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The Regime and the Creation of an 'Arte di Stato'

The expression 'arte di stato' (literally 'State art'), which is crucial to understanding Fascism and its aesthetic politics, refers to the Italian context in which it arose and was almost exclusively used.¹ There is no exact equivalent for the expression in English, and the art officially supported by totalitarian regimes is referred to mainly as 'official art', or more specifically 'totalitarian art', the title of the best-known and most influential book on the subject, written by art historian Igor Golomstock. In *Totalitarian Art*, Golomstock claims that 'in a totalitarian system art performs the function of transforming the raw material of dry ideology into the fuel of images and myths intended for general consumption' (1990, xii), a statement which holds for all the twentieth-century totalitarian regimes that he examines (Germany, Italy, Russia and China). However, significant differences existed between these regimes' approaches to national art, and Italian Fascism certainly stood somewhat apart in this landscape, as Golomstock acknowledges, for, while he takes 'total realism' as the sole truly defining art form sponsored by totalitarian regimes, he recognizes that in Italy 'the process of its formation stretched out over two decades and was never fully completed; it was not until 1938 that Fascist culture ever came close to total realism' (1990, xiv).

In point of fact, Fascism's attitude towards the arts was never one of repression, imposition or the election of one single 'official' style, but rather one of inclusion, diversity and even the encouragement of antagonistic aesthetic styles, as several scholars have argued (e.g. Malvano 1988a; Fagone 1982, 44; Schnapp 1993; Stone 1998; Adamson 2001; Cioli 2011). In general, the regime took pride in supporting 'good' art, with the aim of educating the masses and helping forge them into a **new civilization**, and also of promoting the achievements of Italy's 'national genius' (Bottai 1992, 76; Bottai 1943, 16, 85). Critics have used various terms to describe this distinctive approach to cultural politics, from Marla Stone's 'hegemonic pluralism' (1997, 207), to Roger Griffin's 'totalitarian pluralism' (1998, 20), and Affron and Antliff's simple statement that it was 'heterogeneous in nature' (1997, 17). This chapter will explore the notion of *arte di stato/State art*, the type of relationship established under the regime between the arts and politics, and the system of the arts that was put in place by it, in order to demonstrate the relevance of State art to the existence and legitimation of the dictatorship. **The Fascist 'system' of the arts** is to be conceived as a network of interconnected parts and positions, not existing independently, but rather in constant interdependence both between each other and with the regime. These positions were determined by a social functionality attributed to the arts, linked to a moral obligation to 'build' a Fascist culture (see Billiani 2018, 382).

Fascist art, or art supported and advocated by the regime, occupied an intermediate position between autonomy and heteronomy. While not totally independent of the regime, the autonomy of artistic creation would be at least partly preserved during the dictatorship, in accordance with the dominant Crocean tradition, which prioritized artistic autonomy (Ben-Ghiat 2001, 23–24), and also with Italy's unique artistic tradition, which was exceptionally rich, prestigious and deep-rooted. In the view of the most prominent Fascist intellectuals and officials in the field of culture, such as Bottai,² and indeed Mussolini himself, if art were to be made subordinate to politics, on a German or Soviet model, it would become mere propaganda. This would not only deprive art of its very nature (see Malvano 1988b, 56–57), but also render it ineffective for the purposes of the regime, because in order to be 'effective', convincing, and

therefore instructive, art had first to be of high quality and aesthetic value (see Bottai 1992, 146; Ben-Ghiat 2001, 23). While the complete autonomy of art and artists was out of the question, included as they were in a totalitarian project in which everything was subordinated to the superior interests of the State, belief was nevertheless widespread that the need for the arts to maintain a certain degree of autonomy coincided with the interests of the State. At the end of a topical survey on Fascist art carried out in the journal *Critica fascista* between 1926 and 1927 (discussed below), Bottai inveighed against mediocre and grotesque propaganda artworks filling 'the headquarters of *fasci*, trade unions, and many town halls', 'bringing great disgrace to our artistic civilization' (Bottai 1927, reprinted in Bottai 1992, 74).³ The attacks by less progressive and more extremist members of the Fascist party, like Roberto Farinacci and Telesio Interlandi, against modern art and against such a 'permissive' artistic policy were for the most part rejected, or not taken seriously. Their attempts at introducing conservative aesthetic models and repressive measures, following the German example, were generally considered unsophisticated and inappropriate by authorities in the field, and were never very successful (Fagone 1982, 50–51; Stone 1998, 179–90).

The regime's intervention in the field of culture was more directed towards the control and management of the networks and institutions that enabled artists to perform their activity than the indication of a specific style or aesthetics to follow—a major undertaking that art historian Sileno Salvagnini has defined as 'the colossal Fascist project of integrating Italian art into the apparatus of the state' (Salvagnini 1988, 7; see also Masi 1992, 22; Cioli 2011, 209–13; Salvagnini 2000). The regime sought to exercise control over the means, contexts and 'occasions' involved in the production and enjoyment of art, first and foremost through a coordinated system of exhibitions, ranging from the 'mostre sindacali', on a local level, to major events like the Biennials, Triennials and Quadrennials (Maraini 1934, reprinted in Cazzato 2001, 43–46; Salvagnini 2000, 13–45; Cioli 2011, 209–311; Fagone 1982, 47–49). This attempt at management and control also included various forms of direct financial support for artists (besides that provided through exhibitions), such as grants and prizes, like those awarded by the Accademia d'Italia (Ben-Ghiat 2001, 24; Masi 1992; on prizes, see Salvagnini 2000, 87–126).

This system of material aid also sought to win the support of intellectuals and artists and lead them to engage with the regime, in an effort to build a solid consensus among the intellectual classes, seen as instrumental to the legitimization of Fascism and to the consolidation of its power. As late as 1939, well into the more authoritarian (or totalitarian) phase of the regime, Bottai—the main driving force behind Fascist cultural policy—reiterated an idea which he had consistently put forward since the 1926–1927 debate on *Critica fascista*:

The State neither formulates aesthetics nor accepts any given aesthetics. The State simply acts so that artistic work is serious, concrete, and productive; and wants artists' conditions to be such as to grant them the necessary ease of work. (Bottai 1939, quoted in Bottai 1992, 37)⁴

Art critic and historian Vittorio Fagone, one of the curators of the 1982 exhibition *Annitrenta, arte e cultura in Italia*⁵—which first challenged the widespread post-Fascist consensus that the Fascist regime had produced no culture worthy of the name—has defined the culture of Fascism as a 'pragmatic culture', reprising an expression used by Karl Mannheim (Fagone 1982, 44). This more practical and less normative approach undoubtedly enabled Fascism to carve out a much more extensive and rooted presence for itself in a country with a prominent artistic tradition like Italy, than would have probably been the case had it adopted a normative and repressive approach. Whether or not the Fascists succeeded in reforming the artistic system in Italy and gaining control of Italian artistic culture,⁶ they certainly managed to enrol many artists and intellectuals in the cultural 'mission' of the dictatorship (Stone 1998, 65; Cioli 2011, 209–13; Salvagnini 2000, 330–54; see also Isnenghi 1979), thanks largely to this 'tolerant' approach to the arts, which allowed the regime to include and absorb within itself very different artistic forms and movements (Fagone 2001, 11–12). Indeed, a key objective of these movements would increasingly be to prove that they, and not others, were the main representatives and interpreters of the values of the Fascist revolution and of Fascist modernity.

Defining Fascist Art

In 1926, Mussolini made two key speeches on the question of art and its relationship with Fascism: on 15 February, at the opening of the first exhibition of the [Novecento group](#), in Milan; and on 5 October, at Perugia's Accademia di belle arti (Mussolini 1934, 279–82, and 427). In the former, Mussolini stated that Fascist art would not need to figuratively depict Fascist 'subjects' or scenes, but rather embody Fascist values, a theme revisited frequently in later debates, as will be shown in this book. He argued that the 'marks' of recent events, like the war and especially the advent of Fascism, were not immediately visible in the vast majority of the works, insofar as these were not direct representations of historical-political events (and were therefore not works of explicit propaganda); but the 'mark' was nevertheless present in the values and moral qualities embodied in the artworks' aesthetic characteristics. Specifically, the new art showcased at the exhibition distinguished itself from that of the previous period, and was therefore innovative; it was the result of strict inner discipline and deep, even painful, effort, rather than easy craftsmanship; it was 'strong', like Italy after two wars. Mussolini identified certain common aesthetic features: sharp, clear lines; rich, vivid colours; and the 'solid sculptural quality of things and figures', which all point to an effort towards construction and rationalization that would be the hallmark of processes of [artistic modernization](#) in the Fascist period, in particular, as our analysis here will show, those relating to architecture and the novel. Yet, while these features unquestionably defined the Novecento style, they were also intentionally left rather loose and generic. More than anything else, they seem to point to the anti-impressionistic and anti-subjective turn that would, in broad terms, characterize Italian interwar art. The qualities of an artwork belonging to the Fascist era were thus to be found more in its 'morality' and the values it embodied, than in its subject matter or in any clearly defined aesthetic style. These artworks 'did not celebrate the regime *tout court*, but the very essence of the regime: Italy's genius, tradition, and modernity' (Cioli 2011, 48). The importance of the notion of 'morality' to the development of Fascism and its value system would be unequivocally stated by Mussolini in his first

cogent attempt at defining an ideological framework for Fascism, *The Doctrine of Fascism*, published in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* of 1932. There, he claimed that ‘whilst the fascist state did not have its own theology, it did have its own morality’ (Gentile 1990, 229). Accordingly, the moral aspect of art was a key question around which the debate on Fascist art revolved, as we will be arguing in this book.

At Perugia’s Accademia delle belle arti, Mussolini unequivocally affirmed the crucial role and importance that Fascism ascribed to the arts, although in his usual rhetorical and formulaic terms. He claimed that ‘art marks the dawn of any civilization’ and stated the need to create ‘the new art of our times, Fascist art’. He defined this simply as ‘great art, which can be traditionalist and modern at the same time’, giving a foretaste of the ambiguity and ‘inclusiveness’ that would mark Fascist artistic policy over the course of the regime. This speech gave rise to an open debate published in the pages of the journal *Critica fascista* that can be taken as a pivotal moment in the definition and development of Fascist cultural policies, and in the strengthening of the relationship of interdependence between the regime and intellectuals, which Fascism had sought to achieve since its inception (Schnapp and Spackman 1990, 236). *Critica fascista* was a periodical founded by Giuseppe Bottai in 1923 as a forum for intellectual and artistic discussion.⁷ According to historian Albertina Vittoria, Bottai and his collaborators were those most aware among Fascist officials of the need for a ‘[nexus between culture and cultural policy](#)’, and *Critica fascista* incorporated the question of culture into the broader project of construction of the State and the formation of the ruling class (Vittoria 1980, 327–28). In October 1926, Bottai launched a survey on Fascist art, asking artists and intellectuals to express their opinions on what Fascist art should be. The debate drew wide participation from artists and intellectuals, including Ardengo Soffici, Mino Maccari, Gino Severini, [Massimo Bontempelli](#), Cipriano Efisio Oppo, Curzio Malaparte, [Filippo Tommaso Marinetti](#), [Anton Giulio Bragaglia](#), Umberto Fracchia and Emilio Cecchi. Their contributions were published in the journal between 1926 and 1927.⁸

Echoing Mussolini’s speeches, most contributors seemed to agree that Fascist art had to be engaged and socially meaningful, but without being propagandistic or explicitly political; it had to be unmistakably Italian

and connected to the prestigious Italian tradition, yet modern, and not a mere imitation of the past; and it had to be 'national', 'of the people', [placing the artist in a new relationship with the collectivity](#). Alessandro Pavolini, who had been a Fascist activist since the very beginning, and was at that time collaborating with several Fascist journals, called for a *rapprochement* between artists and the people (Pavolini 1926). Maccari, artist and director of *Il Selvaggio*, and writer-journalist Malaparte rejected the idea of Fascist art as an aesthetic school or tendency, declaring that it should instead be the interpreter of a specifically Italian modernity (Maccari 1926; Malaparte 1926). Writer and intellectual [Bontempelli](#) reprised the principles of his Novecento movement (see Chap. 5), and stated the need for an anti-subjective art concerned with 'building things' ('costruire cose'), telling stories and creating new myths and tales (Bontempelli 1926a). [Bragaglia](#), the director of the Roman Teatro Sperimentale degli Indipendenti, maintained that the profile and reputation of a dictatorship are built through the arts, more than through an 'exemplary administration' ('una amministrazione esemplare') (Bragaglia 1926, 417). For him—and his particular focus was on theatre and cinema—Fascist art should be, first and foremost, modern, innovative and revolutionary. The architect Alberto Jacopini, focusing on architecture, described Fascist art as being marked by 'frankness, clarity, simplicity, order, and truth' ('schiettezza, chiarezza, semplicità, ordine, verità') (Jacopini 1926, 455); in short, by morality and rationalized aesthetic means. It is worth pointing out that nobody tried to define Fascist art in terms of style and subject, nor provide 'aesthetic guidelines' (apart, perhaps, from [Marinetti](#), who of course advocated [Futurist art](#), but without really discussing aesthetics). Fascist art could only be defined negatively, by what it should not be: not Romantic (Pavolini); not academic, and against any style taking inspiration from past traditions, like neoclassicism (Bragaglia); not decadent (Fracchia); not cosmopolitan and not 'French' (Malaparte).

Bottai continued to pursue this line in his final article 'Resultanze dell'inchiesta sull'arte fascista', in which he attempted to draw some conclusions (Bottai 1927, reprinted in 1992, 71–79). Significantly, the first section was entitled 'How Fascist art must not be' ('Come non deve essere l'arte fascista'): summing up the majority view, Bottai concluded that it

should not be ‘fragmentary, syncopated, psychoanalytical, intimist, or crepuscular’ (*frammentaria, sincopata, psicoanalitica, intimista, crepuscolare*) (Bottai 1992, 72). He drew a parallel with architecture to describe the only real tendency he could see in Fascist art thus far, alluding to the notion of art as reconstruction—a notion which forms the basis of our argument in this book—visible in the tendency towards ‘more solid, more full, more powerful constructions’, generated in turn by the same tendency at work in the political field, and in line with the native Italian tradition (*ibid.*). He thus established a direct connection between aesthetics and politics, both of which were driven by an urge for reconstruction. As Roger Griffin has demonstrated in his study on ‘generic Fascism’, paligenetic myths were foundational to Fascist ideology: ‘fascists believe the destruction unleashed by their movement to be the essential precondition to reconstruction’ (Griffin 1993, 47).

Bottai did, however, express disappointment that most contributions had not gone beyond vague and generic discussions, and had not considered whether manifestations of Fascist art already existed, and what the regime could do to encourage them; in other words, the [practical aspects of establishing an artistic system under Fascism](#), which he deemed crucial. He stated the need for artists to be integrated into society, unlike in the liberal state. Artists ‘need[ed] the State’, firstly in terms of economic support, which according to Bottai, they would receive through the system of trade unions,⁹ and secondly, and most importantly, in terms of ‘artistic, moral, and spiritual assistance’ (Bottai 1992, 75). He alluded to a process of evaluation and selection of artists and artworks, which would take into account their value as artists and intellectuals of Fascism, based not only on aesthetic but also on ethical criteria. This task would be entrusted to the Accademia d’Italia—founded in January of that year, but only inaugurated in November 1929—which despite its name would be an anti-academic institution, dynamic and creative. Its duty would be that of

encouraging any form of intellectual and artistic expression and manifestation, which [...] reflects the historical and immutable nature of the Italian genius, and is able to recreate this genius into a style that is its own, and is unmistakable from that of any other people. (*Ibid.*, 76)¹⁰

Who would be the judges in this *Accademia*—a task that, even in the view of its promoter Bottai, would be 'extremely hard'? (ibid., 75). Again, Bottai's indications were quite indeterminate: 'The academics will be chosen among the lively, distinguished Italian Fascist personalities of the Nation' (Ibid., 78).¹¹

This crucial debate in *Critica fascista* can be taken as emblematic of the ambivalence and contradictions that the regime fuelled and never resolved in its cultural politics, as highlighted by Schnapp and Spackman (1990, 237). The debate, and the contributions of artists and intellectuals, revolved around certain key words and themes like 'Italianness', 'national', 'revolutionary', 'classical', 'tradition', and 'modernity'. Not only were some of these words antithetical, but they were also versatile terms, which could be interpreted in different ways. Their vagueness was exploited to maintain a certain level of ambiguity while formulating the pompous and highly rhetorical statements typical of Fascism, as some of the excerpts previously quoted demonstrate. The idea of 'Italianness', for instance, was a highly rhetorical concept, and one that each artist or movement could claim for themselves, bending it towards modernity or tradition, according to their aesthetic beliefs. This ambiguity was not exclusive to Fascist discourse on the arts and culture. Fascism's versatile cultural politics were rooted in the regime's ambivalent attitude towards the key notions of tradition and modernity, which generated a simultaneously anti-modern and modernizing rhetoric. Fascist ideology consisted of a powerful, but sometimes contradictory, combination of revolutionary and reactionary values. An emphasis on the idea of revolution and the palingenetic myth of the construction of a new world and a new civilization coexisted with the idea of a 'return to order', a cult of Romanness, and various anti-modern myths, found for instance in the regime's ruralist, anti-urban propaganda, and its conservative views of family, gender relations, morals and social life in general (Griffin 1993, 47; Gentile 2003, 59–62).

In the artistic field, where Fascist myths were supposed to be produced, this self-contradictory ideology generated the 'pluralist' aesthetic approach referred to above. More specifically, it translated into the regime's endorsement of diverse, and even antithetical, artistic movements, which fought for hegemony, that is to say, for the right to be proclaimed the regime's

official ‘State art’ (Cioli 2011, 160). The most famous of these ‘battles’ opposed the dominant aesthetic movements [Futurism](#) and [Novecento](#).¹² The connection between Fascism and Futurism was foundational, owing to the Futurists’ role in the creation of the *Fasci di combattimento* (Gentile 1982, 152–158; 1988; 1996 [1975], 167–87; Cioli 2011, 21–24). For this reason and for the many ideological elements they shared with Fascism¹³—at least its early, revolutionary version, the so-called *fascismo diciannovista*—the Futurists expected to be automatically elected as the exclusive artists of the ‘revolution’.¹⁴ For them, ‘it was not Futurism which should be labelled Fascist, but the exact opposite, because it was Fascism that had originated from Futurism’ (Cioli 2011, 171). However, the regime never elected one movement, or style, as official Fascist art, and intermittently supported both Novecento and Futurism.¹⁵ [Futurism embodied the revolutionary side of Fascism, its leaning towards modernity](#), while Novecento—whose ‘creator’, Margherita Sarfatti, defined *Novecentisti* as ‘the revolutionaries of the modern restoration’ (‘i rivoluzionari della moderna restaurazione’) (Sarfatti 1925, 127)—represented its conservative and populist side, expressed in [the return to order and to the Italian tradition, and in a legible figurative language](#). A similar battle for hegemony happened in the field of architecture, chiefly between the proponents of rationalism and monumentalism (see Chap. 4). Fascism’s ambition, expressed in its eclectic cultural politics, was to absorb these conflicts within itself, without seeking a resolution, in an attempt to reach ‘concord’,¹⁶ a national style which would encompass these different factions, so that all good Italian art would be Fascist art.

The Role of Artists and the Arts in the Public Sphere

The debate in *Critica fascista* highlighted the belief of many artists and intellectuals that art was the most important, effective and noble instrument for the education of the masses, for [bringing about spiritual renewal and a change in mentality](#). We find this idea expressed very clearly, for instance, in Maccari’s article:

It cannot be denied that art is the most delicate and formidable political instrument for the development of a people. It is certainly the purest spring from which the sentiments of national pride, of sacrifice for the motherland, of love for the traditions of race, boldness, and civic consciousness flow down to the nation. [...] Any excellence in any field of intellectual activity is art. (Maccari 1926, 397)¹⁷

This was very much the role that Fascists ascribed to, and expected from, intellectuals and artists. At the same time, 'excellence in any field of intellectual activity' would bring prestige to the regime, and be the 'final nail in the coffin' of the democratic era ('l'ultimo colpo d'ascia da vibrare all'età democratica') (Aniante 1927). These, then, were the principles that inspired the regime's extremely keen interest in the arts and guided the steps of the Fascist 'azione per l'arte'.¹⁸ The ultimate goal of the regime was the modernization of the Italian nation, not only in political and social terms, but also morally and culturally. Mussolini envisaged a process of national regeneration in which political revolution and social modernization were to be accompanied by a 'revolution of the mind', which would, in Emilio Gentile's words, 'form the sensibility, the character, the consciousness of a new Italian, who would comprehend and confront the challenges of modern life' (Gentile 2003, 46). This cultural and moral revolution would be brought about through the creation of myths for the new modern civilization, a 'palingenetic mythology' of Fascism that would undermine 'the modernity of enlightenment reason' as another undesirable element of bourgeois society, favouring a different model of modernity grounded in 'activism, instinct and irrationalism' (Braun 2000, 6).

Artists and intellectuals were enrolled in this mission and given the critical role of 'demiurges' and educators for the regime. They were entrusted with the central palingenetic process of the creation of myths for the new Fascist era and the constitution of the regime's symbolic space. The case of Mario Sironi and his aesthetic-visual mythology grounded in the themes of the nation, work and the family, and stylistically, from the 1930s onwards, in mural painting, provides the archetypal example, extensively examined by Emily Braun in her seminal work (Braun 2000; see also Griffin and Feldman 2004, 129–30). Therefore, as

Gentile aptly pointed out, Fascism cannot only be understood in terms of the ‘aestheticization of politics’, as famously theorized by Walter Benjamin (1939, reprinted in 2003, 251–83), but also in terms of the specular process of the ‘politicization of aesthetics’ (Gentile 2003, 43), and of culture. The regime, with the expectations it placed on producers of art and culture, changed both their role and their relationship not only with power, but also with society. Artists and intellectuals renounced the complete autonomy and separation from society and power that had been their goal since the Romantic age, and became absorbed in the totalitarian mission of the regime, playing an active and central role in it (Iannaccone 1999, 37–38; see also Isnenghi 1979).

Art was no longer valued as the privileged means of expression of the artist’s subjectivity, instead becoming the highest embodiment of the thrust and the spirit of the collectivity. Artists and intellectuals were thus expected to leave their ivory towers and engage with the people, the masses, whom they were supposed to guide and educate. In so doing, they would become instruments for the mass legitimation of the regime, but in return, they would receive the material and symbolic rewards (financial support and enhanced social status), which they craved. The following, for instance, is an excerpt from an article written in 1932 by eminent artist [Carlo Carrà](#), praising the regime’s actions in support of artists:

To artistic problems, Fascism gave more than mere platonic support. It gave hundreds and hundreds of thousands of Lire; it reorganized the International Art Exhibitions in Venice; it ensured the [Milan Triennials of Decorative and Industrial Arts](#) could continue; it established the Rome Quadrennials. It placed representatives from the ranks of artists, architects, painters, musicians, and writers in the Chamber of Deputies and the National Council of Corporations. In short, it gave Italian artists something that no liberal democratic government had ever given them: that positive recognition and moral vigour that are the foundational elements of dignity and human decorum. (Carrà 1932, cited in Cioli 2011, 209)¹⁹

The debate in *Critica fascista*, as well as the other sources and debates analysed in this book, including this quote by Carrà, prove that most artists and intellectuals were willing and happy to take on this social, even ‘messianic’ role. This epochal shift in the role of artists and intellectuals

did not end with Fascism, but on the contrary continued to shape post-war Italian culture, despite the social and political change brought about by the Second World War (Iannaccone 1999, 11–30). Our particular focus in this book, however, will be to show how architecture and the novel, in their synergy and intersections both with each other and with the political sphere, are the artistic forms which best exemplify this collectivist, constructive and rationalizing aesthetic effort.

Notes

1. The expression '*art d'Etat*' exists in French (see, for instance, the recent exhibition at the *archives nationales*: 'Un art d'Etat?' <http://www.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/un-art-d-etat>).
2. Giuseppe Bottai held several important positions within the regime, and was one of the key figures engaged in the conception and construction of Fascist art and culture. The most important posts he held were Minister of corporations, governor of Rome and of Addis Ababa, and Minister of national education (for further detail, see Mangoni 1974 and De Grand 1978).
3. 'Decorazioni pittoriche incredibili sulle mura, busti orribili di gesso colorato ad ogni cantone, emblemi e stendardi a colori pugno negli occhi per arazzi, fasci littori di stucco dorato che sembrano fastelli di legna da ardere, cromolitografie del Duce in atteggiamenti impossibili [...] ecco le sedi dei Fasci, dei sindacati e di molti comuni. [...] con gravissimo disdoro della nostra civiltà artistica'.
4. 'Lo Stato non fa dell'estetica e non accetta alcuna estetica determinata. Lo Stato si preoccupa, soltanto, di far sì che l'operare artistico sia serio, concreto, produttivo; e vuole che le condizioni di vita degli artisti siano tali da consentire loro l'indispensabile serenità di lavoro [...]'.
 5. See the voluminous catalogue of the same title. The exhibition received praise for commencing a re-evaluation of artistic production during the Fascist regime, free from the ideological bias that had previously prevented an objective assessment (see e.g. Lucie-Smith 1985). However, it was also criticized for providing a limited and misleading representation of the 1930s in Italy that excluded political, social and economic problems, while claiming to give a comprehensive account (Rochat 1982).

6. On the failure of the system of artistic trade unions, see, for instance, Cioli (2011, 224–27).
7. On the journal *Critica fascista*, see Vittoria (1980, 327–34), Malgeri (1980), and Sechi (1980).
8. Several scholars have discussed this crucial episode in the history of Fascism and the arts. See, e.g. Schnapp and Spackman (1990), Salvagnini (2000, 346–48), Cioli (2011, 54–56), and Ben-Ghiat (2001, 25–26). Some of the most relevant contributions have been reprinted and translated into English in Schnapp (2000, 207–41).
9. On artists' trade unions, see Salvagnini (2000, 13–25) and Cioli (2011, 213–27).
10. '[...] Incoraggiare ogni forma di espressione e di manifestazione intellettuale ed. artistica, giudicate dall'Accademia perfettamente rispondenti al carattere storico ed. immutabile della genialità italiana, capaci di riportare e di confermare questa genialità nello stile che le è proprio ed. è inconfondibile con quello di ogni altro popolo'.
11. '[...] gli accademici saranno scelti fra le personalità artistiche vive, egregie, italiane, fasciste della Nazione'.
12. This 'battle' was thoroughly reconstructed and analysed by Monica Cioli (2011).
13. According to historian Emilio Gentile, the cultural and ideological basis that Fascism and Futurism shared is located in 'modernist nationalism', a cultural orientation centred on the myth of the nation and an optimistic attitude towards modernity, which in social and political terms meant 'a crisis of traditional aristocracies, an epoch of new masses and the rise of new elites, the predominance of collectivities over individuals, renovation of the State, and political and economic expansion' (Gentile 2003, 46). See also Cioli (2011, in particular 117–54).
14. See in particular the article 'Futurismo e fascismo' by the Futurist artist [Fillia](#), who argued that 'only Futurists, a group of artists who were precursors and collaborators of the Fascist Revolution, have the right to speak of State Art' ('Soltanto I futuristi, come raggruppamento di uomini artisti preparatori e collaboratori della rivoluzione fascista, hanno diritto di parlare sull'Arte di Stato' (Fillia 1929, reprinted in Patetta 1972, 258).
15. The relationship of Futurism with Fascism, and the question of whether Fascism supported or marginalized Futurism, has generated a heated debate among art historians and historians of Fascism. We subscribe to the balanced view of Cioli (2011, 169–75) and Salaris (1985, 190–91),

according to whom the Futurists were strong and loyal supporters of Fascism, at least of what they perceived as its dynamic and revolutionary part (Ibid., 172), and in turn, Fascism supported Futurism and considered it among the most important artistic movements of Fascist Italy. Equally, we endorse the claim that Novecento, despite being a dominant artistic movement of the period (especially in the 1920s and early 1930s), cannot be considered the official Fascist *arte di stato* (Fagone 2001, 17–18).

16. The 'courage of concord' was a famous expression used by Bottai, which gave the title to an important article on *Primato* (Bottai 1940a, reprinted in Bottai 1992, 229–31).
17. 'Né si può negare che l'arte sia forse sia forse il più delicato e poderoso strumento politico dell'espansione d'un popolo: è certo la fonte più pura, dalla quale scendono alla nazione i sentimenti dell'orgoglio nazionale, del sacrificio, per la patria, dell'amore verso le tradizioni della razza, della fiera e della coscienza civiche. [...] Tutto quello che eccelle in ogni campo dell'attività intellettuale, è arte'.
18. This famous expression of Giuseppe Bottai can be found, most significantly, in an interview published on *Corriere della sera* on 24 January 1940 (Bottai 1940b, reprinted in 1992, 222–28), and as the title of a work written in 1940 by Marino Lazzari, the General Director of Antiquity and Fine Arts, and prefaced by Bottai himself (Lazzari 1940). See also Salvagnini (2015, 175) and Cioli (2011, 211).
19. 'Ai problemi artistici, il Fascismo ha dato qualcosa di più di un semplice appoggio platonico. Ha dato centinaia e centinaia di migliaia di lire; ha regolato le Esposizioni Internazionali d'arte di Venezia; ha dato modo di continuare le Triennali dell'arte decorativa e industriale di Milano; ha istituito le Quadriennali di Roma. Alla Camera dei Deputati e al Consiglio Nazionale delle Corporazioni ha messo i rappresentanti degli artisti, architetti, pittori, musicisti e letterati. In una parola, ha dato agli artisti italiani, quello che nessun governo demoliberale aveva mai dato: quel riconoscimento positivo e quel vigore morale che sono gli elementi base della dignità e del decoro umano'.

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