

## **4. THE CIAC IN CONTEXT**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter bridges the chronological narrative of the last two chapters by considering the pre-history and history of the first eight years of the Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume (CIAC), which forms the case study of this dissertation. For this reason, it focuses on the SNIA Viscosa and its marketing tactics as developed through exhibitions organised between the 1930s and the early 1960s. Opened in 1951 and funded by the SNIA Viscosa to promote a cultural image of the company, the CIAC was an original institution whose agenda depended on Franco and Paolo Marinotti's personal visions rather than on established disciplines as was instead the case with traditional historical museums. The analysis of the first eight years of the CIAC forms the basis for the main argument of the dissertation – developed at length in the next chapter– that Fascism and commerce played a significant role in the emergence of the contemporary curator, by providing a different and more flexible institutional context from the traditional one offered by museums for the display of contemporary art through thematic contemporary art exhibitions.

The relationship that grew between the world of production and the art world in respect to Italian display culture has never been explored within either curatorial studies or the history of exhibitions.<sup>1</sup> Klonk, although addressing the broader topic, chooses not to analyse the Italian context, deciding that it is not relevant for the 'story of the emergence of the white cube'.<sup>2</sup> It is only thanks to historians of architecture and historians of design that the theme has been explored: Paolo Fossati, Renato De Fusco and Anty Pansera are among those who have touched upon the issue in their publications.<sup>3</sup> In addition,

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<sup>1</sup> Cimoli in her introduction to *Musei Effimeri* highlights the fundamental role played by the fair pavilions of the Milan Fair for architects such as Baldessari or the Castiglioni brothers, but ultimately her book is focused on art historical exhibitions; Anna Chiara Cimoli, *Musei effimeri. Allestimenti di mostre in Italia, 1949–1963*, Milano: Il Saggiatore, 2007; Sergio Polano (ed.) *Mostrare. L'allestimento in Italia dagli anni Venti agli anni Ottanta*, Milano: Edizioni Lybra Immagine, 1988, and Roberto Aloï (ed.), *Esposizioni, Architettura, Allestimento*, Milano: Hoepli, 1960 present different examples of designed exhibitions from both fairs and institutions in their anthologies dedicated to the twentieth century. The *Rassegna* n.10, year IV, 1982 issue dedicated to Italian exhibition design of the twentieth century comprises a series of articles that gather together art historical, commercial, propaganda and thematic exhibitions, producing a convincing departure point for further analysis of the entanglement and mutual influence of these events.

<sup>2</sup> Charlotte Klonk, *Spaces of Experience. Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009, p.6.

<sup>3</sup> Paolo Fossati, *Il Design in Italia*, Torino: Einaudi, 1962; Renato De Fusco, *Storia del Design*, Rome: GLF edizioni Laterza, 2006; Anty Pansera, *Storia del disegno industriale italiano*, Rome: Laterza, 1993; Anty Pansera, *Storia e cronaca della Triennale*, Milan: Longanesi, 1978.

historians such as Fogu or Jeffrey T. Schnapp have researched the entanglement of private or public companies (engaged in the production of materials, goods or services) and artistic production during the Fascist dictatorship, an argument first developed by Pagano.<sup>4</sup>

In chapters one and two it was argued that the thematic exhibition emerged from three elements that, in the case of Italy, burgeoned in the early 1930s: the questioning of the role of the museum, the rise of the synthesis of the arts and the acknowledgement of exhibition design as a distinct architectural discipline. The next two chapters examine and analyse further these three elements, testing their development when confronted with the world of industrial production. In order to do this, it is necessary first to trace the chronological sequence of events that led to the foundation and the activities of the CIAC.

#### 4.2 Franco Marinotti and the SNIA Viscosa

The history of the SNIA Viscosa overlapped with that of the dictatorship in 1929, when the board of the company forced its founder, Riccardo Gualino, to resign, appointing Senatore Borletti as the new President a year later.<sup>5</sup> While Gualino was a well-known antifascist, openly against the economic policy of Mussolini (especially after 1926 with the deflated Lira), Borletti was instead closely associated with the regime. It is partly thanks to this relationship that the dictatorship could easily add the production of artificial fibres to its own propaganda machine, linking it to the promotion of Fascist and nationalist values, such as Italian superiority over other European nations in respect of research and technology, economic independency, self-sufficiency in terms of raw materials and complete dominance of the natural world.

The SNIA – Società di Navigazione Italoamericana – which came into being on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1917, during the First World War, was the brainchild of Gualino who, eager to take advantage of the international economic conditions imposed by the conflict, wanted to trade in U.S. charcoal using a private fleet. From 1920, due to the international

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<sup>4</sup> Claudio Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary, Politics of History in Fascist Italy*; Jeffrey Schnapp, 'Flash Memories (Sironi on Exhibit)', in *South Central Review*, vol.21, n.1, "Politics and Aesthetics of Memory", Spring 2004, pp.22–49; Jeffrey T. Schnapp, 'The Fabric of Modern Times', in *Critical Inquiry*, vol.24, n.1, Autumn 1997, pp.191–245; Jeffrey T. Schnapp, 'The Romance of Caffeine and Aluminium', in Rana Dasgupta, Nina Möntmann, Avi Pitchon (eds.), *Companion Manifesta 7*, Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2007, pp.95–101.

<sup>5</sup> Further information on Riccardo Gualino (Biella, 1879–Firenze, 1964), entrepreneur, patron of the arts, cinema producer and antifascist can be found in Riccardo Gualino, *Frammenti di vita e pagine inedite*, Roma: Famija Piemontèisa, 1966; Roberto Gabetti, 'Riccardo Gualino e la Torino degli anni '20', in *Studi Piemontesi*, vol. XI, March 1982, pp.13-27 and Pier Francesco Gasparetto, *Sogni e soldi: vita di Riccardo Gualino*, Torino: Aragno, 2007.

transformation of the political and economic conditions of the U.S. market (with its new export restrictions), Gualino decided to abandon the charcoal trade to explore new emerging markets, such as the production of artificial fibres. Rebranded with a new name – SNIA Viscosa (standing for Società di Navigazione Industriale Applicazione Viscosa) – the company grew its profits steadily until 1925, expanding its production of rayon, an artificial fibre derived from cellulose.<sup>6</sup> Between 1925 and 1926 a crisis in the international market for artificial fibres, combined with the new economic policy promoted by Mussolini, undermined the SNIA Viscosa's business.<sup>7</sup> The first Italian company to be listed on an international stock exchange, in London in 1925, a year later the SNIA expanded its shareholdings to two foreign companies – the British textile company Courtauld's and the German Vereinigte Glanzstoff Fabriken. Despite the fact that both were major international competitors of the SNIA, Gualino's thinking was that they would help the financial situation of the company by further expanding the international market. In the meantime, the financial empire built by Gualino collapsed brutally, a fact which led the directors of the two international companies, both powerful members of the board, to force Gualino to resign from the company in 1929.<sup>8</sup> It was not just Gualino's daring (today we might say, creative) financial attitude, which tended to weave together his multiple economic interests and companies, that bothered both Courtauld's and Glanzstoff. His stance against Fascism made him an unpredictable and dangerous partner in the delicate political situation in which Italy found itself at the end of the 1920s. As mentioned earlier, this was not the case with Borletti, one of the most powerful Milanese entrepreneurs and already experienced in the field of textiles, who was an expert in international finance and business and a loyal supporter of Mussolini.

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<sup>6</sup> The basic difference between man-made fibres and artificial fibres is that the former are derived from natural elements, while the latter from chemical compositions. This distinction is crucial in respect to Fascist propaganda that would use the production of artificial fibres to create a direct link with the Italian ability to exploit the (scarce) natural resources of its territory.

<sup>7</sup> In the so-called 'Pesaro speech' of August 1926, Mussolini announced the intention to fix at ninety (quota novanta) the international exchange rate of the Lira with the British Pound as a counter-measure against the Lira's galloping inflation. This decision obviously damaged those Italian companies such as the SNIA Viscosa that exported the majority of their production abroad.

<sup>8</sup> Gualino's financial and industrial empire fell into crisis from 1926 onwards, when Mussolini promoted the devaluation of the Italian Lira, causing a drop-off in the export of Italian products. The stock market crash of October 1929 further increased the difficulties of a system based on Gualino's unwise administration of his business. In fact, as early as March 1929, Gualino's international partners asked him to resign, accusing him of embezzling the profits from production. On the crisis in Gualino's empire in respect to the SNIA Viscosa, refer to Marcella Spadoni, *Il gruppo Snia dal 1917 al 1951*, pp.67–91.

Thanks to the support of Borletti, Franco Marinotti became general director of the SNIA Viscosa in 1930.<sup>9</sup> The two had had the opportunity to collaborate since 1921, when Marinotti opened his first company, the CICE – Compagnia Industriale Commercio Estero. Borletti supported him from the very beginning of his enterprise, which was intended to facilitate and regulate the economic relationships between Italian companies and Russia, which at the time was still recovering from the aftermath of the October Revolution (1917). This was possible due to Marinotti's broad experience of Russia gained in the 1910s: he had worked both in Poland and Russia for the Filatura Cascami Seta, a small Italian textile company based in Milan. In this way, he obtained first-hand knowledge of these two countries, and was able to build a series of useful commercial and political contacts which he would later use to his advantage. The instability of the political situation in both Italy and the Soviet Union during the 1920s, together with the fact that the two countries articulated opposite political positions, meant that the fate of the CICE ultimately, and unfortunately, depended on the troubled political relationships of the leaders of these two countries. If this, on the one hand, condemned the CICE to failure at the end of the 1920s, on the other hand it would allow Marinotti to build a relationship with Mussolini and the Fascist apparatus.<sup>10</sup>

When, in 1930, Borletti took over the SNIA Viscosa, Marinotti was the ideal candidate to become the confidant and advisor of the new president in what was a very delicate phase in the life of the company, due to both the adverse economic conditions of the international artificial fibres market and the rapid transformation of Italian economic policy. Borletti and Marinotti restructured the entire company and its finances, updating and rationalising the machinery at the different plants owned by SNIA Viscosa around Italy, making redundancies, and promoting the production of Sniafiocco, a new fibre based on a mix between natural and artificial fibres (one of the company's most successful products during the 1930s). From 1931 to 1937, SNIA, CISA Viscosa and Châtillon – the three main Italian producers of artificial fibres – founded Italrayon, a consortium aiming to

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<sup>9</sup> Further information on Senatore Borletti (Milano, 1880–1939) founder of La Rinascente, the most successful Italian department store, first opened in 1917 in the centre of Milan, and a member of the Italian Senate since 1929, can be found in G. Perondi, 'Verso la costruzione di un impero finanziario. Le prime iniziative di Senatore Borletti', in Duccio Bigazzi (ed.), *Storie di imprenditori*, Il Mulino: Bologna, 1996, pp.381–413 and Alceo Riosa, 'Senatore Borletti', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Roma: Istituto Enciclopedia Italiana, fondata da G. Treccani, vol.XII, 1970, pp.794–6. On Franco Marinotti (5 June 1891–20 November 1966) please refer to: Valerio Castronovo, Anna Maria Falchero, *L'avventura di Franco Marinotti. Impresa, finanza e politica nella vita di un capitano d'industria*, Milano: Christian Marinotti Edizioni, 2008 and Marcella Spadoni, 'Francesco (Franco) Marinotti', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Roma: Istituto Enciclopedia Italiana, fondata da G. Treccani, vol. 70, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Valerio Castronovo, Anna Maria Falchero, *L'avventura di Franco Marinotti*, pp.5–80.

implement, regulate and control foreign exports of their products.<sup>11</sup> At the end of 1932, when a number of smaller producers also joined Italtayon, the SNIA held 47.27% of the shares, and so was the most powerful company in the entire consortium. Two years later, they published *Rayon: Monthly Bulletin of Artificial Fibres*, a specialised newspaper for those working in the cartel's companies. The bulletin aimed also to influence the *Ente Nazionale della Moda* (an institution opened in 1935, devoted to the promotion of Italian fashion) in instigating the fashion companies to use rayon and other man-made fibres for their *haute couture* dresses and garments.

In 1934, the SNIA Viscosa launched its own in-house magazine – *SNIA Viscosa i tessili nuovi* – a magazine aimed at industry workers and customers, and intended to provide information about the company's activities and advertise its products.<sup>12</sup> Historians agree that FIAT produced the first Italian in-house magazine in 1913, a practice borrowed from the Anglo-Saxon world where industrial culture was much more developed.<sup>13</sup> In-house magazines became very popular in Italy after the Second World War, with the reconstruction period and the economic boom that followed, but already in the 1930s a handful of larger companies such as the SNIA Viscosa had started to publish them. The magazine came out four times a year, and, alongside information strictly related to the company, it addressed both a female audience, at that time a growth market, and a male one.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, it promoted a series of articles dedicated to the use of man-made fibres: for example, on the market created by sports (such as skiing or swimming, which required specialised garments), prompting a new tourism-related industry both in winter and summer; on the military and colonial discourse (through the creation of ad-hoc uniforms for the Italian colonies in Africa), and on fashion conceived specifically for children. In parallel with this primary commercial strategy, aimed at boosting sales by creating synergies with the Fascist nationalistic propaganda, the house organ deployed another tactic that would emerge fully after the Second World War, when the nationalistic rhetoric related to man-made fibres had to be abandoned: namely, the relationship between man-made fibres and the history of costume, by paying particular attention to the attire depicted in tapestries, paintings and sculptures of past epochs. Various artists famous for their advertisements, such as Araca (Enzo Forlivesi), Erberto Carboni and Marcello

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<sup>11</sup> Marcella Spadoni, *Il gruppo Snia dal 1917 al 1951*, Torino: G. Giappichelli Editore, 2003, pp.113–4.

<sup>12</sup> On the history of the SNIA Viscosa in-house magazines from 1934 to 1948, please refer to Laura Reineri, *SNIA Viscosa e propaganda, grafica, allestimento e architettura*, MA thesis, Politecnico di Milano, Corso di laurea in Architettura, 2010–11.

<sup>13</sup> On the topic of in-house magazines, see Gian Luigi Falabrino, *La comunicazione d'impresa*, Milano: Carocci, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Milly Buonanno, *La donna nella stampa: giornaliste, lettrici e modelli di femminilità*, Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1978.

Dudovich, created covers for the magazine. The propaganda office of the SNIA Viscosa granted these artists complete freedom in their designs, demonstrating its willingness to avoid a single corporate image, which instead changed with every issue. In 1939 the magazine changed its title to *Itahiscosa*, in line with the new cartel created by SNIA Viscosa together with CISA and Châtillon. That same year, Borletti died and Marinotti became President of the company, a position he held until his death in 1966.<sup>15</sup> It is interesting to note that Futurist poet and founder of the movement Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, as early as 1935, in the fifth issue of the magazine, had already published his first poem in free-words dedicated to the SNIA Viscosa, titled ‘Poema chimico della luce tessuta, dopo una visita allo stabilimento di Venaria Reale della SNIA Viscosa’.<sup>16</sup>

During the 1930s, Marinotti reconfigured his relationships with the regime. In particular, in Milan, his adopted city, Marinotti fostered a greater consensus between politicians and industrialists. On 16 November 1935, while already general director of the SNIA Viscosa, he became Vice-Podestà of Milano (the Podestà being the Romanised title for the mayor of an Italian city during the *ventennio*). Due to a series of troubles within the Milanese section of the PNF, Mussolini dismantled the city council after only three years, on 18 June 1938. Two days later, Marinotti became President of the Provincial administration of Milan, in charge of overseeing the relationship between the city centre and the smaller towns in the surrounding countryside that were in a state of rapid expansion. The fact that a wealthy entrepreneur occupied such a key public position demonstrates how entangled the private and the public sectors had become during the regime. This obviously corresponded with the political, economic and social strategy of the dictatorship, which was to maintain close and friendly relationships with the wealthy sectors in society, despite publicly supporting corporatism as a ‘third way’ to a more equal society, as explained below.

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<sup>15</sup> After the war, he was suspended for a few months due to his links with Fascism, but in 1947 he was reinstated partly thanks to the influence of Courtauld’s members.

<sup>16</sup> Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, ‘Poema chimico della luce tessuta dopo una visita allo stabilimento Venaria Reale della SNIA Viscosa’ in *I tessuti nuovi, Les Textiles Nouveaux, The New Textiles, Die Neuen Textilien*, year 1-XIV, n.5, October–December, 1935, pp.2–3. The poem was later retitled by Marinetti: *Poesia simultanea della luce tessuta* and positioned in third place within the *Il poema non umano dei tecnicismi*, a collection of poems written during the 1930s and published by Marinetti in 1940 with a dedication to the SNIA Viscosa in its frontispiece. The collection is now republished in Luciano De Maria (ed.), *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Teoria e invenzione futurista*, Milano: Mondadori, 2010, pp.1139–94. Because of the order in the publication and the change in the title, commentators such as Schnapps in his article *The Fabric of Modern Time* seem to ignore not only the fact that the poem was the first written by Marinetti to celebrate a SNIA Viscosa factory but also that the collaboration between Marinetti and the SNIA Viscosa goes back to at least 1935. Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *The Fabric of Modern Times*.

### 4.3 The SNIA Viscosa and Fascist Economic Propaganda

In order to understand how and why the SNIA Viscosa became so entangled with the economic propaganda of the regime, it is necessary to quickly summarise the latter's economic stance. In the second half of the 1920s, the alternative development of the artificial fibres market coincided with the Fascists' promotion of their new economic model – corporatism, or the 'Third Way' – as opposed to those proposed by communism and capitalism. Corporatism aimed to do away with the social struggles that had overwhelmed Italy, as much as the rest of Europe, following the First World War, by creating a society organised into corporations. In an attempt to erase social conflict within society, the model united the workers, employees, managers and owners of one area of production in order to maximise the profits of their particular business. The dictatorship presented corporatism as a strategy to avoid both the confiscation of private property and the nationalisation of the economy that characterised the Soviet Union, and the social turmoil generated by class struggle (which could paralyse an entire state economy) that infected the other European liberal democracies. However, while Fascism sold its new policies to the public as a model of equality and fairness, in fact, it continued to pursue the interests of high finance sectors and of middle class entrepreneurs.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the patronising attitude toward workers and peasants typical of the Italian liberal state, so vilified by Fascism, in fact continued almost unchanged during the entire *ventennio*.<sup>18</sup>

Corporatism was the response to the crisis in parliamentary democracy put forward by Fascism, a dictatorial regime convinced of its mission to construct a new Italian state. It also provided an alternative to capitalism after the economic crisis of 1929. In overcoming class divisions and struggles, the dictatorship aimed to create a new society in which for the first time the entire population, the masses, were engaged in the process. While the previous parliamentary monarchy had fragmented and divided Italian society, Fascism aimed instead to make the individual fully responsible for his/her own role in the building of a new state, Fascist at its core. It is for this reason that Mussolini carefully infiltrated every single aspect of the life of an individual: on the one hand, by visibly transforming public spaces with monuments or major urban redevelopment plans, on the other hand, by creating a series of institutions able to control the private activities of the whole population.

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<sup>17</sup> On the relationship between Fascist corporatism and other economic systems, see Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*, London: Allen Lane, 1998, chapter one.

<sup>18</sup> There were some strikes during Fascist rule, especially during the Second World War when the conditions of the workers worsened due to the international conflict.

From 1923, an educational reform – promoted by the then Minister of Education, the philosopher Giovanni Gentile – had resulted in the creation of a special youth corps, to which everyone between the ages of 6 and 21 was expected to sign up. After that, the OND – Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro – took care of the organisation of the private time of adults. In this way, Fascism managed to impose itself onto every single moment of a person’s life.<sup>19</sup> As highlighted by historian Salvatore Lupo, the investment in education in particular emphasised the Fascist regime’s projection towards the future – an obsession already recorded in the design of exhibitions – in an attempt to instil Fascist values into the upcoming Fascist society of tomorrow.<sup>20</sup>

Alessandra Tarquini notes how the OND managed to create a ‘mass public’ by way of three different approaches: first, by colonising people’s traditional leisure time activities such as bocce, ballgames and music; second, by organising mass tourism, facilitating access to trains going to holiday resorts by lowering ticket prices; third, by sensitizing the Italian public to contemporary arts ‘with an intrinsic propagandistic value’, such as theatre, cinema (and, we could add, exhibitions).<sup>21</sup> As if this giant institutional apparatus of mass control was not enough, the regime also managed to exploit for its own purposes private companies, taking control of their production, advertisement and commercial sectors.

This, of course, happened in exchange for state support for the private sector, with some products enjoying greater success thanks to the dictatorship’s propaganda messages.<sup>22</sup> Modern materials, such as aluminium or artificial fibres, together with typical Italian products, such as cars or pasta, offered the dictatorship reasons for celebrating Italian inventiveness and its superiority in respect to other countries. If it is true that, with the

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<sup>19</sup> In 1926 the dictatorship created the Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB), which coordinated four associations dedicated to the care of young people: Balilla, Avanguardisti, Piccole Italiane, Giovani Italiani including, from 1930, Figli della Lupa. The Gruppi Universitari Fascisti (GUF), instead, gathered together college students. Alessandra Tarquini, *Storia della cultura fascista*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011, p.75. Criticised at the end of the 1920s for being unable to complete in a satisfactory way the process of Fascistization of the students, the 1923 school reform by Gentile underwent little change until Bottai, in 1939, finally promoted a new school reform outlined in his Carta della Scuola. In this document, Bottai underlines the need to overcome the idea that the aim of culture is to allow the personal growth of an individual, positioning instead political formation as the core of an institution’s mission.

<sup>20</sup> Salvatore Lupo, *Il Fascismo. La politica di un regime totalitario*, Roma: Donzelli editore, 2005, p.340.

<sup>21</sup> Alessandra Tarquini, *Storia della cultura fascista*, p.79. My translation.

<sup>22</sup> Studies on Fascism have only relatively recently explored this area and with varying fortunes. Karen Pinkus, *Bodily Regimes: Italian Advertising under Fascism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995 is one of the first studies, although problematic for the author’s sometimes too simple connections, with not enough historical evidence. Jeffrey T. Schnapp has extensively researched the relationships between Fascism and the production and distribution of particular products made of specific materials, such as aluminium, artificial fibres, tempered glass to name but a few. Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *The Romance of Caffeine and Aluminium*; Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *The Fabric of Modern Times*.



Autarchy, Fascism cemented its relationships with the private sector, it should be noted that some form of mutual collaboration was already in place from the very beginning of the dictatorship. This is because the dictatorship's entire economic policy was focused on helping to build the Fascist state. In 1925 Mussolini launched the 'Battle of Grain', in 1926 the 'Quota Novanta'; and the same year he adopted the 'Beneduce' system (named after the Minister who proposed it), a mixed economy based on the nationalisation of some private manufacturing and financial sectors otherwise at risk of bankruptcy, and on the concentration of economic power in the hands of families loyal to the regime.<sup>23</sup>

In relating the textile industry to a nationalist discourse, though, Fascism was not taking a unique position. As stressed by Jeffrey T. Schnapp, since the beginning of the industrial revolution, textile industries have proved both a battleground for North American and European countries and a 'symbolically charged place,' being the embodiment of progress and modernity.<sup>24</sup> At the Great Exhibitions, the exhibited technology from the textile industry marked the level of progress reached by a nation in respect to others. Furthermore, fabrics were associated with a range of themes varying from 'democratisation, emancipation, resistance, strength, personal hygiene,' providing a 'tie-in between efforts at collective self-fashioning and individual subject-formation.'<sup>25</sup>

What Fascism did, however, was to embed the textile industry within its mission to forge a Fascist state and a new Fascist citizen. Before appropriating the production of modern fabrics for the purposes of the autarchy's propaganda, Mussolini launched a call for the development of an appropriate Fascist style in furniture, clothing, interior decoration and soft furnishings.<sup>26</sup> The fashion and furniture industries replied to this call by intensifying their experiments with the forms and materials used for their products, paving

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<sup>23</sup> It is interesting to note that the textile sector, with the 'quota novanta' reform and the intervention of Fascism in the Italian economy, started losing a lot of the power and money it had gained in the first twenty years of the century under liberal politics, as demonstrated by the SNIA Viscosa under Gualino. Marcello de Cecco, 'Splendore e crisi del sistema Beneduce: note sulla struttura finanziaria e industriale dell'Italia dagli anni venti agli anni sessanta', in Fabrizio Barca (ed.), *Storia del capitalismo Italiano*, Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2010, p.391.

<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *The Fabric of Modern Times*, pp.196–7. Schnapp's essay starts from two Marinetti poems commissioned by SNIA Viscosa, then delves into the relationship between the company and the Fascist propaganda surrounding artificial fibres. Although indebted to Schnapp, I am here expanding the importance of Marinotti's role, barely recognised in the article, and casting further light on the artists' contributions to the situation.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.197.

<sup>26</sup> It is not by chance, then, that in 1950 Marinotti wanted to open the CIAAA devoting it to those same themes recognised by Mussolini as central for the evolution of both Italian economy and culture.

the way for the internationally recognised Italian style of two decades later.<sup>27</sup> The regime could count on the collaboration of various Italian entrepreneurs, such as Marinotti, who were keen to support the dictatorship's vision as a way to maintain a dialogue with Mussolini and so potentially exert their influence on the regime's economic policy.

In 1934, Italtayon, with the support of the government, launched a massive national campaign, reaching cities and villages across the entire country. The aim was to advertise to people with different social backgrounds the benefits of artificial fibres and their products, such as clothes and other garments.<sup>28</sup> The advertising campaign consisted of a caravan of vehicles comprising three Fiat 635 motorcars, each with a trailer, with luxurious display cases for the products, storage space for stock and an area to accommodate the staff, together with a Fiat 621P truck that could become a film studio and radio station for broadcasting songs that had been expressly written to celebrate rayon.<sup>29</sup> The caravan left Milan on 18 May 1934, reaching Rome in October, where it stopped for few months, before moving on to villages and town and city centres in the South of Italy.<sup>30</sup> Advertised as a rayon road show, 'L'autotreno delle 5000 miglia del rayon' could count on the coverage of local and national newspapers that dedicated one of their pages on a weekly basis to giving updates about the caravan's trip, reporting news related to rayon, events happening in the different cities and villages visited by the caravan (e.g. the organisation of an evening ball with rayon dresses), and publishing poems and songs dedicated to artificial fibres and composed for the occasion.

Aside from 'Italtayon', the SNIA Viscosa also promoted its products independently through two different institutions: the Milan Triennial and the Milan Fair. While in the former, artists and companies presented their most recent products, in the latter the connection with the market was more explicit. It should be noted, though, that eventually

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<sup>27</sup> On the fashion industry during the Fascist period, see Natalia Aspesi, *Il lusso e l'antarchia: Storia dell'eleganza italiana 1930-1944*, Milano: Rizzoli, 1982. In addition to the previous sources, an overview of Italian design through the twentieth century can be found in Giampiero Bosoni (ed.), *Il Modo Italiano. Design e avanguardie artistiche in Italia nel XX secolo*, exh. cat. Mart Rovereto, March-June 2007, Ginevra-Milano: Skira, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> While Jeffrey T. Schnapp in *The Fabric of Modern Times* tends to identify the regime as mainly responsible for the planning of the campaign, Marcella Spadoni highlights a more active role played by Italtayon in conceiving it. Marcella Spadoni, *Il gruppo Snia dal 1917 al 1951*, pp.114–5

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. This kind of propaganda found a possible reference in the Carri di Tespi. These consisted of a series of portable theatres (initially four) that could function variously as cinema, theatre and opera house, that used to tour Italy. Easily erected and transported, they became very popular during the Fascist era.

<sup>30</sup> To avoid entering into open competition with the Italian silk producers, the government prohibited it from stopping in some cities of the North-East of Italy and in the Centre-East. Tensions between the producers of natural fibres and the producers of artificial fibres were diffused, since both looked for Fascist support in the production and distribution of their goods. Valerio Castronovo, Anna Maria Falchero, *L'avventura di Franco Marinotti*, p.138.

the positions were not so distinct: the Triennial basically functioned as a showcase for products that customers could find in the shops of Milan, and the Milan Fair, in the 1930s, became a branch of the Fascist propaganda office, with pavilions largely designed in the discursive style that explicitly referenced mass exhibitions.<sup>31</sup> Certainly, the fact that the Triennial had an organisational committee comprising artists and architects and a set of specific themes and goals to achieve helped the institution to maintain a more clearly articulated argument in its proposals (as recounted chapters one and two).

From the fifth edition of the Triennial, SNIA Viscosa participated in the exhibitions organised there, usually with a stand on which the architect in charge of the exhibition design arranged textiles fabricated from man-made fibres. In 1933, for example, Luciano Baldessari designed the section dedicated to the *Mostra Internazionale delle Arti Decorative e Industriali* where the SNIA Viscosa had its booth, a tall vertical cylinder with textiles hanging from it. Baldessari organised the same section of the sixth Triennial edition, creating a stand with an ‘S’ shape for the SNIA Viscosa’s products (fig.59). In this edition, the company’s main contribution, however, was in supplying a grey fabric for Pagano to hang in the huge empty space left on the staircase by Sironi’s unfinished mosaic (fig.60).<sup>32</sup> In the 1940 edition, Erberto Carboni designed the Italviscosa booth, occupying a larger portion of space than in the previous Triennials (fig.61). With less international participation because of the war and with a more conservative stance due to the directors that year, Ponti and Piacentini, Carboni’s design at the 1940 Triennial confirmed the possibility of using a modernist language in Italy even when mass exhibitions abandoned aesthetic pluralism. With its panels decorated in a surrealist style, elegantly matched with tubular structures reminiscent of a rationalist approach, the stand clearly aimed to create a new vision in the visitors’ minds that would turn them into perfect customers.

If at the Milan Triennial, the SNIA Viscosa presented its products without directly referring to Fascist propaganda, things were different at the Milan Fair. This was because of the transformations that occurred in the Italian economy and, most of all, in the regime’s propagandist strategy. As mentioned in the first chapter, after 1935, following the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, the international community imposed sanctions on Italy,

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<sup>31</sup> One example being Franco Albini’s 1933 Ina pavilion, obviously influenced by the aesthetic of the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*. Installation shots reproduced in: Federico Bucci e Augusto Rossari (eds.), *I musei e gli allestimenti di Franco Albini*, Milano: Electa, 2005, pp.78–9.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Arte e moda (sesta Triennale di Milano, XX Biennale di Venezia)’, *Snia Viscosa i tessuti nuovi*, n.8, July 1936, pp.34–45.

preventing the country from importing raw materials and limiting its exports.<sup>33</sup> With the beginning of the Autarchy, the development of any style in fashion in Italy could therefore count only on national resources. It was at this moment that artificial fibres, such as rayon, started to become central to Fascist propaganda. For their special relationship to both nature and technology, artificial fibres provided the dictatorship with a product suitable on the one hand for celebrating the ability to take advantage of the ‘national/natural landscape’ despite its paucity of resources, highlighting Italian moral superiority, and on the other hand for demonstrating how the *genius Italicus* was able to conceive new technologies, materials and products, ‘transform[ing] the lack into abundance, beauty and strength.’<sup>34</sup> After 1936, the connection between the government agenda and the textile industry (with the SNIA Viscosa in the forefront) became even stronger. The regime tried to support exports – despite the international sanctions – and expand the internal market through campaigning amongst customers, but also by imposing on those Italian industries working with natural cotton and wool fibres the requirement to use their artificial counterparts. Lanital, a product obtained from casein, was one such product, although initially it was not of a very good quality. Companies paid back the regime by promoting their products within a nationalist discourse.

In 1935, the SNIA Viscosa commissioned from Faludi a new pavilion for the Milan Fair, in order to show their state-of-the-art research, machinery and products (fig.62). The fair was a strategic arena in which to promote a company – due to extensive international participation and the masses of general visitors who flocked to it to look around the most up-to-date products – thus the SNIA Viscosa wanted to present itself as cutting edge. In his early architectural projects, Faludi developed a rationalist language appreciated by his colleagues, as proved by Pagano’s invitation to participate at the *Esposizione dell’Aeronautica Italiana* with the design of the room *Mezzi di sicurezza e paracadute*. On the occasion of the Milan Fair, Faludi decided to create an impressive building of 800 square metres, topped by a rationalist tower of almost 40 metres.<sup>35</sup> Made of steel, glass, and Eraclit (a light and sound-proof material), the pavilion strikingly stood out from the other older buildings around it. The entire architecture functioned as an advertisement for the company. Not only did the tower attract the visitors’ attention from the different areas of the fair, but

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<sup>33</sup> In regard to the sanctions, it should be noted that many states such as Spain did not comply with them, and they lasted only until 1936. In any case, the regime took full advantage of them until its end, to further engender national pride and create a sense of superiority. Obviously, although with much more difficulty, the regime kept importing raw materials such as oil from other countries.

<sup>34</sup> Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *The Fabric of Modern Times*, pp.194–5.

<sup>35</sup> The same year, 1934, Faludi created another SNIA pavilion on the occasion of the International Exhibition of Brussels.

being covered in glass, it acted as a showcase for the exhibition of the company's products. Glass also constituted the façade of the main body of the building, allowing visitors to catch a glimpse of what was happening inside.

Obviously, since Paxton's Crystal Palace for the London Universal Exhibition in 1851, the use of glass had represented a common technique of communication in such exhibitions, which suggested the idea of bringing actual machinery inside the exhibition space. In this way, visitors could understand and witness the entire chain of production. Furthermore, as was often the case since the avant-garde exhibitions of the 1920s, a series of panels with photomontages helped visitors to understand the various production phases. The pavilion ended with a circular room, a 'must' after its use in both *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* and *Esposizione dell'Aeronautica Italiana*, in which visitors could appreciate the textiles produced, displayed under the watchful eye of a photograph of Mussolini.

In the following years, with the Autarchy campaign becoming more aggressive, the SNIA Viscosa pavilion at the Milan Fair increasingly supported the national narrative within which its products were inscribed. In 1936, a text on the façade exalting the independence of Italy in textile production welcomed visitors, launching Lanital as the miraculous new product invented by Italian scientists. Machines, photomontages and products filled the inside of the pavilion, delivering a precise message in support of Italy's economic independence. Finally, Faludi topped the tower with a tubular structure on which he positioned a neon sign advertising Lanital.

In 1937, alongside Lanital, the tower also sponsored Amba, the new fibre created by SNIA Viscosa, while the word 'Independence' ran along its vertical surface. For this edition the pavilion was organised following a chronological narrative recounting the production of textile fibres, with the main room divided into three sections: yesterday, today, tomorrow. The same machinery was sited in each period, the only change was the type of fibre produced on it. In the 'past' section there were only cotton and wool; in the 'today' section, a mix of artificial and natural fibres; while in the 'tomorrow' part, the machinery worked only those man-made fibres produced in Italy, highlighting the Fascist autarchic agenda. As reported in an article in *SNIA Viscosa i tessili nuovi*, the goal was to highlight how, from a 'past' economy based on the import of raw materials from which to obtain natural fibres, Italy was smoothly moving to an economy of independence thanks to

the invention of new artificial fibres that exploited national resources.<sup>36</sup> The production of the ‘present’, still clinging to the use of foreign raw materials, would be finally overcome in a ‘tomorrow’ in which only Italian produced fibres (obviously man-made) would be used by clothing manufacturers. In the circular room, surrounded by samples of artificial textiles, a Roman-style sculpture representing a Winged Victory holding a spool, witnessed the immediate response to the new Emperor-style iconography of the regime. In 1937, as discussed below, the regime organised the *Mostra del Tessile Nazionale* at the Circo Massimo in Rome, to celebrate all the national textiles produced in Italy. The following year, some of the machinery employed by the SNIA Viscosa to celebrate Lanital in its Roman pavilion (also designed by Faludi) was moved to the one at the Milan Fair. A celebration of Autarchy, this pavilion added further fuel to the usual patronising attitude towards the masses shared by Fascist entrepreneurs alike, through a series of propagandist panels in the main room; on the walls of the round room Roman-style decorations praised the contribution of workers and peasants to the company, while in the centre an oversized sculpture of a standing figure raising its arms sang the praises of Autarchy.

The pavilion of the 1939 edition was the first since 1935 not to be designed by Faludi, who had been forced to leave Italy due to the infamous Racial Laws declared in 1938 against Jewish people. Faludi was replaced by Angelo Bianchetti and Cesare Pea, two architects who had previously worked with him on a number of different exhibition designs.<sup>37</sup> In this edition, the pavilion abandoned the presentation of machinery, typical of commercial exhibitions, to employ mainly a propagandist exhibition tone. This allowed for the introduction of Torviscosa to the public, the new city funded by Marinotti to produce Italian cellulose (discussed below). Panels and photographs presented the figures through which this new SNIA Viscosa miracle was achieved, the creation of a real city in ‘320 days of work.’ This was also the last edition in which the pavilion was dedicated to the SNIA Viscosa; from 1940 it would promote ‘Italviscosa’. Both the 1940 and 1941 editions, alongside textiles in the circular rooms, presented only photographs, panels and drawings that aimed to explain ‘Italviscosa’ to the public and to further advertise Torviscosa.<sup>38</sup> Involved also in the 1942 edition of the Milan Fair, the last before it was suspended due to

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<sup>36</sup> ‘XVIII Fiera Campionaria’, in *SNIA Viscosa i tessili nuovi*, n.11, April–June 1937, p.6.

<sup>37</sup> In the early 1930s, Bianchetti worked as a trainee in Faludi’s studio and they worked together at the 1935 International Exhibition of Brussels. In the following years, both Bianchetti and Pea worked on the SNIA Viscosa pavilion at the Milan Fair together with Faludi. In 1939 they designed, also for the Milan Fair, the Chatillon pavilion and the Raion pavilion, both praised by critics for their inventiveness. In particular, the latter quoted Pagano’s spiral used in the Icaro room at the end of the *Esposizione dell’Aeronautica Italiana*.

<sup>38</sup> In 1940, Torviscosa underwent a major expansion of its plants, testifying to the success of the production of cellulose.

the war, Bianchetti and Pea had the task in 1946 of rebuilding a new pavilion, since Faludi's one was destroyed in the bombings along with the main part of the fair's site.

Given their involvement with the Milan Fair, it is no surprise that, in 1937, Faludi, Bianchetti and Pea all participated in the *Mostra del Tessile Nazionale*. The exhibition was paired with another mass exhibition, dedicated once again to textiles, which opened in Forlì in 1936. Both were aimed at boosting clothing manufacturers' confidence in the Italian textile sector and at further percolating Fascist values into the private lives of the public.<sup>39</sup> Although the exhibition presented all the national fibres produced in Italy (whether natural, artificial or synthetic), artificial fibres again played a strategic role, being the best embodiment of the myth of the Fascist state. The exhibitions displayed large photomurals, presenting scenes of peasants' life, alongside actual machinery, able to transform natural products into artificial fibres. In this way, as noted by Schnapp, the regime valued at one and the same time the nation's past (with its references to agriculture and tradition) and its future (the new machines and materials produced by Italian genius).<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, particularly in the Rome exhibition, entire sections of the production process of artificial fibres were reconstructed and presented in front of the visitors, with peasants, animals and workers actually enacting their jobs within the exhibition space.

As in the other mass exhibitions, Fascism pursued its educational mission. Thanks to fibre samples and photographic documentation, visitors could learn how Italian researchers conceived new fibres from unusual natural products such as milk (for Lanital), broom plant (for Ginestra), and hemp (for Cafioc). In Rome, the regime not only mobilised the national and specialist press, but also published stories related to the exhibition in schoolbooks. In these short tales, Mussolini was presented as a magician able to inspire Italian scientists to supersede the natural world, achieving through the production of artificial fibres something even more real than nature itself.<sup>41</sup>

Visitors to the Circo Massimo in November 1937 were greeted by a huge panel dedicated to Autarchy, reminding everyone of the goal towards which all the energies of the Italian economy were aimed. Positioned around the length of the perimeter of the

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<sup>39</sup> Regarding the Forlì exhibition and its symposium, the best resource is Federazione Nazionale dei Consorzi per la Difesa della Canapicoltura, *Le fibre tessili nazionali e dell'Impero*, Milano, 1937. Various photographs and detailed coverage of the Rome exhibition can be found in *La rivista illustrata del popolo d'Italia*, fine dicembre (end of December), 1937.

<sup>40</sup> Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *The Fabric of Modern Times*, pp.231–3.

<sup>41</sup> One of these stories is re-published by Marcella Spadoni, *Il gruppo Snia dal 1917 al 1951*, p.117.

Circo Massimo, a series of pavilions hosted different sections of the exhibition. The central pavilion, opposite the entrance, was host to Montecatini, a company producing pigments for dyeing textiles, and a catwalk for fashion shows. In its main hall, Nizzoli painted amorphous forms recalling those of Arp in a curved panel dominating the room (fig.63). He conceived the space, together with Bianchetti, to best present the Montecatini products.<sup>42</sup> On the catwalk, women modelled Italian ladieswear in an attempt to counterbalance the supremacy of French couture in the minds of Italian customers. Thus, the central pavilion summarised the two main goals of the exhibition: first, to present the achievements of Italian industry, mobilized by Mussolini's call of 1927 and by the system of autarchy, and second, to modify customers' purchasing habits by making the products of that autarchy desirable.

Among the other pavilions, one of the highlights was a display dedicated to craftsmanship and the role of the rural housewife, underlining the typical traditional and patriarchal attitude of connecting the production of textile-based crafts mainly with women. Girls from different rural areas of Italy displayed their traditional textiles and fabrics (while also themselves being on display) for the visitors' appreciation. Another highlight was the women's pavilion, illustrating activities led by Fascist women's groups. The textile industry being closely related to fashion, it should not come as a surprise that women were among the privileged visitors (both as producers and customers) to the exhibition.<sup>43</sup>

Standing out against the ruins of the Coliseum, the modernist pavilions dedicated to hemp, cotton, silk, rayon, fiocco and wool allowed for the celebration of those companies that concentrated on producing fibres of the highest quality. The wool pavilion celebrated this product and the Marzotto company, a family business founded in Valdagno (Vicenza). In its December 1937 issue, an essential part of the report of *La rivista illustrata del popolo d'Italia* presents the history of the Marzotto company, highlighting the regime's interest in paying attention to all the most important national textiles. Another section of this issue is dedicated to the SNIA Viscosa.

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<sup>42</sup> Nizzoli, together with Bianchetti and Pea, worked the year after in the ACNA pavilion at the Milan Fair. Arturo Carlo Quintavalle (ed.), *Marcello Nizzoli*, exh. cat. Milano: Electa, 1989, p.276.

<sup>43</sup> On the relationship between women and Fascism, see Victoria de Grazia, *Le donne nel regime fascista*, Venezia: Marsilio, 1993. Translated by Stefano Musso. In particular, pp.295–301 on the nationalisation of fashion.



The anonymous writer of the article on the SNIA Viscosa gives a detailed description of the company pavilion designed by Faludi: at first, visitors encountered the massive machinery used to produce Lanital, the artificial fibre obtained from casein. In order to show to the public the magic transformation of a liquid (casein being a component of milk) into a thread, the SNIA reconstructed the entire chain of production. The demonstration ended with women weaving the fibres to produce items of both male and female clothing. Another room introduced the public to the production of the 'SNIA Amba'. A room covering the range of artificial textiles welcomed visitors into the following area, showing how the company was able to provide fabrics of different types to please a range of customers from the ordinary to the more sophisticated.

The highpoint of the exhibition was the Autarchy room, again repeating the trope of the circular room from previous mass exhibitions.<sup>44</sup> In this space, the SNIA Viscosa presented on a panel the different moments of the production cycle of cellulose, in the past dependent on raw materials imported from Scandinavia. The room demonstrated how, thanks to the discoveries by the SNIA Viscosa team of researchers, cellulose was now obtained from the Italian *arundo donax* (a type of common reed) and wheat plants. A wall panel reported statistics to prove the company's support of Mussolini's campaign for Autarchy: eighteen factories created, employing 14,000 workers across different parts of Italy, the sheer numbers a testament to the support for Autarchy. Next to it, a production diagram illustrated the growing sales figures of the SNIA Viscosa, showing the success achieved in recent years. Obviously, in this consensual environment, any figures relating to the poor health conditions of textile workers dealing with artificial fibres (among the worst of the industrial sector), the shrinking number of jobs for women, and the pitiful salary levels went unreported.<sup>45</sup> By this time, a huge gulf existed between the Italian approach to discursive exhibition design and that on which it was modelled, the *Deutsche Bauausstellung*, designed by Bayer for the building unions in Berlin in 1931. After the loud claims made by statistical data, visitors finally encountered at the centre of the room a column by sculptor Leone Lodi, a shorter version of a Roman column, with spiral bas-reliefs celebrating the rise and success of the Italian nation under Mussolini. Painted on a black wall were

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<sup>44</sup> As seen in the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* and in the *Esposizione dell'Aeronautica Italiana*, analysed in chapter two, the circular room generally constituted the crowning moment of a mass exhibition, where visitors could experience a final epiphany about the purpose of the show. A cross and a spiral occupied the centre of the circular room of *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* and *Esposizione dell'Aeronautica Italiana*, both rationalist in their aesthetic; in the event of the *Mostra del Tessile Nazionale*, a roman column occupied the central spot, underlining the importance for the regime of an imperial rhetoric inspired by roman times.

<sup>45</sup> On the relationship between women and the artificial fibres industry, see Victoria de Grazia, *Le donne nel regime fascista*, pp.255-61 and on women's working conditions during the regime in general, all of chapter six.

Mussolini's words 'it is the spirit that tames and moulds matters'; this acted like a final blessing, closing the circle opened at the entrance of the pavilion.<sup>46</sup>

The same motto seemed particularly appropriate for the SNIA Viscosa's pavilion as, less than one year later, in the presence of the Duce himself, the famous city of Torviscosa was officially inaugurated. Torviscosa was the outcome of the discovery by the SNIA Viscosa team of a way to produce cellulose in Italy. Marinotti decided to buy an expanse of marshland close to the sea in Friuli Venezia-Giulia, in the north-east of Italy, between Venice and Vittorio Veneto, Marinotti's home town. He could only count on very limited economic support from the regime, as part of the Fascist programme of reclaiming land from marshes. The idea of Torviscosa (which Schnapp argues probably derived from the U.S. town of Marcus Hook, created by the DuPont Corporation in Pennsylvania in the mid-1920s) was to build a city near a specific factory, close to the natural resources from where the raw materials would come: in this case, 6,300 acres of plantations of the reed *arundo donax* around the city (fig.64).<sup>47</sup>

Marinotti managed to build the city in less than a year, and although similar to other cities founded by the Fascists, such as Aprilia or Latina, Torviscosa was at the same time built on a fairly personal scale. It was without a House of Fascio, which embodied the patronising attitude towards the masses typical of the Italian ruling class, while the Venetian architect invited to design the city was Giuseppe De Min, a minor figure, albeit a friend of Marinotti's. De Min used the rationalist style in the main square of the city, but then stuck to a typical Venetian style for most of the buildings, such as the workers' houses. Sculptures by Lodi adorned the main street, which connected the Olympic swimming pool for the workers, and Marinotti's villa, directly to the factories. A primary school dedicated to Marinotti's still-born child, Resi, a theatre, a canteen and a hall (which was available for the citizens/workers of the Torviscosa factory to use for other creative and leisure activities), all contributed to the formation of a pleasant environment. Furthermore, inhabitants knew that in the event of any other need or problem, they could count on Marinotti's support. Again the patronising nature of the relationship between worker and entrepreneur assured the former that their low salaries would in some way be compensated for by the generosity of the latter.

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<sup>46</sup> Translated from English into Italian by Schnapp in Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *The Fabric of Modern Times*, p.236. Mussolini pronounced this sentence in his speech in Bologna, on 22 October 1936. Benito Mussolini, *Scritti e discorsi dell'Impero di Benito Mussolini*, Milano: Hoepli, 1936.

<sup>47</sup> Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *The Fabric of Modern Times*, p.211

Alongside producing cellulose of high quality with local (that is, national) products, Torviscosa constituted a key location for Marinotti's business, thanks in part to the extensive hunting grounds, which he created to impress his guests (from politicians and business men to other Italian and foreign entrepreneurs). Through this recreational activity for his sophisticated guests, Marinotti created a pleasant experience and a relaxed environment where deals could be sealed and alliances strengthened. The idea of having such a facility with which to impress his visitors was evidence of Marinotti's business skills and, after the Second World War and the sudden collapse of the powerful propaganda machine created by Fascism to promote and support artificial fibres, it was probably a key factor in his conception of the CIAC.

Finally, the creation of Torviscosa, the site for state-of-the-art Italian artificial fibre production *par excellence*, occasioned Filippo Tommaso Marinetti to write his third poem dedicated to the SNIA Viscosa itself. Marinetti wrote *The Poem of Viscose Tower* in a rush after his first visit to the town and presented it to Mussolini in Torviscosa on the day of the city's inauguration, 21 September 1938. Only one year earlier, in 1937, Marinetti had visited Cesano Maderno's factories devoted to the production of Lanital, which inspired him to write the *Poem of Milk Dress*, illustrated by Munari. It is likely that the SNIA Viscosa was also the inspiration for the poem *Simultaneous Poem of Italian Fashion*, which was included together with the three poems already mentioned in his anthology *The Non-Human Poem of Technicism*, which he published in 1940 together with a series of other poems inspired by the construction of the highways, or by the port of Genoa, or by an imaginary battle in which the swastika and the *fascio* joined together to beat the enemy.<sup>48</sup>

Among the four poems, *The Poem of Milk Dress* is of the greatest interest for this research given the collaboration that it prompted (fig.65). The poem describes a journey from the coast of Africa, where Marinetti was fighting for his country, to Italy where, through advances in technology, milk could be used to produce a fibre called Lanital. In his typical free-association style, Marinetti celebrated Italian industry, il Duce and his technologically advanced armies, by comparing the flow of milk and the process of Lanital's production with the advancing flood of Italian soldiers. At the same time, Marinetti had the opportunity to evoke one of the most ancient *topoi* of Western culture,

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<sup>48</sup> *Il poema non-umano dei tecnicismi* is republished in Luciano De Maria (ed.), *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Teoria e invenzione futurista*.

that of milk as related to reproduction by recalling the role of the male in the insemination of the ovum, although in this context he prized the rise of a new technological subject.<sup>49</sup> It was the SNIA Viscosa's marketing office that commissioned and published the poem in 1937, with illustrations by Munari. Loosely following the content of the text, Munari's drawings alternate images of human organs, such as lungs or a stomach, with photos of war scenes (tanks, troops, bullets, an air squadron in formation) and images related to the making of Lanital (from a peasant milking a cow to some of the machines used for producing the fibres). Munari interleaved the pages of the book with acetates and also designed its cover, drawing the profile of a cow's head, intersected by a photograph of an industrial plant and a floating piece of Lanital cloth to give depth to the composition.<sup>50</sup> The violence evoked in all of Marinetti's poems would have quickly found an answer in the Second World War that, according to Benjamin, constituted the only possible outcome of a Fascist economy.<sup>51</sup>

The poem dedicated to Torviscosa, instead, sings of the creation of cellulose in epic form, from the *arunda donax* trees in the field, compared to young girls enjoying their lives, to their ensuing harvest and the various phases in the production of cellulose. Through poetry, Marinetti praised machines and the achievements of Mussolini and Fascism. A narrative structure very similar in its metaphors, although with a completely different tone and without any Fascist reference, can be found in the short movie realised in 1949 by Michelangelo Antonioni, *Sette canne un vestito*, [Seven reeds, one dress], dedicated to celebrating the reopening of Torviscosa's plants after the war and the city's achievements. In this film, recalling in its title the slogan often used in the 1930s in advertisements by both SNIA Viscosa and Italviscosa which asserted that with seven reeds you can produce a dress, the voiceover recounts a fable to the audience: the story of a castle, of the factories of the city that resemble it, where a miracle happens, namely the transformation of the *arunda donax* into cellulose paper.<sup>52</sup> Antonioni began his movie with an aerial view of the factories, showing both the industrial district and its immediate relationship to the surrounding countryside, then switches immediately to the fields of *arunda donax* and the threshing of the trees. The whole film seems to work against the text of the voiceover,

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<sup>49</sup> As commented by Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *The Fabric of Modern Times*, pp.236–9.

<sup>50</sup> Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Il poema del vestito di latte*, Milano: Ufficio Propaganda della Snia Viscosa, 1937, republished in Miroslava Hájek, Luca Zaffarano (eds.), *Bruno Munari: My Futurist Past*, exh.cat. Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, London, Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2012, pp.192–5.

<sup>51</sup> Walter Benjamin, *L'opera d'arte nell'epoca della sua riproducibilità tecnica*, Torino: Einaudi, 2000, p.47. Translated in Italian by Enrico Filippini.

<sup>52</sup> Michelangelo Antonioni, *Sette canne un vestito*, 1949, [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2omuu\\_sette-canne-un-vestito-1949\\_shortfilms](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2omuu_sette-canne-un-vestito-1949_shortfilms) (last accessed 20 September 2013).

being shot in a quite direct and violent way, both in its content and the techniques used (black and white in stark contrast, and an insistent focus on all the different machines and their merciless destruction of the reeds). At a time, when Italian directors were still involved with Neo-realism, Antonioni was interested in capturing a tension between the activity of the machinery and the life of the workers, who appear visibly tired. The short movie ends with the presentation of the dress obtained by this process, using as its backdrop the catwalk installed at the SNIA Viscosa pavilion in 1948.

The war brought an end not just to the dictatorship but also to the infamous entanglement between the manufacture of man-made fibres and nationalist discourse, supported by both the regime and the SNIA Viscosa. This can be seen in the interior design conceived in 1948 by Bianchetti and Pea, the architects who had rebuilt the new SNIA Viscosa pavilion at the Milan Fair the previous year. Photomontages and discursive panels were discarded in place of an artificially ordered main street of an invented town, full of showcases displaying man-made textiles, while in the centre a catwalk concentrated visitors' attention on fashion designs. Having escaped to Switzerland in 1944, where his son Paolo had been living since 1943, Marinotti waited until 1947 to return to Italy, fully resuming the role he never really abandoned and ready to conceive the re-launch of the campaign to promote man-made fibres. Having decided not to abandon the experiments in exhibition design developed during the 1930s by the SNIA, seeing in them a possible role in the new growth economy, and conscious of their potential for communication, Marinotti opted for the creation in 1951 of a new centre loosely linked to the activities of the SNIA. This was first conceived as the CIAAA by the SNIA Viscosa marketing office, headed up by Marzio Simonetto since 1934; Marinotti, after rejecting the first proposal, finally decided on the CIAC.



Fig.59: Sixth Milan Triennial, Milan, 1936, *Mostra Internazionale delle Arti Decorative e Industriali*, SNIA Viscosa booth designed by Luciano Baldessari.



Fig.60: Sixth Milan Triennial, Milan, 1936, grey fabric supplied by SNIA Viscosa for the grand staircase with the unfinished mosaic by Mario Sironi.



Fig.61: Seventh Milan Triennial, Milan, 1940, SNIA Viscosa booth designed by Erberto Carboni.



Fig.62: 1935 Milan Fair, Milan, the new SNIA Viscosa pavilion designed by Eugenio Faludi.



Fig.63: *Mostra del Tessile Nazionale*, Rome, 1937, *Padiglione dei coloranti nazionali* designed by Marcello Nizzoli with Augusto Bianchetti.

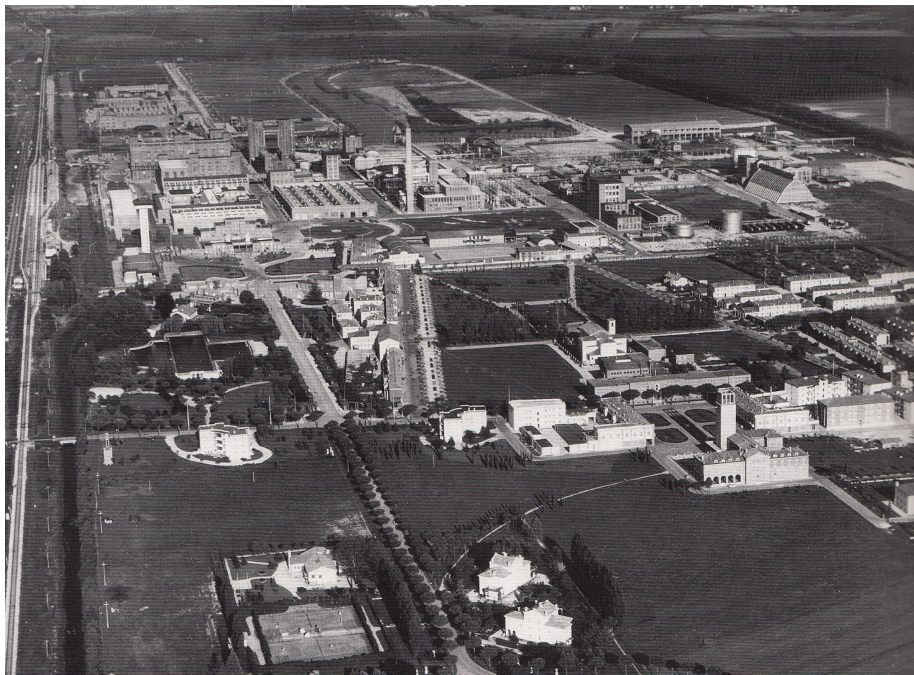


Fig.64: Torviscosa, 1965, aerial view of the town with the factory in the background.



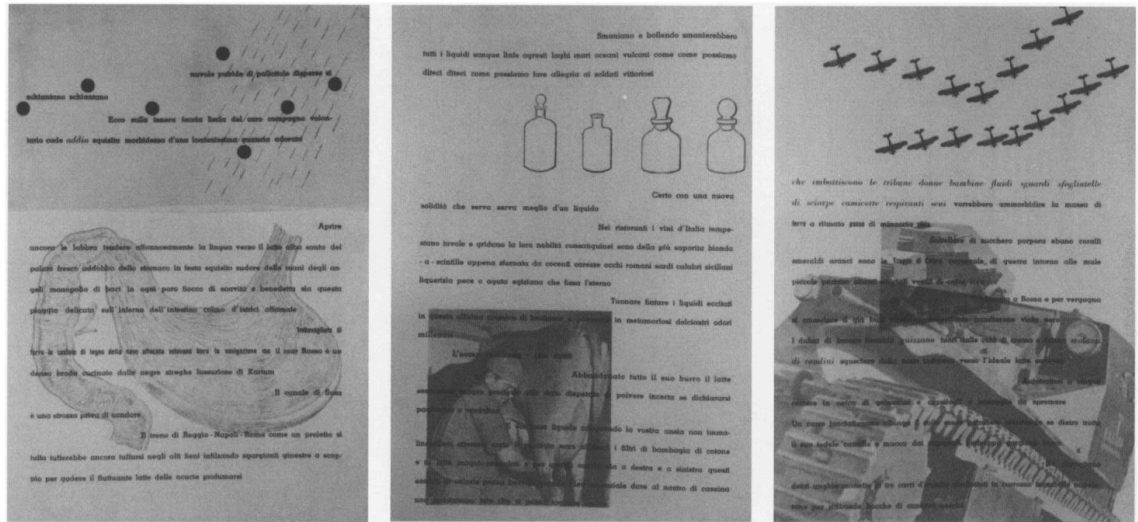


Fig.65: pages from *Il poema del vestito di latte*, 1937, text by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, illustrations by Bruno Munari.

#### 4.4 Rehearsal for a Post-war Marketing Strategy: The CIAAA - Centro Internazionale Arti Abbigliamento e Arredamento

The Italian economy suffered mixed fortunes in the aftermath of the war. As far as the textile manufacturing sector was concerned, although it had suffered damage during the conflict, after 1946 it was not in a state of collapse. Torviscosa, for example, although badly damaged, could count on a quick recovery, thanks to the direct intervention of Marinotti who paid for its refurbishment. Given the difficulties of international communication and transportation that prevented the import of raw materials (such as wool or Scandinavian cellulose) that were essential for the Italian textile industry, in the late 1940s the production of cellulose through the *arunda donax* had a positive impact on the market, being the only available resource. In the meantime, the Italian government tried to devise an economic policy that would be able to redress the fragile conditions of the Lira, with Luigi Einaudi opting for a credit crunch on the banks to counteract inflation.

From an international point of view, the U.S. pushed its European allies to create an economic system based on the free market, in order to stabilise the future political relationships of the European states. Furthermore, the launch of the ERP plan, announced by General George Marshall, was intended to provide support to the various economies in need. Marinotti, according to his biographers Valerio Castronovo and Anna Maria Falchero, refused to resort to this kind of support, although another source states that the opposite was true.<sup>53</sup> What is certain is that the post-war period saw Marinotti committed on several fronts: the reconstruction and update of the old SNIA Viscosa plants; the improvement of the company's administrative organisation; the promotion of research into new kinds of fibres, such as the *lilion 6* (a type of nylon); a series of workers' strikes against the closure of some factories and, most of all, the risks presented by the lowering of the protectionist barriers that helped to preserve the internal market for artificial fibres.

Despite these issues, Marinotti could count on a positive financial situation and in 1954 and 1955 he managed to open, together with international partners, new plants in South Africa, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico. An amateur connoisseur of the arts – he used to paint and work in ceramic –, Marinotti also wanted to support fashion by helping the

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<sup>53</sup> Valerio Castronovo, Anna Maria Falchero, *L'avventura di Franco Marinotti*, p.233; Marcella Spadoni, *Il gruppo Snia dal 1917 al 1951*, pp.148–9.

establishment of the *Centro Internazionale della Moda* in Milan, dedicated to the promotion of the fashion industry, since the previous *Ente Nazionale della Moda* had closed down.<sup>54</sup>

In an interview of 1951, looking back to the post-war years, Franco Marinotti explained his commitment to the CIAC as an impulse to contribute to the reconstruction of society, still deeply traumatized by recent events.<sup>55</sup> It was within this framework that, in 1949, the idea emerged of opening an international cultural centre in Venice (where he had studied as a student), since that beautiful city was (as it continues to be) considered an obligatory stopover point for the international jet-set. The CIAC opened in 1951, with Franco's son Paolo as its general secretary from the start. Franco and Paolo were two different personalities but both shared a love of art, although Franco was reportedly more interested in antiques and Paolo in modern art. According to Paolo, it was Franco who rejected the first draft for the CIAAA prepared by the marketing department of the SNIA Viscosa and who proposed the CIAC.<sup>56</sup> What originally concerned Franco Marinotti was probably the overtly propagandistic tone and the lack of any real engagement with culture.

The first draft of the project states: 'The CIAAA constitutes a new medium to present on a worldwide level the promotional activities of the Italviscosa.'<sup>57</sup> There were three sectors through which the CIAAA could develop its activities; these were nominated, using the language of the theatre, as 'stage', 'foyer' and 'stalls.' The stage coincided with the CIAAA venue, Palazzo Grassi, the eighteenth century palace facing the Canal Grande. 'Palazzo Grassi does not conduct any activity relating to promotion, apart from those in the highest spheres where the great aesthetic syntheses are realised.'<sup>58</sup> The venue should attract 'the interest, the devotion and the admiration of a selected international public such as writers, intellectuals, artists, scientists, financial experts, industrial tycoons, journalists, men and women from high society able to endorse the success of an initiative, turning it into a tendency, a Centre able to attract a worldwide public, an obligatory stop on the

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<sup>54</sup> The new centre founded in Milan in 1948 by the SNIA Viscosa, was directed by the same Dino Alfieri who conceived the MRF in 1932. Alfieri became minister of popular culture in 1937 and then in 1940 Italian ambassador in Berlin.

<sup>55</sup> *Ispirazione remota di un'idea attuale, Intervista col Presidente Franco Marinotti*, Archivio Paolo Marinotti, (from now on APM), Milano, file 'Scritti e Discorsi 1951', p.4. The transcript of the RAI TV interview does not report the date or the name of the journalist. From the content though, it can be established that the interview occurred a few months before the opening of the CIAC on 25 August 1951. Marinotti states: 'The CIAC probably derives from a natural reaction to the tragic break that each war and post-war period provoke in the collective spirit.'

<sup>56</sup> Marcello Venturoli, *Tutti gli uomini dell'arte*, Milano: Rizzoli, 1968, p.183.

<sup>57</sup> From the first draft of the document 'Obbiettivi propagandistici del Centro Internazionale Arte Abbigliamento Arredamento di Venezia', APM, Milano, file 'Scritti e Discorsi', p.1. My translation.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. My translation.

extensive international tourist route.<sup>59</sup> Knowing that this kind of public would have never accepted the endorsement of events openly related to industrial or commercial propaganda, it was therefore necessary to divert any suspicion of such a relationship away from the CIAA. In becoming a point of attraction for such a distinguished elite, the CIAAA would become the ideal platform for the ‘true and substantial propagandist activity entrusted to the “foyer” and the “stalls”.’<sup>60</sup> Under the banner ‘foyer’, Simonetti refers to those propagandist activities aimed at the ‘specialists’ of the textile sector. In the case of the CIAAA, this would manifest itself in the organisation of meetings, symposia, conferences and sales’ agreements happening in various different areas of the city.<sup>61</sup> The draft continues: ‘This will be the most solid and substantial part – in a sense both propagandist and commercial – of the CIAAA’s activities.’<sup>62</sup> The last sector, the ‘stalls area’, refers to those more casual propagandist activities aimed at the international public visiting Venice. ‘This kind of public, absent-minded and typical of the weekend period, longing for fun and diversion itself, will hardly choose Venice so as to visit a first grade exhibition on textiles: but it will be forced to enter in our stalls area – willy-nilly – because our propagandist stalls area is the very city of Venice.’<sup>63</sup> With Venice turning into a permanent shopping mall, thanks to its small retailers, boutiques, luxurious hotels, small streets and beaches, visitors could experience the CIAAA’s direct propaganda, spread across and unveiled all over the city. Starting in Venice, artificial textiles could quickly conquer the Italian and the international markets.

Nevertheless, Marinotti discarded the CIAAA project when it was already quite advanced. In Paolo Marinotti’s archive, there are copies of a ‘Manifesto’; a list of the CIAAA’s aims; the preliminary programme for the first five years, with the first year sketched in quite substantial detail; the guidelines for regulating the relationships between the propagandist promotion of rayon and the Palazzo Grassi’s activities; and finally an organizational chart. Among this material, it is possible to detect two main ideas that would resurface in the final programme of the CIAC: the first established a new relationship between art and craft, the second reconsidered a new symbolic meaning for the city of Venice.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp.1–2. My translation.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.2. My translation.

<sup>61</sup> But also meetings dedicated to the artificial textile industry workers, to their unions and to the social politics related with this sector

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p.3. My translation.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.4. My translation.

The atavistic link between art and craft was identified as the alternative to the chauvinistic approach of Fascist textile propaganda. In the 1930s the SNIA Viscosa had tested the waters of this much-needed shift in attitude in a series of articles published in its in-house magazine on the fashion of the past as evidenced by paintings and tapestries. This new stance not only allowed the SNIA Viscosa and its cartel, the Italviscosa, to distance themselves from their previous associations with the regime, but it further helped to position artificial fibres as the ultimate chapter in the long history of textiles, which had begun with the history of man himself. If the regime praised the relationships between textiles and machines as the symbol of Italian excellence and strength, in the post-war era the terms of reference were reversed: the CIAAA would be born from the need to rethink the impact of mechanisation on clothing and interior design (the principle areas of interests of the institution). The standardisation imposed on these two activities by the mechanisation of production weakened the traditional links between interior design, clothing and artistic production. The purpose of the CIAAA would have been the ‘refinement of taste and the education of masses towards beauty and art’, both considered the main paths to any ‘human and civil conquest.’<sup>64</sup> Artificial fibres, produced mechanically, would nevertheless become the new material for man’s creativity, carefully avoiding the risk of the standardisation of clothing production.

In this renewed framework, Venice came to play a new and significant role. The ancient city built through skilled craftsmanship represented the perfect location for the CIAAA. From being a symbol of *passatismo* (empty nostalgia) according to the Futurists, Venice became an image of hope for the future, depicted as ‘serene as [the city’s] waters’.<sup>65</sup> The reference to Venice as a place from which to start afresh in building a new civilisation (and here it is worth remembering that this was seven years after the end of the Second World War) was also linked with another aspect of the city’s history, already highlighted, its ‘mercantile artistic tradition.’<sup>66</sup> Venice – being built from the union of practical necessity and aesthetic achievement – constituted, even to this day, the perfect example of how economic interest and artistic production can go hand in hand. Tradition would play an invaluable role in creating a new and different future where industry and capitalism would play a lasting role.

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<sup>64</sup> *Manifesto del Centro Internazionale Arti, Abbigliamento e Arredamento*, APM, Milano, file ‘Scritti e Discorsi 1951’, 1951, p.1. My translation.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2. My translation.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* My translation.

#### 4.5 Paolo Marinotti and the CIAC

During his entire career, Franco Marinotti carefully managed the public image of the SNIA Viscosa, as well as his own private image. The CIAC certainly offered a further opportunity to publicise both the family name and the business, but it could also be inscribed into a series of noble acts towards society such as were expected from a captain of industry of his reputation (fig.66).<sup>67</sup> It was he who eventually decided to position ‘art’ and ‘costume’ as the two terms around which to build the CIAC, but it was Paolo who developed the guidelines for the institution’s programme.<sup>68</sup> Like his father Franco, Paolo had an artistic disposition; a contemporary art lover (and dealer), throughout his life he dedicated himself to writing poetry, publishing his works in three different collections.<sup>69</sup> According to Paolo, a key moment in his education was the three years he spent in Switzerland, where his father sent him after 8 September 1943 to escape the war. Like his father, he was deeply religious and driven by the same sense of duty and responsibility towards society. With his father’s support, Paolo could project his vision onto the newly born institution, which from its inception aimed to build its own academic foundations.

In reading Paolo’s editorial notes, catalogue introductions, interviews and inaugural speeches, one cannot but find them extremely vague in their statements and often convoluted in form. Paolo’s arguments describing the aims of the CIAC develop through a series of images and visions evoked in the reader’s mind, rather than through a rational line of thought. Despite the fact that certain passages, in their naivety, sound almost like the ramblings of a deluded man, at the same time they testify to a relentless quest to contribute to the transformation of society through culture and to safeguard the creative essence of man. The fact that he could count on a team of research staff at the CIAC allowed him greater freedom to develop his ideas and deepen his knowledge of costume. Being largely self-taught, and the son of one of the most powerful international tycoons, one’s impression is that he was anxious that people did not take him seriously enough. The fact that the entire story of the CIAC has been consigned to oblivion until now is evidence that his suspicion was not unfounded.

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<sup>67</sup> On the one hand, this ensured the respect of the elite while on the other hand it provided an exceptional platform in newspapers for the more general public. The same reason, inspired by his passion for archaeology, lay behind the decision to support archaeological excavations in the area of Aquileia, followed by the opening of a museum to preserve and present the found relics.

<sup>68</sup> Marcello Venturoli, *Tutti gli uomini dell’arte*, p.183.

<sup>69</sup> Paolo Marinotti, *Aghi di pino*, Bellinzona: A. Salvioni&C., 1946; Paolo Marinotti, *Violenze*, Milano: Mursia & C., 1970; Paolo Marinotti, *Il raglio dell’asino*, Samedan: Munt Press, 1975.

At first sight, the historical impact of the CIAC seems negligible, forgotten by almost everyone. The main histories of Venice do not mention it when listing the cultural institutions of the post-war period; in the field of art, the CIAC left no mark, and what people do know about the history of Palazzo Grassi is mainly its relationship with FIAT; the history of costume certainly did not develop in the direction expected by Paolo, with fashion design – rather than textile history – becoming one of the most discussed and studied topics of the last decades. Still, the Museo del Costume of Palazzo Mocenigo in Venice contains books, some of great value, and precious and rare samples of textiles and costumes from the CIAC's collection; some of the works of art commissioned by Marinotti for the CIAC contemporary art exhibitions entered into the mainstream discourse of art history and are held in important private and public collections; and, of most interest for the present thesis, the institutional approach developed by Paolo remains to date unparalleled, at least in Italy, for its breadth of scope, its generosity of intent and the originality of its position, allowing it to stand as a possible model today for rethinking the development of curatorial practice.<sup>70</sup> In never fitting in with the models of more traditional cultural institutions, such as museums and universities, and having no interest in any of those targets that often guide public and private institutions today – such as visitor numbers, press reviews etc. – the CIAC appeared to be an institution doomed to oblivion for having spectacularly failed to create lasting relationships with those historical disciplines it snubbed.

Since its opening, Paolo acknowledged the peculiar nature of the CIAC with regard to its relationship with existing disciplines. Rather than being based on a single discipline, such as art history, or specialised in a field already linked with an existing discipline, the CIAC recognised in the relationship between the two terms composing its title – ‘art and costume’ – its core interest. In particular, the concept of *costume* played a central part in driving the activities at Palazzo Grassi. Interestingly enough, despite the fact that the Marinottis built the entire programme of their institution around it, when the CIAC opened, the term *costume* still defied any clear definition. The meaning of the concept gradually came into focus through the activities organised by the CIAC itself, unravelling its potential event after event and year after year. In inhabiting this area of potentialities, Marinotti opened an institution based on a loose idea that needed to find confirmation through each of the events it organised. What is costume? Can a concept come into focus

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<sup>70</sup> As with many curatorial projects of today, Marinotti also ran the risk of appearing (and actually being) insufficiently grounded in the intellectual propositions and arguments developed in his exhibitions.

through the programme of the institution that it should itself define? What could be the outcome of such an enterprise?

In referring to the CIAC, Marinotti writes that it was an institution of a 'grandiose scale because grandiose are its aims.'<sup>71</sup> Refusing the specialisation of other institutions working to serve already given disciplines, Marinotti proposed laying the foundations of a new one, the history of costume, meant both as the history of clothing and as the habits and culture expressed in a given time. To accomplish such an ambitious mission, two main streams of activity guided the CIAC's programme: first, a series of events and exhibitions, each year centred around a theme; second, a series of permanent research activities aiming to build a library, a *tessilteca*, to grant a series of scholarships for young students and to generate a collection of furniture and clothes from the past.<sup>72</sup> Dance, theatre, cinema, the history of textiles, the history of clothes, and the history of the city of Venice all formed some of the main areas of interest covered by the multiple activities of Palazzo Grassi.

In terms of institutions that could have inspired the CIAC, one could mention the Fondazione Giorgio Cini and the Milan Triennial, very different from each other but somehow finding common ground in the CIAC. The former, founded in 1949 by Count Vittorio Cini to celebrate the memory of his son Giorgio, opened in 1951 on the Venetian island of San Giorgio, facing the church of San Marco. The Fondazione Cini devoted itself to providing material and spaces for research in very specific areas of knowledge (such as art history, history of Venice, literature, music and theatre, and the history of the relationship between Venice and the East). The latter, by contrast, exhibited state-of-the-art design, furniture and architecture and had a direct link with consumerism, its exhibits always available in the shops of Milan. However, the CIAC shared with the Milan Triennial not just the practice of installing thematic exhibitions, but also of using the same architects in its exhibition design, such as Nizzoli, Bianchetti, Pea, Albin and Scarpa. In this way, the Italian lineage of exhibition-making that began with the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* and continued through the *Esposizione dell'Aeronautica Italiana* and the exhibitions at the Milan Triennial of the 1930s, dovetailed with the history of the exhibitions organised by the CIAC. Furthermore, architects such as Albin or Scarpa, while designing some of the

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<sup>71</sup> Paolo Marinotti, 'Reasons for the Centre', in APM, Milano, file 'Scritti e discorsi 1951', 1951. The original Italian edition of this essay is published in Paolo Marinotti, 'Ragioni del Centro', in *Arte e Costume*, Milano: Edizioni Internazionali d'Arte, vol.1, 1951, pp.9–16.

<sup>72</sup> Precisely, the permanent activities of the CIAC listed at the time of its opening: the Grassi Collection, a collection of the best art works presented in the future exhibition of the CIAC; a specialised Library; a Film Library; a Print House for its publications, and a centre for studies, in *Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume*, Venezia: Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume, 1951.



exhibitions for Palazzo Grassi, were also involved in the refurbishment of several Italian museums, further enriching the cross-fertilisation within the field.<sup>73</sup>

It is clear that the impulse for such a costly enterprise derived from the close relationship between the CIAC and the SNIA Viscosa. At the same time, Paolo managed to go even further in trying to integrate different fields of knowledge with the aim not just of creating a new discipline for capitalism to make its own, but also of returning to the true essence of man which, according to Marinotti, had been lost since standardization had governed industrial production. Indeed, it was as a response to their current situation that they decided to found the CIAC. Franco mainly wanted to respond to the trauma of the war, while Paolo primarily wanted to provide a space in which man could reconnect with his creative essence (and doubtless also to take on a project that was potentially as demanding and prestigious as those of his father).

As a self-educated man, Paolo's beliefs were not rooted in a systematic philosophical system or grounded in history. Guided by intuition, he expressed the uncertainties of his time as to the effects of mass production on man's creativity.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, he tried to convey his understanding of the spirit of his times with an empathic (and emphatic) approach, providing possible answers to his concerns. His essentialist vision of man, today quite simplistic and outdated, nevertheless revealed the anxieties of a time caught between the traumatic losses of the Second World War (physical, emotional and symbolic), the 'brutal peace' of the Cold War with its attendant uncertainties, and the radical transformation of Italian society under the U.S. model and its subsequent economic boom. It is under these conditions that the notion of *costume*, closely related to his father's business and therefore familiar to Paolo from birth, inspired the young Marinotti's actions.

The CIAC was born out of 'the need to express, in exact terms, an instinctive yearning to place precise values on things that are vital to us.'<sup>75</sup> Key to this purpose is the relationship between art and costume, art being considered as *téchne*, the Greek term referring to a notion of art as the skill of making something, and costume being understood

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<sup>73</sup> A further element shared by the CIAC and the Milan Triennial, explored in chapter five, was the opportunity, granted to contemporary artists, to produce works *in situ* and in response to the topic of the exhibition's theme outside the framework provided by the art historical discipline.

<sup>74</sup> This bias had of course a long history, rooted in nineteenth century or early twentieth century movements such as Arts and Craft and Werkbund, and has only recently been radically questioned and overturned. Glenn Adamson in Glenn Adamson, *The Idea of Craft*, London: Bloomsberg, 2013.

<sup>75</sup> Paolo Marinotti, 'Reason of the Centre', unpaginated.

not only as clothing but as a way of expressing one's own time through making things.<sup>76</sup> As a fervent catholic, Marinotti believed that creativity was the essential characteristic of man, and the closest to God of the gifts conferred by Him. Whereas it was easy to recognise the *costumi* of past ages, the same could not be said about contemporary times, since the standardisation imposed on production largely deprived man of the opportunity to express his creativity.<sup>77</sup> The CIAC aimed to gather together all the energies of its present time to animate through 'costume, a phenomenon of life itself ... those slumbering relations with art that, on its part, seems to have betrayed its duties to man and to life.'<sup>78</sup> Therefore, the CIAC wanted to demonstrate through its historical exhibitions how through the expression of different *costumi* (in both its meanings) man was faithful to his place in the creation; at the same time, with these past examples, the CIAC aimed to inspire and reactivate a relationship between art and *costume* in the present day.

The desire to have an impact on the present was a constant driving force for Marinotti, and one of its consequences was the shift to contemporary art that happened in 1959. Marinotti, though, had the artistic world in mind from the very beginning of the CIAC, as demonstrated by his inaugural statement. In this paper he denounces, in his usual naïve language, the holing up of artists in their studios, saying that 'these monstrous renunciations belong in fact to our time, opaline phantasms, separated, in clouds of "pure art", from the life of the world, frail stems emerging athwart a diaphanous sky that one longs to replace with a sun flower or the trunk of a baobab.'<sup>79</sup> He continues, 'the essential aim of the Centre is to re-establish that generative circuit which links artistic creation to a human fact in whose setting it becomes manifest and finds its inspiration.'<sup>80</sup> It is not by chance that recent tendencies in the production of contemporary artists demonstrated to him the need to go back to traditional techniques, to the so-called 'applied arts' such as mosaic, ceramic, glass work, witnessing a renewed intent and interest on the part of artists to address those themes with which the CIAC was concerned. The very link between the Centre and the industry supporting it demonstrated how man could eventually benefit from the world of production and its most recent progresses. Based on these premises, Marinotti believed that man needed to be brought back to himself:

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<sup>76</sup> He defines costume 'as the essence of man's life that shows itself in his ways of feeling, of acting, of creating his setting and animating it and, at the apex, the ever renewed effort to transform matter, regarded in its concrete-abstract function of overcoming: – the artistis [sic] expression.' Ibid., unpaginated.

<sup>77</sup> This perspective was obviously narrowly Eurocentric, and based on the accounts of the history of clothes of the time, which tended to take only the wealthy classes into account.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., unpaginated.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., unpaginated

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., unpaginated

This world of machines before which we stand indicted, is the sorry world we have called into being without grasping that, once abandoned to ourselves, we were but the drone of a machine in motion, the dumb beating of a driving-belt like a sob between grey walls. To awaken the universe through creation, our creation, to feel the blue sky against the propeller, the heart-beat in the machine: even a thread against the light is an atom of creation.

And so it is too easy [sic] to accept foregone conclusions. Our calculations are wrong, because life is not calculation but art and, if we knew how to find ourselves again in art, if we had the courage to affirm ourselves again without being frightened [sic] of being taken for poets, because the world can't live without poetry, we should automatically discover new sources of freshness and could go on building machines forever, certain that their noise would never trouble our speech [sic] but rather enrich it.<sup>81</sup>

These words illustrate Marinotti's style of writing well, and have echoes of the Futurists texts, although tamed down in tone, highlighting his ambivalent feelings towards industrialization, as opposed to Marinetti's unequivocal embracing of technology. The perception of the Centre, though, must have been quite controversial since even at its very inception its honorary president, the Prince Vitaliano Borromeo, intervened with a press conference in Rome on 27 June 1951, prior to the opening of the CIAC, to clarify the aims of the new institution.<sup>82</sup> In particular, Borromeo wanted to dispel suspicions that the CIAC was the new propaganda machine of the SNIA Viscosa. Recognising its debt to the textile industry, Borromeo explained how its goals were purely cultural, recalling the contribution of the Florentine *Arte della Lana*, the wool guild that commissioned Giotto to paint frescoes for the bell tower of the church of Santa Maria del Fiore. Furthermore, Borromeo underlined in his speech, which was later printed, that the CIAC was not a new institution devoted to fashion. Fashion would come under its remit only as an expression of the *costume* of present times.

The CIAC aimed to be a world-wide 'reserve of values', available for all those interested in a newly revitalised age of man.<sup>83</sup> In reviewing the activities of the CIAC between 1951 and 1958, a twofold attitude emerges towards fashion on the one hand, and

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., unpaginated

<sup>82</sup> Vitaliano Borromeo's speech is published in a separate pamphlet, APM, Milano, file 'Scritti e Discorsi, 1951', 1951, unpaginated

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., unpaginated.

the history of clothing and textiles on the other. The former was expressed in the form of fashion shows that happened on a yearly basis from 1956, the latter in the form of exhibitions, mainly of a historical nature. Fashion became a consistent part of the CIAC's programme of events from 1956 on, when it organised *La moda nel costume contemporaneo* from 21–23 of August, the first fashion show the CIAC presented.<sup>84</sup> The most prestigious *couturiers* from Germany, Japan, India, the United Kingdom, the United States, Spain, Ireland and Italy participated in the event, underlining the powerful appeal of the CIAC. In particular, from Italy the fashion houses Capucci, Simonetta and Antonelli, amongst others, presented their designs. More than 100 labels from all over the world introduced their new creations in Venice, all rigorously produced with man-made fibres. These kinds of events were repeated every year in increasingly spectacular ways, with themes to frame them, directors to take care of the staging and actors (such as Giancarlo Giannini) and actresses (such as Mariangela Melato) appearing as models. With the CIAC, Venice attempted to revamp its role as an international centre for fashion, as in its heyday in the eighteenth century.<sup>85</sup> The large part of the exhibitions organised since 1951 were presentations focused on the history of textiles or of costume from the past: *Mostra del Costume nel Tempo. Momenti di arte e di vita dall'età ellenica al romanticismo* (1951); *La leggenda del filo d'oro – Le vie della seta* (1952); *L'arazzo francese dalle origini ai nostri giorni* (1953); *Mostra dell'arte tessile e costumi dell'India* (1956). The only exception was in 1954, when the centre honoured Venice itself with the exhibition *Venezia Viva*.

Marinotti had a precise vision of the position of the CIAC in respect to Venice and its other cultural institutions. The opening of the CIAC immediately disturbed the Venice Biennial, despite the partnership established between the two institutions at the outset (such as an award during the Film Festival for the best costume in movies). What the organisers of the Biennial feared most was the possibility that the CIAC could step on its toes with contemporary art exhibitions that could eclipse those organised by the Biennial, since Marinotti had enormous financial assets while the budget for the Biennial was always tight. These concerns were to some extent offset by an official statement in which the CIAC declared its areas of interests and promised not to organise exhibitions or events

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<sup>84</sup> Although, it should be noted that Palazzo Grassi had hosted fashion presentations since 1952, with the presentation of historical costumes within the event: *Costumi lungo la via della seta*, 15–16 September. In 1953, a 'Manifestazione di alta moda' happened on 13–14 June, while in 1954, the CIRFS presented the exhibition *I tessili dell'avvenire* from 22<sup>nd</sup> May to 1<sup>st</sup> June and a fashion show, *Parata del tessuto e della moda* on the 11–12 September.

<sup>85</sup> A particularly successful one was *Moda circus*, with the setting inspired by the circus world, in which Francis Davis, president of the CIRFS, announced that the second international meeting of the association was due to happen in London from the 1 to 4 May 1962, sponsored by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the II.

related to contemporary art.<sup>86</sup> In 1954, the city council of Venice organised a meeting with the main cultural institutions, such as the Biennial and the opera house La Fenice, in order to try to coordinate as best possible the calendar of cultural activities, a key element in boosting the tourist-based economy of the city. Marinotti responded to the meeting with a letter to the Mayor of Venice in which he explained the CIAC's position in respect to the other institutions and to the city itself. He argued that, while the Biennial or La Fenice were institutions that could know their programme of events well in advance, since these were yearly and organised to 'demonstrate a matter of taste', the CIAC 'does not have needs of creative orders ... since its programme is in constant evolution and it implies a permanent fine tuning in all the fields of human knowledge, it needs absolute freedom and an extreme promptness of intervention in order to realise, through any kind of expression, the value of an idea.'<sup>87</sup> Basically, for the CIAC, advanced scheduling was impossible. In the same letter, Marinotti also highlighted his perception of Venice, underlining how tourism was a positive element in the life of the city but that it should not just be considered as a tourist attraction. Venice, for Marinotti, had the potential to be 'the meeting place of a whole global rebuilding of spirit and life warmth.'<sup>88</sup>



Fig.66: the Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume at Palazzo Grassi, Venice in 1951.

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<sup>86</sup> The document was signed by MP Giovanni Ponti, President of the Venice Biennial and Giuseppe Segati, at the time President of the Italian commission of the CIAC, the 30 March 1951. ASAC, Venezia, Arti Visive, Misc.16, folder 'Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume', in 'Copie verbali e convenzione'.

<sup>87</sup> From Paolo Marinotti to Angelo Spanio, Mayor of Venice, ASAC, Marghera (Ve), in *Arti Visive*, Misc.16, folder 'Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume', in 'Corrispondenza con il Centro', pp.2-3. My translation.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4. My translation.

#### 4.6 A survey of the CIAC exhibitions between 1951 and 1956

Exhibitions constituted the public expression of the CIAC's activities, considered by Marinotti to be complementary to the research programme. Until the opening of the CIAC there was no similar institution in Italy dedicated to these topics.<sup>89</sup> The Milan Triennial, probably the only institution in which themes like these could be addressed through a historical exhibition, never organised one despite always having sections presenting contemporary textiles. Among the goals of the CIAAA, repeated in a first draft of those of the CIAC, was the requirement to stage exhibitions where a 'spectacular element, aesthetic-historical content and documentary value could be maintained in the sphere of artistic expression.'<sup>90</sup> The CIAC managed to achieve this mix in all its exhibitions, underlining again the schism with a traditional museological approach, sanctioned in Italy in 1932 by the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*.

The exhibitions organised between 1951 and 1956 had an historical approach expressed through the modern language of exhibition design, in line with those experiences of the 1930s. It should not be forgotten that it was no accident that Nizzoli, who organised the opening exhibition of the CIAC, was involved in the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* and was well aware of the coming-of-age of exhibition design as an architectural language in its own right. The fact that the CIAC's exhibitions were intended to create a new discipline, rather than following an already existing one, challenged still further the museological institution. The exhibitions were intended to be historic events in both challenging the present living conditions of man and in establishing the basis for a new academic discipline on *costume*. Nothing could better serve this purpose than the modernist language of exhibition design with its technologies and visual concepts able to immediately connect historical artefacts and exhibits to the present.

This could be seen from the very first exhibition organised in Palazzo Grassi in 1951, *Il costume nel tempo – momenti d'arte e di vita dall'età classica al romanticismo*, designed by Bianchetti and Pea with the collaboration of Nizzoli (the latter then employed by the design department of the Olivetti company). Since the 1930s, both Bianchetti and Pea and Nizzoli had designed different exhibitions, especially for propaganda or commerce.

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<sup>89</sup> Of the few museums variously dedicated to textiles and costume in Italy, the main examples opened during the 1980s, one of them being the Museo del Costume di Ca' Mocenigo in Venice, which has reunited several books, costumes and textiles from the collections of the CIAC.

<sup>90</sup> 'Scopi del Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume', in *Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume*, Milano: Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume, 1951, unpaginated. My translation.

Bianchetti and Pea worked with Faludi to take over his role in the SNIA Viscosa pavilions of the Milan Fair after 1938, while Nizzoli collaborated with Persico at the *Esposizione dell'Aeronautica Italiana* and at the sixth Triennial of Milan, and in the exhibition design of mass exhibitions and of various commercial companies, such as Montecatini and Carlo Erba.

The exhibition explored the history of costume, considered from the perspective of the western wealthy classes. It began with four rooms dedicated to examples from ancient Greek and Roman times, and continued up to the Romantic period of the nineteenth century. With the three levels (from the ground floor to the second) of the Palazzo Grassi filled with objects, furniture, casts, textiles, clothes, tableaux, sculptures, paintings and drawings, the CIAC officially opened its doors with a glamorous demonstration of its power. The CIAC set the horizons of its task on the very first page of the small guide published for the occasion:

This exhibition needs to be visited according to the intentions that gave it its origins: it wants to be a synthetic presentation of the themes that the Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume intends to tackle and unfold in the exhibitions of the following years and at the same time, it wants to provide, with a panoramic presentation of 'moments of art and life', a demonstration of the importance of costume through time and of the extent of the subject.<sup>91</sup>

If this text seemed to make an advance plea to the general public and critics for the exhibition's approach to the breadth of the history of costume that it succinctly summarised, at the same time the desire was to avert any doubts about the cultural goal of the CIAC initiative. Despite this, the exhibition design betrayed the propaganda mission of the initiative by using a device already successfully tested in the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* in 1932: covering the walls with the actual items that formed the subject of the exhibition. Unfortunately, from the black and white installation shots it is not possible to gauge the final colour of the curtains selected by the architects to drape all the walls. It is not possible to assess if colourful textiles welcomed the visitors or if the exhibition created a more austere mood. But looking at the photographs one cannot but feel an overwhelming sense of claustrophobia, since every exhibit or vitrine is almost suffocated by the textiles framing it (figs.67–8). The effect is reminiscent of the same level of excess

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<sup>91</sup> *Mostra del Costume nel tempo. Momenti di arte e vita dall'età ellenica al romanticismo*, exh. cat., Venezia: Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume, 1951, unpaginated. My translation.

reached by the newspaper writings positioned obsessively all over the walls of the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*, and certainly instilled in the mind of the visitors that textiles were clearly the subject of the exhibition, subverting (again like in 1932) the relationship between exhibits and exhibition devices.<sup>92</sup>

As noted by art historian Gloria Bianchino, it can be argued looking at Nizzoli's installation sketches and plans that he gave careful consideration to each separate exhibit to be displayed. Certainly, in visualising the installation Nizzoli could refer to the previous experiments in exhibiting textiles, such as in the 1937 *Mostra del Tessile Nazionale* or in the Milan fair pavilions designed for the chemical company Montecatini that also produced fabrics.<sup>93</sup> At Palazzo Grassi, the architects worked with the Industria teatrale Ponti, a company specialised in creating theatre settings. This underlines the complexity of the *Il costume nel tempo* exhibition design.

The diversity of exhibits covering a wide period of history obliged architects to create different installation designs to encompass a range of disparate references. For example, the first four rooms dedicated to the Greek and Roman periods largely drew inspiration from the decorations on ancient Greek bowls or from the frescoes of the Misteri Villa in Pompei. From the sketches preserved in his archive, it is likely that Nizzoli designed these rooms, the first one of which was circular (fig.69). For the special setting, he used a series of casts of Greek and Roman sculptures able to exemplify the costumes of the time, a move criticised by the architect Carlo Enrico Rava, the founder of Gruppo 7.<sup>94</sup> As shown in chapter two, the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità* had already legitimised the use of casts in the context of historical exhibitions. It is likely that Nizzoli visited the exhibition and followed the polemics of the time in their use, since in 1937 he was in Rome for the *Esposizione dei Tessuti Nazionali* and, in 1938, he went back for the installation of the pavilion dedicated to fool's gold at the *Mostra Antarchica del Minerale Italiano*. In his article Rava also harshly criticises the use of vitrines with reinforced parts as being too similar to those used at fairs and unsuitable for such a historical venue and exhibition. Furthermore, he points out how architects accustomed to designing commercial exhibitions should not be invited

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<sup>92</sup> This suspicion is confirmed by the installation of the exhibition design of the *Mostra dei libri d'arte sul costume*, installed in a room of Palazzo Grassi where the walls above the library created for the occasion were left unadorned. Installation shot published in the short guide of *Mostra del costume nel tempo*.

<sup>93</sup> Until that date, Nizzoli collaborated in exhibiting Montecatini products at the Milan Triennial almost on a regular basis since 1927 (apart from 1932, 1933, 1941–45 and 1949). In 1928, during Gualino's management of the SNIA Viscosa, he designed an exhibition for him as witnessed by six photos the location of which is not identified.

<sup>94</sup> Carlo Enrico Rava, 'La mostra del costume nel tempo a Palazzo Grassi', in *Prospettive*, n.2, 1951, pp.67–74.



to work on artistic exhibitions, to avoid the treatment (and thus misrepresentation) of works of art as commodities.

It is clear instead that the architects made a conscious decision in selecting these kinds of vitrines, first because – as suggested by Bianchino in the case of Nizzoli, but we could include also Bianchetti and Pea – they considered exhibition design to be an autonomous discipline within the field of architecture, with its own independent language based on context;<sup>95</sup> and second, because it allowed them to create a striking contrast between the eighteenth century spaces and decor of Palazzo Grassi and the contemporary materials used in their design. As presented in chapter three, the architects' use of modern materials aimed to convey in the minds of visitors the awareness that the past belongs to the present, and that through the present it had to be rethought.

The installation shots suggest that the architects achieved a spectacular effect overall and one cannot deny a striking resemblance with the atmosphere of fair pavilions. Where Nizzoli carefully considered the height of the venue's rooms using panels that modulated the spaces of the first rooms, Bianchetti and Pea used a series of display cases that guided visitors through its corridors. Encased in frames protruding towards the visitors, the eighteenth century ceiling frescos appeared like jewels among the textiles. The solution though, allowed the architects to homogenise the different historical ceilings throughout the entire exhibition. Tableaux encased in vitrines presented scenes of everyday life, again among the aristocracy, with historical furniture alongside replicas produced for the occasion. In the last room, architects rebuilt a booth from the La Scala theatre, showing alongside it memorabilia such as the contract signed by Rossini for 'Il Barbiere di Siviglia' or the original score by Donizetti of the 'Lucia di Lammermoor.'

Strolling around the exhibition rooms during an opening weekend packed with events, a commentator from *Il Corriere della Sera* stressed the impressive scale of the aims that the CIAC intended to achieve through its activities. Another journalist from the newspaper *La Stampa* wondered: 'everything in this debut is wide-spread and you cannot really foresee where, at the end, this mass of activities will find its cornerstone', immediately picking up on one of the main criticisms that Marinotti had to face from the

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<sup>95</sup> Gloria Bianchino, 'Mostra "Il costume nel tempo – momenti d'arte e di vita dall'età classica al romanticismo"', Centro [sic] delle arti e del costume di Palazzo Grassi a Venezia', in Arturo Carlo Quintavalle (ed.), *Marcello Nizzoli*, p.313. Here we come back once again to one of the three elements of my argument, the theme of the independence of installation design as an architectural category.

very beginning of the CIAC.<sup>96</sup> The amazement of the two journalists can be appreciated if one considers the numbers of events marking the opening of the CIAC that took place around the city of Venice. Alongside *Il costume nel tempo*, the CIAC presented two other small shows, the *Mostra dei libri d'arte sul costume*, dedicated to books on costume, and *Les Grand Romantiques Français à Venise* on the mutual influence between Romantic French writers and the city of Venice. A theatre opened at the back of the CIAC featured *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare directed by Giorgio Strehler, one of the most accomplished Italian directors of the twentieth century. A few days later, an exhibition dedicated to the history of theatrical costume also opened at the Giardini della Biennale. A festival dedicated to costume in cinema and a prize for the best historical costume film were set up in collaboration with the Cinema sector of the Venice Biennial. Finally, staying true to its worldwide profile and role as a vocational research centre, the CIAC organised an international symposium on fashion, cinema and theatre to reflect on the theme of costume.

This symposium, together with the exhibition on the French Romantics in Venice, exemplified the particular organisation of the CIAC. While perennial institutions such as the Biennial or the Triennial had international representations, the CIAC set up a series of national committees in various countries such as Brazil or the United Kingdom (often strategic locations for the SNIA Viscosa businesses) that, depending on their proposals, could either present exhibitions at the Palazzo Grassi or organise events in their own countries with the collaboration of the CIAC. Although the experiment did not entirely succeed, as demonstrated by the low number of events organised abroad or in Venice by the various national committees, at the same time, it stressed once again Paolo's openmindedness and the strategic position the CIAC occupied in the international marketing policy of the SNIA Viscosa.<sup>97</sup> Rather than depending on temporally fixed events, the CIAC wanted to respond to the urgent needs of the time, welcoming even international proposals.

If the first year of activities sketched the broad areas of interest the CIAC intended to cover in its future programme, the second year focused on a theme rather close to

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<sup>96</sup> Arturo Lanocita, 'Eccettuata la foglia di Eva, tutti i vestiti che la donna portò', in *Il Corriere della Sera*, 24 agosto 1951; Gigi Ghirotti, 'Venti secoli di eleganze', in *La Stampa*, 24 agosto 1951. My translation.

<sup>97</sup> Besides the collaboration of 1951 for *Les Grands Romantiques Français à Venise*, the French committee collaborated on the 1953 exhibition *L'arazzo francese dalle origini ai nostri giorni*. In 1954, the CIAC organised the exhibition *Il tessuto d'arte italiano antico e moderno* in Lausanne and in 1955 the exhibition *Venezia Viva* travelled to Salzburg, while in Palazzo Grassi, together with the Polish committee, the CIAC organised the art exhibition dedicated to Bernardo Bellotto and Alessandro Gieryski.

Franco's heart: the relationship between nature and science. The exhibition *La leggenda del filo d'oro – Le vie della seta* opened in 1952 at the Palazzo Grassi, retracing the history of silk thread from its legendary discovery in China up to its most recent artificial version made using man-made fibres obtained through scientific research. As discussed above, reframing man-made fibres within the historical narrative of the history of textiles or clothing was part of Franco's strategy to distance artificial fibres from the previous propaganda narrative that related them to a nationalistic discourse. The 1952 exhibition allowed him to introduce at Palazzo Grassi a discourse around man-made fibres, modestly avoided in the first year, while at the same time respecting the independence of the CIAC and its cultural ambitions.

The CIAC entrusted the exhibition design of *La leggenda del filo d'oro – Le vie della seta* to a number of different architects; one certainly was Franco Albini, while it is also probable that Bianchetti and Pea worked on the main exhibition design. Art historian Guido Perocco, in his review published in *Emporium*, praised this second exhibition for its accurate installation and for focusing on a narrower topic such as the history of silk, although the temporal extension, once again spanning several centuries, still raised some issues; first, because its beginning and end strayed into the area of mythology rather than historical accuracy, and second, because it lost its focus through having to integrate all the different materials.<sup>98</sup> In contrast to the previous exhibition, the wall decoration changed according to the theme of the rooms. The departure from the heavy-handed use of curtains and fabrics, the leitmotif of the 1951 exhibition, gave a lighter feel to the whole experience.

The exhibition aimed to present the history of silk thread from its mythical origins to the present day. Depicted as a natural miracle, further improved by man and his skill in manufacturing precious textiles and clothes, the history of silk thread allowed for the retracing of man's own journey from nature to science. In effect, the exhibition tried to guide visitors smoothly through a journey of initiation: from a 'miracle' of nature to a 'miracle' of science, as stressed in particular by the first and the last two rooms. Of course, the scientific 'miracle' associated with the natural one (the production of silk thread) was the invention of man-made fibres, both artificial and synthetic. (This theme returned in a veiled manner in the contemporary art exhibition *Dalla natura all'arte* organised by the

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<sup>98</sup> Guido Perocco, 'La mostra del filo d'oro, la leggenda della seta, a Palazzo Grassi, a Venezia', in *Emporium*, anno LVIII – n.10 vol. CXVI – n.694, October 1952, pp. 179-183. The exhibition was not covered by the national newspapers as had happened the year before on the occasion of the CIAC's opening; Carlo Enrico Rava criticises the exhibition reiterating the same points set down in his review of the first exhibition, *Il Costume nel Tempo*, arguing that the exhibition design was improvised and commercial in its look. Carlo Enrico Rava, 'La mostra "La leggenda del filo d'oro" a Palazzo Grassi', in *Prospettive*, n.4, 1952, pp.70-6 and pp.109-13.

CIAC in 1960). The second to last room praised the researchers in charge of experimenting with natural and synthetic materials to produce new fibres; the last room, designed by Albini, celebrated the fibre itself through an immersive installation, described below. In proposing the formula of a journey of initiation, this exhibition retrieved the narrative scheme already used in Italy in the mass exhibitions of the 1930s, such as the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* or the *Esposizione dell'Aeronautica Italiana*. In fact, the chronological order of the scientific historical presentation of the given theme was given a twist in the non-chronological extremities of the exhibition. For the occasion, the CIAC published a small guide with installation shots and a brief explanation of each room, however without mentioning the architects who worked on the installation. Furthermore, the small catalogue terminates with a text titled 'Precisazioni', evoking the link between nature and science as the two miracles constantly related to man and his creative essence, claiming that it 'is man who determines man's events, and not history.'<sup>99</sup> This reiterates the idea of man taking responsibility for events through his creative actions, rather than reacting to events passively, and reveals how history sat awkwardly within the CIAC's position.

The first room, alongside the introductory text printed on a silky fabric suspended in the centre of the room, presented a panel depicting chaos as the origin of the world, with silk thread emerging from this mysterious Far-Eastern setting. Having been invented in China, where man 'miraculously' obtained silk thread from silk worms, the story went that India and Japan stole the secret and the worms. Once imported into Europe, Italy had excelled in silk manufacturing since the Renaissance. The exhibition design – most probably realised by Bianchetti and Pea – again made extensive use of vitrines in modern materials and shapes, similar to those used in fairs (fig.70). While some rooms had a refined design, recalling those by Scarpa and Albini although always with an original twist, others spectacularly failed in their pedestrian approach, such as the one dedicated to Lucca.<sup>100</sup> Albini and Helg designed the *Sala dei tessuti genovesi del XVI secolo*, with silk thread hanging from an octagonal structure suspended in the centre of the room, with fabrics either

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<sup>99</sup> *La leggenda del filo d'oro – Le vie della seta*, exh. cat. Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume, 1952, Venezia: Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume, 1952, pp.113–4. My translation.

<sup>100</sup> In the room dedicated to the renowned production of silk and fabric in Lucca in the fifteenth century, the architects used stripes of two colours recalling the typical geometrical motifs of Tuscany's roman and gothic cathedrals, creating something close to an 'atmosphere room' as employed in the 1920s by museum director Alexander Dorner in his Landesmuseum in Hannover. In this design, the backdrop of the room aimed to immerse the visitor in a *Kunstwollen* experience chronologically in keeping with the exhibits on display. This approach was far removed from the modernist language used in exhibition design in Italy since the 1930s. On Alexander Dorner and the 'atmosphere room', see Joan Oackman, 'The Road not Taken', in R. E. Somol, *Autonomy and Ideology: Positioning an avant-garde in America*, New York: The Monacelli Press, 1997, and Samuel Cauman, *The Living Museum, Experiences of an art historian and museum director – Alexander Dorner*, New York: New York University Press, 1958.

framed in suspended glass cases or on steel poles in shapes similar to those used at the Palazzo Bianco (fig.71). Interestingly, in one photograph it is possible to pick out a wall decoration of hyphen-forms strikingly reminiscent of Mondrian's painting *The Sea* (1914), belonging to Peggy Guggenheim and shown by Carlo Scarpa at the Venice Biennial in 1948: a tribute to a master and at the same time a reference to the geographical position of the city of Genoa.

The final rooms, instead, introduced a recurring theme in the CIAC's activities and research: the relationship between nature and science. The *I ricercatori's* room, with pipettes and a model of an atomic structure positioned at its centre, recalls the design of those fairs pavilions or mass exhibitions dedicated to technological materials, while the *Miracolo della scienza* room constituted an exception in the entire history of post-war Italian exhibition design (figs.72–3).<sup>101</sup> Designed by Albini and Helg, rather than presenting a product, the room created an emotionally charged environment to celebrate man-made fibres.<sup>102</sup> A path of circular pads guided visitors through the room, where a play of mirrors, neon lights and suspended spheres introduced them to the 'miracle' of science: Albini played with the analogy of silk thread as a ray of light, particularly apt for describing man-made fibres such as rayon, for example. In the 1930s, the parallel between the ray of light and rayon was quite a common one, especially in advertising, and Marinetti also uses it in one of his poems.<sup>103</sup> On the floor, a semi-elliptical mirror reflected half of a sphere in artificial light from which a series of neon bars projected. Opposite the entrance of the small room, a semi-circular mirror doubled the whole effect, immersing the visitor in an elliptical space. To articulate the visitor's path, a series of man-made fibre cones were placed on the ground, like planets floating in this imaginary universe, recalling the standardisation of production. Small spheres suspended from the ceiling further reinforced the image of a universe disclosed to the visitors through science.

In the event, the transition from one 'miracle' to the other did not appear as smooth as desired, as Perocco's comment makes clear. In his review, he expresses concerns

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<sup>101</sup> The installation is reproduced in Sergio Polano (ed.) *Mostrare. L'allestimento in Italia dagli anni Venti agli anni Ottanta*, Milano: Edizioni Lybra Immagine, 1988. Marcello Fagiolo presented the major exhibition designs realised by Albini until 1975 (among which those for Palazzo Grassi) in one of the first articles addressing the topic, in Marcello Fagiolo, 'L'astrattismo magico di Albini', in *Ottagono*, n.37, 1975, p.36.

<sup>102</sup> In *La leggenda del filo d'oro*, Albini and Helg also designed the room dedicated to Genoese textiles of the sixteenth century.

<sup>103</sup> On the analogy between rayon and a ray of light in Fascist advertising please refer to Karen Pinkus, *Bodily Regimes, Italian Advertising under Fascism*, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1995, in particular pp.195–228. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's poem *Simultaneous Poem of Woven Light* refers explicitly to this metaphor.

about the first and last rooms of the exhibition, while praising the high quality of its central parts. Here paintings, textiles and sculptures of exquisite quality were in stark contrast to the slapdash look of the other two rooms. Perocco's judgement should not come as a surprise since, as an art historian, he would have felt more in tune with the middle section of the exhibition, where the display presented historical works of art that would impart knowledge to the visitor about the history of costume. But in denying value to the other two parts, Perocco failed to understand the organising principle of a thematic exhibition, which aimed to insert works of art into a discursive framework that was not necessarily art historical. The mythological origins recalled at the beginning and the futuristic installation at the end of the exhibition, again called into question the traditional chronology used by museums in order to promote another kind of story, hardly acceptable from a scientific point of view but immediately able to communicate the narrative set by the CIAC.

In 1954, the CIAC organised the exhibition *Venezia Viva*, a homage to Venice but also an original attempt to reflect on the actual situation of the city. Rather than offering spectacular installations, the exhibition presented a journey across the different ages of the city through contributions by art historians, architects, politicians and sociologists.<sup>104</sup> The intent was to portray Venice as a 'living unit, the result of the work of man and of a society at the centre of great and small events, a witness of personal values within a collective conscience.'<sup>105</sup> To achieve this goal, the exhibition developed three sections: a presentation of the particularities of Venice such as the Basilica of San Marco; the architectural and urban transformations undergone by the city throughout its history; and the troubles the city faced in the present day and the future, for example, the town plan of the city or the refurbishment of the island of Tronchetto.

Marinotti invited different architects to look after each of the different sections: for example, Nizzoli, together with Pea, designed the rooms concerned with Palazzo Ducale and San Marco, while he alone planned the one dedicated to foreign poets inspired by Venice. Albini designed the rooms about Venice in the eighteenth century, considered the apex of the city's Republican era, while Egle Trincanato arranged the section relating to the transformation undergone by the city. As had already happened with *La leggenda del filo d'oro*,

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<sup>104</sup> Among them architects Egle Renata Trincanato and Giovanni Battista Rubin de Cervin; Salvatore Carboni; the deputy director of the Marciana library, Giorgio Emanuele Ferrari; historian Luigi Lanfranchi; and the art historians Giorgio Mariacher, Terisio Pignatti and Giuseppe Mazzariol.

<sup>105</sup> Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume, *Manifestazioni organizzate dal Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume dal 1951 al 1976*, Venezia: Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del costume, 1977, unpaginated. My translation.

Marinotti chose to articulate a sense of different rhythms throughout the rooms rather than conceive the exhibition as an architectural unity.

Nizzoli and Pea highlighted the byzantine influence on Venetian culture as reflected by the church of San Marco. In his room, Nizzoli built a sequence of converging pillars resembling the abstracted shape of an open book, with each pillar dedicated to one of the international poets who found inspiration in Venice. At the intersection of the two lines of pillars, a photograph of Venice's palaces reflected in the water proposed, with a contemporary language reminiscent of art *informel*, an original way to recall the city to visitors' minds (fig.74). The rooms by Albini confirmed his interest in playing with light and space to create a refined abstracted environment in which the art works could be experienced (fig.75). Trincanato, recovering the long tradition of discursive exhibition making, presented a series of photos and texts in an attempt to engage viewers in the issues surrounding the urban development and architecture of the city. These ranged from Wright's project for Casa Masieri in the Canal Grande, which a year earlier had created a stir among the Italian and international communities, to the proposal for the island of Tronchetto, the industrial development of Porto Marghera and the town plan for Venice.

In reviewing the exhibition, critic Bruno Zevi praised it for the quality and the quantity of the material included, arguing that it should become the core of a museum dedicated to the city and its problematic relationship with the present. At the same time, he goes on to underline how the historical and the contemporary sections were incommensurate. The historical part lacked the dynamism of the present day city and the population that actually inhabits those very monuments depicted in the exhibition. The section devoted to the present, by contrast, had a completely different pace, presenting a series of problems without providing any solutions. The lack of these elements, according to Zevi, constituted the basic limitation that prevented the exhibition from being an extraordinary project. Finally, after praising Nizzoli's room, he criticised the closing room – of which there is no photographic documentation – in which an allegorical figure of a woman depicting Venice stood in the middle of the space, holding in her hand a model of the church of San Marco. Coincidentally, the allegorical room at the end of the exhibition was circular.

*Venezia Viva* hybridized the discursive tradition in exhibition making with the more immersive experiments by Italian exhibition designers during the 1930s, under the

influence of both Abstraction and Surrealism. It constituted a decisive step on the part of the CIAC towards a greater engagement with the present, grounding an argument on a specific topic like the city of Venice, considered in all its complexities. *Venezia Viva* not only mobilized a diversity of intellectual energies in the lagoon, but also demonstrated the flexibility of the CIAC to rethink the concept of costume according to the urgency of the present. Despite Zevi's plea, the material was dispersed after the exhibition travelled to Salzburg and it seems that the decision by the organisers to be politically correct in their assessments of Venice's problems did not pay off, since it did not mark a turning point in the debate around any of the issues facing the city. Trincanato, who wrote a review of the exhibition for *Casabella-Continuità*, seems mainly to hold the CIAC responsible for the objective position of the exhibition, while recognising that the series of conferences and events organised by Palazzo Grassi during *Venezia Viva* granted the possibility of a more dynamic discussion of those very issues.<sup>106</sup>

This chapter ends with an analysis of the conference and workshop organised by the CIAC in 1956 on the term and concept of *costume*. International and national symposia on fashion, theatre, cinema, and the histories of costume and textiles had punctuated the CIAC's activities since its inception.<sup>107</sup> On the one hand, this realised Franco's ambition of giving the discussion of topics related to the textile industry a platform in Venice, a meeting point for different workers in the field; on the other hand it gave the CIAC the possibility to further explore the multiple meanings within the concept of costume. In particular, it was the 1956 symposium on *costume* that drew some conclusions about the ongoing discussion around the topic that had developed in a fragmented way through its exhibitions over the previous five years. Rather than being an international gathering, on this occasion only Italian academics took part. Intellectuals such as Emo Marconi, Paolo Filiasi Carcano, Felice Balbo, Giuseppe Flores D'Arcais, Mario Apollonio and Valerio Tonini, coming primarily from philosophical or theatrical circles in Milan, both leaning politically to the left and deeply influenced by Catholicism, addressed from very different angles how costume could be defined.<sup>108</sup> The new concept of capitalism, with its wider

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<sup>106</sup> E.R. [Egle Trincanato], 'La Mostra "Venezia Viva"', in *Casabella-Continuità*, n.202, 1954.

<sup>107</sup> In particular: *Convegno Internazionale della moda, del cinema e del teatro*, Palazzo Grassi, Venezia, 1951; *Premier Congrès International d'Histoire du Costume*, Palazzo Grassi, Venezia, 1952; *Premier Congrès International "Unité dans le Textile"*, Palazzo Grassi, Venezia, 1952; *Convegno sul commercio tessile con il medio oriente*, Palazzo Grassi, Venezia, 1954; *Teatro – Mito – Individuo, I convegno laboratorio*, Palazzo Grassi, Venezia, 1954; *Gli usi del commercio tessile in Italia*, Palazzo Grassi, Venezia, 1954; *Termine e concetto di Costume, II convegno laboratorio*, Palazzo Grassi, Venezia, 1956.

<sup>108</sup> Marconi was a playwright and critic engaged from the outset in the research centre of the CIAC. It was his play that was presented in 1952 at the theatre of Palazzo Grassi. He collaborated in Milan with Apollonio, founder, among other things, of the Teatro Piccolo. He was the first professor of History of Theatre in the



reach and mass production, was among the topics discussed, together with the relationship between cinema and costume, the semantics of costume and the aesthetics of costume.<sup>109</sup>

For the occasion, the CIAC's centre for studies prepared a document of about fifty pages for the participants of the congress, to set the terms of the debate and provide a briefing about the CIAC's history. Probably compiled by Marconi, the document underlines the importance of addressing the concept of *costume* from a psychological and a semantic point of view. Summarising the positions expressed by Marinotti in his first writings on costume, the document states that '*costume* is not just what we can identify as the framework of our life, but "what is done in a life".'<sup>110</sup> This meant that the history of *costume* built up so far through the CIAC's activities referred, on the one hand, to what could be identified as belonging to an historical moment in terms of lifestyle, while on the other hand it should act as a guiding principle around which contemporary man could build his activities and life. Reflecting on the history of the CIAC, the document continues:

if we go back and analyse exhibitions such as *La leggenda del filo d'oro* or *Venezia Viva*, and we notice that they did not want so much to show precious exhibits, but rather narrate an event in the history of man, it is clear that what interested the organiser was the research into a way of being human... When studying the Congresses of the centre...it is easy to recognise that is this problem of value that [the CIAC] wanted to put forward and stir up. But the word value recalls immediately two other concepts: freedom and conscience.<sup>111</sup>

This passage is interesting in respect to the present dissertation, since it implies that the CIAC was not primarily focused on providing the traditional aesthetic experience of an exhibition or a museum, but rather in creating an event, it could even be said an historic event, capable of helping the individual to understand him or herself. This is further explained by the contradictions pointed out by the document in the notion of costume

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Italian universities. Filiassi Carcano was a philosopher who developed his research around twentieth century philosophy, in particular Husserl's phenomenology and science of language, becoming Professor in 1953 at the University of Naples. Balbo was an active participant in the cultural life of post-war Italy, born in Turin and friends of Natalia Ginzburg, Cesare Pavese, Elio Vittorini and Norberto Bobbio, and worked at the Einaudi Press publishing house and wrote extensively on Catholicism and Communism. Flores D'Arcais was a researcher on pedagogy, Professor at Padua University, and wrote extensively about cinema. Tonini was mainly interested in philosophy of science.

<sup>109</sup> The proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> convegno-laboratorio, 27–29 September, are published in *Termine e Concetto di Costume. II Convegno-Laboratorio*, Venezia: Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume, 1957.

<sup>110</sup> *Tesi per una discussione sul costume e il suo significato*, Venezia: Centro Internazionale delle Arti e del Costume, 1956, p.3. My translation.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p.36. My translation.

when it comes to pairing together concepts such as freedom and conscience with an apparently opposite, and much more common, one that referred to a shared tradition, a habit. The ambiguity of the concept of costume can also be disclosed through its etymology, with reference to two Latin words: one is *consuetudinem*, meaning ‘the habit of doing something, or custom’. The other word is *mos*, originally meaning ‘willingness, power’, which only in late Latin became ‘norm of behaviour.’<sup>112</sup>

The 1956 document provided a solution to this conundrum, claiming that the basis for a society is reached when people share various habits at the same time. The origin of *costume*, instead, resides on the idea of an ‘atemporality of habit.’ This means that when someone identifies a habit, and complies with it, he or she is in a static condition, in which nothing is changed and he is contemporaneous to the positions of those with whom he shares the habit. But ‘if he or she manages to position him/herself in an atemporal way, if he or she is a creator of an attitude able to create relationships, affinities...then the static condition becomes dynamic.’<sup>113</sup> *Costume* has to be a free, informed and united act on behalf of those who are willing to perform in an atemporal way in respect to their present. Furthermore, it entails the notion of possibility, that something can be allowed to happen, and that can produce affinity either in the present or in the future, if the person is able to create affinities, and build a community. ‘The mistake of identifying habit with *costume* derives from the fact that it is not easy for us to conceive the *discontinuo* [the rupture] in history.’<sup>114</sup>

Therefore, the conclusion was that the CIAC and the history of costume should be focused along these lines, looking for those ruptures in history that created affinity and allowed a *costume* to emerge. From these premises, the notion of *costume* entails a moral duty on the side of the one who decides to make the break, being at the same time always part of society. Eventually, the document underlines the distinct positions that *costume* allowed the CIAC to maintain in respect to the other traditional historical disciplines and the phenomenon of fashion. The first tended to present even those ruptures instigated by those who acted in a discontinuous way with their own context as a natural development, while fashion, in constantly breaking habits, just repeated that very habit of making the break, remaining eternally contemporary to itself and its premise.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p.39. My translation.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p.43. My translation.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.44. My translation.

This document functioned as a blueprint for Paolo Marinotti's paper 'Uomo – Costume – Centro', with which he opened the symposium.<sup>115</sup> Still, it seems that he somehow misunderstood the fundamental premises of the document when, at the end of the three days of the conference, he spoke again, with a short note titled 'Etica dell'industria' (Ethics of industry).<sup>116</sup> In this paper, he claims ecstatically that after the symposium and its various papers, he has come to realise that the main purpose of the CIAC is to serve large-scale industry, the 'distinctive phenomenon of our times.'<sup>117</sup> With the advent of the industrial revolution, man abandoned his direct relationship with nature, radically changing his habits. Plainly attacking Marxist theory based on binary concepts such as capital and labour or employer and employee, Marinotti proposed to overcome these artificial distinctions (dramatically evoking a corporatist attitude, though in fact revealing the patronising attitude typical of the Italian industrialist): 'You need one person who organises and one who carries out ... Industry created a new relationship where at its base one has to recover humanity, responsibility and conscience.'<sup>118</sup>

Placing moral issues at the core of the concept of costume, therefore, became fundamental in leading large-scale industry to growth in a more correct and humanist way. 'A moral act means being interested in the end market of a certain production, to study the psychology of people, so you can enter into the lives of other populations and prepare for new possibilities of understanding.'<sup>119</sup> Significantly, at this stage, Marinotti through the CIAC was reinforcing capitalist arguments for neo-colonialism, probably without even realising it, as his rhetoric reflected the universal humanism that moved the West to impose its form of economics, politics and culture on the rest of the world. It is curiously impressive to see how someone holding such views in 1956 could become, in 1958, one of the closest Italians to an artist such as Asger Jorn, wary of capitalism and its ill-omened implications, and one of the founders of the Situationist International.

The symposium marked a turning point in the history of the CIAC. After that, Palazzo Grassi did not organise any more historical exhibitions on textiles or on the history of costume, dedicating its 1957 annual exhibition to Carlo Goldoni, and not presenting any form of exhibition at all in 1958. In an interview of 1967, Marinotti recalls how, around that time, he felt tired and at risk of repeating himself and falling into folkloristic nostalgia.

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<sup>115</sup> Paolo Marinotti, 'Uomo – Costume – Centro', in *Termine e Concetto di Costume*, pp.17–43.

<sup>116</sup> Paolo Marinotti, 'Etica dell'Industria', in *Termine e Concetto di Costume*, pp.193–5.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p.193. My translation.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p.194. My translation.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. My translation.

A document in his archive, dated 1958, reveals how he felt the need to align the CIAC with the trend followed by other cultural institutions promoted by private companies, institutions whose agenda focused on cultural issues related to the present – such as politics or music – and to a European context.<sup>120</sup> He points out how private companies support culture to invigorate both their international relationships and those universal humanist values so important to him. It was at that moment that he found those affinities in the characters of Willem Sandberg and Jorn that would allow him to create the *Cycle of Vitality*, a break both with the CIAC's activities and with Italian contemporary art exhibition culture.



Fig.67: *Il costume nel tempo*, CIAC, Venice, 1951, Room 10 (Baroque period), exhibition design by Augusto Bianchetti and Cesare Pea.

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<sup>120</sup> Paolo Marinotti, *Relazione al Consiglio Generale del 14 aprile 1958*, in APM, Milano, file 'Scritti e discorsi', 1958. Among the examples he mentions, for instance, the ISPI – Istituto per gli studi di politica internazionale (Institute for the Study of International Politics) – supported by Leopoldo Pirelli (despite the fact that his company produced tyres), or the interest of Krupp (by which he probably means Alfred Krupp, owner of the company producing steel) in music within the Fondation Européenne de la Culture, founded in Geneva in 1954. Paolo Marinotti discussed the document with the general assembly of the CIAC to obtain their support for taking the institution in a new direction. On this occasion, though, he does not yet mention contemporary art as the new field for the CIAC's exhibitions but simply argues for the need for change.

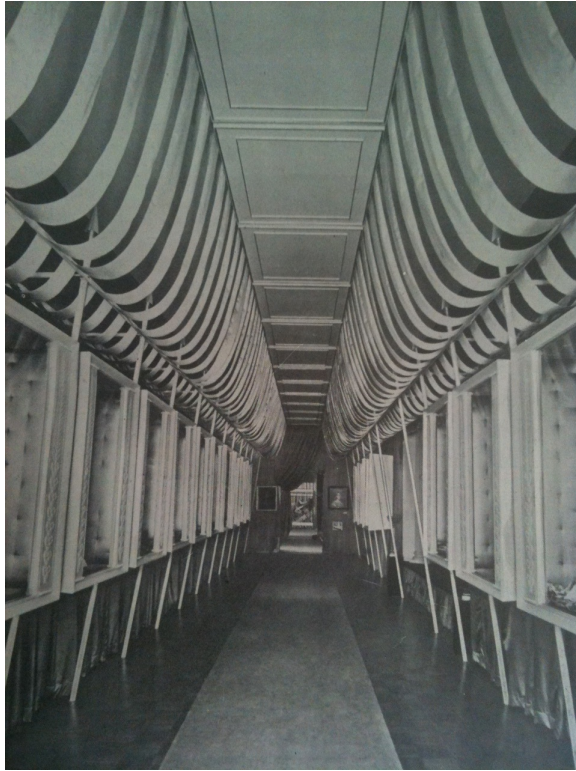


Fig.68: *Il costume nel tempo*, CIAC, Venice, 1951, *Room 15* (Neoclassical period), exhibition design by Augusto Bianchetti and Cesare Pea.



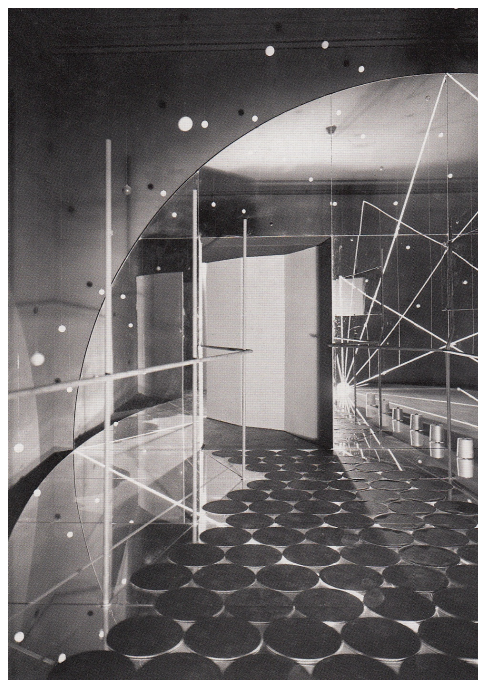
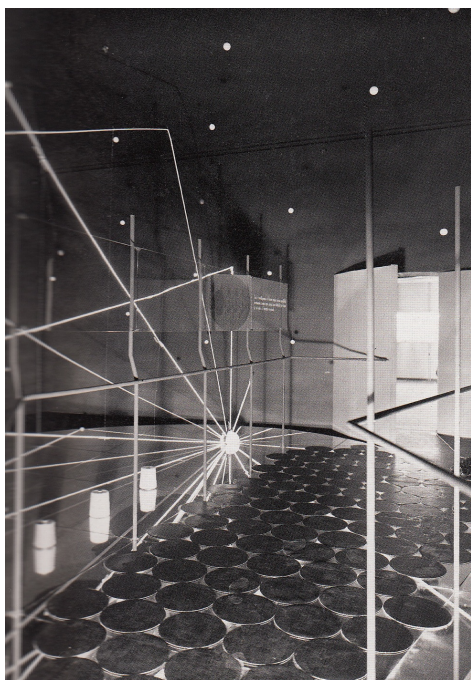
Fig.69: *Il costume nel tempo*, CIAC, Venice, 1951, *Room 1* (Greek period), designed by Marcello Nizzoli.



Fig.70: *La leggenda del filo d'oro – Le vie della seta*, CIAC, Venice, 1952, *Sala delle statue e dei restauri inglesi del XIV e del XVII secolo.*



Fig.71: *La leggenda del filo d'oro – Le vie della seta*, CIAC, Venice, 1952, *Sala dei tessuti genovesi del XVI secolo*, exhibition design by Franco Albini and Franca Helg.



Figs.72-3: *La leggenda del filo d'oro – Le vie della seta*, CIAC, Venice, 1952, *Miracolo della scienza*, exhibition design by Franco Albini and Franca Helg.

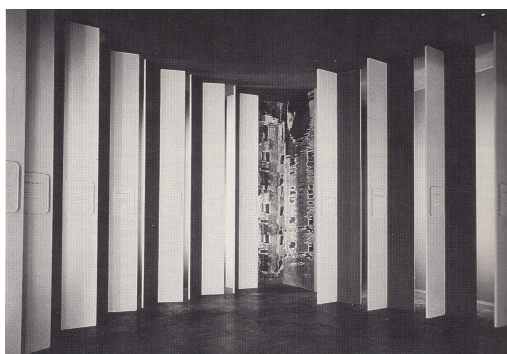


Fig.74: *Venezia Viva*, CIAC, Venice, 1954, *Sala dei poeti*, exhibition design by Marcello Nizzoli.



Fig.75: *Venezia Viva*, CIAC, Venice, 1954, *Mostra del settecento veneziano*, exhibition design by Franco Albini and Franca Helg.