
A Greek Revival in the Eternal City

PROJECTS FOR THE NATIONAL STADIUM IN ROME 1906-11

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DESIGNS FOR THE 1911 NATIONAL STADIUM IN ROME REVEAL THE MUTABLE RELATIONSHIPS LINKING ARCHITECTURE, HISTORY, IDENTITY, AND POLITICS—AND HOW ADAPTATION OF THE CLASSICAL LANGUAGE REFLECTS PERCEIVED CONTINUITIES AND RUPTURES BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT.

Classical architecture offers the designer diverse characters that may be used to express different intentions. Such characters may be evoked by general building configurations or types as well as by elevation features or decorative detail. The use of varied strains of the classical language was especially nuanced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when architects sought to embody newly emerging national identities by adapting to present needs models drawn from the past. The story of the National Stadium in Rome, as presented here, reveals how architectural conceptions grounded in history intersected with present-day cultural and political aspirations and how the universal values of classicism became intertwined with local or national traditions. In Rome, this process naturally involved the further consideration of the architect's relationship to a distant past whose vestiges remained potent symbols of Italian identity.¹

Figure 1 (above): The Panathenaic Stadium, Athens. The victory of Spyridon Louis in the marathon shown in a period illustration (April 10, 1896).

The urge to define that national identity began with the constitution of the unified Italian state in 1861 and became a matter of public interest in many different cultural manifestations, including in architecture related to sport. From an elite activity of the leisure class, sport gradually became a mass phenomenon by the end of the nineteenth century, thanks in part to the “invention” of the modern Olympic Games by Baron Pierre de Coubertin in 1896, celebrated by the reconstruction of the Panathenaic Stadium in Athens, venue of the ancient games. [FIGURE 1] In 1911 new stadiums were opened in Turin and Rome as part of the International Exposition held to celebrate the fiftieth

anniversary of Unification with sites split between the first and last capitals of Italy. The stadiums, both full of symbolic resonance, were born from two completely different architectural conceptions.

The cyclopean Stadium of Turin represented the typological antithesis of the one constructed in Rome in the same year, with which it shared the brevity of its existence [FIGURE 2].² As conceived by Vittorio Eugenio Ballatore di Rosana and Ludovico Gonella, the Turin stadium was to be “the gathering place of the people and the center around which the different sporting events would

take place.” Thanks to its dimensions, the Turin stadium was celebrated by the press as “the vastest in the world.”³ In response to this theme, the designers turned to the scheme of the ancient Roman amphitheater, shaping an elliptical plan whose axes measured 204 by 360 meters. (In comparison, the ancient Flavian Amphitheater in Rome, better known as the Coliseum, occupied an ellipse whose axes measured 191 by 223 meters.)

The triumphal entrance and the royal box faced one another down the central axis. According to Daniele Donghi, the “ten kilometers” of



tiered seating hosted 24,000 seated spectators, or over 40,000 standing.⁴ At the top was to be a portico that ran between little towers intended to divide the cavea into distinct sectors. A very innovative aspect of the stadium was the structural design, entirely in reinforced concrete, realized by the engineer Giovanni Antonio Porcheddu, an Italian pioneer in this technology. The sculptor Giovanni Battista Alloati modeled groups of equestrian statues, also realized in concrete. In the end, the Turin stadium design suffered numerous cost-saving simplifications during construction and its intended sumptuous decoration cast in the classical style was replaced by a language limited to the expression of the reinforced concrete skeleton in a tone of cold and off-putting modernity. [FIGURE 3] The exposed structural members on the side walls and the severe citation of the ancient imperial box (pulvinar) might have seemed an anticipation of the later Rationalist style, had the presence of the two sculptural groups by Alloati not brought to mind the “Greco-Roman style renewed by the architect Bellatore di Rosana and the engineer Gonella”⁵ that the imposed economies negated.

Differently, the origins of the project for a National Stadium in Rome lie early in the twentieth century with Bruto Amante’s proposal to build a new stadium on the ruins of the ancient Circus Maximus. Amante was the son of the scholar and Senator Errico Amante, one of the most important figures in the movement for national unification in Southern Italy. The younger Amante inherited his father’s interest in ancient Rome, as revealed by his given name (i.e., “Brutus”). He was the author of numerous historical studies, including his book *The Birth of Rome* (1879), and held high positions in the Ministry of Public Instruction. As Secretary to the Minister Francesco De Sanctis, a close friend of his father, Amante was well-connected politically and this proved helpful in advancing his initiative for the new stadium.

As President of the National Scholastic Federation of Physical Education (FSNEF), Amante conceived his initiative in May 1906 while attending the convention organized in Athens on the occasion of the intermediate Olympic Games (held between the two official editions at St. Louis and London).⁶ Amante represented the Ministry of Public Instruction and was a member of the Committee for the Panhellenic Games chaired by Luigi Lucchini, President of the National Institute for the Advancement of Physical Education in Italy (INEF). The venue of the Athens Games was again the Panathenaic Stadium, called *Kallimarmaro* for the precious marble used in its construction, but which had been abandoned for centuries. It was definitively restored in 1895 in order to host the first modern Olympic Games, held the following year.⁷ The restoration was carried out by the architect Anastasios Metaxas, a member of the Olympic organizing committee and concurrently a competitor in target shooting⁸ [FIGURE 4].

In Britain, sport had been a popular pursuit for a long time, but in Italy at the start of the twentieth century it was just taking its first steps. In fact, the newly-unified state recognized the great political and propaganda value of sport rather later than other European countries. For example, gymnastic exercise was required in schools in Denmark by 1804, but was introduced in Italy only in 1878. At that time, sport was pursued primarily by the aristocracy and upper middle class, unlike in England, where the leisure and recreational activity of the urban working class benefitted from a long-established tradition. In Italy, in the years before the First World War, the attitude was generally one of diffidence:

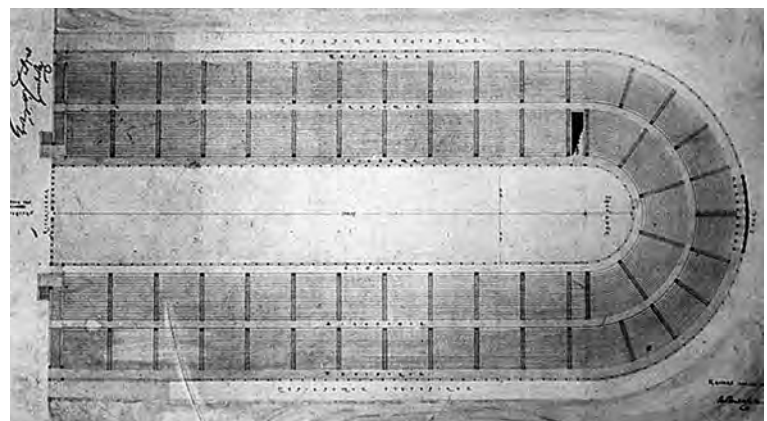
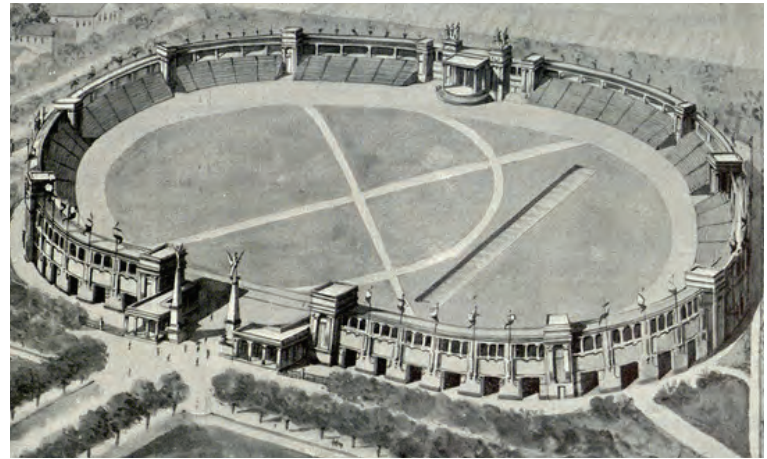


Figure 2 (top): Vittorio Eugenio Ballatore di Rosana and Ludovico Gonella, *The Stadium*, Turin, 1911. Aerial perspective of the project. (From Treves, Guido (ed.), *Le esposizioni del 1911: Roma, Torino, Firenze: rassegna illustrata delle mostre indette nelle tre capitali per solennizzare il cinquantenario del Regno d'Italia*, Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1911, p. 47.)

Figure 3 (middle): Vittorio Eugenio Ballatore di Rosana and Ludovico Gonella, *Stadium*, Turin, 1911. Photograph of the exterior upon completion of the structure. (Tummers Tijs, D'Eletto Clino, *Storia degli Stadi d'Italia illustrata da cartoline d'epoca*, [?], Tesink, 2007, p. 45.)

Figure 4 (bottom): Plan reconstruction of the Panathenaic Stadium, Athens, as it appeared in antiquity. (www.panathenaicstadium.gr).

the philosopher Benedetto Croce labelled as a “false ideal” the myth of sport exalted by Friedrich Nietzsche in Germany and Maurice Barrès in France. The political Left was generally uninterested: one of the fathers of the Socialist Party, Filippo Turati, thought organized sport “stupid and aristocratic.” After an initial indifference, the Catholic Church at the turn of the century recognized the educational potential of sport and sought to transform what were seen as elite activities into a popular pursuit by creating local associations united in the Federation of Italian Catholic Sports Associations (FASCI). It was this Catholic sports movement that later resisted the forceful advance of Fascism, which for its part confronted the Catholic associations in a battle for the loyalties of Italian youth. Whereas, at the end of the nineteenth century, only equestrian, fencing, and target shooting could count on a strong public following in Italy, interest increased in the early 1900s as sports like football (soccer) and cycling spread quickly—so much so that in 1904 the International Olympic Committee designated Rome as the site of the fourth edition of the Games.⁹ Despite the enthusiasm shown by De Coubertin and the support of the King, however, the cost of organizing the Games and the rivalry between the cities of Milan and Turin forced the Italian government to decline the invitation.

Disappointed, Amante sought to address the grave lack of sporting facilities in Italy¹⁰ and, with the motto “Hellas and Rome!” launched the idea of matching in the city of the Caesars “the splendid example of the resurrection of the Panathenaic Stadium,” by reconstructing “that Circus Maximus, which was the epilogue of the city’s glorious history from the first king onward...”¹¹ Amante understood that the realization of such a symbolic structure necessitated a new culture of sport involving the schools, “the true *consortium vitae* of the young.” For this purpose, in June 1906 he led the formation of the FSNEF which, taking inspiration from the poet Juvenal, adopted the name *Virides*.¹²

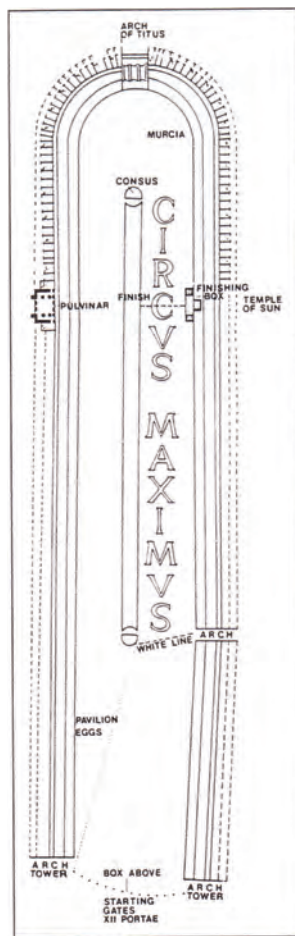
Amante explained his idea at the Congress of Women’s Physical Education in Milan the following September¹³ and launched a general appeal in which he elaborated the “patriotic and educational goals” justifying the creation of a new National Stadium. The celebrations of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1911 seemed an opportune moment to realize the project, and a law passed July 11, 1907 restricting the use of the land surrounding the Circus Maximus site¹⁴ urged “bringing back to light and to the admiration of the world the remains of the most sumptuous of the circuses of Rome.”¹⁵ In his publication, *The National Stadium in the Circus Maximus*, Amante proposed a project inspired by that completed in Athens in 1896; that is, to construct a new structure in the ancient Circus combining the architectural features of the Greek stadium and the Roman circus.

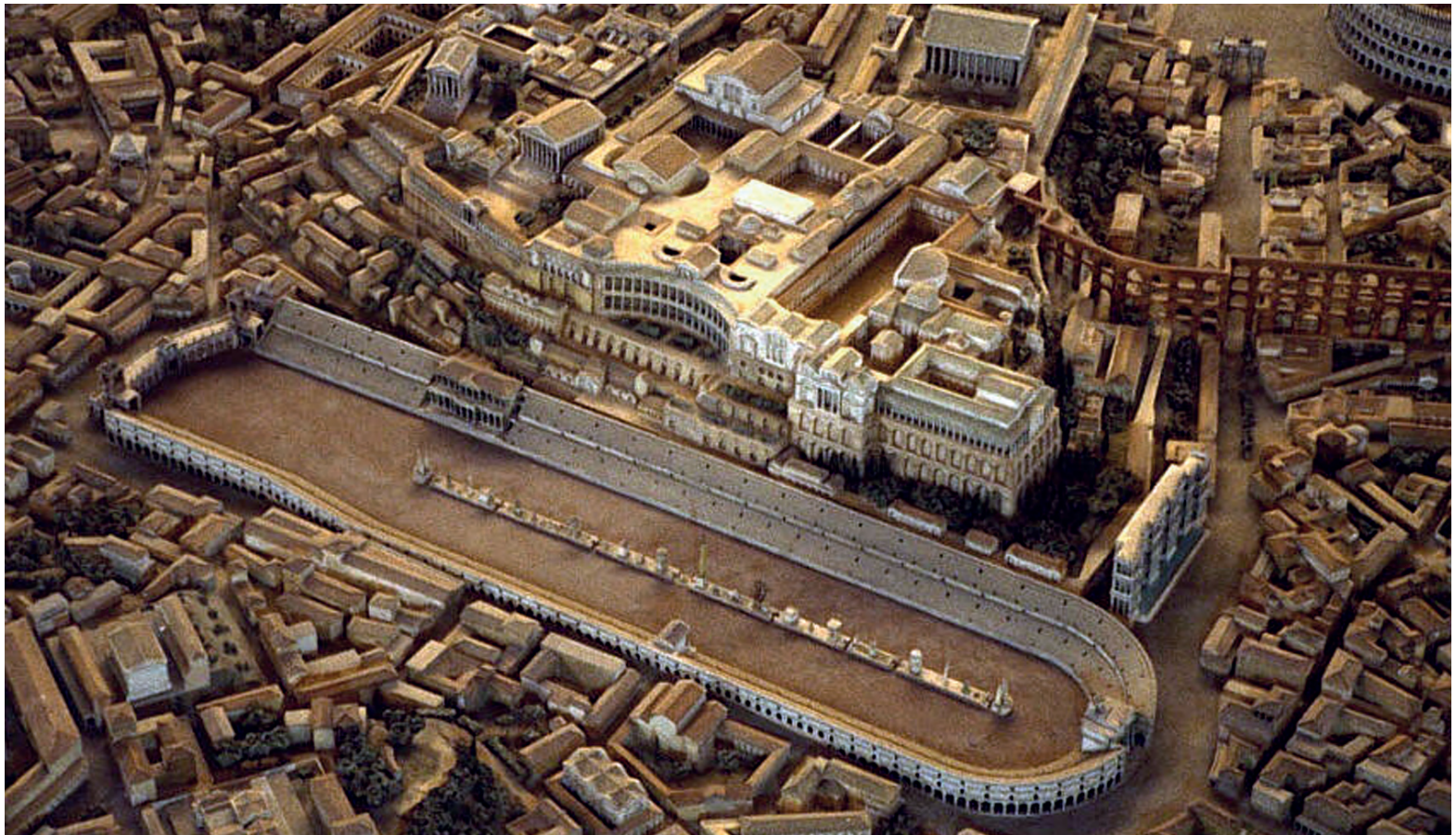
THE STADIUM AND THE CIRCUS: TYPES AND HISTORIES

The boundaries between these two architectural types have long been indistinct: the Greek stadiums were primarily intended for gymnastic competitions and foot races as part of religious festivals, while the Roman circuses were the venues primarily of horse and chariot races and gladiatorial contests as public entertainments. The circus has often been viewed as the Roman version of the Greek hippodrome, although the resemblance is limited to the plan configuration.¹⁶ In Rome, in fact, athletic competitions passed from the religious sphere to that of *ludus*, or sport, and therefore from the sponsorship of the aristocracy to that of the businessmen who, for the purpose of improving the quality of the spectacle and the condition of the spectators, constructed permanent seating and provided additional services and facilities. For this reason, throughout the Romanized Greek world between the second and third centuries, the hippodromes, originally simple running tracks of beaten earth, were transformed into monumental structures on the model of the Roman circus.¹⁷

The most important difference in plan between the circus and the stadium was in the short side opposite the semi-circular end: in the stadium, this end was open and served as the public entrance; in the circus, it was closed by a broad arc housing the starting cages for the horses (*carceres*). The circus was also characterized by the *spina*, the *euripo*, and the *metae* in the center of the arena (see Note 24), and the length of the track was almost double that of the stadium. In spite of these differences, as Amante records, the term “stadium” was used in both Greek and Latin between the second and third centuries in the eastern provinces of the Empire to refer to structures in which chariot races took place, as well as those in which the *munera* (gladiatorial fights) and *venationes* (fights between men and animals) were held.¹⁸

Actually, the stadium—the Greek monument par excellence—was little known by the Romans until the Imperial age, probably because of the simplicity of the structural systems used. At the beginning of their history the most important examples, like the stadiums of Olympia, Delphi, and Nemea, did not have stone steps for spectator seating but usually wooden benches, as seen in an inscription about the stadium of Delphi. Elsewhere, as in Epidauros and Delos, the stepped seating was arranged only on one side of the slope into which the stadium was carved. Complete and permanent *cavea* appeared only between the first and second centuries BC, as at Delphi, where between 166 and 177 Herod Atticus built seats in the local limestone. The Roman model of the stadium was not a decisive factor because, besides the examples just cited, seating in stone had already been constructed in the Hellenistic age at Rhodes, Cos, and Dodona.¹⁹ Roman influence was more significant in the evolution of the type in Asia Minor, as demonstrated by the structure at Nysa that Strabo calls *stadio-anfiteatro* because of its semi-circular plan at both





short ends.²⁰ Additionally, at the stadium of Aphrodisias in Caria, the first phase of which can be dated to the end of the first and the beginning of the second century, both short ends were semi-circular and the long sides were slightly curved to give the audience a better view.

Suetonius considered the first stadium constructed in Rome to be the temporary structure erected in the Campo Marzio to honor the triumph of Caesar Augustus in 46 AD,²¹ while, according to Amante, the first permanent stadium was the one constructed by Domitian between 86 and 90 AD to host the athletic games of the *certamen Capitolinum*, which he himself instituted in honor of Jupiter.²² The arena of this structure, which corresponds to the current Piazza Navona, was 275 meters long (or one and a half times the length of an Olympic stadium) and 54 meters wide internally. The track was completely free except for the accessories needed for the games; the principal entrance was at the center of the semi-circular end and marked by a wide arch preceded by a monumental portico, while two secondary entrances opened on the long sides. The external façade was on two levels with arches framed by half-columns in the familiar fornic motif: the lower level employing the Ionic and the upper probably the Corinthian order. This upper level corresponded to the continuous portico (*mtænianum*) at the top of the seating.

Despite becoming one of the principal meeting places of Rome, the structure later fell out of favor with the population, which believed the “Greek” games immoral, as well as with the emperor, who was known to be excessively interested in the gladiatorial fights. Throughout Italy the Greek-style gymnastic games found a limited audience and, as a consequence, between the second and third centuries, stadiums were superseded by amphitheaters and circuses. In the former Magna Grecia the only stadium of architectural importance was that at Pozzuoli constructed by Antoninus Pius for the games he himself instituted in honor of his predecessor, Hadrian. Although the grand dimensions of the arena conformed to the circus type, the curvature of both short ends meant that it was intended for both athletic competitions and the games associated with the circus.

Figure 5 (opposite): Circus Maximus, Rome, in its most monumental form in the third century AD. Plan. (From Gros, P., *L'architecture romaine, 1. Les monuments publics*, Paris: Picard, 1996, p. 312)

Figure 6 (above): The Circus Maximus in its ancient urban context. View of the model of Rome in the time of Constantine. (Museo della civiltà romana, Rome.)

Amante's proposal took inspiration from the large number of circuses in ancient Rome, which, in addition to the Circus Maximus, included the Flaminio (or Apollo) and those of Alexander Severus, Hadrian, Caius, Domitian, Flora, Maxentius, and Sallust.²³ After describing the characteristics of the type based on the nineteenth-century treatise of Luigi Canina,²⁴ Amante proposed the reconstruction of the Circus Maximus, the oldest and grandest of the circuses of Rome and sited in the Murcia valley between the Palatine and Aventine hills [FIGURES 5 AND 6]. According to tradition, the Etruscan kings Tarquinius Priscus and Tarquinius Superbus erected the first stadium structure on the site in the sixth century B.C.²⁵ but, even though surrounded by religious buildings, it did not have a monumental character²⁶ and its functional characteristics were defined only after the middle of the fourth century B.C.²⁷

In 46 B.C., Julius Caesar enlarged the Circus, but only with the advent of the imperial age would it take on a truly monumental character. Agrippa dressed the *spina* in marble decorated with bronze dolphins, while Augustus installed the obelisk of Ramses, constructed the royal box (*pulvinar*) on the side facing the Palatine, and the monumental entrance to the circus (*porta triumphalis*) on the side opposite the starting gates for the races (*carceres*).²⁸ This is how the complex looked to Dionysus of Halicarnassus, who in his *Roman Antiquities* described with admiration the portico that ran around the entire cavea of three tiers and seating 150,000 spectators in all—an astonishing number compared to the other venues for spectacles in the *Urbs*.²⁹ Fires in the



Figure 7 (above): Giovanni Battista Piranesi, “Veduta degli Avanzi delle Case de Cesari sul Palatino,” from *Le antichità Romane* (1784).

Figure 8 (opposite top): G. Magni and G. Podesti, Project for the Stadium at the Circus Maximus, Rome, plan, 1908. (From *Progetto per lo Stadio Massimo Nazionale sull'area del Circo Massimo*, a cura di Virides, Federazione Scolastica Nazionale Educazione Fisica, Roma, Stabilimento Fratelli Capaccini, 1909, p. 23.)

Figure 9 (opposite middle): G. Magni and G. Podesti, Project for the Stadium at the Circus Maximus, Rome, principal elevation, 1908. (From *Progetto per lo Stadio Massimo Nazionale sull'area del Circo Massimo*, a cura di Virides, Federazione Scolastica Nazionale Educazione Fisica, Roma, Stabilimento Fratelli Capaccini, 1909, p. 25.)

Figure 10 (opposite bottom): Project for the Stadium at the Circus Maximus, Rome, aerial perspective, 1908. (From *Progetto per lo Stadio Massimo Nazionale sull'area del Circo Massimo*, a cura di Virides, Federazione Scolastica Nazionale Educazione Fisica, Roma, Stabilimento Fratelli Capaccini, 1909, p. 26.)

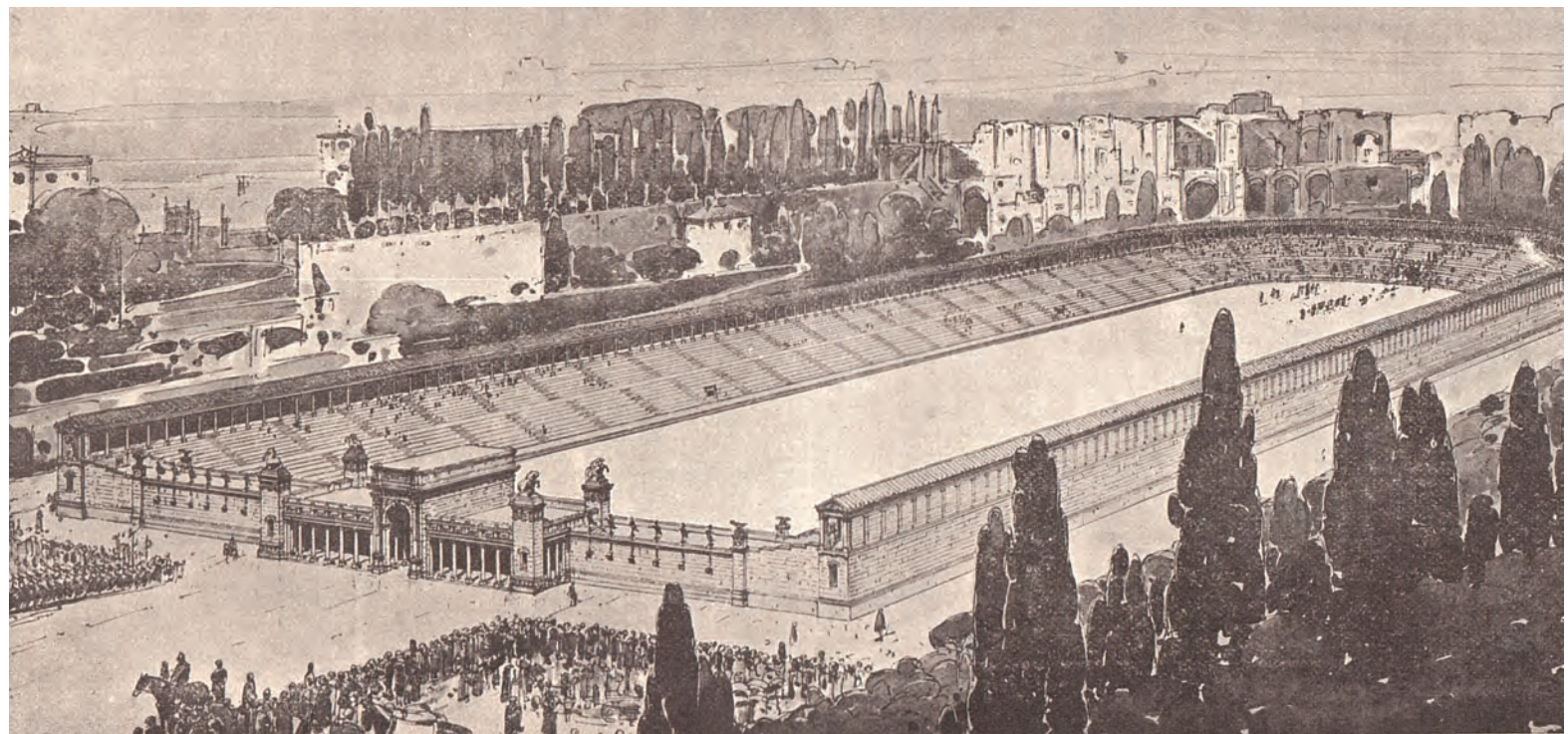
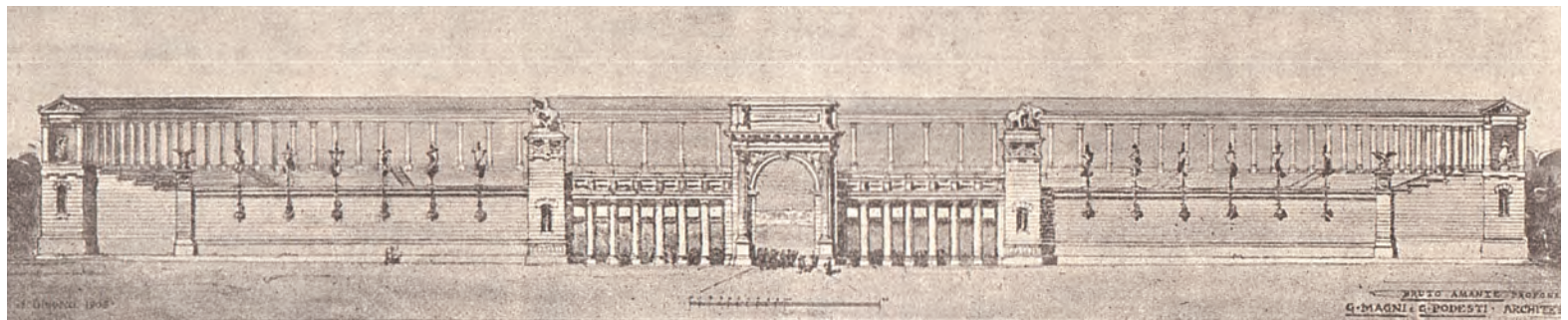
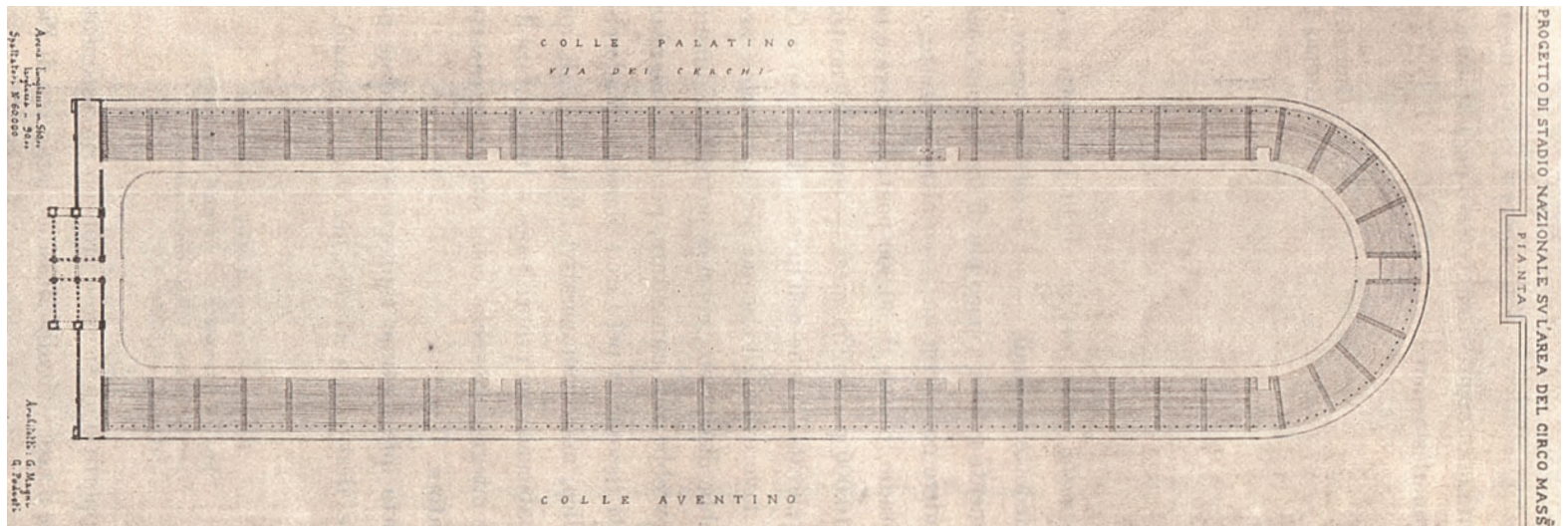
first century offered opportunities to make the structure even more monumental: Caligula and Claudius rebuilt the *carceres* in marble and the *meta* in gilded bronze, Nero increased the capacity to 250,000 spectators, and Titus enriched the Circus with a new triumphal entrance of three arches of the *fornice* type and added sculptural decoration to the entire *spina*.³⁰ In the *Panegyric of Trajan*, Pliny the Younger describes the Circus at the beginning of the second century, praising the majesty of the gigantic masonry structure at the foot of the Palatine;³¹ indeed, the arena floor—at 580 meters long and 79 meters wide—was twelve times larger than that of the Coliseum.

A PROPOSED NATIONAL STADIUM AT THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS

It's important to notice that Amante chose the Circus Maximus as the preferred site for the proposed National Stadium, despite the fact that the archeologist Rodolfo Lanciani, whom he had consulted, had advised him to consider the Circus of Maxentius instead, since it was “well preserved.” Amante was not convinced by Lanciani's opinion, noting that the conservation of the Circus of Maxentius was likely due to its distance from the center of Rome.³² Amante argued that his program foresaw a new stadium that would rise on the archeological ruins and adapt the original typology to modern needs; moreover, at the Circus Maximus, the few archeological remains would allow a greater freedom in the “reconstruction.” Indeed, it would be enough to demolish the buildings of the Societa' del Gas on the Aventine and the modest tenement buildings on the side of the Palatine to reconstruct the image depicted by Piranesi in one of his most famous engravings [FIGURE 7].

Importantly, the Circus Maximus could accommodate the activities historically associated with both the circus and the stadium, making it more suitable for the diverse competitions of a modern Olympics. As we have seen, this was not without ancient precedent: Suetonius and Dio Cassio reported how in antiquity the Circus Maximus hosted not only chariot races but also the *quinquertium*, the Roman equivalent of the Greek *pentathlon*,³³ exercises that for Amante constituted “the holy and healthy objective of the new generations, the truly educational element,” and thus appropriately aligned with the aims of the anniversary celebrations of the Italian state. However, Amante was under no illusion that the structure would be completed in time for the 1911 events and proposed that, in that case, the immense arena capable of holding 140,000 persons could be temporarily fenced in, setting a “strict architectural line” on the site that, he believed, would have been built upon in any case.

In January 1908, Amante presented his publication *Lo Stadio Nazionale nel Circo Massimo* to the King, and the proposal to construct the new building “possibly” on the ruins of the ancient structure³⁴ received the support of, among others, the poet Gabriele d'Annunzio, the archaeologist Giacomo Boni, the sculptor Ettore Ferrari, and the art historian Adolfo Venturi. Particular importance was attributed to the positive opinion expressed by the sculptor Vito Pardo in his capacity as Director General of the Italian branch of *Audax*, the famous association of cycling enthusiasts.³⁵ Amante assembled his team, which included Lanciani as a consultant, along with the architects Giulio



Magni and Giulio Podesti,³⁶ and on June 18, 1908, the “illustrious Roman architects” presented their project for the “reconstruction” of the Circus Maximus according to the archaeological indications supplied by Lanciani [FIGURE 8].³⁷

The structure proposed by Amante had an ideal didactic value because it was intended, in the first instance, to host schoolchildren’s competitions. However, while wanting to follow the example of the Panathenaic Stadium at Athens, he suggested for Rome a modern reconstruction not of the stadium type, but of the circus. The intention to reconcile the two types is apparent in all the studies for the project, and Podesti and Magni’s proposal was an attempted synthesis of the architecture of the Greek stadium and that of the Roman circus in the form of a free reconstruction of the Circus Maximus. They retained the U-shaped plan and the same dimensions as the ancient structure but, disregarding the archaeological data, they omitted the monumental entrance at the semi-circular end and, at the opposite end, designed an entrance very different from the circus type. Here they proposed a great triumphal arch of *Beaux-Arts* taste, with undecorated walls to either side [FIGURE 9].

The arena floor was to occupy 50,000 square meters, the tiers of seats hold 60,000 spectators, and the portico at the top level accommodate another 10,000 standees. Below the *cavea* they planned vast halls for locker rooms, stables, and services, as well as caretakers’ homes, management and administration offices, and restaurants [FIGURE 10]. In the end, the two architects estimated the costs for the realization of the work at not more than five million lire—a sum so high it immediately defeated the initiative.³⁸ In the end, something like Amante’s proposal was realized as part of the 1911 Exposition, whose site in Rome straddled the Tiber on the north side of the city, but with this change in site the National Stadium lost any reference to the Circus Maximus and became, instead, a re-evocation of the Panathenaic Stadium in Athens.

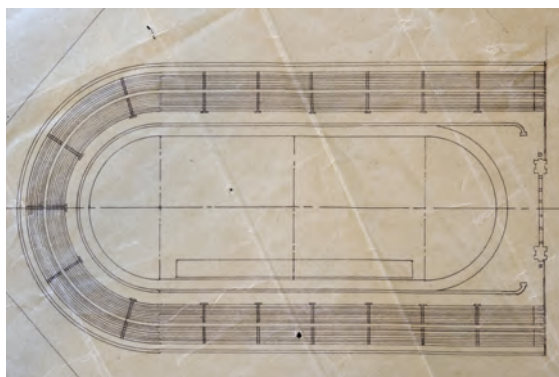
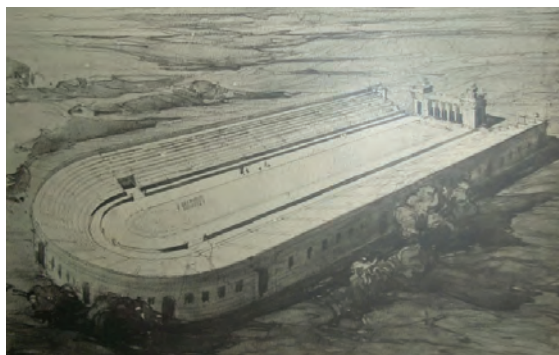
THE NATIONAL STADIUM OF 1911

It was not clear in practical terms how Amante’s proposal would have incorporated the archeological remains of the ancient Circus, and these perplexities prompted a parallel initiative on the part of the INEF, which the previous April had commissioned the architect Marcello Piacentini and the sculptor Vito Pardo (despite his earlier endorsement of Amante’s proposal) to design “a concrete project responsive to technical, artistic, and financial considerations.”³⁹ A survey was taken of persons “competent and eminent in the fields of archeology and art” to ask “if it were advisable to reconstruct one of the ancient circuses” or, rather,

“if it were more appropriate to construct a new, modern stadium on the site of the ancient Circus Maximus, suppressing every vestige of it.” Because the great majority of respondents thought it more correct “to respect this vestige of Roman grandeur and to erect on an open site a stadium corresponding to modern needs,” the INEF endorsed the project of Piacentini and Pardo and decided to realize it in the area along the Viale Flaminio where “all the sporting life of the Capital” would soon be centered. But in the meantime, the Mayor had conferred the same commission on the chief city engineer, Angelo Guazzaroni, and therefore, in 1910 the INEF and the City wisely commissioned Piacentini, Pardo, and Guazzaroni to undertake the project jointly in order to get construction underway quickly.⁴⁰ Every link with the Circus Maximus was finally dissolved in the design by Piacentini and Pardo, after which the city administration and INEF definitively abandoned Amante’s proposal.⁴¹

Unlike Magni and Podesti, Piacentini designed the National Stadium at the beginning of his career, which had started in the office of his architect father Pio, who advised him to establish business relations with the other professionals who frequented his studio, such as Podesti, Gaetano Koch, Giuseppe Sacconi, and Manfredo Manfredi.⁴² At the time he dedicated himself to the project for the National Stadium, the twenty-seven-year-old Piacentini was a successful young professional who had garnered many awards in important competitions and had a growing list of impressive private works.⁴³ Of special relevance to the stadium project was Piacentini’s role as co-master-planner (with Gustavo Giovannoni) of the 1911 Exposition and designer of a number of its buildings.

In the press at the time, the new stadium design was described as a structure rising almost 10 meters above the ground which would have created “a sumptuous and pleasing backdrop to the grand setting in which it was placed.”⁴⁴ The tiered seating was described as being below grade for two thirds of its height, while only the upper third rose above grade at the foot of the Parioli hill. The building, “with two long arms of tiered seats for the public, enclosed on one end by a semi-circle,” was a reprise of the scheme of the *Kallimarmaro* even in its dimensions, excepting the greater width of the arena floor and the lesser height of the seating tiers, reduced “for aesthetic reasons.” These descriptions largely conform to the drawings conserved in the Marcello Piacentini Archive in Florence, especially the bird’s-eye perspective, in which the stadium is shown with the semi-circular end in the foreground [FIGURE 11].⁴⁵ The drawing shows the monotonous elevation of the part above ground marked only by rectangular windows and entrances to the spaces carved out below the seating; the tiers are uncovered and without a crowning portico.





The construction drawings for the National Stadium are conserved in the Archivio Storico Capitolino in Rome and bear the signatures of Piacentini and Guazzaroni. Examining them reveals how the building, while maintaining the plan shape of the previous solution, was made longer (220.20 meters) and wider (120.00 meters) in execution [FIGURE 12].⁴⁶ The load-bearing structure was formed by ninety reinforced concrete trusses⁴⁷ and the twenty-two rows of seats in concrete accommodated 23,000 persons, with an additional 3,000 places for standees on the uncovered promenade at the top. The plan was similar to that of Magni and Podesti at the Circus Maximus, although the latter was wider and two-and-a-half times longer. (As built, the National Stadium was 120 x 220 meters, while the proposal for the Circus Maximus was 140 x 620.) The new stadium was also smaller than the ancient Greek one, which in the times of Herod Atticus could seat 50,000 spectators in its forty-six tiers of seats, exactly double the number of tiers in the National Stadium.

The most characteristic element of the stadium was the entrance feature, for which Piacentini studied two alternatives. The first explored the solution visible in the aerial perspective, showing two massive lateral masses surmounted by tall pedestals and sculptural groups framing a hexastyle colonnade, above which runs a tall entablature with a modillion cornice [FIGURE 13]. The second study conforms to the elevation drawing in the construction documents [FIGURE 14].⁴⁸ Rejecting the more customary aspect of “a façade for a grand palazzo, all porticoes, windows, atria, arcades, and niches,” Piacentini showed four columns engaged at each end by “square pillars upon which stand symbolic marble sculptural groups,” preceded by stairs and two ramps for vehicular access.⁴⁹ The columns, linked at the top with a bronze frieze of festoons, shields, and garlands, were surmounted by representations of Fame (by the sculptors Angelo Barbieri and Romano Mazzini)⁵⁰ recalling both the *Rostra* of the Roman Forum and Piacentini’s own design for the entrance to the Forum of the Regions

at the 1911 Exposition [FIGURE 15]. The choice of this decorative motif was a direct citation of the triumphal entrance of the athletes at the center of the open end in the structures built for similar spectacles in the Greek world.⁵¹ Simultaneously at the Turin Exposition, freestanding columns bearing statues of winged victories decorated the monumental bridge of Valentino [FIGURE 16], while at the Rome Exposition the decorative program of the Forum of the Regions was curated by Giuseppe Guastalla, creator of the winged Victory placed on the column commemorating the breach of the Porta Pia.⁵² Such classical citations assumed a widely-recognized patriotic and celebratory significance, linking contemporary Italy with its glorious imperial past [FIGURE 17].

Figure 11 (opposite top): M. Piacentini and V. Pardo, project for the National Stadium, Rome, 1908. Aerial perspective. (Biblioteca di Scienze Tecnologiche dell’Università di Firenze, Fondo Marcello Piacentini, filza 16.)

Figure 12 (opposite bottom): M. Piacentini and A. Guazzaroni, with the collaboration of V. Pardo, project for the National Stadium, Rome, 1910. Plan. (Archivio Storico Capitolino, Fondo Contratti, Atti Pubblici, 238, 7 dicembre 1911.)

Figure 13 (top left): M. Piacentini with the collaboration of V. Pardo, project for the National Stadium, Rome, 1908. First solution for the main entrance elevation. (Biblioteca di Scienze Tecnologiche dell’Università di Firenze, Fondo Marcello Piacentini, filza 16.)

Figure 14 (middle left): M. Piacentini with the collaboration of V. Pardo, project for the National Stadium, Rome, 1908. Second solution for the main entrance elevation. (Biblioteca di Scienze Tecnologiche dell’Università di Firenze, Fondo Marcello Piacentini, filza 16.)

Figure 15 (top right): M. Piacentini, Esposizione Etnografica, Foro delle Regioni, Rome, 1911. View of the entrance. (*Emporium*, n. 204, 1911, p. 415.)

Despite the claim that its “grandiosity was entirely Roman,” the stadium was actually “inspired by the great Olympic stadium of Athens.”⁵³ At the open end, a tetrastyle entrance feature similar to the second solution in the Florence drawings was built, except that the two lateral blocks became noticeably slenderer in execution. Such a solution was a further indication of the Greco-Roman “contamination” underlying the project, evoking the entrance of the *Kallimarmaro* of Herod Atticus, reconstructed in the Corinthian order for the “Intermediate

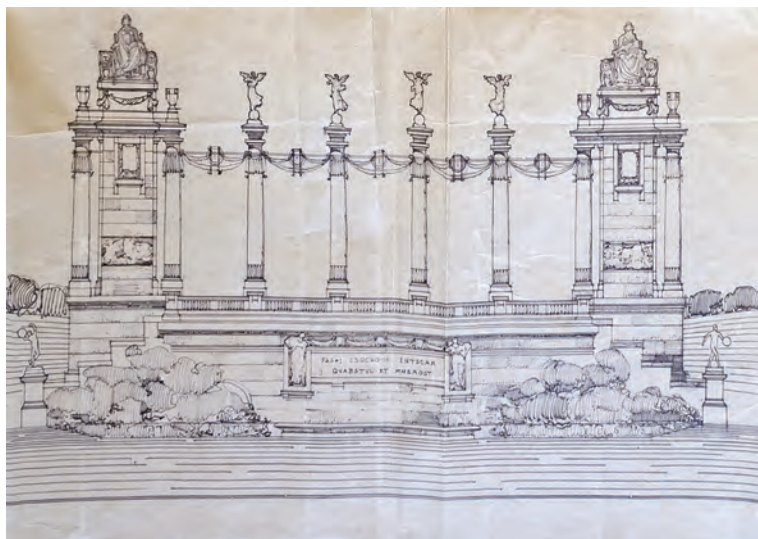


Figure 16 (top): Esposizione Internazionale dell'Industria e del Lavoro, Monumental bridge of Valentino, Turin, 1911. General view. (*Emporium*, n. 199, 1911, p. 43.)

Figure 17 (bottom): M. Piacentini and A. Guazzaroni, with the collaboration of V. Pardo, project for the National Stadium, Rome, 1910. Principal elevation of definitive design. (Archivio Storico Capitolino, Fondo Contratti, Atti Pubblici, 238, 7 dicembre 1911.)

Games” of 1906, while giving the stadium an architectural character decisively Roman in form and decoration [FIGURE 18]. In the end, the Rome stadium, like the one under construction at the same time in Turin, suffered cost-cutting simplifications of the original exterior design. The entire external elevation appeared extremely naked, replacing the originally-conceived decorative treatment with a sequence of simple openings revealing the structural frame. The contrast of these walls with the courtly entrance feature was rather sharp, even though this part, too, was simplified: The entrance was constructed without the designer’s proposed ramps and the bases of the columns were brought down to grade level [FIGURE 19].⁵⁴

On June 10, 1911 the new stadium was inaugurated in the presence of the King with an impressive ceremony involving hundreds of athletes and 1,500 schoolchildren. Thanks to the numerous areas planned for recreation and education below the stands, the new structure was hailed by the press as a true “house of physical education” in which the athletes would find an environment well-equipped for the cultivation of the mind as well as for engaging in sports.⁵⁵ But after the celebrations of the Roman Exposition the life of the National Stadium was cut short: Even though the structure could seat “only” 25,000 spectators (a third of the number in the contemporary stadium in Torino), the capacity was oversized with respect to the actual need at the time. In the following years, the building hosted a variety of events but fell progressively into disuse. With the coming of Fascism in 1922 there was a brief reprieve, and in 1927 ownership of the building was transferred to the National Fascist Party (PNF), whose officials decided to update it to reflect the party’s sports policies, which sought to intensify the public sense of continuity with former imperial glories. The remodeling was again entrusted to Piacentini and Guazzaroni. On the inside of the arena they inserted a football pitch and installed a swimming pool, demolishing the former main entrance. They replaced this with a new screen of four massive columns linked by concave partition walls on a curved plan and surmounted by bronze statuary groups by the sculptor Amleto Cataldi representing Soccer, Racing, Wrestling, and Boxing⁵⁶ [FIGURE 20]. The seating capacity was increased to 30,000 spectators while the central tribune was covered by a reinforced concrete roof; in the curved end they carved out a two-story hotel to house the athletes. The renovated PNF Stadium, part of an extensive new sports zone consisting of hippodromes, soccer fields, and tennis courts, was officially inaugurated on March 25, 1928 followed by a match between the national soccer teams of Italy and Hungary.⁵⁷

In subsequent years, the circus type reappeared in a series of stadium designs between 1912 and the 1930s, confirming the value of Amante’s original proposal.⁵⁸ Whereas some of these modern stadiums de-emphasize the moral significance of the ancient classical models, pursuing instead designs based primarily on functional needs, the frequent use of the ancient plan configurations and a repertory of architectonic and ornamental elements traceable to their use in antiquity nevertheless recalls the types and features that enabled the spread of the circus and the amphitheatre throughout the Roman world.

In the post-war period, the building was once again threatened. After the airline disaster at Superga in 1949, the stadium was rededicated

to the “Grande Torino,”⁵⁹ but shortly after that, in June 1955, the decision was taken by the International Olympic Committee to award Rome the XVII Olympic Games and this led to a move to replace the stadium with a new and more functional facility. The typological scheme of the stadium designed by Piacentini and Guazzaroni was too closely tied to the ideological premise inherent in the citation of the Panathenaic Stadium, considered as the cradle of “modern” sport. Besides, the architectural climate had also changed, and Italian post-war culture now looked to modernism and industrialism for emblems of national identity, unrelated to the symbols of continuity with the past that had served for three-quarters of a century. The Flaminio Stadium, designed by Pierluigi and Antonio Nervi, arose on the site of the PNF Stadium and was inaugurated in March 1959; its modernist form and reinforced concrete structure reveal an architectural conception altogether different from the designs of Amante, Piacentini, and the others [FIGURE 21].

THE NATIONAL STADIUM AND CONTEMPORARY ROMAN ARCHITECTURE

To understand fully the importance of Piacentini and Guazzaroni’s work at the Stadium we must bear in mind the decisive impact the 1911 Roman Exposition had on the entire Italian architectural community.⁶⁰ Piacentini had been named artistic director of the fair thanks to his close relationship with Mayor Ernesto Nathan but also, and above all, thanks to the international success he achieved the previous year with his Italian Pavilion at the Exposition in Brussels, in which we can identify a formal language similar to the fair buildings of 1911. The National Stadium was constructed along with the other exposition buildings, including the Gate of Honor and the Palace of the Fine Arts by Cesare Bazzani, one of the leading classical architects of the day [FIGURE 22], as well as the various international pavilions realized in the Valle Giulia, while the general exhibits were sited on the west bank of the Tiber across the new Ponte Flaminio designed in concrete by François Hennebique. Passing through the Gate of Honor, a work of Arnaldo Foschini and Ghino Venturi [FIGURE 23], one encountered the double exedra of Piacentini’s Forum of the Regions, followed by the artificial lake and his Salon of the Festivities, flanked by the regional buildings. Here Piacentini employed a formal language recalling the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century architecture of Rome, particularly evident in the elliptical vestibule with a curved façade and freestanding columns of the Palace of the Festivities [FIGURE 24]. Nor was this an isolated case: The search for a durable connection with the classical culture of the past had prompted many explorations of the sixteenth-century style, as in the work of Guglielmo Calderini, for example, whose return to the lexicon of Sangallo and Michelangelo was animated by echoes of Piranesi to confer greater muscularity on a now-familiar *romanità* “rediscovered in modern times.” [FIGURE 26].⁶¹

Despite considerable praise for his work, Piacentini was not satisfied with the outcome of the Exposition, with which he closed the first phase of his professional career. Even as the celebrations of the Fiftieth Anniversary were being set up, the debate about a national Italian style was once again in fashion.⁶² Piacentini abandoned this search for a new style and finally addressed “modern” architecture,

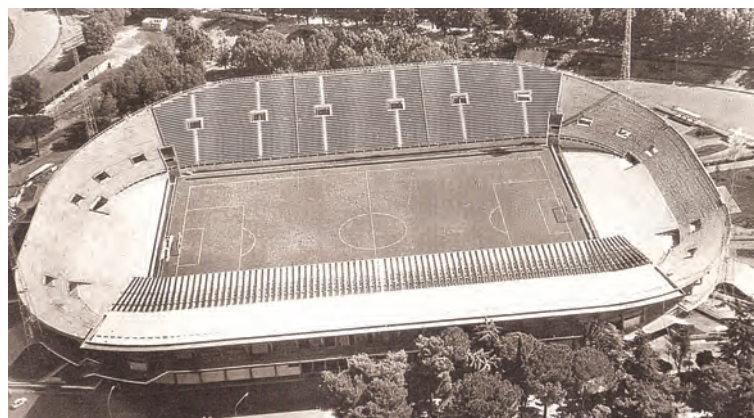


Figure 18 (Section opener, pages 6–7): M. Piacentini and A. Guazzaroni, with the collaboration of V. Pardo, project for the National Stadium, Rome, 1910. Aerial perspective. (Archivio Storico Capitolino, Fondo Contratti, Atti Pubblici, 238, 7 dicembre 1911.)

Figure 19 (top): M. Piacentini and A. Guazzaroni, with the collaboration of V. Pardo, National Stadium, Rome. Period photograph prior to the remodeling of 1927. (From Massari, S., ed., *La Festa delle Feste. Roma e l'Esposizione Internazionale del 1911*, Rome, Palombi editori, 2011, p. 170.)

Figure 20 (center): M. Piacentini and A. Guazzaroni, with the collaboration of V. Pardo, National Stadium, Rome. Period photograph after the remodeling of 1927 showing a detail of the entrance elevation. (Private collection.)

Figure 21 (bottom): Flaminio Stadium, designed by Pierluigi and Antonio Nervi and completed in 1959 on the site of the former National Stadium, Rome, aerial view. (Tummers, Tijs, D'Eletto, Clino, *Storia degli Stadi d'Italia illustrata da cartoline d'epoca*, Tesink, Zutphen, 2007, p. 127).



Figure 22 (top left): Cesare Bazzani, Esposizione Internazionale di Belle Arti, palazzo delle Belle Arti, Rome, 1911. View. (*Emporium*, n. 204, 1911, p. 408.)

Figure 23 (top right): A. Foschini e G., Venturi, Esposizione Etnografica, Gateway of Honor, Rome, 1911. View. (*Emporium*, n. 204, 1911, p. 409.)

Figure 24 (above): M. Piacentini, Esposizione Etnografica, Padiglione delle Feste, Rome, 1911. View. (From Massari, S., ed., *La Festa delle Feste. Roma e l'Esposizione Internazionale del 1911*, Rome, Palombi editori, 2011, p. 68.)

Figure 25 (left): M. Piacentini, Palazzo di Giustizia, Messina, 1912-28. View of principal elevation. (From Pisani, M., *Architetture di Marcello Piacentini. Le opere maestre*, Roma, Clear, 2004, p. 53.)

understood at that time as a return to unvarying classical principles.⁶⁵ In this sense, the aspiration to conjoin “Hellenic beauty” and “Roman permanence” underlying Piacentini’s design for the National stadium was completely free of the “anxiety of renewal” that had marked the debate on a national style. The National Stadium appears, then, to be a precocious testimony to the interest nurtured by its author for the “Neo-roman Style” that would emerge more strongly in his work after the First World War, as at the Palace of Justice in Messina [FIGURE 25].⁶⁴ Piacentini’s stadium project seems to recall the neoclassicism that came out of a conference held in Rome on 21 March 1901 sponsored by the Artistic Association of Architecture Enthusiasts (better known by its Italian name, the Associazione Artistica tra i Cultori di Architettura or AACA), which called for a balance between the monumental grace of the Greek and the composition of grand masses in the Roman building cultures.⁶⁵ What appeared to be a youthful intuition (Piacentini attended the conference even before completing high school)⁶⁶ developed further in the next phase of his career, during which he identified these values with *romanità*: an unerring formal code that he would later think appropriate to represent the city of Fascism. In the same period, other architects also adopted the poetics of grand and unadorned masses to express modernity, like Bazzani in his work of the Thirties. Both of these motives would characterize Piacentini’s work in the following decades, part of a search for a “modern classicism” that extended far beyond Italy. Henry-Russell Hitchcock believed the early Piacentini, like Gunnar Asplund, was capable of simplifying the attempt to perpetuate the classical language that Auguste Perret and Peter Behrens had expressed in their work and, therefore, Piacentini came to be considered an “eclectic of neoclassical taste.” In his solutions for the National Stadium, he drew freely on all the interpretations of Greek and Roman architecture but, as in other works of his early career, still rejected any break with the classical building tradition.⁶⁷

To be precise, it should be stated that recourse to the formal code of classicism does not belong to the architecture of fascism, just as the architecture of fascism cannot be identified with the classical language. At least until the declaration of the Italian Empire in the mid-1930s, development of modernist architecture was not merely tolerated, but was even favored by the regime, as demonstrated by the work of designers like Luigi Moretti and Giuseppe Terragni, as well as numerous others in the major cities and the smaller towns.⁶⁸ The claim that classical architecture is indelibly stamped with a historical association with autocratic regimes disregards the full history of its use: It is true that during the Napoleonic Era the Arc de Triomphe in Paris (commissioned by Bonaparte and designed by Jean-François-Thérèse Chalgrin in 1806) and the Arco della Pace in Milan (begun the following year by Luigi Cagnola) were erected as symbols of the absolute power of the new Emperor; but a short time later in Germany, the same classical language was directed in opposition to French influence, as is apparent in the classical work of Karl Friedrich Schinkel in Berlin. For example, Schinkel’s Schauspielhaus (1818–21) imposed a new character of severe rationality on its surroundings, laying the foundation for a coherent national architecture with a strong ideological stamp. The particular elaboration of the classical code in a “functional” key would make

Schinkel one of the principal interpreters of “Germanness” in architecture.⁶⁹ In later periods, the classical language was adopted by other cultures that saw it as a means to express civil and democratic values, as in the United States.

In the case of Piacentini’s National Stadium and the works realized for the Roman Exposition of 1911, reconnecting with the past had the value of a national expression. At the end of the nineteenth century, the search for a unified style for the new Italian state seemed to have focused its attention on a neo-Romanesque style. It was, therefore, not by chance that the buildings for the Exposition made reference not only to the architecture of ancient Rome, but to that of the Renaissance and baroque in order to identify an “absolute *romanità*” that would transcend strict chronological limits to embrace the full range of classicism since antiquity. At the very moment the city of Rome elected Ernesto Nathan mayor—a Mason from outside the nobility and un-beholden to the ecclesiastical power—Piacentini sought a difficult symbolic and architectural balance between the ancient and modern sources of classicism, with an objective very different from the one which he himself would pursue in his mature years during the fascist regime.⁷⁰

The story of the National Stadium in Rome in the early twentieth century demonstrates, rather, the way in which historic types and the classical formal language were used to express different cultural and political contents. The wish to express architectural continuity between modernity and antiquity was paralleled by a desire to link the new Italy with its ancient forebears, even in the field of sports. This parallel was a consistent theme in Italian culture from at least the late nineteenth century until the end of the Second World War. While the relationship between the architect in the present and the architecture of the past can be both contested and fruitful, the tradition as a whole offers opportunities for the accommodation of new building tasks—as well as coherent expression of present-day aspirations—by means of a universally understood and continually evolving formal language. ◀

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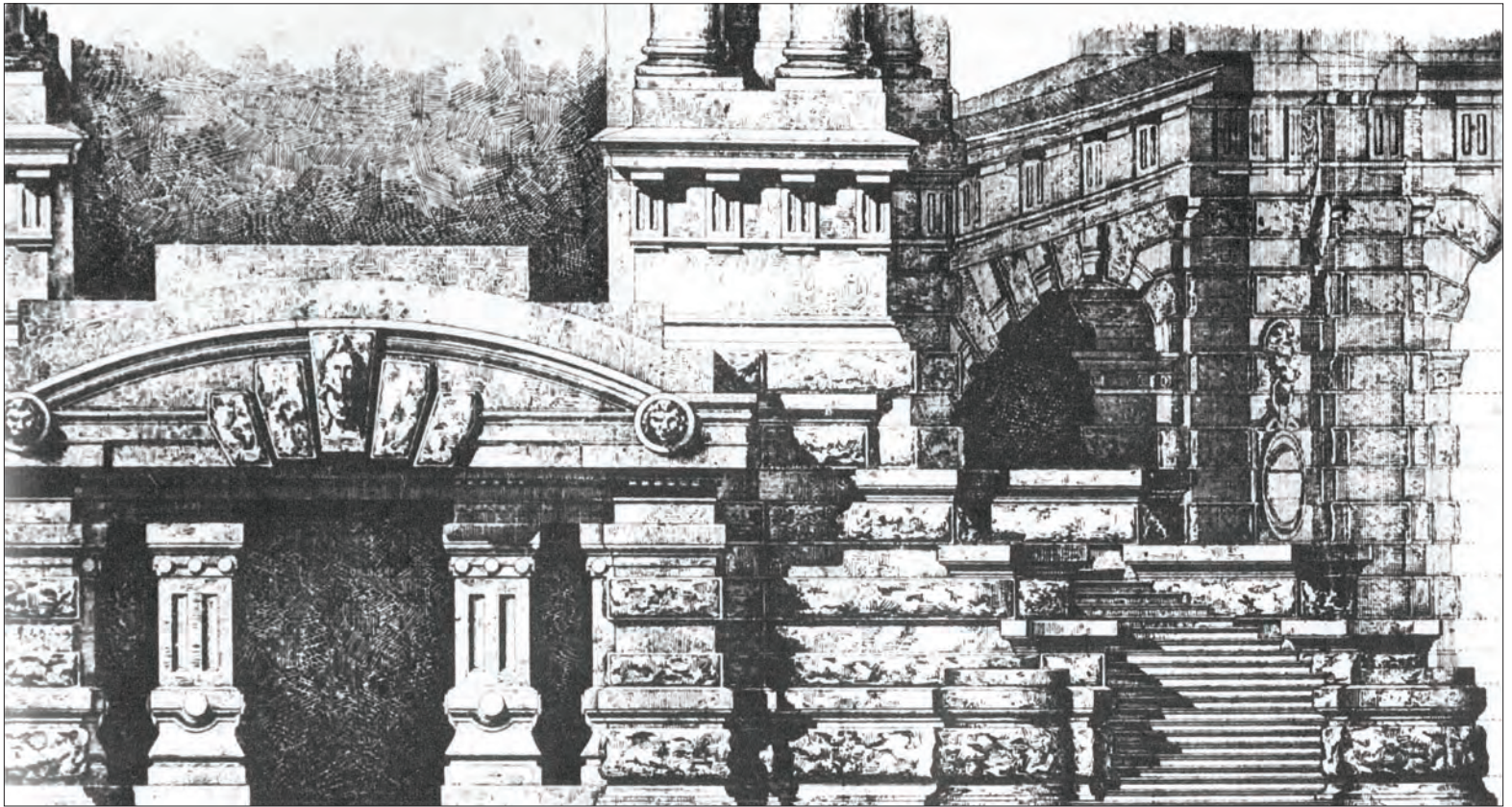


Figure 26 (above): G. Calderini, Palazzo di Giustizia, Rome, 1887. Detail of final project. (From Accasto, G., Fraticelli, V., Nicolini, R., *L'architettura di Roma Capitale 1870-1970*, Roma, Edizioni Golem, 1971, p. 91.)

NOTES

1. For histories in English of Italian architecture in the early twentieth century, see Kirk, Terry, *The Architecture of Modern Italy, vol. II, Visions of Utopia, 1900-Present*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005 and Meeks, C. L. V., *Italian Architecture 1750-1914*, London-New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966. For the cultural and political background of the 1911 Exposition, see Courtenay, Todd, "The 1911 International Exposition in Rome: Architecture, Archeology, and National Identity," *Journal of Historical Geography*, v. 37, 2011, pp. 440-459.
2. Capra, P., *Torino città di primati 333 volte prima in Italia*, Torino, Ed. Graphot, 2003.
3. Morasso, M., "Il programma sportivo dell'Esposizione di Torino," in G. Treves, Ed., *Le esposizioni del 1911: Roma, Torino, Firenze: rassegna illustrata delle mostre indette nelle tre capitali per solennizzare il cinquantenario del Regno d'Italia*, Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1911, p. 46.
4. Donghi, D., *Manuale dell'architetto*, Turin, Unione Tipografico-Editrice, 1924.
5. De Luca, P., "All'esposizione di Torino", in *Emporium*, XXXIV, December 1911, n. 199, p. 52.
6. *Il Popolo Romano*, January 15, 1906.
7. The Stadium that hosted the Games in honor of the Goddess Athena was originally constructed with wooden seats, but in 329 BC, Lycurgus reconstructed it in Pentelikon marble. In 140 AD, Herod Atticus gave it a monumental form, increasing the seating capacity to 50,000 spectators. In this phase the structure measured 255 x 131 meters. The stadium remained buried and neglected for many centuries, but the prized marble was reused in other construction or burned for lime. The stadium was reconstructed in 1895 on the basis of the archeological finds by the architect Anastasios Metaxas in a manner faithful to the original design. The following year, the "new" stadium hosted the first edition of the modern Olympic Games, and was used again for some events in the Athens Games of 2004. See Gasparri, C., *Lo stadio panatenaico. Documenti e testimonianze per una riconsiderazione dell'edificio di Erode Attico*, Roma, L'erma di Bretschneider, 1978, Estratto da "Annuario della Scuola archeologica di Atene e delle missioni italiane in Oriente", 52, 1974-75, pp. [313]-392).
8. See *Die Olympischen Spiele 776 v. Chr. - 1896 n. Chr., Mit Genehmigung und Unterstützung des Central-Comités der internationalen olympischen Spiele unter dem Vorsitz Seiner Königl. Hoheit des Kronprinzen Constantin, Athen, verlag von Carl Beck - Leipzig, F. Volckmar, London, H. Greveland Co, 1896*.
9. Toschi, L., "Lo sport a Roma da porta Pia alla candidatura per le Olimpiadi del 1908", in *Studi Romani*, 3-4, November-December 1988 (XXXVI), pp. 311-324. On sport in Italy around the turn of the twentieth century, see Varrasi, F.M., *Economia, Politica e Sport in Italia (1925-1935). Spesa pubblica, organizzazioni sportive specializzate, impianti ed espansione delle pratiche agonistiche amatoriali e "professionistiche" in un paese a regime autoritario*, Graduate thesis of the Facoltà di Economia dell'Università degli Studi di Firenze, 1994-1995, p. 83-86; Fabrizio, F., *Storia dello sport in Italia. Dalle società ginnastiche all'associazionismo di massa*, Guaraldi, Firenze, 1978, p. 56-64; for other aspects cited in the text, see Croce, B., *Storia d'Europa nel secolo decimonono*, Laterza, Bari, 1932, 3 ed. Bari-Roma, 1972, p. 298-303; Rossi, L., "Sport e cultura operaia in Europa 1900-1939", in *Italia contemporanea*, September 1989, 176, p. 168-170; Turati, F., *Discorsi parlamentari, Camera dei Deputati*, Roma, 1950, vol. II, p. 856. On the relationship between sport, fascism, and Catholic associations, see Fabrizio, F. *Sport e fascismo. La politica sportiva del regime. 1924-1936*, Guaraldi, Firenze, 1977, p. 11-27 and Giannantonio, R., *La costruzione del regime. Urbanistica, architettura e politica nell'Abruzzo del fascismo*, Lanciano, Carabba, 2006, p. 476-495.
10. Amante, B., *L'educazione fisica in Italia nei rapporti con la scuola*, Roma, Cecchini, 1907.
11. *Ibid.*, *Per il giubileo della Patria del MCMXI. Lo Stadio Nazionale nel Circo Massimo*, Roma, presso l'autore, 1908, p. 8.
12. "Totam hodie Romam circus capit, et fragor aurem percutit, eventum "viridis" quo colligo panni" (Juvenal, Satires, XI, 195). "All Rome flocks to the circus today, and a burst of applause greets the success of the green uniform."
13. Toschi, *Uno stadio per Roma . . .*, op. cit., p. 87n.
14. Legislatura XXII, 1a Sessione, Disegni e Relazioni, n. 617, p. 4, in *Progetto per lo Stadio Massimo Nazionale sull'area del Circo Massimo*, a cura di Virides, Federazione Scolastica Nazionale Educazione Fisica, Roma, Stabilimento Fratelli Capaccini, 1909, p. 21 and note 21.
15. Amante, *Per il giubileo . . .*, cit., p. 16.

16. The hippodrome in ancient Greek architecture was an open space served by tiered seating where horse races were held ("ippos" = horse, "dromos" = course). In Roman architecture, such races were held in the circuses, while the stadiums hosted athletic competitions, as in the Greek world. For an analysis of the typologies of the stadium and circus, see Gros, P., *L'architecture romaine, 1. Les monuments publics*, Paris, Picard editeur, 1996 and Humphrey, J., *Roman Circuses. Arenas for Chariot Racing*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1986.
17. In the Greek cities, the ancient tradition of the equestrian contests was extremely different in character from the Roman *ludi circenses*. The structures consisted of tracks of beaten earth as in the hippodromes at Corinth and Athens. Only between the second and third centuries did hippodromes appear that reflected the monumental model of the Roman circus, but with different characteristics according to the province.
18. For the Latin terms, see notes 27 and 30. See also Gros, *L'architettura romana . . .*, op. cit., p. 396-397.
19. Gros, *L'architettura romana . . .*, op. cit., p. 398-399. Cfr. anche: Crema, L., "Architettura romana," in *Enciclopedia Classica*, XII, III, 1, Società editrice Internazionale, Torino, 1959, p. 207 sgg., 302 sgg. e 436 sgg.; Colini, A.M., *Stadium Domitiani*, R. Ist. di Studi Romani, Roma, 194; Akurgal, E., *Ancient Civilizations and Ruins of Turkey: from prehistoric times until the end of the Roman Empire*, Haset Kitabevi, Istanbul, 1973; Aupert, P., *Fouilles de Delphes, II. Topographie et architecture. Le stade*, En depot aux De Boccard, Paris, 1979; Welch, K., "Greek Stadia and Roman Spectacles: Asia, Athens, and the Tomb of Herodes Atticus", in *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 11, 1998, 117-145; Aupert, P., "Evolution et Avatars d'une Forme Architecturale", in Landes C. ed., *Le Stade Romain et ses Spectacles catalogue de l'exposition, [du 4 juin au 20 octobre 1994]*, Lattès Musée archéologique Henri Prades, 1994, 95-106 ; Golden, M., *Sport in the Ancient World from A to Z*, Routledge, London, 2004.
20. Strabo, XIV, 639. The stadium at Laodicea, datable to 79 AD, also had short sides with a semi-circular plan. In addition to Aziano and Ephesus, the stadium-theater type is also present at Perga and Aspendos.
21. See Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, 39, 3, 7.
22. Gros, *L'architettura romana . . .*, op. cit., p. 400.
23. Among the structures of the type standing in Rome in the Imperial era, the Circus of Caligula and Nero was cited by Piny the Elder in *Naturalis Historia*, XXXVI, 74.
24. See Amante, *Per il giubileo . . .*, op. cit., pp. 20-21. He writes, "The stalls for the horses and chariots were arranged at the opposite end of the arena when viewed from the principal entrance of the Circus (the *porta triumphalis*). These stalls (called *carceres* . . .), were constituted by twelve *fornice*s and a thirteenth in the center, where the *pompa circensis*—the solemn procession of the athletes—entered the field. (...) In the middle of the arena, running lengthwise, was a long raised berm (*spina*), the truly sacred and monumental part of the circus because upon it was located the most prized mementos of the civil and religious history of the Romans: obelisks, aedicules, altars, columns, etc. The *meta* or *metæ*, conical constructions at the ends of the *spina*... were reminders of the etymology of the term circus which, beyond the meaning related directly to its form or the purpose it served, meant, according to Cassiodorus, Servius and others, only *circum enses*, because the *metæ* were trophies of weapons around which the chariots turned to make the drivers more artful and at the same time more meritorious in their triumphs. ... (And) we must remember the *euripo*, which was the moat filled with water that separated the spectators from the arena to protect them from the wild animals. Julius Caesar constructed the *euripo* of the Circus Maximus, a canal 3 meters wide and equally deep to isolate the spectators (...). Finally, *mæniana* (...) was an order of benches mounting up in concentric circles contained between two walkways that ran around the amphitheater and gave access to them. The *mæniana* was divided into a given number of equal sectors (*unei*) by staircases (*scaltæ*) cutting them perpendicularly to allow the spectators to go up to their places."
25. Livy, I, 35,8-10. The *Trigarium* in the *Campus Martius*, the oldest space used for the training of race horses, was already in use during the Etruscan period and at the end of the Republican era it had acquired a rectangular plan arrangement with its southeast side arcaded.
26. To the west was located the *Ara Maxima* of Hercules near the Forum Boarium, and at the southwest were the temples of Ceres, Flora, Mercury, and Venus Obsequens.

27. In 329 BC, the *carceres* were constructed in painted wood on the curved side; toward the end of the 4th century BC the *spina* was arranged in the center of the track; in 196 BC, on the other short end Lucius Stertinius, upon his victorious return from Spain, constructed a triumphal arch (*forix*) with gilded statues on top (*signa*). (See Livy, *Ab Urbe condita*, 33, 27). In 174 BC, the censors Quintus Fulvio Flaccus and Aulus Postumius Albinus rebuilt the *carceres* in masonry, locating *metae* at the ends of the *spina*, and at about the same time the rotating eggs were installed to indicate the number of laps to be completed. (Livy, XLI, 27, 6).
28. In 33 BC, to memorialize his naval successes, Agrippa placed on the *spina* the bronze dolphins that performed the same function as the eggs. The obelisk of Ramses erected by Augustus (now in the Piazza del Popolo) had come from Heliopolis in Egypt. The Imperial Box, more than the older *pulvinar*, seemed to resemble a sacred area dedicated to the gods presiding over the exhibitions. (Propertius, *Elegies*, II, 31).
29. Dionysus of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, III, 68, 1-4. The Greek historian lived in Rome between 30 and 7 BC. In Canina's reconstruction, the total length was 640 meters and the width 235 meters, while the capacity was about 200,000 spectators.
30. The fire of 36 AD prompted the reconstruction in marble of the *carceres* and the installation of *metae* in gilded bronze. The fire of 64 AD, which began right in the *cavea* of the structure, permitted Nero to rebuild it anew, bringing the capacity to 250,000 spectators. (Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, XXXVI, 102). An umpteenth fire in the period of Domitian (started again in the wooden seats) gave rise to yet more modifications, the most important of which regarded the replacement by Titus of the *forix* of Stertinius with a new triumphal entrance of three *forices*. The curvilinear traces still visible of the substructures of the *cavea* erected between the Palatine and the Celio are attributed to the time of Trajan. This phase is documented in the famous marble map of Rome, the *Forma Urbis*, created in the period of Septimius Severus (203-211) and by a mosaic dated to the fifth century uncovered at the House of the Mosaics in Luni. (See Ciancio Rossetto, P., "Il nuovo frammento della Forma severiana relativo al Circo Massimo", in *Formae Urbis Romae. Nuovi frammenti di piante marmoree dallo scavo dei Fori Imperiali*, edited by R. Meneghini e R. Santangeli Valenzani, Roma, "L'erma" di Bretschneider, 2006, p. 127pp.)
31. Pliny the Younger, *Panegirico di Traiano*, 51, 2-5.
32. This had been pointed out in the eighteenth century: see Bianconi, G. L., *Descrizione dei circhi, particolarmente di quello di Caracalla e dei giuochi in essi celebrati*, a posthumous work in French edited by C. Fea, Roma, Paglierini, 1789 (cited in Amante, *Per il giubileo . . .*, cit., p. 67).
33. Suetonius, *Cæsar*, XXX; Dio Cassius, LIII, 1°. The *quinquertium* originally included the long jump, footrace, wrestling, discus, and boxing. The modern version of the pentathlon was held for the first time in the fifth Olympic Games in Stockholm, 1912.
34. *La Tribuna*, 14 e 19 gennaio 1908.
35. *Progetto per lo Stadio Massimo Nazionale . . .*, op. cit., p. 12 and 21. The Italian branch of *Audax* was a cycling association founded in 1898 by Vito Pardo in order to promote sport tourism.
36. The project for the National Stadium was the last project of Giulio Podesti (1857-1909). In his works, principally from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, he adopted a "moderate" classical language to satisfy the need for an urban and representative character in the new capital. (See Accasto, G., Fraticelli, V., Nicolini, R., *L'architettura di Roma Capitale 1870-1970*, Roma, Edizioni Golem, 1971, pp. 70-71, 138, 197.) In the same years, Giulio Magni was developing his practice in Rome, where he designed innovative public housing at Testaccio in 1905 and the complex for the Cooperative of Railroad Workers in Piazza Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, on which he was working when called to collaborate on the National Stadium. See Toschi, L., "L'edilizia popolare a Roma. Giulio Magni e il quartiere Testaccio", in *Avanti!*, 5 September, 1984, p. 9; Artibani, M., *Giulio Magni 1859-1930. Opere e progetti*, Roma: Edizioni Kappa, 1999, p. 65; Muratore, G., "Uno sperimentalismo eclettico", in *Storia dell'architettura italiana. Il primo Novecento*, op. cit., p. 30.
37. *Il Messaggero*, July 18, 1908.
38. *Progetto per lo Stadio Massimo Nazionale . . .*, op. cit.
39. *Progetto di uno stadio in Roma*, in *L'Architettura Italiana*, v. IV, n. 7, April 1909, pp. 74-77.
40. Angelo Guazzaroni, at the time the head engineer of the municipal government of Rome, was born into a noble family in 1875 and had a career that continued until 1940. He was responsible for the realization of numerous public works, including the re-arrangement of the roadways and pedestrian access around the Coliseum (1939).
41. The publication produced by the Istituto Nazionale per l'Incremento dell'Educazione Fisica in Italia (INIEF) reported that the National Stadium had been designed based on the type of the Olympic Stadium of Athens. See *Stadio Nazionale in Roma*, Roma, Tip. Edit. Roma, 1910, [p. 1].
42. Gaetano Koch (1849-1910) was among the most important architects in Rome after the city became the new capital of Italy. (See Pevsner, N., Fleming J., Honour, H., *A Dictionary of Architecture*, London, Penguin Books, 1966). Giuseppe Sacconi (1854-1905) won the competition for the Monument to Vittorio Emanuele II (1884), whose work he directed until his death, after which it was completed in 1911 by Manfredi, Koch, and Pio Piacentini. (See Borsi, F., *L'architettura dell'Unità d'Italia*. Firenze, Casa Editrice Felice Le Monnier, 1966, parte IV, *I protagonisti*, cap. I, pp. 157-165; Meeks, C. L. V., *Italian Architecture 1750-1914*, London, New Haven, 1966, pp. 337-347). Manfredo Manfredi (1859-1927) designed and directed the construction of the new Ministry of the Interior on the Viminal hill (1911-26). (See Borsi F., Buscioni, M.C., *Manfredo Manfredi e il classicismo della nuova Italia*, Milano, Electa, 1983; Gigli, L., "Manfredo Manfredi", in *Il Vittoriano. Materiali per una storia*, II, Roma, Fratelli Palombi, 1988, pp. 151 s.).
43. In the first part of his long and fortunate career, Marcello Piacentini (1881-1960) participated in important competitions and designed residences for affluent Romans. In 1906 he won the competition to remodel the center of Bergamo. In 1908 he obtained the commission for the National Stadium as well as the master plan for the proposed 1911 Exposition. After the First World War he dominated official architecture in Italy, and was responsible for directing the most important state projects. (See Pisani, M., *Architetture di Marcello Piacentini. Le opere maestre*, Roma, Clear, 2004, pp. 22, 23; De Rose, A.S., *Marcello Piacentini. Opere 1903-1906*, Modena, Franco Cosimo Panini, 1995, p. 28, 107).
44. This and the following citations are from *Il Messaggero*, February 26, 1909; *Progetto di uno stadio in Roma*, op. cit.; *Stadio Nazionale in Roma*, op. cit.
45. The drawings are conserved in the Biblioteca di Scienze Tecnologiche dell'Università di Firenze, Fondo Marcello Piacentini, filza 16.
46. *Lo Stadio a Roma*, op. cit.
47. Giorino, *Lo Stadio di Roma inaugurato*, cit., p. 210.
48. In the same folder is another drawing that represents a long colonnaded elevation closed at the sides by two triumphal arches, also colonnaded, probably an additional solution for the entry feature.
49. *Il Messaggero*, 26 febbraio 1909.
50. Angelini, L., "I palazzi e gli edifici delle Esposizioni di Roma. Valle Giulia e Piazza d'Armi," in *Emporium*, XXXIV, dicembre 1911, n. 204, p. 418.
51. Varrasi, *Economia, Politica e Sport . . .*, op. cit., p. 219.
52. See Paroli, L., Baldinotti, S., "Foro delle Regioni," in *La Festa delle Feste. Roma e l'Esposizione Internazionale del 1911*, edited by S. Massari, Roma, Palombi editori, 2011, p. 63. On 20 September 1870, the Italian army besieging Rome managed to breach the Aurelian Walls near the Porta Pia. In this way the city was stormed and delivered to the new unified State, and the following year became the official capital, succeeding Turin and Florence.
53. Giorino, *Lo Stadio di Roma inaugurato*, op. cit., p. 210.
54. Baldinotti, S., "Stadio Flaminio", in *La Festa delle Feste . . .*, op. cit., p. 170.
55. *Progetto di uno stadio in Roma*, op. cit., p. 77.
56. *Il Messaggero*, August 11, 1929.
57. On June 10, 1945, the Stadium was the site of the finals of the second edition of the world soccer championship, won by Italy over Czechoslovakia.
58. Stadiums with conspicuous displays of classical architecture and sculpture of antique inspiration were constructed in numerous countries in the following decade, from Rome's Stadio dei marmi (Enrico Del Debbio, 1928) to Chicago's Soldier Field (Holabird and Roche, 1924): the second had the same U-shaped configuration as the stadiums proposed for Rome in 1911.

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59. On May 4, 1949, the airplane bringing home almost all of the champion Turin soccer team crashed into the hill below the Basilica of Superga, outside Turin, killing all aboard. The tragic loss of the team, popularly known as “Grande Torino,” deeply affected the Italian public.
60. On this subject, see *La Festa delle Feste* . . . op. cit., and Courtenay, op. cit.
61. Muratore, *Uno sperimentalismo eclettico*, op. cit., pp. 20-21.
62. Bossaglia, R., “Dopo il Liberty: considerazioni sull’eclettismo di ritorno e il filone dell’architettura fantastica in Italia,” in *Scritti in onore di Giulio Carlo Argan, Roma, Multigrafica*, 1984-85, p. 213.
63. Lupano, M., *Marcello Piacentini*, Laterza, Roma, 1991, p. 17. Arianna Sara De Rose associates the fascination with Roman imperial architecture in Piacentini’s buildings with the contemporary scenographies for epic films set in ancient Rome, like “The Last Days of Pompeii” (1908) and “Spartacus” (1909). The close relation between film and architecture, then and now, deserves further study. See De Rose, *Marcello Piacentini* . . . , op. cit., p. X. A return to a more sober Romanism in civic architecture was also the dominant trend in the United States, as evidenced by the work of McKim, Mead & White during the same years.
64. Pisani, *Architetture di Marcello Piacentini* . . . , op. cit., p. 45.
65. Piacentini, M., *Lo stile neo-classico e la sua applicazione in Italia*, Roma, Tumminelli, [1901?]
66. Ibid., “Confidenze di un architetto. Marcello Piacentini,” in *Scienza e tecnica*, vol. 7, February 1943, fasc. 2, pp. 56-57. Piacentini attended courses in architecture at the Istituto romano di Belle Arti, where in 1906 he received a diploma as professor of drawing. In 1912 he obtained his degree in civil architecture at the Scuola di applicazione degli ingegneri in Rome, based on a Regio Decreto issued *ad personam*. (See Lupano, Marcello Piacentini . . . , cit., pp. 4-5).
67. Hitchcock, H.R., *Architecture Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, London, Penguin Books, 1958, p. 534.
68. On Italian architecture between the world wars and the relationship between the large cities and the smaller towns, see the Giannantonio, *La costruzione del regime* . . . , op. cit.
69. Middleton R., Watkin D., *Neoclassical and 19th Century Architecture*, Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1976. (Italian edition, *Architettura dell’Ottocento*, Electa, Milano, 1977), p. 267-268. On neo-classical architecture, see Mellinshoff T., *German Architecture and the Classical Ideal*, MIT Press, Cambridge Mass., Thames & Hudson, London, 1987. On the architecture of the Age of Enlightenment, the classic text remains Kaufmann, E., *Architecture in the Age of Reason*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1955.
70. On the figure of Marcello Piacentini see also the recently-published book, Ciucci, Giorgio, S. Lux, and F. Purini, eds., *Marcello Piacentini architetto 1881-1960*, Roma, Gangemi Editore, 2012. Mayor Ernesto Nathan was elected in 1907 and re-elected in 1911. His administration was notable for attempts to regulate the intense building development throughout the city and to promote the construction of humane social housing.

Acknowledgements: The author wishes to thank Steven Semes, Luisa Boccia, and Assen Assenov for their assistance with translations for this article.