played on the connotations and inspirations of the rationalist movement and its inappropriateness to the extreme nationalism and political power associated with Fascism. According to the neoclassical movement, rationalism was an offshoot of modernism. Modernism in the thirties was an international movement – it argued for standardization and industrial production rather than a national character of architecture. Furthermore the modernist movement had inherited a number of elements of prior and contemporary artistic movements. Russian constructivism for example was a movement which despite its demagogic similarities was the ideological enemy of Fascism. A number of famous modernists were associated with political and social problems which were not a concern of Fascism. It is beside the point to prove a strong connection between leftist ideology and modernism. While allegedly such a link existed, what is relevant to the discussion is the number of colliding values between modernism and Fascism.¹⁹ Another element which disassociated modernism from Fascism was the close relation of modern artistic movements to architectural modernism. Expressionism and cubism although present in inter-war Italy were generally despised by Italian fascists.²⁰ The liberal internationality and the opposition to abstract art in general did not conform to the rhetoric of formalistic monumentality associated with Fascism.²¹ The neoclassicists however tried to avoid the modality by which the rationalists described themselves. While semantics may seem

¹⁹ Mantero, p.10

²⁰ Ciucci, p.10

²¹ Ciucci, p.10

superfluous in such an ideological conflict, they were important in differentiating the rationalist movement from unsuitable elements of modernism.

Terragni and the *Gruppo 7* explained rationalism as a movement which was inspired by the contemporary spirit of the modern movement. While the rationalists partly denied inspiration from futurism²², they did so intelligently by not repudiating it but rather indirectly suggesting a hidden thread connecting the two movements. Futurism was after all an important movement in Italy. It was importantly related to Fascism because of its characteristic national character. It was a movement born in Italy, something which party members considered important in its implied nationalist connotations. Furthermore both fascism and futurism advocated for triumph by violence, technology and youth. The futurists loathed everything old and were therefore dangerous opponents of the neoclassicists. Most importantly however rationalism was differentiated in a number of elements from modernism. Marciano explains Terragni's rationalism by comparing him to Le Corbusier and Gropius:

"...scansa il module europeo di Gropius e Corb dopo averlo esplorato.

Segna cosi, una svolta nel razionalismo italiano, travalicandone i convenzionalismi."²³

Terragni agreed to the fundamental principles of modernism yet did not inherit the prevalent formal solutions of the movement, employing a different architectural sensibility than most European modernists of the time.²⁴ Schumacher explains that the rationalist dilemma resided in the attempt to preserve modernity without adopting a

²² Schumacher, p.22

²³ "He (Terragni) evades the European module of Gropius and Le Corbusier after having explored it. He therefore marks a development of Italian rationalism by fleeing from typical conventionalism." Marciano, p.83

²⁴ Ciucci, p.14

modular formal aesthetic which would consume the national characteristics of the fascist movement.²⁵ Furthermore it is important to note that while opposing the neoclassicists a number of rationalist works illustrated the historical and architectural baggage of Italian designers. Schumacher describes the *Casa del Fascio* as Terragni's most patently modern building, which in its interior preserves a number of highly sophisticated Renaissance-inspired allusions.²⁶

Before moving into the practical path of argumentation it is important to concisely formulate a theoretical summary and conclusion. The first arguments appealed respectively to ancient history and future possibility. The neoclassicist promoted an extension of ideological respect for historical triumph to architectural values. The rationalists on the other hand believed in a reinvention of values in a new architecture which, by being easily identifiable, would constitute a clear connection with the new regime; a new symbol which would energize the people just as Mussolini's speeches did. The second arguments debated the conception of monumentality regarding the fascist movement. Neoclassicists argued for a visual grandeur which expressed strength and power through sheer size and scale. The rationalists on the other hand contended that the new political movement needed a sophisticated and intelligent conception of monumentality; one which resided in the functionality, structure, materiality and form of the building rather than its sheer size and simple visual impact. The third arguments discussed the inspirations and inheritances of the rationalist movement. The neoclassicists considered rationalism an Italian offshoot of modernism and discussed the inappropriateness of a relation between international modernism and

²⁵ Schumacher, p.31

²⁶ Schumacher, p.66

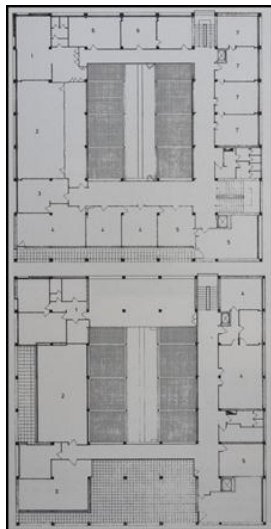
nationalist Fascism. The *Gruppo 7* and Terragni argued for the originality of rationalism and described the movement in the way which made it the most appealing to Fascist ideology. While fascists were just as confused after the *Casa del Fascio* polemic as they was before it, the specific arguments employed by the rationalists in their dialectic with the neoclassicists are seminal in understanding the practical aspects of rationalist architecture. The polemic while not really helping the fascist movement make its mind on a specific architecture, clarified the positions of both architectural movements in relation to Fascism. The second part of this endeavor will therefore try to locate the shared values between Fascism and rationalism in a specific case study: the *Casa del Fascio* by Giuseppe Terragni.

The second argumentative path attempts to practically explain how Terragni was able to integrate the aforesaid theoretical arguments in reconciling the highly radical fascists of Como to a modernist inspired architectural style. The *Casa del Fascio* is a formal expression of reinterpreted modernism through an Italian rationalist who was highly praised by most fascists. It is most importantly however a demonstration of the shared values between fascism and modernism. While 'values' may be a strong word connecting these two movements, it is appropriate in that it is one of the main reasons radical fascist from Como would choose a rationalist building as their central office. Furthermore this second part of the essay concerns the reactions to the structure by both politicians and the cultural milieu of Como ultimately concluding with the idea of unity which permeated Terragni's masterpiece in Como.

The *Casa del Fascio* in Como was basically a formal expression of the rationalist movement in structure and form. The building is able to reflect the city within its structure. It furthermore extends its interiors by expanding



through the glass on to the external piazza.²⁷ The internals are composed of a number of fundamental horizontal and vertical lines which support the wide use of different iterations of glass.²⁸ The perfectly square plan of the building – each side 33m²⁹ – surrounds an internal rectangular courtyard which is translated into the lobby³⁰ – the



most public space of *La Casa del Fascio*. The planning scheme and rectangular form have been interpreted by different critics as subtle classical influences injected by Terragni into his structure.³¹

³² The central covered zone creates the main assembly hall representing the physical as well as symbolic heart of the

²⁷ Terragni et. al. p.213

²⁸ Terragni et. al. p.214

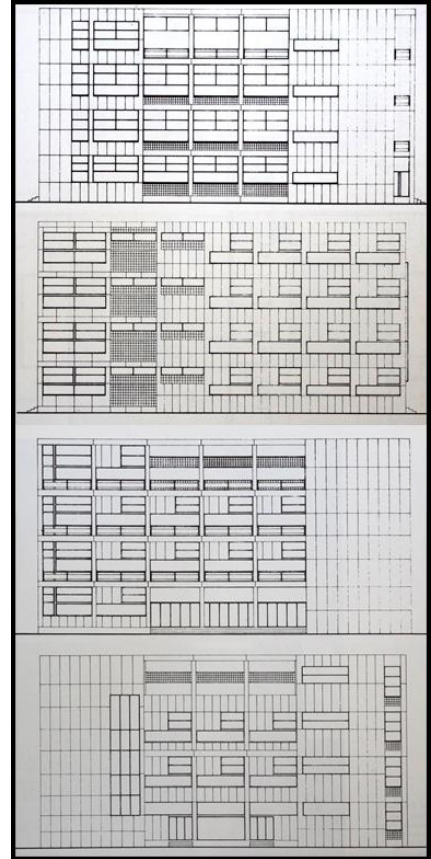
²⁹ D'Amia, p.65

³⁰ D'Amia, p.65

³¹ D'Amia, p.64

³² Schumacher, p.66

building.³³ The main floor contained the offices for the provincial party leaders and secretaries; the second floor was used by the administration while the top floor offered two ample verandas.³⁴ It is interesting to note how the architecture of the elevations differentiates the four facades depending on how the interior spaces are used.³⁵ Marciano interpreted the different facades as categorically different from the Corbusian puritan *façade libre*.³⁶ Libeskind, Rosselli, and Terragni's brother, Attilio captivatingly describe the interiors focusing on the importance of reflection and materiality within the structure:



“On entering, the monument changes, the clear defined shape of the exterior disappears and the expression of the architecture is replaced by an immaterial image in which a mysterious space appears, composed of reflections of light, of secret repetitions, of simulations of constructional elements that combine with barely recognizable structures: pillars, beams and staircases all fluctuating in a continual luminous variation. Materials: reflecting black marble, red granites, polished brass, opaline blue glass,

³³ D’Amia, p.64

³⁴ D’Amia, p.64

³⁵ D’Amia, p.64

³⁶ Marciano, p.83

*shiny lacquered black doors, interior plasterwork, incised glass bricks, plastered walls.*³⁷ (Terragni et. Al. p.211)

Terragni's Casa del Fascio is a building which attracts and stimulates exploration of structure and form. It therefore provided a new kind of architecture which would have been charming to the typical young fascist milieu of the time.

It is notable to see pictures of the youth of Como cheering Terragni's creation on its opening day. The pictures confirm the rationalists' argument of a new architecture which was able to energize the populace through the built form; a structure which fit perfectly the architectural concepts of young fascists. Terragni's building resembled a new symbol which was perfectly capable of illustrating Fascist ideology.³⁸ Beyond describing the manifestation of political ideology within the architecture of Terragni, Mantero labels the *Casa del Fascio* as a building which most proficiently demonstrated the spirit of the time – the cultural zeitgeist of Italian Fascism. While the fascist youth



applauded the structure a number of traditional fascist could not forgive the absence of the aforementioned Littoria tower and speaking pulpit – traditional visual symbols of

³⁷ Terragni et. al. p.211

³⁸ D'Amia, p.67

Fascism in Italy during the time. Nevertheless the building pleased most of the important fascists of the time including the lover of Mussolini.³⁹

Equally important was the role of La Casa del Fascio in the city and urban fabric of the center of Como. Just as when inside the building extends to the outside, when outside it seems to pull the beholder in. The frontal façade of the main floor consists of a central unbroken glass



wall which overlooks the external Piazza.⁴⁰ The internal lobby is silently transformed into an internal plaza evoking the urban sense of the city within the boundaries of the building.⁴¹ While de-materializing the cathedral of Como⁴² from the interior, the façade is important in contributing to the appeal of the building. Another element reminiscent of renaissance Italy is the placement of Terragni's building in the city center. In a typical



Italian show of the dual presence of civic and religious power, the Casa del Fascio and Duomo of Como seem to comfort as well as confront one another reflecting the urban history of the Italian city.⁴³ The mountain under which the structure is

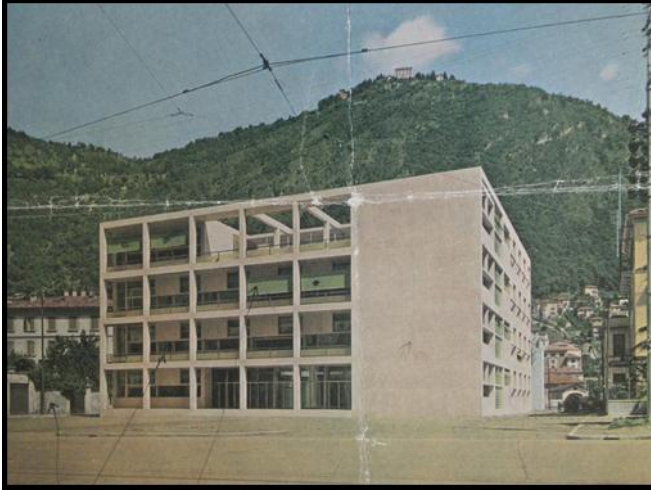
³⁹ Ciucci, p.179

⁴⁰ D'Amia, p.64

⁴¹ Fosso, p.34

⁴² Marciano, p.85

⁴³ Fosso, p.34



located frames and evokes all the visual monumentality which any neoclassicist might have wanted. Attilio describes this contraposition as a feature that:

“...supports and reinforces the union of the building with the landscape above, but also the

perception that the expressive world of the landscape has in some way invaded its solid external perimeter with a dynamic presence.”⁴⁴

The integration of the structure within the urban fabric while respecting the Italian tradition of urban organization illustrates an implied monumentality not only within the edifice but also in the building’s relation to its surroundings.

It becomes therefore evident as well as interesting to see how the *Casa del Fascio* is a great example of monumentality and grandeur embedded in the building’s interiors as well as its urban placement in the



city. Relating it to the second theoretical argument, the building exists as a symbol proudly representing Fascism in the city center. Terragni was able to convey a sense of transparency and honesty in his extensive use of glass. It represented the metaphor used by Mussolini describing Fascism as a “house of glass”.⁴⁵ The ideological idea of a regime which was – superficially - transparent and open to inspection was translated by

⁴⁴ Terragni et. al., p.211

⁴⁵ Mantero, p.131

Terragni in a building which really is transparent and easy to inspect by public opinion.⁴⁶

Terragni calls it: *"the house of the people, a place where bureaucracy has no reason to*



*exist".*⁴⁷ In order to achieve such a sophisticated integration of ideology within architecture, Terragni had to resort to a number of cunning strategies. His initial sketches which served as a proposal do not look like the completed product. Furthermore when local fascist leadership proposes an intervention in the façade which would make it more stimulating by adding red marble stripes, he faithfully resists.⁴⁸ In order to justify his opposition to visual stimuli on the building's facade neither Terragni, nor his brother accept any fees for

designing the structure⁴⁹. The position of his brother Attilio as Mayor of Como contributes to the final product as much as the influence of a staunch supporter of the rationalists - Mussolini's lover⁵⁰. Ultimately what complete Terragni's oeuvre are these kinds of details - small interventions in politics and architecture which allow him to commit La Casa del Fascio to a total design from its placement and urban form to the development of its furniture.

Terragni conceived of La Casa del Fascio as an exemplary work of rationalist architecture.⁵¹ He therefore was inclined to design and plan every minute detail of the

⁴⁶ Schumacher, p.31

⁴⁷ Marciano, p.86

⁴⁸ Marciano, p.85-86

⁴⁹ Schumacher, p.38

⁵⁰ Schumacher, p.38

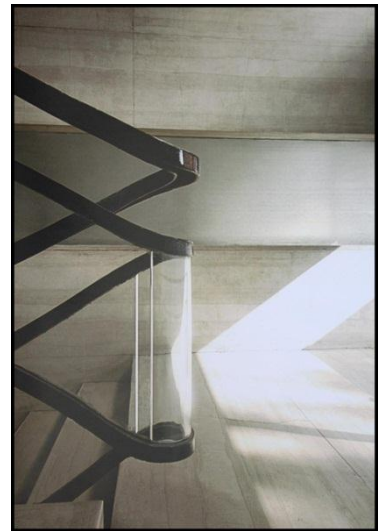
⁵¹ D'Amia, p.66

structure – from the monumental façade to the stunning interior stairway. Beyond the furnishings the architect even commissioned the art by Italian abstractionist Mario Radice.⁵² Although the choice of art seems peculiar, it fits with Terragni's desire for a total control of the structure - one which gave no space to anti-abstractionist Fascist local politics. The building is therefore contemplated as a whole - a structure which in its minute details embodies the true spirit and belief in a democratic utopian Fascism.⁵³ Marciano positively describes the architect's life as dedicated to an architectural utopia:

*"Dedica la sua esistenza all'architettura. Crede, dapprima, in un fascismo mitico, civile e democratico, sinonimo di eversione culturale."*⁵⁴

Terragni is always present on the building site following and guiding the workmanship.⁵⁵ From 1933 to 1935 he dedicates all of his time to the design of chairs, couches, handrails and every other internal detail that can be conceived.⁵⁶ Only because of his dedication to the political movement was he able to appropriately reinterpret modernism to fit the political cause while keeping its spirit intact.

The second part of this endeavor located the shared values between Fascism and rationalism in Giuseppe Terragni *Casa del Fascio*. The first argument described how the building expressed the rationalist movement in both structure and form. In doing so it masterfully articulated the



⁵² D'Amia, p.66

⁵³ Schumacher, p.48

⁵⁴ "(Terragni) dedicates his existence to architecture. Believes since the beginning in a mythical form of civil and democratic fascism – synonymous of cultural evolution. Marciano, p.11

⁵⁵ Marciano, p.86

⁵⁶ Marciano, p.100

political ideology of Fascism by embodying it in its functionality and structure. While protested by some traditionalists, the building was cheered by the youth who were able to identify in the architecture a modern fascist spirit. The second argument clarified the role of Terragni's building in the city as well as its urban function. By emphasizing the piazza, gently confronting the cathedral and embodying the mountain under which it was constructed, the Casa del Fascio served as an example of urban organization and implicit functional monumentality. The third argument explained the total design employed by Terragni in the structure. By evading political dogma and compromising his personal wealth for architectural success, Terragni was able to create a superb example of a rationalist building in inter-war Italy. The second part of this essay is a direct exploration of Terragni's ability to integrate his architecture with political ideology. It explains how the architect through originality and negotiation was able to retail rationalism as a Fascist architectural movement. Conclusively it is important to note that after participating in the Russian campaign, Terragni returned to Como a broken man.⁵⁷ Like most Italians who believed in utopian Fascism he realized the mistakes of the regime once the war started.⁵⁸ It is uncertain whether his death was a suicide or an accident, what is certain however is concisely described by Schumacher:

*He lived and died believing in Christ and Fascism.*⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ciucci, p.7

⁵⁸ Schumacher, p.48

⁵⁹ Schumacher, p.48

Annotated Bibliography

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Poretti, Sergio. *La Casa del Fascio di Como*. Rome: Carocci Editore, 1998. Print.

Both books offer two different perspectives on La Casa di Fascio as a whole. They are important in that they provide the historical and architectural descriptions of the building - extensive objective information on top of which the individual can create his idea and opinion of the building. While Poretti's book is focused on the architectural aspects of La Casa di Como explaining its place in the political and architectural context of Italy, Artioli is important in helping understand the vivid debates that were sparked by the building.

Ciucci, Giorgio. *Giuseppe Terragni Opera completa*. Milan: Casa Editrice Electa, 1996. Print.

Ciucci's chapter on La Casa del Fascio is very interesting in that it relies on primary sources in explaining and analyzing the huge controversy that surrounded La Casa del Fascio. The debates are very important in illustrating the conflict between the ideologically opposite art movements (the neoclassicists and the modernists). The debate furthermore compares La Casa dell Fascio to two other European modernist buildings (the school of housewives "Vesna" in Brno by Fuchs in 1930 and the senior asylum in Kassel by Haesler in 1931) with the direct intervention in the debate by both Fuchs and Haesler. The chapter is therefore important in providing a number of opinions both for and against La Casa del Fascio from both Italian as well as international architectural personalities.

D'Amia, Giovanna. *Givseppe Terragni: oltre il razionalismo - beyond rationalism*. Como: Enzo Pifferi Editore, 2003. Print.

The book by D'Amia initially provides a close account of Terragni's life from one of his friends including his traumatic death at the young age of 39. Furthermore the book provides important facts on Terragni's life in Como. Beyond the personal perspective, D'Amia explores the political games that Terragni played all his life in order to ultimately create buildings he – despite being a utopian fascist in spirit - wanted to keep free of political influence.

Fosso, Mario, and Enrico Mantero. *Giuseppe Terragni 1904-1943*. Como: Tipografia Editrice Cesare Nani, 1982. Print.

Beyond a number of primary source writings and essays from Giuseppe Terragni, the book is important in immortalizing Terragni's career and locating La Casa del Fascio within the architect's body of work. Furthermore the authors explain Terragni's role within two short-lived Italian architectural groups he helped create and develop: the *Gruppo Sette* (Group Seven) and *M.I.A.R.* (Italian Movement for Rational Architecture).

Mantero, Enrico. *Giuseppe Terragni e la città del razionalismo italiano*. Bari: Dedalo libri, 1969. Print.

Despite being an old publication Mantero's book on Terragni is an engaging read on the architect's work within his geographic and urbanistic context. The book delves into the exploration of Como's architecture and how with the help of Terragni it became the representative city of Italian rationalism. The book is also helpful in explaining the interesting urban challenges of La Casa del Fascio with a number of drawings situating the building within the city – emphasizing its relationship with the central *piazza* and the Cathedral of Como.

Marciano, Ada Francesca. *Giuseppe Terragni opera completa 1925-1943*. Rome: Officina Edizioni, 2008. Print.

Marciano offers an interesting contemporary perspective on Terragni's body of work. She is helpful in summarizing the major points pervading Terragni's architectural thoughts throughout his short career. Marciano shortly compares elements of Terragni's work to those of world modernists. She explains how the architect was able to absorb modernist thought and then overlay his ideas over modernism making his buildings unique. This puts the architect's body of work in an international context and helps compare his futurism inspired *razionalismo* to the international modernist movement.

Schumacher, Thomas L. *Surface & Symbol: Giuseppe Terragni and the Architecture of Italian Rationalism*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991. Print.

Schumacher's book is helpful in tracing Terragni's architectural evolution. However most importantly, on his chapter on La Casa del Fascio, the author is very successful in treating the building as a symbol. It is an interesting analysis of the combination of the brilliant formal exercise that is La Casa del Fascio with its underlying ideological expressions. A number of floor plans are also important in illustrating how those two elements functioned throughout the building and not only in its façade.

Terragni, Attilio, Daniel Libeskind, and Paolo Rosselli. *The Terragni Atlas: Built Architectures*. Milan: Skira, 2004. Print.

Beyond an interesting perspective on Giuseppe Terragni's architecture by his brother Attilio and contemporary architect Libeskind, *The Terragni Atlas* has an extensive collection of high quality images and photography by renowned Italian photographer Paolo Rosselli. While the written part is interesting this book is most helpful in the visual interpretation of the building. The photos are accompanied by drawings, sketches and collages created by Terragni as well as historical photos of La Casa del Fascio after it was built. The detailed interior photos are very important in conveying how the building is pervaded by Terragni's modernism from the façade to the beautiful glass and steel stairway handle