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**Fabio Colonnese**

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*Acknowledgements*
*This article develops themes already presented in "Collage and Photomontage in the 1930s: Piero Bottoni's Architectural Designs", Studies in Visual Arts and Communication, 5, 1, 2018, p. 1-11. I wish to thank Giancarlo Consonni and Graziella Tonon for their annotations and Renzo Riboldazzi and Oriana Codispoti of the APB of Milan for their kindness and permission to reproduce Bottoni's documents and drawings.*

## Italian Architectural Photomontages

1 In the 1920s, Italian photography of architecture already presented peculiar qualities. This is exemplified in the pages of Gio Ponti's *Domus*[1] through its innovative use; and underlined by the words of Edoardo Persico,[2] who defined it as "critical," "living," "anti-rhetorical," "anti-illustrative" and capable of conveying a "real state of fantastic moments."[3] Photomontage was accepted in the Italian artistic and political sphere only in the late 1920s,[4] when it was already being practiced with articulated intent by some European architects.[5] Early experiments can be found in the work of futurist artists.[6] While Milanese Bruno Munari used it with an ironic tone to connote futurist themes,[7] the anomalous futurist-communist Vinicio Paladini, who was in contact with the Dadaist John Heartfield, was an exponent of the fleeting movement of *Imaginism* between 1926 and 1927, exploring a new synthesis of the arts through photomontage.[8]

2 Photomontage was also a protagonist in the lively debate triggered by the diatribes between rationalists and traditionalists in architecture. The Ligurian Pietro Maria Bardi began his experiments with photomontage in 1928 by comparing the buildings of young authors, such as Giuseppe Pagano and Giuseppe Terragni, with historical and historicist buildings, often with caustic results. His so-called "table of horrors" at the

second Exhibition of Rational Architecture in Rome (1931) established a sort of ground-zero for this kind of critical agency, tracing a red line in the clash between the two factions.[9] The many exhibitions organised by members of avant-garde groups or by exponents of the regime, who were relentless in their search for consensus and new forms of self-representation, often resulted in opportunities to experiment with innovative combinations of drawings, photographs and models. This was the case for the Fascist Revolution Exhibition of 1932, where architect-photographers such as Pagano and Marcello Nizzoli joined young architects such as Terragni and Adalberto Libera in the production of photographic collages, implicitly seeking the endorsement and institutional appreciation of the Duce.[10] Parallel to exhibitions and ephemeral architecture,[11] photomontage spread in the design communication of architects, especially in the context of competitions.

3 When some Milan-based architects attempted Roman architectural competitions,[12] several differences surfaced. Roman-trained architects were generally aligned with the tradition of graphite or pictorial rendering. This resulted from academic importance (the School of Architecture opened in Rome in 1932), architects often being both architects and artists (or set designers) all at once, and the presence of authoritative figures such as Gustavo Giovannoni and his idea of "integral architect."[13] Conversely, Lombard-based architects had grown up in an active community of entrepreneurs and industrialists, and were more interested in the potential of new media. In the context of the early competitions for public buildings, architects used photomontage above all as a ploy to integrate their work with that of artists, by inserting photographs of the artworks directly into the drawings. At the same time, they used it to contextualise photographs of scale models, pasting the sky, a background, and other secondary elements from photographic cut-outs. Yet, the rarity of these applications contributed to raising questions that often went beyond their institutional status of representation. The architects who used them were presumably looking for an expressive form to embody ideas that could not be conveyed by traditional techniques. Photomontage broke with the traditional academic canons—such as stylistic, perspectival, and proportional unity— also due to the difficulty of finding photographic elements that adhered perfectly to the spatial structure of the drawing. Furthermore, they introduced fragments of reality into graphic fiction, conveying meanings that came directly from the illustrated source. In addition to these, some of them enclosed meanings transcending the architect's intention of standing out or appearing generically modern.

4 At times, it could also be used simply as a ploy to get the consent of the committee members. This attitude can be seen in some entries to the first edition of the competition for the Palazzo del Littorio in via dell'Impero in 1934. While pictures of the model from the group headed by Terragni show photographic inserts of a crowd praising Mussolini, on the picture of the model by Luigi Figini and Gino Pollini's team, there are cut-out images of airplanes flying over Sabaudia during its inauguration. Sometimes, photomontages and collages could also reveal psychological or philological considerations, indirectly manifesting the inner dynamics of the design process. In the project for the Palazzo dei Congressi in Rome (1934), Libera, who was also a painter like Figini and Terragni, pasted a picture of an attractive and smiling woman in the foreground of the pencil perspective, which was anomalous for his representational practice. This could just be a visual reference, of course, but whenever interpreted as a prostitute, the woman can be assumed as a sign of Libera's submission to the columns

imposed by Marcello Piacentini.[14] Another interesting case involves the young Ludovico Quaroni, Francesco Fariello and Saverio Muratori, who used collage in the renderings of both the Court of Rome project in 1936 and the Piazza Imperiale project at the E42, in collaboration with Luigi Moretti. In a rendering of the latter project, they pasted a photographic fragment of the St. Peter's colonnade in the foreground, to show the visual effect of the supports they had shaped (fig. 1). Although they manipulated the base of the columns—in particular, the torus is obliterated—the result can be interpreted as a critical-philological exhibition of the "return to columns" addressed by the last phase of the regime through a simplification of historical models.

**Figure 1. Francesco Fariello, Luigi Moretti, Saverio Muratori, Lodovico Quaroni, Photomontage of the Piazza Imperiale at E42, 1938-1939**



Archivio Centrale di Stato (ACS), EUR.

## Piero Bottoni

5 Piero Bottoni (1903-1973) was one of the most active and curious architects working in Milan, who applied scientific methods to the functional organization of space inspired by "Taylorist and Fordist dictates to the domestic sphere" but always aimed at a "humanisation of the domestic landscape."[15] During his university years, he also attended human figure drawing courses at the Academy of Fine Arts, practicing as a painter and sculptor;[16] and bonded with some of his Lombard colleagues, from Piero Portaluppi to Giuseppe Terragni. In 1927, he presented his *Cromatismi architettonici*[17] —a project to design urban perception through the colour of facades—in Monza, Zurich, and Rome, at the First Italian Exhibition of Rational Architecture, eventually mailing it to Le Corbusier. His aspiration to have a direct relationship with the European masters

was fulfilled in 1933, when Sigfried Giedion invited him to participate in the 4th Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM). On the cruise from Marseilles to Athens, he was able to speak personally with Le Corbusier, László Moholy-Nagy—who was making a documentary on the conference—and Cornelis Van Eesteren—a photomontage author as early as the 1920s,[18] who was to become one of his most sincere friends.

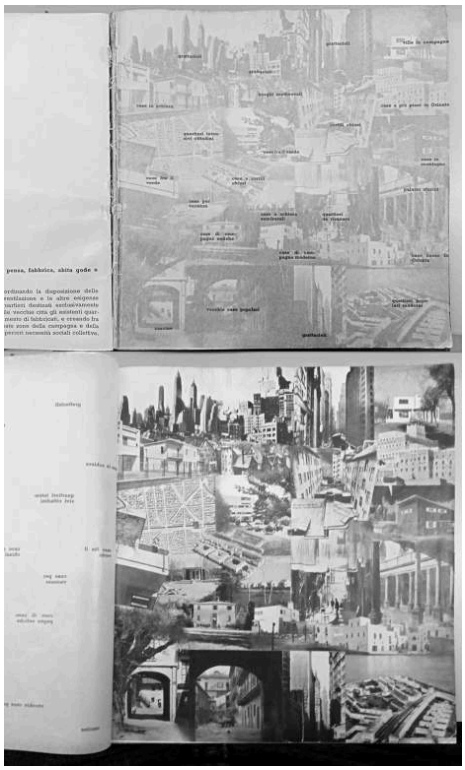
6 As an active member of CIAM, Bottoni was a promoter of advanced European ideas, both by collaborating with the *Rassegna dell'Architettura* and organizing exhibitions and conferences. He also supported the renewal of architectural culture from a rationalist point of view through his activity as a total architect who dealt with designing the human environment "from the spoon to the city"—to quote the famous slogan Ernesto Nathan Rogers would formulate at the Charter of Athens in 1952.

7 Parallel to his interest in European architecture, Bottoni explored the potentials of cinema within architectural development, even before the technology of sound synchronized with images would turn it "into the most important instrument of entertainment and indoctrination."[19] In 1927, while still a student, he wrote the article "Cinema, trends and hopes," alongside Antonello Gerbi, underlining the artistic opportunities of the *cinematografo* with regards to the major arts.[20] On the occasion of the 8th Milan Triennale of 1933, he directed and presented *A day in the Council House* (*La giornata nella casa popolare*) together with Ubaldo Magnaghi, a short movie intended to valorise and preserve the house-prototype he had built in the nearby park with Enrico Griffini. He also stimulated the use of cinema in the definition of a general development plan for Como with Terragni and many others,[21] and presented four surrealistic scenes for an "imaginary movie" that resulted from a partial photographic inversion of frames from existing movies[22] at the 1936 International Exhibition of Tourist-Scientific Cinema of Como.

## Photomontage and Collage

8 In 1932, the presentation of Bottoni's elegant interiors and pieces of furniture for Casa Contini on the pages of *La Casa Bella* (later *Casabella*) already revealed a specific interest in photomontage as a tool to illustrate the urban space of Ferrara.[23] Bottoni presented the same kind of urban-oriented photographic collage in *Urbanistica,* the book he published in 1936.[24] He used these "dioramas" to introduce the basic concept of urban design, eventually placing a page of transparent paper before them to add captions to the different parts (fig. 2).

Figure 2. Piero Bottoni, Urban photomontage with Captions on the Transparent Page and without

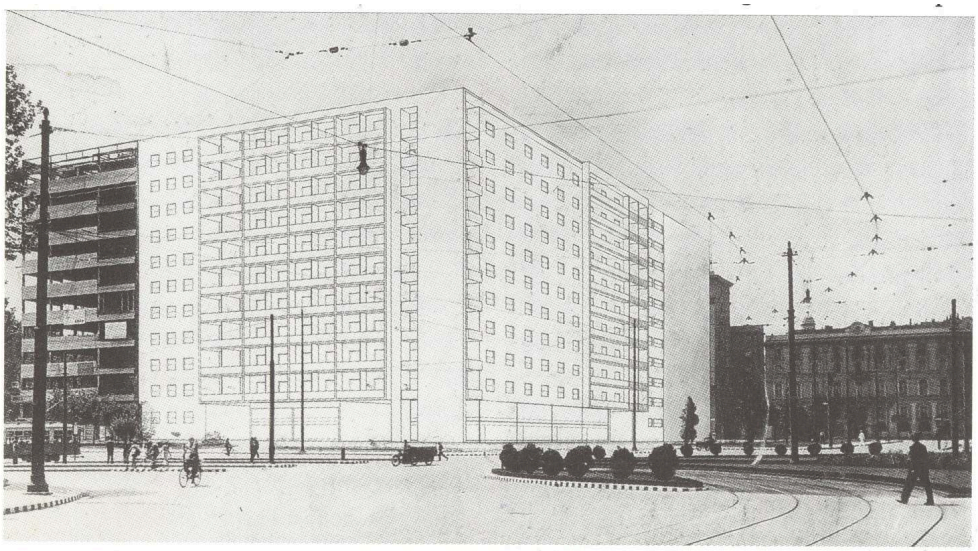


Source: *Urbanistica*, 1936, n.p.

9 Rather than using simple square portions, like in some dioramas, the photographic pieces were cut out following the form of specific visible elements, or pasted to suggest the presence of vanishing points shared by adjacent pieces. In this sense, they were designed to form a new unity, in addition to a sort of multifocal perspective to be explored in detail, like when moving a camera lens along a landscape. In the same book, a project for a rationalist residential district in New York was presented through the montage of a bird's eye view of the buildings, using black ink, set within a photographic view of Manhattan from the East River.[25]

10 Since 1934, when Le Corbusier had accepted his invitation to give conferences in Rome and Milan, the architectural drawings of Bottoni had been showing influences from European Rationalism. They also presented the early results of an explicit contamination between drawing and photography that he was exploring, both within exhibition devices and architectural communication. His projects began to show proposals in two complementary senses: on the one hand, Bottoni experimented with photomontage by inserting design perspective views or pictures of the *maquette* within photographs of the site; on the other, he explored the collage by pasting human figures, furnishing accessories, trees, and cars onto traditional ink drawings.

**Figure 3. Piero Bottoni, Giacomo Prearo and Mario Pucci, Residential building in Piazza Fiume, Milan, 1934**



Milan, Politecnico, DAStU, APB op. 100.

11 The former modality was exemplified by a 1934 rendering of the neoplastic-inspired building in Piazza Fiume, Milan, that he designed with G. Prearo (fig. 3). Like the following Manhattan district, the ink wire-frame perspective view of the building, although inserted with perspective consistency in the photo, contrasts markedly with the rest of the square. The three large photomontages of the 1937 project for piazza Duomo[26] are rather different. The designed buildings—the *loggia-arengario* and the building in piazza Giovinezza/Mercanti—are rendered in shades of grey and shadows to obtain a more realistic and mimetic simulation. The photomontage of piazza Giovinezza/Mercanti also introduces the modality of the collage. Here, the façade of the new building is almost obscured by the group of four men in the foreground (fig. 4), taken from one of his personal photographs. As Bottoni was also a photographer and used his own pictures for his montages, the choice of the figures he pasted onto his drawings may reveal a specific intent. In this case, it is interesting to note that Bottoni himself is visible in the group. This is rather surprising and uncommon in the coeval architectural representation. Since the Renaissance, artists have occasionally reproduced themselves in their pictorial works, but this circumstance seems more like a cinematic cameo which had been practiced, for example, by Alfred Hitchcock in his own films since 1927.

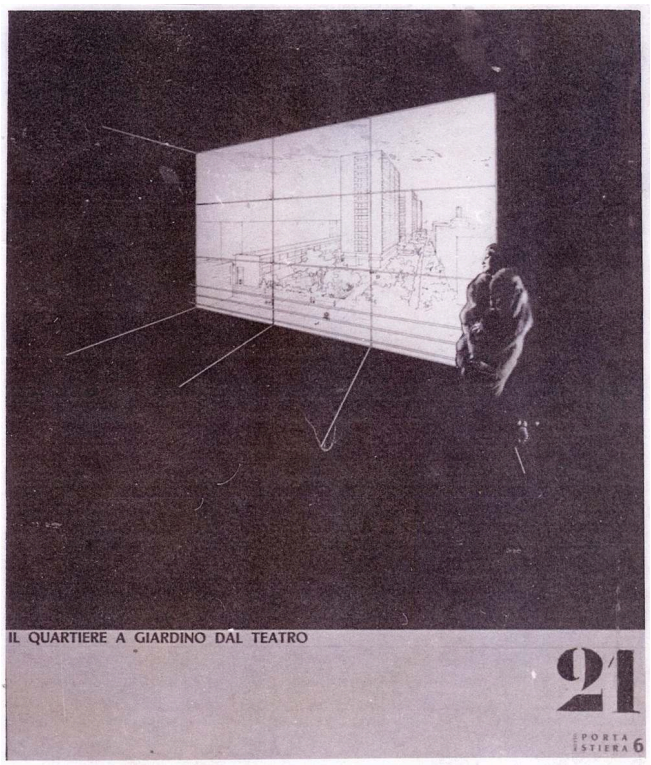
Figure 4. Piero Bottoni, G. Luigi Giordani, Mario Pucci, Design of Piazza del Duomo in Milan, 1937



Photo-reproduction of the perspective photomontage of piazza Giovinezza/Mercanti, positive, black-and-white, 17,4 x 16,2 cm. Milan, Politecnico, DAStU, APB, op. 155, Photographs, 18.

12 By pasting photographic figures onto traditional ink or graphite drawings, Bottoni obtained different goals. First, he could reproduce elements that would be long and hard to draw, like the interior murals pasted in the section of the Arengario building in Piazza del Duomo.[27] Second, he attributed them with a narrative role that transcended their institutional function of scale reference for design space (especially the human figures), and not only through his cameos. In the first phase of the competition for via Roma in the centre of Bologna (1936-1937), Bottoni's team tried to safeguard the existing historical fabric as much as possible and proposed a small rationalist garden-city. In particular, the plate 21 (fig. 5) of their entry shows a wireframe perspective view of the designed buildings, framed by a window of the "theatre." However, the black cardboard *passe-partout* around it makes it look like a cinema screen; the narrative key of which seems to be confirmed by the seductive figure of Marlene Dietrich, dressed in fur and posing beside it.

Figure 5. Piero Bottoni, Nino Bertocchi, G. Luigi Giordani, Alberto Legnani, Mario Pucci, Giovanni Ramponi (Porta Stiera 6), Urban design of via Roma in Bologna, 1936-1937

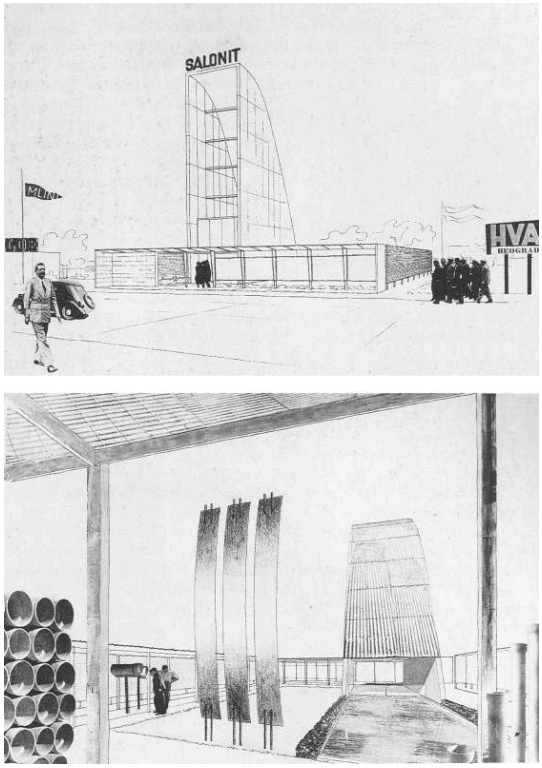



Milan, Politecnico, DAStU, APB, op. 153.2, Black Album, 1.

13 In the second phase of the competition (1937-1938), Bottoni was called to merge his team with the other two winning groups[28] under the supervision of Marcello Piacentini, who was instead promoting the demolition of part of the historic centre. The pencil and graphite views show the project buildings as masses, without windows but with chiaroscuro and strong shading. This rendering transforms the project into "an ambiguous scene [...] in which the fascist mystique could be recognized—beyond the intentions of the creators."[29] The photographic figures pasted on the perspective contribute to this interpretation, looking like models posing for some popular illustrated magazine.

14 The typology of the building might have had an influence on Bottoni's use of either traditional techniques or photomontage in architectural communication. The wireframe perspective views of his project for the Salonit pavilion at the 1934 Belgrade Fair were enriched with human figures as well as cars, flags and advertising signs taken from photographs (fig. 5). These served to demonstrate the use of the metal frames as an exhibition structure, indirectly revealing a congruous use of ready-made elements for a structure designed to exhibit industrial products. They also evoked the ephemeral and changing atmospheres of stands and pavilions, whose "fresh advertising architectures"[30] were also legitimised by Giuseppe Pagano.

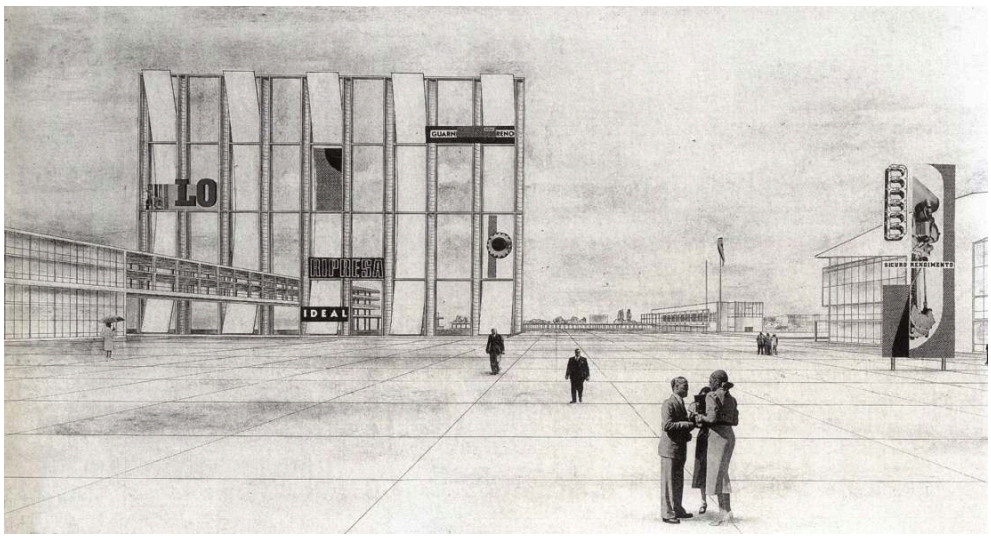
Figure 6. Piero Bottoni, Padiglione Salonit at the Belgrado Fair, 1935




Milan, Politecnico, DAStU, APB, 151, Black Album, 15.

15 Similar solutions can be found in the competition entry for the new Milan Trade Fair that Bottoni designed together with Terragni, Lingeri, Mucchi and Pucci from 1937 to 1938. The wide perspective views of the main entrance show a dilated and rarefied space that evokes the squares of the ideal cities painted in the Renaissance. The absence of a consolidated urban context probably also emancipated Bottoni in the representation. The space is delimited by flagpoles, vertical grids, perforated passages and trees. The unusual coexistence of drawn and photographic elements can be attributed to the complementary approach of Terragni—who used pencil drawing and chiaroscuro—and Bottoni—who mixed ink and collage. Colourful photographic fragments also complement the perspectives attributed to Terragni,[31] with people, vehicles, signs, and advertisements (fig. 7).

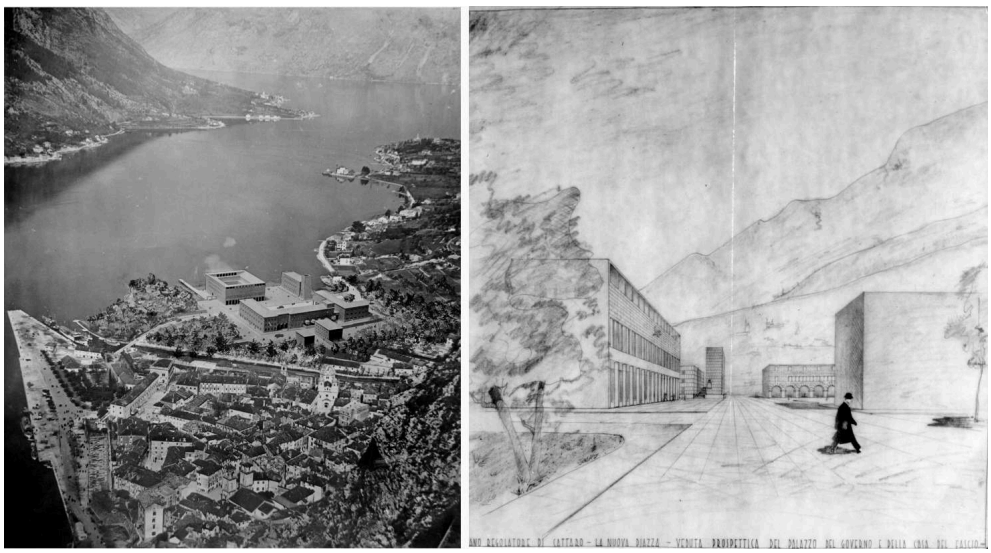
**Figure 7. Piero Bottoni, Pietro Lingeri, Gabriele Mucchi, Mario Pucci, Giuseppe Terragni, Design of the new Trade Fair in Milan, 1937-1938**




Black ink and graphite on cardboard and photographic collage, 57,5 x 94,3 cmMilan, Politecnico, DAStU, APB,167, Drawings FPB, 13.T254.

16 Photomontage also gave Bottoni the opportunity to valorise the landscape and the role of architecture by ascribing new meanings to it. In the context of a general plan coordinated by Adriano Olivetti from 1936 to 1937, Lodovico Belgioioso and Bottoni introduced the landscape and social conditions of the Valle d'Aosta by combining large photos and elegant statistical diagrams. They also presented their project for the Conca del Breuil by inserting pictures of the model, with its evident contour lines, into the photos taken by Bottoni himself. An analogous attention to the landscape—a composite morphology of bays and mountains—was featured in the project for the Civic Centre of Cattaro (Kotor) in Italian Albania (today Montenegro) in 1942. In this case, the Archivio Piero Bottoni (APB) preserves several pencil and ink sketches and perspective views of the buildings around a piazza inspired by San Marco in Venice. One of these shows the figure of Bottoni himself walking across the piazza, while another presents a low bird's eye view inserted into a photograph of the city. Added to these, three photomontages show the picture of the model included on photographs of the city taken from either the top of the mountain (fig. 8) or the opposite side of the bay, generally with tempera additions and modifications to better merge the various parts.[32]

**Figure 8. Piero Bottoni, Mario Pucci, Leone Carmignani, Design of the New Civic Centre of Cattaro, 1942**

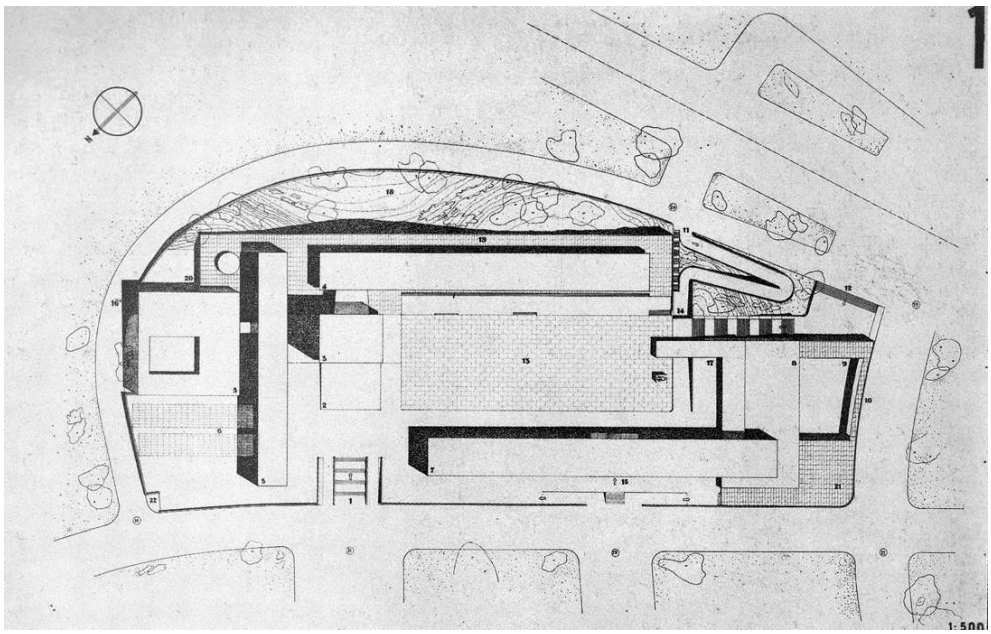


Photomontage from the top of the hill; perspective view of the piazza, black ink, graphite and collage. Milan, Politecnico, DAStU, APB, 204, Photo 47; p. 18.

## Collage Architecture

17 The practice of photomontage and collage had the consequence of not only addressing the communication of the project towards original and recognisable hybrid typologies, but also influencing the design approach of Bottoni, who seemed to experiment the potential of collage in terms of composition as well. In the summer of 1937, he took part in the "Competition for the Design of the Buildings of the Armed Forces" at the 1942 Universal Exposition in Rome, or E42 (then the EUR district).[33] The program prescribed the construction of buildings to house the museums of the Army, Aeronautics, and Navy. The large perspective views in pen present the artworks of Jenny Wiegman Mucchi and figures of soldiers cut out from photographs, according to a methodology already described in the previous cases. Here, the innovative element is the general composition of the buildings. The sketches preserved at the APB testify to a gradual abandonment of symmetrical solutions, in favour of an asymmetrical arrangement of the volumes around a barycentric transparent cubic shrine. The conclusive general plan, which ended up ignoring the curvilinear shape of the lot, is the result of a sort of collage of rectangular shapes to be turned into slabs and boxes (fig. 9).

**Figure 9. Piero Bottoni, Gabriele Mucchi, Mario Pucci, General Plan for the Armed Forces Buildings at E42, 1937-1938**



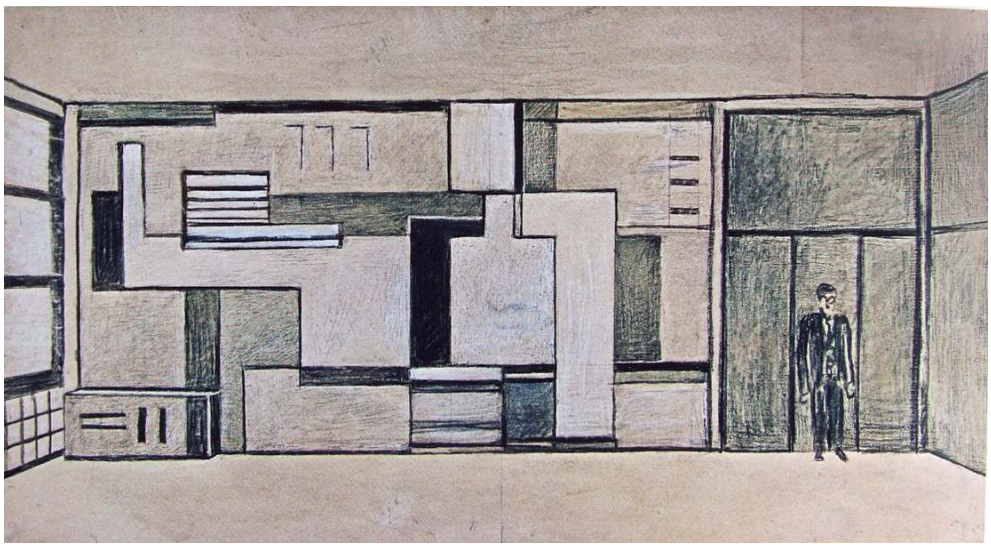

Print on paper.
Milan, Politecnico, DAStU, APB, op. 168.

18 Beyond considerations on the urban superiority of bodies in line over closed blocks,[34] the compositional vocabulary finds its figurative (or rather anti-figurative) reference in the abstractionist experiments of the European avant-gardes of the previous decade. In 1936, just one year before this project, a conspicuous part of those experiments had been celebrated in a popular exhibition on Cubism and Abstract Art at the MoMA in New York. In the catalogue of that exhibition, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. associated the plan for the brick country house designed by Ludwig Mies van de Rohe with *Rhythm of a Russian Dance,* painted by Theo Van Doesburg in 1918, establishing the artistic ancestry of his architecture from the De Stijl movement.[35] Although a personal opinion of Barr, such an association between an architectural plan and an abstract painting found extraordinary success at that time, consequently endorsing a concept that was already evident among architects.

19 In analogy with that association, surprising figurative similarities can be found between Bottoni's plan of the Armed Forces Buildings and the works of Mario Radice. The Como-based painter was a friend of Bottoni, and the circulation of ideas and techniques between the two can also be supported by other circumstances. Together with Figini, Pollini, Luciano Baldessari and Pietro Lingeri, Bottoni and Radice founded *Quadrante* in 1932 and participated in the 5th Triennale in Milan, under the supervision of Bottoni himself. Between 1936 and 1938, Radice was working with Terragni at the Casa del Fascio in Como. His *Composition C.F. 123 B* (1934) convinced Terragni to interrupt his years-long collaboration with the figurative painter Mario Sironi[36] and place Radice's large mural model (fig. 10) in the Sala del Direttorio,[37] making the Casa del Fascio the first Italian public building with an abstract decoration. Moreover, Bottoni and Terragni were friends and had just designed the new Trade Fair in Milan together, which was largely illustrated with photomontages. Terragni himself was exploring the potential of photographs and videos in the Casa del Fascio with Nizzoli,

along with its presentation in *Quadrante.*[38] In this sense, Bottoni's attitude to collage might have favoured his interpretation of Radice's work in an architectural key.

**Figure 10. Mario Radice, Study for the Large Fresco Plastic Mural for the Sala del Direttorio in the Casa del Fascio, 1936-1938**



Charcoal and biacca on paper, 56 x 102 cm.
Como, Civic Pinacoteca

## Considerations

20 After the war, Bottoni had the opportunity to be a director once again, filming the construction of the *QT8 Experimental District* for the 8th Triennale in 1948 and producing a huge painted diorama of the whole district for the Palazzo dell'Arte.[39] Meanwhile, he kept on producing photomontages for the presentation of his projects, at least for a while. Starting from a photograph of the model, he created a mixed media perspective on cardboard of the garden house project at QT8 in Milan (1945, 1950-1951 with Mario Pucci; fig. 11).

Figure 11. Piero Bottoni, Mario Pucci, Garden House at the QT8 District, Milan, 1945/1950-1951

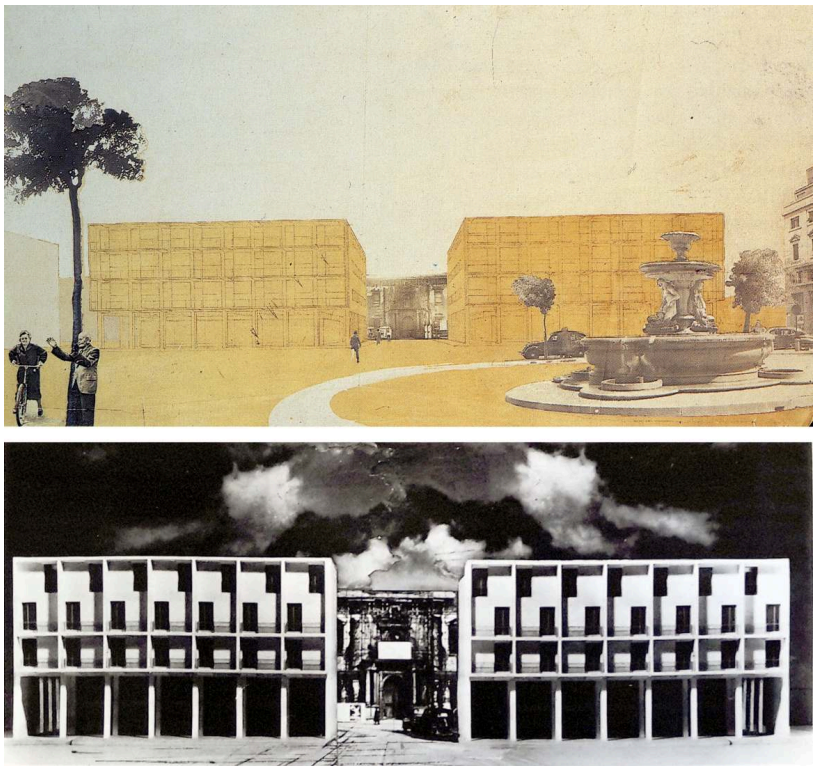


Photographic collage and painting on cardboard, 32,7 x 61,4 cm.
Milan, Politecnico, DAStU, APB 234-1.

21 The project for the twin buildings in Piazza Fontana in Milan (1952-1955) was also presented by two interesting works created in mixed media. The first is a panel showing a perspective drawing of the two buildings on yellow paper with black-and-white photographic inserts of a large fountain, a pine tree, and various human figures—some of which can be seen in the foreground—while the sky is painted with white tempera. The result resembles the atmosphere of neorealist movies which were *in auge* in the late 1940s, like Roberto Rossellini's and Vittorio De Sica's masterpieces.[40]

22 The second is a contextualized photograph of the model, obtained in an ingenious way that deserves a brief explanation: Bottoni enlarged a photograph of the existing building's façade under a cloudy sky at the right scale of reduction, glued it onto cardboard and placed it standing vertically onto a table. He modelled the two main facades of one of the two cubic buildings he had designed (and took some shots of the two facades combined, simulating a corner view of the building). As only one of the buildings had been actually modelled, Bottoni took a frontal shot of it, experimenting different light conditions, and mirrored the photo. Then he assembled the picture with a mirrored version of it, to create a picture of the two buildings together. Finally, he added a new photographic sky over the original (cutting the clouds with great attention), also to hide the two side towers of the existing building in the background, using black and white tempera paint to hide the scaffolds in front and to add some details (fig. 10).[41] The inconsistent shadows in the images of the two facades reveal the trick, but also add a metaphysical tone to the image.

Figure 12. Piero Bottoni, Design for Twin Buildings in Piazza Fontana, Milan, 1952-1955



Collage on yellow paper, 54 x 102 cm (above); photomontage of the model (below).
Milan, Politecnico, DAStU, APB. 333, Photography, 23.

23 These last examples demonstrate that Bottoni possessed not only an extraordinary craftsmanship in creating images through the combination of different techniques, but also a personal artistic sensitivity in conveying fragments of reality in the design communication. Extending the words that Polin wrote about the work of Figini and Pollini, whose representational practice has several points in common with Bottoni's,[42] those collages "have introduced almost hyper-realistic tones in the project panels, constituting an autonomous language over the years, a particular form of expression capable of giving further suggestions to perspective and free-hand drawing."[43]

24 However, Bottoni especially adopted photomontage during the years of fascism. He used it to find his own, personal way of illustrating his projects in competitions in order to convey a whole series of innovative cultural elements which, in the context of the gradual closure of the fascist regime, would acquire a critical and even subversive sense.

25 His specific contribution to the development of photomontage in the architectural design field is characterised by two main aspects: an ironic approach and the visual negotiation of cinema. Although not appreciated by both futurists and the regime, irony was an attitude he shared with friends and colleagues. His teacher and friend Piero Portaluppi had drawn caricatured figures in his architectural renderings,[44] while the young Terragni drew caricatures under the pseudonym Pepin Zanzaresco.[45] Both Bardi and Paladini[46] had demonstrated that photomontage could be used to deride their 'retrograde' colleagues, while Munari's visionary collages seemed capable of corroding the credibility of institutions through the potential of the naive and the imaginary. Although the Italy of the 1930s was still not aware of the implicitly subversive nature of

photomontage, in Europe it had already aroused institutional reactions. Further, after *Berlin Fotomontage*, Curt Glaser's exhibition showed the production of Bauhaus and John Heartfield's collages in 1931:

> the Nazi regime had to acknowledge, reluctantly, that photomontage was always identified with leftist agitation. This was why Nazi propagandists, after some initial attempts with the medium, rejected it as Bolshevik. Although Futurism was officially accepted as a modernizing force in fascist Italy, here too the use of photomontage declined.[47]

26 From 1936 onwards, fascism joined its German ally in this crusade against abstract and surrealist artistic research. The illustrated magazine *Popolo d'Italia* suddenly rejected Bruno Munari's surreal collages as, "too experimental to be examples of art, and [they] were evidently no longer tolerable in the journal of the National Fascist Party."[48] Photomontages were then permitted only for innocuous commercial advertising or as ancillary to architectural representation. Terragni, who had also practiced photomontage, was likely opposed by Roman institutions—he built none of his projects for Rome—also due to this attitude towards abstraction and media experimentation, which attracted criticism from both his supporters and the late guardians of fascist values.[49]

27 In addition to irony, Bottoni's original contribution was related to the use of cinematographic models, an attitude that he shared with Paladini. Bottoni considered cinema an innovative and powerful form of art. Already in 1927, he complained that "the distracted and hasty public [...] looks for spectacle more than art" in movies, stressing how all of the new artistic techniques "looked at cinema for inspiration or adopted cinematic expedients."[50] He hoped cinema could express its artistic potential, already testified by expressionist German works,[51] to become a real *fonte di letizia* (source of joy). In the 1930s, Italian cinema was a growing industry involving famous artists and disseminating hundreds of foreign movies. Falasca-Zamponi pointed out that "fascism was slow in discovering cinema as an instrument of political use, despite the enormous success of the medium as a private pastime for Italians."[52] Despite occasional censorship and propaganda movies, Bottoni could have considered cinema as a sort of oasis of creative freedom, a *fonte di letizia* still spared from the interference of the regime. While the figure of Lucia Bosè in the foreground of the rendering of Pavilion 34 at the Fiera di Milano may only be a homage to the Italian star,[53] the decision to place 'actors' along via Roma in Bologna can be interpreted as an injection of popular realism as well as a veiled criticism of Piacentini, who was to sacrifice the urban historical heritage. The reference to cinema is manifest in the perspective view with Marlene Dietrich, where the drawing of the new buildings actually appears projected onto the white cloth of a 'movie house.' On the one hand, the figure of the German star seems to mediate a glimpse of the German-style modernist city drawn behind her, without shadows and materials (as well as his beloved German movies); on the other, it evokes her open dissent to Nazi activities, which caused her to apply for American citizenship in March 1937, probably in the same days in which Bottoni was assembling this panel. In this sense, the figure of Bottoni himself walking in the empty piazza of Cattaro in 1942—almost a fake scenography of Venice—might look like a sort of self-exiling at the periphery of the Italian Empire.

28 Beyond his drawings, photographs and movies, cinematic elements also feature his architecture—think of his post-war monuments, full of human figures moving, acting and staging[54] —as well as writings — think of the story of the Monte Stella at the QT8.[55]

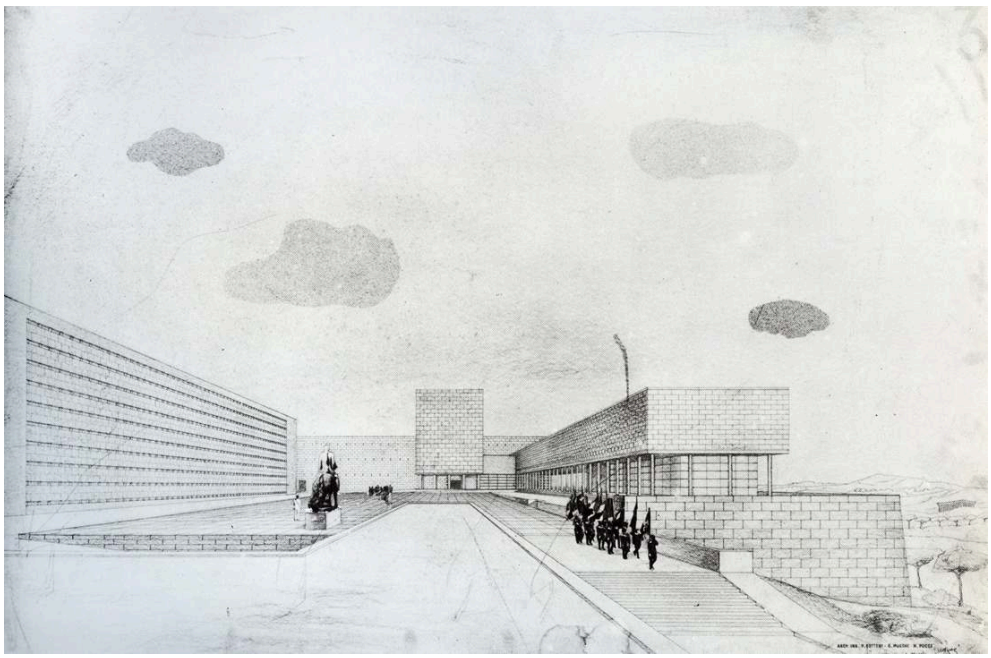
Still in 1967, he was reiterating the importance of cinematography in urban design, explaining that in "this new spatial dimension of urban design, which involves a whole territory and in which the pedestrian dimension has no determining value, the cinematic experience or methodology, in the sense of sequence of space in motion, can effectively contribute as a tool of design or, at least, of verification."[56]

## Conclusions

29 In the early 1930s, Bottoni and the Milanese rationalists believed that rational architecture could interpret the revolution of which fascism claimed to be the social and political bearer.[57] Although Bottoni was convinced that "the battle for modern architecture," which began in 1927, had ended in 1936 with the success of the VI Triennale,[58] he considered it something distinct from the values of fascism. Being of communist vocation and not being a member of the fascist party, he had to give up the voluntary assistantship at the Milan Polytechnic,[59] subsequently suffering the effects of the racial laws of 1938, which provoked the persecution of his mother, who was of Jewish origin.[60] In 1939, the extension of autarchy to the cinematic industry led to a reduction of the distribution of American movies, later putting a stop to it, as it accounted for 75% of ticket revenues.

30 Signs of unease and dissent with respect to the choices of the regime can be read not only in Bottoni's use of photomontage, but also in specific drawings that seem to record "the suffering of those who are bearers of an ideal tension of social transformation, and for whom the course of events proves to have been misplaced."[61] It is no coincidence that, with the publication of the project in *Casabella* 158—a special issue dedicated to the "lost opportunities" of recent Italian architecture—the perspective view of the Buildings of the Armed Forces square (fig. 13) is purged of the figure of marching soldiers (which can still be seen in the drawing preserved in the archive).[62] This is an early example of post-production editing that reveals not only Bottoni's true state of mind, but also the intrinsic political and rhetorical nature of photomontage in architectural drawings.

**Figure 13. Piero Bottoni, Gabriele Mucchi, Mario Pucci, Design of the Armed Forces Buildings at E42, Perspective View of the Square, 1937-1938**



Panel 3, black ink and graphite on cardboard and photographic collage, 80x118 cm.
Milan, Politecnico, DAStU, APB, op. 166, 29.

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## NOTES

**1.** Gio Ponti, “Discorso sull’arte fotografica”, 1932.
**2.** Giulia Veronesi (ed.), *Edoardo Persico*, 1964, p. 269 and 276.
**3.** Maria Ida Catalano, “Tra la parete e la pagina”, 2018, p. 125 (transl. by the author).
**4.** Nanni Baltzer, Die Fotomontage im faschistischen Italien, 2013.
**5.** For example, Martin Stierli argues that Mies van der Rohe’s photomontages of the several versions of the 1921 Friedrichstrasse skyscraper mostly served to promote himself in publications and exhibitions and to develop an architecture in terms of collage and film editing. See Martin Stierli, “Mies Montage”, *Aafiles*, 61, 2011, p. 54-72.
**6.** Giovanni Lista, “Futurist Photography,” *Art Journal*, 41, 4, 1981, p. 358-364.
**7.** Pierpaolo Antonello, “Bruno Munari. Il mio passato futurista”, 2012.

**8.** Vinicio Paladini's *Fotomontage* (*La Ruota dentata. Movimento Immaginista*, February 5, 1927) is a sort of autobiography of his trip to USA. See Ilaria Schiaffini, "I fotomontaggi immaginisti di Vinicio Paladini", 2013, p. 57-58.

**9.** Think of the members of the Milan-based Group 7, who first merged into the Italian Movement for Rational Architecture (MIAR) and then into the Group of Modern Italian Architects (RAMI).

**10.** Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, "Italian Architects and Fascist Politics", 1980, p. 109-127.

**11.** Massimiliano Savorra, "'Perfetti modelli di dimore'", 2005, p. 120

**12.** Piero Cimbolli Spagnesi, "Roma 1921-43. I concorsi di architettura", 2007.

**13.** Gustavo Giovannoni, "Per le scuole d'Architettura", 1907; "Gli architetti e gli studi di architettura in Italia", 1916.

**14.** Giorgio Ciucci, *Gli architetti e il fascismo*, 1989, p. 195-196.

**15.** Giancarlo Consonni, Lodovico Meneghetti and Graziella Tonon, *Piero Bottoni: opera completa*, 1990, p. 60-61 (transl. by the author).

**16.** Lodovico Meneghetti, "La città cromatica", 1983, p. 23.

**17.** Fabio Colonnese, "Chromatic gradation", 2017.

**18.** In 1924, Van Eesteren was invited by Theo Van Doesburg to collaborate on a design for a shopping arcade with cafés and restaurants in The Hague. The perspective view presented at the contest shows a human figure of the Greek sovereign Constantine cut out of newspaper and pasted onto a traditional ink rendering.

**19.** Lutz Becker, *Cut & paste*, 2008, p. 13.

**20.** Antonello Gerbi and Piero Bottoni, "Cinema, mode e speranze, 1927", *Il Convegno*, 5, 1927, p. 293-296.

**21.** Andrea Mariani, Gli anni del Cineguf. Il cinema sperimentale italiano dai cine-club al Neorealismo, Milano-Udine, Mimesis, 2017, p. 88.

**22.** The three panels still preserved in the APB show: "positive characters on a negative scene," from Charlie Chaplin's *The Circus*, 1928; "positive character with negative characters and scene," from René Clair's *Un chapeau de paille d'Italie*, 1928; "negative character with positive characters and scene," from Buster Keaton's *Free and Easy*, 1930. See Giovanna D'Amia and Andrea Mariani, "Le Manifestazioni Internazionali", 2017, p. 93.

**23.** Edoardo Persico, "Ferrara: città del silenzio e il suo primo alloggio moderno", *Casabella*, 54, 1932, p. 30-39.

**24.** Piero Bottoni, *Urbanistica,* 1936.

**25.** Ivi, p. 78.

**26.** September 1937, with Luigi Giordani and Mario Pucci, Milan, Politecnico di Milano, DAStU, APB, op. 152. See Fabio Colonnese, "Drawing, drafting, designing, and pasting", 2020.

**27.** Milan, Politecnico di Milano, DAStU, APB, op. 155, Drawings, p. 55.

**28.** In this sense, Piacentini was the leader of a group consisting of P. Bottoni, N. Bertocchi, L. Giordani, A. Legnani, M. Pucci, and G. Ramponi, A. M. Degli Innocenti, A. Pini, G. Rabbi, A. Susini and A. Vitellozzi. See Milan, Politecnico di Milano, DAStU, APB, op. 158.2.

**29.** Giancarlo Consonni, *Piero Bottoni a Bologna e a Imola*, 2003, p. 18 (transl. by the author).

**30.** Giuseppe Pagano, "Tre anni di architettura in Italia", 1937, p. 2-5. Bottoni's project at page 110.

**31.** Consonni and Tonon, *Terragni inedito*, 2006, p. 78-93.

**32.** 1942, with Leone Carmignani and Mario Pucci, Milan, Politecnico, DAStU, APB, p. 204, Fotografie, p. 18 (walking man), p. 12 (perspective view in photo), p. 41, 44, 47 (photomontages).

**33.** 1937, with Mario Pucci, Gabriele Mucchi and the artist Jenny Wiegman Mucchi, Milan, Politecnico, DAStU, APB, op. 168. See Fabio Colonnese, "Photo-Collage and Rhetoric of Regime", 2018, p. 1353-1366.

**34.** Bottoni, *Urbanistica,* 1936.

**35.** Martins, 2001, p. 124

**36.** Caramel, 1968; Mario Radice, "Le decorazioni," *Quadrante. Mensile di arte, lettere e vita*, 35/36, 1936, p. 33.

**37.** Cristina Casero, "La Casa del Fascio di Como e le sue 'decorazioni', 2010.

**38.** Even before the building was finished, Terragni had involved Bardi and Nizzoli in the preparation of a double issue of *Quadrante*, the magazine directed by Massimo Bontempelli and close to the positions of the Italian rationalists. Terragni had commissioned Nizzoli to design photomechanical panels on the facade and photographic installations to complement Radice's abstract decorations, part of the facade having been redesigned as a screen for projections of propaganda films.

**39.** The diorama is attributed to Marcello Nizzoli with Enzo Cerutti, Vittorio Gandolfi, Cesare Pea, Angelo Bianchetti and Gian Luigi Giordani.

**40.** Think of Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (1945) and De Sica's *Ladri di bicilette* (1948) and *Miracolo a Milano* (1951).

**41.** Milan, Politecnico, DAStU, APB, 33, Fotografie, p. 23. Amongst the many photographs preserved, some reveal the photographic set arranged by Bottoni (photo 42), leftovers as well as the source of the pieces used for the final photomontage.

**42.** They also used photomontages in the design communication and had arranged a photographic set in their office with a table and a cloudy sky background in watercolour or photography.

**43.** Giacomo Polin, "Five memos for Figini & Pollini", 1997, p. 272 (transl. by author).

**44.** Antonello Negri, "Cinque album e fogli sparsi. Piero Portaluppi disegnatore umoristico e satirico", 2003, p. 183-191.

**45.** Giancarlo Consonni and Graziella Tonon, *Il "lapis zanzaresco" di Pepin,* 2004.

**46.** David Rifkind, *The Battle for Modernism,* 2012, p. 32.

**47.** Lutz Becker, *Cut & paste,* 2008, p 13.

**48.** Antonello Negri, "Opere d'arte e artisti nella stampa periodica fra le due guerre", 2013, p. 30 (transl. by the author).

**49.** Sergio Poretti, "Casa del Fascio di Como", 1996, p. 402-404.

**50.** Gerbi and Bottoni, "Cinema, mode e speranze, 1927", p. 294-296 (transl. by the author).

**51.** The original manuscript of the article presents unedited parts that reveal Bottoni's additional lucid considerations: "In the representation of an idea, cinema surpasses the heavy obstacle of the word (...), the fixity of the pictorial image (...). Every caption disappeared into the cinematic work of art. Futurism (...) has returned all the arts to the study of Volumes: that and the study of the 'spaces' resulted in the new German cinema, one of the few organic attempts to form movies of art". Milan, Politecnico, DAStU, APB.

**52.** Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle,* 1997, p. 143.

**53.** I thank Oriana Codispoti for this suggestion.

**54.** See the Ossuary of Partisans at the Certosa of Bologna, 1954-59, and the Monument to Resistence in Sesto San Giovanni, 1962-63.

**55.** "*Giacché sogno e poesia muovono, malgrado le apparenze, il mondo*" (As dream and poetry move, despite the semblances, the world). Piero Bottoni, "Ascensione al Monte Stella", in Graziella Tonon (ed.), *Piero Bottoni. Una nuova antichissima bellezza*, 1995, p. 457-476.

**56.** Piero Bottoni, "Spazio Statico e Dinamico", in *ivi*, p. 477-479 (transl. by the author). This paper was originally presented at the conference *Urbanistica e cinematografo: lo spazio visivo della città*, held in Bologna, 1967.

**57.** Graziella Tonon, "Un ponte verso l'Europa", 1983, p. 34 (transl. by the author).

**58.** Piero Bottoni, "Rendere popolare la Triennale di Milano", 1953 (1995), p. 286.

**59.** Giancarlo Consonni, Piero Bottoni a Bologna e a Imola, 2003, p. 38.

**60.** Giancarlo Consonni, Lodovico Meneghetti and Graziella Tonon, *Piero Bottoni: opera completa*, 1990, p. 95.

**61.** Ibid.
**62.** Milan, Politecnico, DAStU, APB, op. 166, p. 29.

## ABSTRACTS

Italian architects began to adopt photomontage and collage techniques only at the end of the 1920s. In the decade before the Second World War, these techniques provided architects with a visual key to distinguish themselves from the academies' canonical representation; to seek an affiliation with the European avant-gardes; and to be recognisable in architecture competitions. They also constituted a critical tool for investigating and designing. Their peculiar evolution is exemplified in the work of the Milanese architect Piero Bottoni. Passionate about photography and cinema, Bottoni used these techniques for different purposes, not least their latent political and subversive potential, which was already implicit in the work of the artistic avant-gardes. In this sense, the analysis of some of his photomontages, which are today preserved in the Archivio Piero Bottoni (APB) at the Milan Polytechnic, reveals both his intent to introduce an anti-academic, ironic and realistic language, as well as the importance of cinema as an original source for architectural communication. Parallel to colleagues such as Giuseppe Terragni, Figini and Pollini or Ludovico Quaroni, Bottoni explored these techniques in the political context of the fascist regime, which initially promoted any kind of original artistic research; and then gradually converged towards a reactionary, conformist and populist classicism which would isolate creative voices.

Les architectes italiens n'ont commencé à utiliser le photomontage et le collage qu'à la fin des années 1920. Dans la décennie précédant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, ces techniques offraient aux architectes un moyen pour se différencier visuellement des canons des représentations académiques, pour s'inscrire dans le sillage des avant-gardes européennes et pour se distinguer dans les concours. Elles leur servaient aussi d'outils critiques d'investigation et d'expérimentation. L'œuvre de l'architecte milanais Piero Bottoni illustre une telle évolution. Passionné de photographie et de cinéma, Bottoni utilisa ces techniques pour différentes fins, en particulier pour leur potentialité politique subversive, déjà implicite dans les œuvres artistiques d'avant-garde. De cette façon, l'analyse de certains de ses photomontages, qui sont conservés aujourd'hui à l'Archivio Piero Bottoni (APB) del Politecnico de Milan, révèlent son intention d'introduire un langage anti-académique, ironique et réaliste qui s'inspirent des modèles visuels du cinéma. Parallèlement à ses collègues tels que Giuseppe Terragni, Figini et Pollini ou Lodovico Quaroni, Bottoni a exploré ces techniques dans le contexte politique du régime fasciste, qui au début soutenait toute recherche artistique originale, mais qui s'est graduellement réorienté vers un classicisme réactionnaire, conformiste et populiste, tendant à isoler les voix créatives.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** Piero Bottoni, Design Communication, Cinema and Photomontage, Architectural Competitions, Collage in Architectural Design

# AUTHOR


## FABIO COLONNESE

Fabio Colonnese is an architect and senior researcher at Sapienza University of Rome, Italy, where he teaches Descriptive Geometry, Architectural Survey and Drawing. He has taken part in major survey campaigns in Italy and Turkey. His PhD study on the labyrinth and its manifold relationships with art, architecture, and the city was published in *Il Labirinto e l'Architetto* (2006); while *Movimento Percorsi Rappresentazione* (2012) deals with the relationship between the experience and image of architecture. His research concerns design representation, from industrial design to urban scale, and currently focuses on the intangible heritage of architectural archives.