

Varese (IT), Sala Montanari (former Casa del Mutilato) [extant] - 1939

PEOPLE

[Unknown]

Sanguis florebit.

Blood will flourish.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The inscription (1939) is visible over the entrance of Sala Montanari (via dei Bersaglieri 1), a building named after the painter Giuseppe Montanari (1889–1976) and currently owned by the Municipality of Varese, used for cultural events. The inscription is engraved in stone. Its author is unknown.

The building was designed by architect Ottavio Coletti (1879–1960). Built between 1939 and 1940, it was intended to serve as the headquarters of Associazione Nazionale Mutilati e Invalidi di Guerra (ANMIG; Association of War Mutilated and Invalids). The façade has a trilithic porch in dark green serpentine, and its architrave bears the Latin inscription. On the left side stands a quadrangular tower covered in imitation travertine plaster. On the wall, there were originally three fasces (later removed) and the symbol of the Associazione Nazionale Mutilati (three swords surrounded by a crown of thorns). In the building's main hall, there is a large fresco by Giuseppe Montanari (1939) depicting an allegory of Glory crowning those who fought for the Fatherland. On either side of the fresco, there were two marble busts by the sculptor Daniele Scola (1940) and depicting King Vittorio Emanuele III and Benito Mussolini (they were destroyed after the Second World War). After the war, the building was converted into a cinema (Cinema Rivoli) before being purchased and renovated by the Varese municipality.

According to *Cronaca Prealpina*, the local pro-regime newspaper, the building was inaugurated on 2 June 1940, just days before Italy's entry into the war (Anonymous 1940a). The grand event featured a large parade starting from Piazza Montegrappa, home to the Palazzo delle Corporazioni, and passing in front of the monument to the fallen in Piazza dell'Impero (now Piazza della Repubblica). The ceremony was attended by Fascist authorities, the ANMIG president Alessandro Gorini (1890-1980), and Luigi Russo (1882–1964). Luigi Russo, who had participated in the March on Rome, served as Undersecretary to the Presidency of the Council (1939–1943). During the inauguration, a message from Carlo Delcroix (1896–1977), a renowned war veteran and Fascist deputy, was read to those attending the parade, addressing “la Varese Garibaldina e Fascista” (the

Garibaldian and Fascist Varese). The building and the epigraph were blessed by Varese's provost, Monsignor Alessandro Proserpio (1877-1948). Following this, both Gorini and Russo delivered two solemn speeches (Anonymous 1940b).

The inscription stands out prominently due to its frontal and elevated position. The Latin text pays homage to wounded soldiers who had fought for Italy. The fate of the soldiers of the First World War held particular significance for early Fascism, especially during its Sansepolcrista phase. Fascism sought to give new meaning to the sacrifice of these soldiers, aiming to make "their blood flourish," as the inscription suggests, by redeeming Italy from its condition of subordinate power. This situation was often described in propaganda with the term "Mutilated Victory," coined by Gabriele D'Annunzio. In his inauguration speech, Gorini stated that the Casa del Mutilato is "a temple built by the gratitude of an entire people towards the idea of the most proven sacrifice [...], to the idea of the purest, warmest, and reddest blood, which alone can serve as the cement for that other great temple named Italy" ("Essa è un tempio, un tempio edificato dalla riconoscenza di tutto un popolo all'idea del sacrificio più provato [...], all'idea del sangue più puro, caldo e vermiglio, che solo può far da cemento all'altro grandissimo tempio che ha nome Italia") (Anonymous 1940b).

Bibliography

Anonymous. 1940a. 'Oggi il sottosegretario Russo rappresentante del Governo fascista inaugurerà la Casa del Mutilato e la «Giornata della Tecnica»'. *Cronaca Prealpina* (2 June 1940): 4.

Anonymous. 1940b. 'Nel nome del Duce'. *Cronaca Prealpina* (3 June 1940): 4.

Guglielmi, Eugenio. 1999. *Guida alla città di Varese: itinerari di architettura del primo Novecento*, Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 18-19.

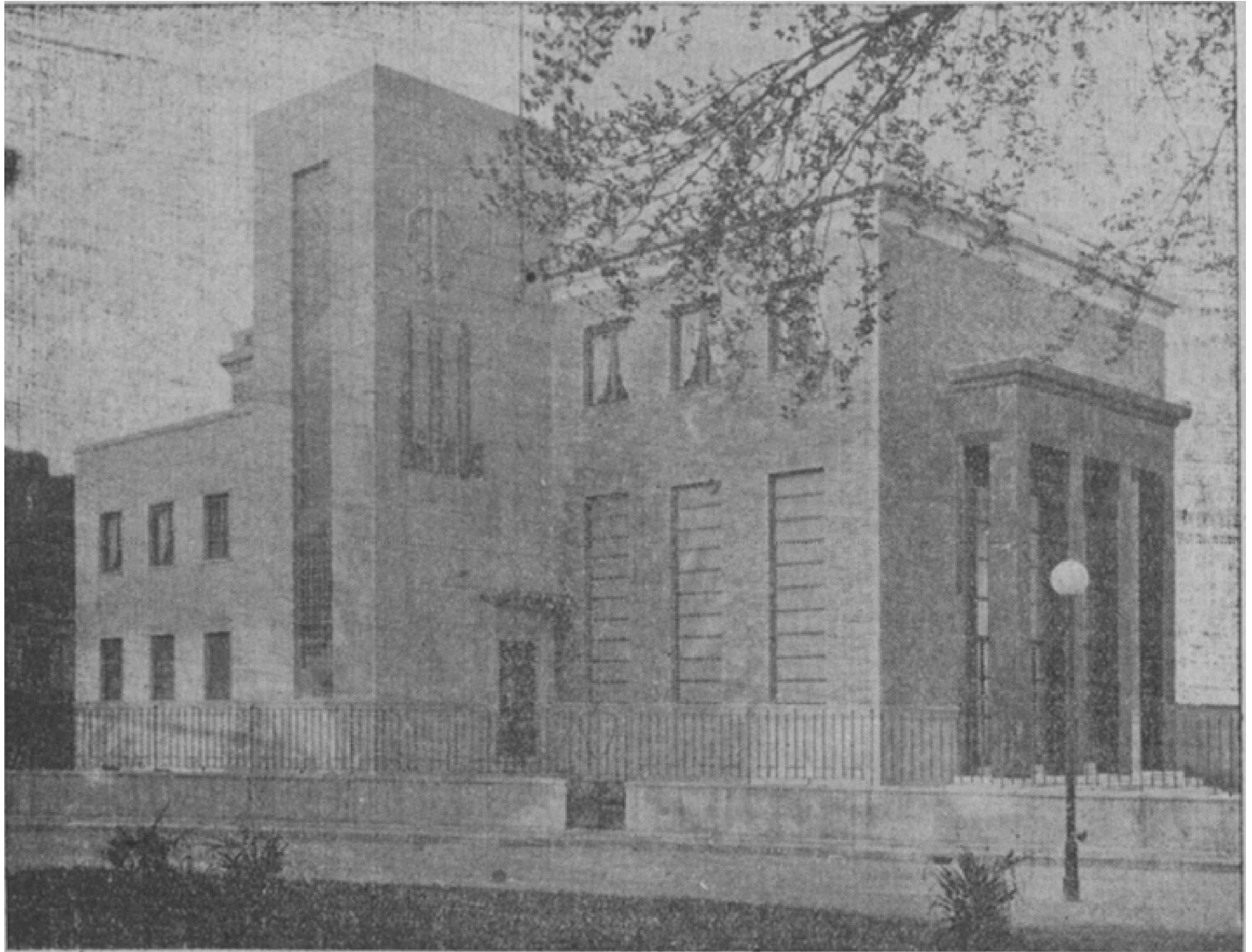
Saldini, Alessandra. 2015. *L'architettura fra le due guerre in provincia di Varese: conoscenza e catalogazione*. Milano: Politecnico di Milano (MA thesis), 98-105.

Marcello Zeni





Façade of the former Casa del Mutilato (Varese). © M. Fioravanti.



The situation of the building in ca. 1940. From: Anonymous 1940a.



The inaugural parade, headed by Luigi Russo. From: Anonymous 1940b.