Collage and Photomontage in 1930s:
Piero Bottoni's Architectural Designs

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Abstract

By the end of 1920s, photomontage was adopted throughout Fascist Italy first as a tool for stylistic and fashion criticism, then as a teaching and exhibition device, and lastly in the practice of architectural visualization. While most of architects used it only as an occasional tool to communicate the entries for the major competitions called by the regime, others such as Giuseppe Terragni and Piero Bottoni adopted photomontage as an innovative tool for their enquiries and critical activity as well as a field of mutual exchange and influence. The former used it as a medium to integrate Fascist values into rationalist architecture, while the latter adopted it to evoke figurative references from the cinema – such as the very idea of the cameo – that were useful to visually negotiate the project space and take distance from the regime at the same time. Despite the importance the Futurism and its photographic works had had in the formation of Fascist ideals, around 1936 photomontage began to be considered as a subversive activity close to communism. This article focuses on the use of photomontage in Bottoni's design representation – particularly of human figures and other details in perspective views – in connection with both its figurative and political agency.

Keywords: collage, photomontage, Rationalist Architecture, design communication, Piero Bottoni, Giuseppe Terragni.

Photography in architectural drawing

The early attempts to use photography in the representation of an architectural project dates back to the beginning of the 20th century (Nerdinger 1986). In 1910 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe had inserted photographic clippings of his maquette for the monument to Bismarck in some photographs of the hill it had been planned for, in order to anticipate its visual effect.[1] Within a few years, many of the collages and photomontages of both Dadaists and artists such as Paul Citroën, Podsadecki, El Lissitsky and André Verlon (Taylor 2004, 189) focused on the image of the contemporary city while some architectural competitions began to request explicitly photomontages (Lepick 2001, 324).

De Stijl's artists experimented photographic collage even by contaminating the canonical architectural representation. In 1924, while still working at Jan Wils's studio in Voorburg, Cornelis

Van Eesteren was invited by Theo Van Doesburg to collaborate in a project for a gallery of shops with cafes and restaurants on Laan van Meerdervoort in The Hague. Although Hendrik Petrus Berlage and the other jurors ignored the proposal entry under the motto *Simultanéité*, the innovative perspective deserves attention (fig.1).

Fig. 1. C. Van Eesteren (Van Doesburg color advisor), *Design for a shopping gallery with a restaurant on Laan van Meerdervoort*, The Hague, 1924.

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[1] According to Martin Stierli (2011), Mies van der Rohe's celebrated photo-montages for the various designs of the Friedrichstrasse skyscraper of 1921, which he completed graphically in order to obtain less realistic images but with a strong emotional impact, are instead hybrids useful to promote himself in publications and exhibitions and to develop an architecture in terms of collage and film montage.

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It shows a human figure cut out from a newspaper and glued onto a traditional ink line rendering. First of all, it is quite rare to find human figures in De Stijl's architectural drawings. Moreover, although the figure is correctly placed with respect to the perspective geometric horizon, it seems to walk towards the observer and to get out of the drawing, almost disregarding the architectural context. Generally, in architectural designs human figures serve as an optical reference to measure space, to suggest proportional relationships or incommensurable qualities, and to illustrate narratively the instructions for the use of space and architectural components (Colonnese 2016). Here the contrast between the drawn lines and the figure, as well as between the neoplastic colorful surfaces and the photographic black-and-white figure, destabilizes the canons of architectural representation and introduces inconsistencies and tactile values that implicitly require the readers to "justify" what they are seeing. The general meaning of the view is also articulated by the fact that the figure pictures the Greek ruler Constantine, previously exiled to Italy and deceased the year before in Palermo (Bouman and Mousavi 2012). In addition to carrying out the usual role of optical reference of the design spaces, the photographic figure reveals the task of transmitting additional meanings, not least that of a wider revaluation of the many levels of interpretation of the design representation and communication.

Architectural photomontage in the fascist Italy

In Italy, the photomontage was accepted in the artistic and political sphere at the end of 1920s (Baltzer 2013), in a period of lively debate stimulated by the Fascist regime's request for the self-representation and by the diatribes between Rationalists and Traditionalists. In those years Rome, where "architecture is made and disposed of much more than elsewhere," (Sarfatti 1925, 238) was offering young architects the opportunity of entering the productive world through direct relationships with the political establishment. On the contrary, Milan was expressing "a vitality of unparalleled research, gathering more voices and giving space to multiple experiences," (Ciucci 1989, 76) in an atmosphere of great participation and collaboration.

In this context, the camera gradually turned from an instrument of objective investigation to an expressive tool, able to valorize not only the works but also their architects. Collaborations between architects and photographers arose while sometimes architects themselves became photographers and introduced photography in their project presentation strategy. "Pagano's photos were undoubtedly the first attempt to use the technical means with an interpretative intentionality and they have certainly influenced profoundly the new way of seeing the architecture of the whole generation of professionals grown up leafing through *Casabella*" (De Seta 1998, 182). Through the pages of *Domus,* Gio Ponti promoted the diffusion of new assembly criteria and graphic treatment in picturing ancient art (Catalano 2014) and stressed how the independence of the photographic view could reveal unprecedented aspect of things (Ponti 1932).

Starting from 1928, Pietro Maria Bardi began his experiments with the critical potential of photomontage, by comparing the architectures of young authors, such as Giuseppe Pagano and Giuseppe Terragni, with historical and eclectic buildings, often with caustic results.[2] In the alternation of meetings, exhibitions and collaborations between the newer Roman architects and the Milan Group 7 members – first merging in MIAR (Movimento Italiano per l'Architettura Razionale) and then in RAMI (Raggruppamento Architetti Moderni Italiani) – the exponents of the Rationalist fringe conquered the partial trust of the institutions. In the 1932 Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, architects-photographers like Pagano and graphic designers like Marcello Nizzoli could work alongside young architects such as Terragni and Adalberto Libera, demonstrating the communicative potential of photographic collages. These experiences, deeply rooted in the Futurist tradition (Lista 1981), aspired to experiment spatially the figurative potentialities of European Rationalism and to promote it to Mussolini as the most authentic and accredited language of the Fascist revolution (Ghirardo 1980).

The diffusion of photomontage in museums, exhibitions and ephemeral architectures built in

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[2] Bardi's intolerance for the "in style" architecture promoted by Marcello Piacentini or Armando Brasini reached its peak in the so-called *Tavolo degli Orrori* at the Second Exhibition of Rational Architecture of 1931.

the many opportunities offered by both the regime and other cultural institutions, is indirectly demonstrated by the critical words of Marcello Piacentini, the most influential architect of the Regime. As a member of the board of directors at the Milan Triennale in view of the 6th edition of the exhibition, he condemned "the photomontage system widely used in the 5th Triennale" (Savorra 2005, 120). He instead proposed a greater attention to the "development of models accompanied by clear technical elements with a prevalence of graphic materials on the photographic ones" (Savorra 2005, 120).

Roman competitions

The season of the great Roman competitions oriented also Milan-based architects' attention to the capital (Cimbolli Spagnesi 2007). The programs of most of these competitions requested for buildings with a strong rhetorical accent in order to respond to the regime's need to promote its fictive descent from the Roman Empire. Although many of the architects involved in these public works were also painters, photographers or cartoonists, being still inspired by Gustavo Giovannoni's (1907; 1916) concept of "integral architect", they generally presented entries elaborated with painters and sculptors. From the 1934 competition for the Palazzo del Littorio in Via dell'Impero to the five permanent monumental buildings of E42 / EUR between 1937 and 1939, many of the participating architects adopted collage-based techniques, generally to integrate the pictures after their models.
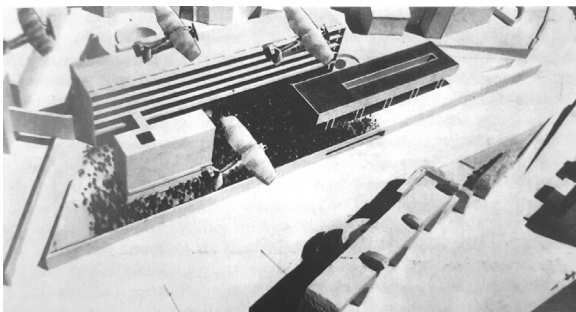

Fig. 2. L. Figini, G. Pollini, *Photomontage with the model of the Palazzo del Littorio,* 1934.

For example, in the first degree of the competition for the Palazzo del Littorio, the group guided by Terragni added photographic inserts of the crowd praising Mussolini in the pictures taken after their architectural model, while Luigi Figini and Gino Pollini added pictures of airplanes cut out of the photographs of the inauguration day of the new-town Sabaudia (fig.2).

Although Roman architects were more involved in traditional graphic techniques, the young Ludovico Quaroni, Francesco Fariello and Saverio Muratori used photomontages to render the project for the Pretura di Roma in 1936. Together with Luigi Moretti, they also took part in the design of the Piazza Imperiale at E42 and their perspective views include not only photographed figures but also photographic fragments of Gian Lorenzo Bernini's colonnade of S. Peter, although with a simplified base (fig.3).

Fig. 3. F. Fariello, L. Moretti, S. Muratori, L. Quaroni, *Photomontage of the Piazza Imperiale at E42*, 1938-39.

Adalberto Libera, who was also a painter like Figini and Terragni, occasionally adopted the collage, too. He pasted a photographed statue on the pencil rendering of the project for the Auditorium of Rome (1934). The photographed woman on the perspective view of his Palazzo dei Ricevimenti at E42 may instead be interpreted as the mark of his surrender to the ineluctable columns imposed by Marcello Piacentini (Ciucci 1989, 195-196).

The use of photographic materials proposed by Terragni in the representation and construction of the Casa del Fascio in Como (1932-36) would deserve a separate article. Before the building was even finished, Terragni had involved Bardi and Nizzoli in the preparation of a double issue of *Quadrante*, a magazine directed by Massimo Bontempelli and close to the positions of Italian rationalists. The issue is

full of "photographs and photomontages because the visibility of his ideas was most important to him" (Forster 1996, 118). The building itself was somehow "contaminated" by photography (fig.4).
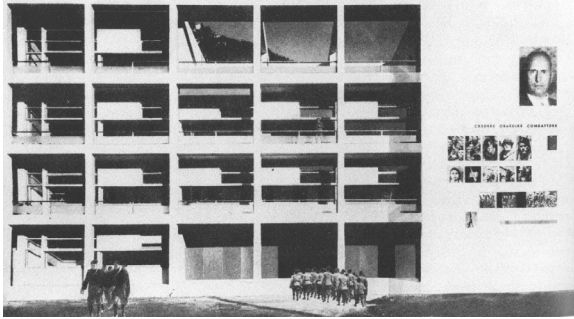

Fig. 4. M. Nizzoli, G. Terragni, *Photomontage of the facade of the Casa del Fascio at Como*, 1936.

Terragni had commissioned Nizzoli to design photomechanical panels on the façade (Casero 2010) and photographic installations to integrate the abstract decorations of the artist Mario Radice, who had been preferred to the faithful and figurative painter Mario Sironi. In the meantime, part of the façade was re-designed as a screen for projections of propagandistic movies.

In this building, Terragni had conceived – a unique case among the rationalist buildings of those years – the decoration not as a figurative counterpoint but as a sensitive and chromatic emanation of the architectural structure and its ideological contents, capable of performing "an effective and immediate pedagogical and propagandistic function" (Poretti 1996, 408). This choice allowed architecture to be an expression of the fundamental concepts of Fascism intended as a "transparent house" (Storchi 2007) as well decoration to be its media complement. The building would have welcomed texts, symbols and photographic pictures of the regime, even that of its leader in a twice-than-real scale in the Sala del Direttorio,[3] exhibiting its nature of "reproduction of reproduction".[4] Such an iconographic apparatus appeared to be

excessively nonconformist even to Terragni's friends of *Quadrante*, who perhaps did not understand the implicit consistency of his conception. Through the contribution of collage, photomontage and cinema, Terragni was actually pursuing a rational architecture that could favor a new synthesis of the arts. Such a synthesis was no longer to be measured on the individual and on traditional art inspired to classical canons but on the crowd and on popular media associated to a monument that mathematically and metaphorically embodied the foundations of the new Fascist ideology.

Piero Bottoni

Piero Bottoni (1903-1973), whose archive (APB) is today preserved at the Milan Politecnico, is one of the most investigative and dynamic architects in Milan during the Fascist decades. For example, his *Cromatismi Architettonici* presented in Monza, Zurich and Rome, at the First Italian Exhibition of Rational Architecture allowed him to have an epistolary relationship with Le Corbusier in 1927 (Colonnese 2017). He supported a rationalist renewal through his activity of interior designer by applying scientific methods of functional organization of space inspired by "Taylorist and Fordist dictates to the domestic sphere" but always aimed at a "humanization of the domestic landscape" (Consonni, Meneghetti and Tonon 1990, 60-61). Sigfried Giedion (1933), who had grasped the scientific and innovative character of Bottoni's research, urged him to participate in the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM). A few months later, Bottoni was in La Sarraz, for the first congress and later became an active member of CIAM, together with Pollini and, to a lesser extent, Terragni. He was a promoter of the most advanced European ideas by both contributing to the journal *Rassegna dell'Architettura* and organizing exhibitions and conferences. Cruising from Marseilles to Athens in the 4th CIAM, he could personally talk not only with Le Corbusier, Pollini, Bardi, and Terragni, but also with Cornelis Van Eesteren, who was to became one of his most sincere friends, and László Moholy-Nagy, who was responsible for the filming of a documentary on the conference. In 1934 Bottoni and Pollini finally accomplished to invite Le Corbusier for a series of conferences in Rome and Milan: in those years, Bottoni and the Milan Rationalists still believed "that rational architecture could interpret the revolution of

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[3] "The larger [wall] bears the portrait of the Duce, twice the size of the real, photo-mechanically engraved on a marble slab. The plate is inserted in a plastic work painted in fresco whose formal value is in relationship with the effigy. (...) The symbol of the Littorio and the words of the Duce participate in the composition" (Radice 1936, 33).

[4] "Every time [in the Casa del Fascio] some 'icons' appear (...) they bear the mark of reproduction: they are dithered images whose large grain betrays their origin as newspapers illustration, unmasking them as reproductions of reproductions" (Forster 1996, 123).

which Fascism was believed to be a conveyer in the social and political field" (Tonon 1983, 34).

Even before graduating, Bottoni attended the figure courses at the Academy of Fine Arts practicing as a painter and sculptor (Meneghetti 1983, 23). Looking for a key to a new synthesis of the arts, he also saw it in the new media, such as photography and cinema, devoting himself to making short films and experimental design sets.[5] On the other hand, the technology of sound synchronized with images was transforming cinema "into the most important entertainment and indoctrination instrument" (Becker 2008, 13) of 1930s.

Around 1933, a mutation is perceived in the way he used to present his projects. He became manifestly inspired by Le Corbusier's formal and visual repertoire[6] and began to use photographic montages. On the one hand, Bottoni inserted drawn perspectives in pictures of the site, such as the neoplastic-inspired palace in Piazza Fiume in Milan (1934, with G. Prearo); on the other, he pasted photographic pieces on his pencil and pastels sections and perspective views. For example, in the Salonit pavilion project at the 1934 Fair in Belgrade, Bottoni enriched the wire-frame perspective view with a number of photographic complements dealing with human figures, cars, flags, advertising wallpapers. They are also used to demonstrate the use of the pipes designed as a display structure, even if they unavoidably reveal a certain inconsistency with the general perspective structure.

Collage and montage in the presentation panels for the competitions

The success of the Mostra dell'Urbanistica as well the 6th Triennale in 1936, in which Bottoni also involved Bruno Munari to elaborate diorama and photomontages, confirmed the importance of photography as both an ally for architectural representation and to add extra-architectural meanings to drawings.

Photomontages were developed to describe the guidelines and interventions of the Plan for the Conca del Breuil as part of the Valle d'Aosta regulatory plan (1936-37), studied by Bottoni with Lodovico Belgiojoso.
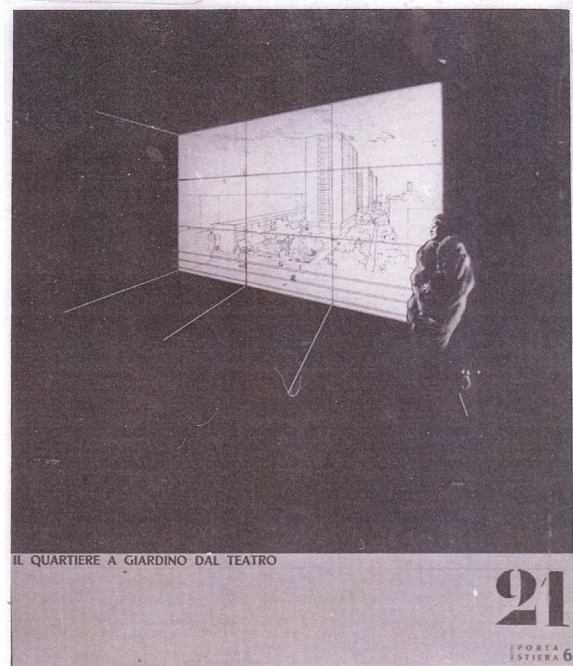

Fig. 5. P. Bottoni, N. Bertocchi, A.M. Degli Innocenti, G.L. Giordani, A. Legnani, M. Piacentini, A. Pini, M. Pucci, G. Rabbi, G. Ramponi, A. Susini, A. Vitellozzi, *Design of via Roma in Bologna, second solution*, 1937-38.

Photographic figures crowd most of the designs Bottoni produced in those years. In the second phase of the competition for the via Roma district in Bologna, Bottoni was asked to merge his group with the other winning groups under the supervision of Marcello Piacentini, the most active mediator between the architectural movements and the Fascist institutions.[7] The pencil and graphite views show the design buildings as masses, without the windows holes – whose vertical traces in pencil are visible, indeed – but with chiaroscuro and strong shadings. This treatment transforms the project into "an ambiguous set design (…) in which the Fascism mystic could be recognized – beyond the intentions of the designers" (Consonni 2003, 18). The photographic figures seem to nurture

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[5] Bottoni's passion for cinema already surfaced in the article *Cinema, mode e speranze, 1927* he wrote together with Antonello Gerbi (Gerbi and Bottoni 1927). In 1936, he presented proposals to create a cinematic fantastic environment through "the inversion from positive to negative of either the background or the foreground character" (Consonni, Meneghetti and Tonon 1990, 55) at the Mostra Internazionale di Cinematografia Turistica e Scientifica e di Scenografia Cinematografica of Como.

[6] The axonometric view of the expansion designed in 1935 for Villa Cicogna in Bergamo looks like an homage to the Swiss master. Milan, APB op. 115.

[7] With respect to the first phase of competition (1936, with N. Bertocchi, L. Giordani, A. Legnani, M. Pucci, and G. Ramponi), in the second phase members from two other ex-equo winner groups were added (A.M. Degli Innocenti and the group composed of A. Pini, G. Rabbi, A. Susini e A. Vitellozzi), and overall, M. Piacentini. Milan, APB op. 158.2

this choice, appearing as models posing for photos or films, superimposed on the edge of perspective and "looking at the camera", like Van Eesteren and Van Doesburg's view mentioned before. While the abstraction of the urban rendering seems to evoke De Chirico's metaphysical places, the inventive panel 21 seems to confirm the prominence of the cinematic reference (fig. 5).

This shows a seducing picture of Marlene Dietrich dressed in fur that mediates the perspective bird's eye view of the garden-housing as seen from a theater looking upon it, through an hypothetical window simply made with a black cardboard passe-partout.

Figurative inspirations also emerge in the perspective photomontage of Piazza Giovinezza / Mercanti, the most intimate part of the competition entry for the rearrangement of Piazza del Duomo in Milan.[8] Here the design elevation in the background is almost obscured by the plastic group of four men in the foreground that captures all of the observer's attention (fig. 6).

Fig. 6. P. Bottoni, G.L. Giordani, M. Pucci, *Design of Piazza del Duomo in Milan*, 1937

It is interesting to note that Bottoni himself can be recognized among them. Since the Renaissance painting tradition, artists have occasionally reproduced themselves in their own

works, but this case seems more a direct reference to the so-called cameo in the movies, as practiced, for example, by Alfred Hitchcock in his movies since 1927.

Bottoni and Terragni were good friends. They had designed together (and won) in 1934 the competition for the Aosta's regulatory plan, largely illustrated with photomontages. In 1937 they assembled a group together with Lingeri, Mucchi and Pucci to compete in the contest for the new Milan Trade Fair. The large perspective views of the main entrance (fig.7) show a dilated and rarefied space, delimited by flagpoles, vertical grids, perforated passageways and Corbusieresque trees. They also show an unusual coexistence of drawn and photographic elements which can be attributed precisely to the overlap between Terragni – drawing in pencil and chiaroscuro – and Bottoni – mixing ink and collage.
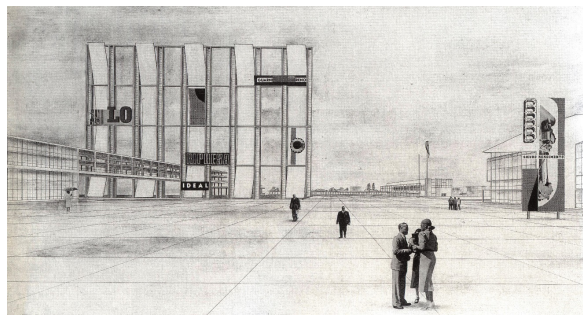

Fig. 7. P. Bottoni, P. Lingeri, G. Mucchi, M. Pucci, G. Terragni, *Design of the new Trade Fair in Milan*, 1937-38

His colorful photographic fragments literally complete the views attributed to Terragni (Consonni and Tonon 2006, 78-93) with people, vehicles, signs and advertising. Associated with the type of structures designed and the exhibition theme, these collages suggest an avant-garde visual value. They also evoke the ephemeral and iridescent atmospheres of stands and pavilions, whose "fresh advertising architecture" were legitimized by Pagano (1937, 110) who tolerated "the use of exceptional solutions" only for exhibition and aulic buildings. Even the perspective view of Terragni's restaurant for 10,000 people is dotted with groups of photographic human figures. They are supposed to manifest a sort of architectural promenade but they happen to alter the correct perception of the structure, being often oversized if compared to the representation scale (fig.8).

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[8] September 1937, with L. Giordani and M. Pucci. Milan, APB op. 152.

Fig. 8. G. Terragni (attributed to), *Perspective view of the restaurant for 10,000 people at the new Trade Fair in Milan*, 1937-38

Bottoni and Terragni's mutual respect and constant attendance over the years also promoted an exchange of suggestions and solutions, whose effects also emerge in the innovative and unrhetorical project the former proposed for the Armed Forces buildings at E42.[9] In general, the Neoplastic-inspired asymmetric plan of this complex seems to have been developed directly after Mario Radice's abstract visual studies for the interiors of the Casa del Fascio. In particular, the volumetric project looks like a magnified part of the life-size wooden model that had "convinced" Terragni of the effectiveness of the abstract decoration (Caramel 1968). Apart from the equestrian statue and the bas-relief semi-hidden by the glazed and decorated grid delimiting the Hall of the Italian War Glories, all of representative tasks are entrusted to the space enclosed by the naked architectural surfaces and boxes. Even the columns are here reduced to thin pilotis. Among the few elements afforded to the regime's expectations, few photographic figures of soldiers marching in sections and perspectives (Colonnese 2018).

Considerations on the political value of architectural photomontage

The avant-gardes had proposed the photographic collage as a technique that stages an "archaeological density of the imaginary and a non-linear narrativity through the juxtaposition of fragmented images deriving from non-reconcilable origins" (Pallasmaa 2012, 50-51). It was adopted by Terragni and conducted, together with Bardi and Nizzoli, from a merely graphic and visual level to an operational and spatial one in the name of a new plastic concept based on Fascist ideology.

In contrast to Terragni, Bottoni adopted this technique in order to convey innovative cultural elements, which were eventually critical and even subversive with respect to the Fascist regime. Extending the words Polin has written on the work of Figini and Pollini, those collages "introduced almost hyper-realistic tones in the project panels, as well as constituting over the years an autonomous language, a particular form of expression capable of giving further suggestions to perspective and free sketching" (Polin 1997, 172). In particular, Bottoni's work reveals often an ironic approach to visual arts. This can be a consequence of many factors, first of all, his relationships with other artists. For example, his teacher and friend Piero Portaluppi used to draw caricature figures in his architectural renderings (Negri 2003) while the artist Vinicio Paladini was instead an anomalous communist futurist also practicing photomontages (Rifkind 2012, 32). When he was younger, Giuseppe Terragni himself used to sketch caricatures under the pseudonym of Pepin Zanzaresco (Consonni and Tonon 2004). However, Bottoni's original contribution results of pictorial and cinematic models used to provide a critical visual key. For example, the decision to place his "actors" along Via Roma in Bologna, among the scenography-looking buildings, in the phase in which Marcello Piacentini had taken over directing operations, can be interpreted as a veiled criticism of stylistic interventions in Italian historical centers. On the other hand, Falasca-Zamponi (1997, 143) pointed out that "Fascism was slow to discover the cinema as an instrument of political use despite the enormous success of the medium as a private pastime of Italians". Thus, Bottoni is supposed to have considered the cinema as a sort of oasis still spared from the interference of the regime, even if not that long.[10]

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[9] 1937, with M. Pucci, M. Mucchi and the artist Jenny Wiegman Mucchi. Milan, APB op.168

[10] The inauguration of Cinecittà in Rome in 1937 was followed, on September 1938, by the establishment of the monopoly of the Ente nazionale industrie cinematografiche (National Film Industry Agency) which caused the embargo of the American majors and encouraged the exponential growth of Italian productions (Manetti 2012).

The graceful figure of Marlene Dietrich in the project for Bologna, which is apparently admissible in a perspective view from a theater hall, also assumes a stratified meaning. On the one hand, the figure of the German star seems to mediate a glimpse of the German-style modernist city drawn behind her without shadows and materials; on the other hand, it evokes her open dissent to the Nazi activities, which had made her demand for American citizenship in March 1937. This choice probably was not only an instinctive outlet for a political situation that was getting more and more oppressive. This was also part of a strategy aiming at a visual recognition of his architectural proposals, especially in the context of public competitions, at conveying values of visual performance and contemporaneity to his project and even at creating an opportunity to empathically involve some of the committee members.

Already after Berlin *Fotomontage,* the 1931 Curt Glaser's exhibition displaying the production of the Bauhaus and John Heartfield's collages, "the Nazi regime had to recognize, reluctantly, that photomontage was forever identified with left agitation. This was the reason why Nazi propagandists, after some initial tinkering with the medium, rejected it as Bolshevik. Despite the fact that Futurism was officially accepted as a modernizing force in Fascist Italy, here too the use of photomontage declined" (Becker 2008, 13). From 1936 on, *La rivista illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* rejected also Bruno Munari's *fantasticherie*, which were eventually politically harmless. His surreal collages, being "too experimental examples of art, were evidently no more tolerable in the magazine of the National Fascist Party" (Negri 2013, 30). Photographic montages were allowed only for the harmless commercial *réclame* or as secondary accessories for the representations of architecture. Terragni, who had practiced photomontage that long, was probably contrasted by the Roman leaders also for this "eversive" representational attitude. In the end, he attracted the criticism of both his supporters and the custodians of the Fascist values and institutions, who unfortunately did not conceive of photography manipulation as virtuous as the other traditional figurative arts (Poretti 1996, 402-404).

Conclusions

In Fascist Italy, the presence of photography and its diffusion in the representation of the architectural project was largely linked to ephemeral architectural production. Especially in the early 1930s, photography marked outfits, fairs, exhibitions and competitions and found its own life reason in the seductive and aggressive visual communication intended to convey an image of order and organization to the masses.

The Milan-based architect Piero Bottoni was one of the few authors to practice photomontage and photo-collage with continuity throughout his long career. Since the late 1920s, the photographic clippings seemed to offer him:

1. a reference to the graphic collages of the European avant-gardes, of which he had directly met many of the main exponents;
2. an opportunity to present his projects with photo-realistic renderings of cinematic inspiration;
3. a component of popular realism, using the photographic elements not only as negotiators of the uses and dimensions of the designed spaces, as in the view of Terragni's restaurant, but also as cinematic vehicles of new social values.

Although Bottoni was convinced that "the battle for modern architecture" begun in 1927, had been closed in 1936 with the success of the 6th Triennale (Bottoni 1995, 286), he considered it as something distinct from the values of the Fascism, towards which he maintained a critical vision that gradually turned into a bitter disappointment.
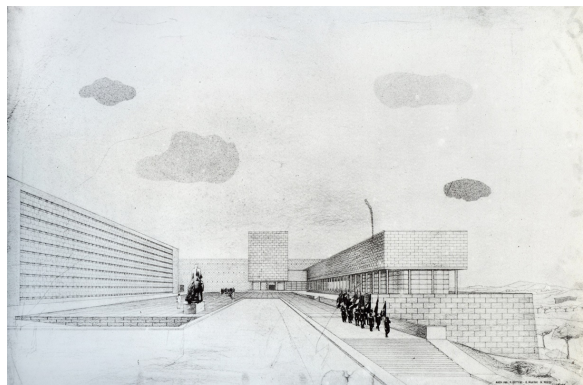

Fig. 9. P. Bottoni, G. Mucchi, M. Pucci, *Design of the Armed Forces' buildings and square at E42*, 1937-38

Being of a communist vocation and not being a member of the Fascist party, he had to renounce the voluntary assistantship at the Milan Politecnico (Consonni 2003, 38) and later he had to suffer from the effects of racial laws, which caused the persecution of his Jewish-born mother (Consonni, Meneghetti and Tonon 1990, 95). Some account regarding his personal anxiety and disappointment in the early 1940s can be found in *Casabella*. The issue 158, which Giuseppe Pagano dedicated to the "lost opportunities" of Italian architecture, included the project by Bottoni, Mucchi and Pucci for the buildings of the Armed Forces at E42.

The perspective view of the square (fig. 9) appears here purged of the silhouettes of marching soldiers, scratched away from the photograph of the panel[11]: a precocious example of post-production that can reveal Piero Bottoni's mood as well as the intrinsic political and rhetorical power of photography in architectural drawings.

[11] The cut-out photographic figure is still pasted on the original panel preserved in Milan, APB, op. 166, 29.

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