



PIAZZALE STAZIONE MARITTIMA

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Born in Rome in 1873, professionally speaking Cesare Bazzani remained a man of the nineteenth-century, tied to the world of eclectic historicism, although not averse to forays into the sort of Modernism centered on monumentalist Fascist architecture. His best-known works reference a blend of styles largely modeled on Renaissance examples. This is evidenced by a number of his most prominent buildings, such as the National Library in Florence (1903–35), the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome (1909–11) and the Palazzo del Governo in Messina (1913–20) – with evident references to Liberty style – and the façade of the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Assisi (1924–28).

His preference for eclectic styles did not stand in the way of a thorough exploration of typology and function. In his project for the Museum of Fine Arts in Rome's Valle Giulia, he was determined to produce airy, light-filled spaces, achieving a rational visitor layout from an "easy, square, classical type" plan. The building for the Maritime Station in Naples, the competition for which was announced in 1933, represents not so much a change of tack as a minority component: here, in fact, the volumetric development becomes clearer and more legible and the decorative apparatus is drastically scaled back, as in the contemporary Casa del Fascio in Taranto (1935–36). Nonetheless, even in projects for later buildings, such as the churches in Addis Ababa (1938) and Pescara (1933–38), he returned to the eclectic matrix with which he was most comfortable, closer to late neo-Romanesque in the latter case.

Bazzani also pursued educational and political activities, and was appointed an Academician of Italy in 1929. Gabriele D'Annunzio, who had known Bazzani prior to and especially after commissioning him to build the cathedral in "his city" of Pescara, described him as an "enduring architect." He believed Bazzani had managed to achieve the right balance of modernity and tradition: "without pandering to my feelings and the resources of our age, I strived to adapt to the environment."

The modernization of the city of Naples during the Fascist era rested on a number of key points: the reconstruction of the new Rione Carità as an administrative hub, replacing the previous historic urban fabric; the expansion to the west, involving the Fuorigrotta district and centered on the Mostra d'Oltremare; and lastly the restructuring of the port area, which had remained more or less unchanged since the Bourbon era, with the old Pisan-cane pier. A tertiary city, therefore, in which the port played a key military and civilian role – commercial, tourist and propagandist. If Naples was to fulfill its ambition of being a "bridge" to the African colonies, its port facilities had to be up to scratch.

A competition was launched in 1933, consisting of a first and second phase and open to ten competitors, including Pietro Aschieri, Marcello Canino, Luigi Piccinato, Carlo Broggi and Giovanni Battista Milani. As was by no means unusual in the Fascist era, there was no outright winner, and the commission was subsequently assigned to Cesare Bazzani.

Works to build the quay replacing the old San Gennaro pier had already begun in 1928. The new 120 x 400-meter quay is perfectly aligned with Piazza Municipio, meaning that the new Maritime Station is aligned with the City Hall, albeit at a 600-meter distance.

Bazzani's project, in line with the procurement directives, provided for two parallel blocks linked by a transversal bridging structure, in a structurally bold move, and softened by the lowered arch. There was a plan to allow rail as well as pedestrian and vehicular traffic through the open space beneath. Particular attention was paid to the design of the two bridging blocks because they help to define the two elevations overlooking the square and the sea. The first clearly aspires to monumentality, with its absolute symmetry, clock towers and round-arched apertures; the second appears more dynamic, thanks to the semi-cylindrical towers that break up the rigid geometry of the volume. Both are clad with travertine, emphasizing the building's clean Mediterranean feel. Colonnades on either side of the quay rounded off the complex, and were useful for embarkation/disembarkation purposes.

The building was completed in 1936 and was soon put to propagandist and celebratory use with Hitler's visit of May 5, 1938, which started from Mergelina station and finished at the Maritime Station, where he set off to meet Mussolini on a flagship in the Bay of Naples.











