

Commemorative monuments in Rome (1870-1911): images and symbols of the new capital

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Abstract

In 1870 Rome became part of the unified kingdom of Italy, becoming from that moment the capital of the new State. The city entered a new phase of its history that historiography has called the “Terza Roma” (Third Rome), or “Roma Capitale”, to differentiate it from the “Prima Roma” (the First Rome, the Rome of the Caesars) and the “Seconda Roma” (the Second Rome, the Rome of the Popes). While the first two always had the prominence proper to their importance in the history of architecture and urban planning, the new Roma Capitale also builds its image through a complete and perfectly planned programme of actions, among which the proliferation of commemorative monuments in the public space stands out, with which to contribute to the construction of the image of modern Rome. The permanence in time of these values, and also of their transformations, appreciation and new meanings, enrich and update the relationships between art, heritage, city and communication.

Keywords: Public monument, urban landscape, Rome, image, communication.

Introduction. The configuration of modern Rome.

In September 1870, the city of Rome was the last bastion to be conquered in the process of unifying the new kingdom of Italy. On the 20th century, the *bersaglieri* of General Corona’s army opened a breach in the wall at Porta Pia and, with little resistance, put an end to the thousand-year-old papal rule of the city. Having become the capital of the new State, Rome entered a new phase of its history considered as the “Terza Roma” (the Third Rome) or “Roma Capitale”, to differentiate it from the “Prima Roma” (the First Rome, the Rome of the Caesars) and the “Seconda Roma” (the Second Rome, the Rome of the Popes) that had marked its history and its image for two millennia. While the first two phases always had a prominent role in the history of architecture and urban planning, the new Roma Capitale builds its image through a complete and perfectly planned programme of actions. Urban planning, restoration of monuments, creation of new neighbourhoods and expansion areas for housing and industry, promotion of the arts and presence of artists, proliferation of public monuments, creation and reorganization of numerous and important institutions and cultural venues, characterize a period culminating in 1911 with the celebration of the International Exhibition commemorating the 50th anniversary of the unification, adding to what had already been carried out a new plan of exhibitions, events,

advertising, public works and artistic manifestations with which to consolidate the image of a cosmopolitan and cultural city that had always been wanted for the new capital. Out of all this, we focus our analysis on the proliferation of public and monumental sculpture that is displayed in the city with the support of the new government, playing an especially relevant role in shaping the image of modern Rome.

The transformation of Rome during the forty years between the entry of the Garibaldine troops in 1870 and the Universal Exposition of 1911 is not an archetypal model of the most advanced proposals in urban planning and development that had been put into practice in the great European capitals. Rome allowed itself to become influenced by these without offering a significant model of its own. At the same time, it is, consequently, a magnificent and easily extrapolated example of a type of urban planning where uses and transformations of the city are in perfect harmony and coherence with the criteria of the time and its daily reality.

We find a Rome that became the capital of the new bourgeois liberal and secular state that, following Haussmann’s Parisian model, transferred to the city a policy of demolitions, replacement of the urban fabric, isolation of monuments and creation of zones of expansion connected to

the historic city and organized from geometric lines with a dominant nucleus around a square or a monument. But it is a Rome that, in the face of its reference model, felt incapable of synthetically organizing all these interventions, thus showing a lack of coherence and coordination. This logically lead to its failure “as the capital of a united Italy”, as pointed out by W. Braunfels (1987: 277) and made even more specific by Paolo Sica (1981: 481) by stating that the true failure of Rome laid in the inability of the central power to guide city planning in the face of very strong private interests that are at stake.

Thus, the essential feature not only of Rome but common to all of Italy was the inevitable participation and the control of private initiatives when planning in a city bound to its speculative interests. The selling of land that motivated the parcelling of the historic Roman villas gave rise to the creation of residential spaces both luxury, such as the Ludovisi neighbourhood, and workers, as is the case of Testaccio. They caused an organization of the new residential areas, previous even to the development of the Urban Plan in 1873, which, shortly after and as a consequence of these

economic pressures, was only in charge of ratifying by legal means what was already a reality on the material plane. It is from this perspective that we need to approach the two regulatory plans that were developed in the city during the last third of the 19th century, the first one in 1873 and the second in 1883, both drafted by the engineer Alessandro Viviani. The second plan was not due to any need to modify or correct the previous one, as would be logical, but rather to the need to present an official document that endorsed the granting of capital that the law of March 14 of 1881 had granted to the city specifying which projects were subject to such concession. Rome was creating its new image of the capital of the Unified State of Italy. In the urban planning, work was being done simultaneously on the regularization and alignment of streets, at the same time that the new great arteries of the modern city became opened, such as Via Nazionale or Via XX Settembre. In any possible case, both as a result of the restoration and/or transformation processes of historical buildings, as well as the search for a new architecture that established the hallmarks of the desired national style, architecture was the protagonist.

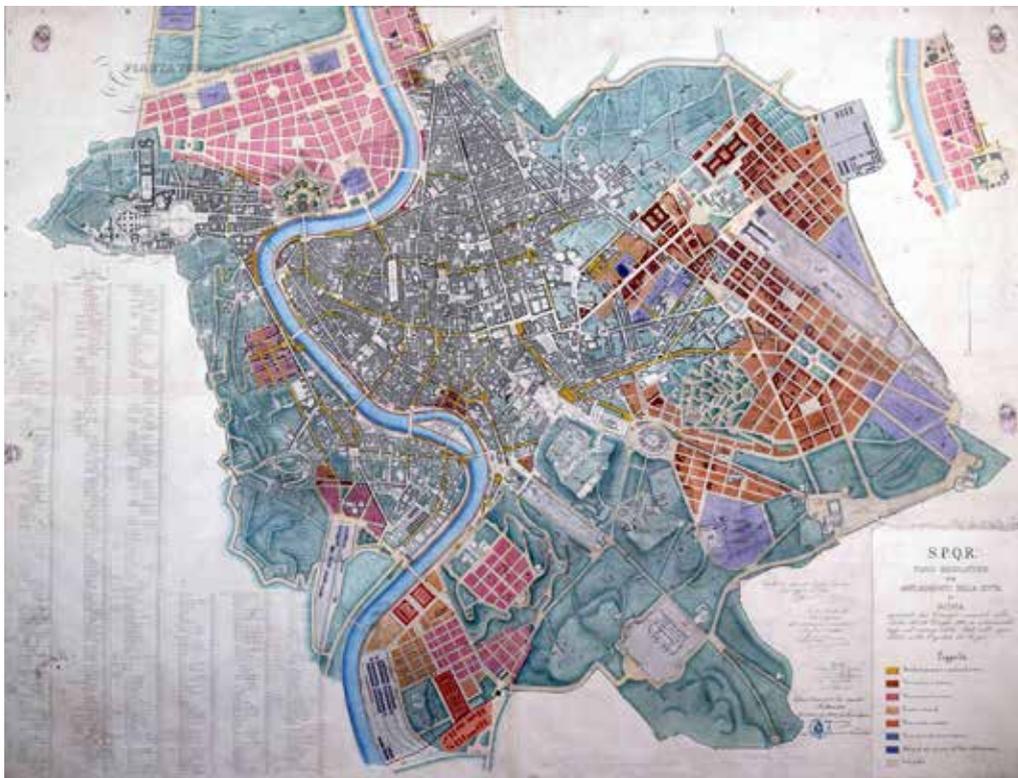


Figure 1. Piano Regolatore e di Ampliamento della città di Roma (Alessandro Viviani, 1883)
Archivio Capitolino, Biblioteca Romana, Cartella XIII, 119.

The city was resized in very few years and reached the extent that ancient Rome had occupied. In this way, on the land occupied by the historic suburban villages (Ludovisi, Medici, Albani...), new neighbourhoods with reticular planning were now designed for the upper classes (Ludovisi), the employees and officials of the new State administration (Esquilino) and the increasingly abundant working class (Testaccio) located next to the new industrial area in the city (Ostiense). On these first regulatory plans, dominated by the private initiative that took control of the land as well as the construction and the new buildings, Sant-Just proposed in 1909 a third Regulatory Plan under the government of Ernesto Nathan Rogers, with whom he tried to change this dynamic by joining to the new urban planning trends that were being developed in Europe. During the first years of the 20th century, before the Plan, the *Istituto Case Popolari* had been established, and at the same time, the so-called *Giolitti* Laws of 1904 and 1907 managed to stop the control and speculation of private companies that had conditioned previous plans. The new Sant-Just Plan promoted the development of public instruction, the housing construction policy for the popular classes, and the control of land speculation, with which the municipal initiative acquired a prominence until then unknown. Regulatory provisions were even established in terms of typologies and shapes of the different neighbourhoods, according to the needs and type of population of each one, from the apartment blocks (*fabricatti*) to the small two-storey hotels with a garden (*villini*) and the luxury dwellings with large garden areas (*giardini*).

In 1911, the International Exhibition commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Unification put end to this process that was not only truncated by the outbreak of the World War but above all by the political change that took place in the city that the same year 1914 with the entry into the government of Prospero Colonna and the subsequent return to control of the aristocracy and private real estate companies, which truncated the programme drawn up by San Just.

Public Art and the City: The monumental sculpture of the new Rome.

Although the presence of large groups of monumental sculpture in the urban space already had a historically consolidated trajectory in the processes of construction of the image of all cities, it was during the 19th century, at the dawn

of the contemporary city, when the relationship between artistic manifestations, public space and the city became more evident as a result of the proliferation of new areas both in the transformed historic centres and in the peripheries generated by the extensions. There appeared a growing need to provide new landmarks to the city, thereby also contributing to the beautification of large spaces, in which public monuments interacted with the urban planning, architecture and citizens. Originally, we are talking about memorial monuments, an exaltation of past glories; heroic tributes that, although they affect the urban landscape, are still conceived almost exclusively as monumental sculpture. It was with the arrival of modernity, with the new approaches to the avant-garde and its ideas of the city, the use and meaning with which artists, architects and designers conceived it, when a substantial change took place in this regard, which culminated decades later in the rebuilding of Europe after the Second World War. There was an awareness of the need to give character to the places on which one acted, allocating for such purpose a small percentage of the budget to public works whose purpose was to dignify, decorate or minimize the negative impact, depending on the case, of the decisions carried out on the landscape, the city or the monumental complexes. However, already in the last century, the aforementioned projects of a monumental sculpture of the 19th century have not only been designed with a remarkable dose of symbolic values, but can also be perfectly understood from the formal, aesthetic and communicative interactions that they established with the urban space, partially modifying their original values or modifying the perceptual aspect of a place, as happens in the public sculpture programme developed in the new Roma Capitale.

The work of public art is located in the urban setting configuring multiple symbolic frameworks, in which the subjects' perception and their visual experience of it converge, creating a fusion between the world of artistic representation and the facts of everyday life. The artworks have established in the urban landscape an aesthetic territory where communicative interactions are built. These are a product of the appropriation of the aesthetic object and the assumption of meanings, which generate a communicative and aesthetic dynamic in the space of the city that is interrelated to and affects the construction of the urban image. When a sculpture, a public monument, is set in a given space, the ur-

ban context is modified creating a new codification; that is, a relationship between architecture, urbanism, art and the receptor (citizen). In this sense, Claudia Londoño (2007: 43) states that, in the contemporary city, public art observes its loss of autonomy, a rupture with the logic of the monument and the spectacle; all of this in a process of aesthetic consolidation that enriches the urban landscape, allowing the mobilization of senses and strengthening expressive levels, which establish the communication between the everyday world and the determinants of a citizen policy. At the same time, this citizen policy democratizes the access to art and the appropriation of a space that needs to be assumed as an entity, as a social and cultural imaginary and as a mandatory reference for the future of citizens.

When it comes to the meaning of cities, Carlo Aymonino (1983) has already pointed out how streets and squares are recovered for expression and the city is transformed into its physiognomy, unleashing a reaction, where the artistic work splits into a multiplicity of fragments, juxtaposed or facing each other, interacting with the contradictions and convergences of a collectivity eager for sensations, drives, voids and silences. In addition to the primordial meaning of the works of art, their significant, contextual and marginal virtualities are meaningful to understand the logic of the intercommunication between the citizen, the artistic object and the space in which all of them coexist, as meeting points. The artwork is inserted in the city as a value that participates and, at the same time, modifies the architecture and the urban planning, establishing relationships between volumes and voids, lights and shadows, textures, conditioning the perception in time and space; two dimensions that permanently alter and modify it. Having turned into “places of memory”, in these spaces of meaning in the city, the aesthetic meaning, the social meaning, the communicative action and the functionality of the signifiers of the aesthetic effect converge. A work of art then determines the expressive paradigms that mobilize and construct the senses of the epoch in which it is conceived and observed. Public art thus constitutes one of the most representative signs of the semiotics of the city, as Javier Maderuelo (1994) says, positioning itself in urban spaces, assuming the variants typical of contemporary art; the presence of public art enables the citizen to approach aesthetic proposals that have been modified throughout history, to condense an artistic expression following the demands of the time.

In line with these ideas, the Roma Capitale that emerged from 1870 onwards seeks in commemorative monuments the exaltation of the values of the *Risorgimento* and the heroic representation of the new fathers of the country, both from a military, political and cultural point of view. Streets and parks, squares and monuments are filled with their names, their feats and their formal representations. Converted into symbols of the new city and linked to its architecture and public spaces, the great monuments have become myths, emblems and references of the new ideas of the State and society. The city becomes dignified and celebrates itself through them, as the politician Luigi Pianciani pointed out already in 1872:

Rome is an exceptional city. The memory of its glorious history is a halo that frames its revered name. It represents the two great civilizations of history; it is the synthesis of the greatness of the past and is the first museum in the world. It is not a simple municipality to administer; it is the largest metropolis in the ancient world that needs to be respected while creating the modern metropolis. In our city, that memory must be preserved so that future generations contemplate the cosmopolitan greatness of the ancient Romans and the Popes, in the same way that we must also leave a record of the imprint of the new Italian nation.

The new Roma Capitale creates its own symbols, which are united to those of the past –to the great landmarks of the Rome of the Caesars and the Popes– both at the architectural and sculptural level. In the first case, with a notable predominance of architecture (Colosseum, Pantheon, ruins of the Forum, baths, temples, commemorative columns, triumphal arches...) but without forgetting neither the prominence, nor the historical significance of the great bronze figure of Marco Aurelio on horseback, who had presided the Capitol Hill for centuries. In the second case, the palaces of the aristocracy and the scenographies of squares with their monumental sculptures (Navona, Trevi, Popolo ...) are added to the impressive architecture of the Vatican and the new Roman Baroque churches, which are landmarks of the great jubilees (San Carlino, Santa Agnese, San Giovanni Latrano).

The decision to turn Rome into the new capital of the kingdom of Italy meant transferring all the powers of the State to the city, with the consequent need to create a new image of power that would be reflected in its architectures, urban planning and monuments. Rome, as M. Sanfilippo (1993: 32) points out, had to house the King and his court, the Government and its ministers, the two parliamentary chambers (deputies and senators), the Army and Navy Staff, the Council of State, the courts and embassies. All of this supposes

a modification in the functional structure of the city and new architecture, together with a precise and well-planned programme of monumental sculpture that is marking the milestones of the new image of power. This proliferation of functions and bureaucracies configures a complex network of spaces and a political-financial population that rapidly swallows the great pontifical possessions and is also eager for new spaces, which it achieves through a complete expropriation plan.



Figure 2. Winged victory over the bronze quadriga that culminates the main facade of the Palace of Justice in Rome, Ettore Ximenes, 1920. (Author's photograph).

One of the first measures was the construction of large public buildings since the new Rome had to compete from the beginning with the monuments of the past. Everything was projected, necessarily, on a monumental scale, from the Ministerial headquarters to the Banks, from the Palace of Justice to the Palace of Exhibitions, from the public fountains to the Monument to the King. This is an ambitious programme that can be divided into three large groups:

- 1) Statutory elements. The most frequent and most important for the image of the city, organized into three main sections:
 - a) Equestrian statues, such as that of King Charles Albert in the Quirinal Gardens (1900), that of King Vittorio Emanuele on the Capitol (1900-1911), that of King Humberto in the Villa Borghese gardens (1911) and that of Garibaldi in the Gianicolo (1895).
 - b) Public monuments, such as those of Giordano Bruno in Campo de Fiori (Ferrari, 1889), Cola di Rienzo and Mazzini in Circo Massimo (1887) and Quintino Sella in front of the Ministry of Finance (Ferrari, 1893). Besides, there are also monuments related to the three main heroes of the fatherland: Cavour, in Prati (Bertolini, 1895); Garibaldi, in Gianicolo (Emilio Gallori, 1895), and the Victor Emmanuel II National Monument, also known as Altar of the Fatherland, which is allocated in the Piazza Venezia (Sacconi, 1885-1911).
 - c) Monumental sculpture connected to the new architecture. It has its best exponent in the set of statues of jurists that presides the façade of the new Palace of Justice together with a bronze quadriga; linked to the macro-project of G. Calderini (1888-1911), erected to close one of the main roads of the new area of Prati.
- 2) Monumental fountains, such as those in Piazza della Exedra, with the Fountain of the Naiads (Mario Rutelli, 1888) and the fountains that accompany the Vittoriano (Altar of the Fatherland in Piazza Venezia) or the Palace of Justice.
- 3) Commemorative columns and obelisks, recalling ancient typologies, such as the Monument to the *breccia* (commemorative column topped by the figure of a winged Victory) built at 1895 next to the wall fragment near Porta Pía, where the first Garibaldi *bersaglieri* entered, to commemorate precisely the 25th anniversary of the taking of the city; or the Obelisk of Dogali placed in front of the new Termini

Station in 1887, as a memory of the fallen in Eritrea, thus following the papal tradition of Rome in the 16th and 17th centuries with the proliferation of Egyptian obelisks in the squares. Not forgetting the so-called Faro del Gianicolo, the work of the sculptor Manfredi in 1911, donated by Italian emigrants in Argentina.

The programme with which to celebrate, in the “augusto recinto” of Rome, the conquests of the *Risorgimento* and to honour its protagonists, is clear and well defined from the very first moment. All participated –politicians and intellectuals, the State and the Municipality itself– creating a common front in the “noble task”. This was stated by the deputy Antonio Mordini in the session held on March 20, 1890, when he affirmed that Rome should symbolize the life of the nation, at the same time that it became the sacred place that would remind future generations, with marbles and bronzes, of the great work of the fathers of the country. A few years earlier, in 1881, Minister Crispi insisted on the importance that both the Government and the institutions were not only the guarantors of the well-being of the nation but also had the obligation to perpetuate themselves in marbles and monuments.

Economic prosperity had made the bourgeois class –the true protagonist of the process, who was proud of its political triumph– to take charge of promoting the recent history of the country through monumental interventions in which the main artists participated, looking for the new symbols of the unitary state. The problem (a specifically figurative one), was, according to Gianna Piantoni, finding in a “monument” the balance between the possibilities of representation of the heroic realism characteristic of the years 1850-1860, and the need for historical legitimation of the ideals of the present in a repertoire of symbols already legitimized by tradition. When Rome assumed the role of capital, it also assumed the need to transform itself into the ideal and political centre of the new State, and this was something that also needed to be reflected in the public sculpture programme, from the very choice of the place or the concession of the relevant land for the construction of a monument. The evocative and ideological meaning of the places is prioritized, as is the case of the Gianicolo, where to raise the monument to Garibaldi; or simply the meaning related to a position, as is the case of the Monument to Quintino Sella just in front of the Ministry of Finance on Via XX Settembre.

One of the most significant examples can be found in the design of the new monumental access to the city, the current Republic Square, back in the days called Piazza delle Terme and later Piazza della Esedra, which occupies part of the ancient baths of Diocleziano. Already before 1870, this access had been the object of attention of De Merode during the pontificate of Pius IX, but it was after the unification when that part of the city, sparsely populated and still poorly planned, saw the new main roads grow in its surroundings: via Nazionale, XX de Settembre and delle Terme. Obviously, a monumental reorganization of that space that had become a landmark of the new city was needed, and thus the buildings in the form of a hemicycle with arcades that surround the old exedra of Diocleziano's baths were designed, now converted into a public square with by a monumental fountain.

The architectural design of the Fountain of the Naiads was by Alessandro Guerrini, and the sculptures by Mario Rutelli. The works were carried out in two phases, between 1885 and 1914. On a granite and travertine structure, four groups of figures of nymphs, aquatic animals and monsters are arranged with a particularly dynamic and expressive treatment. A fifth central group exists too with the figure of Glaucus, the sea monster son of Poseidon, and a naiad,

clinging to a dolphin from whose mouth comes out the most spectacular stream of water in the fountain.

The square became the new backbone of the great routes that housed the headquarters of the great ministerial buildings, and also next to them, the public monuments alluding to their protagonists, as is the case of Quintino Sella in front of the Ministry of Finance, by Ettore Ferrari (1893). Proposed as a posthumous tribute to the minister, an upright figure was chosen, with the right hand on the chest and some letters on the left hand. It is made of bronze and is more than three meters high, in the attitude of a statesman, not very expressive and gestural, solemn, monumental, on a stepped stone base, accompanied by the allegorical figures of the Law and the genius of finance. The first one, a female bronze figure seated on a stone throne, holds a staff on which the owl, symbol of Minerva, rests, in allusion to Sella's scientific commitment (mining engineer). It is further flanked by a naked child who holds a book with the inscription "Finance". Everything was controlled by the commission in charge of the contest, from the attitude of the minister to the presence and meaning of the accompanying figures; and also the obligatory inscription, which was the subject of arduous debate as it emphasized more the scientific values of the person portrayed than his importance as a



Figures 3a – 3b. Piazza della Repubblica (Esedra). Rome. Overview and detail of the state of the sculptures in 2018 (Author's photograph).



Figures 4a and 4b. Monument to Quintino Sella (Ettore Ferrari, 1893) in its original location on Via XX Settembre and detail at its current location on Via Cernaia.

statesman in the new Italian state. This was in contradiction with the monument's location, since the engineer and scientist was relegated by the figure of the Minister of Finance right in front of his own headquarters. In 1926, the works on the tram caused it to be moved to the rear part of the building, facing the façade of Via Cernaia.

On the other side of the city, a new emblematic space was made available for the *Risorgimento*. The Gianicolo Promenade (*Passeggiata del Gianicolo*), with the Monument to Garibaldi and a series of public commemorative sculptures distributed around it, marked the recent memory of the unified city. On February 9, 1849, the Roman Republic had been proclaimed. Shortly after, on April 24, a section of the French army that had disembarked in Civitavecchia under the command of General Charles-Victor Oudinot came to support Pius IX to restore him to power in Rome. In June, after some initial defeats, the French received reinforcements and the small and emblematic Gianicolo Hill was heavily bombed. Stoically defended by the soldiers of Mazzini and Garibaldi, the city returned to pontifical power on July 4. The Roman Republic had barely lasted a few months. It was then, during the pontificate of Pius IX, when a series of interventions began, involving the fixing of paths and garden areas. But the works got their full dimension after the unification, taking the place as a symbol of the new

Rome. The private properties, especially the ones in the hands of the Corsini family, became of municipal control; and the complex fell within the General Plan of Urban Development of 1881-83 with the clear intention of turning the place into an environment evocative of the patriotism and heroism of its recent past. The central work of the project, located on the esplanade that the former Corsini casino occupied, was the Monument to Garibaldi.

The project went out to public tender on June 3, 1882, with an initial budget of one million lyres from the State plus private donations. The location at the Gianicolo commemorated Garibaldi's first interventions in defence of the short-lived Roman Republic against the French. The equestrian figure of Garibaldi, by Emilio Gallori, appears serene, calm, typical of the image of a hero, in a way that seeks more the essence of volumes and masses compared to the excessive realistic detail that had characterized previous examples. The architectural base, sober and monumental, incorporates four sculptural groups in bronze. That is, the allegories of Europe and America in the fronts, and two episodes of the unification in the short ones: the embarkation of Marsala and the resistance of Boiada, both with Garibaldi as the protagonist. Gallori began his work in 1886, and the monument was inaugurated on September 20, 1895, coinciding with the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the unification.

In parallel, the commemorative program was completed with an extensive program of public sculpture along the new Promenade. On July 26, 1884, the Municipal Board accepted the proposal of the Busts and Tombstones Commission to place “the busts of the patriots who stood out in the defence of the liberation of Rome” in the Promenade. Recalling classical antiquity and its long historical tradition, the hermas (pillars topped by a bust) commemorating the most outstanding defenders of the country were raised between 1885 and 1888. As a result of the work of the sculptors Giuseppe Trabacchi, Alfredo Luzi, Ricardo Grifoni, Pietro Benedettini, Raffaele Cotogni, Michele Capri, Enrico Simonetti, Antonio Illarioli, Biagio Salvatore, Giovanni Prini, Ricardo Rossi, Giovanni Cozza y Aurelio Temperoni, the busts of Luigi Masi, Gaetano Sacchi, Francesco Daverio, Luigi Ceccarini, Pietro Pietramellara, Francesco Cerroti, Giovanni Nicotera, Alessandro La Marmora, Giuseppe Avezana, Carlo Pisacane, Gustavo Modena, Mattia Montecchi, Pietro Roselli, Alessandro Gavazzi, Angelo Masi-

na, Alessandro Calandrelli, Colomba Antonietti, Ludovico Calandrelli, Luciano Manara, Goffredo Mameli, Nino Bixio, Nicola Fabrizi, Natale Del Grande, Giacomo Pagliari, Angelo Tittoni, Tommaso Salvini, Giacomo Medici, Giacinto Bruzzesi, Ugo Bassi, Luigi Bartolucci, Menotti Garibaldi, Maurizio Quadrio, Quirico Filopanti, Carlo Bontemps, Carlo Mayr, Achille Sacchi and Filippo Zamboni started to be arranged along the Promenade, until placing there the 84 ones currently preserved. The commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Unification of Italy, in 2011, contributed to the restoration of a notably damaged set in some of its elements. And nowadays, works on the base of the Monument to Garibaldi and the bronze sculptural groups in the surrounding are being continued.

The promenade is opened to the old city creating a new route full of symbols and images of the *Terza Roma*, which was completely becoming transformed in a fight against the weight of tradition and the greatness of its past, between



Figure 5. Monument to Garibaldi in the Gianicolo, Rome (1886-1895).

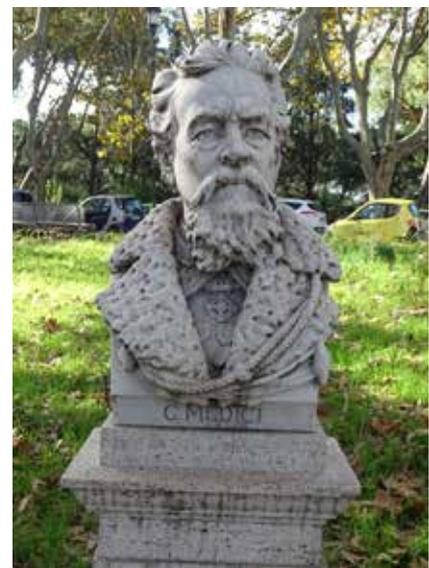
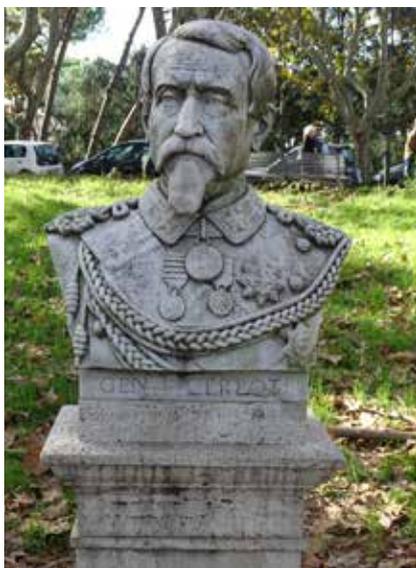


Figure 6. Gallery of busts of the heroes of the Unification. Gianicolo Promenade, Rome (1885-1888).

rupture, integration and balance. This was correctly noticed by Camilo Boito, when in 1893 he stated that when talking about Rome, it is convenient not to confuse the new with the old civilization; the present with the past. That past is like a whirlpool: it swallows everything that gets close to it or, at least, weakens it. It is impossible to fight against it. Therefore, it was convenient to place oneself with the new work wherever the old remains were lacking, or where centuries or men had already deteriorated the old grandeur so much as to have reduced it to today's measure.

Nevertheless, neither the words of Boito nor the greatness and the symbolic values of the mentioned monuments can overshadow the role and prominence of the most emblematic one: the Victor Emmanuel II National Monument. Located in Piazza Venezia, it is also known as *Vittoriano* or Altar of the Fatherland and it summarises and fusions all the ideas and values contained in the other monuments. As studied and criticized (Venturoli, 1995; Brice, Racheli et al, 1986; Brice, 1998), the Monument to Vittorio Emanuele King has been recently reviewed by modern historiography.

The colossal memorial is erected in an emblematic place, on the Capitoline Hill. In this sense, it is raised as a connection between the Rome of the Caesars, the Roman Forum (which is just behind it), the Rome of the Popes (planned along the already disappeared promenade from *Via Alessandrina* to *Corso*) and the new *Roma Capitala* (raised at both ends while transforming and destroying a significant part of the historic city centre).

After the King passed away in 1878, it was decided to raise a monument in his honour. An international competition was called in 1881 and 293 projects of enormous typological, volumetric and even economic diversity concurred on it. There were projects with a marked urban character that proposed the creation of semicircle and exedra squares, monumental triumphal arches or palatial court buildings thought to house exhibition spaces. The awarded project was the one from the French Paul Nénot, who was a pensioner at the French Academy in Rome. His project, as interesting as controversial, was an equestrian statue of the king erected in the middle of a large square enclosed by



Figure 7. Altar of the Fatherland. Victor Emmanuel II National Monument. Rome (1882-1911) (Author's photograph).



Figure 8a-d. Altar of the Fatherland. Monument to King Vittorio Emanuele. Rome (1882-1911). Details (Author's photograph).

two buildings. These recreated, at the beginning of Via Nazionale, the exedra shape of the ancient Roman baths. The project integrated monumental and classical architecture in its shapes, but with an insurmountable problem: despite meeting all the requirements of the competition, it failed in the main goal. The competition for the Altar of the Fatherland, the monument created to glorify the image of the king and the new unified Italy, had been won by a Frenchman. The situation reached such an extreme that, in defence of national values, a new contest had to be called in December 1882. This new competition even changed the location for the monument, which was no longer at the discretion of the contestants. This new location was, as said verbatim in the call for participants, “on the slope of the Capitolium, towards the Corso”.

This location change was significant as, compared to the prevailing predilection until then for prioritizing new areas of expansion, what was now occupied was an emblematic space in the old city centre. In this sense, it required reforms and modifications that affected the city image and some of its main heritage elements. The resolution of the competition was delayed because, from the 98 projects submitted, seven were selected for a new restricted competition (six by Italian artists and one by a German artist). The winning triad was integrated by the German Bruno Schmidt and the Italians Manfredo Manfredi and Giuseppe Sacconi, to whom the work was finally awarded in 1885. Sacconi proposed a large porticoed temple with an equestrian statue of the king in the centre. This temple was preceded by a monumental staircase that saved the slope of the Capitoline Hill. The main architects of Roma Capitale (Gaetano Koch, Marcelo Piacentini, Manfredo Manfredi) participated in the works under the direction of Sacconi, and these were extended in time until 1911. Besides, an outstanding cast of sculptors was included in the group of workers. They filled the bases and the stairs of the building with statues and reliefs. The colossal statue of the king, in bronze, is a work made by Enrico Chiaradia; the chariots that crown the ends of the portico, also made of bronze, were made by Paolo Bertolini and Carlo Fontana. Furthermore, Angelo Zanelli took care of the monumental reliefs located in front of the Altar, symbolizing the regions and noble cities of Italy.

Since its construction process, the monument has been criticized but also praised (it has received more criticism

than praise). There are assertions such as the one made by G. Lavini in *L'architettura Italiana* in July, 1909, qualifying it as “the most comprehensive and grandiloquent statement from the past and the present, the concentrated evocation of Italian history written in the marble and bronze of the best current artistic energies” (Alonso, 2003: 190). However, the vast majority saw a building of colossal dimension, scenographic, academic, without personality, dull, cold and scholastic, as A. Melari pointed out in *Le Construction Moderne* (Paris) on June 17, 1911: “It is the greatest monument ever built in Europe but it is not necessarily beautiful, and, from the artistic point of view, it lacks character. It is theatrical and violent with the simple and severe lines of the adjoining monuments” (Alonso, 2003: 190). Its colossal dimensions and its immaculate white colour contrast with a monumental environment in which it has not been successfully integrated. First, it not only destroyed an important part of the archaeological memory of the place (along with the Forums and the narrow paths of the historic city), but also imposed itself on the whole of the architecture of Rome through the use of different materials. In this sense, it was built using *botticino* from Brescia instead of the characteristic Roman *travertine*, that would have allowed it to integrate much better with the chromaticism and qualities of the environment. Finally, an inappropriate architectural typology based on Hellenistic models, which ignored the references of the place and the “lesson of Rome”, was chosen.

Inaugurated in 1911, coinciding with the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Unification of Italy (the Great International Exhibition in the Valle Giulia area and the inauguration of the *Passeggiata Archeologica* just behind the Monument), the *Vittoriano*, with its colossal scale, became the symbol of the transformations of Roma Capitale (Alonso, 2003: 191). Raised on the slopes of the Capitolium, it affirms continuity with the Roman tradition of political power since ancient times: the *umbilicus mundi*, the place where history and culture, politics and power are concentrated. This way, the commemorative monument acquires a symbolic and urban significance, both due to its landmark character and its civic character of identification of the city. Roma Capitale was looking for creating its own symbols and it achieved it by connecting them with the ancient symbols of the universality of the city.

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