# QUEERING A FASCIST HERITAGE

*Degree project in Archtecture*
*AAHM10 2021.*
*Lund Tekniska Högskola*

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# *Special thanks to:*

Jenny Övergaard, Therese Skevik, Matilda Svensk,
Björn Sandell & Marianne Sandell.

And to my photographer and beloved partner,
Wasim Harwill.

Who is the fastest snail?

**01** Palazzo della Cilvitá Italiana
- An architecture with intentions
- The hidden construction under the rational surface
- Fendi moves in
- The fascist exhibition room
- Fendi’s interior design
- The subject and the heterosexual ideals
- Celebrated form, forgotten intentions

**02** The power of *re-imagine*
- Manipulate with the opposite ideals
- The absurd becomes serious

**03** To *Queer*
- Imagine with care, think queer
- Change the main character
- The Care Map

**04** *Queering* as a method
- Introducing another main character
- The shaft / the ramp
- Transparent walls / A hole in the wall
- Fendi / McDonald’s

**05** *Queering* the form
- Introducing Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana as another object
- Happy Palazzo
- The Snail Game
- The Picking box
- The Bread Plate
- The Curtain
- The Coloring Book

**06** Final reflections
- What is happening when the intentions are manipulated?
- What is happening when the main character is changed?
- What is happening when the form is changed?

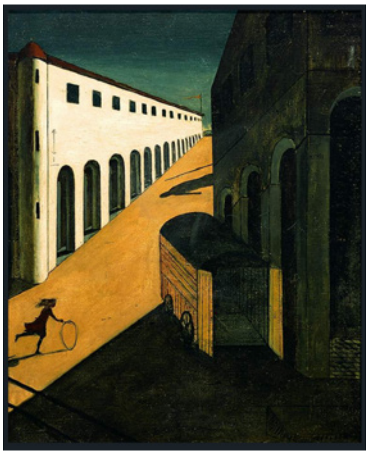

*Figure 1. Piazza d'Italia (1913)*
*by Giorgio de Chirico*

# An introduction

I visited the area of EUR once, three years ago (see attachment 1). It felt like a ghost town, but it was just a business district during a Sunday. Life was still and the empty stone buildings felt anonymous, yet present. It felt like I was in a world of abstraction from the otherwise chaotic Rome. The wide empty streets and the monumental structures, made me feel aware of my own presence as I realized how big the architecture was compared to me. It was a fascinating, but still offensive feeling who dragged me towards the monument at the end of the street called The Palazzo della Civiltà.

After my visit, I got triggered by my own experience and asked myself how fascism could look so pure? In my search for answers, I found out that the architects behind the monument were inspired by metaphysical art. Looking at the famous Italian painter Giorgio de Chirico, I realized that my embodied experience could be described as being inside a metaphysical painting. The paintings had the same feeling of still life, long dark shadows and all humans was replaced with remote figures or statues. The art had been more or less directly translated to architecture.

In this thesis I have tried to understand this great complexity in architecture, when an oppressive architecture can be considered an architectural masterpiece. For me, this conflict is embodied by Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana. A monument built with the intentions to host an exhibition celebrating 20 years of fascism, is now 80 years later, rented by the luxury fashion house Fendi due to its mesmerizing aesthetic design.

As a way of approaching this conflict, I have explored if it is possible to use art, not only as a tool for making architecture, but perhaps it also could be tool for generating a critical discussion about architecture and its complex hybridity.

To discuss the hybridity of architecture I am influenced by queer theory and its insistance upon acknowleging the neglected.[1] In the search for an intersectional and critical process, I have explored architecture through theory studies and experimental practices, such as art installations, imaginative interventions and objects. In my explorations my aim has been to discuss the invisible by bringing it out of the already built form. By elaborating on two main questions: when does architecture become fascist and is it possible to demonstrate the fascist legacy by manipulating its architecture?

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1. S. Ahmed. "Queer Phenomenology: orientations, objects, others". 2006. p. 169.

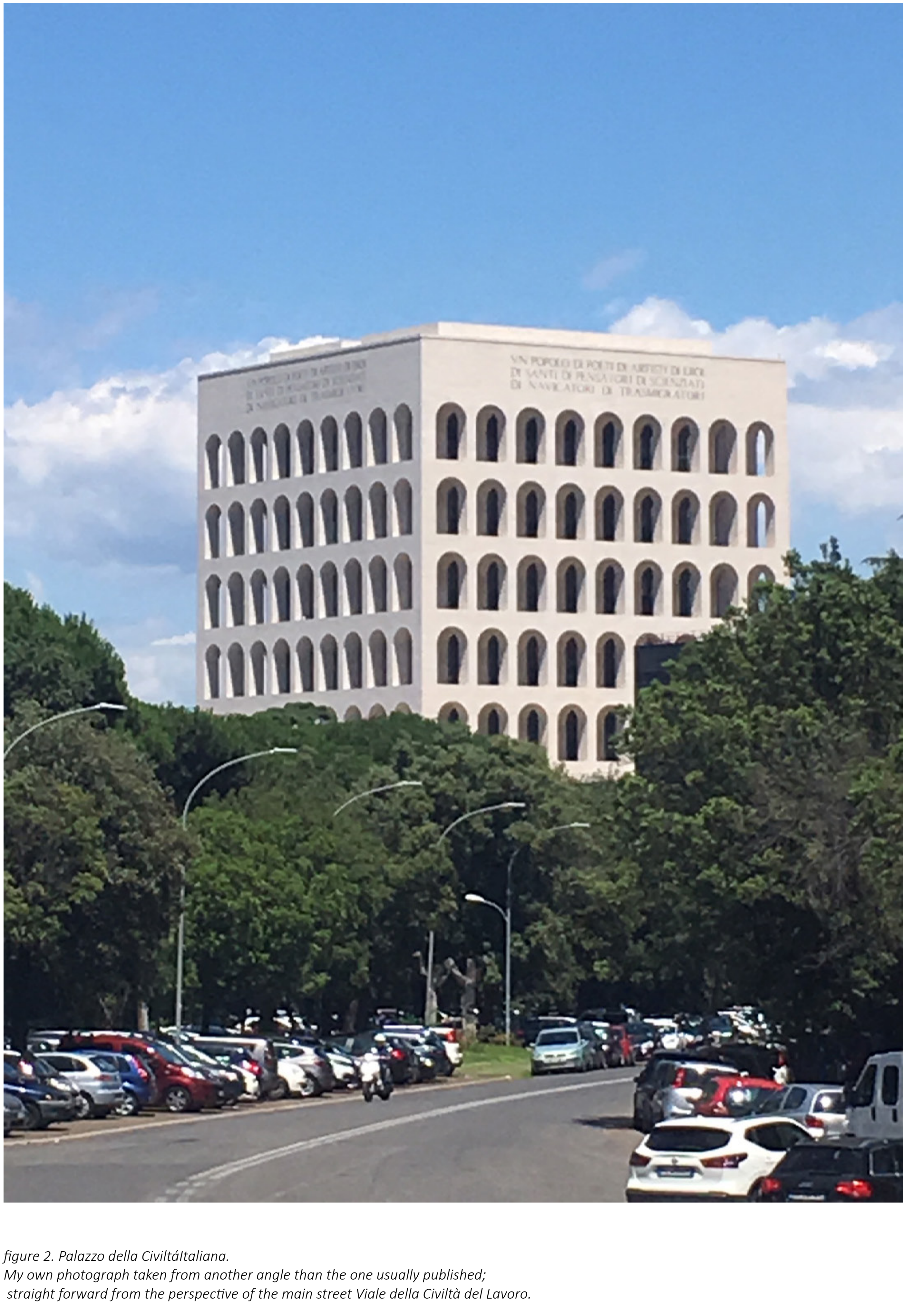
UN POPOLO DI POETI DI ARTISTI DI EROI
DI SANTI DI PENSATORI DI SCIENZIATI
DI NAVIGATORI DI TRASMIGRATORI

*figure 2. Palazzo della CiviltáItaliana.*
*My own photograph taken from another angle than the one usually published;*
*straight forward from the perspective of the main street Viale della Civiltà del Lavoro.*

Introducing the monument

# Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana

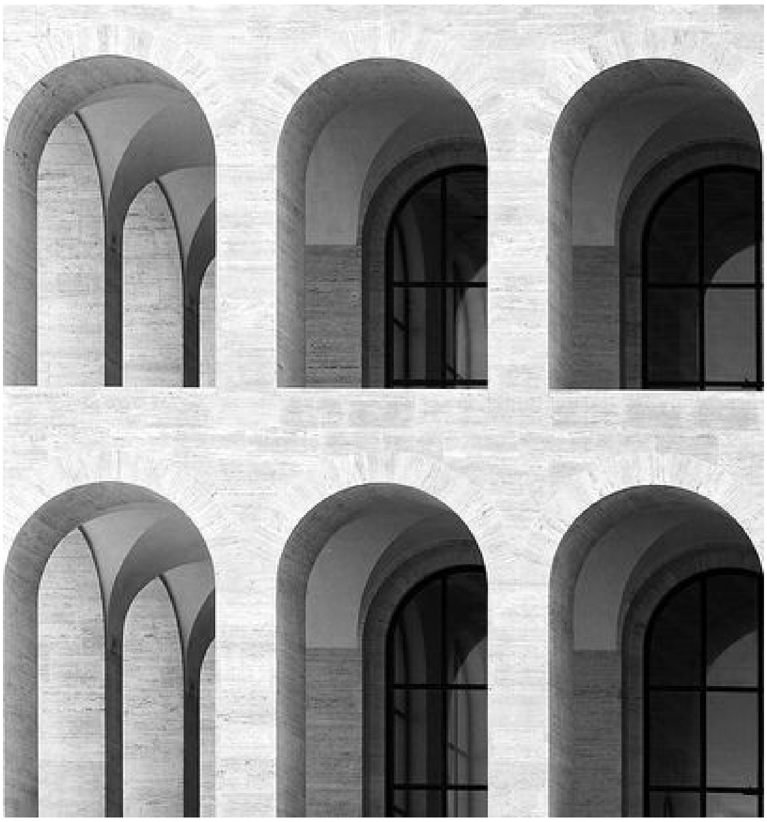

*figure 3. A zoom in of the facade, Palazzo della Cilvitá Italiana.*

Palazzo della Civiltà.Italiana is a well known building, proposed during Mussolini's regime. Placed in the center of EUR, outside of Rome, the Palazzo della Cilvitá Italiana was planned to be a monumental building complex that would host a world fair in 1942, called EUR42, celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the fascist rise to power. However, the building never came to fruition as a fascist exhibition hall due to the fall of the regime. It stood mostly empty until 2015, when the fashion house of Fendi moved in and began using it as their headquarter.

One might think that taking over a fascist building, would be a problematic matter for the brand's reputation and clientele. However, Fendi's CEO Pietro Beccari, agrues that the building is completely deloaded from political propaganda, since ”there was no political activity that took place here. We never saw it through the lens of fascism”.[2]

Beccari argues that the only way a building can become fascist if it is used by fascists, but what is a fascist building and who is in controll of the fascist narrative?

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2. ” Fendi rejects criticism over new HQ in Mussolini propaganda building ”, in The Guardian, 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/22/fendi-launches-hq-in-mussolini-propaganda-building (accessed 2021-09-01)

# An architecture with intentions

The district's letters ”EUR” stand for Esposizione Universale di Roma, translated to ”The universal exposition of Rome”. It was a part of Mussolini's vision to build a new Fascist Roman Empire.[3]

Fascism identified its ideology a lot with the legacy of ancient Rome, using the Romans' established aesthetic language to lend their ideology legitimacy and credibility.[4] The fascists admired ancient Rome as a united and stable society, in contrast to what they considered to be their contemporary individualistic, liberal and chaotic society to be. Looking at Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana one can see how the former Roman Empire is mimicked in its architecture. The Palazzo Civiltà. Italiana is even called ”The Colosseo Quadrato” (”the Square Colosseum”) and can be seen as a paraphrase of the ancient monument with its repetitive arches penetrating the solid marble in a symmetrical manner. This fascist obsession with the past is referred to as ”Romanitá”.[5]

Mussolini was also keen on letting himself be an architectural symbol. One example of this is how the six rows of nine arches is penetrating the facade could be interpreted as representing the letters of Mussolini's name, six for Benito and nine for Mussolini. Another way Mussolini attempted to engrave his DNA into the building was to inscribe his own quote at the top of each facade. “Un popolo di poeti di artisti di eroi / di santi di pensatori di scienziati / di navigatori di trasmigratori.” [“A nation of poets, of artists, of heroes/Of saints, of thinkers, of scientists/Of navigators, of emigrants.”]. But his name is not inscribed. It is rather significant that he chose not to inscribe his name onto the facades of his architectural centerpiece, one reason could be that it felt superfluous, since he was supposed to give his speeches from the rooftop in person.[6] But, since it is not inscribed one has to know that it is a quote by Mussolini, otherwise one can just simply say that it is a tribute to the Italian people.

The rhetoric of ”bring back Italy to its glorious past” was clever propaganda. However, the fascists also wanted to be the creators of a new modern style, emphasizing their relevance for the future as well. Therefore they adopted the modern rational style and made it the official fascist style. As stated in the pamphlet entitled ”Report to Mussolini on Architecture'' written by Pietro Maria Bardi, ”Rationalist architecture is the only true expression of Fascist revolutionary principles”.[7] Significant for Italian Rationalist style is the allusion to ancient Roman architecture, but absent from ornament, revealing the strong geometrical forms, often in the form of a monumental building.[8]

The Roman Empire had the strong established legacy that Mussolini strived for, and the rationalistic architecture with the futuristic visions. By using this dual vision Mussolini founded the progressive, revolutionary attitude that the fascists wanted. Managing to convey both the conservative and the progressive.

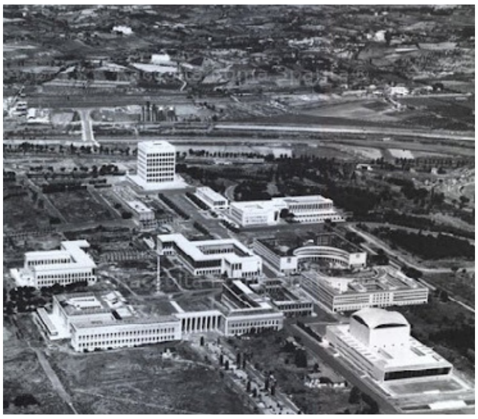

*Figure 4. The area of EUR and Palazzo della Cilvitá Italiana as the centerpiece.*

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[3] Lathrop, Alan K. The EUR: Mussolini's New Rome. https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/2018/12/27/the-eur-mussolinis-new-rome/. (accessed 2021-09-04)

[4] Scott, Kenneth. ”Mussolini and the Roman Empire”. 1932. pp. 645-657.

[5] Fallon, Nathan. ”How does the aesthetic of Fascist architecture reflect the natur of fascist political ideology in Italy during the years of Benito Mussolini's regime from 1922-1943?”. 2011. pp 22.

[6] Fallon, Nathan. 2011. p.*

[7] Frampton, K. Modern Architecture: A critical history, 2014. pp. 203-209.

[8] Frampton. 2014. pp. 203-209.

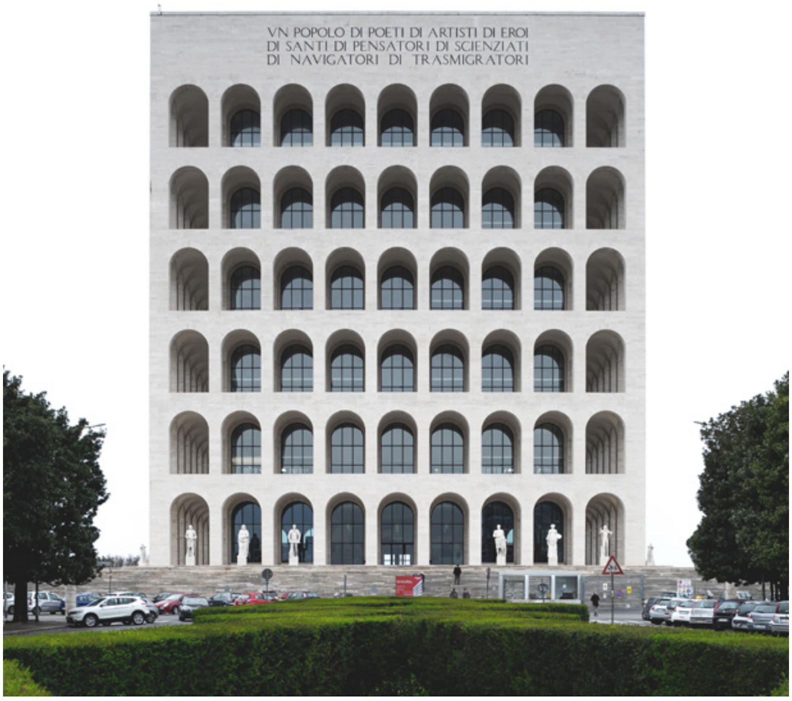
VN POPOLO DI POETI DI ARTISTI DI EROI
DI SANTI DI PENSATORI DI SCIENZIATI
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*Figure 5. Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana from the main street, Viale della Civiltà del Lavoro*

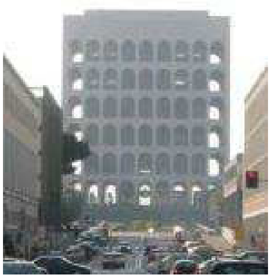

*Figure 6. During daytime.*

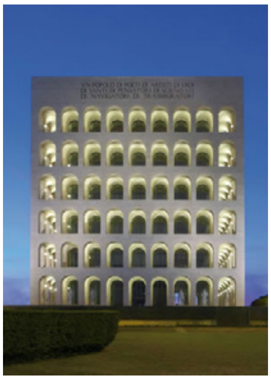

*Figure 7. During night time.*

Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana faces the street in a symmetrical perspective, it is placed on a podium, like a statue, emphasizing its artistic value and its significant importance. It is the tallest building within the district and has an independent position, not competing with any other building next to it. Standing at the end of the main street, Viale della Civiltà del Lavoro, it almost appears to be a screen, like a two-dimensional object, in a three-dimensional world. It can therefore be hard to understand the depth of the building. It is as if the embodied experience becomes an abstraction of reality.

Contributing to this effect further is, the hollow feeling of the outer facade, with its big reflective glass section makes it feel opaque. It is also hard to understand what is going on inside, which contributes to the mystical expression of the building. However, ”the mystery” also opens up for many different interpretations about what the building can be.

The bone white surface of travertine marble appears seamless and it feels as if the facade is almost boasting with its clean cuts. Indeed, it feels possible to detect a sense of boldness, by the way the holes have been cut with such precision and decisiveness. The building required a lot of constructors and skilled craftsmen, since every detail had to be precise for achieving this seamless surface.[9] This uniformed surface could be seen as totalitarian symbolism, with its one obvious leader, not recognizing the hard work behind it.

On the other hand, consisting of several different elements, which each have their own logic, covered with a rational surface, could also be interperated as a metaphor of the pluralism within the party. The traditional elements of the construction contradict the progressive and strong surface.

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[9] C. Ceccoli, T. Trombetti and D. Biondi. *”Structural evaluation of the Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana in Rome.”* 2010., p. 151 - 154.

# The hidden construction, rational surface

The winning proposal of Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana was designed by the architects Giovanni Guerra, Ernesto Lapadula and Mario Romando in May 1938. The concept was later modified by the architect Marcelo Piacentinit, who was the supervisor and the one in charge of the whole planning of the EUR project.[10]

Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana was officially completed in late November 1940.[11] Unfortunately, the original technical drawings of the buildings are lost, resulting in that all the technical evaluations are made by analyzing the already built and looking at photographs from the construction period.

The structure is made up of reinforced concrete, clad in 150 millimeter thick Travertine stone, to give the effect of solid marble. It is a local material and it is the same stone as Colosseum is built in.[12] In that sense it could be seen as an additional way of covering the building with the ancient roman legacy.

It is a remarkable inter-story height is 6 meters between ground and floor, and 8,5 metres in all other levels.[13] Giving the building a ”mega human” scale, as if the building was built to fit something *bigger* than the human. Even if the floors were full of people, the void would be about five times bigger. The ceiling height is a grand and generous gesture, giving us the notion of the importance of the building. It is as if the building is built for everyone to see and admire, no money has been on hold.

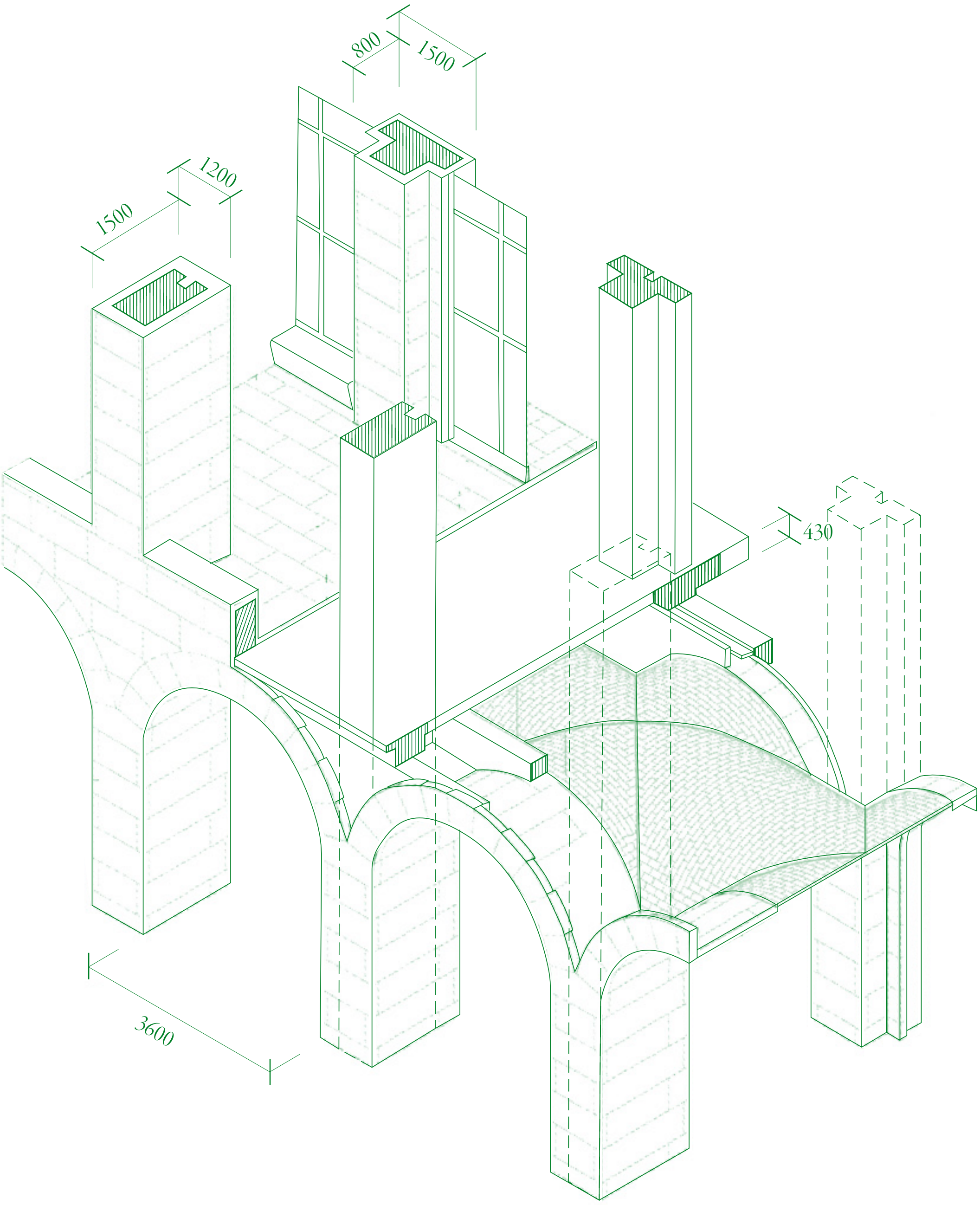
The base of the central pillars have a generous dimension of 1,50 by 0.8 metres. The pillars at the corners have a cross section of 2.1 by 2.1, they are repeated with a distance of 3,6 metres.[14] Making the mass of the structure massive in comparison to the room it creates. This massiveness gives the building a heavy body, and the redundant mass makes the structure *not only* a structural element, it is also a sculptural element.

According to the Fascist Rationalism manifesto, the architecture is to be free from ornaments, yet; one could argue that Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana contains many decorative elements. The brick cross vaults inserted in all porches (see also fig. 8), are all a decorative element they are in fact, not structural elements, even though that could be the intended interpretation.It required skilled craftsmanship and only the best bricklayers were employed.[15] However, these 32 vaults are mostly hidden by the outer surface of the facade, only visible from a close distance or inside the loggia. Probably, to keep the rational outer surface.

Another purley decorative element is the 28 white statues in a neoclassical style, Just like the vaults, they are a way to associate the building to the Roman Empire. The height of each statue is around 3,5 metres, makes the head of a medium height man only reaches the knees of those statues. As a white person, the embodied experience of these sculptures would be to meet oneself. I arguee that, these becomes statues who you as a white person could relate to, that they would give you a feeling of empowerment. However, if you are not a white medium height person, the scale of the statues could feel authoritarian, in some cases even oppressive.

Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana is considered to be an architectural masterpiece. With a rather complex construction, hidden under a ”perfect” surface. The clean cuts in continuous lines, makes no room for mistakes. The building makes us feel small using different strategies - structural and decorative. With that in mind, I would argue that the intentions behind these structural or decorative actions are there to ensure that the human will always be subordinated to the building.

*A axonometrical sketch of the construction, with measurements in millimetres (mm). The source for the measurements are from "Structural evaluation of the Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana in Rome." by C. Ceccoli, T. Trombetti and D. Biondi.*



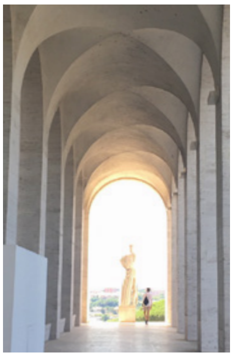


*Figure 8. A human next to one of the statues. Here we also see the vaults. My own picture.*

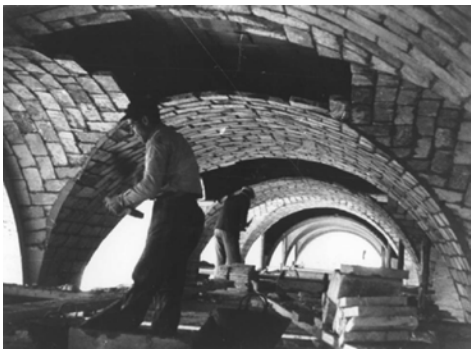


*Figure 9. The making of the brick vaults.*

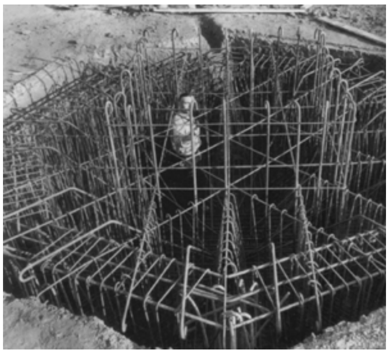


*Figure 10. The construction of a plinth.*

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10. C. Ceccoli, T. Trombetti and D. Biondi. 2010., p.149.

11. Ibid, p.149.

12. Ibid, p.149.

13. Ibid, p.151.

14. Ibid, p.151.

15. Ibid, p.151-154

# Fendi moves in

The EUR is not on the UNESCO World Heritage list. One of the reasons for this is its contested history.
For example, the Nazi concentrations camps, nations tend to not submit requests for sites which call attention to less appelling parts of the history. If UNESCO does not sponsor the site, Italy’s government has to fund the upkeep and renovations without external help. Italy’s economy has been unstable since after the second World War, which forces the government to reach out to private corporations.[16] This is one of the reasons many fashion and design brands sponsor the maintenance of Italy’s architectural heritage.[17] In the case of Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, it is Fendi.

Fendi’s acquisition of Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana might just be with the intentions of goodwill, helping a nation in need to preserve an architectural masterpiece. An argument Fendi wants to be associated with as they actively distances themselves from fascist accusations.[18] However, it is significant that Fendi decides to move in, and make it a part of their branding as a company. To contextualize, for example the leather company Tod’s, sponsored the cleaning of the Colosseum, but Tod’s did not mark the heritage with their brand. This could be argued that it is a strategic move by Fendi, knowing that they will gain status by being associated with the building.

The question I want to discuss is; if Fendi also adopted the fascist legacy when they moved in?

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[16] P. Malanima, V. Zamagni. *”150 years of the Italian economy, 1861-2010.”*. 2010., pp. 3-17

[17] H. Kessler. *” THE PALAZZO DELLA CIVILTÀ ITALIANA: FROM FASCISM TO FENDI”. 2015. pp. 65-67.*

[18] ” Fendi rejects criticism over new HQ in Mussolini propaganda building ”, in The Guardian, 2015.

[19] AD editorial Team. *”Fendi Fashion House Relocates to the Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana in Rome”* 2015-10-27. Accessed 2021-09-05)

*The building was built with the intention of hosting a fascist exhibition in Mussolini's honor. After the fall of the regime the building stood empty, but around 75 years later Fendi is using the building as their headquarter, paying €240,000 annually in rent.*[19]

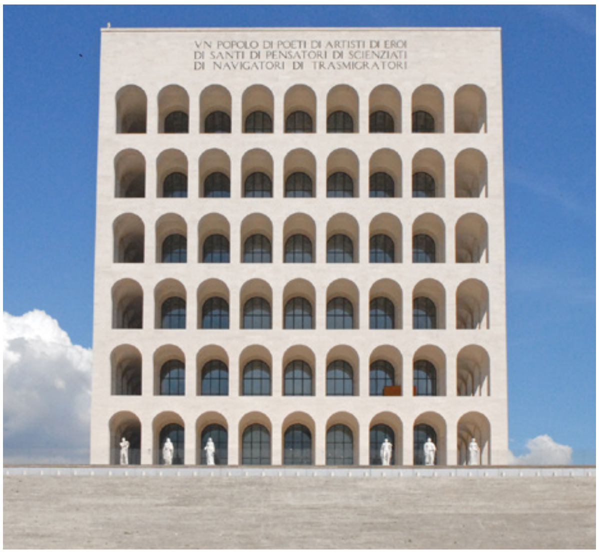
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*Figure 11. Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana before Fendi moved in.*

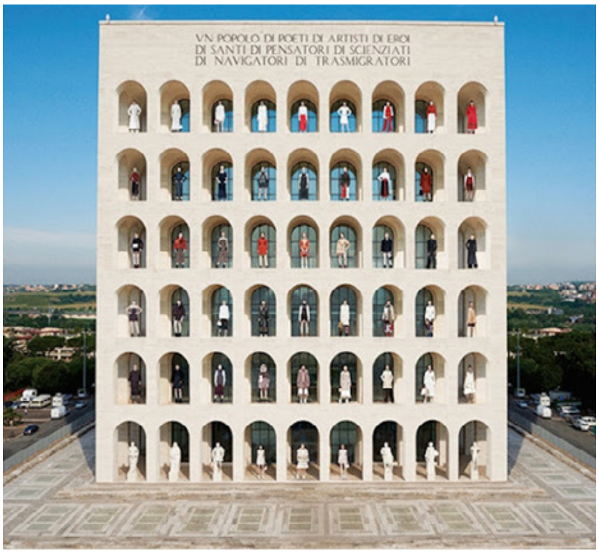
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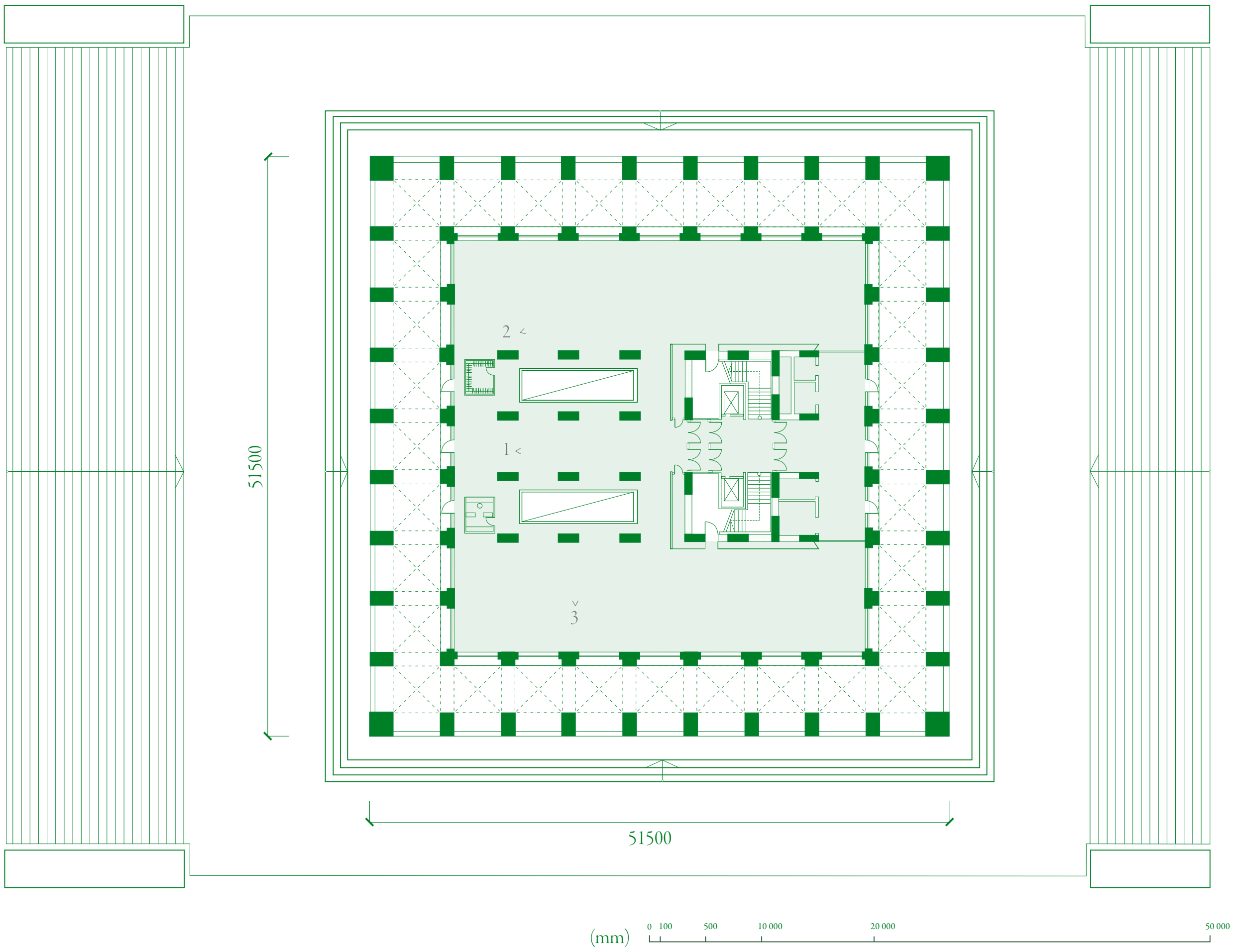
*Figure 12. Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana after Fendi moved in.*

*Fascism*
*1940*

→

*Fendi*
*2015*



# The fascist exhibition room

The ground floor was designed to host a fascist exhibition, but what does a fascist exhibition look like?

By looking at the plan drawing above, one can see that there are almost non-existing services for the visitors. For example, there are no lavatories and the wardrobe is big enough for a private home, but not a public event. It is as if this is a room you only visit during a short period. This is further corroborated as the layout of the plan also promotes motion with its two main open spaces of the same size, connected by a circular movement.

The walls and the wide pillars are clad with travertine stone like the exterior facade. The choice of material and the repeated huge sections of glass, makes it hard to hang up paintings on the walls.
It is as if the room requires a monumental free standing exhibition; for example it could be sculptures or other big objects. Fitting a fascist agenda, one could imagine an exhibition of military equipment, men riding on horses or continuing the theme of neoclassical sculptures in this space.

There is indeed space for monumental objects, but at the same time it is as if the building is designed to be admired as empty. The loggia creates an evenly soft light, which embraces the sculptural pillars and the beautiful marble stone, neither is it difficult to imagine the choice of material causing an echoing acoustic, forcing the visitors to be quiet. This contributes to the feeling of ”still life” and timelessness, as in the metaphysical paintings.

However, even if it is empty, it needs to be ”taken care of”. Someone has to clean, but it is as if the cleaner can not be associated with the building, rather be ”grateful” for being welcomed in and then happily disappear from the image. In that manner, the subject is always *subordinated to the architecture*, since the biggest work of art is the architecture itself.

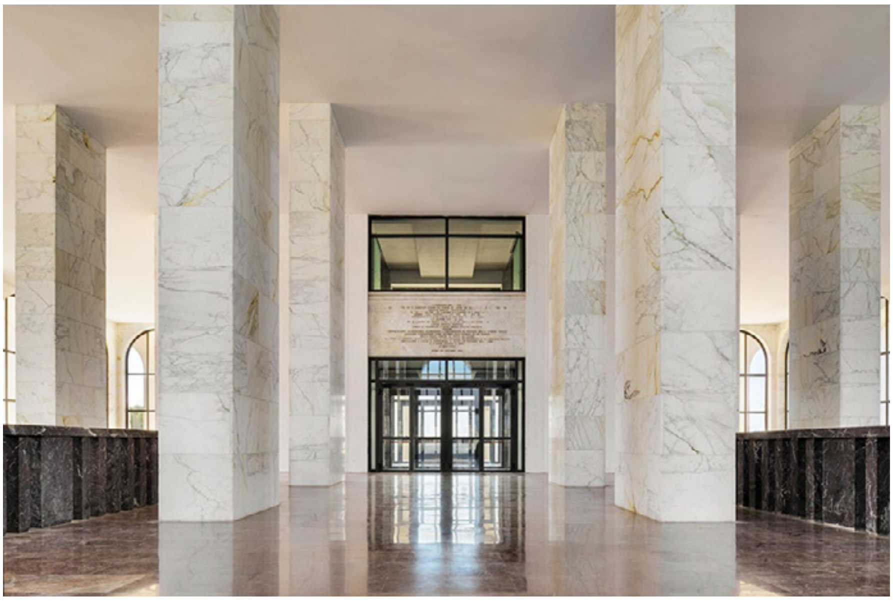


*Figure 13. The foyer in the main entrance*

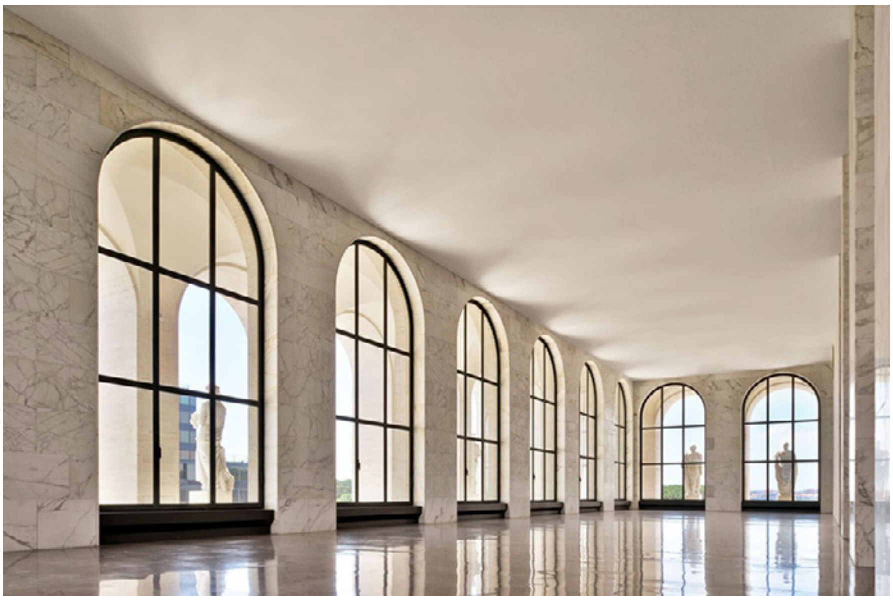


*Figure 14. One of the two main open spaces.*

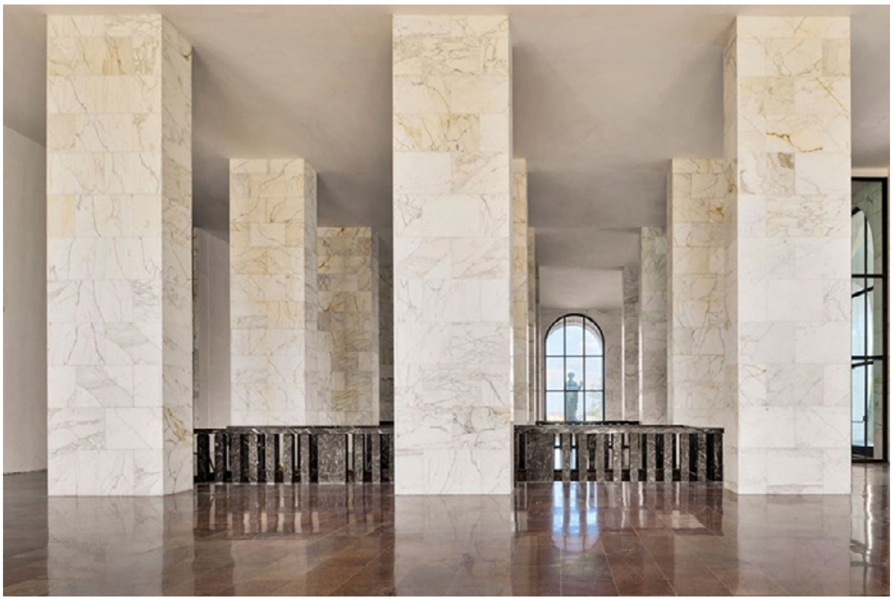


*Figure 15. Standing in the other opens space, looking towards the internal pillars.*

# Fendi’s interior design

The floors of Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana are more or less identical, with a circulation core in the middle and the same pillar system around that.

Fendi is still keeping the ground floor as an exhibition area, however, the upper floors had to be re-designed to accommodate office spaces. As seen on the pictures to the right, the new interior design made by Marco Costanzi is speaking as rational as the building itself. This space has been curated as a conventional modern office layout with islands of seating places.

To create a more intimate place, by breaking down the scale, the white stone walls are contrasted with a black core and wooden floors. In addition, the light system is hanging from half the height of the ceiling and is evenly distributed in a grid system, keeping the straight lines of the architectural design.

If the original purpose of the building was to some extent to promote itself as the work of art, superior to the subject, this seems to prevail also in the way Fendi makes use of the architectural language with its intentions of keeping a uniform interior. Fendi seems to intend to give the employees a sense of belonging as well as giving the company a brave and strong concept identity.

Mirroring this intention, it can be noted that everything seems to be supposed to look the same, nothing can stand out, not even a color. Every table is evenly distributed in the plan, and the same chair is repeated over and over again. There is a low variety of materials. The palatte consists mostly of wood and steel. Adding to this, it seems like it has been decided that any curtains would destroy the aesthetic of the building, and that it does not matter that abiding to that decision results in a bad working environment.

The employees do not have much storage, which  forces the employees to keep their desk tidy, and to not leave any personal belongings in the office. The level of privacy seems to be low, while the privacy levels are increased for the decision making workers who have their own rooms. Following Daphne Spain’s essay on ”The Contemporary Workspace”, the ”open floor jobs’ ’ are lower in status compared to the ”closed door jobs”, since the ”open floor jobs” are paid not to use their knowledge for personal gain as they also lack direct contact with decision making managers.[20] Fendi is not unique in this manner, it seems like in the conventional office, the heighest triumph is to get a room with a door.

However, it is interesting that the chase of power is manifested both in the exterior and in the interior design. It is as if Fendi, by the support of the architecture, addresses the employee by telling them to be grateful for being a part of the company, and then every trace of work should disappear, subordinated to the design - reminding us of the invisible construction workers and the intentions from the fascists.

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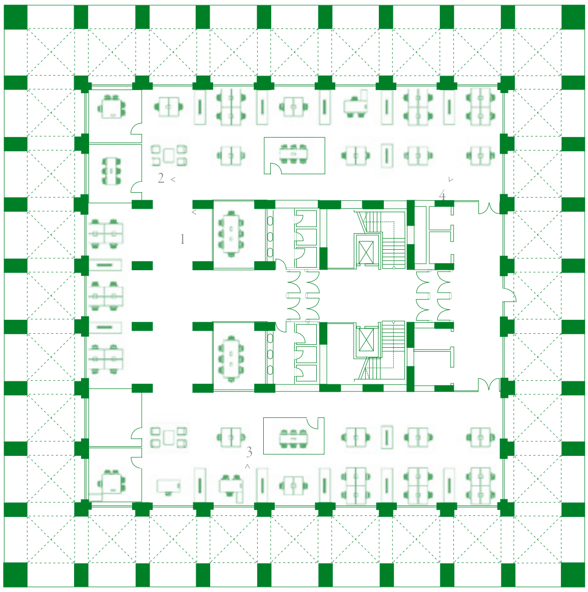
[20] J. Rendell, B. Penner & I, Borden. *Gender Space Architecture, An interdisciplinary introduction. 2000. pp. 118-128.*



*The drawing is based on*
*Marco Costanzi’s official interioir drawing.*

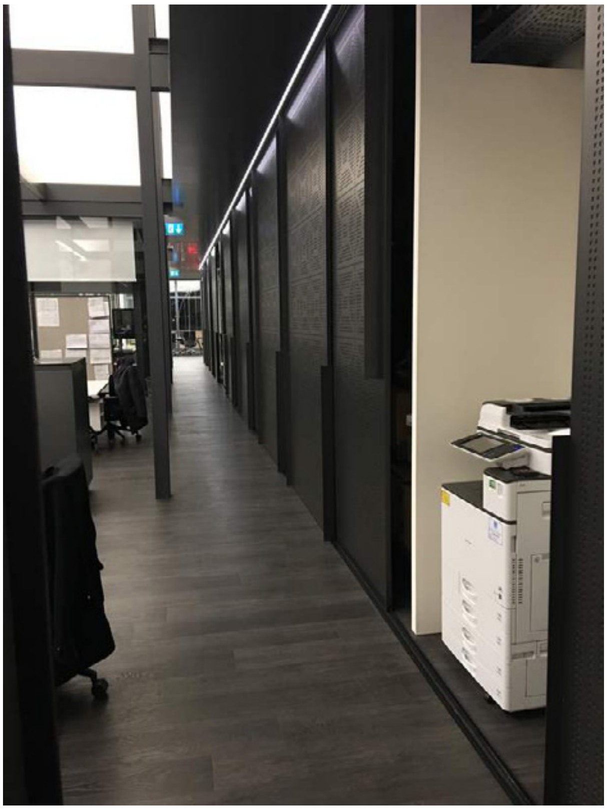


*Figure 16. The internal corridor.*

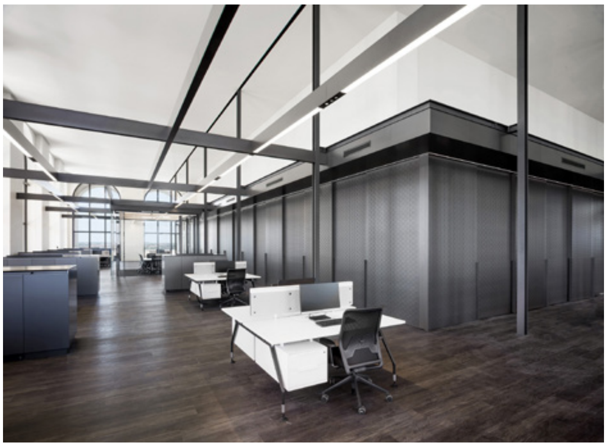


*Figure 17. Office space with free standing tables.*

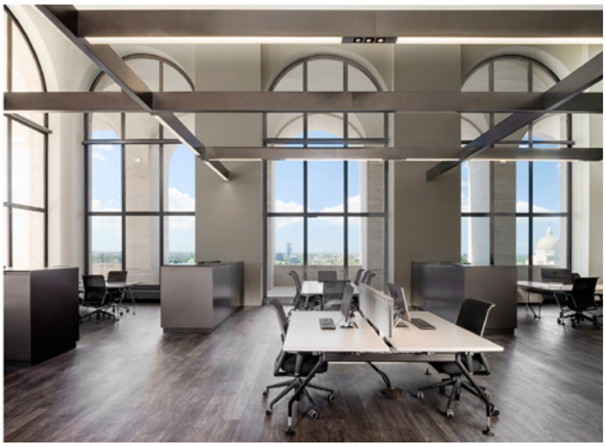


*Figure 18. Office space with islands of seating places.*

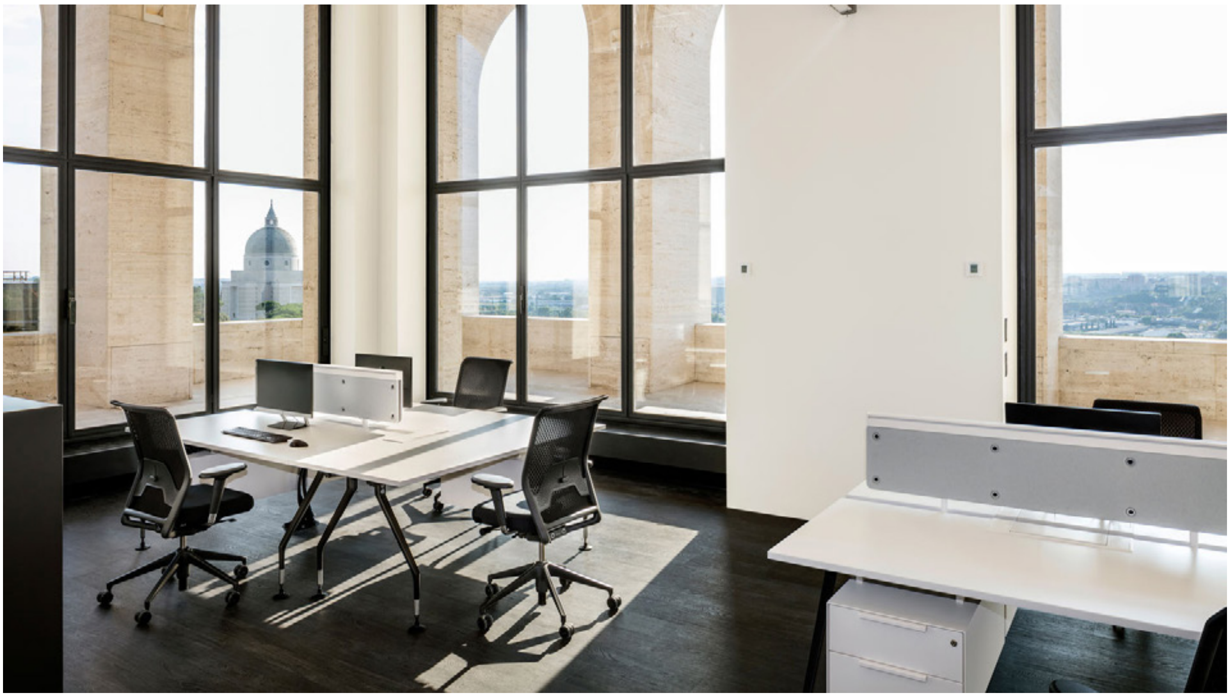


*Figure 19. Office space with a island of seating places in the corner.*

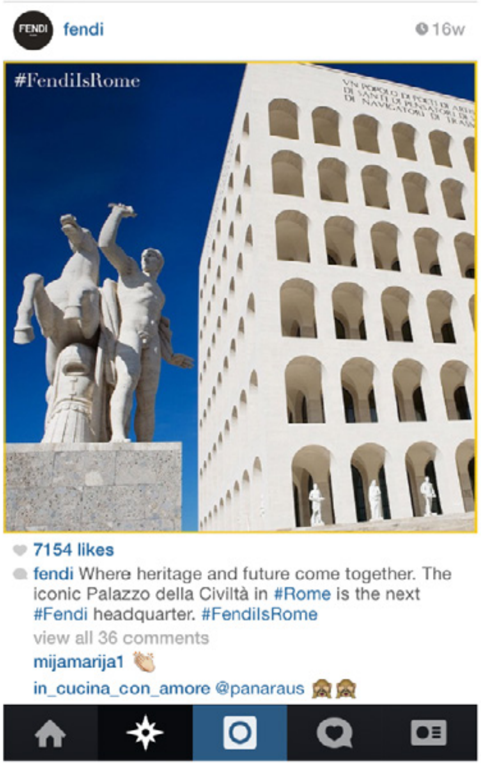
# The subject and the heterosexual ideal

In the search for trying to find the fascist legacy in Palazzo della Cilvitá Italiana it is hard to determine if it possibly would be the architect, the building or the programme whom is in control of the fascist ideals.

Even if the interior has been ”re-designed” by Fendi, the intentions of the fascist architecture is still present, to the extent that it is as if the same architect who designed the building 75 years ago, is designing the interior for Fendi. Another note is, the exterior has not changed at all, since keeping the architectural expression seems important. This made me think about the role of the subject. Can the subject help me understand why Fascism still is present in Fendi’s headquarters?

Mussolini’s subject is his followers, while Fendi’s subject is their customers, I will arguee that both of these subjects could be said to be striving towards becoming elitistic, yet a part of a bigger prestigious community. This results in a willingness to do anything for the party or buy a bag no matter the cost. The subjects are ”buying” a lifestyle which describes someone who they want to be, whether it is clothes or political agendas.

But there are also differences to be noted between the subjects. Mussolini’s subject was a man and he spoke to ”his men ’’ while Fendi’s main customer is a woman. However, they roles are both arragned into the same heterosexual ideals, the man in contrast to the woman. The beautiful, sensual and soft woman, in contrast to the strong, powerful and working man. Both achieve the aim of these ideals by being, just for mentioning a few; well-dressed, attractive, white and upper-class. Therefore I would argue that the subject is the same in Fascism and Fendi.



fendi Where heritage and future come together. The iconic Palazzo della Civiltà in #Rome is the next #Fendi headquarter. #FendiIsRome

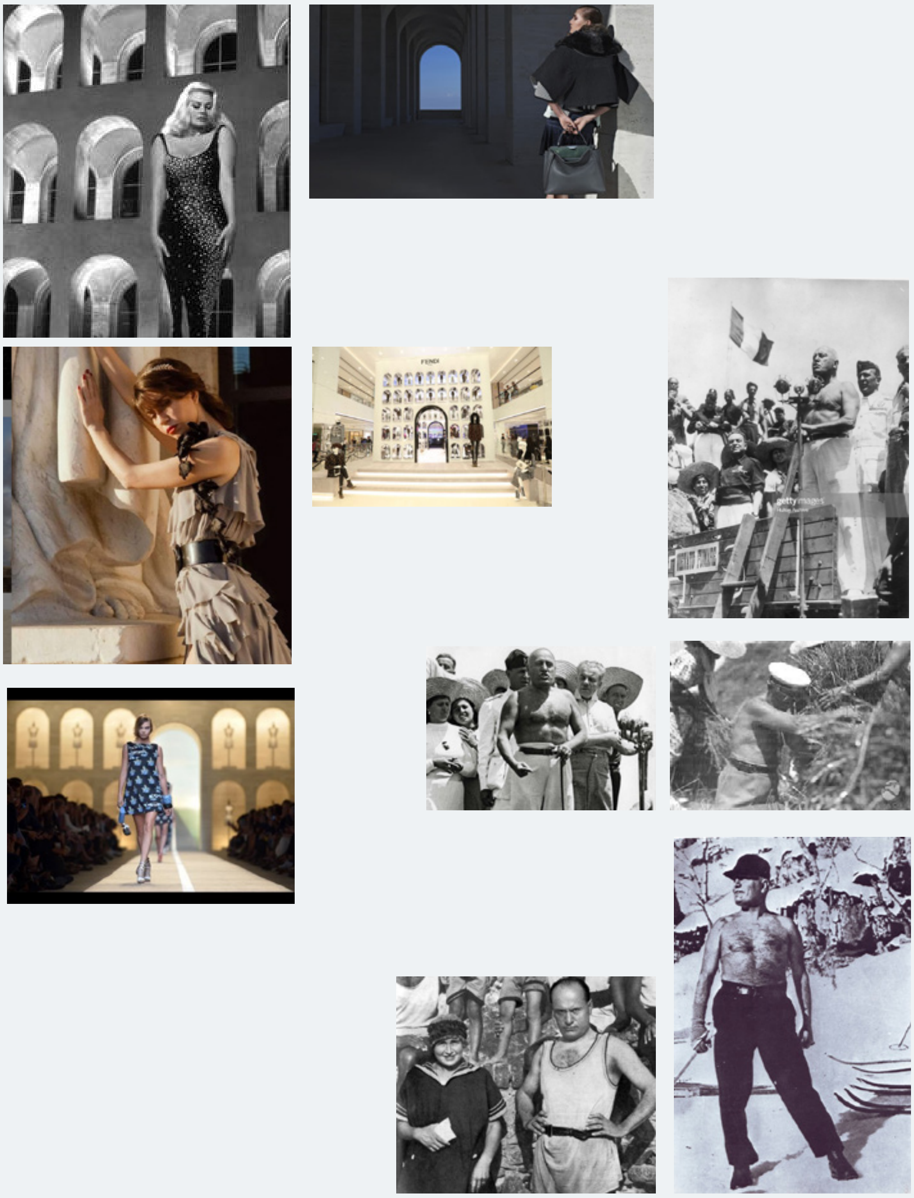
view all 36 comments

mijamarija1 👏

in_cucina_con_amore @panaraus 🙈🙈

*Figure 20. An instagram post by Fendi.*
*Worth mentioning, Fendi’s rethoric is very similar to Mussolini’s in many cases. Just to mention one, an instagram post Fendi did when it became official that they were the new tenants of the Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana.*

*A collage of advertisements or other images from Fendi and public pictures of Mussolini.*



# Celebrated form, forgotten intentions

Today, the Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana is considered to be “great architecture” with ”timeless” and “pure” geometrical aesthetics. It attracts tourists from all over the world and is frequently instagrammed, often used as a backdrop to a desirable selfie. It is as if the original fascist intentions have finally been achieved 75 years later with the building *literally* being liked by the masses.

It could be considered rather naive, but I think one reason for this is that the fascists’ intentions are no longer “visible” in the physical world. Only with knowledge of the heritage can one see the propaganda clearly expressed by the building. But if you don’t know, then you don’t see.

I think it is important to make fascism visible, but it is important to note that when I say that I want to make fascism visible, I do not want to simply learn how one can find fascism in architecture. The aim is rather to expose the oppressive heritage in order to make it possible to more precisely scrutinize the implications of fascism in architecture.

Edward Soja’s describes in this book ”Thirdspace” how he sees architecture as a hybrid between the imagined and the real.[21] I see this hybridity of architecture as a way to achieve an intersectional approach, but I would emphasize the role of the subject as equally important. Personally I like to use the word *mental* and *physical*, instead of imagine and real, since for me it is about what we read with our *mind* and what is in the *physical world*. The mental aspects of architecture is *not* imaginative they are as ”real” as the physical. With that said, I would say there are three main categories; the mental, the physical and the subject, that are always interdependent and dynamic throughout time and space. When building and discussing architecture they *all* have to be considered.

It is this notion of the three different categories I aim to explore in order to find a method that can make the invisible visible. This would be done by showing the fascist’s intentions in the physical form. The method must work simultaneously with the notion of the mental, physcial and the subject. This made me think about the field of art. When the artist is allowed to imagine different forms, subjects and realities, that is arranged into becoming a work of art. In an architectural context, to imagine becomes an act for making architecture.

In this case, what is already built (Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana), the subject (the man) and the intentions (fascism) are already imagined. But since they are all interrelated, what will happen if I try to re-imagine one of the aspects? I think that the act of re-imagining can become a critical tool for discussing architecture.

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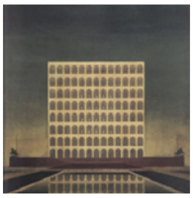
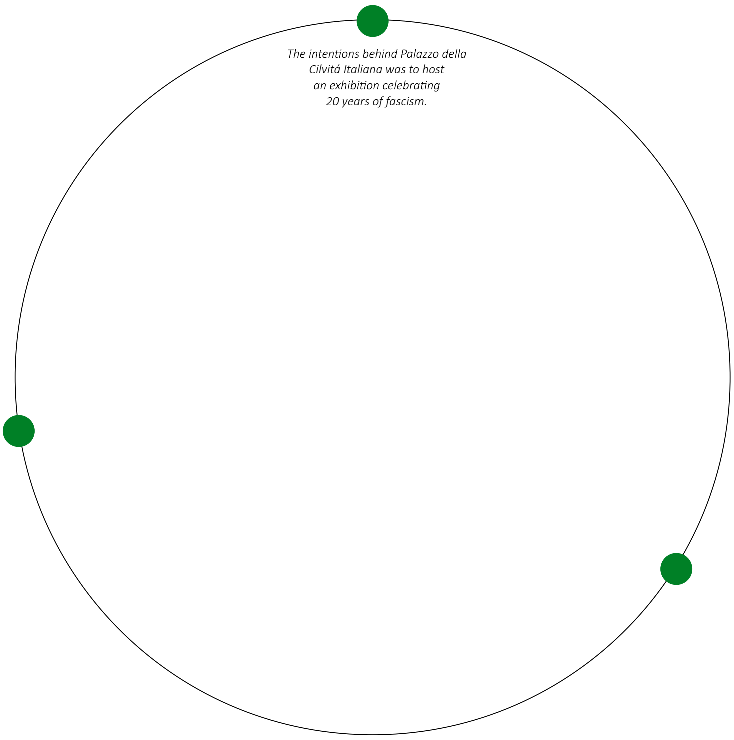
[21] Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace, Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places.* 1996. pp.153-163.



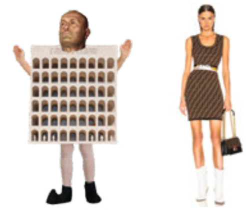
## *The intentions*



*The intentions behind Palazzo della Cilvitá Italiana was to host an exhibition celebrating 20 years of fascism.*

## *The form*

*The Roman Empire had the strong established legacy that Mussolini strived for, and the rationalistic architecture the futuristic visions. By using this dual approach Mussolini managed to convey both the conservative and the progressive.*



## *The subject*

*Mussolini's subject was a man and he spoke to "his men '' while Fendi's main customer is a woman. However, they roles are both arragned into the same heterosexual ideals, the man in contrast to the woman.*

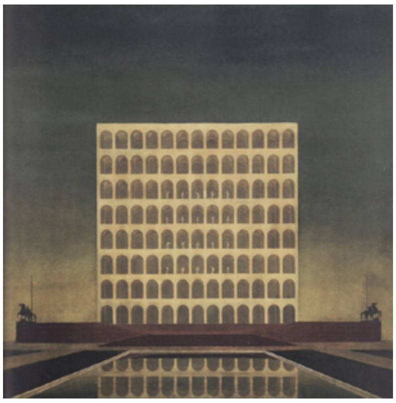


*Figure 21. "Image of intentions"*

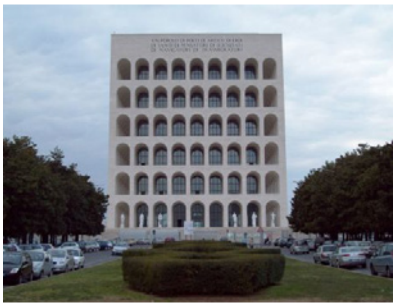


*Figure 22. "Picture of the built"*

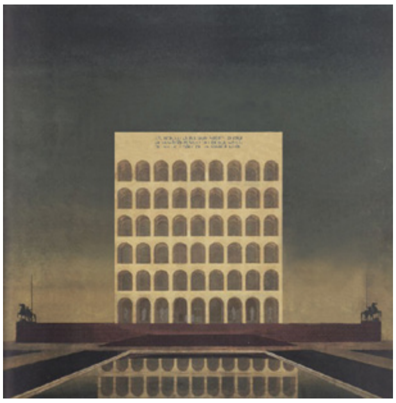


*Figure 23. "Critical tool"*

*The critical tool, as an act of re-imagining the form with the means of showing its intentions.*

*Here I have taken the early illustration from the architect's archiv and then merged it with the built form. - I explain why this could be an example of a critical tool in the following pages.*

# The power of *re-imagine*

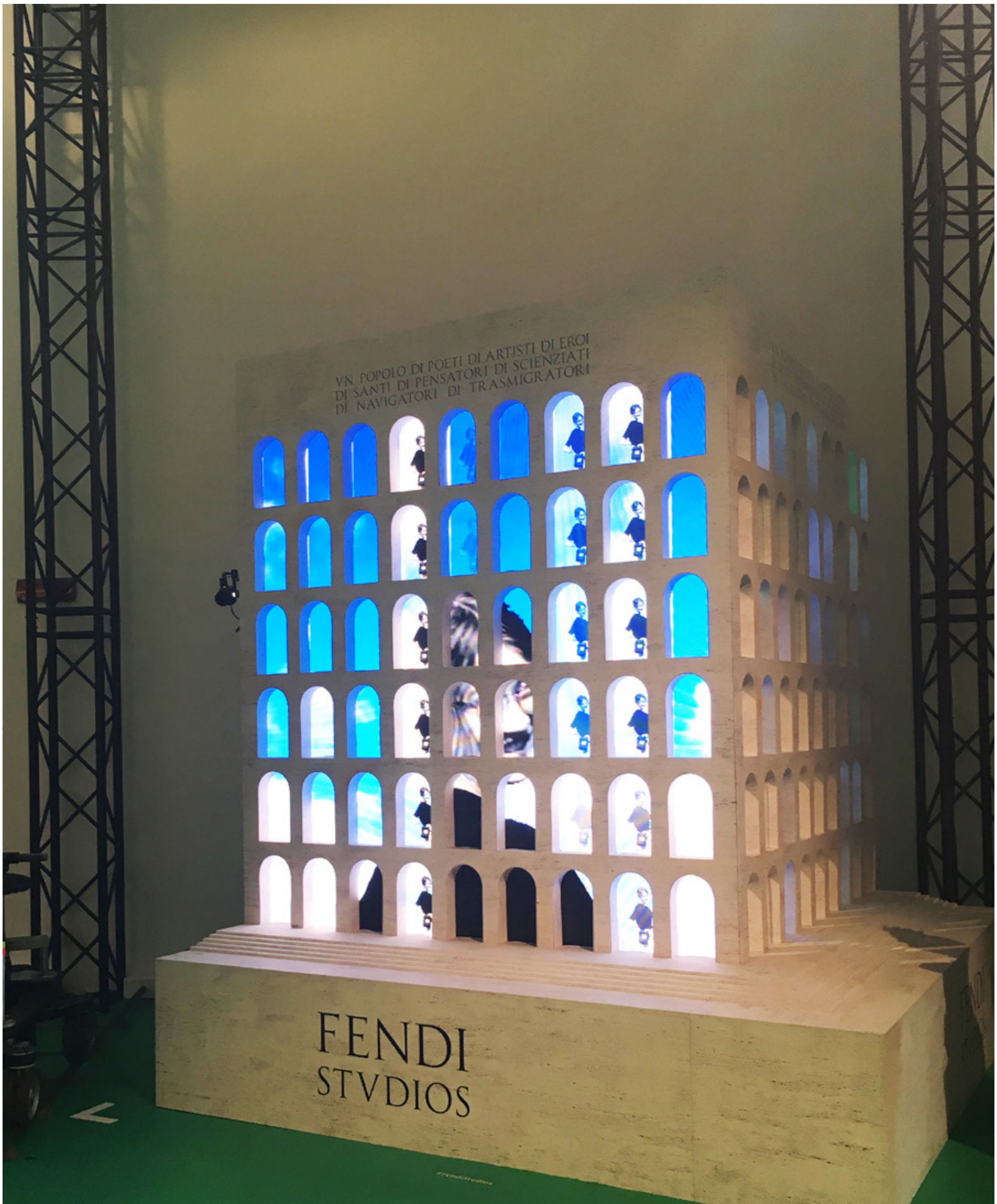

VN POPOLO DI POETI DI ARTISTI DI EROI
DI SANTI DI PENSATORI DI SCIENZIATI
DI NAVIGATORI DI TRASMIGRATORI
FENDI
STVDIOS

*Figure 24. An object in an exhibition about Fendi curated by the company.*
*Located on the groundfloor of Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana.*
*My own picture from 2018.*

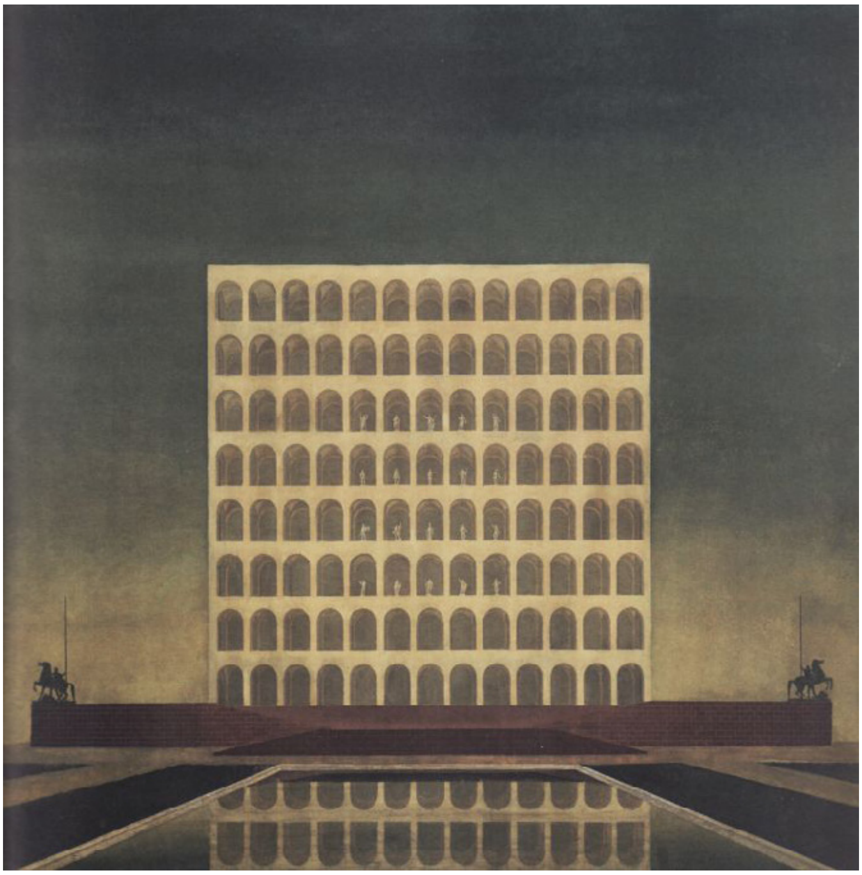


*Figure. 25. Palace of Italian Civilization, Exterior perspective, preliminary version. Made by the architects Ernesto Bruno La Padula, Giovanni Guerrini, Mario Romano.*

# Manipulate with the opposite ideals

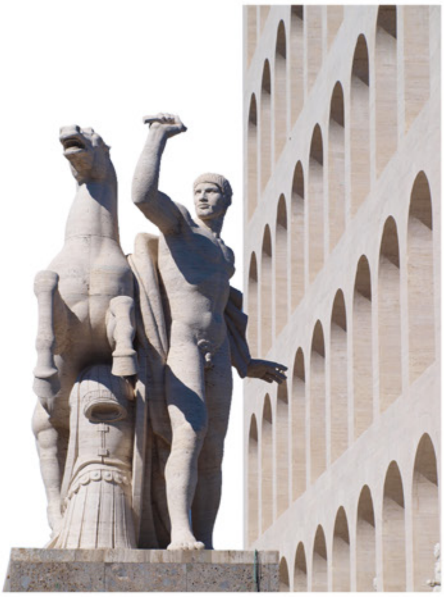
The illustration above is the preliminary exterior perspective of Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana, made by the architects.

The illustration of the building from before it was built works as a representation of the intentions of the architects, in this case it was the intentions of Mussolini. He wanted to build a fascist building that would follow the fascist's ideals. However, if you do not know, or actually even if you know, it is a fascist building it can be hard to determine the fascist ideals. Therefore, this experimental practice is to try to show where these fascist ideals can be hidden by manipulating the illustration above.

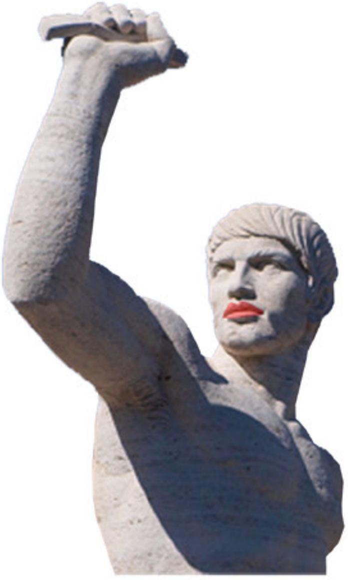
*A proposed timeline describing how fascism can win and loose status with the help of physical attributes.*

The fascists appropriated Colosseum, which becomes an act of borrowing the established legitimacy of the Roman Monument.

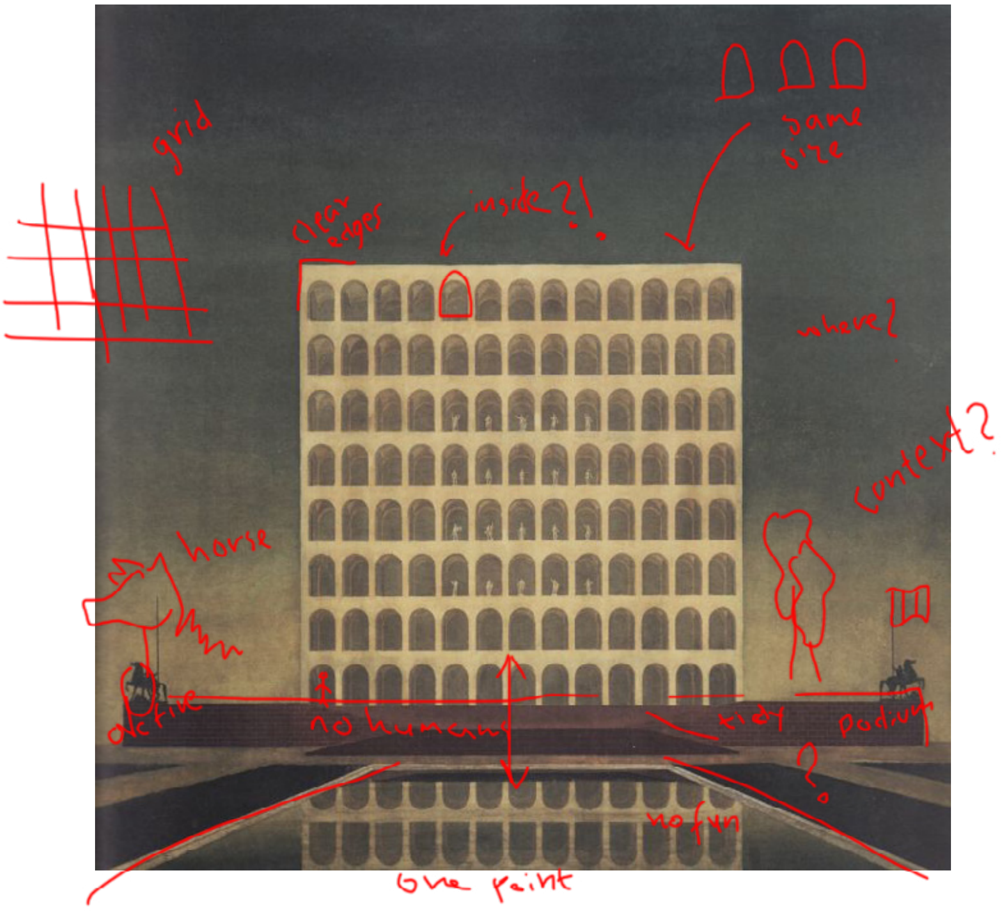
They even claimed the neoclassical statues and built 28 of them, for the same reason as borrowing the repetitive arches from the colosseum.



If the physical form is borrowed from classicism, then Fascism must be hidden elsewhere?



To manipulate the illustration becomes a critical tool for exposing the fascist’s ideals.


grid
clear edges
inside?!
same size
where?
context?
horse
active
no humans
tidy
podium
?
no fun
one point

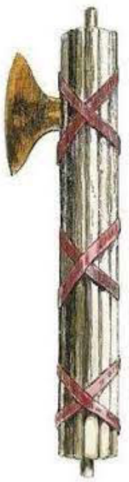


*Figure 26.*
*The Fasces was an ancient autority symbol from the Roman Empire, an axe that has a bundle of sticks tied to its handle. Mussolini used it as a symbol for power and unity.*[22] *It can be interpreted as the sticks being the followers, protected by the fascism against outside threats. Conveys the message:*
*"If your are with us, we protect you."*

| *Fascist’s ideals* | *”Others”* |
|---|---|
| *Normative* | *Abnormal* |
| *Fixed* | *Dynamic* |
| *Man* | *Woman* |
| *Symmetrical* | *Oblique* |
| *Order* | *Disorder* |
| *Powerful* | *Weak* |
| *Inaccessible* | *Accessible* |
| *Icon* | *Ordinary* |
| *Serious* | *Funny* |

Mussolini had a rhetoric that distinguished the Italian people from others. To differentiate people as “oppositional otherness” systematically reduces “the other’’ to “being different from”, which is often equal to “being less than”. One is either ”powerful” or ”weak”, everything in between is denied by the fascists.[23] This makes the act of manipulating with opposite even more powerful, since being ”the other ’’ is equal to “failure” according to the fascists’ ideal. The fixed, dualistic approach of the fascist ideals, makes them extremely fragile and easy to disarm.

Considering the above, could it be possible to overcome the fascist legacy by manipulating its ideal?

*On the following pages I’ve tried to manipulate the illustration different forms of opposite ideals.*

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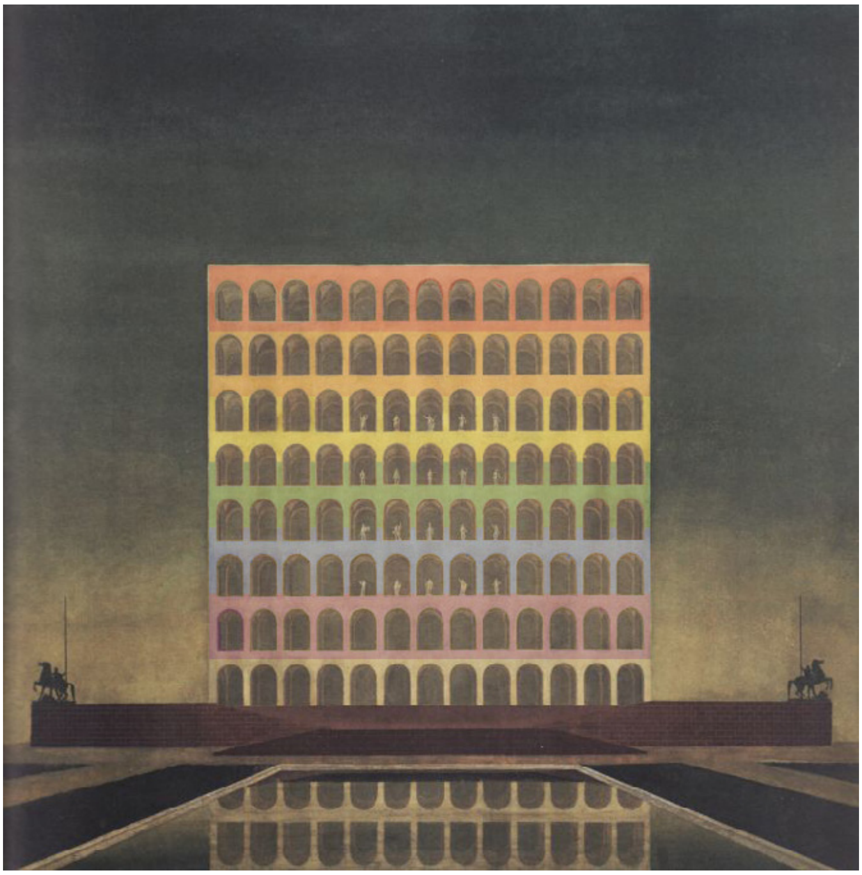
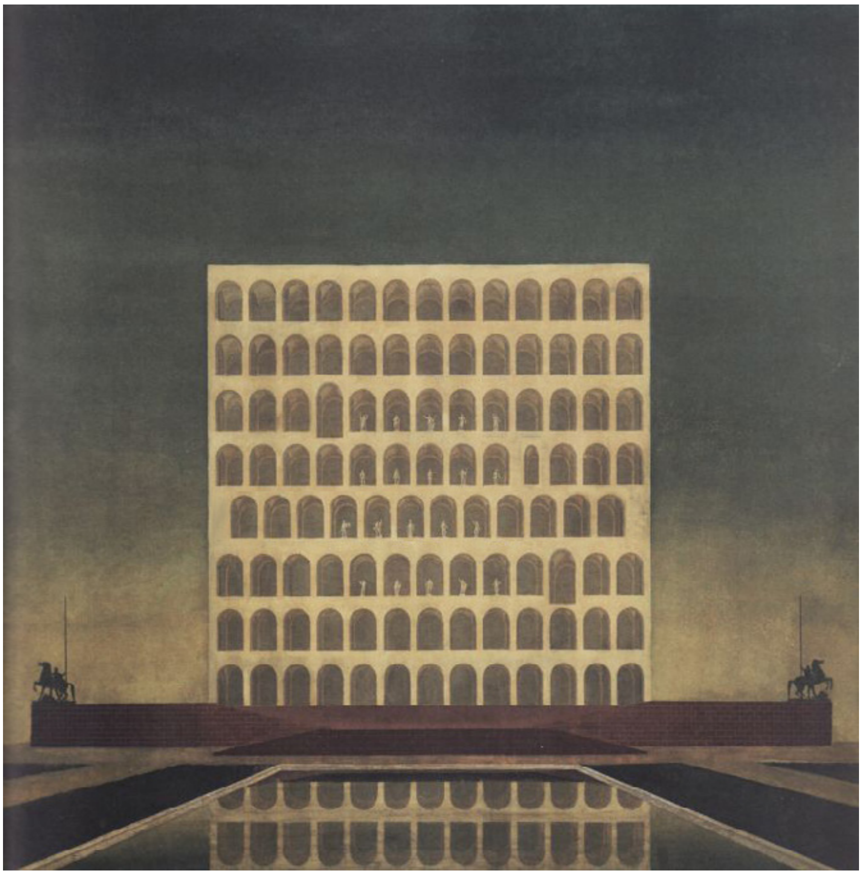
22. Fallon, Nathan. 2011. p. 9

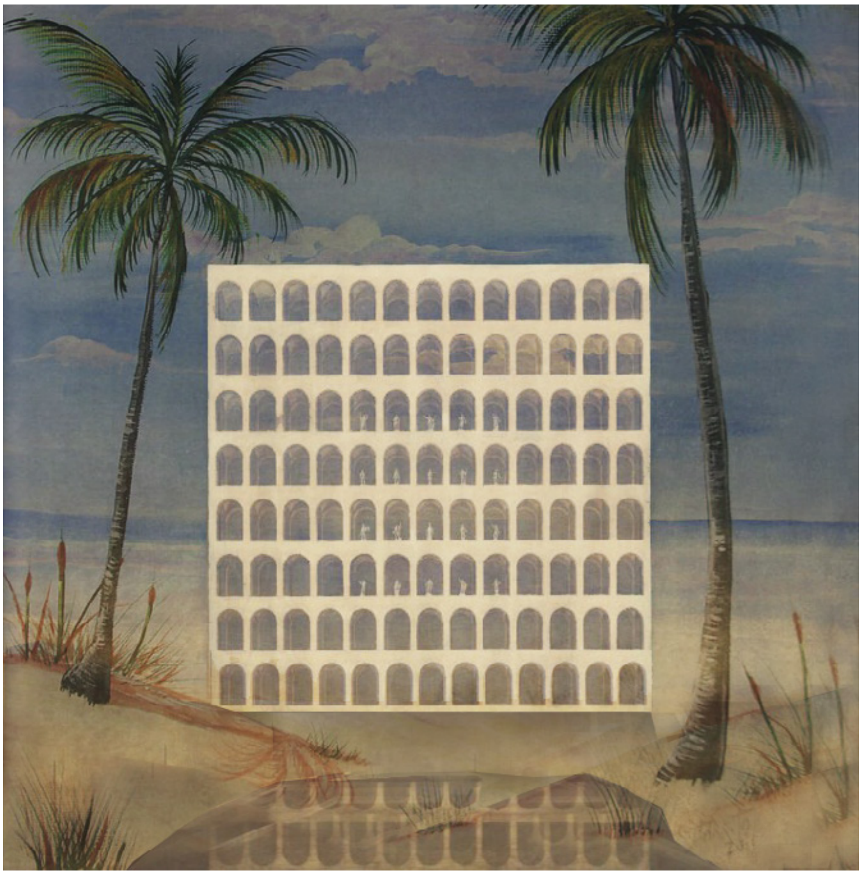
23. P. Amiri & L. Bergman. (Hosts). (2021, Mars 9). Mussolini. (No. 13). [Audio podcast episode]. *Diktatorer.*



*Pride flag's colors*

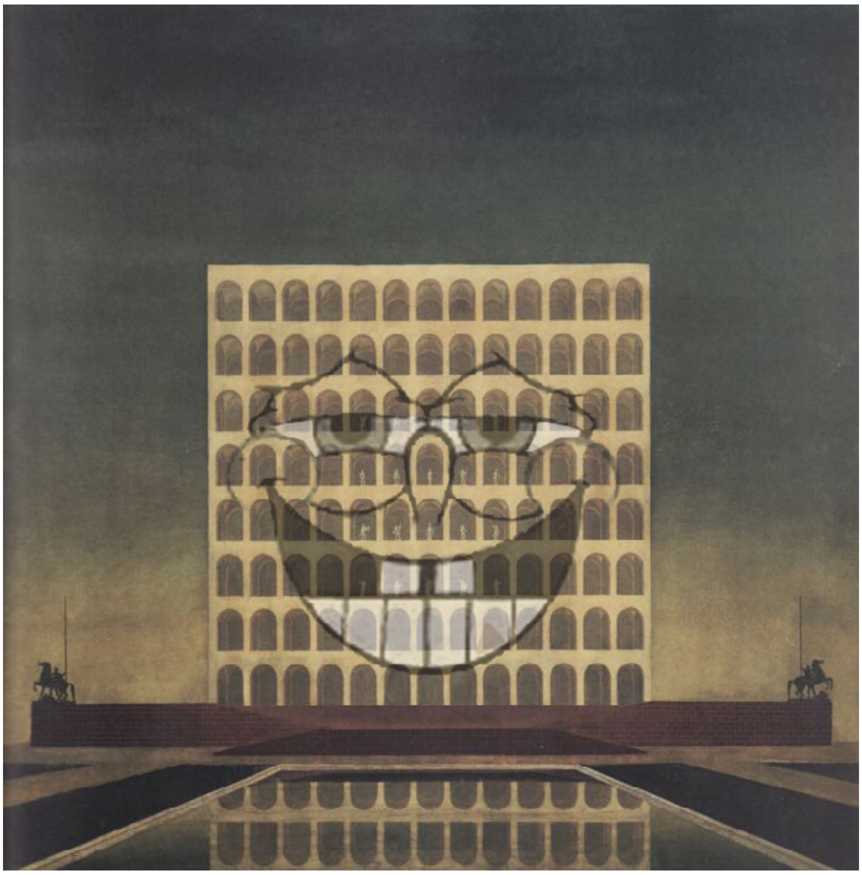


*Disorder*



*In a Caribbean context*

*In New York*



*As Spongebob Squarepants*

# The absurd becomes serious

To manipulate a fascist ideal with the oppositional turns out to be quite a comical act, since the contradistinction becomes absurd. For example, we could imagine a situation where Dracula is doing a commercial for garlic, a highly unlikely scenario, since everyone *knows* that garlic would kill Dracula. In the same way; we find it funny if a fascist monument would become a manifestation for HBTQI rights, *knowing* Mussolini was a homofobic.

However, even if the manipulations I have made are perceived as being absurd, some of them are *not imaginative*. For example, putting the monument in a Caribbean context might seem to be absurd at a first glance, but in fact; fascist monuments still exist in old colonies today.

The point is, this absurd feeling can only occur if we know the history behind it. If we exaggerate the opposite, one understands that this is a joke. Then you try to understand *why* this is funny. In the search for why, you recognise the intentions behind the image. In that sense, imagining the opposite becomes a method for making the invisible, in this case fascism, visible for the observer.

First one must imagine the absurd, then laugh. The laugh is an indicator that we have challenged ourselves to think and imagine outside the norm.

The imagination sets the boundaries for what our intentions can be. If we re-imagine the intentions, perhaps the perception of the building can change. But this process takes time, since it forces us to rethink what we can imagine, to *re-imagine*, and to be brave enough to be open-minded towards the result.

To re-imagine with the opposite ideals and manipulate the image of intention is a method which has the potential to generate a self-reflective process, when we open our eyes to see things from a new perspective. In this process of unlearning and re-learning, we start to question the intentions behind architecture. It becomes a absurd tool for approaching serious things in architecture.

# *To queer*

# Imagine with care, think queer

Our imagination emerges from what we already know, so to be able to re-imagine one must learn something new. The imagination is an endless source where everything can be possible, making the concept of “re-imagine” being a quantitative method. However, this could also be a more qualitativ method for achieving change if it’s done within the perspective of queer theory.

Following Sara Ahmed, queer is “what is ‘oblique’ or ‘off line,’” referring to the social rather than the sexual definition.[24] As bell hooks further describes, it is about the people in the margin, the ones who are not counted and not seen.[25] It is about those neglected embodied experiences of what architecture *does* to us, the subject who nobody really learns to care about and is therefore not imagined. It is time to unlearn and re-imagine with care and “queering” what we already know. You can ofcourse *be* queer, but I am more interested in using it as a verb; *to* queer. Then it becomes an active act you *do*, with the purpose of making the neglected heard.

What happens when we replace the fixed Cartesian body with a more fluid and dynamic one? If architects should imagine reality, then we must acknowledge that it consists of more than one type of user. The fascists’ build for the italian man, who performed the heterosexual ideals. - A man who works hard, has authority and strength, which was supplemented with a wife who could take care of their children. The intention was to build for the upper class and the happy middle class families, as a modernist utopia that promised a better life for the future, originated from a binary lifestyle. With the perspective of queer theory I will explore; if is it possible to experience fascist architecture through another body?

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[24] S. Ahmed. 2006. p. 166.
[25] Soja, Edward. 1996. p. 100.

# Change the main character

If the invisible is going to become visible it is important to rethink the modern architectural language and by doing so unlearn the binary approaches of architecture. The architectural language of today describes architecture as limited to dualistic concepts; inside/outside, safe/unsafe, home/work, public/private, accessible/non-accessible, good/bad architecture etc. However, the categorization as such is not the problem, one must be able to talk about and identify different aspects of architecture as form. The critical question must be; *who* is the subject in these discussions? In the majority of the cases, it is the white western man, who is adapting himself within the binary system and by doing so also maintains them. The problem is; if the binary approach is maintained by the white western man, he will be the one owning and controlling the ”truths” about the experience of architecture.

One way to “queer” the language is to ask questions about the subject; *Who* can come in? *Who* works at home? *Who* feels unsafe in the city? *Who* feels safe in the suburbs? *Who* has access to the private rooms? *Who* decides what is bad or good architecture?

The subject then becomes the main character in the discussion since it explains the experience of architecture and what it does to us. When ”queering”, the aim is to shift the focus from what architecture *is*, to what architecture *does*.

As Maria Puig de la Bellacasa describes, matters of care must be added to matters of concern. Everything is a part of the system, but the system is not treating everyone the same.[26] With that said, It is time to care about the mental constructs which are affecting us *differently*.

When ”queering” the act of mapping we must re-assemble the neglected things, then the agency of mapping will make the invisible visible for us, acknowledging more than one type of experience of space. I see the act of ”queering” as an act of caring for the embodied experience outside the binary norm.

In the ”Care Map” on the opposite side I have tried to illustrate some things to care about which affect our embodied experience in space differently, but are not *necessarily* visible in architecture as physical form.

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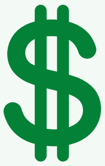
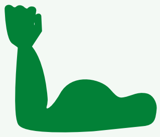
[26] M. Puig de la Bellacasa. *Matters of care in technoscience: Assembling neglected things. 2011. pp. 89 - 92.*

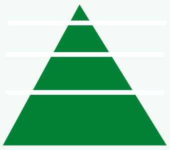
# *The Care Map*



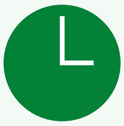
*money*



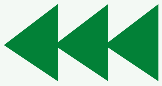
*power*



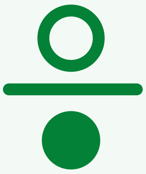
*class*



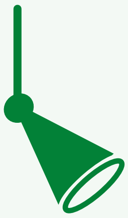
*time*



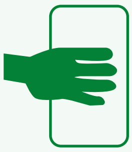
*memories*



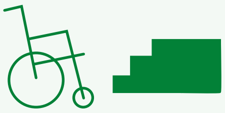
*racism*



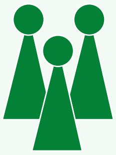
*observation*



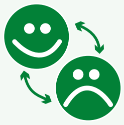
*access*



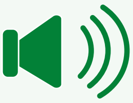
*availability*



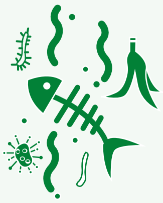
*group affiliation*



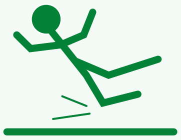
*emotions*



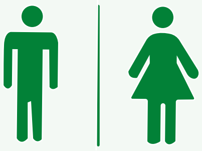
*sounds*



*smell*

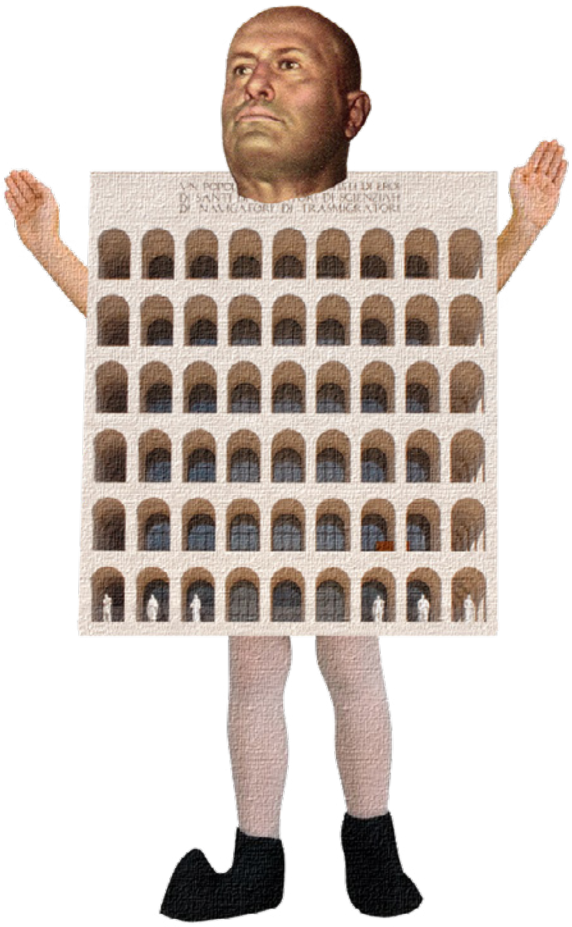


*slippery*



*gender division*

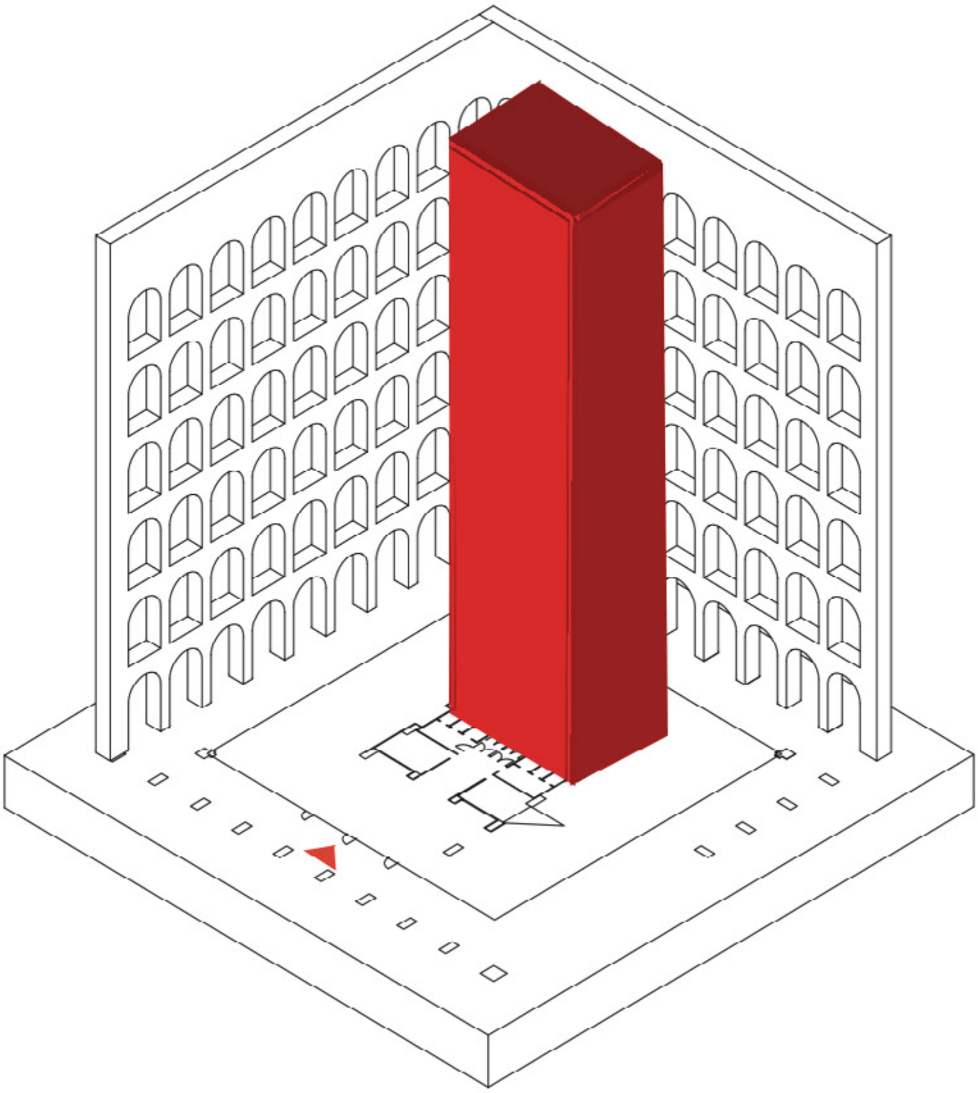
# *Queering as a method*

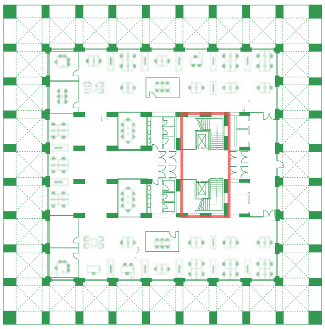


# Introducing another main character

What will happen if architecture is experimented with as a hybrid? Allowing ourselfves to re-imagine the mental, the physical and the subject as the main interrelational aspects in architecture.

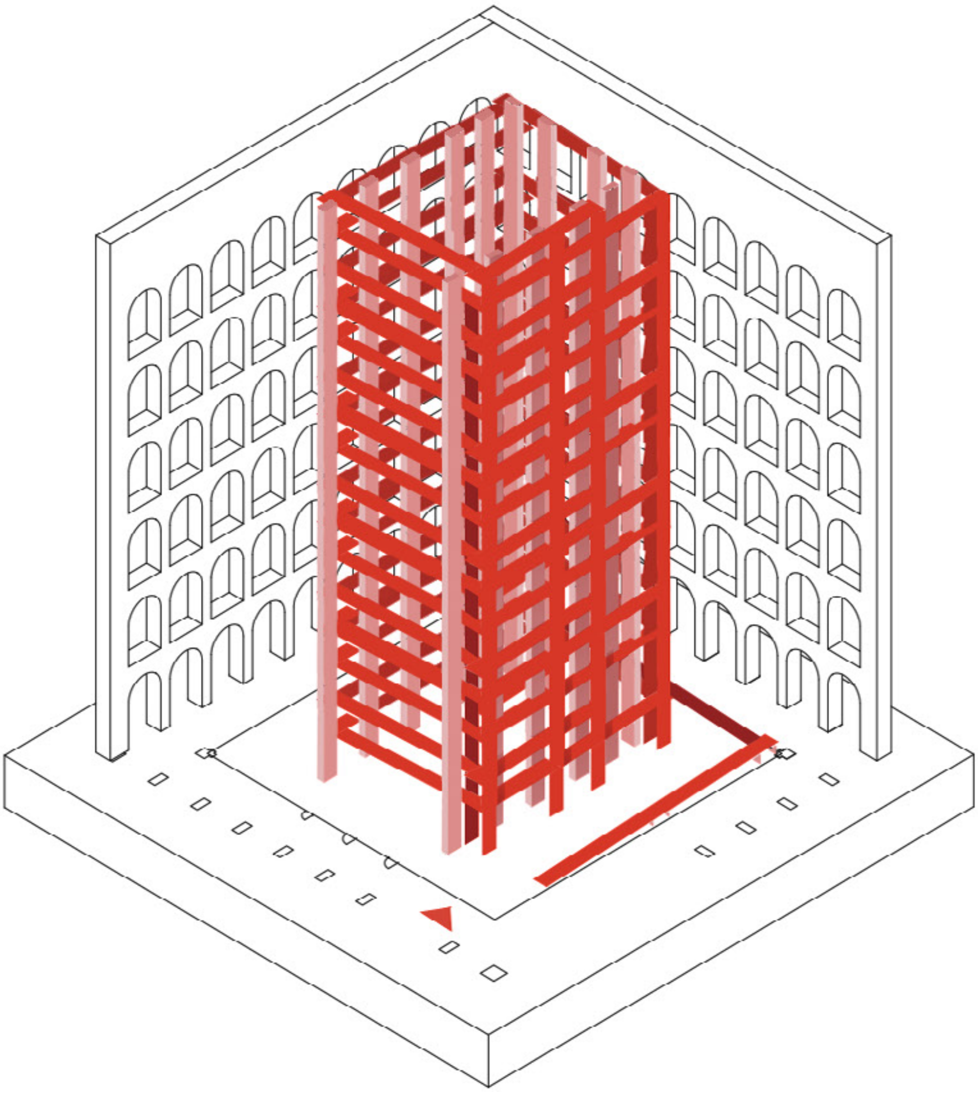
One way to queer, is to introduce another narrator or another experience, resulting in another architecture. In the case of Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana, a fascist man is the main character. But with my proposals I am introducing a character that the fascists as well as Fendi is denying. The aim is to generate a discussion of *who controlls* ”the truth” about the embodied experience of Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana.

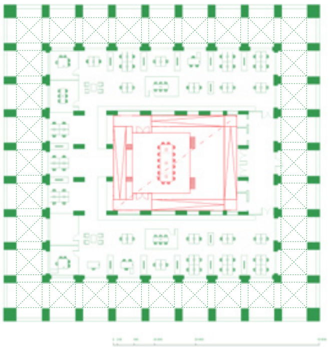




# The Shaft

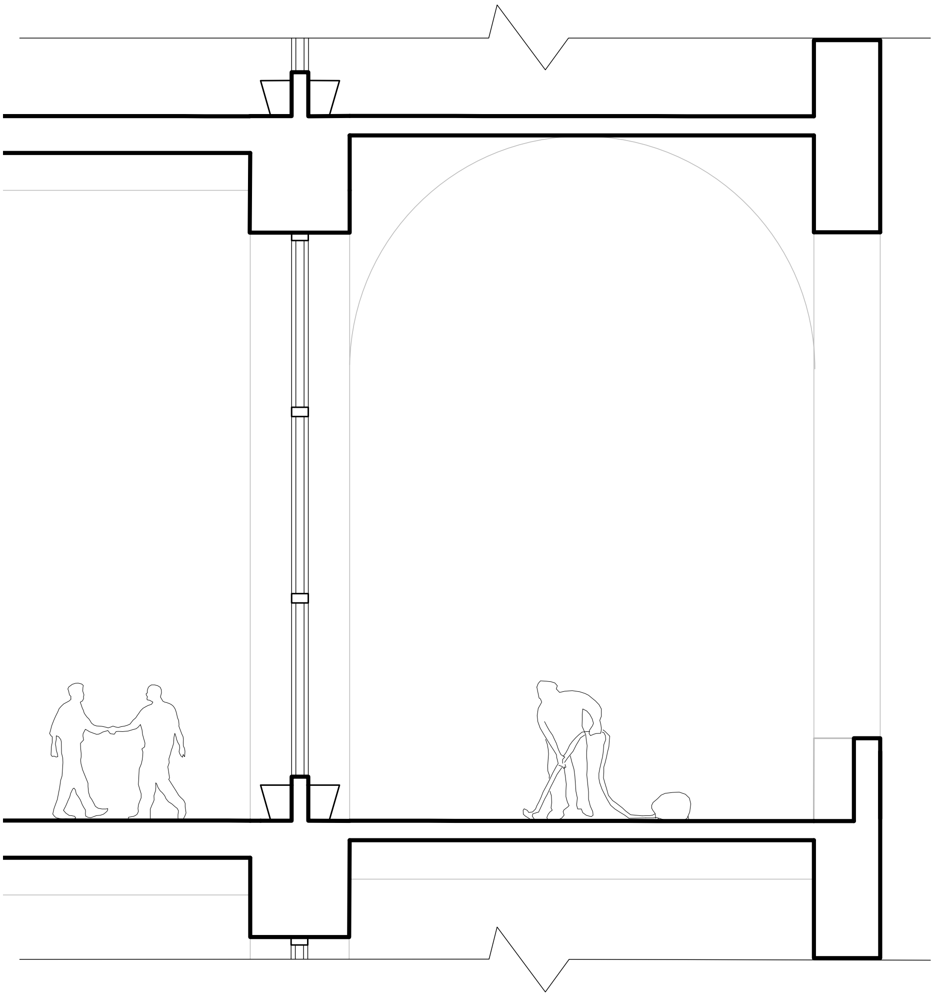
Today the circulation is existing within a vertical body, consisting of two elevators and two U-shaped stairs. The monumental scale of the building is not an issue for the user, since this circulation volume generates an effective travel speed. However, the volume is rather introverted and hides the division of movement, which splits up parties into who can walk the stairs and who can not. Who can fit into the elevator with the group and who has to wait for the next one. The elevator with its closed doors also creates a private moment, resulting in exchange of exclusive information or a quiet moment of awkwardness.

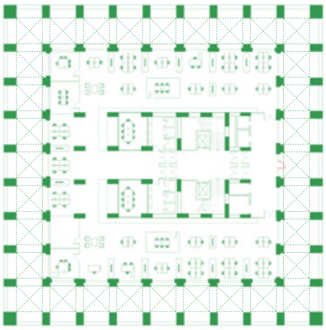




# The Ramp

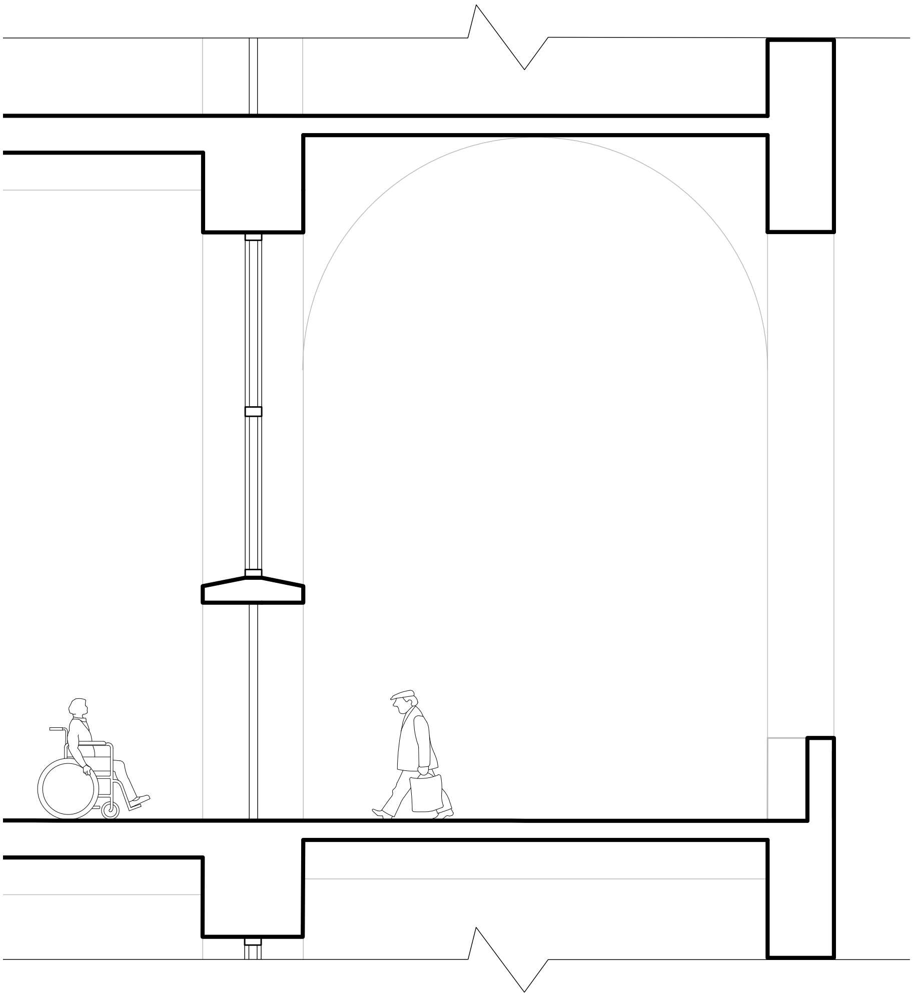
One way to queer the ciculation would be to replace the vertical body with a low-sloping ramp, following the rules of disability adaption. The motion in the building will be more extroverted, since the users will have to face each other every time they cross paths, because we are forcing every user to take the *same* route. However, it is far less effective, because walking every level takes several routes, due to the huge ceiling height on each floor, making the experience of the monumental scale perceived as an *unnecessary* void.

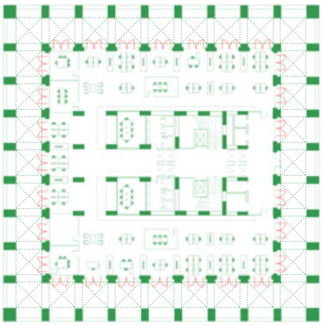




# Transparent walls

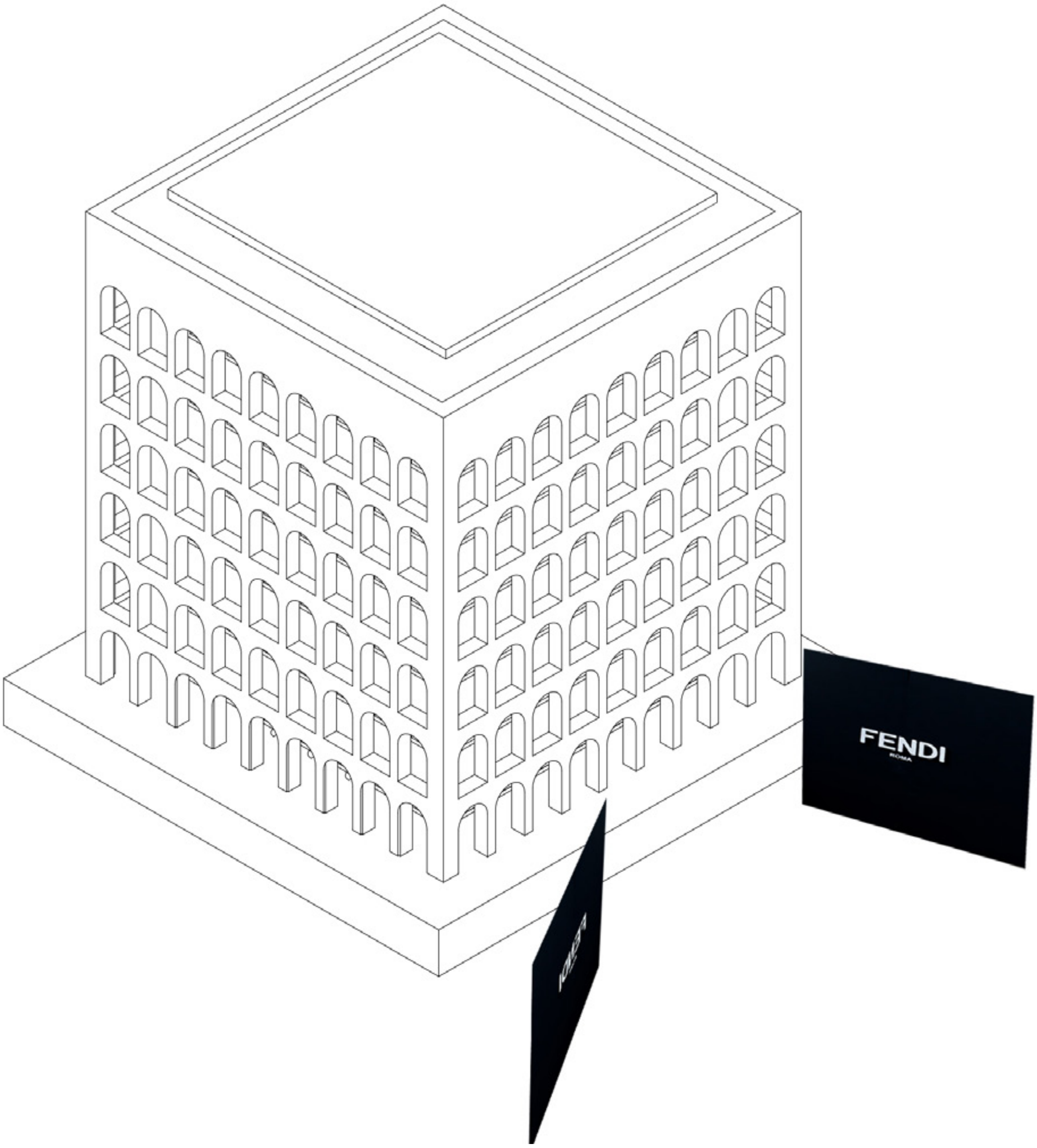
Today, Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana has facade with many windows, resulting in the building being perceived as open. A normal assumption is that transparency of the windows is equaled to inclusion, since the inside has nothing to hide towards the outside. However, this inclusion is just mentally constructed and perceived. If the windows are impossible to open, then the windows are just transparent closed walls.

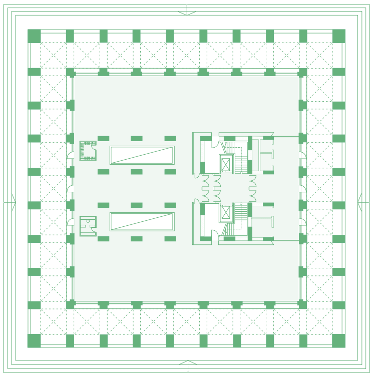




# A hole in the wall

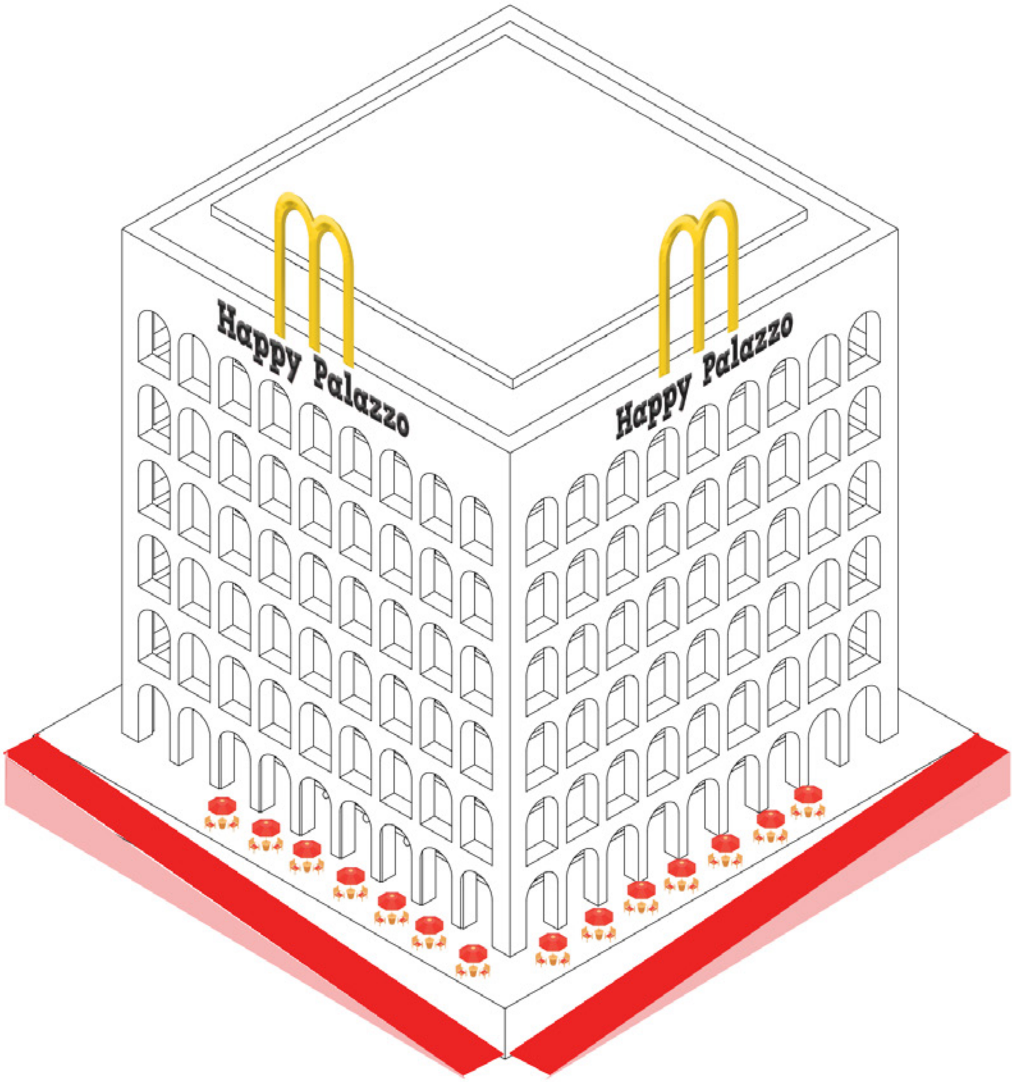
The agency of the door is different from a window. Assuming everyone has the key, the door is a hole in the wall, which everyone can open. It is not transparent as glass, but it allows for free movement. The building would be perceived as closed, but is far more open. Is the agency of the door being perceived to be more inclusive than the transparency of the window?

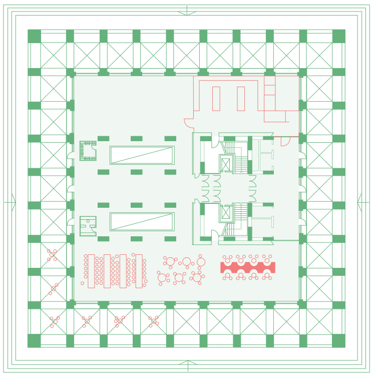




# Fendi

Today, Fendi is renting the building as their headquarters. They are a luxurious fashion brand with customers responding to the brand's elitistic values, which alludes to making their customers feel special. However, this also means that not everyone can be welcomed. This is why Fendi's reclaiming of the monument pairs well with their overall image of ”good” taste, with the finest materials and best cuts. Fendi's products still have a good second hand value and each purchase is often seen as an investment which you can keep for a lifetime.

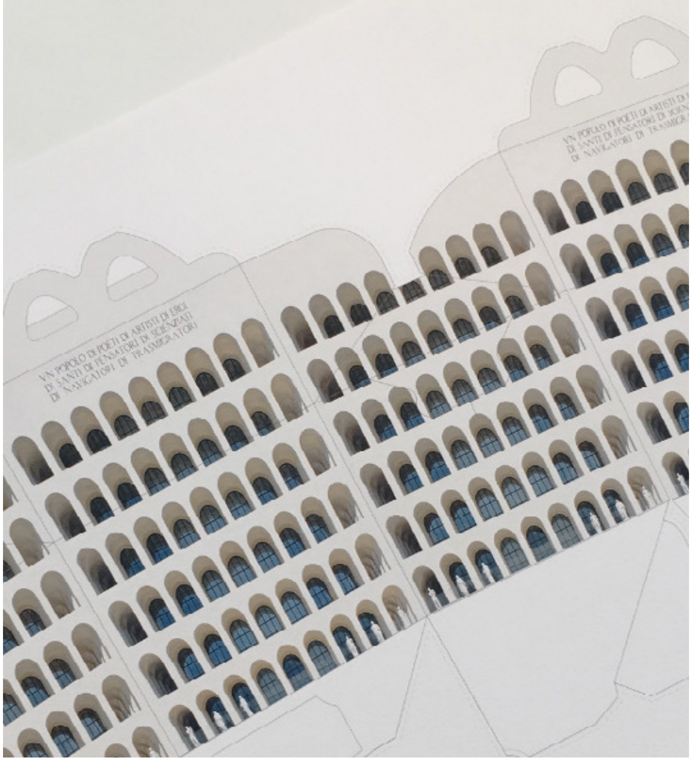




## McDonald’s

Imagine McDonalds as the tenants instead. McDonalds is a brand which is branding themselves as “cheap and fast”. They want as many customers as possible and rely on being easy to access, which sets up different demands on the building. Many open doors, accessible, good visibility from the outside and good connections to the flow of people. Their products are short lived since every purchase becomes either eaten up or trash. Will the perception of the building change if an American fast food brand is associated with it?

# Queering the form



# Introducing Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana as another object

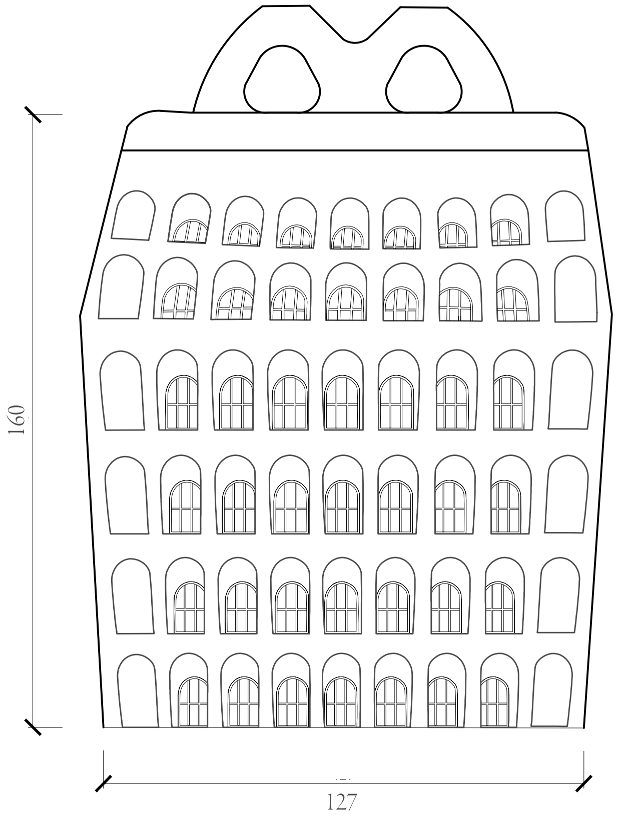
I have tried to disarm the fascist legacy by manipulating it, introducing another character and now I will further explore if it is possible to disarm the monument by making it another object. As I aim *to queer* the object, I start by asking myself: what would the opposite form to a monument be?

It would be an object from ”everyday life”. An object in a different scale, approachable for kids, appreciated without caring for it too much or its history. In a material less heavy and stable than the travertine stone. A cheaper material that is allowed to get dirty or become trash. One of many, instead of one of a kind.

With these explorations I try to bring up the great conflict with Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana as an aesthetic masterpiece with a fascist heritage. With the context of the ”everyday” I try to indicate if the building as a form is as innocent as Fendi is arguing.

# *Happy Palazzo*

*Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana as a Happy meal box. Printed on paper with the same measurements as the original size of a Happy Meal.*



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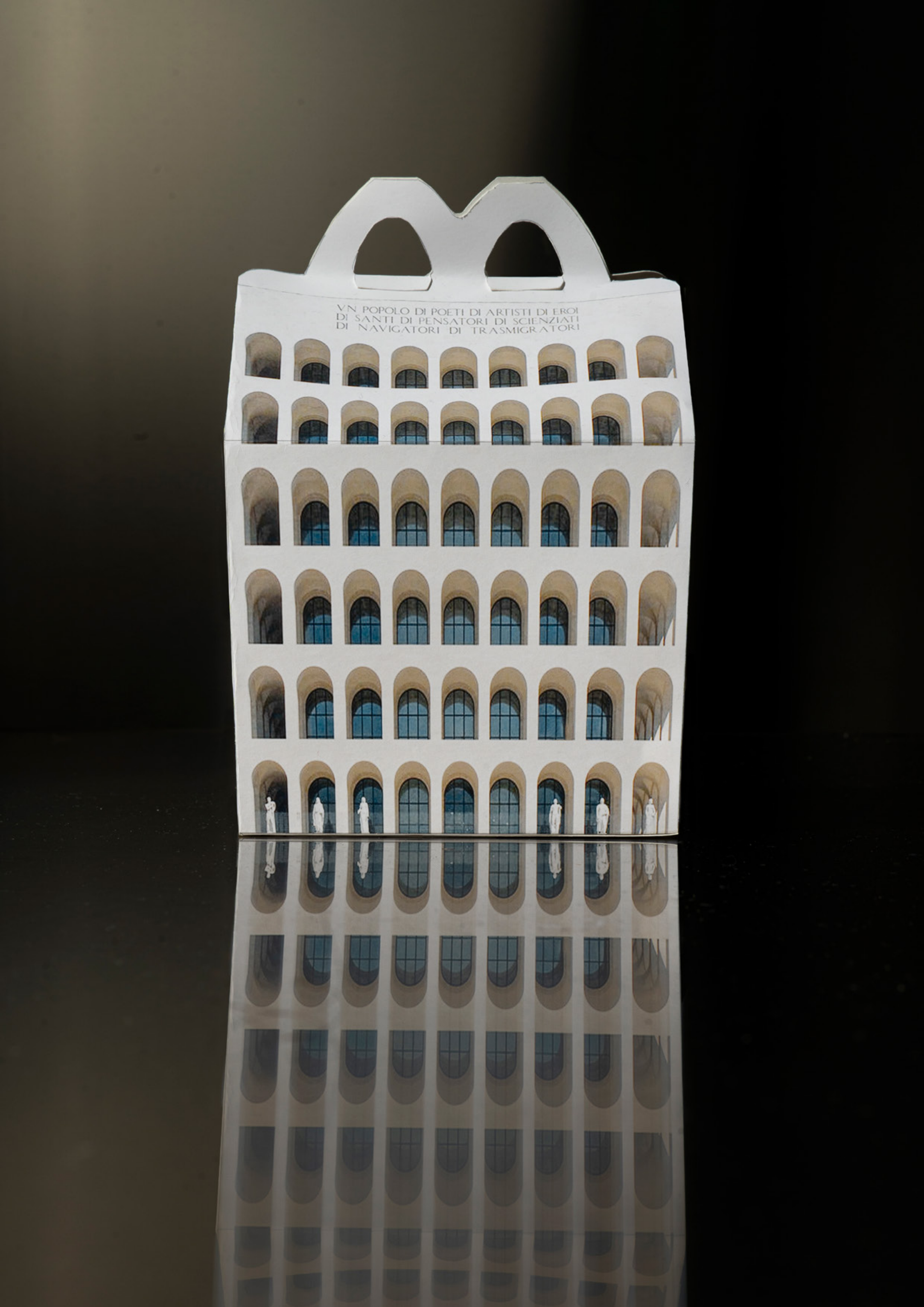
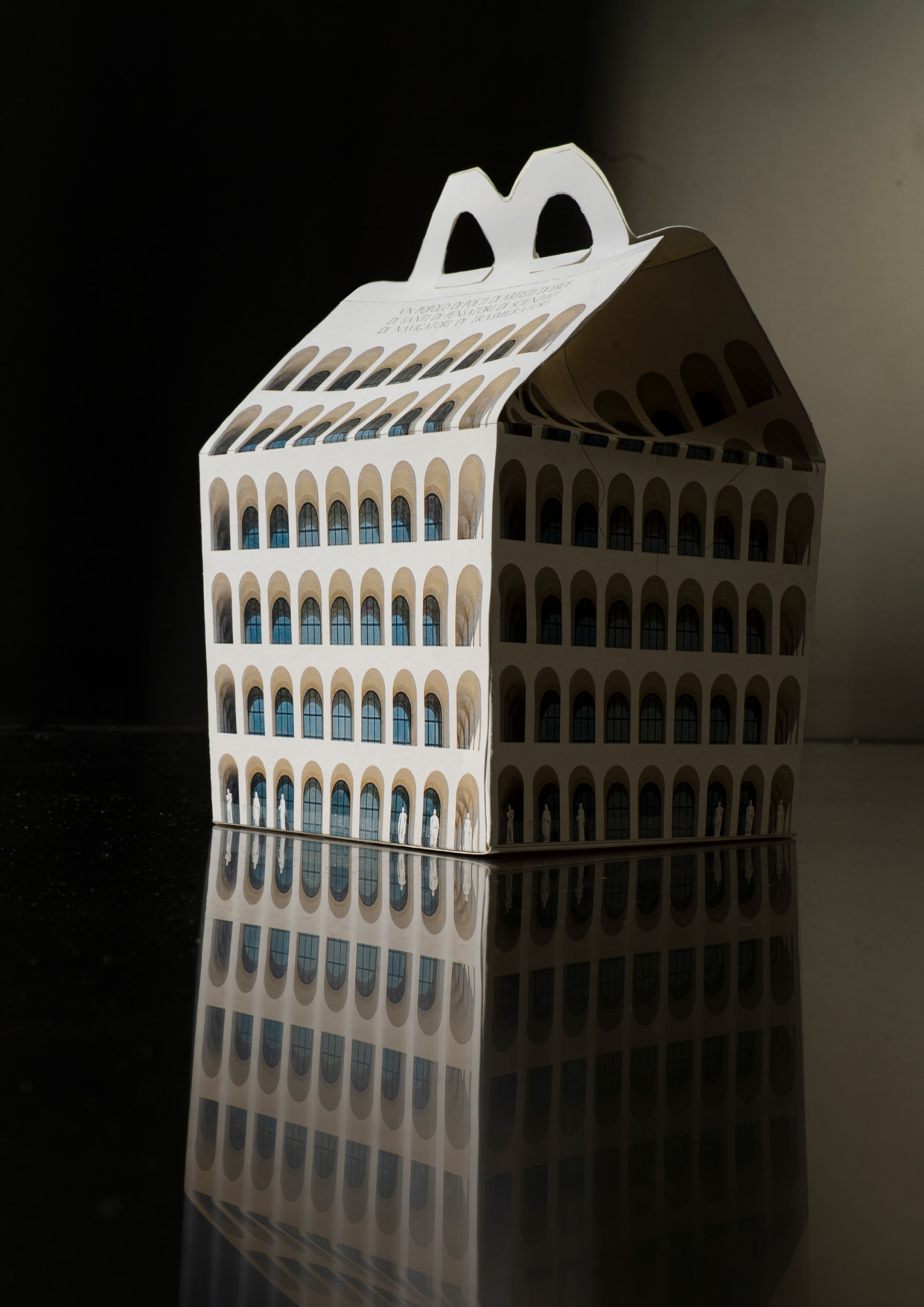

VN POPOLO DI POETI DI ARTISTI DI EROI
DI SANTI DI PENSATORI DI SCIENZIATI
DI NAVIGATORI DI TRASMIGRATORI


VN POPOLO DI POETI DI ARTISTI DI EROI
DI SANTI DI PENSATORI DI SCIENZIATI
DI NAVIGATORI DI TRASMIGRATORI

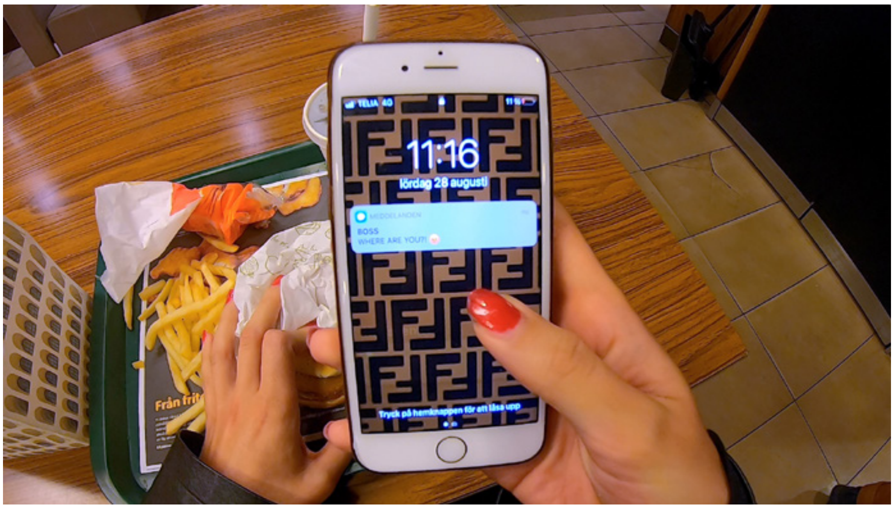
# Happy Palazzo
# - a movie.

Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana becomes a Happy Meal box. It goes from permanent, to temporary. From high end to trash. From being a surface, to being its containings. From superhuman to microhuman scale. From stable to fragile. From one of a kind, to eternal examples. From building to doggy bag. From immovable to movable. From a celebrated monument to happy meals, - But it is still a clear paraphrase of Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana.

Do we still perceive the monument as fascist?

Från friterat till fossilfritt

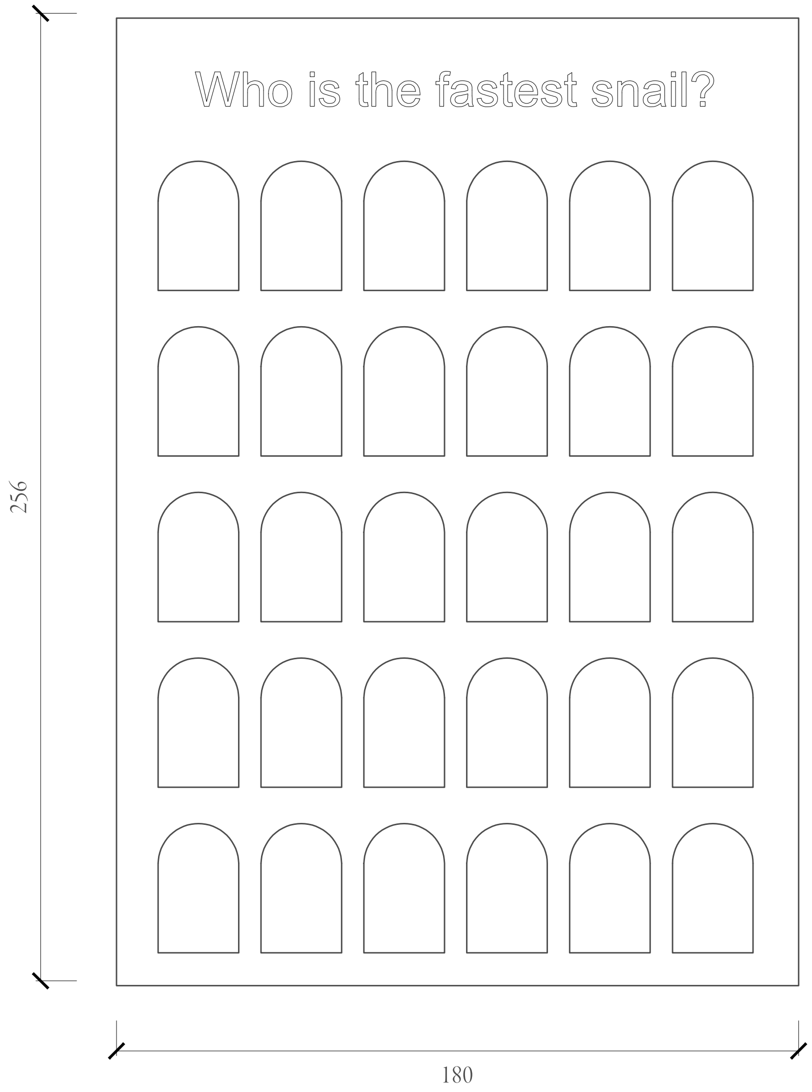
rån friterat til


TELIA 4G
11:16
lördag 28 augusti
BOSS
WHERE ARE YOU?!
Tryck på hemknappen för att låsa upp
Från frit

Tack för
Från friterat till
ÖVRIGT
EAL
MUGGAR

# *The Snail Game*

*Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana as board game.*
*Lasercutted Plywood, painted wooden balls, 3D printed snails.*
*Same proportions as the built monument.*


Who is the fastest snail?
256
180

Scale: 1:2

*Queering a fascist heritage by*
*making it a snail path.*

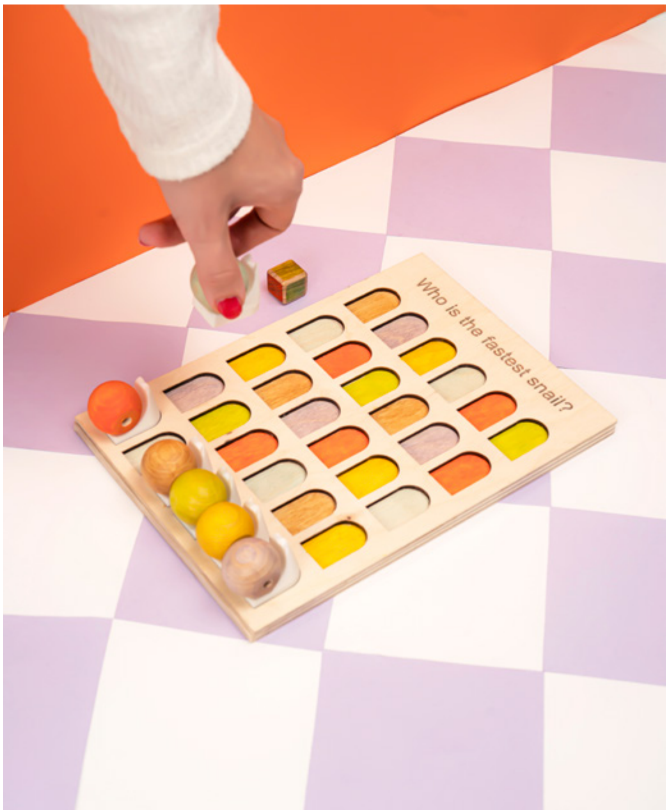
Who is the fastest snail?

*Get ready!*
*The first player throws the dice.*
*Keep in mind, this is a game*
*with some high speed!*

Who is the fastest snail?

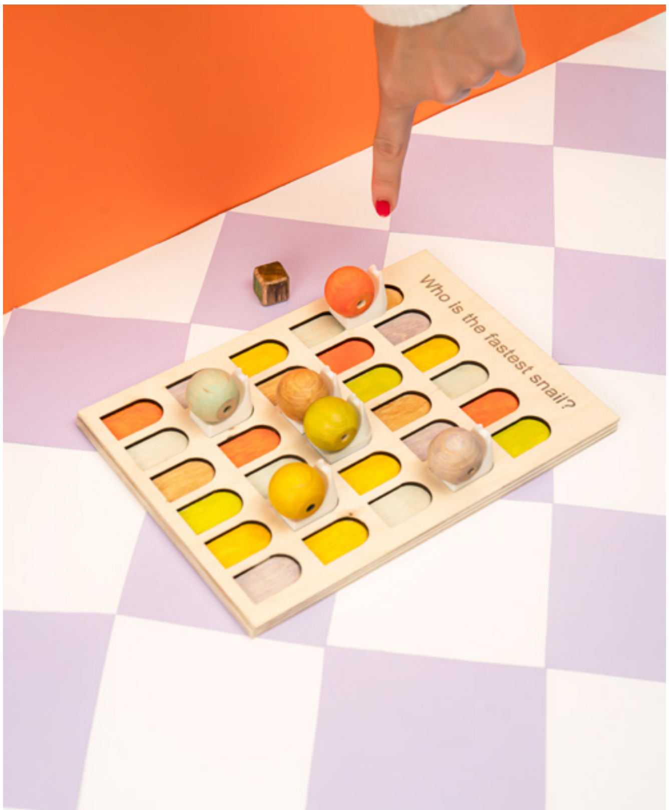
Who is the fastest snail?

*Let's start!*
*Set up all the snails*
*on the first line.*


Who is the fastest snail?

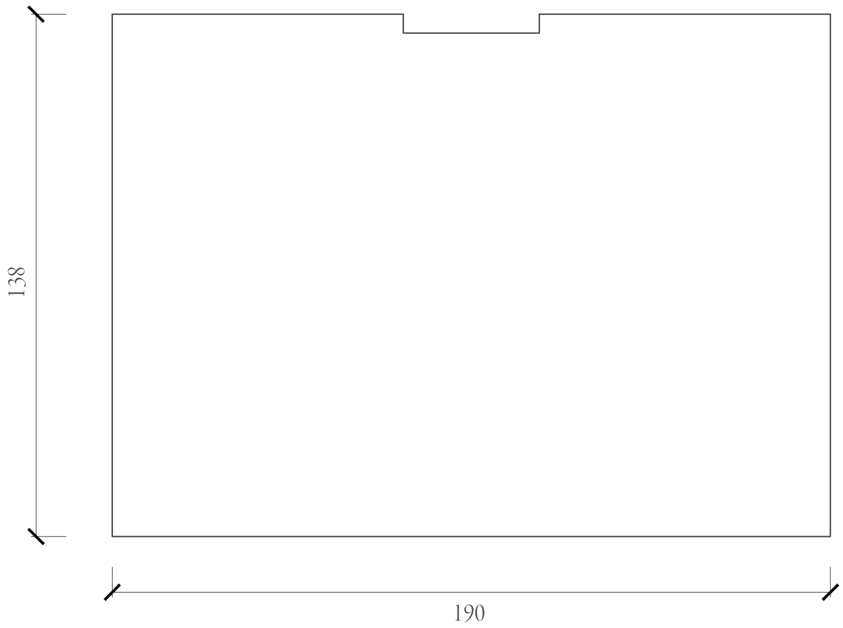
*Go get it!*
*You can move forward if the dice end up in the same color as the color in front of you. Otherwise, give the dice to the player after you.*

*Are you the fastest snail?*
*If you manage to be the first snail on the last row - you win!*


Who is the fastest snail?

# The Picking Box

*Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana as a picking box..*
*Lasercutted Plywood and furniture paint.*



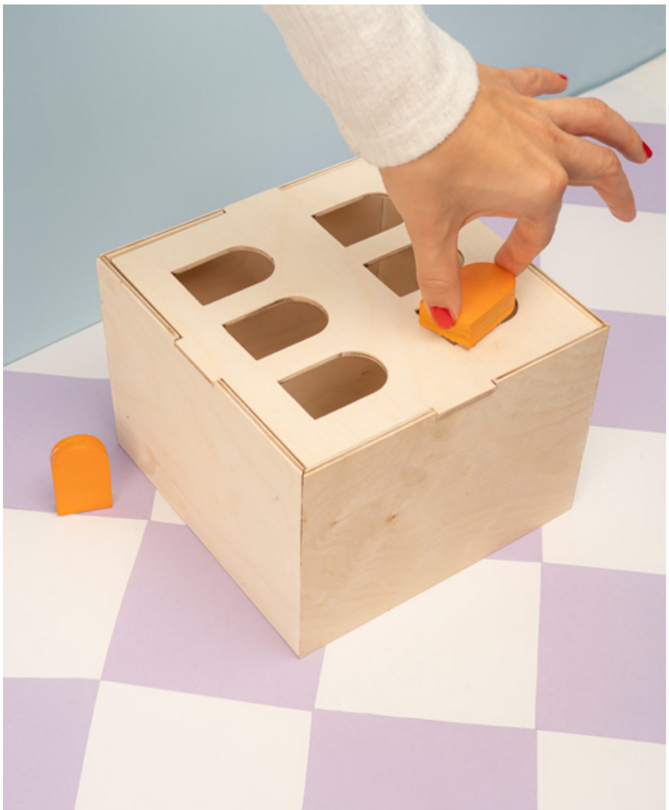
Scale: 1:2 (A4)

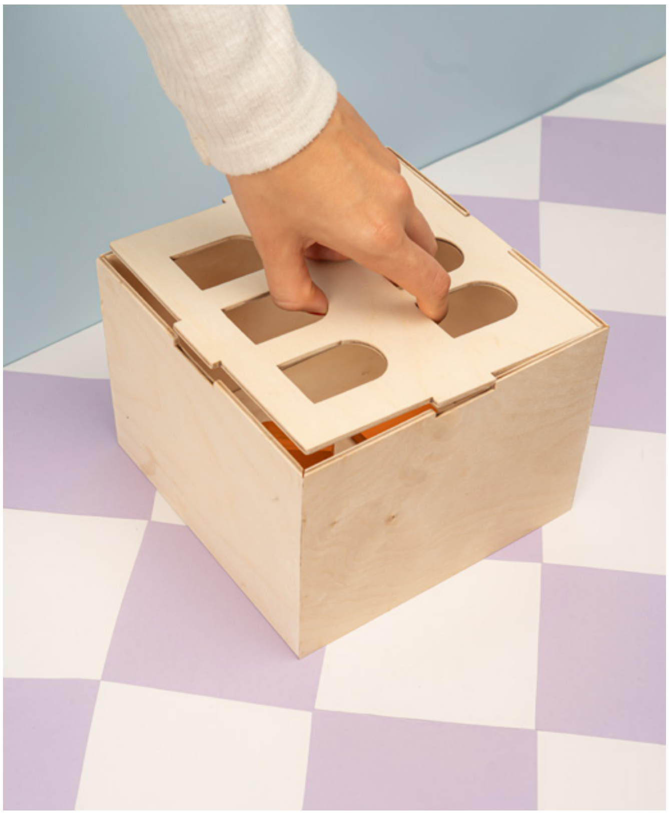
*Queering a fascist heritage by*
*putting stuff in it.*

*Take the blocks up!*
*Try to fit each block into the holes.*

*Let's start!*
*Take out all the blocks from the box.*

*Let's do it again!*
*Now you are finished with putting all the blocks in the box. You can now grab the holes and lift up the top of the box. Get inside and take the blocks out!*

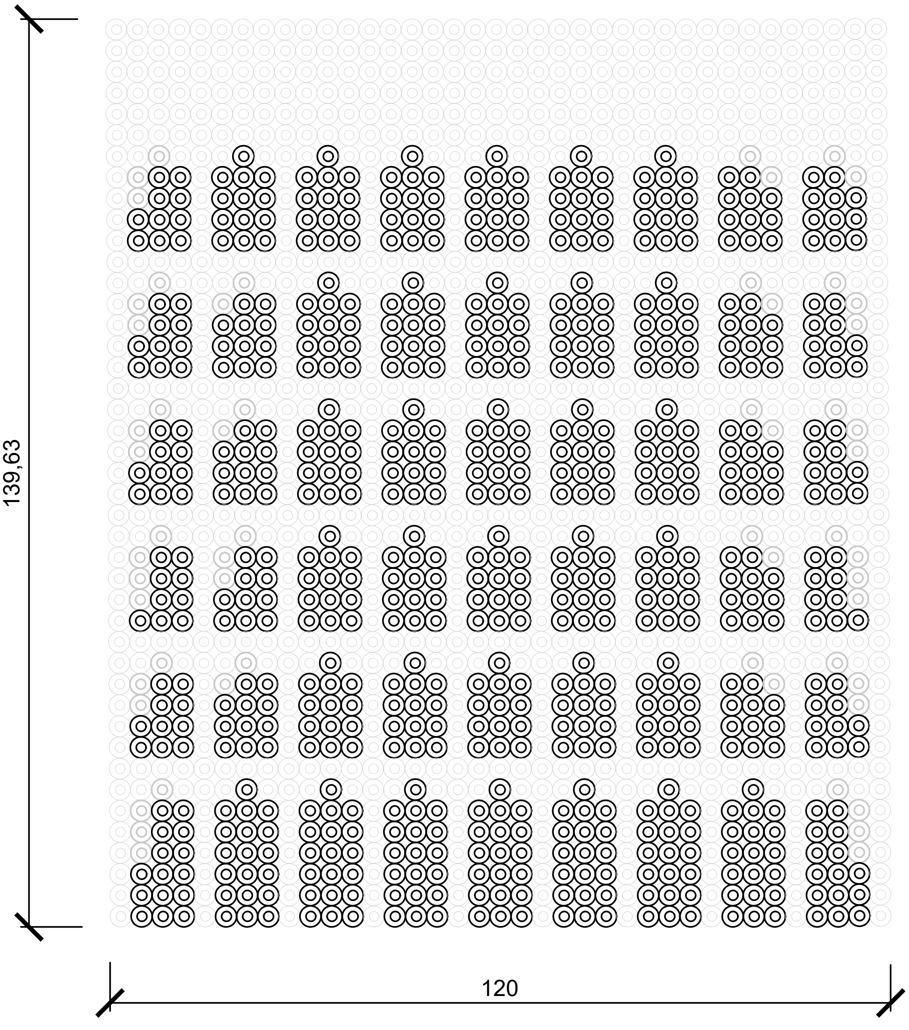




*Good job!*
*You will here the sound of a bump when the block is touching the the base of the box.*

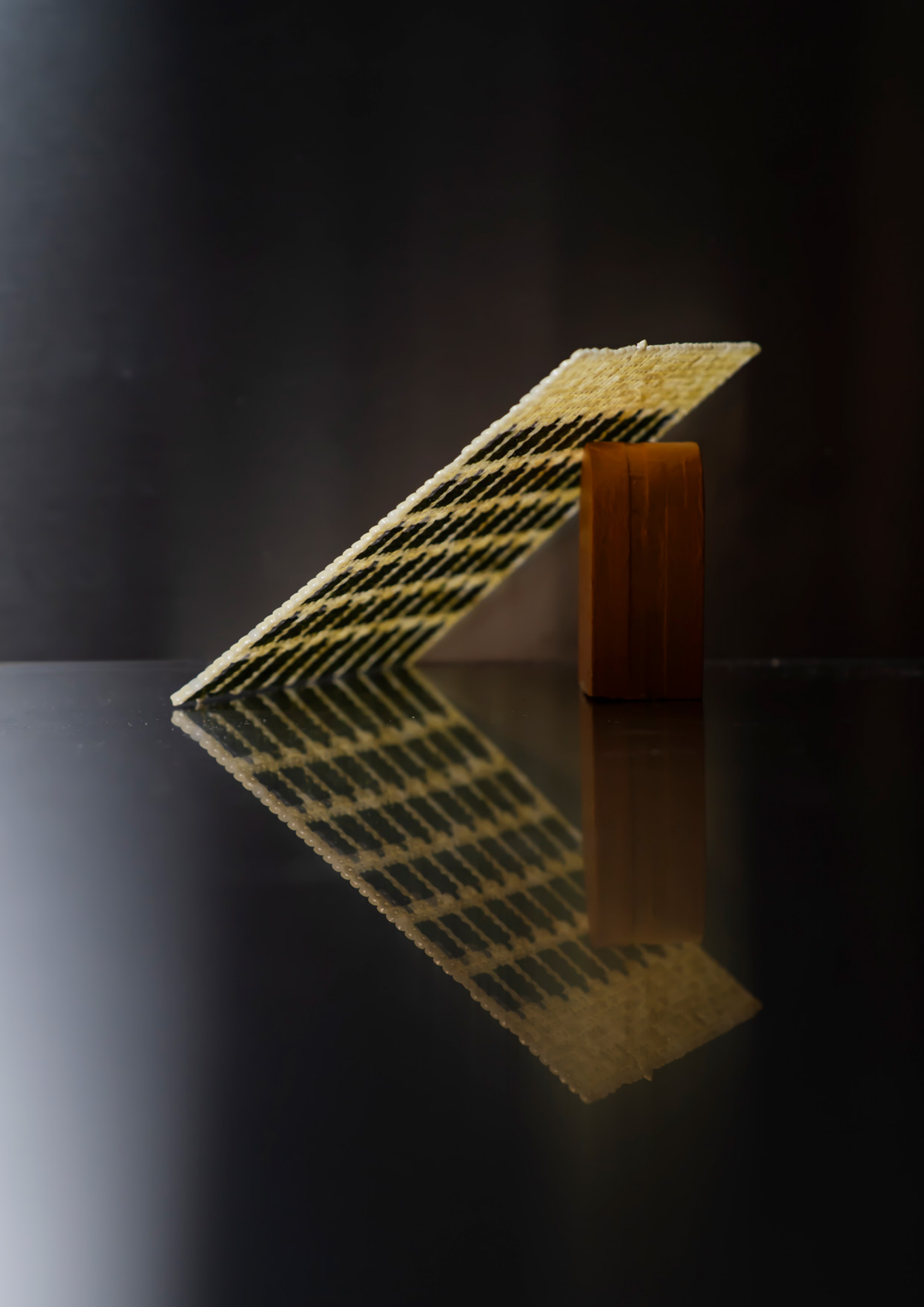
# The Bead Plate

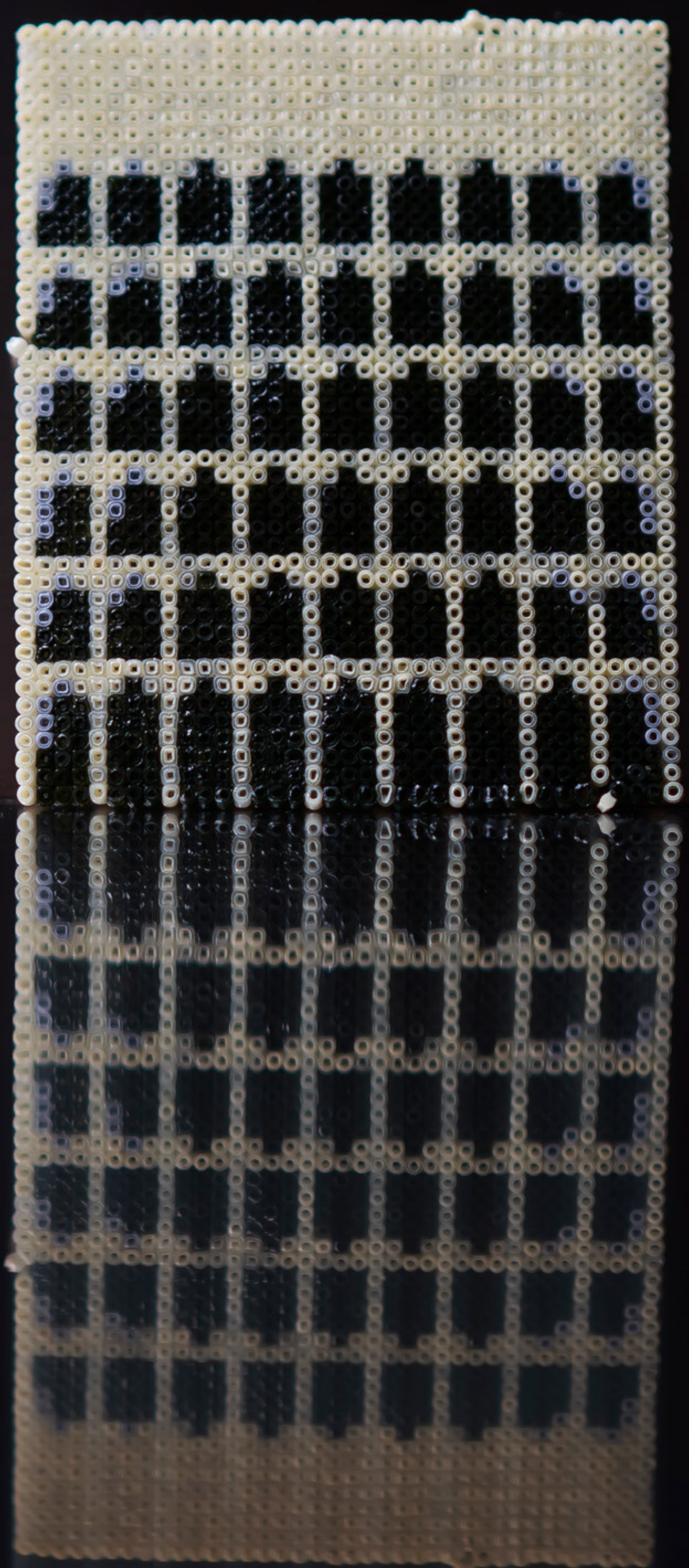
*Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana as a bead Plate.*
*Using different colors on pearls.*

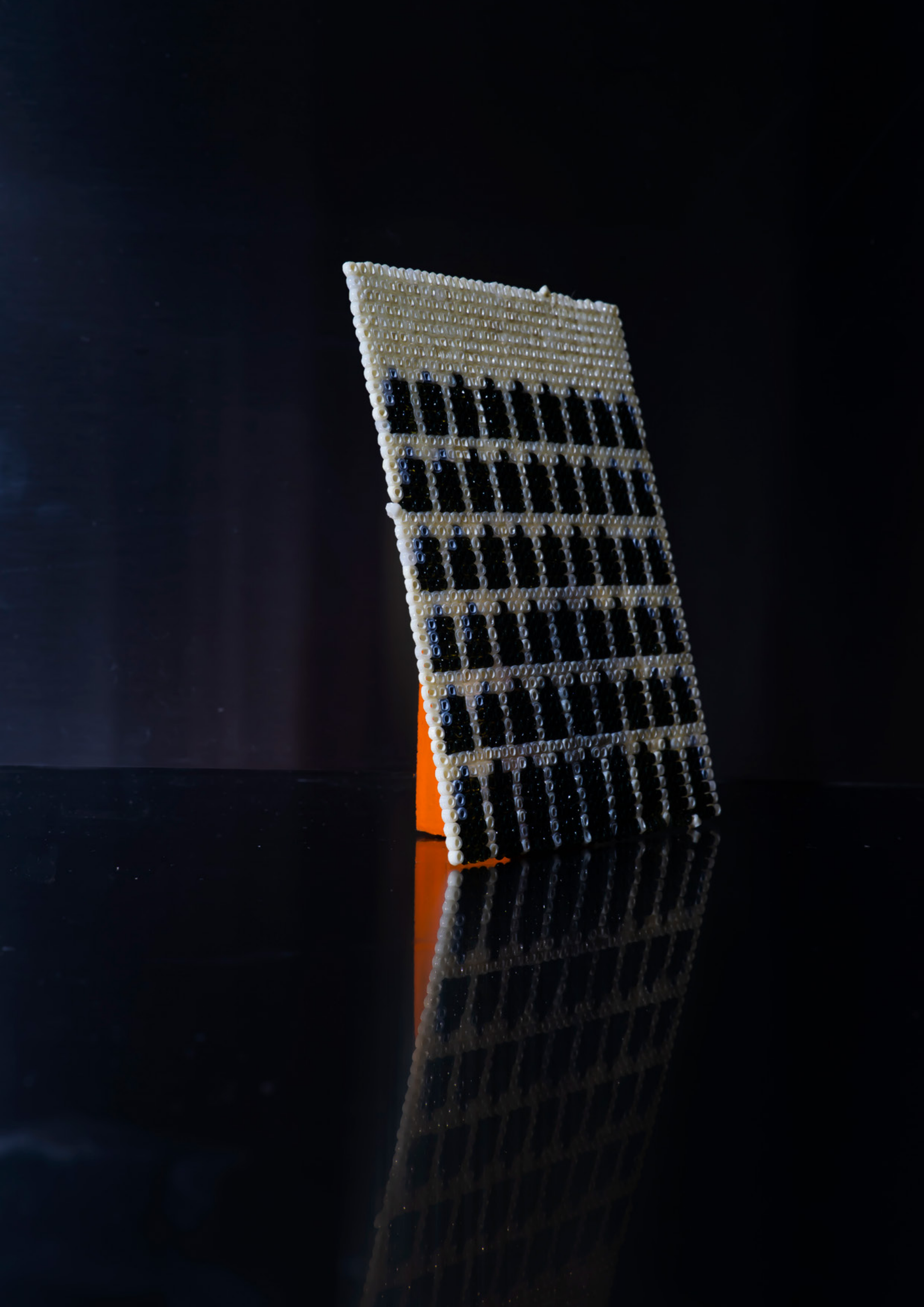


Scale: 1:1 (A4)

## *Queering a fascist heritage by making it fragile*

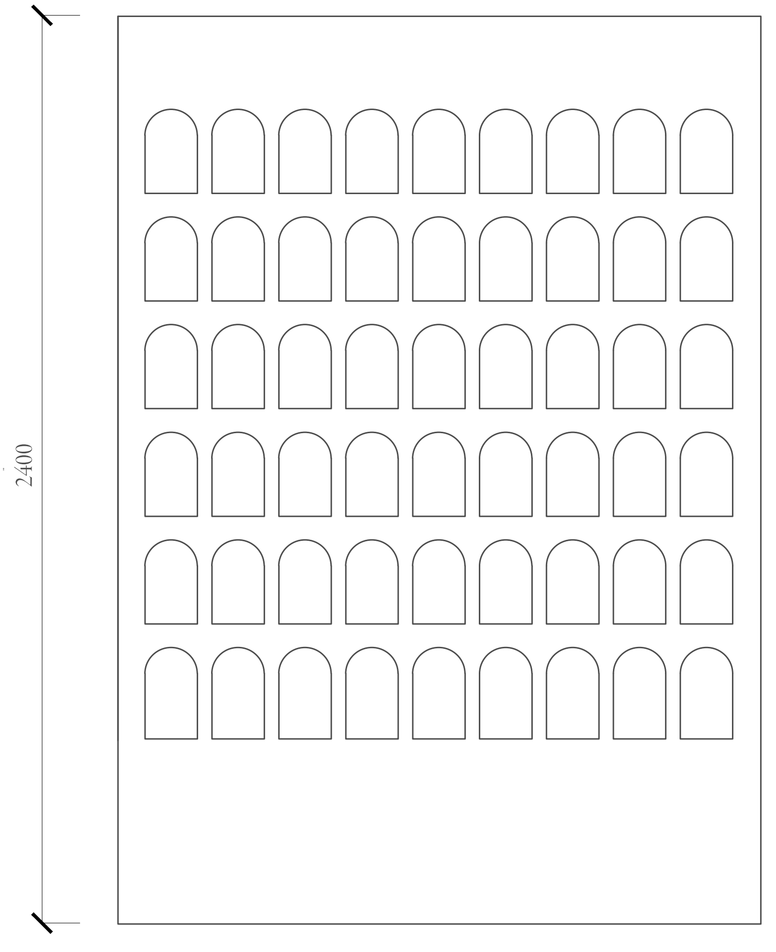






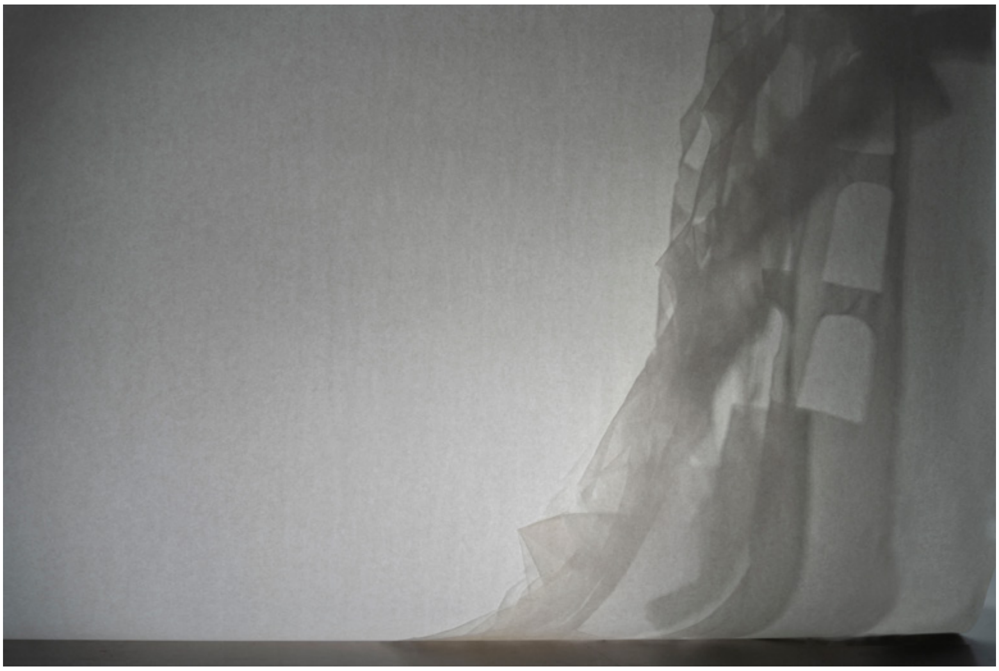
# *The Curtain*

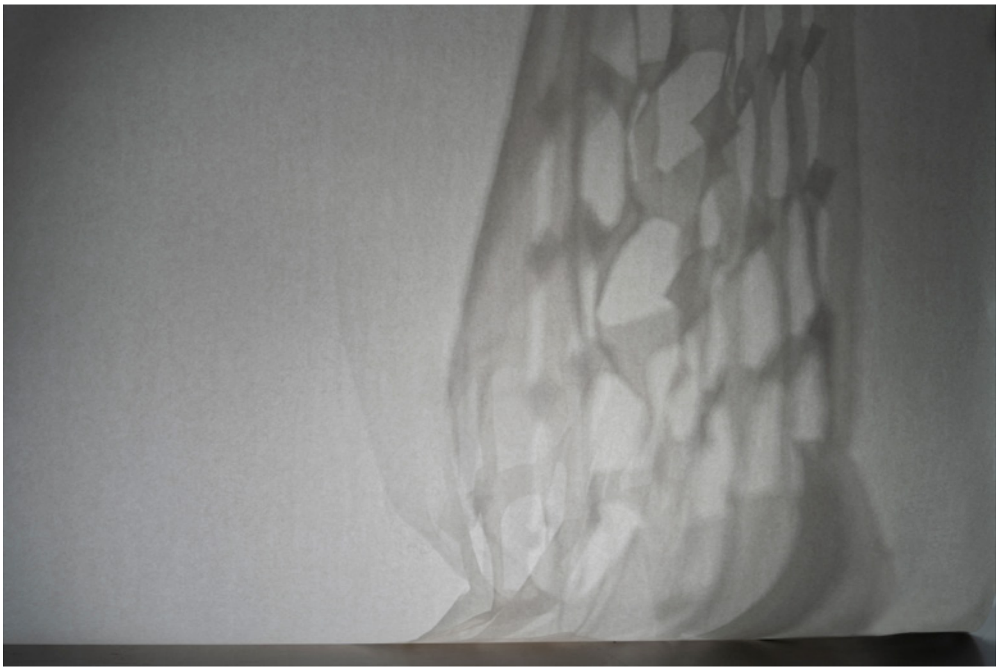
*Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana as a curtain.*
*Snapshots from a video, where the curtain is dancing.*
*The same proportions as the facade of the built monument.*
*Cutted fabric.*
*1700 x 2400 mm*

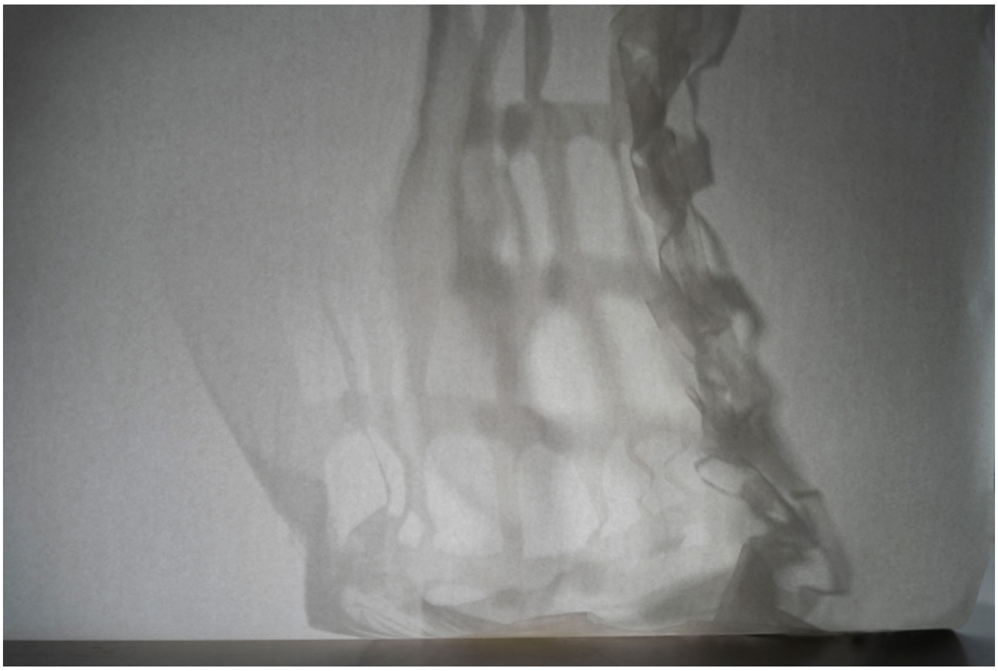


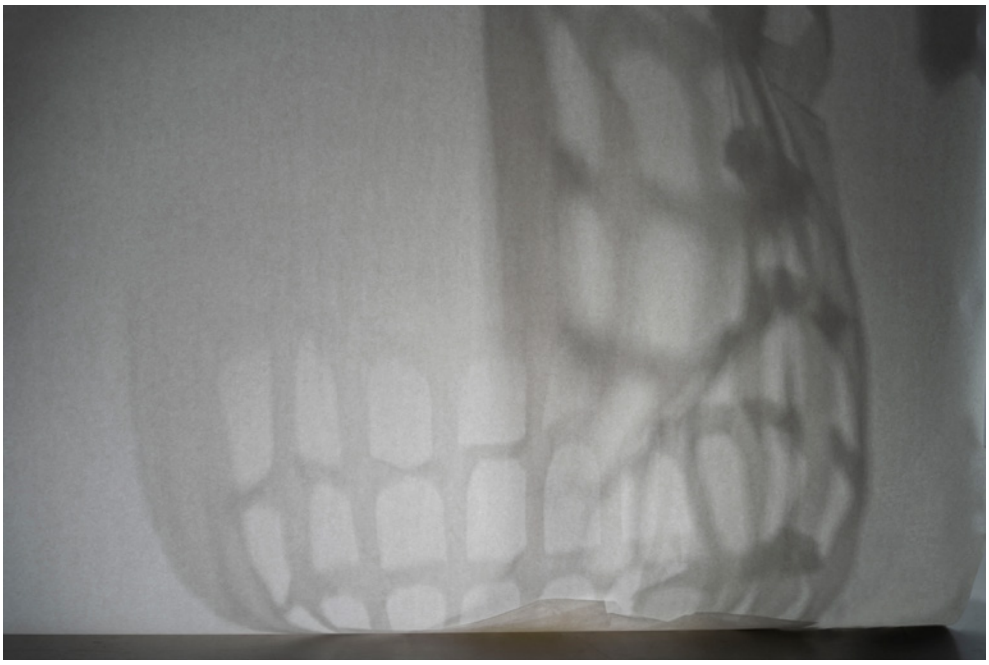
Scale: 1:5 (A4)

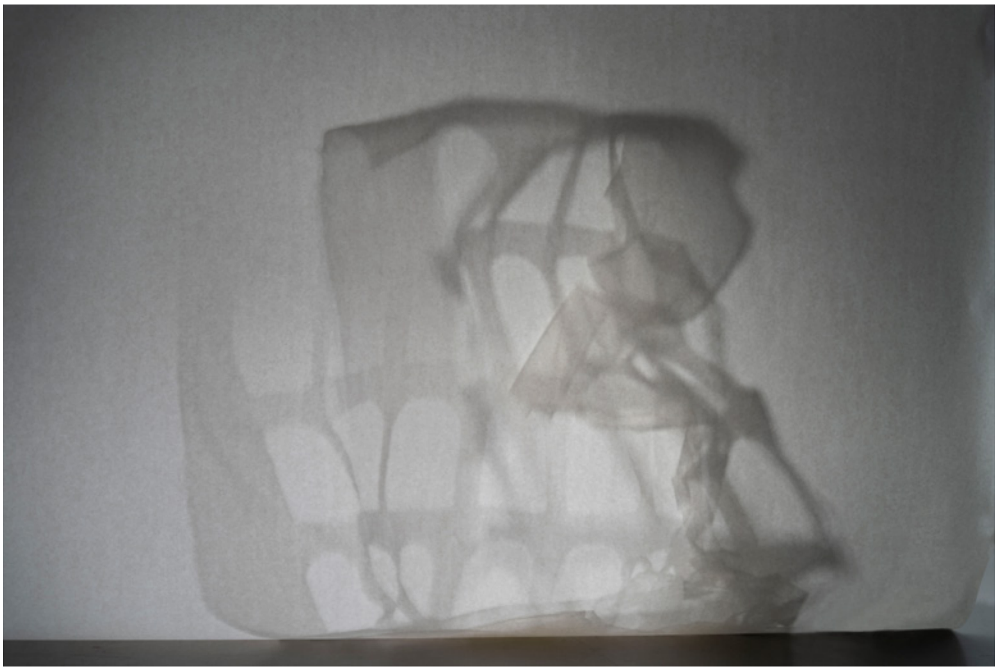
*Queering a fascist heritage*
*by making it dance.*





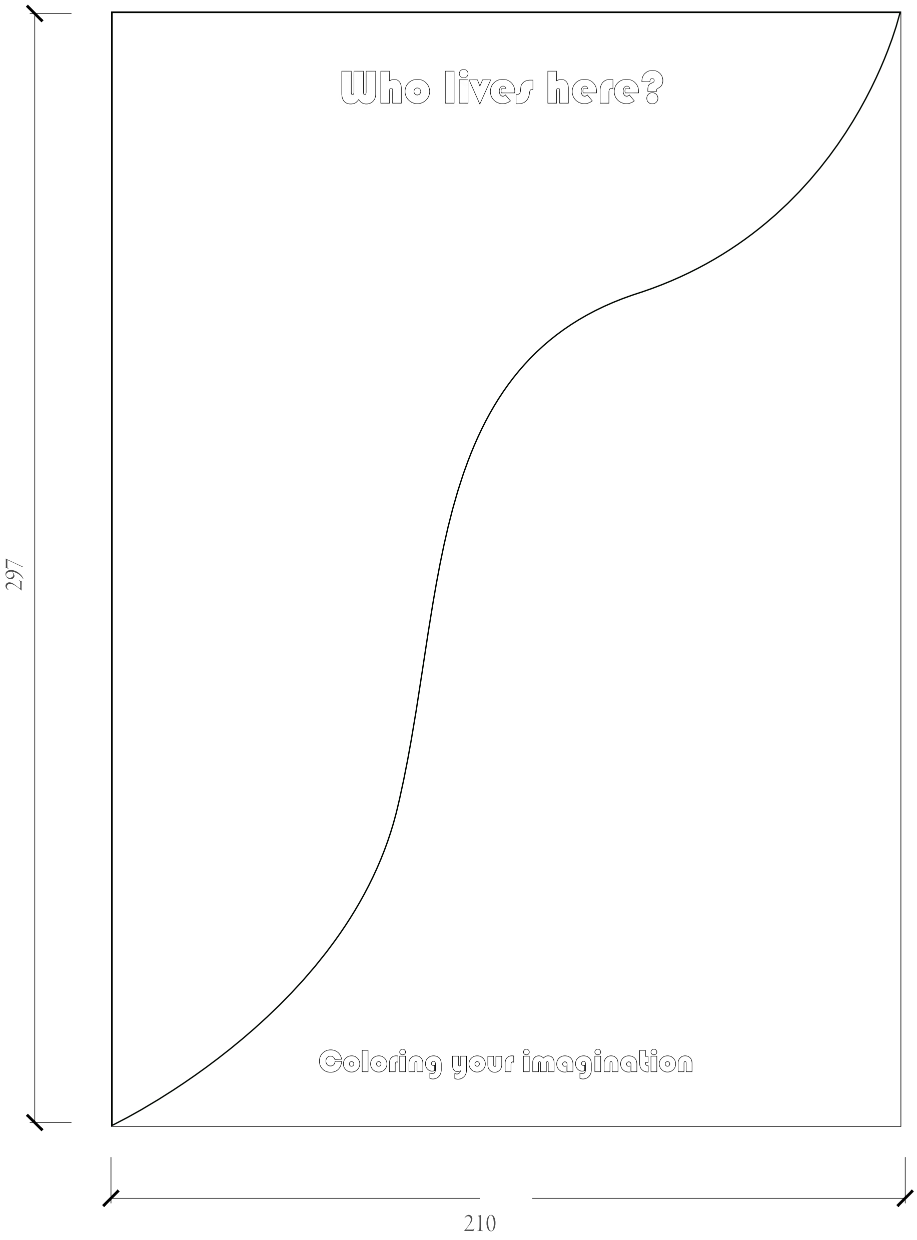






# The Coloring Book

*Five Coloring Books.*
*Traced 5 different buildings with oppressive heritage*
*and gave them to my participants to color. (I was not present during the coloring)*
*A4 format, papper.*


Who lives here?
Coloring your imagination
297
210

Scale: 1:2 (A4)

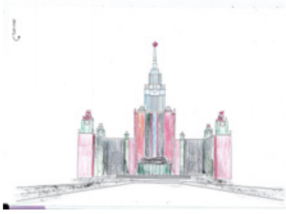
## *Queering a fascist heritage by coloring it*

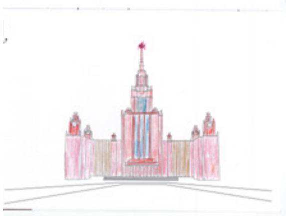
# Who lives here?

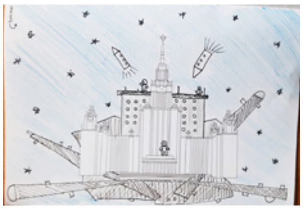
**Color your imagination**

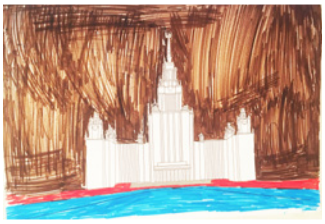
# The Coloring Book - A despised art form

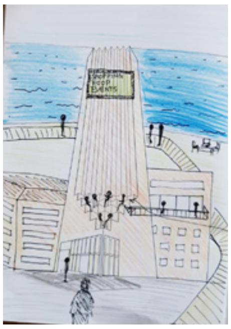
The Coloring book is different from the other objects, since I have invited other participants to use their imagination. It consists of traced images of five different buildings with oppressive heritage. The buildings are traced as objects subtracted from its context and the participants' only guideline was to coloring it with their own pencils. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, I could not be present during the coloring.

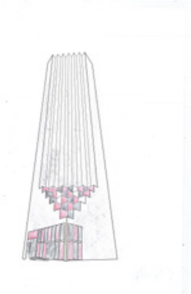


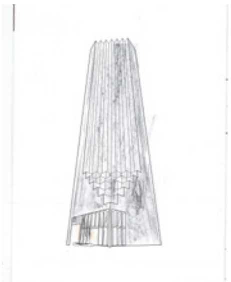


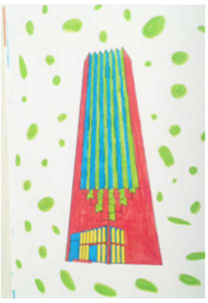


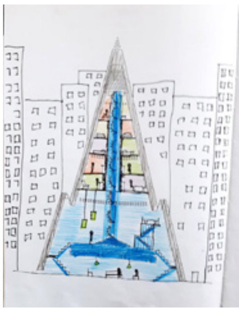


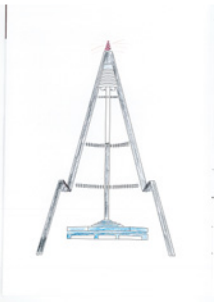

SHOPPING
FOOD
EVENTS

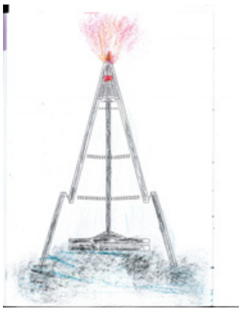


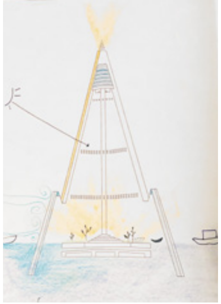


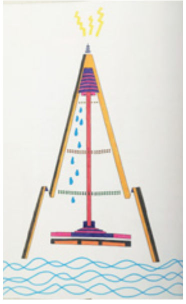


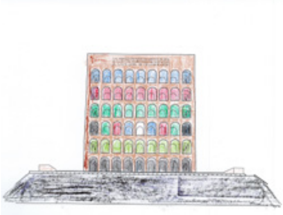


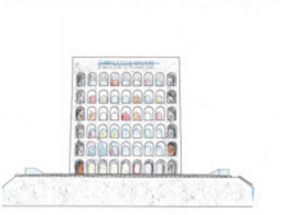


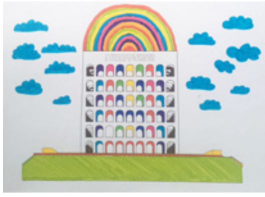


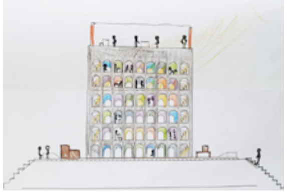


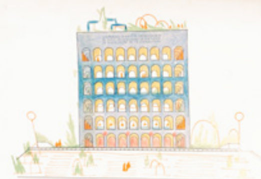


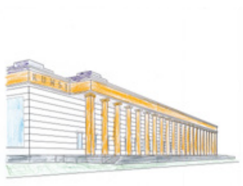


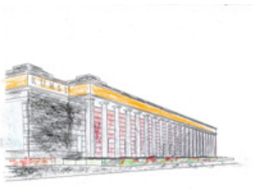


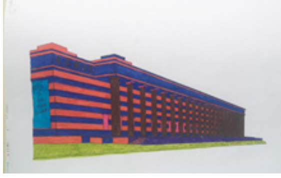


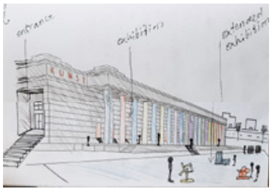


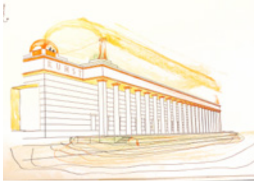






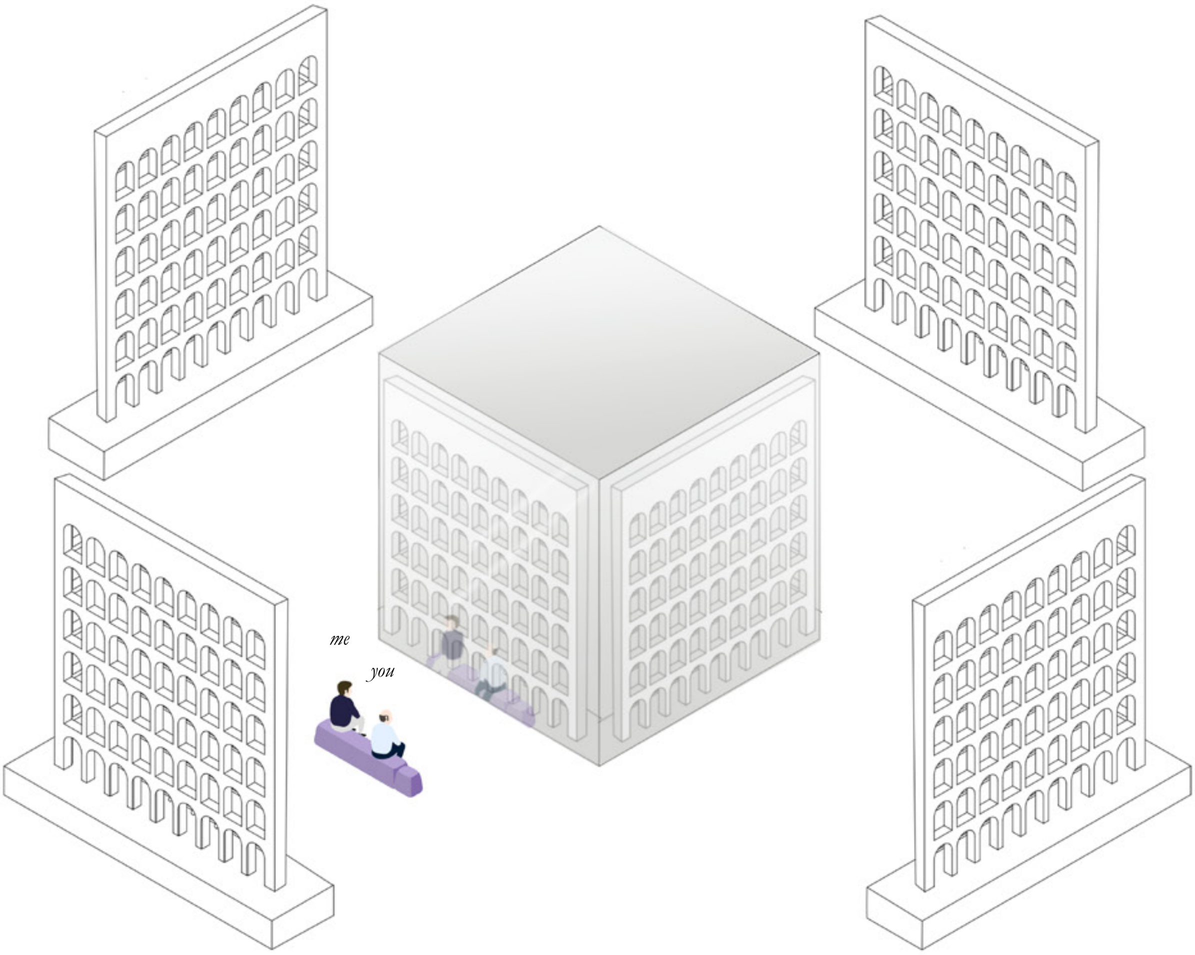



entrance
KUNST
exhibitions
extended exhibitions



# *Reflections*

*Illustration representing the concept of Palazzo della Cilvitá Italiana as a hybrid.*



”Queer space proposes a world of fantasy
that in directly related to the body and has no definite space.
Conventional architecture is more like a window into a perfect world,
queer space is a mirrored space that just brings us back to ourselves.”

*Aaron Betsky, Q Space. 1997. p. 23.*

# What is happening when the intentions are manipulated?

During my process I have read and experimenting with concepts divided into three main categories; the intentions, the subject and the form. What each category is doing to the architecture of Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana is formulated as I continue to experiment and than reflect and push things forward. In this chapter I will share some of the reflections I have made from this process of Queering.

As a starting point, the intentions behind the architecture was the first thing that triggered me. Since when I experiment with the intentions I experiment with the fascist values. How can we determine the fascist values by looking at the preliminary illustrations made by the architects and what will happen when the fascist intentions are queered?

I started by manipulating fascist ideals using another movement - the HBTQI movement, since it consists of the oppositional values to fascism in many ways. One of the core values of the HBTQI movement is the recognision of the limitation of the binary system, arguing that the differences in gender are socially constructed and therefore dynamic, while fhe fascist ideals are based on biological fixed ideals. When painting the building with the pride's flag it becomes an act of queering one of the core values in fascism.

I believe that the bright colors added to the illustrations gives a sense of playfulness and self distance to the building. However, the pride flag's layout, which is based on a grid with straight stripes, it is as rational as the existing facade of Palazzo della Cilvitá Italiana. This means that I do not change the form of the existing, just paint the surface in bright colors and the gesture is done, making it a symbol of Pride instead of fascism.

Indeed, this manipulation becomes direct in its symbolic language, discussing the values of the different movements. However, as mentioned, the architecture stays the same, I have just scratched the surface. This made me relise, to paint the building is not radical enough in the long term, even if it could be very effective for creating a debate about the intentions behind the architecture.

As a reaction to that notion I wanted to transform the architecture more, by changing the symmetry of the facade's openings. I changed the openings in the windows in many different ways, using many different shapes. But then I decided to continuously work with the arches. Since I realised that it was important to keep quite many of the arches as the original shape and placement, otherwise I would lose *the contrast* that I needed for generating a discussion. My intentions were clear - I needed something symmetrical to become asymmetrical by small means, in other worlds, without deleting the story of the symmetry. This also generates a conflict which can be applied to the fascist movement as well, the orderly surface above the internal conflicts.

The experiments with the symmetry of the surface was an interesting exercise. How much disorder can Palazzo della Cilvitá Italiana handle before the architecture looses it's intentions? I believe that the intentions are quite easy to destroy, since it is dependent on being in total symmetry. This creates a fragility towards the fixed architecture, when the intentions are distrubed just by changing one window.

In contrast to this we can look at the Palazzo Nobili-Tarugi as an example of a facade which is playing both with the symmetry and the asymmetry at the same time.

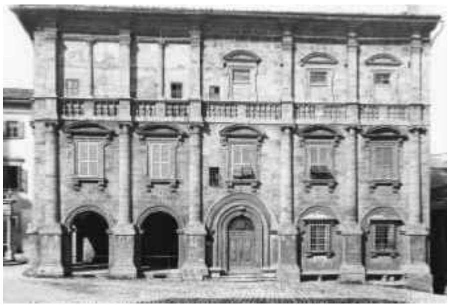


*Figure 26. Palazzo Nobili-Tarugi*

This opens up for a flexibility in the facade, a bigger window or other smaller ones could be easily added to the facade without destroying the facade's intentions. Since the architectural intentions of the facade is to have both symmetry and asymmetry. This unfixed architecture can be considered to have a greater chance to survive over time and adapt itself to other programmes.

Another aspect I wanted to investigate was the context of the building. In the original illustration the building was perceived to be without any historical, built or cultural context. It is just an object placed on a podium placed in ”nowhere” and without the statues it would even be hard to understand the monumental scale. But by putting the building in a context of ”somewhere” the building becomes an object of reality. When I place the Palazzo in a Caribbean context, the criticism of the fascist movement becomes real, since it is criticizing the fascist architecture still standing today in old Colonies.

However, when I put the Palazzo in the context of New York, the building is no longer this ordinary monumental masterpiece. It became one of many architectural landmarks. The scale of the monument becomes rather small in the context of New York. Showing that scale is always in relation to its context and that architecture always is subordinated to its context.
Lastly, the Palazzo as Spongebob is maybe the most absurd one, since the monumental Palazzo becomes a naive and childish character. Mussolini saw himself as the obvious leader to th fascist monument and a symbol for the fascist monument., in that manner, the Palazzo can be read as an embodied Mussolini. When Mussolini becomes SpongeBob the critic is directly addressed to Mussolini himself. Even if the manipulation is conceptual, it helped me to develop this thesis, since I recognized the importance of the Palazzo being in the *shape of an architectural building*. That the notion of being a monument contains a intrictis value in itself.

I see many similarities with the memes on social media and the Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana as SpongeBob. It can be consiered that absurd manipulations has become the new activism, since they are extremely effective and are spread globally, the more absurd, the better. When we laugh we disarm, however, it can easily become an ”innocent” but yet effective propaganda which becomes a truth, spreading false facts. Another reason to why we should not underestimate the power of the absurd.

In conclusion I can see that every manipulation is discussing different perspectives and serves potential discussions. However, it also becomes clear that the intentions of Palazzo della Cilvitá Italiana are fragile towards many different aspects. It is due to its (almost excessive) symmetry in the facades, its lack of context and the meta fact that it *is* a recognized monument.

Another reflection is that I constantly catch myself writing ”architecture” instead of ”intentions”. The reason is that I consider them to be almost the same thing. The intention is the foundation of the architecture, whose message we try to read. This made me believe that if we understand the intentions behind just looking at the building, we are more keen on considering it to be ”good architecture”. Perhaps that is the curse behind the fascist ”good” architecture. It is clear in its intentions, but fragile towards change.

# What is happening when the main character is changed?

In my thesis I have queered the intentions and the form, but I think that the main character was the hardest one to queer. Since It was important for me, not to make it into an architectural intervention which would be ”a better solution”, I wanted to generate a nuanced discussion about architecture and to discuss which main character we have in mind when we draw. Today, indeed the discussion is trying to be more inclusive and I see this experiment as a contribution to further discuss these questions.

Reflecting back, I can see that I tried to queer the main character in different ways with the help of architecture. First we have the shaft and the ramp, which is pretty straight forward, discussing the different internal transport systems. One which we use everyday and draw in as a norm. The ramp on the other hand, is a transport system which is more democratic forces us to take the same route.

However, it is also a discussion about time and space. The elevator is much more time effective than the ramp, and time is considered to be precious today. However, the elevator closes its door and we forget the architecture for a while, denying the fact that not everyone fits into the elevator or that the scale of this architecture is enormous. When the doors open, we experience architecture again, but we do not really experience the architecture while transport vertically. Just horizontally with short pauses in between each floor. On the other hand, we have the ramp, where we almost constantly experience the architecture’s verticality, since we constantly go upwards. One understand that the verticality of the building is a problem, in the same way it can be a problem for someone who is in a wheelchair, or for an old man’s legs. This change in the transport system makes us reflect about different peoples’ different experiences of architecture, in this case, that a vertical building can be perceived as an obstacle for free movement.

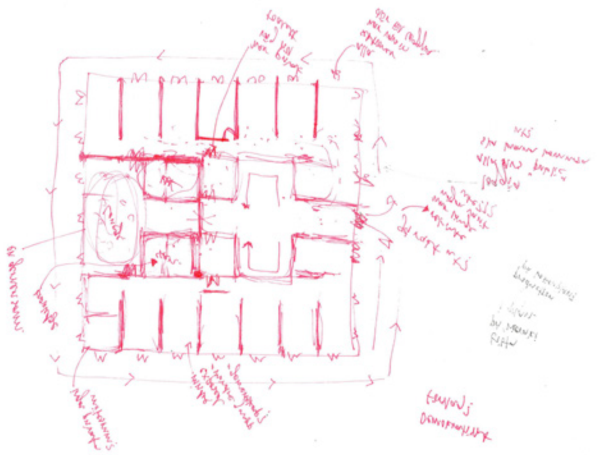
The second experiment is influenced by Bruno Latour’s essay on ”the Sociology of the door”. I wanted to discuss architecture more in detail. The big sections of glass are still not open, even if we talk about it as ”a open facade” when we talk about big sections of windows”. But it is more about the feeling of openness, not the function. However, if we change the windows to a door (not glazed) we will perceive the facade as closed, but is in fact, more open, since we can ”open it”. This results in a discussion about the feeling of architecture versus the function that it can be a visual contradiction. What we perceive is not always true. However, perhaps the perception of a feeling is more important than the actual function in the case of Palazzo della Cilvitá Italiana.

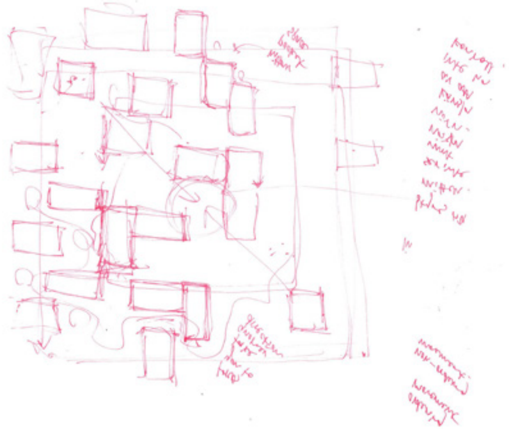
I chose to draw this experiment as a section, since I thought it was the easiest way to show the different situations. However, I realised that the architectural drawing is as abstract as any other abstract art work, since it is just a line on paper representing a material. The architectural language (the drawing) requires imagination and a great understanding of spatial experience. This made me understand the role of the architect as a translator between the imaginative and the real, which made curious to investigate ”the world inbetween” more, defined as ”the abstract”. Maybe architecture is more about the *abstraction* of reality, then the reality itself. Either if it is a line drawing, a toy or art work, the abstraction is a necessary tool to use for understanding the world. The line is just a tool translating the experience between the human and the built.

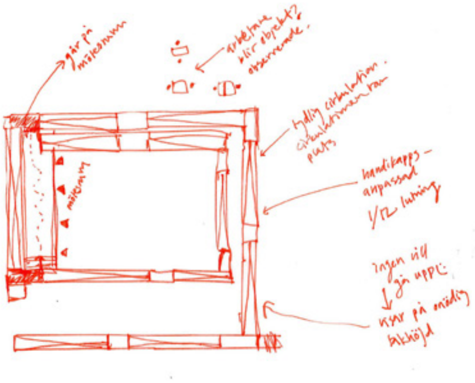
Lastly, I experimented with target groups of different activities and brands. That Fendi gains status by excluding people from their headquarters, while McDonalds wants to include people and make their brand accessible. I think by doing this experiment I realised that Palazzo does not approve of a ”cheap brand”, it would destroy its reputation and status as an architectural masterpiece. An architectural masterpiece can not be rented by McDonalds.- But why not? I think it is more about the Brand being American and cheap, while Fendi is Italian and expensive. The idea that Fendi would rent the fascist monument does not feel strange in contrat to McDonalds, This made me realize how close Fendi and fascism is in their values and what imagie they want to broadcast.

In comparsion to manipulate the intentions, to queer the architecture was much more complex. Now I change something (even if it is conceptually) that is in the three dimensional world which is in a context. It was really hard for me just focusing on changing one aspect of the architecture, without thinking about all other aspects and force myself to think of architectural intervention which is ”not solutions’ ’. This started a self-reflective process, questioning what on what grounds I am making my arguments about what is bad or good architecture.

A celebration to the people is not always democratic, as if it is necessary for us humans to be subordinated to architecture if we are about to admire it and acknowlegde it as an architectural masterpiece? If so, then we might have to change how we validate architecture today.






går på mötesrum
arbetare blir objekt? observerade.
tydlig cirkulation. cirkulationen tar plats
mötesrum
handikapps-anpassad 1/12 lutning
Ingen vill gå upp!:
kisar på onödig takhöjd

*My process elaborating on the internal circulation,*
*1. First I tried to solve the plan for the headquarter*
*2. I became more conceptual*
*3. Decided that I wanted to queer the*

# What is happening when the form is changed?

In this case, to ”change the form”, is to make the form of the Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana into something else. When queering the form, I try to change the form to become an object that is the opposite of an architectural monument. I started by writing down everything that I felt was the opposite values to what the monument wanted to convey. Trash, childish, toys, approachable, fragile, small, weak, dynamic, customizable, feminine, funny, ugly, everyday, temporary etc. Then I just went out in the city and looked around in my own apartment trying to find forms and objects which contained these values.

The reasons behind making Palazzo della Civiltà. Italiana into a Happy meal is multilayered, changing the scale, the context, the material, the purpose, the target groups, the culture and its worth. I really wanted to explore the Happy Palazzo in the context of being a part of the identity of a fast food brand in a more detailed scale, therefore the movie was important. Seeing it in its context is provocative since we know it is a fascist monument, but it can also be provocative since it is a form which we associate with a fast food brand. It is an exploration with form as a communication tool, how the design becomes a symbol of a culture and what happens when different cultural forms collide.

However, when I decided that I wanted to experiment with the form, the first object that came to my mind was toys. I saw it as a great tool to deride the fascist monument, since the form of a toy requires a form which will give joy to a child, which we perceive as ”childish”. This resulted in ”the Snail Game”. A simple game where the goal is to be the fastest snail, in contrast to an ”extraordinary” state as the quote on the top of each facade conveys. We can imagine the followers of Mussolini as snails trying to be as fast as possible, however to be a snail is a bad choice in a competition about speed. The game has simple rules, which allows for an intense play, when the players forgets the outside world and just focuses on being the winner. However, if you win it is just about luck, it has nothing to do with skills. Could be seen as a paraphrase of the privilege many are unreflectively born with, just happy to win.

The Picking Box is a more radical change of form. Changing the proportions and the facades. The arches now becomes ”the roof”which you are supposed to put stuff in. It is often considered to be a learning tool for kids, when they learn about proportions and shapes. However, the game is about the same shapes repeated over and over again, a context which can criticize the the regularity in shapes. The box is also quite big for its contents and the void is present every time you put something in.

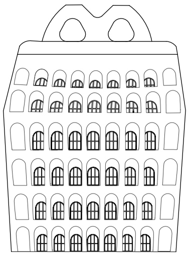
The Pearl Plate is about fragility and material. The travertine stone is used a decoration on the Palazzo, even if it wants us to believe it is structural. On the other hand, pearls are a material used to decorate with. It is not perceived as being a structural material, it is feminine, fragile, opac and small. To work with pearls is a craftsmanship with low statues, resulting in ”feminie objects”, with no function rather being beautiful or cute. However, the contrast in material is not as big as one might think at first, both being decorative materials.

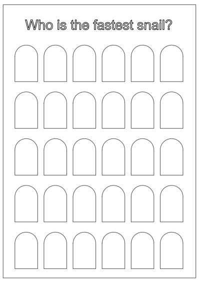
Then I wanted to experiment with making the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana in a material that was movable, in reaction to its fixed approah, resulting in the curtain. To show the mobility it was crucial to show it with a movable media. I choreographed  the movement to feel like a dystopian dance, which became more and more intense. The idea of the smooth and abrupt movement feels unpredictable. Representing the conflict the Palazzo della Civiltà.is dealing with, being an architecturally fixed monument of a fascist heritage standing in a reality of constant change.

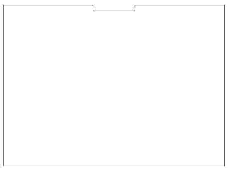
Lastly, the Coloring Book is an everyday object that is rather despised as an art form. It is considered to be “cheating” when coloring inside the lines someone else has already been drawing. However, this is also making it a perfect tool for queering an oppressive heritage. Because it is seen as an innocent act, an disarming act, an “easy” task that gives you the freedom of coloring however you want, in contrast to the ”untouchable” Palazzo. I think the coloring book has the potential of being a research method by itself. It can work as a communication tool, in other reclaiming processes.

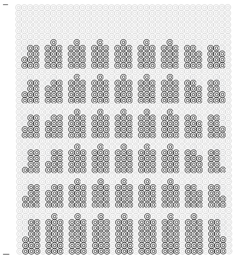
The objects becomes something else in the context of a ”real” situation, as mentioned previously, the objects in context are more multilayered, which is neccesary for generating a nuanced discussion. When captured in video format, one can analyze the interaction with the objects. I would love to have children playing with the toys, since it is hard to predict how they would interact. What happens if the children love to play with it? But maybe even more interesting, what would happen if they do not like to play with it at all? What happens when the Palazzo fails it’s task as a toy? Do we perceive it as fascist regardless of the result?

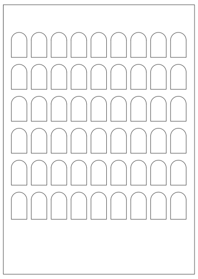
Reflecting back, it was important to module some experiments into ”real” objects. For myself, since I could elaborate on volume, scale, material and craftsmanship. But it also works as a catalyst for the discussions. I believe people are more likely to discussing objects, than drawings or text, in this context of an exhibition. They translate my objects to art and by doing that, the objects establish an expectation to have a critical agenda.

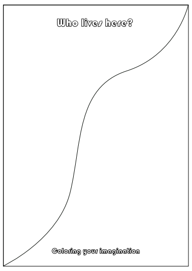


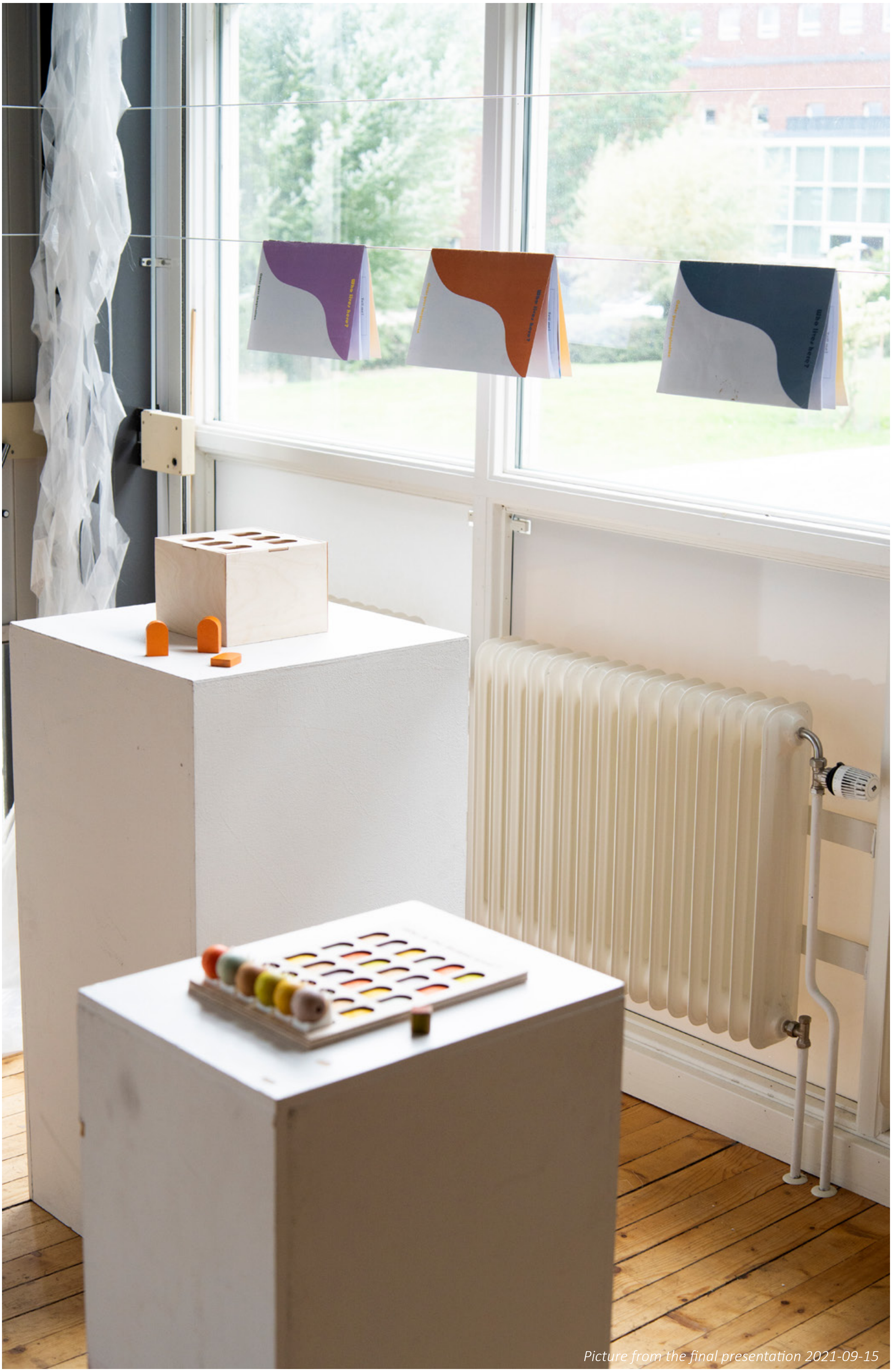












*Picture from the final presentation 2021-09-15*

# Art, architecture and queer theory

It has not been a linear process. I have simultaneously been reading while doing experimental practices, not always completely sure what I was looking for at the moment. A critical process, which evolves by asking questions. However, I think it is key to the outcome of this thesis. If I had known what I was doing the whole time, then I would not have gained any new knowledge. The power of not knowing is the possibility to innovate.

The ”unknown” is invisible to us, therefore, to find the invisible in architecture I had to search for answers using tools from other fields. My believe is that art can be a tool can generate innovations within the field of architecture. Theory helped me formulate concepts, but the practical ”art” practices helped me translate it to form. When concepts become objects, they become something else - in a context of other objects. I think the objects helped me discuss what architecture does, but the theory helped me understand more what architecture is.

It was valuable to divide my experiments into three different categories, the intentions, character and form. By doing so, I gained an awareness of what I was doing. However, I am aware of this being a subjective process, but I am not saying that this is an objective truth. I think we always draw/make architecture from a subjective perspective.

With that said, I am humble towards the fact that the ”artworks’’ are understanding more than I do myself and that they convey more perspectives than I can control, since they do different things to different subjects. I have thought a lot about the receiver of these experiments. When I present it as an exhibition, when I am the one in control of what this object is communicating. In an exhibition I can use the objects as a tool for making fascism visible to the observers, since I can explain why this could be considered fascist and ask my audience to search for specific answers. But If the object is in another context, where I am not in control, the object can just continue making the fascism in Palazzo della Civiltá Italiana invisible. However, that may lift up another discussion of how normalized fascism is today.

Indeed, there are similarities with the postmodernist movement, both striving for a variety which is more inclusive, and an aesthetic language which is less strict. Handling  the role as an architect not as someone who is creating an ”objective magic”, but someone who has the responsibility to questioning it. However, I believe that ”Queering” is more about the sociology behind the form, than the form itself.

This is not a method generating answers, it is a critical method generating critical discussion about architecture and its hybridity. For me, to say that architecture works as a hybrid is to say that it works intersectionality. Meaning, it is multilayered and interdisciplinary. Architecture is much more than we can imagine. It is associations, emotions, symbolism, power, politics, culture and context, - far from binary. My main goal with this thesis was to find a method to discuss complex things with others, also others outside the field of architecture.

Is the play with form innocent? For me, this is little more than a game with aesthetics, is to assume that fascism is ancient, dead history. It is not.

It is a fact that we need to restore instead of demolish and build new due to the environmental crises. Therefore, the complexity with the oppressive heritage most be discussed. I can also identify this thesis with the concept defined by Sara Ahmed, the killjoys. According to Ahmed’s analysis, this shows how social norms are maintained by being linked to positive emotions such as joy and security and that we have to kill the joy for creating change. I see my thesis as a practical method for killjoys- to queer. Queering becomes a method to intervene and discuss fascist architecture without celebrating it.

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## *Images*

*All diagrames, collages and pictures of models are made by the author.*

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*8. Taken by the author (2018).*

*9 - 10. C. Ceccoli , T. Trombetti & D. Biondi.(2010) Structural evaluation of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana in Rome.*

*11.Wikipedia. (2011) https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palazzo_della_Civilt%C3%A0_Italiana#/media/Fil:Palazzo_della_civilt%C3%A0_del_lavoro_(EUR,_Rome)_(5904657870).jpg [2021-02-23]*

*12. Pinterest. (2015) https://www.pinterest.se/pin/291185932150200164/ [2021-02-23]*

*13 - 19. Perez, E. (2015) https://www.eduardoperez.de/architecture/design/fendi/ [2021-05-20]*

*20. Fendi´s Instagram. (2014)*

*21. Moma's archieve.(1939). https://www.moma.org/collection/works/320?artist_id=3381&page=1&sov_referrer=artist*

*22. Wikipedia. (2011).*

*23. Collage by author (2021).*

*24. Taken by the athor (2018).*

*25. Moma's archieve.(1939).*

*25. Olofsson, A. (2017). Den enda symbol, som direkt för tanken till ordningsmakten?. Lunds Universitet.*

*26. Venturi, R. (1966) Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture.*

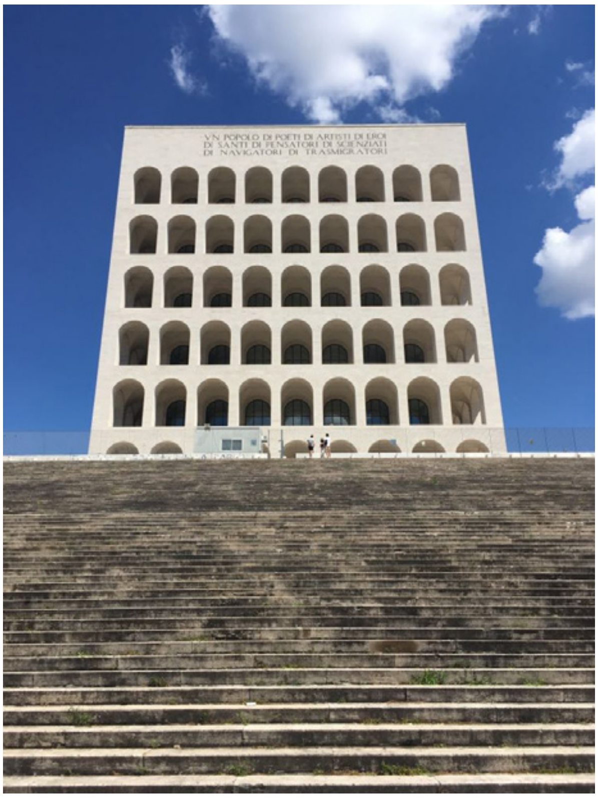
*Picture from the final presentation 2021-09-15*

# Attachment

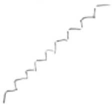
1. A diary . (a part of the exhibition 2021-09-15)

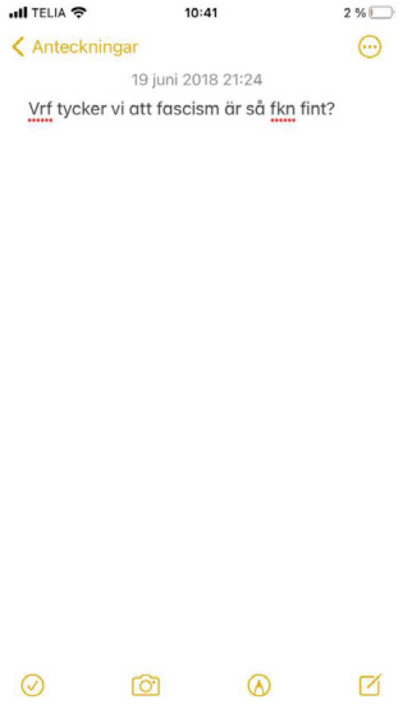
## *A diary*

19 Juni 2018



The monument was placed on a podium.
Sooooo maaaany stairs!!!!

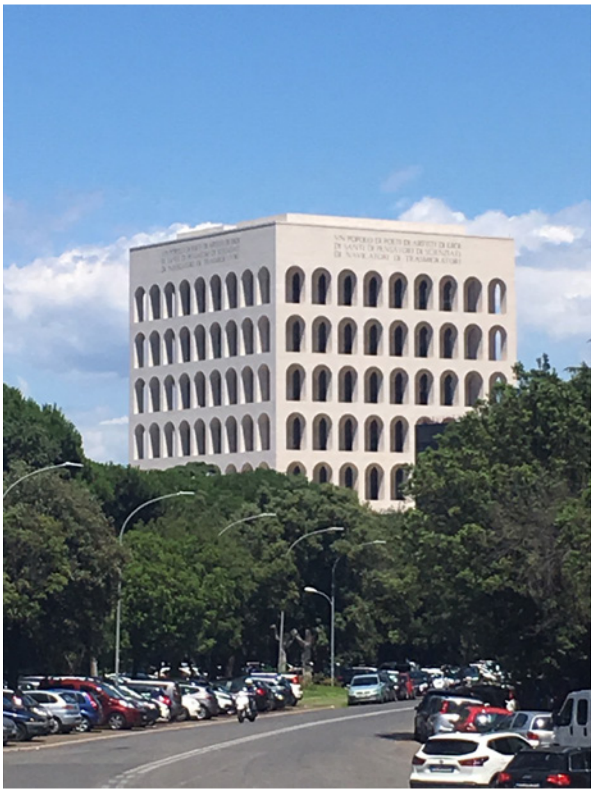



TELIA
10:41
2 %
Anteckningar

19 juni 2018 21:24

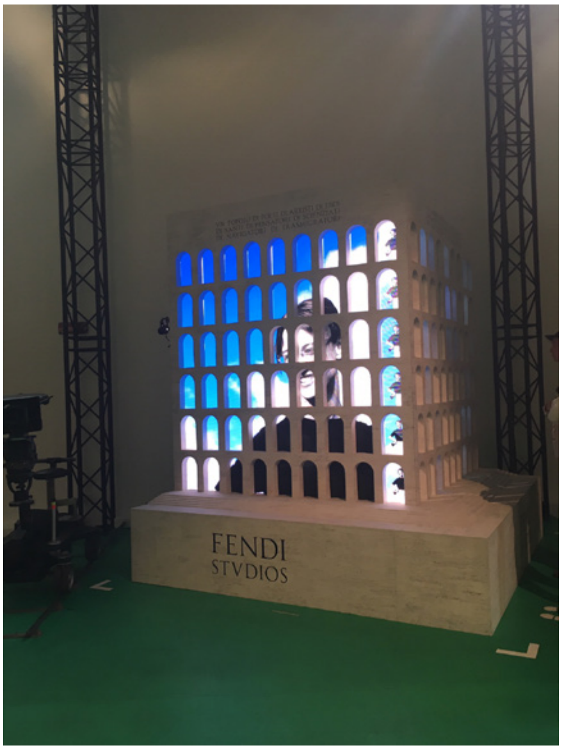
Vrf tycker vi att fascism är så fkn fint?

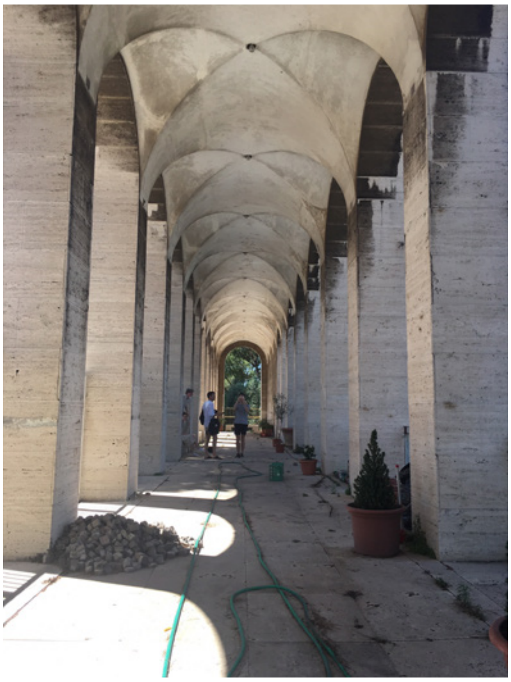
A 'note:
"Why do we think fascism looks so pure??"



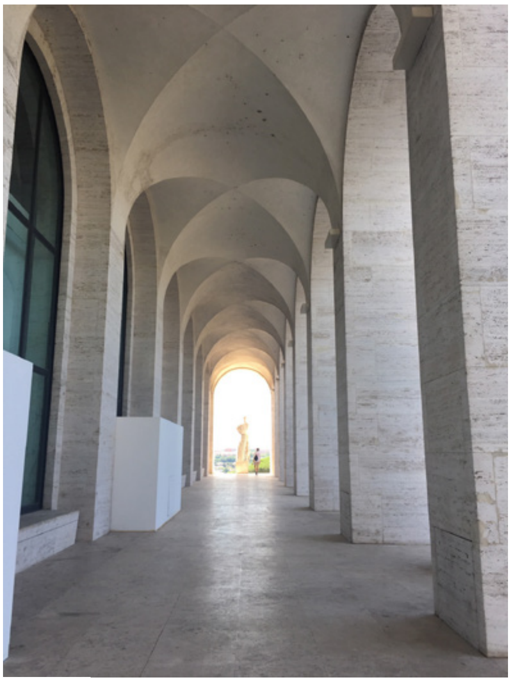
When we first saw the Palazzo
It felt like the building wasn't real!

Fendi's exhibition
quote still there - no shame! ☺

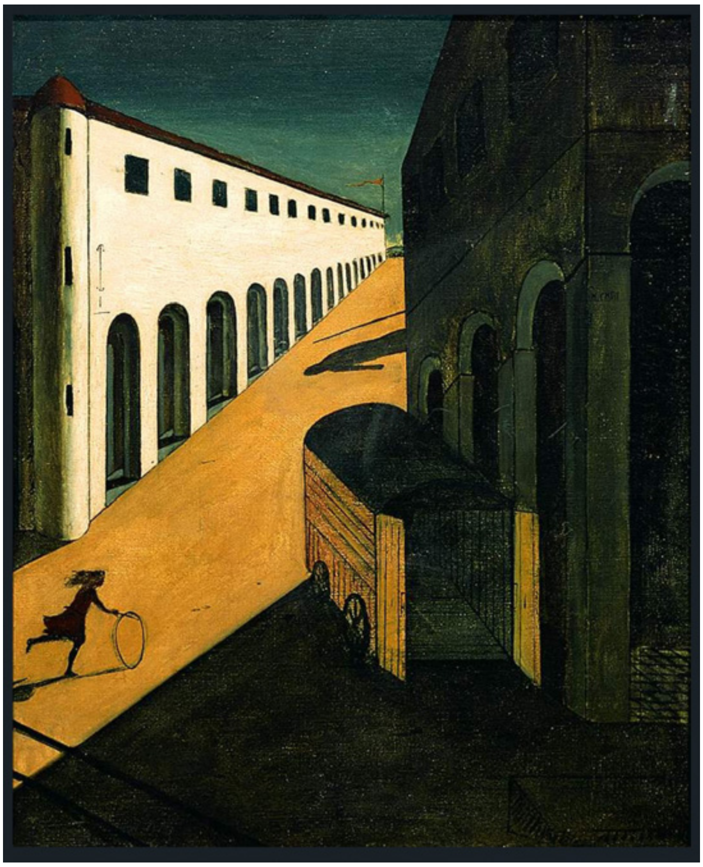

FENDI
STVDIOS



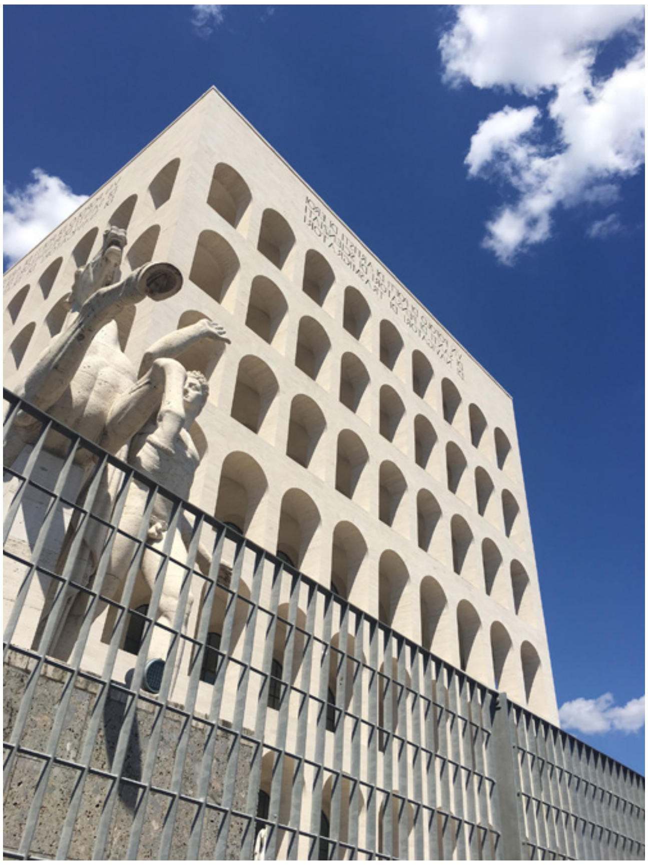
vaults on the opposite side
of EUR was not restored.
time was present Ⓛ



WHAT A SURPRISE!
The vaults where hidden
behind the rational surface.
Fully restored! ~timeless~



How could I describe this???
It felt like being inside a
metaphysical painting.
Like this one by Giorgio de Chirico

where can I go?
Is the horse and the naked man
trying to escape?!!...