Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution
(Mostra Della Rivoluzione Fascista)
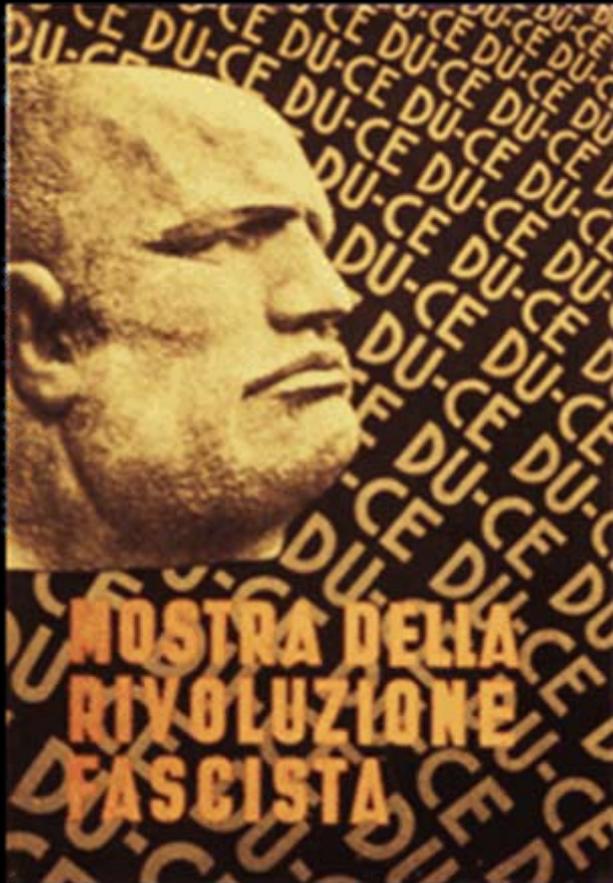## 1932–1934

Fig. 1. Front cover of the *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution,* 1933
Weingrow Collection

Based on the 1st Decennial exhibition, celebrating the 10th anniversary of the March on Rome, this book represents the growing cult of Benito Mussolini—Il Duce—and documents a time in Italian history marked by the rise of fascism. The Fascist Party used expressions of traditional culture, such as art exhibitions, in an attempt to re-contextualize and revolutionize Italy. Mussolini required that the halls and artwork in the exhibit were to look strictly modern, exploiting the contemporaneous style of futurism.

Mostra Della Rivoluzione Fascista
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Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution

Fig. 2. Façade of the Pallazzo delle Espozisioni on the occasion of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, 1932

Fig. 3. Room O of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, 1932
   Weingrow Collection

The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution represents a collective effort in which scholars, artists, writers, and all men belonging to the beginnings of the movement, participated and contributed to the construction and creation of the interior of the exhibition galleries, which are referred to as "rooms." The rooms were examples of the Italian art style prior to the Second World War. They portray the ideals and the moral necessity for the existence of the avant-garde.

"The exhibit stands like a monument on a threshold of the second decennial giving old comrades a thrilling joy and the highest reward for duty accomplished, giving new comrades, and the young a solemn precept, under the Duce."[1]

The exhibition contained documents and relics that reflected various events that were important to the fascists. In addition to illustrating the reasons, motives, and causes of World War I as the fascists wished them to be understood, their purpose was to create the sense that fascism was alive with power and vitality, at the forefront of the people rising after a period of decadence, abasement, and foreign servitude.

Mussolini and his regime tied cultural events to a seventy-percent reduction in train fares, so that more people could attend them. For many, these events represented the first time after World War I that they were traveling outside of their neighborhoods. The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution was extended three times to accommodate the vast number of visitors.

Fig. 4. Room E of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, 1932
Weingrow Collection
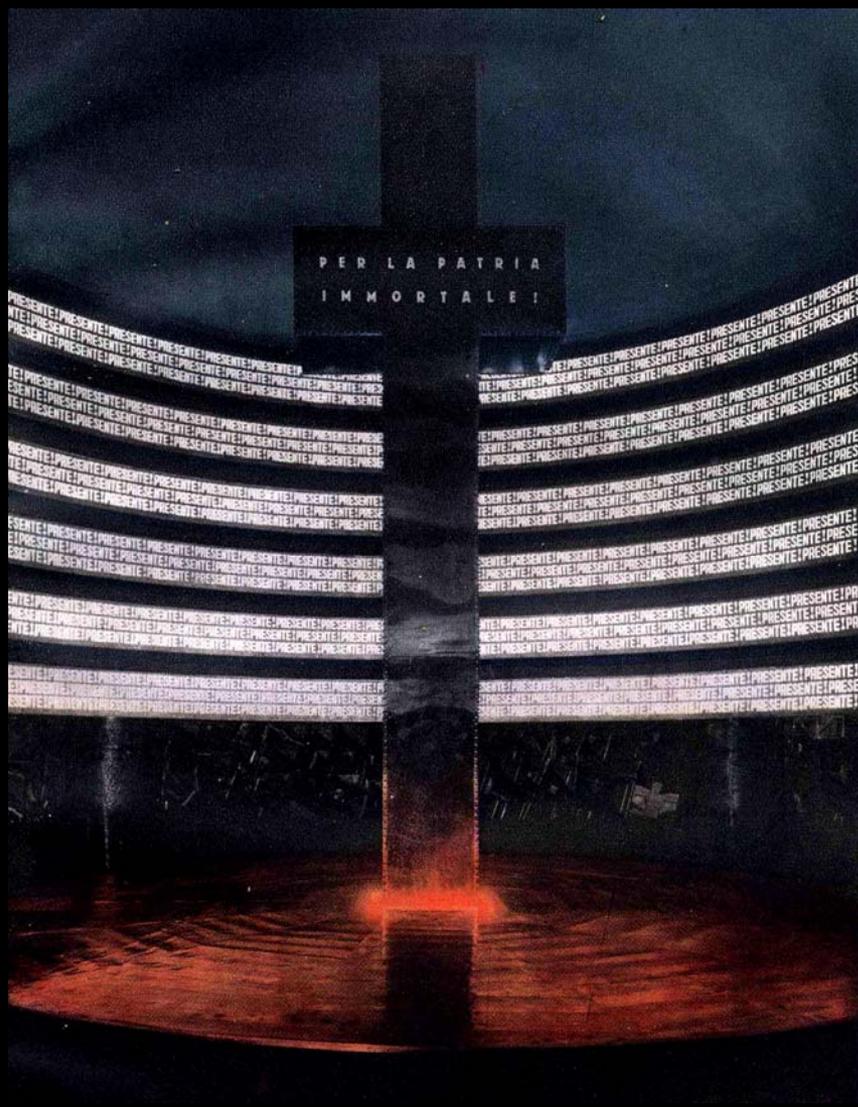
PER LA PATRIA
IMMORTALE!

Fig. 5. Room U of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, 1932
Weingrow Collection

In much the same way that Hitler used exhibitions for propaganda purposes (although with an opposite intention from Hitler's Degenerate Art exhibit, which placed avant-garde art on display for ridicule), Mussolini used propagandizing exhibitions to build himself up as a reliable dictator who could solve all of Italy's problems, gradually making Italians more and more dependent on him. Once his grasp on power was assured, anyone who chose to oppose him was executed.

In the exhibition room to the left is the title "Per La Patria Immortale!" (The Sanctuary of the Martyrs!), transfixed atop a futuristic black steel cross. The cross reaches the ceiling and glows red from the base, while the middle portion reflects the illumination of letters that have been stenciled into the background wall. The letters form a repeating pattern of the word "Presente!", as if echoing the cheers of the deceased martyrs.

"Italian people must be refined . . . to become a work of art. A government that has the touch of an artist and the fist of a warrior. A sensitive man with will power; a man who knows the people, guides them, bends them, even if necessary with violence."[2]

—Benito Mussolini
(Declared after the battle of Caparetto during World War I.)

Fig. 6. Room A of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, 1932
Weingrow Collection

Fig. 7. Mario Sironi, Room S of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, 1932
Weingrow Collection

Fig. 8. Mario Sironi, Sketch for poster for the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, 1932

Mario Sironi (1885–1961)

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti
1876–1944

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "writer-poet and founder of Futurism, passionately believed Italy needed to modernize its intellectual life and overhaul its sluggish, antiquated culture. One of his most ardent wishes was to see the emergence of Italy as a powerful, modern nation and a center for European culture and arts, and this was one of the main driving forces and central concepts of Futurism."[3]

Futurism slowly developed into a political force with a distinctive left-wing strategy and ideology. Marinetti's Futurist Party pursued a strategic alliance with the Association for the Arditi (combatants in World War I assault units) and Benito Mussolini's *Fasci di Combattimento* (League of Combat) to effect an "Italian Revolution" of the "proletariat of genius."[4]

In early 1918, Marinetti founded the *Partito Politica Futurista* (Futurist Political Party), which only a year later was absorbed into Benito Mussolini's *Fasci di Combattimento*, making Marinetti one of the first supporters and members of the Italian Fascist Party.

Fig. 9. Tato [Guglielmo Sanson], *Portrait of Marinetti,* cs.1930

Fig. 10. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Irredentismo,* 1919

Fig. 11. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti,Visual poem*,* 1930

Marinetti chose to use text repetition and collage as *visual poetry*. The layered placement of text was believed to penetrate into the mind's psyche and would simultaneously channel new information from the semantics aspect of the text. He called his art form a "typographical revolution."

 "My revolution is aimed at the so-called typographical harmony of the page which is contrary to the flux and reflux, the leaps and bursts of style that run through the page. On the same page, therefore, we will use three or four colors of ink, or even twenty different typefaces if necessary. For example: italics for a series of similar or swift sensations, boldface for the violent onomatopoeias, and so on. With this typographical revolution and this multicolored variety in the letters I mean to redouble the expressive force of words." Marinetti declares in his *Destruction of Syntax-Imagination without strings-Words-in-Freedom.*[5]

The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution included futurist paintings and sculptures that were radical in their expression of the dynamism of modernity through their subversive use of a borrowed cubist vocabulary of fractured forms. Futurist art that depicted war and referenced the use of force were displayed in the exhibition to convey the fascist message that societal advancement and violence were inextricably bound together.

Fig. 12. Marino Marini, *Italy in Arms,* 1933

Fig. 13. Erico Prampolini, *Mussolini's Blackshirts, 15 April 1919*, 1933

Benito Mussolini (1883-1945)

1914 At age 31, founds the paper *Il Popolo d'Italia* and the pro-war group *Fasci D' Azione Rivoluzionaria,* in t*he* hope that World War I might lead to the collapse of society and bring him to power.

1919 Fascism becomes an organized political movement.

1921 Enters Parliament as a right-wing member.

1925–1926 Introduces strict censorship and alters the methods of elections; demonstrates absolute control over the press and begins disseminating propaganda. Those who resist are killed.

1930 Begins making plans to control the Mediterranean.

1935 Attempts to create an anti-Hitler front.

1936 Sides with Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), ending reconciliation with France and Britain and leading to the alliance with Nazi Germany.

1937 Joins alliance with Nazi Germany.

1938 Poses as Moderate for European Peace.

1939 Pact of Steel with Hitler.

1939 Occupies Albania.

1940 Following the fall of France, declares war; first deployment of troops into Greece reveals that the military is not sufficiently trained to fight a war.

1941 Joins Hitler in declaring war on Russia in June and on the United States in December.

1943 Mussolini's colleagues turn against him.

1945 Tries to escape to Switzerland.

1945 Executed in April, along with his mistress, Clara Petacci.

The Howard L. and Muriel Weingrow Collection of Avant-Garde Art and Literature at Hofstra University includes a copy of the *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution*.

Readers of this book will be exposed to a well-documented era, when Mussolini and his regime regulated the streets of Italy. The pages show a period of history when one of the most notorious dictators ruled over Italy. Through the photographs in this book, one is able to revisit the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution and learn about how art and culture were used as a political tool.

Notes

1. Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, eds., *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution: 1st Decennial of the March on Rome* (Rome: Partito Nationale Fascista, 1933), 51.
2. Ibid., 13.
3. Bob Osborn, "Futurism and Politics," in "Futurism and Futurists," http://www.futurism.org.uk/politics.htm. (accessed November 23, 2005).
4. Pierantozzi Silvia, "Filippo Tommaso Marinetti: La Vita," Tiscali, http://web.tiscali.it/pierantozzisilvia/marinetti.htm (accessed November 23, 2005).
5. Desmal Purcell, "Futurism." East Georgia College, http://www.ega.edu/facweb/dpurcell/futurism.htm (accessed November 23, 2005)

Illustrations

1. Front cover: Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, eds., *Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution: 1st Decennial of the March on Rome* (Rome: Partito Nationale Fascista, 1933). Courtesy of the Howard L. and Muriel Weingrow Collection of Avant-Garde Art and Literature at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.

2. Façade of the Pallazzo delle Espozisioni on the occasion of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, 1932. Courtesy of the Archivio Della Scuola Romana, http://www.scuolaromana.it/document/doc017.htm (accessed November 23, 2005).

3. Room O of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, 1932. Alfieri and Freddi, *Fascist Revolution,* 182. Courtesy of the Howard L. and Muriel Weingrow Collection of Avant-Garde Art and Literature at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.

4. Room E of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, 1932. Ibid., 119. Courtesy of the Howard L. and Muriel Weingrow Collection of Avant-Garde Art and Literature at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.

5. Room U of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, 1932. Ibid., 229. Courtesy of the Howard L. and Muriel Weingrow Collection of Avant-Garde Art and Literature at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.

6. Room A of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, 1932. Ibid., 20. Courtesy of the Howard L. and Muriel Weingrow Collection of Avant-Garde Art and Literature at Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY.

Illustrations (continued)

7. Mario Sironi, Room S of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, 1932. Werckmeister, "Totalitarian Art," under "Slide List for April 20, 1999." Courtesy of Northwestern University, http://faculty-web.at.northwestern.edu/art-history/werckmeister/April_15_1999/Sironi.jpg (accessed December 10, 2005).

8. Mario Sironi, Sketch for poster for the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, 1932. Werckmeister, "Totalitarian Art," under "Slide List for May 13, 1999 (The Leader)." Courtesy of Northwestern University, http://faculty-web.at.northwestern.edu/art-history/werckmeister/May_13_1999/ (accessed December 10, 2005).

9. Tato [Guglielmo Sanson], *Futurist Portrait of Marinetti,* ca. 1930. Marietta Angelini, "Filippo Tommaso Marinetti," trans. Thomas Muirhead, under "Maurizio Castelvetro," "Italian Futurist Architecture, 1909–1944." Courtesy of Rebel, http://www.rebel.net/~futurist/marinett.htm (accessed December 12, 2005).

10. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Irredentismo,* 1919. Rodrigo Alonso, "The Visual Poem, Between Simultaneity and Montage." Courtesy of Poesia Visual, http://www.poesiavisual.com.ar/2004/essays/the_visual_poem_between_simultaneity_and_montage.htm (Accessed December 12, 2005).

11. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Visual poem, 1930. "Il Futurismo di Marinetti Nelle Arti Grafiche," 3. Stampa Tipographica, under "Gutemberg," "Il Futurismo di Marinetti sconvolge la tipographia." Courtesy of Stampa Tipografica, http://www.stampatipografica.it/gutemberg/marinetti/marinetti3.htm (accessed Novembe 23, 2005).

12. Marino Marini, *Italy in Arms,* 1933. James R. Beniger, "COMM 544: The Arts and New Media," under "Image Library." Courtesy of the University of Southern California, http://www.usc.edu/schools/annenberg/asc/projects/comm544/library/images/735.html (accessed December 13, 2005).

13. Erico Prampolini, *Mussolini's Blackshirts, 15 April 1919,* 1933. James R. Beniger, "COMM 544: The Arts and New Media," under "Image Library." Courtesy of the University of Southern California, http://www.usc.edu/programs/cst/deadfiles/lacasis/ansc100/library/images/737.html (accessed December 13, 2005).

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