

A R T E

COLLEZIONI LUOGHI ATTORI

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## COLLEZIONI LUOGHI ATTORI

Diretta da/Directed by

Sandra Costa

Dominique Poulot

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Il titolo della collana sottolinea l'intenzione di considerare l'Arte come un sistema dinamico caratterizzato storicamente dalla molteplicità dei suoi attori. Se la creazione costituisce il cuore dell'arte, fulcro e motore del processo di produzione e di fruizione delle opere sono spesso figure che assumono e svolgono altre funzioni. Dai committenti ai collezionisti, dai conservatori dei musei ai destinatari di una più generica ma sempre più vasta educazione all'arte: lo sviluppo attuale della disciplina impedisce ormai di valutare semplicemente come secondario e accidentale il loro ruolo. Secondo questo approccio l'opera d'arte è "opera aperta": l'attenzione ad aspetti largamente interdisciplinari e alla sociologia dei fenomeni artistici intende infatti collegare il collezionismo e le sue pratiche, anche museologiche, a contesti e congiunture, a circuiti polivalenti e multiformi di cultura e di mercato. L'interesse, anche metodologico, è rivolto a tutte le possibili forme di diffusione e mediazione; la volontà è quella di considerare l'ampliamento di orizzonti che caratterizza oggi il dibattito sull'Arte e anche di perseguire l'idea che i documenti d'archivio o gli allestimenti museali possano proporre una Storia non meno significativa di quella degli oggetti evidenziando preferenze culturali ed estetiche.

The title of the series draws attention to its intent to regard Art as a dynamic system, characterized throughout history by a multiplicity of actors. While the heart of art may be creation, the linchpin and driving force to the production and consumption of works of art often rests with figures who take on and carry out other functions. Those who commission works of art and those who collect them, museum conservators and the recipients of a general but increasingly broad art education – the current development of the discipline makes it impossible to consider the roles played by such people as simply secondary or accidental. According to this approach, the work of art is an "open work": indeed, the attention to largely interdisciplinary aspects and to the sociology of artistic phenomena aims to link collecting and its practices, including its museological practices, with contexts and circumstances, with the multipurpose and multiform circuits of culture and market. The series' interest, including its methodological interest, is toward all possible forms of art diffusion and mediation; the purpose is to consider the broadening of horizons that currently characterizes the debate on Art and also to pursue the idea that archive documents and the way exhibitions are mounted in museums can convey a History as meaningful as the one set forth by artifacts, highlighting cultural and aesthetic preferences.

Tutti i contributi pubblicati nella collana sono sottoposti a double-blind peer review.

All contributions published in the series are subject to double-blind peer review.

# IMPRESE IN MOSTRA

L'eredità del Novecento:  
esposizioni, musei, percorsi

a cura di  
Sandra Costa

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Fondazione Bologna University Press  
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# Beyond the Italian Pavilion: National Pride and Corporate Presence at the 1937 Paris Exposition

Paola Cordera  
*Politecnico di Milano*

The 1937 Paris *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques appliqués à la Vie Moderne* could be described as a theater of power, emphasizing how diplomatic and political tensions influenced aesthetics, display, and communication strategies targeting the exhibition audience. While many essays and articles have analyzed the architecture of the Italian pavilion within the context of Fascist rhetoric and exhibition strategies,<sup>1</sup> none has explored the numerous ways Italian products gained visibility within and beyond the national pavilion through “corporate pavilions”. Drawing on unpublished archival documents and foreign press reports, this essay explores the many strategies for displaying the “Made in Italy” production within the broader context of the 1937 Paris Exposition and its interconnections with the concurrent international museum debate. In doing so, it seeks to illuminate the nuanced dynamics of cultural diplomacy and economic promotion at play within the international exhibition landscape of the interwar period, shedding light on the less-explored aspects of Italian participation and their broader implications.

## Showcasing Italy

Spanning from the Champ de Mars to the Palais de Chaillot and along the banks of the Seine River from the Pont de la Concorde to the Pont de Grenelle, the 1937 Paris Exposition aimed to be a strategic showcase of global cultures and innovations. Although France was allocated the largest space, significant impor-

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<sup>1</sup> For a critical overview of the 1937 exhibition within the context of universal exhibitions throughout history, see Jackson 2008, *passim* and Masina 2016, pp. 291-339. For discussions on the connections between museums and exhibitions, see Cecchini 2013. For issues centered on art, see Cordisco 2012 and La Rovere 2021.



1. Unknown photographer, *The Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne (International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life)*, Paris, 1937. Fireworks illuminate the Seine River, with the Italian Pavilion on the left and the German and USSR pavilions on the right

tance was also given to foreign nations, whose pavilions were prominently positioned at the intersection of the two main axes along both banks of the Seine.

Nestled between the Swiss Pavilion and the Elegance Pavilion on the left bank of the river at the foot of the Eiffel Tower, the Italian pavilion was particularly notable (fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> Designed by architect Marcello Piacentini, its architecture reflected the monumental and classical style favored by Benito Mussolini's regime, with colonnades, terraces, courts, and reliefs that exuded power and echoed Italy's glorious past.<sup>3</sup> This modern monumentality captivated national newspapers

<sup>2</sup> The exposition was designed to disseminate propaganda and influence public opinion, aligning with the broader goals of the state's propaganda efforts. Establishing the Undersecretariat of State for Press and Propaganda in 1934 signaled the Fascist government's intent to control cultural and informational spheres. By restructuring this body into the Ministry of Press and Propaganda in 1935 and subsequently evolving it into the Ministry of Popular Culture by 1937, the regime aimed to centralize and intensify its propaganda efforts. These changes illustrate how the government sought to manipulate public perception and opinion domestically and to channel a specific image internationally through events like supranational expositions. On this topic, see Fabi 2013. For an overview of the event concerning the regime's ideology, see Cimadomo, Lecardane 2014.

<sup>3</sup> On the general conception of the building, see Piacentini 1936. On Piacentini's role in displays and exhibitions, see Melis 2012.



and international audiences,<sup>4</sup> receiving acclaim in daily press coverage and photographs taken by notable figures such as British architect and architectural photographer Francis Rowland Frank Yerbury,<sup>5</sup> American architect Leon Hyzen,<sup>6</sup> and foreign news editor of “The Times” Ralph Deakin.<sup>7</sup>

The pavilion’s interior arrangement, crafted under the direction and coordination of architect and designer Giuseppe Pagano, epitomized Italy’s advancements in art, craftsmanship, science, industry, and agriculture within a monumental yet accessible framework. Visitors were provided a comprehensive view of the country’s capabilities, ranging from technological innovations to traditional manufacturing. Emphasizing the potential of such ephemeral architecture, Pagano noted how temporary structures could offer unique opportunities for designers to explore innovative concepts and push beyond the boundaries of traditional architectural norms, unfettered by the usual practical constraints.<sup>8</sup>

The spatial layout of the pavilion display, detailed in “Architettura” – a magazine directed by Piacentini since 1931 – was based on a circulatory system that ensured independent upward and downward visitor flows.<sup>9</sup> Adopting a one-way circulation through various spaces on each floor ensured visitors followed a predetermined route from entrance to exit. This layout, echoing contemporary exhibition design philosophies, was also advocated by Austrian American graphic designer and architect Herbert Bayer, who emphasized the importance of guiding visitors through the displays to enhance their experience and ensure smooth crowd management.<sup>10</sup> This approach aimed to maximize the educational impact of the displays while providing an enjoyable and enlightening experience for all attendees.

Design strategies ensured that each element within the Italian pavilion served as an educational tool and a beacon of Italian excellence. Aimed at portraying Italy as a modern and dynamic country, the pavilion showcased technological advancements, artistic prowess, and cultural heritage. To accommodate this diversity, it employed a variety of display approaches, each tailored to meet the specific needs of different types of items and exhibits. This customization

<sup>4</sup> See for instance, Zveteremich 1937 and Pagano 1941. On the pavilion’s impact on French press, see Delarbre 2010-2011, pp. 131-137.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance, inv. n. RIBA15562, Architectural Press Archive / RIBA Collections [from hence on RIBA], London.

<sup>6</sup> For photos by Hyzen from 1937 in Paris, taken during his trip to Europe and the Middle East as part of his Rotch Travelling Scholarship, see the Leon Hyzen Collection at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, MA.

<sup>7</sup> See for instance, inv. n. RIBA27645 and RIBA6456, RIBA, London.

<sup>8</sup> On the role of Giuseppe Pagano as a designer, see Bassi, Castagno 1994.

<sup>9</sup> *Architettura* 1937. In 1937, Pagano teamed up with Piacentini to draft the preliminary study for the master plan of the Universal Exposition scheduled to be held in Rome in 1942. For further details on his relationship with Piacentini, see Duranti 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Though published in 1939, the article was written in 1937: Bayer 1939, p. 17.

catered to the diverse interests of the audience, thereby maximizing the impact on all visitors.

Aiming to promote Italy as a modern industrial nation capable of competing internationally, the Gallery of Industry showcased a diverse selection of Italian production offerings. This exhibition – designed by architects F. Albini and G. Palanti – featured contributions from key companies such as Fiat, Montecatini, and Breda, emphasizing Italy's capacity in various industrial sectors.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, visitors could explore cutting-edge displays of aeronautical mechanics, precision measuring instruments, and state-of-the-art radio and cinematographic apparatus. Such a display highlighted Italy's technological advancements and demonstrated Italy's role in pioneering modern manufacturing techniques and innovations. By presenting such a wide array of industrially significant products and technologies, the pavilion served as a testament to Italy's industrial dynamism and integration into global economic progress. This exhibition section bridged the gap between traditional Italian craftsmanship and contemporary industrial achievements, fostering a perception of Italy as a country of rich historical heritage and a forward-thinking, innovative powerhouse.

For educational purposes, this section – and sections devoted to architecture and public works (designed by architect A. Pica) and graphic arts (designed by architect and designer E. Caroni) – were supplemented with writings, photos, and graphic elements.<sup>12</sup> These additions, praised in the French press,<sup>13</sup> were specifically crafted to make complex subjects accessible and engaging for untrained viewers. Such strategies were previously discussed at the Madrid conference in 1934 concerning ethnographical and popular art collections.<sup>14</sup> This alignment with international standards for museum displays underscores the exhibition's commitment to cultural education and the promotion of heritage. Furthermore, these efforts exemplify the Italian pavilion as an “exposition vivante”, a concept reminiscent of the “musée vivant” coined by art historian Henri Focillon to describe a living exhibition that not only showcases but also educates and inspires attendees.

Despite its focus on modern industry, the 1937 Paris Exposition featured traditional Italian craftsmanship, with dedicated areas for decorative arts and artisanal skills designed to showcase Italy's rich cultural heritage (fig. 2). These

<sup>11</sup> Lo Duca 1937.

<sup>12</sup> Beyond these names, one should recall the contributions of architect M. Asnago for the design of the information room in the decorative art section, architects L. Baldessari and M. Nizzoli for the rooms dedicated to Italian wines and architect A. Bianchetti for the design of the Fine Art room. Architect E. Rossi curated the Tourism Gallery in the Honour Hall, the Restaurant Hall, and the Propaganda Hall. Painter, sculptor, and designer M. Sironi designed and curated the section devoted to the Overseas Colonies. For further details on the contribution of Italian architects and designers to the Italian pavilion at the 1937 exhibition, see *Le Pavillon Italien 1937*.

<sup>13</sup> M.G. 1937, p. 199.

<sup>14</sup> On this topic, see the different contributions in Della Piana, Failla, Varallo 2020.



2. T. Bonney (1894-1978), *The Decorative Arts Gallery at the Italian Pavilion. The Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne (International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life)*, Paris, 1937

elements particularly captivated foreign audiences, as witnessed by photographs taken by American photographer and publicist Thérèse Bonney. Given her significant role in the 1930s, akin to today's illustrated news agencies, it is likely that her selection of subjects – e.g., P. Melandri, Lenci, Ginori, Seguso, Ferro Toso e Barovier artifacts – was strategically aimed at appealing to the foreign market, especially in America.

The decorative art and art fabrics sections, masterfully crafted by architect R. Camus and curated by C.A. Felice on behalf of the Triennale Institution, followed a taxonomic order. Works by renowned manufacturers – including ceramics by De Salvo of Albissola and glassware crafted by Seguso and Venini of Murano – were tastefully selected, highlighting their exceptional quality and contribution to Italy's storied traditions in craftsmanship.

The furniture exhibition epitomized elegance and sophistication, thanks to the design efforts of architects G. Ponti, G. Pulitzer-Finali, L. Cosenza, and P. Chiesa. This exhibition was designed to recreate the ambiance of an upper-class Italian apartment, immersing visitors in the refined living spaces of Italy's elite and showcasing their enduring aesthetic traditions, underscored by the thoughtful pairing of furniture with decorative arts (fig. 3). The music salon



3. T. Bonney, *Pavillon de l'Italie. Furniture section. The Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne (International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life)*, Paris, 1937. The armchair and desk, manufactured by Arcari Company, feature prominently. A ceramic horse by Richard Ginori is displayed on the desk, and ceramics by Melandri and Cantagalli are placed on the shelves

– designed by architect G. Pulitzer Finali with contributions from painter M. Campigli – also embraced such an approach. These exhibitions were not merely displays of individual pieces but masterclasses in interior design, demonstrating how individual elements could be integrated into a cohesive living environment. Modeled after museum period rooms, these spaces played a crucial role in the exhibition by offering more than just visual appreciation of artifacts; they provided a contextual framework that suggested to visitors the historical and cultural dimensions of the items, thereby deepening their appreciation of cultural heritage and design evolution.<sup>15</sup> The effectiveness of such ambiance is underscored by scholar Jeremy Aynsley, who also noted how “overlaps and interconnections existed between the exhibited interior and [...] the commercialized and commodified period interior – that which was for sale”.<sup>16</sup> This remark highlights the educational and commercial purposes of the exhibition, bridging historical appreciation with contemporary consumer culture. Through such displays, the exhibition celebrated Italy’s past while positioning its cultural and industrial output within a modern marketplace, illustrating how historical reverence and modern innovation coalesce to shape public perception and market dynamics.

The immersive experience peaked at the Italian Restaurant, organized with the support of ENIT (The Italian Government Tourist Board). This venue offered a unique opportunity to sample authentic Italian cuisine in a distinctly Italian atmosphere. Visitors could watch the kitchen in action through a crystal-clear glass partition, transforming food preparation into a dynamic “show” that enriched the interactive experience. Gastronomic information on Italian recipes was available upon request, adding an educational dimension to the dining experience.<sup>17</sup> Echoing the thoughts of Herbert Bayer, who advocated for exhibition design that “should not retain its distance from the spectator, it should be brought close to him, penetrate and leave an impression on him, should explain, demonstrate, and even persuade and lead him to a planned and direct reaction”,<sup>18</sup> this part of the exhibition utilized culinary displays as a medium of cultural expression and engagement. Thus, the exhibition design paralleled the psychology of advertising, aiming to both inform and inspire visitors.

In conclusion, the Italian pavilion not only showcased a diverse array of objects but also featured varied displays. These exhibits underscored efforts to modernize Italian culture internationally, incorporating both architectural aesthetics and the dynamics of exhibition and communication to align with contemporary international display strategies.

<sup>15</sup> On this topic, see Costa, Poulot, Volait 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Aynsley 2006, p. 25.

<sup>17</sup> *Le Pavillon de l'Italie Impériale* 1937.

<sup>18</sup> Though published in 1939, the article was written in 1937: Bayer 1939, p. 17.

## Italian Attractions Beyond the Italian Pavilion

As has been noted, food played an important role in staging Italian culture within the pavilion. Prominently featured were renowned names from the Italian food and beverage industry, such as the Campari *aperitivo* and Casa Vinicola del Barone Ricasoli, showcasing their relevance as a significant cultural symbol. Other companies secured their places in individual pavilions alongside these distinguished brands, underscoring the confidence in the Paris initiative as a strategic promotional endeavor.

The presence of “corporate pavilions” was not unprecedented in international exhibitions, as evidenced by expositions in Philadelphia (1876), Chicago (1893), and Paris (1889 and 1900). At the 1906 Milan exposition, Italian companies, including private food and beverage firms like Fernet Branca, Gelateria Siciliana Romeo, Florio, Distillerie Italiane, and Liquore Strega, were granted substantial space.<sup>19</sup> Their pavilions served as inviting cafes and tasting rooms, allowing visitors to sample or purchase products on-site. Often designed in the Art Nouveau style consistent with the general trend of the time and sometimes incorporating the company’s logo into the building – as in the case of the Branca company – these spaces were compelling and memorable promotional tools.

Likewise, the 1937 exhibition showcased the symbiotic relationship between commerce and culture by providing a space devoted to advertising practices, namely the Pavilion de la Publicité, attesting to how advertisements played a vital role in shaping modern society’s narratives. This innovative pavilion marked a departure from traditional exhibition practices, introducing an original dimension to the celebratory atmosphere of the exposition, showcasing not only the achievements of industry and art – addressed to arts and techniques applied to modern life – but also the evolving dynamics of consumer culture and marketing tactics.<sup>20</sup> Renowned architect René Herbst and graphic designer Jean Carlu, specialists in storefronts, stands, and window decoration, collaborated to create a cohesive and visually striking ensemble.

They transcended traditional advertising conventions, complementing the main pavilion with twenty stands allocated to various advertisers. Adjacent to the row of French companies’ pavilions, the Buitoni building stood out with its giant, eye-catching advertisements (fig. 4). The location of the Buitoni pavilion in this area further attested to the company’s international reputation, given its existing plants abroad at the time. Such a collective vision transformed the advertising stands into more than mere promotional spaces. It enhanced the individual

<sup>19</sup> In addition to these names, it is also worth mentioning the Venezia Murano Glass Company and the Fontana Company, which had their own autonomous pavilions. For a comprehensive overview of pavilions at the 1906 exposition in Milan, see Cordera, Ricci 2011.

<sup>20</sup> On this topic see Chessel 1998, especially, chapter 6: *La publicité à l’Exposition internationale de Paris (1937)*, pp. 181-210.



4. T. Bonney, *Pavillon de la Publicité*. Several pavilions at the *Champ de Mars*. Among others, on the right is the Buitoni Pavilion. The Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne (International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life), Paris, 1937

appeal and contributed to the overall ambiance and atmosphere of the advertising area, leaving a lasting impression on all who attended while captivating and engaging visitors with innovative design aesthetics.

Standing alone at the rear of the Petit Palais, the Cinzano tower boasted an Art Deco design characterized by geometric patterns and crowned by a metal structure bearing the company's name (fig. 5). Additional "Italian pavilions" were constructed in the exhibition's Parc des Attractions by the Pont de l'Alma, designed by architect Robert Martzloff, and situated on the right bank of the river between the Quai de la Conférence and the Cours Albert 1er. This area was intended to be a bustling destination within the exposition, filled with people strolling along the riverbank and enjoying the attractions. Featuring large windows and open terraces on pilotis inspired by Le Corbusier's architecture, the Martini & Rossi (fig. 6) and Fernet Branca pavilions were included among those attractions. The structural and security issues raised by these architectural innovations become clear from archival sources<sup>21</sup>.

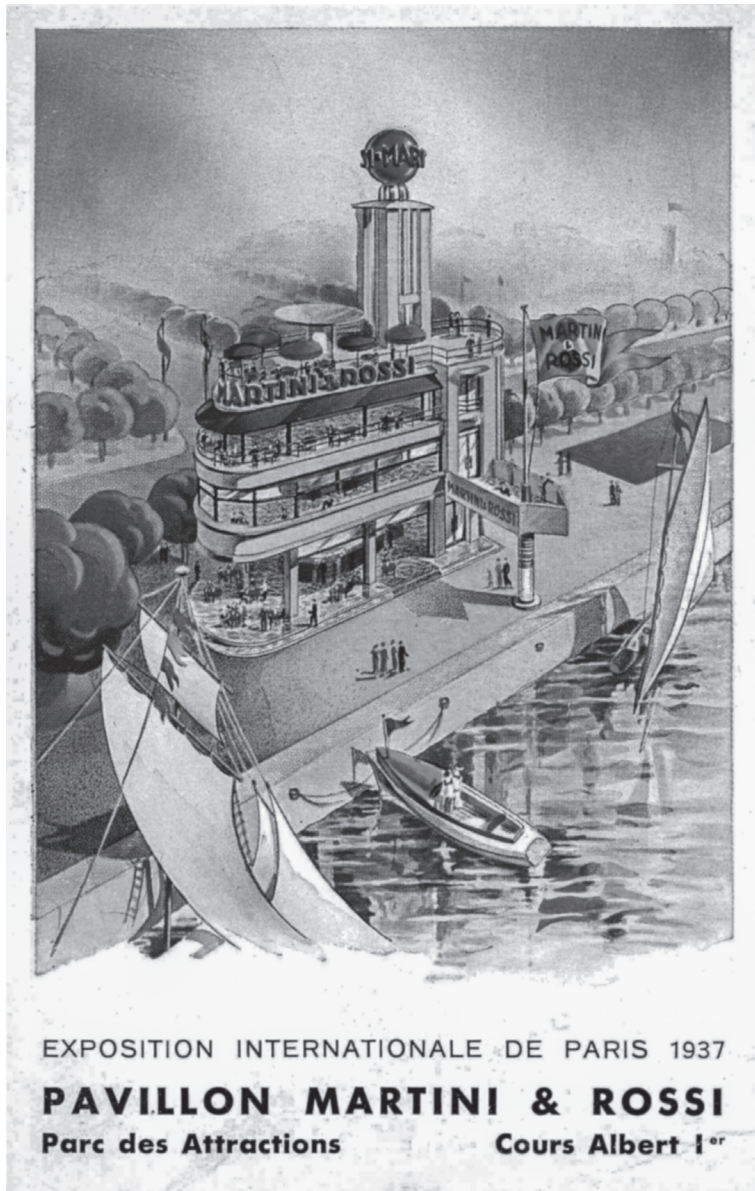
<sup>21</sup> Security reports and technical drawings are held at the Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Archives Nationales de France, *Exposition internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne de 1937 à Paris*, F/12/12596.



5. T. Bonney, *Tower of the Cinzano Pavilion* by architects Georges Letellier and H. Mathé. *The Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne (International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life)*, Paris, 1937

The installation of luminescent lights further enhanced the pavilions' appeal. Lighting played a crucial role, especially after nightfall. Lights illuminated the stands, casting a radiant glow that captured visitors' attention and highlighted the company's importance. Such lights were carefully positioned to enhance the visual appeal, emphasizing architectural elements and transforming the exhibi-





6. Unknown author, *Martini & Rossi Pavilion at the Parc des Attractions*. *The Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne (International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life)*, Paris, 1937, postcard

tion space into a mesmerizing spectacle. Beyond ensuring visibility, they created an enchanting atmosphere that intensified the allure of the stands, making each one a beacon of innovation and creativity that invited exploration and discovery well into the night. In this manner, the use of lighting not only illuminated the stands but also the visitors' imagination, reinforcing the exposition's significance

as a showcase of progress and innovation. This was to be one of the striking aspects of the event, as evidenced by the existence of several night photos.

Archival documents also attest to the use of the pavilions' inner spaces. In fact, those pavilions served as captivating and inviting spaces, drawing large crowds eager to watch shows from terraces – such as fireworks, light fountains on the Seine, or nautical shows – and to experience the renowned companies' products inside the tasting and reception rooms. Visitors were given the opportunity to appreciate the quality and craftsmanship of the offerings, ensuring a memorable experience for all who visited the pavilions.

These aspects were highlighted by the editorial staff of the newspaper “La Nuova Italia”, who described the visit to the Fernet Branca pavilion as one of the most delightful experiences of the exposition.<sup>22</sup> They noted how visitors were warmly greeted on the second floor by groups of charming young women dressed in the picturesque costumes of the Friuli region, the Sesia Valley, and Brianza. It cannot be overlooked that the emphasis on folk traditions and customs in 1937 also led to the first International Folklore Conference and the founding of the Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires, directed by Paul Rivet and Jacques Rivière.<sup>23</sup>

Although not fully philologically accurate, this staging was designed to reflect the authenticity of the products' ingredients and create a genuinely Italian atmosphere. The focus on authenticity and cultural representation, as highlighted by the use of regional costumes and themed decorations by painter Corrado Cagli in the bar room, emphasized the exhibition's goal to entertain and educate visitors about local traditions and crafts. Such a delightful welcome set the stage for a gourmet experience, further enhanced by the opportunity to sample renowned products by Alemagna company, most notably the panettone.<sup>24</sup> In this way, the Fernet Branca pavilion successfully highlighted the region's cultural wealth and gastronomic legacy, making a memorable impact on visitors.

## Epilogue

The 1937 Paris Exposition was a crucial platform for Italian companies, enabling them to broadcast their entrepreneurial skills and affirm their cultural identity.

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<sup>22</sup> “La Nuova Italia” (or “La Nouvelle Italie”) was a newspaper published in France, founded by Nicola Bonservizi, who established the first Paris fascist party in 1922 and served as the foreign correspondent for “Il Popolo d'Italia”. For the description of the Fernet Branca Pavilion, see *Le pavillon du Fernet-Branca 1937*, p. III.

<sup>23</sup> On this, see Segalen 2009.

<sup>24</sup> In 1933, the Alemagna company expanded its business by opening a pastry shop in Milan's Cathedral Square. The shop became a popular venue in the interwar period, renowned for producing and selling its celebrated panettone.

This event showcased Italy's technological progress and rich cultural heritage, capturing the international community's imagination. It also highlighted the intersection of art and commerce, particularly through the fusion of traditional Italian craftsmanship with modern industrial products. The food and beverage industries, exemplified by pavilions from Martini & Rossi and Fernet Branca, offered essential experiences through tastings and demonstrations that immersed visitors in Italian culinary arts, blending tradition and innovation – a hallmark of the “Made in Italy” brand. These presentations were both commercial showcases and artistic expressions, enhancing the visitor experience and underscoring Italian excellence.

Despite some companies relocating production abroad in the 1930s, they retained strong ties to their Italian origins. In line with the mid-20th century Italian trend of establishing corporate collections and archives to preserve records of industry development and enhance brand promotion,<sup>25</sup> the Martini company opened the Museum of the History of Enology in Chieri, Turin, in 1961. It expanded in 2005 to include a permanent exhibition of the company's historical archive. The Branca Collection was inaugurated in 2009 within the Fratelli Branca Distillerie industrial complex in Milan. In 2010, Campari opened the Galleria Campari in its original Art Nouveau factory in Sesto San Giovanni, Milan. This gallery explores the brand's history and the evolution of its products and bar culture, offering an interactive multimedia experience that delves into Campari's unique art and design communications. Finally, discussions have also been ongoing about establishing a museum dedicated to the Buitoni brand in Sansepolcro, Arezzo. Such efforts illustrate the ongoing commitment to cultural heritage as a core aspect of Italian corporate identity. These numerous efforts demonstrate a broader movement among Italian corporations to safeguard their heritage and proactively participate in and contribute to the cultural dialogue of the modern era, thereby strengthening their role as cultural emissaries on the global stage.

In conclusion, the recent initiatives undertaken by Italian companies to preserve their cultural heritage and promote their brand identity through museums and collections are deeply rooted in the legacy of the 1937 Paris Exposition. Just as the exposition served as a pivotal platform for showcasing Italy's entrepreneurial spirit and cultural richness, these ongoing efforts continue to reinforce the narrative of Italian excellence that emerged from that historic event. By investing in cultural heritage, these companies strengthen their role as global cultural ambassadors. Consequently, they extend the influence of the 1937 exhibition, during which Italy's technological prowess, rich cultural heritage, and innovation captured the international community's interest, making a significant impact globally.

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<sup>25</sup> On this, see Amari 1997.

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*Beyond the Italian Pavilion: National Pride and Corporate Presence  
at the 1937 Paris Exposition*

Paola Cordera  
(Politecnico di Milano)

This essay explores the 1937 Paris Exposition as a seminal event for Italian enterprises, illustrating how their technological innovations were deeply entwined with their rich cultural heritage. It discusses the ways in which Italian products and brands not only showcased their distinctiveness within the national pavilion but also extended their reach through specially designed corporate spaces. Drawing on unpublished archival materials and contemporary press reports, the study scrutinizes the strategic display and promotional techniques used to accentuate “Made in Italy” products against the backdrop of global exhibition trends and evolving museum narratives. The exposition strengthened Italy’s cultural and industrial narratives and played a vital role in cultural diplomacy and economic promotion during the interwar period. This analysis brings to light overlooked aspects of Italian participation, merging aesthetic, entertainment, and educational goals to craft a visitor experience that could resonate internationally. Finally, the essay assesses the enduring legacy of the exposition and its pivotal role in promoting Italian cultural and industrial prowess on the world stage.

*Questo saggio è focalizzato sulle strategie di promozione, comunicazione e display del “Made in Italy” all’interno dell’Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques appliqués à la Vie Moderne di Parigi del 1937. Il contributo analizza le diverse modalità con cui i prodotti e i marchi italiani vennero esposti sulla scena internazionale, trovando spazio all’interno del padiglione nazionale in una dimensione collettiva, e singolarmente all’interno dei padiglioni finanziati dalle diverse società con l’obiettivo di promuoverne la produzione. A partire da materiali d’archivio inediti e cronache giornalistiche coeve, vengono esaminate le diverse strategie messe in atto, anche in relazione al contemporaneo dibattito relativo alle pratiche espositive e museali. Ne esce un quadro che attesta come l’esposizione abbia svolto un importante ruolo di diplomazia culturale e di promozione della produzione italiana, contribuendo a sviluppare e consolidare una narrazione in cui la capacità di innovazione delle singole ditte era fortemente connessa con le radici storiche. Questo studio contribuisce a far emergere aspetti inediti della partecipazione italiana e delle diverse esperienze estetiche, immersive ed educative messe in campo, al fine di offrire una esperienza di visita suggestiva – e persuasiva sotto il profilo commerciale – e al tempo stesso di divulgare un’immagine della nazione e della sua produzione moderna e aggiornata.*

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