



1 Rome, EUR, Museo delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari "Lamberto Loria",
Sala d'Onore, interior view. Archival photograph, 1987.

DEFINING SELF BY COLLECTING THE OTHER MUSSOLINI'S MUSEUMS AT THE EUR WORLD'S FAIR SITE

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In the 1930s, Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini attempted to re-create the prowess of imperial Rome by extending the city toward the sea. For the projected *Esposizione Universale di Roma* (EUR), he planned a white city of pavilions modeled on ancient Roman fora and modern world's fairs, located in an undeveloped area halfway between Rome and Fiumicino Airport that would eventually become a bustling suburb. Earmarked for 1942 to celebrate twenty years of Fascism, E42, as the exposition came to be called, would showcase scientific progress, corporate national production, rural yield, empirical expansion, and homage to imperial Rome. Under the dictator's brand of imperial nation formation, the fair was intended to launch Italy from the margins of industrialized Europe onto the world stage. World War II ensued, and E42 went unrealized.

Nonetheless, between 1956 and the 1970s, due to Italy's post-World War II economic miracle, the 1960 Olympics in Rome, and the determination of EUR Commissioner Virgilio Testa, himself a former Segretario Generale del Governatorato di Roma under the Fascist regime, many of the original architectural plans for E42 were realized and four museums opened in the complex.

Two of these museums, the Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari "Lamberto Loria" and the Museo della Civiltà Romana, opened in spaces intended for them. A third, the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini", was placed in a building originally planned as a Palazzo della Scienza Universale.¹ All three museums, whose buildings were nearly complete before the war, showcase collections that have

¹ The fourth museum, the Museo Nazionale dell'Alto Medioevo, was also established in the EUR in the 1960s and, like the Museo "Luigi Pigorini", placed in a section of the building originally planned as a Palazzo delle

Scienze. Because the collection history of the Museo Nazionale dell'Alto Medioevo does not have ties to the Fascist period or the building of the EUR, it will not be discussed in this paper.

historic links to the Fascist regime and to each other. However, today they function independently, under the authority of different ministries. With limited resources, two have made efforts to revise their presentations away from dissonant political or outdated scientific displays, while the third currently undergoes a building renovation in compliance with technical regulations. In their exhibition signage, none of the three EUR museums discussed here link their collections to the Fascist-era buildings that house them.

Nonetheless, in the EUR, the buildings, monumental marble and travertine palaces designed by the era's most important Italian architects in a modern style that blended neoclassicist and rationalist ideas, are themselves historically and architecturally significant and visually arresting. As vehicles for the Fascist rebirth as the predestined continuation of Roman triumphs,² the buildings' presence and architectural decoration alone dwarfs any museums' efforts to revise or ignore their Fascist origin. In the EUR, the architecture, made to represent the absolute rule of the new Fascist nation, is the prime exhibit. It sets the tone for the entire complex, conjuring up a failed regime it never fully explains. In its rhetorical, imposing style, the EUR complex distinguishes itself from the more democratic notions of culture that Western museum visitors often take for granted. It startles us to attention, obscures whatever exhibitions are inside, yet ultimately offers no defining explanation. But rather than decry the futility of the effort of ethnographic and archaeological museums in the EUR to explore new museum practices, I set out in this paper to explore the unique setting of the EUR, a world's fair unrealized yet with many of its pavilions and architectural decoration intact, as a museum topic worthy of future study. With its mosaics, frescoes, sculptures, reliefs, and neoclassical pavilions

that all pay homage to Mussolini's 'Third Rome', to his corporatist state and self-styled achievement of Empire through the Ethiopian conquest, the EUR site offers an unparalleled opportunity to examine how Fascism used museums to fashion its own identity. The displays that linger in the three museums include palaeontological specimens and pre-industrial folk art from Italy, cast copies of ancient Roman imperial sculpture, and non-Western 'ethnographic' artifacts, particularly those from Africa.³ Although housed in three separate buildings, the ideas reflected in the objects, including the Roman past, agrarian bounty, and imperial geographical expansion, were politically important to the regime and fundamental to Mussolini's visions of *italianità* and *romanità*. Most of these objects of the 'other', distinguished in this paper by their place in distant time or geography, were collected prior to Fascism, but many, especially the palaeontological and folk-art objects and the casts of Roman sculpture, were collected out of the nationalist impulses following the unification of Italy, and the regime re-appropriated them for display in the 1942 world's fair. In the case of the EUR museums, Mussolini and his regime at least partially employed the 'other' to define the state.

By unraveling the history of these museums, with its aesthetic and political complexities, I will try to analyze the cultural context for the objects and architectural decorations currently shrouded in outdated scientific displays and address a gravity of silences surrounding the Fascist era that post-war Italy has yet to confront. The neglect of historic research surrounding the EUR site may be a holdover from the post-World War II scholarly avoidance of art produced during the Fascist regime as something unworthy of study,⁴ but the effect of the silence at the EUR has been to enshroud the complex with an aura of mystery evoking a menacing

² Marla Stone, "A Flexible Rome: Fascism and the Cult of Romanità", in: *Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789–1945*, ed. by Catherine Edwards, Cambridge 1999, pp. 205–220: 216.

³ The Pigorini museum currently has three halls for non-Western objects, one each for the Americas, Asia, and Africa.

⁴ See Emily Braun, "Mario Sironi and a Fascist Art", in: *Italian Art in the*

‘other’. In a practical sense, an analysis of the art and architecture of the museums at the EUR could open up new exhibition possibilities for a site that itself is without a clear historic designation. The fact of exhibiting in the EUR, and what the EUR architectural complex means for the artifacts, needs to be addressed.⁵ To do so, I offer brief histories of each institution and then discuss the separate entity, the EUR S.p.A., that manages the buildings’ architectural legacy.⁶

Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari “Lamberto Loria”

At first glance, the Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari “Lamberto Loria”, which houses a collection of pre-industrial folk art from within the borders of Italy, is not apparently relevant to this volume’s subject of ‘visualizing otherness’, if otherness is to be defined as cultural traditions beyond the Italian borders. But the objects in the Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari were initially intended to represent a rapidly disappearing agrarian past resurrected by Mussolini in the service of *italianità*. In the context of the museum and its Fascist past, these objects can be considered as re-appropriated artifacts from an ‘other’ time. They are also historically tied to the non-Western collections currently found in the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico “Luigi Pigorini”. The regime originally planned what became the Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari

“Lamberto Loria” to display the same inherent *italianità* intended for the EUR museums’ other collections of Italian prehistory, non-Western art and Roman archaeology.

In 1905, while on vacation in Circello del Sannio, a rural area in the Campania region north-east of Naples, renowned Egyptian-born Italian ethnologist Lamberto Loria (1855–1913), about to leave for a research and collecting expedition to Eritrea, cancelled his extra-European trip and chose instead to dedicate himself to the traditional culture of his own country.⁷ Loria’s purpose was twofold: one, through collecting popular traditions, he wanted to establish Italian ethnology as a science within the prevailing Darwinian framework and two, he wanted to demonstrate, through this documentation, the vast cultural diversity within the recently unified nation of Italy. For Loria, this activity was to be a counterpart to his collecting of non-European objects, a way to demonstrate a vast cultural diversity throughout Italy that his relatively young country could now rightfully claim.

To implement his plan, Loria returned to his home city of Florence, where he was well connected, and founded on a private basis the Museo di Etnografia Italiana, to which he and others donated traditional objects from various Italian regions. In 1908, Ferdinando Martini, a highly respected member of Parliament, proposed that Loria move his entire collection to Rome, where it would be acquired by the state,

20th Century: Painting and Sculpture 1900–1988, conference proceedings London 1989, ed. by *eadem*, London et al. 1989, pp. 173–180.

⁵ Similar questions are currently under debate for Nazi art – how to present it, to whom, and what kinds of ever increasing knowledge can the material reveal. See, for example, Hans-Ernst Mittag, “Offene Kapitel beim Umgang mit NS-Kunst in Museum, Ausstellung und Forschung”, in: *RIHA Journal* (2014), 3, URL: <http://www.riha-journal.org/> (accessed on 15 May 2017).

⁶ On the topic of exhibiting ethnography and antiquity during Fascism, see, for example, Guido Abbattista/Nicola Labanca, “Living Ethnological and Colonial Exhibitions in Liberal and Fascist Italy”, in: *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*, ed. by Pascal Blanchard et al., Liverpool 2008, pp. 341–352; Giovanni Arena, “The City of the Colonial Museum: The Forgotten Case of the *Mostra d’Oltremare* of Naples”, in: *Great Narratives*

of the Past: Traditions and Revisions in National Museums, conference proceedings Paris 2011, ed. by Dominique Poulot/Felicity Bodenstern/José María Lanzarote Guiral, Linköping 2012, pp. 267–284, URL: http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp_home/index.en.aspx?issue=78 (accessed on 27 September 2016); Joshua Arthurs, “(Re)Presenting Roman History in Italy, 1911–1955”, in: *Nationalism, Historiography and the (Re)Construction of the Past*, ed. by Claire Norton, Washington 2012, pp. 27–41; Francesca Gandolfo, *Il Museo Coloniale di Roma (1904–1971): fra le zebre nel paese dell’olio di ricino*, Rome 2014; Nicola Labanca, *L’Africa in vetrina: storie di musei e di esposizioni coloniali in Italia*, Treviso 1992; Maria Gabriella Lerario, *Il Museo Luigi Pigorini: dalle raccolte etnografiche al mito di nazione*, Florence 2005; Stefania Massari, *Arte e tradizioni: il Museo Nazionale dell’Eur*, Rome 2004.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

along with other ethnographic collections, and used for a grand exposition planned for 1911 to celebrate fifty years of Italian unification. Loria agreed on condition that at the end of the exposition the collection become part of a new national museum of ethnography, which, through many vicissitudes, it ultimately did, in the EUR in 1956, bearing the name Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari “Lamberto Loria”.⁸

The display of the Loria collection in Rome began when the *Esposizione Internazionale di Roma* of 1911 was realized. As part of the *Esposizione's Mostra delle Regioni* and *Mostra Etnografica*, four Beaux-Arts buildings and other temporary pavilions in regional styles showed roughly 40,000 objects from the Loria collection, which had been gathered by Loria himself and by local experts he designated from municipalities and villages throughout Italy. The premise was to present the variety and persistence of local traditions across a vast, recently-designated patrimony.⁹ The displays were among the most popular of the Jubilee.

After the death of Loria in 1913 and the onset of the World War I, the Loria collection was housed in the former stables of the Villa d'Este in Tivoli and showed only intermittently.¹⁰ Some twenty years later, ethnography in the service of nation building experienced renewed attention under the Fascist regime. In 1936, National Education Minister Giuseppe Bottai proposed an exhibition of Italian costume for the planned world's fair EUR, which had by then been designated as the new permanent seat of art and culture in modern Rome. For Bottai and the regime, a display of traditional dress would demonstrate the links between popular art and small industry and the infinite market possibilities offered by artisanal resources. It would reflect the Fascists' corporatist idea

whereby everything was made for the good of the state. Ultimately called *La Mostra delle Tradizioni Popolari*, the traditional costume display became a seed for the pavilion of art and popular traditions in the EUR and the current Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari “Lamberto Loria”.¹¹

Originally, not only the Loria collection, but two other important collections in Rome were proposed for the EUR museum – the Museo Kircheriano, the famous seventeenth-century curiosity cabinet of archaeological, natural, and non-Western objects amassed and maintained by Jesuit priest Athanasius Kircher, and the Museo Preistorico Etnografico di Roma, founded by Luigi Pigorini (1842–1925) in 1876, both of which were then housed at the Jesuit Collegio Romano. The original vision for the Museo delle Tradizioni Popolari, as decreed by the regime, was for the “Unità della Nazione”, whereby “l'arte popolare non dovrà essere concepita disgiunta dalla grande arte ma presentata in modo che l'una e l'altra concorrano a dare un'idea veramente intera dell'estrinsecarsi dello spirito artistico italiano attraverso i tempi”.¹² In this framework, popular art that was considered outside of, or ‘other’, than the art historical canon, was reined in by the Fascists for the political purposes of affirming the corporatist state.

Unlike the 1911 exposition, where the diversity of Italian traditions emphasized the new Italian nation's organic bounty, the official mandate for the future ethnographic museum in the EUR was that the objects be arranged according to principal expressive forms of life. In 1939, the term ‘ethnography’ was replaced with ‘popular art’ and the exhibition divided into nine thematic sections, including agricultural work, religious festivals, ceramic production, domestic life, etc. The concept shifted away from unity in diversity to

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 86, 93; *La festa delle feste: Roma e l'Esposizione Internazionale del 1911*, ed. by *eadem*, Rome 2011, pp. 12, 14.

¹⁰ For example, regional folk costumes were occasionally used for May

Day celebrations on the grounds of the Villa d'Este (Massari [note 6], p. 107).

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 91.

¹² *Ibidem*, pp. 92f.

diversity under the umbrella of uniformity. To ensure a geographical reach appropriate to the imperialist ambitions of the Fascist regime, the topic of the sea was introduced and marine objects added to the collection, including boat models, fishing nets from Liguria, and sails from boats from the Adriatic coast.¹³

The EUR museum was to be built in the modern neoclassical style, with a columned portico, massive interior staircase, and cathedral-like Sala d'Onore (Fig. 1). Located in the center of the world's fair complex, it mirrored the opposite Palazzo della Scienza Universale and was intended to demonstrate the central importance placed by the regime on art and tradition as well as science and progress. Inside the building a series of ten frescoes was commissioned for the Sala d'Onore. Subjects were carefully chosen to present a generic idea of rural, agricultural, and maritime life, and competitions held to hire the best possible artists to paint them. According to Stefania Massari, former director of the Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari, selected topics were specifically aligned with the Loria and Pigorini collections. Moreover, they were guided by Mussolini's orders for a 1936 exhibition of provincial folk art in Catania whereby "le particolari fisionomie e le attitudini delle singole regioni debbono fondersi nella insuperabile armonia dell'unità nazionale".¹⁴ Not fully completed before World War II, the frescoes remained unfinished when the museum officially opened in 1956, some in cartoon form, others partially painted, and all without borders. Recently cleaned and stabilized, the frescoes are incomplete to this day. Culturally preserved, their historical significance is valorized. But nowhere in the museum is their presence contextualized or explained. Rather, the visitor is left with lingering questions. What do these frescoes stand for today? Do they reflect the focus of the new museum or the old regime? What is the legacy of the artists who painted them?

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 93.

Why were the paintings not completed after the war? A centerpiece of the current museum, covering the walls of the main exhibition hall, the frescoes endure as uncertain ghostly presences, an aesthetic, cultural and political legacy crying out to be heard.

The entire EUR complex, left in a ravaged state after World War II, was given a face-lift in the 1950s. Ruins were cleared away, buildings completed according to their original 1930s designs, and a new sports palace created, all in preparation for the development of the neighborhood as a destination for the 1960 Rome Olympics. When the Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari officially opened in post-World War II Rome, it was not updated; rather, its displays were arranged according to the plans of the original 1930s directors and curators and in keeping with the building's original extant décor. To this day, the museum continues this arrangement, although the themes have been bundled into three larger groups: earth and its resources; everyday life; and rituals, festivals, and ceremonies.

While not all the architectural decorations intended for the Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari were fully realized before World War II, some were and, like the interior frescoes, are preserved today as important works of art. For example, a wall mosaic in marble and *pietre dure* by futurist painter, set designer, and graphic artist Enrico Prampolini, called *Le Corporazioni*, is mounted on a sidewall of the museum's exterior (Fig. 2). Luminous and rhythmic and employing chiaroscuro to emphasize certain images, the mosaic depicts the subjects *credito*, *commercio*, *industria*, and *agricoltura*, which, during Fascism, were strictly subordinate to the regime and would have been the businesses under which the popular products and art inside the museum were manufactured and sold. The subject of corporations, beginning with the Carta del Lavoro as the fundamental charter promoting

¹⁴ Quoted from *ibidem*, pp. 104–106.

2 Enrico Prampolini,
Le Corporazioni, 1941.
 Rome, EUR, Museo delle
 Arti e Tradizioni Popolari
 "Lamberto Loria"



private enterprise while reserving the right of state intervention, was politically important to the regime and guided its plans for the display of public art in more than one location.¹⁵ In the 1930s, artist Mario Sironi, a staunch Fascist loyalist, created the massive stained glass window *La Carta del Lavoro* for the Ministry of Corporations building in Rome and the mosaic *L'Italia corporativa* (1936/37) for a wall of the Triennale building in Milan. The EUR complex, an intact monument to a world's fair that never took place, can

potentially illuminate the context of these architectural decorations, the architecture that framed them, the collections they hold, the politics of the artists, and their relationships to the regime. However, on a plaque beside the Prampolini mosaic, the only information offered is that of title, artist, and the bank that funded its recent restoration. A gleaming mosaic set against the backdrop of what is sadly today an under-funded museum with a grimy façade, the Prampolini mosaic makes little cultural sense.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 95f.

¹⁶ The label of another important mosaic in stone, glass and paint, directly opposite from Prampolini's, called *Le Professioni e Mestieri* by futurist artist Fortunato Depero, provides the same minimal details – name, title and pa-

tron. In his mosaic, Depero was required to make color, subject, and design modifications to resemble Prampolini's work and suit the narrative needs of the regime (*EUR SpA e il patrimonio di E42: manuale d'uso per edifici e opere*, ed. by Carlo Bertilaccio/Francesco Innamorati, Rome 2004, p. 66).

Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico “Luigi Pigorini”

While the Pigorini and Kircher collections ultimately did not go to the Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari, they did eventually come to the EUR, but not exactly to a building created specifically for them. Between 1975 and 1977, the historic collections of the Jesuit college in Rome, including the seventeenth-century Kircher cabinet of curiosities and a room with objects from the Museo Preistorico Etnografico di Roma inaugurated by King Vittorio Emanuele II and Prince Umberto di Savoia in 1876, were transferred to the Palazzo della Scienza Universale, a pavilion directly opposite the Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari “Lamberto Loria” that was originally intended as a museum of science.

This was a move of necessity. Much of the Pigorini collection had been stacked away in boxes, due to insufficient space, and the cavernous halls of the Palazzo della Scienza Universale laid empty. However, the contents of the Pigorini and Kircher collections had historical and scientific ties to the Loria collection on display in the opposite pavilion across the piazza. In the wake of Italian unification, Pigorini, like Loria, developed his collection of ancient and ethnographic objects for the purpose of creating a national narrative. In keeping with the then prevailing paradigm of ‘palaeo-anthropology’, Pigorini argued for the evolutionary connection between the prehistoric and contemporary artifacts of ‘uncivilized populations’ and insisted on displaying them together.¹⁷ At the conclusion of the *Esposizione Internazionale di Roma* of 1911 and for the purpose of keeping the idea of a Museo di

Etnografia alive, Pigorini and Loria participated in the first Congresso di Etnografia Italiana, held in Rome, whereby Pigorini endorsed Loria’s ethnographic work. The Pigorini collection included pieces from the Kircher collection, which consisted of a great range of Egyptian, Etruscan, and Roman antiquities as well as ethnographic, artistic, and natural specimens from around the world.¹⁸ The original premise of the Kircher collection, however, differed from Pigorini’s. The non-Western objects in the Jesuit Collegio Romano’s cabinet of curiosities had been acquired out of interests other than nation-building. Kircher’s purpose in working with these and other artifacts he collected, especially those related to ancient Egypt, had to do with unraveling mysteries of his time and the acquisition of a universal knowledge.¹⁹

The Palazzo della Scienza Universale was nearly complete by 1943, although certain decorative aspects were put to a halt due to World War II. Hence, somewhat disjointedly, in the late 1970s, while the palaeontological and ethnographic displays were hung, the building itself was completed according to its original decorative scheme of scientific subjects. In 1980, the cathedral-like interior was embellished by the installation of a monumental polychrome stained glass window that had been designed by Giulio Rosso and cast by Vetrate d’Arte G. C. Giuliani in 1942 (Figs. 3, 4). Like many other artists contracted to work in the EUR, Rosso had some artistic association with the regime, as he followed the style of Mario Sironi, but the theme of this window was science, not propaganda. Dedicated to the subject of astronomy, the window consists of 54 panels representing planets, zodiac signs, astronomical instruments, and diagrams of Ptolemaic and

¹⁷ See Maria Gabriella Lerario, “The National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography ‘Luigi Pigorini’ in Rome: The Nation on Display”, in: *Great Narratives of the Past* (note 6), pp. 49–68: 52, URL: http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp_home/index.en.aspx?issue=78 (accessed on 27 September 2016).

¹⁸ For information on the Kircher collection in relation to the Museo Na-

zionale Preistorico Etnografico “Luigi Pigorini”, see *ibidem*, pp. 51f., and Lerario (note 6).

¹⁹ See, for example, *Athanasius Kircher: The Last Man Who Knew Everything*, ed. by Paula Findlen, New York 2004; *Athanasius Kircher at Stanford/Kircher and Kircheriana*, URL: <http://web.stanford.edu/group/kircher/cgi-bin/site/> (accessed on 29 September 2016).



3 Giulio Rosso, stained glass window for the Palazzo della Scienza Universale. Rome, EUR, Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini"

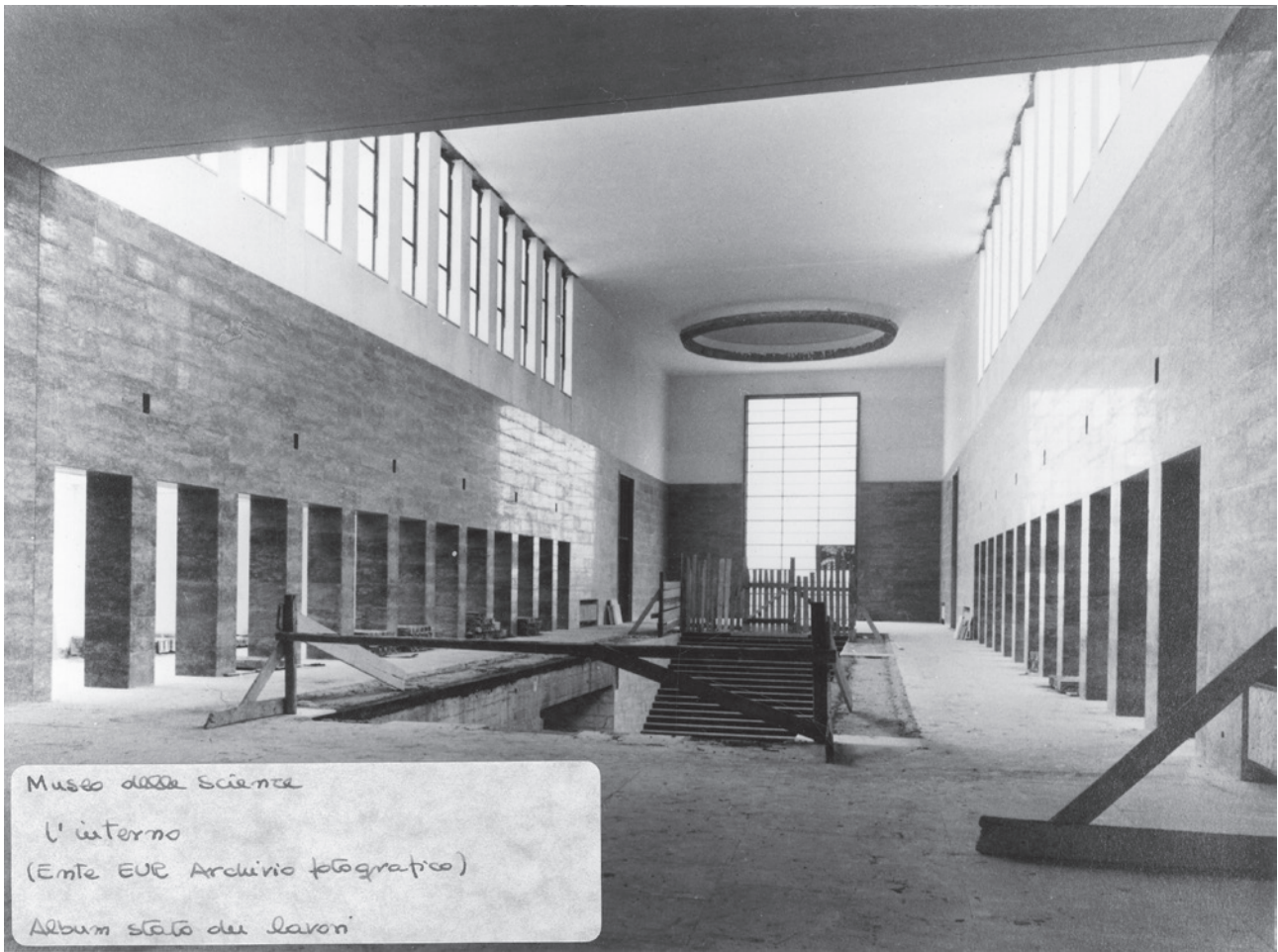
Copernican conceptions of the universe.²⁰ The bright red, blue, and yellow colors provide a striking contrast to the edifice's white and gray marble.

The building features other elaborate architectural decorations that reflect the museum's original theme. In the first floor *salone* is a sprawling intarsia pavement of marble, travertine, and colored stone, designed by Mario Tozzi in the prevailing style of simple forms with vibrant color and consisting of six panels that depict various branches of science, such as science in antiquity, astronomy, palaeontology, physics, and cosmography (Fig. 5). Two encaustic paintings out of four completed for the ground floor atrium walls before World War II were uncovered during the 1970s museum installation. Painted by Valerio Frascchetti, they depict *Scuola di Galileo* and *Applicazioni tecniche della scienza*.

With the arrival of the Kircher and Pigorini collections in the 1970s, the museum was inaugurated as Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini". But since 1994, the permanent exhibitions have been updated; palaeontology was separated from ethnography, which is now arranged in three sections – the Americas, Oceania and Asia, and Africa. Although in outdated cases, the displays more or less reflect late twentieth-century museology, where objects are grouped according to collecting histories from different epochs.

Because of the Fascist conquest of Ethiopia and the establishment of Italian East Africa in 1936, the Museo Pigorini's African displays are particularly relevant to this discussion about the museum's architecture and its objects. They offer an interesting example of 'otherness' in relation to the unity of the Italian national narrative over time. The African collections, arranged sequentially, follow European collecting of African objects from the sixteenth-century activities of missionaries and adventurers straight through to the early twentieth-century appreciation of African

²⁰ On the iconography of this stained glass window see *EUR SpA e il patrimonio di E42* (note I6), pp. 68f.



4 Rome, EUR, Museo delle Scienze (now Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini"), interior view

objects as fine art. However, in following this chronology, a striking historical void becomes apparent. There is a progression, for example, from the 1911 diplomatic gift of a royal African ensemble made by Ethiopian Emperor Menelik (1845–1913) to King Vittorio Emanuele III, to “La scoperta dell’Arte Negra” of the early twentieth century. Absent is any subsequent display of collecting activity by Italians in Africa during the intervening years of the Fascist regime (1922–1945).

Italy’s presence in Africa was quite strong during the Fascist years, culminating in its brutal occupation

of Ethiopia in 1936. Italian ‘collecting’ in the East African colonies of Eritrea, Somalia, Libya, and Ethiopia took place precisely because of Mussolini’s imperialist aims. For Mussolini, establishing an empire would link the accomplishments of ancient Rome to the Fascist present. One of the many ways Mussolini asserted the link between the Roman emperors and himself was by reviving the Augustan tradition of incorporating Egyptian obelisks into the fabric of the city, as an expression of victory and the ‘otherness’ of the vanquished. In the central piazza of the EUR, between the Palazzo della Scienza Universale and the



5 Mario Tozzi, pavement of the Great Hall of the Palazzo della Scienza Universale in the EUR, particular

Museo delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari, sculptor Arturo Dazzi constructed an honorific monument in the shape of an obelisk, with bas-relief panels illustrating the work of Guglielmo Marconi, pioneer in radiotelegraphy and hero of the Fascist party, and popular arts and traditions.²¹

Colonial exhibitions in Italy pre-dated the March on Rome and began around the time of Italy's establishment of the colony of Eritrea in 1890. They took the forms of colonial villages at world's fairs and museum exhibitions.²² During Fascism, paintings from colonial missions, local handmade artifacts, substantially re-defined by regime authorities, and historic and archaeological objects were collected in massive quantities, as part of *africanismo* or *romanità d'oltremare*, that is overseas expansions. The regime displayed them in fairs and exhibitions that celebrated Italian conquests in Ethiopia, Abyssinia, and Libya as modern day expressions of Rome's civilizing mission "in the face of 'the barbarism of the Negus'".²³ But these objects were not brought for storage to the Pigorini Museum. By the end of World War II and the fall of Fascism, a prevailing sense of political embarrassment ensued over this collection of objects.²⁴

Between 1904 and 1971, the Museo Coloniale di Roma was the repository for artifacts, photographs, natural products, and documents from Italy's colonies in North and East Africa. Associated first with a herbarium located at the Orto Botanico in Rome

²¹ Ann Thomas Wilkins, "Augustus, Mussolini, and the Parallel Imagery of Empire", in: *Donatello Among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*, ed. by Roger Crum/Claudia Lazzaro, New York 2005, pp. 53–65: 61.

²² Guido Abbattista and Nicola Labanca have done important research on ethnological and colonial exhibitions in liberal and Fascist Italy, citing for example living displays of Africans in Ethiopia as submissive Fascist soldiers or in Italy as victims of a victorious Fascist military (Abbattista/Labanca [note 6]).

²³ *La Mostra Triennale delle Terre Italiane d'Oltremare: Napoli 9 maggio–15 ottobre 1940–XVIII*, Naples 1940. See also Arena (note 6) and Stone (note 2), p. 217.

and then (1914–1971) with the Italian Ministry of Colonies (later Ministry for Foreign Affairs), the Museo Coloniale was perpetually short of funds and adequate spaces and ended up in a storage area on Via Aldrovandi in Rome, near what is today the Museo Civico di Zoologia. Despite its shortcomings, the Museo Coloniale di Roma had a very large collection of more than 11,000 artifacts plus files and photographs that documented the eight decades that Italy maintained a colonial presence in Africa.²⁵

Between 1996 and 2000, the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico “Luigi Pigorini” collaborated with the Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente to inventory the collections of the Museo Coloniale di Roma; however the government ultimately divided the ownership of the materials: the archives were assigned to the Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente and became a “parte del patrimonio [culturale]”; the objects, exhibition cases, frames, etc. were instead assigned to the Istituto for storage as public property, without a designated scientific or cultural value.²⁶ The objects were not made available to other institutions or the public.²⁷ To this day, the Pigorini Museum has little knowledge of, let alone access to, the object collections of the Museo Coloniale di Roma. It is as if someone locked the doors of the old museum and threw away the key.

In her book *Il Museo Coloniale di Roma (1904–1971): fra le zebre nel paese dell’olio di ricino*, archaeologist Francesca Gandolfo argues that the Museo Coloniale was a patriotic metaphor of national identity. During Fascism in particular, the many archaeological excavations in Africa were considered a precious complement to the Italian (rather than African) national patrimony.

Any scientific value the Museo Coloniale may have had was compromised by the triumphalist façade of the regime.²⁸ Nevertheless, Gandolfo makes a plea to unlock the ghostly museum’s doors. To her, the recovery of the Museo Coloniale is a bet on the future. A nation that loses self-awareness betrays a strong insecurity.²⁹ The same bet of recovery could be made for the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico “Luigi Pigorini”.

Museo della Civiltà Romana

In a building originally designed for it between 1939 and 1941,³⁰ the Museo della Civiltà Romana opened to the public in 1955, after a hiatus caused by the war and with funding provided by Fiat (Fig. 6). The museum’s collection – plaster casts of republican and imperial statues and monuments representing 36 provinces of the ancient Roman Empire covering territories in what are today Europe, Africa, and Asia – was originally gathered for the *Esposizione Internazionale* of 1911 and used for the *Mostra Archeologica* organized by then state archaeologist Rodolfo Lanciani (1845–1929). The exhibition was mounted in the third-century bath complex of Diocletian, which had recently been excavated and cleared of brothels and other run-down buildings for the eventual purposes of becoming a museum of imperial Rome. Advertised in the exposition’s official guide as a beacon of “Roman genius”,³¹ the display was intended to offer the best testimony to “the magnificent patrimony of forms and ideas”,³² a reassembled picture of Roman civilization from the imperial epoch that would restore national dignity to the recently unified nation. Using scale models and plaster casts, the exhibition showed fragmented mon-

²⁴ Egidio Cossa, director of the Sezione Etnografica “Africa” Polo Museale del Lazio – Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico “Luigi Pigorini”, personal communication, spring 2015.

²⁵ Gandolfo (note 6), p. 11.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 320.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 319f.

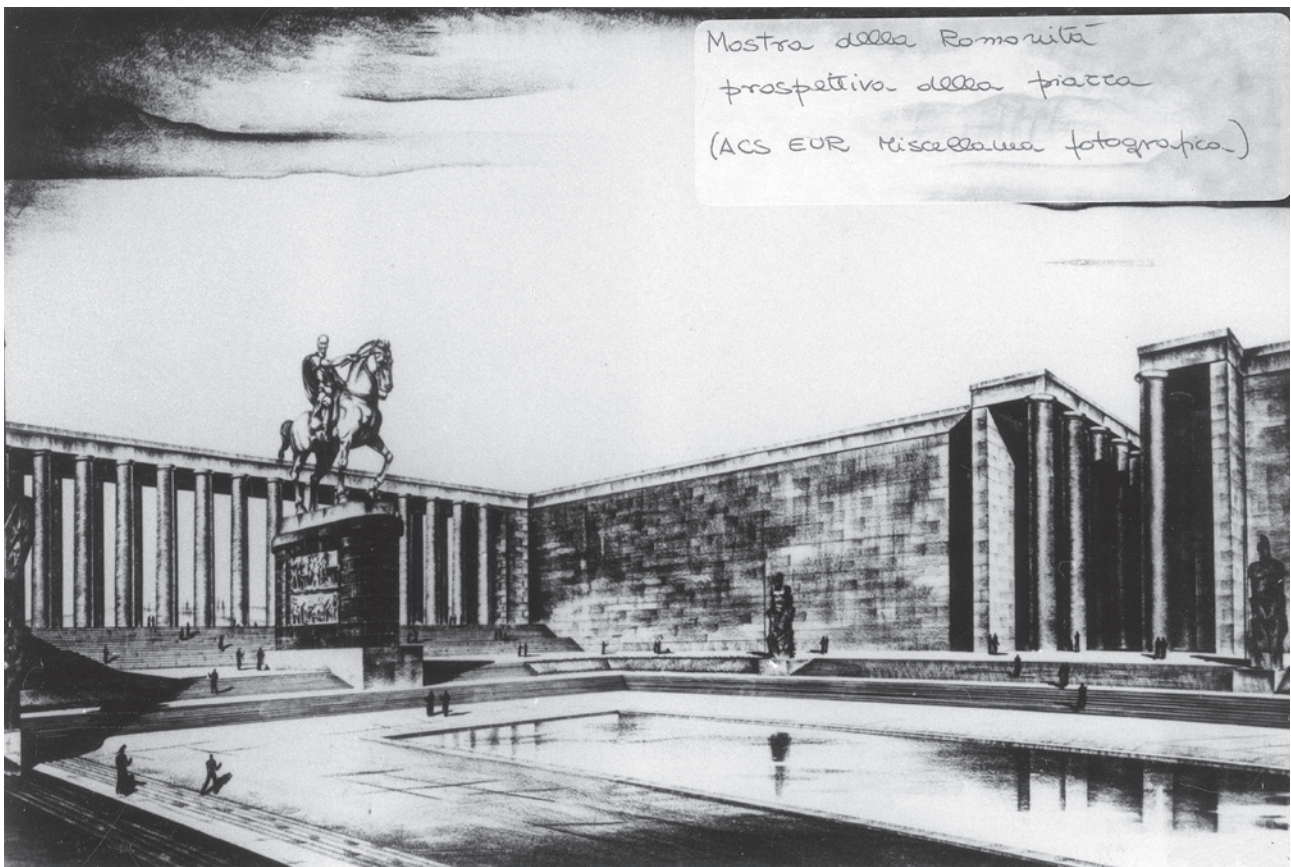
²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 304–308.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 326.

³⁰ The architects were Pietro Aschieri, Domenico Bernardini, Gino Peresutti and Cesare Pascoletti.

³¹ Quoted from Arthurs (note 6), p. 31.

³² Quoted from *ibidem*, p. 32.



6 Project drawing for the Museo della Civiltà Romana, with equestrian statue in center of piazza, ca. 1939-1941. Archival photograph

uments in their original state, often for the first time in centuries.³³ Like the ethnographic exhibitions, these displays were among the most popular at the highly celebrated jubilee.

Although the events of World War I and archaeologist Lanciani's death put plans for a permanent museum on hold, the Museo dell'Impero Romano was finally realized in 1927, under Fascism, and housed in the ancient convent of Sant'Ambrogio della Massima in Rome. In this context, the former *Mostra Archeologica* not only celebrated the new nation of Italy under uni-

fication, but also exalted a nationalist rhetoric directed toward the creation of a new empire. Giulio Quirino Giglioli, a leading Italian archaeologist and Fascist deputy who served under Lanciani in 1911, affirmed the new Museo dell'Impero Romano by saying of the first proposal: "Essa poteva rifiorire solo in una Roma rinnovellata dalla rivoluzione fascista".³⁴

The final iteration of the display of the plaster casts, the 1955 inauguration of the Museo della Civiltà Romana in the EUR, took place under the direction of Antonio Maria Colini, a collaborator of Giglioli in the

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ Quoted from Silvia Giuseppini, "Roma 1926-1928: istituzione del

Museo dell'Impero Romano", in: *Studi Romani*, LV (2007), pp. 214-236, in: Gandolfo (note 6), p. 310.

1937 *Mostra Augustea*. This was an exhibition mounted at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni that celebrated the two-thousandth anniversary of Emperor Augustus' birth and gave Mussolini the opportunity to revive the myth of ancient Rome as a political symbol of the new empire.³⁵ Today, with only a few attempts to efface the most explicit reminders of Fascism, including the ubiquitous quotations from Mussolini, the museum looks much as it did in 1955 with more or less the same arrangement of objects. One of the most popular and enduring works at the museum is a scale model of ancient Rome from the time of Constantine that Benito Mussolini commissioned from Italo Gismondi in 1935, but that was only completed in 1971. Until its recent temporary closure for building renovations, the museum was open half days, catering mostly to visiting school groups. As historian Joshua Arthurs has argued, the absence at the opening of the Museo della Civiltà Romana in 1955 of a fundamental reorganization of the 1937 Fascist exhibition that juxtaposed Augustan Rome and Mussolinian Italy has meant that the present-day museum serves as much a monument to Italy's inability to come to terms with the Fascist past as it does a lesson in Roman history.³⁶ The national narrative that runs through the pre-Fascist, Fascist and post-Fascist history linking modern Italy with imperial Rome is the foundation for cultural self-definition against which the 'other' is measured. The EUR museums and their collections of imperial sculpture, agrarian and prehistoric artifacts, and scientific objects, as envisioned by the regime although never fully realized due to World War II, were meant to bolster the ongoing power of the nation's imperial inheritance. Objects from overseas cultures were significant inasmuch as they reflected the regime's colonization of the 'other'.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ Arthurs (note 6), pp. 36–38.

³⁷ Lerario (note 17), p. 50.

³⁸ Arthurs (note 6), p. 27.

³⁹ The Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari "Lamberto Lo-

EUR S.p.A.

To many, including scholars, administrators, and curators in charge of the EUR museums described above, the institutions' location is a deterrent to their success. Maria Lerario, for example, writing on the history of the Pigorini Museum, claims that "although this museum constitutes the largest Italian collection of prehistoric and ethnographic objects, the new location has had a very negative effect on its image and availability because of the distance from the city centre".³⁷ Directors and curators have bemoaned the lack of visitation due to location, rightfully lamenting that the three-day visitor to Rome will focus on the Vatican, Pantheon, and Colosseum before taking a subway ride away from the historic center. Surprisingly, no one has mentioned the museum architecture, the "immediately disquieting [...] vast blank walls" or "intimidating facades" mentioned in tourist guidebooks, which visually dominate the landscape and whatever might be on display inside.³⁸

What of the museum architecture in the EUR? And what of the museums' infrastructure? Until the time of this writing, September 2016, the three museums discussed here functioned independently from one another, even though, as I have shown, they each have roots in the 1911 *Esposizione Internazionale di Roma* and were each in their own way re-claimed by the Mussolini Fascist regime. Every museum operated with diverse sources of government support – from either a special Soprintendenza under the State Ministry of Culture or the City of Rome –, and this greatly and unevenly affected their operating budgets, mandates, and institutional capacities.³⁹ To make matters more difficult and underscore a prevail-

ria" was administered by the Istituto Centrale per la Demotnoantropologia, a specialized unit of the State Ministry of Fine Arts, whereby the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini" was directly under the umbrella of the Ministry. The Museo della Civiltà Romana continues to be run by the Comune di Roma.

ing lack of autonomy that stifled the ability of these museums to professionalize and update their practices, any bookshop or ticket sales or other museum revenue had to be turned over to external financial authorities that redistributed them at their discretion. This fractured governance and administration made it difficult if not impossible for these museums to collaborate scientifically or programmatically. In the past two years, under the Minister of Culture Dario Franceschini, significant cultural reforms have been introduced: a number of leading Italian museums have been given more spending autonomy, new directors have been hired from international competitions, and tax incentives have been offered to private donors of cultural heritage restoration projects.⁴⁰ More recently, in September 2016, a second wave of reforms included the regrouping of four important national museums into one institution called the Museo delle Civiltà, to be headed by one director who will have spending autonomy and the ability to work with private donors. The four museums are the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico “Luigi Pigorini”, the Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari “Lamberto Loria”, the Museo Nazionale dell’Alto Medioevo, located in a section of the former Palazzo della Scienza Universale, and the Museo Nazionale d’Arte Orientale “Giuseppe Tucci”, located in the historic Palazzo Brancaccio in central Rome. With this new reform, the groundwork will be laid for the possibility of a unified presentation of the Pigorini and Loria collections that emphasizes their close historic ties.

Apart from the museums themselves, however, the architectural patrimony of the EUR remains under its own jurisdiction, by a separate governing body called EUR S.p.A. This is a private company owned by the

Ministry of the Economy and the Rome municipality and an outgrowth of the former Ente Autonomo Esposizione Universale di Roma, established in 1936 as the official governing body for the *Esposizione Universale di Roma*. The primary purpose of EUR S.p.A. is economic development of the EUR, today a modern residential neighborhood and home to many companies and public bodies. EUR S.p.A. is mindful of the neighborhood’s architectural heritage and has done much to document and publicize it, with guidebooks, exhibitions, and magazines. The commissioners are cognizant of the legacy of Virgilio Testa, Fascist party loyalist and first post-war commissioner of Ente EUR (1951–1973), who recuperated all the 1930s architecture that could be saved.

But the EUR S.p.A. commissioners are also engaged in a type of mild image management,⁴¹ whereby the imperialist Fascist past is subordinate to the idea of the EUR as an embodiment of a wide-reaching *italianità*, one that invokes multiple Roman pasts and visions of a future one. In a 2004 EUR S.p.A. guide to the buildings and artworks, the authors quote Mussolini’s lead architect Marcello Piacentini, who said:

l’architettura tedesca è volutamente ufficiale: lo Speer e i suoi collaboratori, tra i quali vediamo Kreis e Bonatz, non vogliono individualizzarsi, fanno un’architettura di Stato [...] tanto meno possiamo costituire un parallelo con l’attuale movimento architettonico italiano, che pur avendo in comune gli stessi ideali di eroismo, ha però le sue speciali sensibilità e particolarissime rievocazioni di solide tradizioni e sane convinzioni di aspirazioni.⁴²

While much has been written about the antipathy and even competition between the German and Italian

⁴⁰ Stefano Pirovano, “The Italian Salvage Job: Inquiry”, in: *Apollo*, CLXXXI (2015), 632, pp. 38–40.

⁴¹ For discussion about presenting museums with difficult histories, see

Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond*, London et al. 2009.

⁴² Quoted from *EUR SpA e il patrimonio di E42* (note I6), p. 10.



7 Installation view of the exhibition *Off Loom II - Fiber Art* (2015) in the Sala d'Onore of the Museo delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari "Lamberto Loria"

Fascist regimes,⁴³ in this guide Piacentini's quote is used to keep the architecture at some remove from politics. While they do not negate the message of the regime in the buildings and the art, the authors of the guide evoke primarily the architectural patrimony of the current EUR and frame it as an elegant aesthetic enterprise waiting to be discovered. The function of the buildings as museums and the collections they contain are neglected.

I colori emergono a contrasto del bianco dei marmi esterni, presentando nelle declinazioni in bianco e nero di alcuni mosaici, o policrome di altri, soluzioni sempre diverse per movimentare l'apparente staticità dei giganteschi manufatti. All'interno, poi, un festival di marmi colorati, di legni pregiati, di vetri soffiati e infissi, dà vita a cubi, parallelepipedi, colonne e vetrate che offrono giochi di spazi e luci originali e sorprendenti.⁴⁴

⁴³ See, for example, Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: The Dynamics of an Uneasy Relationship", in: *Art, Culture, and the Media in the Third Reich*, ed. by Richard A. Ertin, Chicago 2002, pp. 257–286.

⁴⁴ Carlo Bertilaccio, "Introduzione", in: *EUR SpA e il patrimonio di E42* (note 16), p. 7.

Conclusions

What really does the cultural patrimony of the EUR stand for today? Architecturally and museologically, the district is a strange mix of exuberance and decay, of gleaming monumental buildings now nearly eighty years old with outdated and under-maintained exhibitions of ever-fascinating objects. If, as Albert Speer claimed for Nazi Germany, buildings should be considered as words in stone,⁴⁵ how should we read the heavily iconic architecture of the EUR, where buildings and their decorations carry neglected messages of imperial bombast and museum collections silence or even hide their Fascist pasts? In an age when museum architecture is celebrated and considered part and parcel of a museum display,⁴⁶ should these museums bear the responsibility of the Fascist specifications to which they were built? Why don't they? Toward what ends should museological recognition of the 1930s regime take place? Should these museums be considered as monuments, museums, or both?

In the past ten years, the most established European museums of non-European art have been called into political service as agents of change. The Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini" has been deeply involved in some of these revisionist efforts, including the EU-sponsored RIME (European Ethnography Museum Research Network) initiative from 2007 to 2012, which questioned the very necessity of the ethnographic museum in the twentieth century and created multi-cultural public programs with new immigrant communities, and the follow-up program SWICH (Sharing a World of Inclusion, Creativity and Heritage: Ethnography, Museums of World Culture and New Citizenship in Europe), which is developing exhibitions and other activities devoted to the subjects of citizenship, patrimony, and the dialogues between art and ethnography

and self and other. Still, at the Museo Pigorini, the thorny question of the museum's own institutional history continues to be sidestepped, often decisively. Painfully aware of how revisionist aims and the institutional setting work against each other, at least one former museum staff member, who prefers to remain anonymous, feels that the historic museum can only move forward through a kind of 'trespassing' over the outdated galleries.

Across the piazza, the Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari "Lamberto Loria" has also been trying on new identities and reflecting on its past. In 2011, it mounted a photographic exhibition *La festa delle feste: Roma e l'Esposizione Internazionale del 1911* marking the centennial of the 1911 exposition. A more recent exhibition *Off Loom II – Fiber Art* (2015) introduced contemporary craft to the museum (Fig. 7), whereby the selected works were intended to "'closely dialog' with the handmade textiles of [...] the] past, with the baskets, and nets, the hemp and wool [...]".⁴⁷ In neither one of these displays, however, were connections made between the exhibitions themselves, the building that houses them, and the world's fair setting. In the Museo delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari, the architectural decoration, be it the frescoes in the Sala d'Onore, a bas-relief doorframe illustrating popular arts and traditions, or the actual design of a monumental staircase, is part of the display and therefore part of the museum's story. In the museums of the EUR, contemporary exhibitions that are placed in aesthetic and conceptual dialogue with the building can enrich the visitors' experience of both the historic and contemporary objects.

As an architectural and museum complex, the EUR is mired in bureaucratic complications, financial difficulties, and a long Roman tradition of *damnatio memoriae*, whereby marks of unwanted pasts are literally

⁴⁵ Macdonald (note 41), p. 25.

⁴⁶ On this question see, for example, the contribution of Michaela Giebelhausen, "The Architecture Is the Museum", in: *New Museum Theory and Prac-*

tice: An Introduction, ed. by Janet Marstine, Malden, Mass., 2006, pp. 41–60.

⁴⁷ Exhibition label copy "Off Loom II – Fiber Art", Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari "Lamberto Loria" 2015.

rubbed from the surfaces of buildings, monuments, and memories. To reveal the marks of these unwanted pasts is to display what museum scholar and ethnologist Sharon Macdonald, in writing about the Nazi past in Nuremberg, calls “difficult heritage”, a past that is recognized as meaningful in the present but also contested and awkward for public reconciliation with a positive, self-affirming contemporary identity.⁴⁸ Unlike other antique Roman or Fascist-era monuments in Italy that have been covered up or erased, the buildings, architectural decorations, and collections of the EUR are on full display, while only the narrative of their pasts has been silenced. To keep the history of the museums and their site mute has the effect of exalting the silence, of giving more power to the “unimaginable past” and excluding the possibility of a public shared re-elaboration of it.⁴⁹ Left without a voice at the EUR, the Fascist past itself becomes a mysterious and unimaginable ‘other’.

Where the buildings of the EUR were designed under Fascism, the collections housed in the EUR museums have histories older than the regime. Their redistribution from, say, the stores of Villa d’Este or the display rooms of the Collegio Romano to the Fascist pavilions in the EUR has a long historical legacy in post-unification Italy, where collections amassed by one person for a particular place are moved to other locations out of practical or political exigencies.⁵⁰ In Italy as elsewhere, when museum collections move house, they often change allegiances and take on new meanings. The EUR museum collections are part of

this tradition; they represent a multitude of political, historic and intellectual legacies, even though everything but their political origins is addressed. The artifacts represented in the three EUR museums – vernacular culture, the Roman imperial past, Italian prehistory and extra-European (especially African) tradition – were originally collected by scholars, politicians and missionaries for nationalist, colonialist or pre-scientific knowledge. They were then conflated by the Fascists to create a state character that was rooted in a timeless *italianità* specific to the regime. Though a heavy burden, these cultural and architectural inheritances cannot be ignored. While many rightfully argue that colonial museums are obsolete and some have already been laid to rest, this does not necessarily mean that others can be neglected. Precisely because ethnographic, folk art, and archaeological museums are increasingly called upon to represent an inclusive citizenship, whatever difficult histories they have – stemming from colonialism, nationalism, imperialism – must be examined. By incorporating dissonant subjects, in this case Fascism and totalitarianism, into research, display, and community interaction, museums can confront and re-negotiate their legacies, revitalize themselves and gain a renewed opportunity to shape their own epistemological, historical, and material futures. The new Museo delle Civiltà that incorporates the national EUR museums and the Rome-based Museo Nazionale d’Arte Orientale “Giuseppe Tucci” into a unified whole may offer a platform for these important re-interpretations.

⁴⁸ Macdonald (note 41), p. 1.

⁴⁹ Quoted from Viviana Gravano, “Museo Diffuso: Performing Memory in Public Spaces”, in: *The Postcolonial Museum: The Arts of Memory and the Pressures*

of History, ed. by Iain Chambers *et al.*, Burlington, Vt., 2014, pp. 111–124.

⁵⁰ See Simona Troilo, *La patria e la memoria: tutela e patrimonio culturale nell’Italia unita*, Milan 2005, pp. 115–136.

In the 1930s, Benito Mussolini attempted to re-create the prowess of imperial Rome by extending the city toward the sea. In a newly created suburb, he planned a Universal Exposition of Rome, a white city of pavilions modeled on other international world's fairs. Earmarked for 1942, to celebrate twenty years of Fascism, E42 would showcase scientific progress, corporate national production, rural diversity, empirical expansion, and homage to antique emperors. World War II ensued, and E42 went unrealized. Nonetheless, between 1956 and the 1970s, three museums opened in EUR that had ties to the Fascist regime. Two of these, the Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari "Lamberto Loria" and the Museo della Civiltà Romana, opened in spaces intended for them. A third, the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini", was placed in a building originally planned as a Hall of Science. Today, both national museums – Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari "Lamberto Loria" and Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini" – actively refocus their activities away from outdated nationalist, Fascist and colonialist displays, while the third museum, an enormous collection of casts of imperial Roman statuary from worldwide museums, is closed to the public while undergoing building renovation. Yet while these museums work to reconcile current museological practice with legacies of the 'other', they are nonetheless visually dwarfed by massive rationalist white marble buildings that house them. In EUR, the severe neoclassical building program for a Fascist world's fair, completed only after the regime fell, is also a museum of the 'other', a shining, yet brooding open-air collection of architecture and art created under a failed totalitarian regime, although not officially defined as such. In considering the EUR museums and buildings as one large cultural complex, this paper will tease out the historical silence that shrouds the area and advocate for museological recognition of a difficult cultural past.

Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Archivio storico fotografico E42 / EUR S.p.A., Rome: Figs. 1, 3, 4, 6. – From Eur: guida degli Istituti culturali, Milan 1995: Fig. 2. – Author: Figs. 5, 7.

