

A PERMANENT EXHIBITION WITHIN THE MONUMENT TO VICTORY

GUIDE TO THE EXHIBITION

BZ '18-'45
one monument
one city
two dictatorships

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THE EXHIBITION

"BZ '18-'45: one monument, one city, two dictatorships", is an exhibition opened to the public in July 2014. It illustrates the history of the Monument to Victory, erected by the Fascist regime between 1926 and 1928. The work of Marcello Piacentini, it includes decorative features by the most important Italian sculptors of the time.

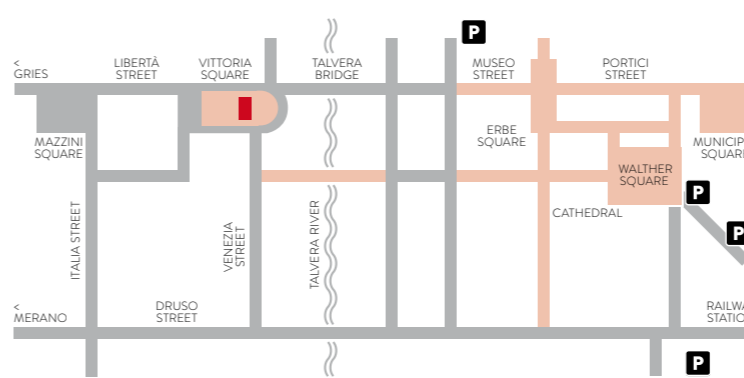
Italy's dictator Mussolini had wanted to dedicate the monument to Cesare Battisti. However, after the opposition of Battisti's widow, it was dedicated "to the victory of Italy".

The monument reflects and provides a link to local historical events during the twenty years of Fascism – *il ventennio* – and the Nazi occupation, within the context of national and international events in the years between the two World Wars (1918–1945).

The exhibition also covers the radical urban transformations for the construction of a new "Italian" city of Bolzano and the establishment of a major industrial zone, from the end of the 1920s. Both had the principal aim of attracting large numbers of people from other parts of Italy.

Finally, the exhibition confronts the difficult relationship between the different language groups, caused by the overbearing legacy of Fascism, within the evolving social and political framework of the second half of the twentieth century to the present day.

In 2012, after having remained closed to the public for decades, it was decided to open the monument to the public. A joint decision was taken by the Italian Ministry for Cultural Affairs and Tourism, the Autonomous Province of Bolzano and Bolzano City Council, to use the crypt and adjacent rooms to an exhibition dedicated to understanding recent history.



OPENING HOURS:

Tuesdays to Sundays: 10am–06pm

CLOSED on Mondays, 24st, 25st & 31st Dec, 1st Jan

BOOK A GUIDED TOUR:

T +39 0471 095474 (Tuesdays–Sundays: 10am–5pm)
museumsbookings@comune.bolzano.it

These visits are by booking only, with a min. 24hrs notice.

Opening hours may be subject to change.

Entrance for people with disabilities on Corso Libertà

For further information visit our website:

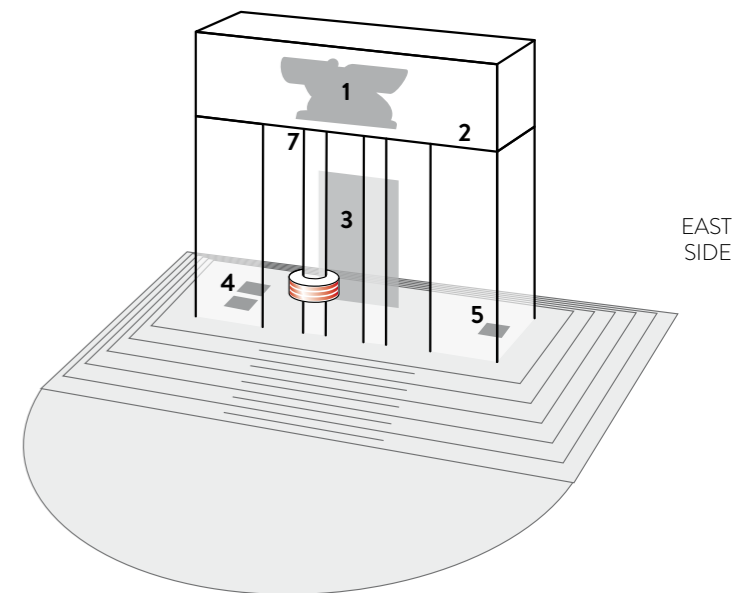
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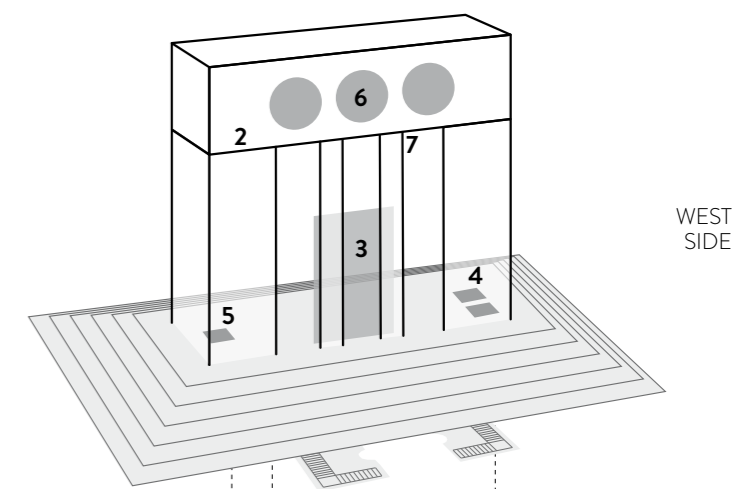
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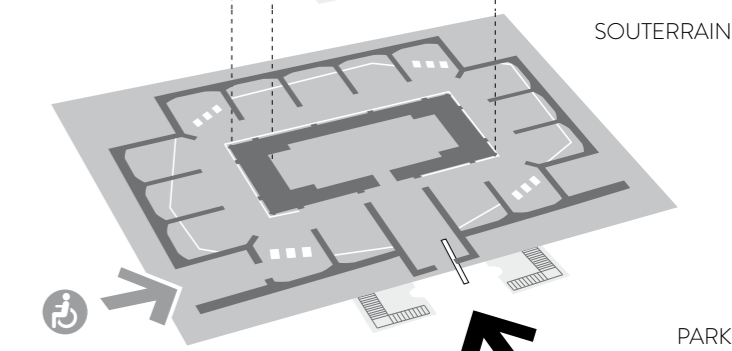
Scholarly team: Andrea Di Michele, Hannes Obermair, Christine Roilo, Ugo Soragni, Silvia Spada · Scientific and Exhibition Consultant: Jeffrey T. Schnapp · Exhibition concept & design: Gruppe Gut Gestaltung
Photos & Infographics: South Tyrol Regional Archives/A. Campaner, Gruppe Gut 08/2024



EAST SIDE



WEST SIDE



SOUTERRAIN

PARK

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AS GLORIA VIRTUTIS

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THE EXTERNAL AREA

THE MONUMENT to Victory was inaugurated two years after the first stone was laid, on the anniversary of the death of Cesare Battisti, 12th July 1928. The architect of the monument, Marcello Piacentini (Rome 1881–1960), is one of the most important figures in Italian architecture from the first half of the twentieth century.

Exterior 1 VICTORY THE ARCHER

On the east-facing entablature above the architrave is winged victory with her bow and arrow, poised to shoot. This bas-relief by Arturo Dazzi was inspired by the goddess Nike, from Greek mythology.

Exterior 2 INSCRIPTIONS ON THE ENTABLATURE

The Latin inscriptions on the entablature mark the difference between the Latin world, bringer of civilization, and the "Barbarian" world. Similar to those found in the crypt, they are inspired by classical authors.

Exterior 3 THE ALTAR OF THE RISEN CHRIST

Libero Andreotti's bronze sculpture stands at the centre of the monument. This altar commemorates the military sacrifice and the rebirth of the homeland, symbolized in the figure of the Risen Christ. The bas-relief at the rear is of winged victories.



Exterior 4 THE FABIO FILZI AND DAMIANO CHIESA HERMS

The Herms (the square pillars which support the sculpted busts) are in memory of Fabio Filzi and Damiano Chiesa. Both were Italian patriots from Austro-Hungarian controlled Trento. They became Italian soldiers, were captured by Austro-Hungarian military and condemned to death in 1916.

Exterior 5 THE CESARE BATTISTI HERM

At the beginning of the Great War, the Trentino Autonomist Cesare Battisti enlisted in the Italian army. He was captured by Austrian soldiers and, as an Austro-Hungarian citizen, was hanged for High Treason on 12th July 1916. This Herm, as with those of Filzi and Chiesa, are the work of Adolfo Wildt, one of the foremost and most original sculptors of his time linked to the twentieth-century Italian group.



Exterior 6 THE THREE MEDALLIONS

The work of traditionalist sculptor Pietro Canonica, they represent Icarus studying the flight of eagles, Italy the victorious and Prometheus.

Exterior 7 THE LICTORIAL COLUMNS AND THE CEILING

The Monument to Victory includes fourteen columns in Fascist styling. The Lictorial column is based on Lictor's Fasces, which had been the symbol of power for Roman magistrates and which were adopted as the emblem of Mussolini's "revolution". The interior ceiling is plated in bronze.



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THE ENTRANCE

THE ATRIUM

Entering the crypt, there is an audio recreating the music, sounds and voices of the period which has been deliberately distorted. The walls are marked with laurel wreaths and evocative words.

THE CRYPT

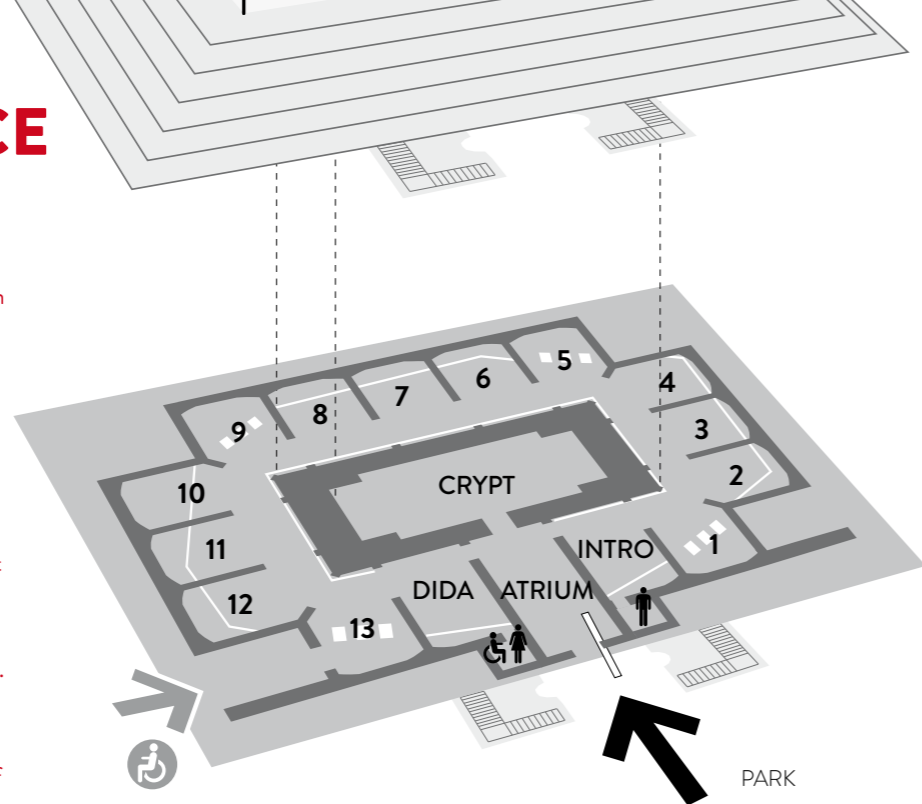
The crypt is adorned with frescoes by Guido Cadorin. On the right is the Guardian of the Homeland, with the Guardian of History on the left. The Latin inscriptions on the walls are extracts from Cicero and Horace, over which quotations from Hannah Arendt, Bertolt Brecht and Thomas Paine are superimposed.

INTRODUCTION

An 8 minute video introduces the internal route.

TEACHING

The final room is dedicated to teaching and instruction. It is possible to view the last video of the visit in the original language.



THE EXHIBITION THE INNER PERIMETER

"THE MONUMENT AND ITS HISTORY"

The inner perimeter presents the history of the Victory Monument, starting with the demolition of the pre-existing monument right up to the present day. There are reproductions of important images, photographs and documents.

Room 1

A MONUMENT IS BORN

In the Summer of 1916, the Bohemian architect Karl Ernstberger designed a memorial to the many fallen from the 2nd Regiment of the Tiroler Kaiserjäger stationed in Bolzano, and deployed on several fronts during the First World War. An open space in Gries was chosen for this monument, near the Talfer Bridge.

Room 2

INTERRUPTIONS

Construction of the Kaiserjäger memorial only began in 1917, a year before the end of the war. It was left unfinished due to unfavourable end of the war for Austria and southern Tyrol's annexation to the Kingdom of Italy in 1919. The construction was left abandoned for almost a decade.

Room 3

TOWARDS AN PROFOUNDLY "ITALIAN" WORK

In early 1926, the dictator Benito Mussolini announced his desire to construct a monument dedicated to Cesare Battisti and the Trentino "martyrs" which should stand "on the same foundations where a monument to German victory should have stood." However Battisti's widow firmly opposed this and so the monument would instead be entitled "to the Italian victory."

Room 4

THE (ALMOST) RATIONAL ARCH

The architect Marcello Piacentini, from Rome, was awarded the project to build the new Italian monument. Inspired by the classical triumphal arch, he revised the structure and approached his work in a spirit of fervent nationalism. The monument was to be a symbol of conquest and victory and mark forever the new border.

Room 5

DEMOLITION AS CONSTRUCTION

The ceremony for laying first stone took place on 26th July 1926, the tenth anniversary of the death of Battisti. Demolition work on the Kaiserjäger monument began in the spring of 1927, at the same time as the foundations for the new monument were being dug.

Room 6

FROM THE FIRST TO THE LAST STONE

Once the demolition of the Kaiserjäger monument were complete in mid-1927, the construction work accelerated to a rapid pace. By the end of the year, Piacentini announced that the new monument was almost finished. The inauguration date was fixed for 12th July 1928.

Room 7

"ARCHITECTURAL SYMBOL OF THE FASCIST SOUL"

Piacentini's stated aim was to build the first "true Fascist monument", for which he introduced an entirely new order of columns based of Lictor's Fasces. Resembling a bundle of rods with a protruding axe-head, this had been an ancient Roman symbol of power, now adopted as the symbol Fascism.

Room 8

ICON OF THE "NEW ORDER"

Standing at the centre of the new city forum, the monument served as rhetoric and propaganda. Along with the traditional historical sites, it quickly became one of the most well-known symbolic places in the city. It became the subject of paintings and was reproduced on postcards, commemorative medals, tourist guides, advertisements and posters for every kind of occasion.

Room 9

STAGE SET I

The monument was destined to immediately become the scene for the most important public gatherings, political rallies and the ceremonies of the Fascist regime. Before it, marched war veterans' associations and a range of Fascist organizations including the Quadri and the youth wing.

Room 10

STAGE SET II

The Fascist war in Africa and Spain, together with the Proclamation of Empire in May 1936, allowed the Fascist regime to transform the monument to reflect not only past victories. It now became the place to celebrate new national glories motivated by an ideology of reaffirming the superiority of Latin civilization.

Room 11

THE HUB OF THE FASCIST CITY

The completion of the monument also signalled the Fascist regime's renewal and modernization of the city of Bolzano. Ten years of urban planning and development underlined the monument's pivotal position in the "new" Bolzano.

Room 12

TO PRESERVE OR TO DESTROY?

After the Second World War the monument remained the focus of tensions between Fascists and anti-Fascists and between the linguistic groups. There were other tensions also, between those who sought to preserve it and those who wished for a break with the past, at the expense of the architecture from the Fascist period.

Room 13

A MONUMENT TO OTHER VICTORIES?

As with all monuments that survive the historical moment in which they are built, the Monument to Victory has gradually acquired meanings other than those originally intended. This is even as it remains, first and foremost a document from that period. The transformation into a public space for historical reflection represents an important moment in the continuous dialogue between the past and the present.

THE EXHIBITION THE OUTER PERIMETER

"HISTORY AND REGION"

The path on the outer perimeter presents the main themes from the history of Bolzano 1918–1945, contextualized in broader national and international affairs. Each of these themes is addressed through three in-depth points.

Room 2

THE SHIFT OF SOVEREIGNTY

The catastrophe of the First World War had among its outcomes the re-design of the political map of Europe. The dissolution of Austro-Hungary, and the Italian victory, brought about the dismemberment of the Tyrol. Ceded to Italy, the territory south of the Brenner and the Brenner Pass itself were destined to become a symbol of victory.

Room 3

LIBERAL ITALY

In the early years, the lands passed to Italy were governed by a liberal ruling class, whose internal positions were markedly different. Some demonstrated openness towards linguistic minorities while others already began advocating the aggressive denationalization, which the Fascists demanded.

Room 4

THE REGIME

Denationalizing interventions and the growth of Fascism locally increased, focussing on the public administration, the schools, language use, place names etc. Thanks to the preservation of their own schools, religious education and newspapers, the Catholic Church managed to maintain an "Oasis" where it was still possible to speak or read in German.

Room 6

BUILDING THE "NEW BOLZANO"

Under the architect Marcello Piacentini, the city of Bolzano was remade. The Monument to Victory became the portal to the new Italian city, while in the rest of the province the regime embarked on a programme infrastructure development as a sign, propaganda even, of Fascist "modernity".

Room 7

ECONOMY – CITY PLANNING – DEMOGRAPHICS

The large industrial zone constructed in Bolzano in the mid-1930s caused an influx of workers from other regions. This radically altered the numerical balance between Italian-speakers and German-speakers in the city. New districts sprang up, including those of the "Semirurali" or semi-rural housing estates.

Room 8

FASCISM AND CULTURE

Italianization and the growth of Fascism in society also spread through culture. German-language cultural institutions were eliminated or "absorbed". In parallel, the regime created and promoted new artistic ventures, some even in German, but always under the sign of Lictor's Fasces – the symbol of Fascism.

Room 10

TOTALITARIANISMS AND THE "OPTION"

During the 1930s, Nazi propaganda found fertile ground among South Tyrolean German-speakers, who looked to Hitler's Germany for their national restitution. This threatened the Italo-German alliance, so a solution was found, known as "the Option", in which Hitler and Mussolini agreed to transfer German-speaking South Tyroleans to the Third Reich.

Room 11

OPERATION PREALPS

After 8th September 1943, Alto Adige fell into German hands and became part of Operationszone Alpenvorland. The Nazis built a concentration camp, which became the most dramatic symbol of those two years, while the rest of the population lived in the devastation caused by the intensive Allied bombing.

Room 12

THE PATH TO DEMOCRACY

With difficulty, the two linguistic communities expressed distinct movements of resistance. At the end of the war South Tyroleans' hopes of seeing a revision of the border were dashed. However the De Gasperi-Gruber Accord, signed 5th September 1946, provided a framework guaranteeing the rights of the German-speaking minority. This marked the first step on the road to living together.

THE EXHIBITION THE FOUR CORNER ROOMS

The four corner rooms contain an outline of the Monument to Victory, in the form of an M, whose structure and stability gradually diminishes. These corner rooms are dedicated to reflection and gaining further insights from the exhibition.

Room 1

WHAT IS A MONUMENT?

Monuments have served different functions in the history of human civilization. They were mostly found in places which had religious significance, were the sites of great battles, memorials to kings, founding fathers or charismatic figures. Initially they were used chiefly by powerful and victorious leaders, to consign their fame to posterity. In modern times, monuments have been increasingly regulated by democratic principles, with debates over their location, legitimacy and significance.

Room 5

THE MONUMENT'S ABC

The Monument to Victory is comprised of many elements. Created by numerous artists, it is best thought of as a composite work. The ABC of the monument begins with the crypt frescoes by Guido Cadorin and finishes with Adolfo Wildt's three herms found under the architrave. Open each small door marked with a letter to find out more about the various parts of the monument.

Room 9

THE ARCHITECT MARCELLO PIACENTINI

The architect of the Monument to Victory, Marcello Piacentini (Rome 1881–1960), was one of the most important figures on the Italian architectural scene in the first half of the twentieth century. He is remembered for the numerous urban and architectural projects he undertook during the twenty years of Fascism and beyond. His work drew inspiration from many different ideological and cultural sources, both nationally and internationally. However his work remains the typical expression of Mussolini's regime and the Fascist period.

Room 13

BUT IT DOES MOVE ...

Some monuments slip into oblivion. Others remain at the centre of dispute, becoming the focus of questions over the political and cultural identity of a society, both now and in the future. This is the case with the Monument to Victory, erected by the Fascist regime to celebrate itself. The last exhibition room of BZ '18–45 is dedicated to public participation. It is a space for critical reflection on the past, which serves to imagine the possibilities for the present and the future for the city, the region and the World.

