



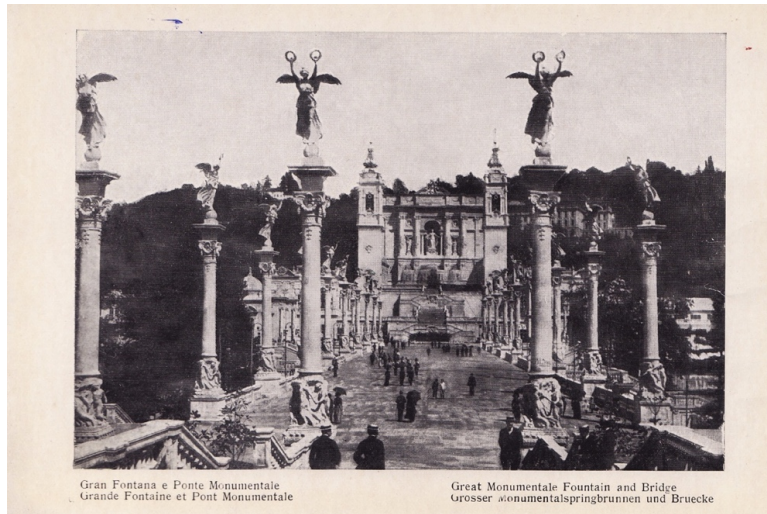
New York University
A private university in the public service

Graduate School of Arts and Science
Department of Art History
**M.A. in Historical and Sustainable
Architecture**



New York Metropolitan Chapter

Exposition Networks in Italy 1911-1942



Steve Rugare, Associate Professor, Kent State University Architecture Program;
Associate of the Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative, College of Architecture and
Environmental Design, Kent State University

Tuesday, May 1, 6:30 pm

New York University Department of Art History
Silver Center, Room 301

100 Washington Square East (entrance on Waverly Place)

In 1911, Italy held two international exhibitions—in Rome and Turin—to mark the 50th anniversary of the country's unification. These little-known events provide a useful comparison, as their planners took highly divergent paths in addressing a fraught political and ideological context. Beyond its historical interest, this case allows us to interrogate prevalent approaches in exposition studies.

Over the last generation, most studies of World's exhibitions and fairs have come from disciplinary positions associated with intellectual history or cultural studies. Many have focused on the ideological goals of elites that organize these events. Alternatively, writers in the tradition of Walter Benjamin have emphasized the exposition as a laboratory for developing consumer visual practices. Neither of these approaches fully takes account of the complexity of the on-the-ground planning and design process. In the case of an exposition, that process involves the interactions of thousands of actors, responding to tight schedules and commercial pressures.

Drawing on ideas of Giorgio Agamben and Bruno Latour, this lecture treats the expositions of 1911 as instances in an ongoing series of apparatuses that deploy elite intentions, popular perceptions, and built artifacts in networked relationships. The result is neither phantasmagoria nor noiseless ideological transmission. Rather it is a narrative of redefinition and hybridization at urban scale. Because exposition planners look at their predecessors, this narrative has a sequel, and in Italy that story leads to the better known events of the Fascist era, particularly the unrealized E42 exposition outside Rome, at which elements of the 1911 expositions were to be redeployed in surprising ways.

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