Moving beyond the collective oblivion of the Italian colonial past

Alessandro Paolo Lena, Francesco Paolo Cunsolo, Chiara Giulia De Leo

Keywords:
Colonialism, Museum, MUDEC, Indro Montanelli statue, Monument, Smearing.

ABSTRACT:

This study explores the contrasting dynamics between artivists' efforts to amplify the voice of the Eritrean community in Milan and the Municipality of Milan's decision to dedicate the Public Gardens and a statue to Indro Montanelli. The monument serves as an exemplary case study, having been at the centre of a series of events that highlight the need to address the complexities of history and the issue of celebration in the urban context. The analysis of the protests against Montanelli's statue—and its vandalization—illustrates how one of the key functions of both museums and public monuments is their agency in shaping collective memory. Furthermore, the article assesses MUDEC's effective role as an institutional actor in the public debate on our shared past, noting how the museum has actively engaged the public by incorporating diverse perspectives and collaborating with historically underrepresented groups, such as Milan's African descendants.

L'articolo esplora le dinamiche contrastanti tra gli sforzi degli artivisti per amplificare la voce della comunità eritrea a Milano e la decisione del Comune di Milano di dedicare i Giardini Pubblici e una statua a Indro Montanelli. Il monumento rappresenta un caso di studio di particolare interesse, essendo stato al centro di una serie di eventi che mettono in evidenza la necessità di affrontare le complessità della storia e il problema della dimensione celebrativa nel contesto urbano. L'analisi delle proteste contro la statua di Montanelli – e degli atti di vandalismo – illustra come una delle funzioni chiave dei musei e dei monumenti pubblici sia il loro ruolo nel plasmare la memoria collettiva di una comunità. Inoltre, l'articolo prende in esame la capacità del MUDEC di inserirsi come attore istituzionale nel dibattito pubblico sul nostro passato condiviso, evidenziando come il museo abbia attivamente coinvolto il pubblico integrando prospettive diverse e collaborando con gruppi storicamente poco rappresentati, come le persone afro-discendenti di Milano.

Opening Picture:

Fig. 06: The statue of Indro Montanelli covered in pink paint during the protests on March 8, 2019 (detail).

source fanpage.it.

Autori:

Alessandro Paolo Lena is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Bologna and the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. Chiara Giulia De Leo and Francesco Paolo Cunsolo are Ph.D. candidates at the University of Bologna and the University of Edinburgh. The authors participate in the Una Europa Doctoral Programme in Cultural Heritage (Una-Her-Doc). The article derives from research conducted for the seminar "Counter-hegemonic narratives in European metropolis: heritage, identities, space" held by Dr. Linda Boukhris in the context of the Una-Her-Doc Founding Theories and Methodology seminars.

https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195

In an era characterized by heightened scrutiny and critique of historical representations, museums find themselves at the forefront of a broader conversation about accountability, inclusivity, and the presentation of history, contributing to the ongoing dialogue about the narratives we choose to remember and celebrate.[1] By revisiting perspectives that were once overlooked and neglected, museums are dynamically engaging with their audiences, seeking an active dialogue with communities that may have been marginalized or ignored in the past within the exhibition halls.

As one of the key functions of both museums and public monuments is their agency in shaping collective memory, the subject of this study is the statue dedicated to Indro Montanelli in the Public Gardens in Milan and its replica on display at the MUDEC museum, an exemplary case study as it has been at the centre of a series of events that indicate the need to address the complexities of our history and the issue of celebration in the urban context. At the same time, it demonstrates the effective role that MUDEC has played as an institutional actor in the public debate on our shared past, by incorporating diverse perspectives and actively collaborating with historically underrepresented groups, such as Milan's African descendants.

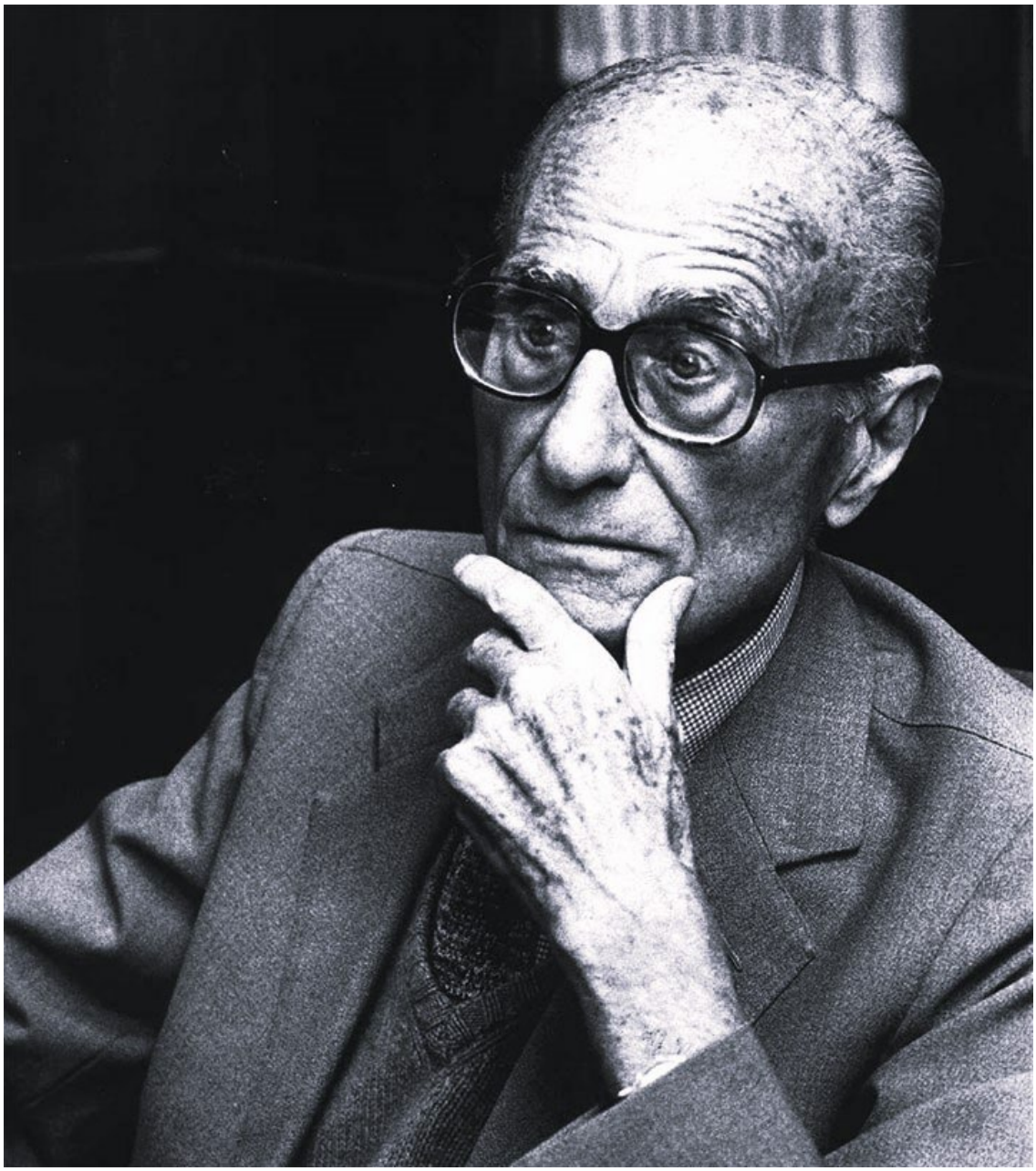
One of the most important African communities in Milan currently lives in the district of Asmarina, which represents a unique case in Italy of a neighborhood permanently inhabited by a foreign population. Located around the areas of Porta Venezia and Corso Buenos Aires, the district is named "Asmarina" ("Little Asmara" in Italian) after the capital of Eritrea, a former Italian colony. After becoming a British "protectorate" at the end of World War II, in 1963, Eritrea became a province of Ethiopia, leading to an independence war. Finally, it became officially independent in 1993.

The neighbourhood is home to people from the Horn of Africa and Eritrea who settled in Milan in 1973. The people of Asmarina are united by the shared Italian colonial past of their countries of origin.[2] Specifically, 1,558 Eritreans are registered in the city, in addition to 571 Ethiopians and 293 Somalis.

The district of Asmarina came to national attention in 2015 when two artists and social justice activists, Alan Maglio and Medhin Paolos, published their documentary: *Asmarina - voices and Images of Post-colonial Heritage*, featuring the Habesha community in Milan. The work is relevant not only for its effort to collectively present a complete story of Italian coloniality and post-coloniality as seen and lived daily by the Habesha people residing in the city, but also for its presence in the permanent exhibition at the MUDEC museum since 2021, as we will see later.

The two authors traced the history of the community in the neighbourhood, bringing attention to its collective memories and putting together people's stories. They built an expressive hybrid language combining old photos from private archives, video interviews, and music. They developed a "real choral narration that includes the voices of those who have lived in Milan for years, those who were born there

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195



01

Fig. 01: Indro Montanelli, source Wikimedia Commons.

and those who have arrived recently: a mosaic of aspirations, dreams, nuances of identity and stories of migration".[3]

Contextually, in 2015, Italy saw a heating and intensifying of the debate on migration. Public and political opinion has been highly polarized in the past ten years, primarily focusing on the dichotomy of migrant/citizen,[4] second-generation/first-generation immigrants, Christianity/Islam, and us/others.[5]

The inspiration for our study stems from the centrality of the debate on immigration in Italy, the documentary and its attempt to give a voice to an underrepresented community, and the contingency of the geographical proximity of the neighborhood of Asmarina with the Giardini Pubblici Indro Montanelli. The public gardens, in fact, are named after the celebrated Italian journalist (fig. 1), infamous for purchasing an Eritrean child bride in 1935.[6] In addition, the park hosts a

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195

monument dedicated to the writer, a celebratory statue that has been at the centre of public debate since the early 2000s.[7]

A clear contrast emerges: on the one side, we have the *artivists*' attempt to give a voice to the Eritrean community in Milan, its history and aspirations, and on the other side, we witness the actions by the Municipality of Milan to dedicate the garden to Montanelli (and sticking to its decision also nowadays), against the backdrop of a polarizing debate on immigration at the national level.

02

We argue that the municipality's decision is contributing to silencing the debate on Italy's colonial past and ignoring the close-by presence of the Habesha community. Indeed, it creates a fertile ground for discussing how Italy's colonial past and post-colonial future have been subject to "amnesia, aphasia, and amnesty",[8] and how some institutions (politics, for example) push toward the collective oblivion of our colonial past. Finally, we look at the selected case study of Montanelli's monument, positioning ourselves within the literature on critical and intersectional perspectives, combining feminist and post-colonial theories,[9] and exploring the active role of the MUDEC museum in engaging with the public to foster critical discussions on such monument, within a broader reassessment of the permanent exhibition's organizing principles.

Theoretical framework

Several works in cultural and Italian studies elaborated on gender, race, and the Italian colonial past.[10] The gender lenses are interesting because women were discriminated against and subject to the colonizers' violence even more than men, as often happens during wars. For instance, they were frequently forced into sexual enslavement through the practice of *madamato*[11] until this custom was banned by the adoption of fascist racial laws in 1938 to avoid mixed relations.

Despite the growing academic interest, the Italian society at large tends to ignore the *vexata question* of Italian colonialism.[12] Historians' attitude about Italian coloniality shifted only recently. At the beginning of the 2000s, historians started to devote more conscious attention towards the expansionist fascists' actions[13] and to our colonial past as a component of our collective memory, that Siddi describes as "shared memories held by a community

Fig. 02:
Indro Montanelli in Eritrea in 1936, source Wikimedia Commons.

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195

about the past".[14]

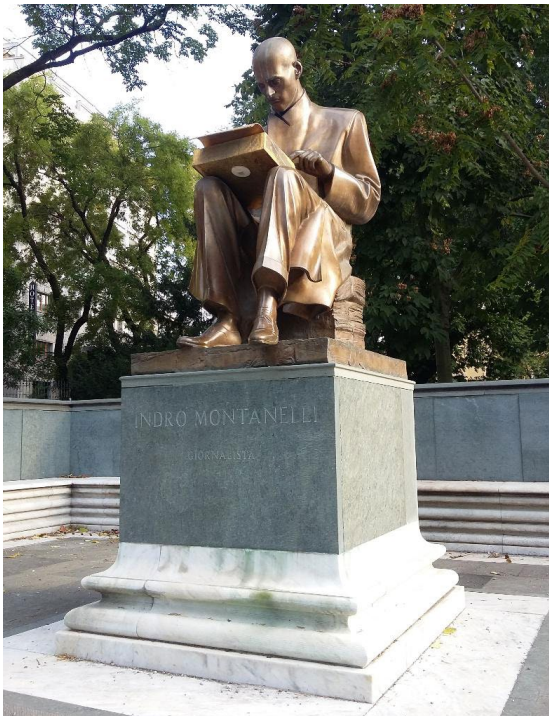
As argued by Siddi and Mancosu,[15] the Italian colonial past has often been seen under rose lenses and witnessed the collective attempt to erase this social dimension of human memory, changing how the past is remembered.

Specifically, Siddi claims that these actions were facilitated by Italy losing its colonies at the end of WWII, so that it never engaged directly in the decolonization processes.[16] Consequentially, unlike France or England, Italy did not have many citizens from ethnic minorities because people from the former colonies were rarely allowed to resettle in Italy. Thus it was easier to "marginalize and repress the country's colonial experience".[17]

Nevertheless, the legacies of the Italian colonial empire lasted well beyond its end. For instance, "Italy's colonies also served as testing ground for strategies of mass repression that would later be applied during Italy's occupation of Greece and Yugoslavia in the Second World War (Ben-Ghiat 2006: 383)".[18]

At the same time, Mancosu highlights how "the reluctance to critically assess the Italian presence in Africa, which was palpable during the time span of decolonisation, materialised in an inadequate awareness about the colonial past and its related legacies".[19] This contributed to the selective remembrance of Italians as good people and, thus, good colonizers, silencing and whitewashing our violent past.

Mancosu also explains how, after the Allies' defeat of Italian troops in 1941 in Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia, the loss of the colonies has often been seen as wrongdoing that Italians had to endure. At the same time, the end of the colonial empire in East Africa coincided with a period of great turmoil in Italy: the fall of Fascism. "The interweaving of events like Fascism's collapse, Italy's military defeat and the consequent loss of colonies, the anti-Fascist formation of the new Italian political forces, and the changing international situation might lead one to think that the brutal crimes that characterized the previous colonial period would have promptly been challenged".[20] However, the practical decisions on the decolonization of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia were left to the winning powers. Thus, the new Italian democratic government was ready to wash its hands of the Italian colonial past for good, promoting a narrative imprinted on the "benevolence" of Italy towards its former colonies, actively working to forget the brutality of the country's colonial history.



03

Fig. 03: Statue of Indro Montanelli in the Public Gardens of Milan, source Wikimedia Commons.

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195

A history of an "unintentional imperial palimpsest"

In light of the aforementioned theoretical framework, the dedication of the Public Gardens to Indro Montanelli and the presence of a highly contested celebratory statue provide insights into the enduring impacts of colonialism on the interpretation of a society's cultural legacy. In order to understand the reasons behind the protest actions against the monument and the subsequent involvement of the MUDEC museum in the public debate, we need to look at the celebrated yet polarizing figure of Indo Montanelli.

Montanelli was born in Florence in 1909. In his 20s-30s, he worked as a reporter/journalist in the Spanish Civil War, then with the United Press in New York. In the 1940s, he also covered the Invasion of Norway and the invasion of Greece. During his youth, he initially subscribed to Fascism and volunteered in Italy's colonizing wars (fig. 2). Towards the end of World War II, he took a stand against Fascism and was arrested and sentenced to death in 1944. However, he was freed before his death sentence could be carried out. After the war, he worked for *Il Corriere della Sera*, a well-respected Italian newspaper, and then he founded and directed a new conservative newspaper, *Il Giornale*, from 1973 to 1994. In 1977, because of his conservative views, he was attacked by the Red Brigades, a terrorist group inspired by communist ideals, who shot him in the legs while walking in Milan Public Gardens. In the 1990s, despite his conservative views, Montanelli gained popularity even within the left in Italy because he was one of the few conservative journalists criticizing Berlusconi,[21] who was the owner of *Il Giornale*. "After his death, which occurred in 2001, Montanelli ended up being generally considered the biggest and most authoritative figure of Italian journalism".[22]

While Indro Montanelli holds a significant reputation in the field of journalism, he remains a controversial figure. On one hand, he is celebrated as one of the most esteemed Italian reporters and columnists of the twentieth century, known for his staunch advocacy of press freedom. He took a stand against fascism in the 1940s and against Berlusconi in the1990s and early 2000s. On the other hand, however, in 1935-1936 Montanelli participated as a soldier in the fascist military campaign in Ethiopia, during which he infamously bought a child bride, enslaving a 12-year-old Eritrean girl.[23] Her name was Destà/Fatima. He never acknowledged his actions as wrong or the marriage as a form of violence towards a child, often publicly justifying the enslavement of the young girl and claiming that things in "Africa" were different,[24] and "European" norms concerning sexuality and childhood did not apply in Africa.

Despite the enslavement of the young Eritrean girl being well-known by every party involved, the oldest public gardens in Milan, dating back to 1784 and "ironically" bordering the neighborhood of Asmarina, were renamed Giardini Indro Montanelli in 2002, following Montanelli's death. The dedication was intended to honor Montanelli's journalism career and commemorate the Red Brigades' terrorist attack, making it an "unintention-

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195

04

05

Fig. 04: The vandalism of the statue of Indro Montanelli during the protests on March 8, 2019, source fanpage.it.

Fig. 05: The statue of Indro Montanelli covered in pink paint during the protests on March 8, 2019, source fanpage.it.

al imperial palimpsest".[25] A statue of the journalist was also commissioned to sculptor Vito Tongiani, placed in the park, unveiled in 2006, and subsequently highly contested (fig. 3).

The harsh criticism of the monument derives from Montanelli's own perspective on the Destà affair. Over the years, in fact, he spoke publicly about this episode on several occasions. Montanelli describes his relationship with the little girl he forced into marriage in an interview with Enzo Biagi in 1982: "She was twelve years old...at twelve, those [African women] were women already. I bought her from his father in Sa-

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195

ganeiti, together with a horse and a rifle. I paid everything 500 lire. She was an obedient little animal, and I built a tucul with some chickens for her. Then, every fifteen days, she used to reach me wherever I was, together with the other wives... she used to arrive with a basket on her head and clean linen".[26]

In another video recording, Montanelli discusses with feminist and African descendent Elvira Banotti during the TV show *L'ora della verità* in 1966 the enslavement of Destà. In the video, Montanelli refers to the girl with dehumanizing racist and misogynist tropes, ex. "docile little animal".[27] As we will see later, the video is currently on display at the MUDEC museum as part of its permanent exhibition, in order to provide more nuanced historical narratives.

He last spoke of the episode in 2000 in an *Il Corriere della Sera* column. Then, and also on this occasion, he did not make any self-criticism, describing the marriage with Destà as a sort of "leasing" in his own words.[28]

However, many Italians still support Montanelli's self-representation as a "revered journalist and benevolent patron of colonial subjects"[29] and defend the presence of a celebratory monument dedicated to him. Many others, instead, have contested the statue, which has been the subject of a series of protest actions.

The soiling of the statue, the artivists' interventions and the role of MUDEC Museum

The emotionally charged unveiling ceremony in 2006, attended by Montanelli's family, friends, and political figures,[30] contrasted with later critiques of the statue, which, despite its lack of initial controversy, faced scrutiny for its aesthetic qualities since the beginning, being labelled as "funereal".[31] Over the years, it has been repeatedly vandalized, reflecting shifting public sentiments and resurfacing debates about the appropriateness of honouring figures with controversial legacies. The statue was first soiled in 2012 and streaked with red paint marks by unknown assailants. Then, on the 8th of March 2019, during the #MeToo protests, it was covered in washable pink paint by activists of the feminist collective Non Una di Meno[32] ("Not One Less," meaning we must not lose one more woman to violence. Fig. 4). Finally, in 2020 – during the Black Lives Matter[33] protests – activists poured a flow of red paint on the sculpture, and the words "racist" and "rapist" were written on it. Subsequently, the debate on the monument inspired an action by street artist Cristina Donati Meyer,[34] who placed the puppet of a little girl in the journalist's arms, denouncing Montanelli's enslavement of Destà.

Thus, the Monument to Indro Montanelli transforms into a dynamic crossroads, becoming the focal point of protest actions imbued with various meaning. Some of these manifestations – such as the ones occurred in 2012 and 2020 – articulate themselves with clear political intent, taking the shape of attacks against Montanelli and aiming to condemn the journalist's controversial past. However, other actions take on more nuanced contours, enriching themselves with polyvalent meanings through processes of resemantization of the work, by

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195

adding new narratives that extends beyond the sole political purpose to integrate an artistic dimension. Non Una Di Meno action incorporates the traits of an artistic performance. As argued by Nicoletta Mandolini, in fact, "the pink paint functioned as a tool to subtract, at an aesthetic level, the visibility and prestige assigned to the figure of a white, male and patriarchal coloniser while at the same time retrieving from invisibility the forgotten figure of Destà"[35] (figg. 5-7).

The MUDEC museum inserts itself into this debate, acting as a bridge between the post-colonial historical perspective and the performative artistic dimension. In this scenario, MUDEC started a reflection on the role of ethnographic museums in contemporary society[36] and the Italian colonial past by rearranging its permanent collection and engaging with local communities.

MUDEC is a relatively new institution in Milan. Since the late 1990s, authorities and museum professionals recognised the need for a new venue to house the city's large non-European collections, which were housed at the time in the Castello Sforzesco. However, the museum was inaugurated only in 2015 during the World Expo, as a self-celebration of Milan as Italy's main global city. Designing a new ethnographic museum in the 2000s would prove difficult, as the openings of the Musée du quai Branly in Paris (2006) and the Humboldt Forum in Berlin (2020) show.[37] MUDEC curators Carolina Orsini and Anna Antonini paid attention to decades of criticism of this type of exhibition and collecting. They rejected the concept of the 'non-Western' as the organising principle of the permanent exhibition (with its obvious undertones of primitivism and exoticisation) and instead focused on intercultural exchanges between Italy and non-European communities, both in Milan and abroad.[38] Another strategy taken by MUDEC

Fig. 07: The statue of Indro Montanelli covered in pink paint during the protests on March 8, 2019 (detail), source fanpage.it.

07

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195

08

curators was the decision to "not conceal the museum's constructed and historical nature, but rather to address head-on the cultural, social, economic, and political processes through which non-European objects ended up in Milan".[39] MUDEC's permanent collection was organised around the topic 'Objects of Encounter' from 2015 to 2020. After five years, the museum has recognized the need to reflect on its role and responsibilities as an ethnographic institution within our society. Consequently, the museum has rearranged its permanent exhibition, now titled 'Global Milan: Viewing the World through This Lens',[40] that narrates the city's history interwoven with significant global historical developments.

Gallery #4 of the Permanent Collection hosts an analysis of the migratory flows in Italy.[41] In addition, it involved Milan's Afro-descendants and international communities in designing its permanent collection through workshops, conferences, and meetings. The new display of the permanent collection was unveiled in September 2021, with the last two sections dedicated to "Decolonisation and Multiculturalism" and "Afro-descendants in Global Milan." Here lies a replica of Cristina Donati Meyer's work. In front of the sculpture, the installation features the video of Montanelli and Banotti's 1966 debate[42] (fig. 7). The permanent collection also displays the artworks of Alan Maglio (one of the directors of the Asmarina documentary), showing some photographs and portraits of the Eritrean people. In this sense, MUDEC's permanent collection, besides analyzing the de-

Fig. 08: Installation view of Cristina Donati Meyer's artwork in front of the video interview from *L'ora della verità*, MUDEC Museum, Milano, 2021. Courtesy MUDEC Museo delle Culture di Milano.

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195

velopment of the Milanese migrant community, reflects on the contemporary criticism of colonialism.[43]

The museum's decision to dedicate one of its galleries to reflect on the development of the Milanese migrant community and the contemporary criticism of colonialism was heavily criticized. "Why did the Museum of Cultures, a public, municipal museum, decide to institutionalize such a divisive gesture as this affront to a journalist who made the history of this city great?" asked Luigi Mascheroni.[44] However, the museum is sticking to this path, as reiterated by Anna Maria Montaldo, MUDEC Director, "This work is part [...] of a museum narrative that we have studied over the years and which is dedicated in this last room to the transition from colonial Milan to multicultural Milan. If we had censored a work by an artist chosen by the curator, we would have limited the museum's work and representation".[45] The museum thus becomes a space where the complex facets of history and politics blend with contemporary artistic expression. Its presence in the debate amplifies the scope of protest actions, endowing them with a broader cultural and symbolic dimension.

Discussion and conclusion

In the public debate, from left to right, many Italians and influential figures, such as Beppe Sala, the leftist Major of Milan, and Enrico Cenati, President of ANPI (National Association of Italian Partisans), still see Montanelli as a revered journalist. See, for example, articles by Beppe Severgnini, "No one remove Montanelli from his Gardens!" on *Il Corriere della Sera*,[46] or Marco Travaglio, "Remove the statue in Milan? He was a child of his time, not a racist", on *Il Fatto Quotidiano*.[47]

As highlighted by other scholars, Montanelli's main defendants are primarily white and male.[48] Moreover, their defence often relies on the argument that Montanelli was the son of his times and that the criticism towards him was anachronistic.[49] Furthermore, they argue that Montanelli's journalistic merits surpass any possible crime he might have been accused of. This widespread support, from both the left and the right, comes from the fact that there has not been a national Italian relevant engagement with the racist legacies of colonialism, and public opinion perpetuates the illusion of a non-racial post-colonial state of affairs in the country.[50] As claimed by writer and activist Igiaba Scego in her book *Roma negata: percorsi postcoloniali nella città* (Rome Denied: Post-colonial Pathways in the City),[51] the Italian trend is to move forward without an operation of genuinely understanding the atrocities experienced or committed: "In Italy historical memory is set apart or forgotten. It is never studied, never analyzed, never relived, never rethought".[52]

In this sense, the act of throwing pink paint by the movement Non Una di Meno in 2019 sounds as an alarm clock for the collective conscience. Interviewed by Igiaba Scego, one of the activists of the movement (Giulia Frova) explained that the gesture was "carefully planned to coincide with the launch of a transfeminist plan to combat gender-based violence",[53] with the consequence of transforming the site of Montanelli's statue "into a sort

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195

of plinth for public discourse"[54] and further inspiring actions. As a sign of solidarity towards the gesture made by the collective Non Una di Meno, which has given visibility to the figure of Destà, other artivists have followed the same path, like the street-artist Ozmo,[55] who created an image of Destà entitled *Monumento in memoria della sposa bambina, in Montanelli*, in Via Torino (Milan), representing the young girl "free, protagonist, portraited in a pride gesture".[56] Also, anti-racist artivists from the community center *Cantiere Milano* asked for the removal of Montanelli's statute and the renaming of the Giardini Indro Montanelli in *Giardini transfemministi Destà* (Destà Transfeminist Gardens), followed by the artivist gesture of commissioning a new statue dedicated to African political resistance.[57]

If we consider the next steps to take in this context, scholars have suggested the importance of working on public memory, problematizing Italy's self-projected image of the "good colonizer",[58] and moving beyond the hegemonic discourse on Italy's colonial past.[59] Shared memory is central because, as Volpi highlighted, "history is made sense of collectively".[60]

A dynamic academic discussion on colonial history and heritage is already underway in Italy, fostering the emergence of cooperative networks and research collectives. In 2019 the public history digital interdisciplinary project 'Postcolonial Italy – Mapping Colonial Heritage' was established, aimed at documenting colonial remnants within the public spaces of the Italian peninsula.[61] In 2022, the Bibliotheca Hertziana–Max Planck Institute for Art History in Rome inaugurated the research division 'Decolonizing Italian Visual and Material Culture' focusing on works, images and objects that have actively participated in the establishment of a colonial imaginary that is based on artificial constructions of identity and otherness. By transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries, these collaborative initiatives prioritize scholarly dialogues and actively engage in the broader public discourse concerning the visual and material legacies of the Italian colonial endeavour.[62]

Following in the steps of MUDEC and Donati Meyer's work, if we can materialize the post-colonial narrative by including hidden figures and victims of racism in public works, we as a collective can move beyond the shared oblivion of the Italian colonial past, making sure that within public institutions people like Destà will no longer be invisible.

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195

Endnotes

1 The article is based on research conducted in 2022 for the seminar "Counter-hegemonic Narratives in European Metropolises: Heritage, Identities, Space," held by Dr. Linda Boukhris as part of the Una-Her-Doc Founding Theories and Methodology seminars. MUDEC has subsequently changed its display, and the the artwork has not been on show since September 2023. The monument to Montanelli was defaced again with purple paint in April 2024.

2 Hawthorne 2017, p. 158; Hawthorne 2022, pp. 167-170.

3 https://asmarinaproject.com/it/asmarina-voci-e-volti-di-un-eredita-postcoloniale/.

4 Hawthorne 2022, pp. 52-54.

5 Siddi 2020, p. 1040.

6 Hawthorne 2022, p. 169.

7 Volpi 2022, pp. 655-657.

8 Mancosu 2021, p. 387.

9 Cfr. Mandolini 2022; Scego, Robertson 2019; Schwartz 2022; Volpi 2022.

10 Cfr. Cenedese 2018; Lombardi-Diop, Romeo 2015; Schwartz, 2022; Visconti 2021.

11 Siddi 2020, p. 1034.

12 Volpi 2022, p. 654.

13 Burdett 2020, p. 50.

14 Siddi 2020, p. 1032.

15 Cfr. Siddi 2020; Mancosu 2021.

16 Siddi 2020, p. 1031.

17 Siddi 2020, p. 1033.

18 Siddi 2020, p. 1034.

19 Mancosu 2021, p. 404.

20 Mancosu 2021, p. 388.

21 Mandolini 2022, pp. 246-247.

22 Mandolini 2022, p. 247.

23 Volpi 2022, p. 655.

24 Hawthorne 2022, p. 169.

25 Hawthorne 2022, p. 169.

26 Translation by Mandolini 2022, p. 250.

27 Scego, Robertson 2019, pp. 49-50; Hawthorne 2022, p. 250 n. 43.

28 *Il Corriere della Sera*, 12th February 2000, p. 41.

29 Schwartz 2022, p. 671.

30 *Il Corriere della Sera*, 23rd April 2006, p. 33.

31 *La Repubblica. Milano*, 9th June 2006, p. 5.

32 Non Una di Meno is a feminist movement that emerged in response to escalating rates of gender-based violence and femicide. Originating in Argentina in 2015 under the name Ni Una Menos, the movement quickly gained international momentum and reached Italy in 2016. Non Una di Meno advocates for the rights and safety of women, demanding an end to gender-based violence, femicide, and other manifestations of systemic oppression. The movement employs various practices of activism, including mass demonstrations, social

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195

media campaigns, and artistic expressions, to raise awareness and push for legal and societal changes. See Salvatori 2022.

33 Founded in 2013, the Black Lives Matter movement is a global social justice movement advocating for the rights and equitable treatment of Black individuals, particularly in the context of systemic racism and police brutality. The movement gained prominence in response to high-profile cases of police violence against Black people, such as the tragic death of George Floyd in 2020. Floyd's death, captured on video, sparked widespread protests and renewed calls for systemic change. Black Lives Matter emphasizes the need to address deep-rooted issues of racial injustice, inequality, and the historical legacies of colonialism and slavery. It has played a significant role in raising awareness about the importance of recognizing and dismantling structures that perpetuate racial discrimination. For a thorough treatment of this topic, see Lebron 2023.

34 Cristina Donati Meyer is an Italian street artist and artivist, born in 1985. She attended the Brera Academy of Fine Arts, living mainly in Milan. She began making performances and public art in 2007, with the performance on climate change entitled *The Death of Spring* (in Piazza Castello in Milan, where the artist presented herself dressed as Botticelli's Primavera and placed in a coffin). Since 2018, she has worked on the streets and walls of several Italian cities, particularly Milan, with socially engaged interventions, installations, and performances. See Gianolla 2021.

35 Mandolini 2022, p. 247.

36 For an interesting overview of changes in ethnographic museums, see Geismar, Otto, Warner 2022.

37 Belmonte, Moure Cecchini 2022, p. 333.

38 Belmonte, Moure Cecchini 2022, p. 333.

39 Belmonte, Moure Cecchini 2022, p. 333.

40 See MUDEC 2021.

41 https://www.mudec.it/collezione-permanente-2021/.

42 The following is the translation and transcription by Mandolini 2022, pp. 250-251:

Banotti: "You have just stated that you had a 12-year-old wife (let's say this) and that at 25, you just did not worry about it because 'In Africa, you do these kinds of things.' I want to ask you how you conceive your relationships with women."

Montanelli: "I am sorry, madam, but on violence… there was no violence because girls in Abyssinia marry at 12."

Banotti: "This is what you claim."

Montanelli: "At the time, it worked like that."

Banotti: "At the level of personal consciousness, the relationship with a 12-year-old is a relationship with a 12-year-old. If you do this in Europe, you would think of raping a girl, right?" Montanelli: "Yes, in Europe, yes, but…"

Banotti: "Precisely. Which differences do you think there are at a psychological or even physical level?"

Montanelli: "No, look. They marry at 12. That's it".

43 https://www.mudec.it/collezione-permanente-2021/.

44 *Il Giornale*, 16th September 2021, https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/spacciata-opera-darte-statua-sfregio-che-infanga-montanelli-1975665.html.

45 *Il Corriere della Sera*, 16th September 2021, https://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/21_settembre_16/al-mudec-riproduzione-statua-montanelli-la-sposa-bambina-3ab8d654-1705-11ec-8284-145049fd3f8d.shtml.

46 *Il Corriere della Sera*, 11th June 2020, https://italians.corriere.it/2020/06/11/lasciate-

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195

in-pace-montanelli/.

47 *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 13th June 2020, https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2020/06/13/montanelli-travaglio-ad-accordidisaccordi-rimuovere-la-statua-a-milano-era-figlio-del-suo-tempo-non-un-razzista/5833925/.

48 Volpi 2022, p. 657.

49 Volpi 2022, p. 657.

50 Schwartz 2022, p. 672; Lombardi-Diop 2012, p. 176.

51 See Scego, Bianchi 2014.

52 Scego, Bianchi 2014, p. 87.

53 Schwartz 2022, p. 673; Scego, Robertson 2019, p. 50.

54 Schwartz 2022, p. 674.

55 OZMO (Gionata Gesi), born in Pontedera in 1975, trained at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence. After a brief parenthesis in the world of comics, he devoted himself mainly to painting and writing. Active on the Italian graffiti scene since the early 1990s, he is among the pioneers of Italian street art and among the first to enter the contexts of institutionalized art. Ozmo, who has been making unauthorized interventions in alternative contexts for years, was featured in the *Assab One* exhibition curated by Roberto Pinto in 2004, and in 2007 he was among the creators of the museum group show Street Art Sweet Art at the PAC in Milan. In 2012 he exhibits in the foyer of the Museo del Novento in Milan *Il Pre-Giudizio Universale*, an exhibition with his most important installation and large-scale works contextualized in the setting with an engaging live painting, and he creates an impressive 300-meter wallpainting on the terrace of the Museo Arte Contemporanea (MACRO) in Rome. See Holsen 2018.

56 Frisina, Tesfau 2020, p. 404.

57 Schwartz 2022, p. 678.

58 See Chalcraft 2018.

59 See Mandolini 2022.

60 Volpi 2022, p. 655.

61 Belmonte, Moure Cecchini 2022, p. 338.

62 Belmonte, Moure Cecchini 2022, p. 338.

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195

References

Belmonte, Moure Cecchini 2022: Belmonte C., Moure Cecchini L., *Introduction: Critical issues in the study of visual and material culture of Italian colonialism*, in "Modern Italy", 2022, 27, pp. 327-350, https://doi:10.1017/mit.2022.38.

Burdett 2020: Burdett C., *Secrets and Lies: Francesca Melandri's* Sangue Giusto *(2017) and the Uncovered Memory of Italian East Africa*, in "Forum for Modern Language Studies", 2020, 56, 1, pp. 49-65, https://doi.org/10.1093/fmls/cqz057.

Chalcraft 2018: Chalcraft J., *Beyond Addis Ababa and Affile: Italian public memory, heritage and colonialism*, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Research Paper No. RSCAS 2018/69, 2018, https://ssrn.com/abstract=3304585.

Cenedese 2018: Cenedese M., *(Instrumental) Narratives of Postcolonial Rememory: Intersectionality and Multidirectional Memory*, in "Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies", 2018, 10, 1, pp. 95-116, https://doi.org/10.5250/storyworlds.10.1-2.0095.

Frisina, Tesfau 2020: Frisina A. Tesfau M.G., *Decolonizzare la città. L'antirazzismo come contropolitica della memoria. E poi?*, in "Studi culturali", 2020, 3, pp. 399-412, https://www.rivisteweb.it/doi/10.1405/99457.

Geismar, Otto, Warner 2022: Geismar H., Otto T., Warner C.A. (eds.), *Impermanence: Exploring continuous change across cultures*, London, UCL Press, 2022, https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781787358690.

Gianolla 2021: Gianolla C., *Colonialismo, razzismo, sessismo: Il dibattito pubblico sulle statue*, in Gianolla C., Ruocco G. (eds.), *Boaventura de Sousa Santos. Conoscere per liberare*, Rome, Castelvecchi, 2021, pp. 35-45.

Hawthorne 2017: Hawthorne C., *In Search of Black Italia*, in "Transition", 2017, 123, pp. 152-174, https://doi.org/10.2979/transition.123.1.17.

Hawthorne 2022: Hawthorne C., *Contesting race and citizenship: Youth politics in the black Mediterranean*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2022.

Holsenn 2018: Holsenn, F., *Ozmo: 1998-2018*, Rome, Crowdbooks, 2018.

Lebron 2023: Lebron C.J., *The Making of Black Lives Matter: A Brief History of an Idea*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023.

Lombardi-Diop 2012: Lombardi-Diop C., *Postracial/Postcolonial Italy*, in Lombardi-Diop C., Romeo C. (eds.), *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 175-187.

Lombardi-Diop, Romeo 2015: Lombardi-Diop C., Romeo C., *Italy's Postcolonial 'Question': Views from the Southern Frontier of Europe*, in "Postcolonial Studies", 2015, 18, 4, pp. 367-383, https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2015.1191983.

Mancosu 2021: Mancosu G., *Amnesia, aphasia and amnesty: The articulations of Italian colonial memory in postwar films (1946–1960)*, in "Modern Italy", 2021, 26, 4, pp. 387-408, https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2021.30.

Mandolini 2022: Mandolini N., *The Art of Smearing: How Is Feminist Decolonizing Artivism Received by Italian Newspapers? The Case of Montanelli's Statue*, in "Comunicação e Sociedade", 2022, 42, pp. 245-258, https://doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.42(2022).4025.

MUDEC 2021: MUDEC, *Milano globale: il mondo visto da qui: catalogo delle opere e guida al percorso*, Milan, MUDEC-24 ore cultura, 2021.

Salvatori 2022: Salvatori L., *The Deep River of Feminism: From Ni Una Menos to Non Una di Meno*, in "Critical Times", 5, 1, pp. 241-248, https://doi.org/10.1215/26410478-9536591.

Scego, Bianchi 2014: Scego I., Bianchi R., *Roma negata: percorsi postcoloniali nella città*, Rome, Futura Editrice, 2014.

Scego, Robertson 2019: Scego I., Robertson A., *Not One Less*, in "World Literature Today", 2019, 93, 4, pp. 48-52, https://doi.org/10.1353/wlt.2019.0267.

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195

Schwartz 2022: Schwartz S.W., *In the name of Destà: Artivism, corporeality, and "postcolonial pathways"*, in "Journal of Postcolonial Writing", 2022, 58, 5, pp. 669-683, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2022.2159768.

Siddi 2020: Siddi M., *Silencing history: Forgetting Italy's past during the refugee crisis in Europe*, in "International Politics", 2020, 57, 6, pp. 1030–1046, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-020-00209-9.

Visconti 2021: Visconti A., *Between "colonial amnesia" and "victimization biases": Double standards in Italian cultural heritage law*, in "International Journal of Cultural Property", 2021, 28, 4, pp. 551-573, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0940739121000345.

Volpi 2022: Volpi S.I., *"I wanted to become an Abyssinian": Rewriting Indro Montanelli's memories of colonial Africa in Francesca Melandri's* Sangue giusto *(2017)*, in "Journal of Postcolonial Writing", 2022, 58, 5, pp. 654- 668, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2022.2158359.

Https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-9699/20195