

**FRAMING MODERNISM  
ARCHITECTURE & PHOTOGRAPHY IN ITALY 1926-1965**

Comprising over 100 vintage photographs drawn from the British Architectural Library Photographs Collection, *Framing Modernism: Architecture & Photography in Italy 1926-1965* investigates how the development of Italian Modernist architecture was recorded and shaped by photography. The exhibition will be on view from **29 April to 21 June 2009**, at the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, 39a Canonbury Square, London N1, recently described by a UK national newspaper as “the best showcase of Italian art in Britain”. The exhibition and its accompanying publication have been generously supported by a grant from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.

Ever since its inception, photography has profoundly influenced the practice and study of architecture. This was especially true with the advent of Modernism in the 1920s which brought architecture and photography into closer alliance than ever before. Modernism’s celebration of the man-made rather than the natural world not only gave new prominence to contemporary architectural and engineering feats but also greatly enhanced their status as subjects suitable for photography. The so-called ‘New Vision’ engendered a more dynamic mode of photography that encouraged the use of unconventional viewpoints such as worm’s and bird’s-eye views, sudden changes in scale, dramatic tonal contrasts, radical cropping and a predilection for geometrical abstraction. In addition, Modernist architects’ greater and more inventive use of materials such as steel and concrete and reflective surfaces, among them glass and chromium, afforded the photographer more possibilities for dramatic expression. As a result, architectural photography was revitalized and played a key role in the dissemination of Modernist architecture.

Despite recent studies, the history of architectural photography remains in its infancy. In particular, little work has been done on the photography of Italian Modernism and this examination is intended to complement recent case studies on the Czech Republic and Hungary as well as those more general surveys. This will in turn paint a clearer picture of the often shifting but symbiotic relationship between the two disciplines.

As well as displaying original prints, the exhibition looks at the part played by photography in books and magazines such as *Domus* and *Casabella* in fostering this striking visual exploration of Modernist architecture. The projects featured will encompass a disparate range of building types and among those exhibited will be Enrico del Debbio’s Foro Mussolini, Rome (1929); the Stazione Santa Maria Novella, Florence (1935) by Giovanni Michelucci and the Gruppo Toscano; Pier Luigi Nervi’s groundbreaking aircraft hangars such as that at Orbetello (1940); and BBPR’s Torre Velasca, Milan (1957). Alongside these major projects will be significant but lesser known ones such as Nicola Mosso’s gem of a station at Cossato (1932) and Gherardo Bosio’s Ugolino Golf Club near Florence (1934).

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Work by a wide range of photographers will be on display from indigenous, specialist practitioners such as Ferdinando and Gino Barsotti and Giorgio Casali, who were commissioned by architects and magazines, to visiting foreign photographers such as G. E. Kidder Smith whose book *Italy Builds* (1955) was instrumental in encouraging a wider appreciation of Italian architecture abroad. The show also includes work by Hubert de Cronin Hastings who highlighted the virtues of Italian townscape as a model for British architects in his characteristically idiosyncratic *Italian Townscape* (1963).

The selection of over 100 period photographs is almost entirely from the Photographs Collection of the British Architectural Library at the Royal Institute of British Architects. These will be an amalgam of vintage large prints drawn from major exhibitions held at the RIBA and others from the archive of the Architectural Press, publisher of the influential *Architectural Review*, which is now held by the Collection. Together these will also illustrate how Italian architecture was received in Britain. Supplementing these will be magazines and books from the British Architectural Library demonstrating how typography and inventive page layouts contributed to enhancing the seductive appeal of the photographs and communicating the architecture to both a professional and lay audience.

The exhibition is curated by Robert Elwall, Assistant Director, Photographs, Imaging & Digital Development, at the British Architectural Library, and Valeria Carullo, Assistant Curator in the Photographs Collection of the British Architectural Library. Robert is one of the leading writers and experts on the interrelationship between photography and architecture, and Valeria is a qualified Italian architect who has extensive experience in the fields of architecture and photography.

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

The British Architectural Library Photographs Collection at the Royal Institute of British Architects contains over 1.5 million images of architecture worldwide and is generally considered one of the finest and most extensive archives in this field. The Collection's earliest images date from the Great Exhibition of 1851 and it includes the work of renowned photographers such as Edouard Baldus, Francis Bedford and Tony Ray-Jones as well as that of respected professional architectural photographers from around the world. In addition the Collection holds the archive of the Architectural Press, publisher of the *Architectural Review* and *Architects' Journal*, and the archives of several of Britain's foremost 20<sup>th</sup> century photographers of architecture among them Dell and Wainwright, Edwin Smith, John Maltby, Colin Westwood, John McCann, Henk Snoek, Crispin Boyle, Alastair Hunter and John Donat. It has a vibrant exhibition and publication programme and a substantial number of its images can be viewed on the web via its online image database RIBApix at [www.ribapix.com](http://www.ribapix.com).

The British Architectural Library is part of the RIBA Trust. The RIBA Trust manages the cultural assets of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), including the internationally recognised collections of the British Architectural Library. It is the UK's national architecture centre, delivering the RIBA Awards and RIBA Stirling Prize (live on Channel 4); the Royal Gold Medal; International and Honorary Fellowships; Architecture Week (with Arts Council England and the Architecture Centre Network); a full programme of lectures, exhibitions, tours and other events; and an education programme.

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28/1/2009

## FACT SHEET

- Exhibition:** *Framing Modernism: Architecture & Photography in Italy 1926–1965*
- Dates:** 29 April to 21 June 2009
- Location:** Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art  
39a Canonbury Square, London N1 2AN  
Tel. +44 (0)20 7704 9522, Fax. +44 (0)20 7704 9531  
[www.estorickcollection.com](http://www.estorickcollection.com)
- Opening hours:** Wednesday to Saturday 11.00 to 18.00 hours. Sunday 12.00 to 17.00 hours  
Late night opening on Thursdays until 20.00 hours  
Closed Mondays and Tuesdays.  
Shop: open gallery hours. Library: by appointment only
- Admission:** £5.00, concessions £3.50, includes permanent collection and temporary exhibitions.  
Free to under-16s and students on production of a valid NUS card.  
Library, by appointment only, £2.50 per visit.
- Catalogue:** The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated publication, 80 pages, with an essay by curator Robert Elwall. This and the exhibition have been generously supported by a grant from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.
- Permanent Collection:** The Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art is internationally renowned for its core of Futurist works including major paintings by the movement's main protagonists. It comprises some 120 paintings, drawings, watercolours, prints and sculptures by many of the most prominent Italian artists of the modernist era. The museum is housed in a Georgian Grade II listed building renovated with the help of a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. There are six galleries, two of which are used for temporary exhibitions, on three floors. It has a library of over 2,000 books, primarily on 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian art making it an unrivalled resource for students of important modernist movements such as Futurism and Pittura Metafisica. Since opening in January 1998, the Collection has established a considerable reputation as an important venue for bringing Italian art to the British public and has achieved both public and critical acclaim for its artistic and educational programmes.
- Groups:** Groups of 10 or more may book gallery talks by curatorial staff on the current exhibition and the permanent collection. Talks last for approximately 50 minutes and there is an additional charge of £3.50 per head. Lunch can also be arranged.
- Events:** **Gallery Talks**  
Informal talks on aspects of the exhibition last approximately 40 minutes and are free with admission. Saturday afternoons at 15.00 hrs.
- How to get there:** Victoria Line, Overground and Network SE to Highbury & Islington; Network SE to Essex Road; buses: 271 to door; 4, 19, 30, and 43 to Upper Street/Canonbury Lane; 38, 56, 73 and 341 to the junction of Essex and Canonbury Roads.
- Access:** Main entrance in Canonbury Road. Wheelchair access to galleries 1 to 4, café, shop and toilets. Limited car parking for blue badge holders (please telephone in advance). Induction loop in gallery 2.