

## **Political Propaganda and Archaeology: The Mausoleum of Augustus in the Fascist Era**

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### **Abstract**

*In the 1920s and 1930s, Mussolini invoked images of ancient Rome to create a new Fascist mythology and to associate himself with the Roman Emperor Augustus as a means to legitimize his dictatorship. To further this aim, he initiated the excavation of the Mausoleum of Augustus and the creation of a surrounding piazza. Mussolini hoped to reveal a monument that would glorify Augustus, and therefore himself, but instead what he uncovered was only the barest remains of the once magnificent Mausoleum. His attempt to use archaeology as a tool for his political propaganda resulted in the isolation of the Mausoleum within a heavy-handed, soul-deadening Fascist piazza. The devastated remains of the monument have become an eyesore for the people of Rome and the Mausoleum's previous role within the life of the city has faded. Recent plans for the renovation of the Mausoleum remain unfulfilled leaving the monument even more unsightly.*

**Keywords:** Mausoleum of Augustus, Mussolini, Fascist propaganda, archaeology, Rome

When Benito Mussolini became prime minister in October 1922, Italy, like so many nations during this period, was entering a time of great economic decline. Rome was truly feeling the effects of this collapse. The population of the Eternal City had been steadily increasing since the unification of Italy, and by the time Mussolini created his one-party government in 1926, the city's population was rapidly approaching one million (Ridley, 1986, p. 41). The combination of increased population and economic collapse created a series of social problems, from housing to unemployment. Mussolini, in his dynamic speeches, promised to eradicate these difficulties and create a new, stronger, unified Italy with Imperial Rome as its shining example.

Mussolini's Fascist Party was not the first Italian government to use Italy's glorious past as political propaganda. The previous government of unified Italy (1870-1922) and the Fascists each created a myth that presented ancient Rome as the ideal state. This mythic Rome was represented as having developed from a strong unified Italy which created civilization and generated the ideal population that put the state before the individual.<sup>1</sup> Fascist propaganda, though, glorified this myth to an extent not seen before.

It was Mussolini's use of architecture and archaeology that had the greatest visual effect on the city of Rome. Mussolini isolated ancient monuments from later structures that were built on or next to them as well as constructed new architectural complexes to glorify Italy and the Fascist party. As early as December 31, 1925, Mussolini gave a brief account of the ancient monuments he wished to isolate within open piazzas. Included on the list were the Imperial Fora, the Mausoleum of Augustus, the Theater of Marcellus, and the Pantheon (see Cerderna, 2001, p. 8 for complete speech). These large, easily recognizable monuments evoked the magnificence of ancient Rome and could be used to advance his program of creating a new Rome out of the glories of the past. The reasons behind this work were not just aesthetic or scholarly; actually they were far from it. The clearing away of old buildings allowed for the opening up of space in which wider streets could be constructed to accommodate the increase in traffic. The new piazzas created around imperial monuments also attracted tourism and, most importantly, resulted in the creation of new jobs for the growing number of unemployed. A final benefit was that Mussolini's government was seen as one of action. Work to isolate the monuments of ancient Rome began almost immediately. In 1926 work began around the Theater of Marcellus.

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<sup>1</sup> For further discussion on this topic see Aicher (2000) and Olariu (2012).

Plans included both the removal of the buildings that crowded around the Theater, so its complete, extant structure would be visible, and the creation of a new, major thoroughfare that would link the city of Rome to the ancient port city of Ostia. This new road, appropriately named Via del Mare (now Via del Teatro di Marcello) provided the citizens of Rome with an easy route to the coast. The new Via del Mare also opened up the area between the Capitoline Hill and the Palazzo Venezia allowing easier traffic flow and the gathering of large crowds. This extra space became increasingly important after 1929 when Mussolini moved his office to the Palazzo Venezia. It was from the balcony of this building that Mussolini made his frequent speeches to the large crowds gathered below (Painter, 2005, p. 2, 35).

It was also in 1926 that two noted archaeologists, A. M. Colini and G. Q. Giglioli, published their archaeological report on the Mausoleum of Augustus in *Bullettino della Commissione archeologica del Governatorato di Roma*. This archaeological study of the monument was an exploration of the monument rather than a systematic excavation. Colini and Giglioli were able to enter through the original entrance of the Mausoleum, which had been re-discovered in 1907, and examine the ancient structure without disrupting the upper parts which still functioned as a concert hall for the city. They were able to gain a greater understanding of the tomb's structure by examining its walls which were often only accessible through the basements of the surrounding buildings, the majority of which were constructed in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Their article is divided into two parts: Colini provides the bulk of information which includes a discussion of the findings, while Giglioli provides the summarizing conclusion. In his report, Colini provides a thorough discussion of each section of the Mausoleum including the materials used in its construction, how much of the structure still remained, and any extant inscriptions or sculptural reliefs. This information has proved to be invaluable to later archaeologists as they have attempted to reconstruct the tomb and evaluate how much has been lost since its excavation.

The most interesting aspect of the archaeological report is the conclusion written by Giglioli. In his opening paragraph, he states that:

To this resolution I will immediately say that, in my opinion, the present noble use of the monument should be maintained, because otherwise it will be a shapeless ruin in the center of Rome, but principally because only in this way can we hope to have all the means necessary to have an arrangement that will guarantee its conservation and allow for its study (228).<sup>2</sup>

He then notes the destruction that had occurred to the monument over the centuries due to its multiple reuses<sup>3</sup> and how this destruction had resulted in inaccurate plans and reconstructions.

In 1930 Colini and Giglioli published a second report, *Il Mausoleo d'Augusto*, on the Mausoleum, which included all of the additional information they had gathered over the previous four years. While this examination of the tomb only served to clarify and confirm their earlier report, it did uncover some fragments of inscriptions and funerary urns. While in 1926 Giglioli argued for maintaining the present use of the Mausoleum as a concert hall, over the course of the next four years he became an important member of the group pushing for the isolation and excavation of the Mausoleum. He began to espouse the value of the monument and its potential as a symbol for Mussolini and his growing association with Augustus. In fact, it was Giglioli who developed the idea of having an exhibit on ancient Rome as part of a celebration of the two thousand year anniversary of Augustus's birth (Kostof, 1978, p. 285). In his concluding paragraph, Giglioli writes:

We have faith that on 23 September 1938 the Duce of the new Italy could, on the bimillennial of the birth of Augustus, admire the great ruin [of the Mausoleum], completely isolated and surrounded anew by those groves that Augustus bequeathed to his good people of Rome (Kostof, 285).

This idea of celebrating the birth of Augustus was just a part of a growing national trend associating Mussolini with the first emperor of Rome. In the 1930s books were published that presented delineated arguments of how Mussolini was the re-embodiment of the Roman emperors, especially of Augustus.<sup>4</sup> It was also during this period that stamps were printed with the image of Augustus and quotes from the *Res Gestae* (Aicher, 2000).

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<sup>2</sup> My translation.

<sup>3</sup> After the fall of Rome in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the Mausoleum of Augustus was used a fortress, vineyard, statue garden, amphitheater, and, lastly, Rome's concert hall. For a complete discussion of the history of the Mausoleum see Riccomini A. M. (1996) and Fugate Brangers, S. (2007).

<sup>4</sup> Examples of this type of publications are Balbo, E. (1937 and 1940) and Viganoni, G. (1933).

In the early years of Mussolini's government, there was equal evocation of Julius Caesar and Augustus; though, as the Fascists gained more power and stability was established, the image of Julius Caesar as dictator and creator of social unrest was judged to be inappropriate. Augustus, though, was presented as the champion of the Republic restoring order after the years of civil war, just as Mussolini was represented as the hero of Italy who rescued the land from a politically and morally corrupt government (Aicher, 2000). With these developments, the time was perfect for beginning the work to isolate and excavate the Mausoleum of Augustus.

On October 22, 1934, the twelfth anniversary of the March on Rome, Mussolini stood on a rooftop on the Vicolo Soderini to announce the beginning of the liberation of the Mausoleum of Augustus from the buildings that surrounded it. Standing ready with a pickaxe nearby and surrounded by a multitude of photographers and journalists, Mussolini declared:

Companions!

The work of isolating the Augusteo, which today I initiate and that must be finished within three years for the bimillennium of Augustus, has a triple usefulness: that of history and beauty, that of the traffic, that of hygiene.

...To isolate the Augusteo will require the demolition of the Via dei Pontefici, Via delle Colonnate (in part), vicolo Soderini, vicolo degli Schiavoni, vicolo del Grottino...Also the isolation of the Augusteo, with the creation of a large square and of a wide passage towards the Corso Umberto I, will be of great benefit to urban traffic.

...Therefore, we are speaking here of purely archaeological pathways, but of large roads on which flow the grand and continuous life of the town.

As for the houses that are demolished they represent a grave backwardness with respect to hygiene.

...The fourth and not least benefit: with the intense activities of demolition and the new building construction work will be given for a period of three years to numerous laborers of every category.

And now I yield the word to the pickaxe.<sup>5</sup>

Although Mussolini's pickaxe struck a roof near the Mausoleum, the actual demolition started along the outer edges of the zone. Therefore, the monument could continue to function as the city's concert hall until May 13, 1936. Three churches that were located on two of the corners of the demolition zone were left standing and, due to the isolation of the Mausoleum, their complete structures were also revealed.<sup>6</sup>

Surprisingly, there are few published accounts of the liberation of the Mausoleum and its subsequent excavation. In 1934, Guglielmo Gatti published an article "Il Mausoleo di Augusto: Studio di Ricostruzione" in which he studied past written accounts and drawings of the tomb's structure in order to develop possible reconstructions. He followed this with a second article, "Nuove osservazioni sul Mausoleo di Augusto," in 1938 in which he presented a reconstruction of the monument which is still widely accepted.

Antonio Muñoz, the director of antiquities and fine arts as well as the director of the Mausoleum's excavation, albeit briefly, wrote the only account of the excavation, "La sistemazione del Mausoleo di Augusto" (1938). From the beginning of the article, there is a sense of disappointment in the results of the excavation. He states that it was hoped that the isolation and excavation of the monument would help resolve the problem of its original appearance and decoration. Muñoz acknowledges that although their hopes were not realized they were able to establish the plan of the large exterior wall and document the structure and thickness of the semi-circular niches between the two outer walls.

Much of the disappointment concerning the Mausoleum was due to the severe devastation that the tomb had suffered over the centuries. As a result of the tomb's condition, it was necessary to reconsider the plans for the monument's reconstruction (see figures 1 and 2). The project engineer, Poscetti, expressed concern, as quoted by Muñoz:

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<sup>5</sup> Translation of select portions of the speech are my translation. For a full Italian transcript of Mussolini's speech see Cederna (2001), p. 161.

<sup>6</sup> The churches are S. Girolamo degli Illirici (or degli Schiavoni) built in 1453, S. Rocco built in 1499, and S. Carlo al Corso constructed between 1612 and 1672.

Unfortunately, from what we can suppose, after the intense activities of isolation the mausoleum will not be presented well because the remainders of the ancient construction are meager and mute. It is necessary, therefore, to study a timely resolution; it is not possible to think about a complete reconstruction of the monument realizing one or another hypothesis, but limit ourselves to valuing what remains... The outside base should be partially rebuilt, and the planted tumulus restored. (1938, p. 504)<sup>7</sup>

After isolating and excavating the Mausoleum, there was a desire to retain as much of the original structure as possible, but its ruinous state required some repairs and securing of the walls. In order to make these repairs, bricks of subtle color that would not conflict with the original color of the wall but would still be distinguishable from the ancient structure were used. These repairs were only necessary on the interior for the outer wall was in a nearly complete and stable state. In fact, some of the original travertine blocks were found still in place (Muñoz, 1938).

Still, Muñoz remained concerned about two facts of the excavation and reconstruction of the tomb. The first concern was over the plan to plant trees and shrubs in the space between the first and third walls. These plantings were planned to recreate the appearance of the Mausoleum in antiquity as reported by Strabo.<sup>8</sup> Muñoz was apprehensive about the potential damage that the plants could cause to the ancient structure (Muñoz, 1938). This concern must have been overcome, or ignored, for the planting of trees and shrubs did occur and can be seen today. The second concern was whether or not to continue the excavation down to the ancient ground level and uncover the base of the exterior wall. Excavating the final distance would reach the current level of the water table thus jeopardizing the standing structure (Muñoz, 1938). Since the base of the exterior drum is not visible today, it can be assumed that either excavation to the ancient ground level did not occur or the base of the wall was excavated but then reburied.

The creation of a piazza to surround the Mausoleum was the second part of Mussolini's plan for the site. The architect Vittorio Morpurgo was chosen to design the piazza and the buildings that would define its periphery. The task set before Morpurgo was daunting for no plan had been fully developed for the area. The relationship of the churches to the Mausoleum and the piazza had not been determined and there was no agreement on how the new buildings would be used (Kostof, 1978, p. 287). The only certainty that Morpurgo had to work with was that the resulting piazza was to glorify the first emperor of Rome and, more importantly through association, glorify Mussolini and the Fascist party.

After a series of proposals and alterations, final construction was completed in 1940. The Piazza Augusto Imperatore, as it was named, consisted of a large piazza dominated on all four sides by new buildings.<sup>9</sup> The buildings are constructed of travertine and brick and stand five stories tall. To the north of the Mausoleum the largest building was constructed to house office space for the national social security administration, which provided the funding for the project (Painter, 2005, pp. 73-4) (Figure 3). On either end of the central portion of this building, tableaux were constructed around a row of windows. The western tableau is decorated with relief sculpture depicting Roman weapons and armor (Figure 4). Below this window is written in raised letters, "A·MCMXL·POST·CHRISTUM NATUM," giving the date in which this building was completed (1940). The eastern tableau is decorated with the weapons and armor of twentieth-century Italy (Figure 5). Below this window is written, "ANNO XVIII A FASCIBVS RESTITVTIS," giving the date of completion in terms of the number of years (18 years) since the establishment of the Fascist government in Italy. This form of dating became standard during the years of Mussolini's rule and can be found on other monuments and even in published works.<sup>10</sup> The far eastern end of this building is offset from the rest of the structure and also contains a three-story inset.

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<sup>7</sup> My translation.

<sup>8</sup> "Most worth seeing is the so-called Mausoleion, a large mound set upon a tall socle by the river, planted with evergreen trees up to the top." (5.3.9)

<sup>9</sup> A complete discussion of the development of this piazza can be found in Kostof (1978).

<sup>10</sup> The use of the Fascist dating can be found in such published works as Giovanni Viganoni's *Mussolini e I Cesari* which provides the standard date of 1933 which is then followed by XI meaning year 11 of the Fascist government and the catalogue for *Mostra Augustea della Rommità* where the date of the exhibition is given as 23 Settembre 1937-XV - 23 Settembre 1938-XVI (the Roman numerals represent the year of the Fascist government).

Unlike the other tableaux, this one is over a balcony and is decorated with a mosaic triptych (Figure 6). In the center stands the personification of the River Tiber holding the infants Romulus and Remus. Seated at the Tiber's feet is the she-wolf which, according to the legend, suckled the infant twins. Above the head of Tiber, the personification of the sun emerges from the sea with his horses. The two narrow side panels each depict three large figures performing various labors associated with the countryside. Below this triptych is the inscription, "HIS AB EXIGVIS PROfecta INITIIS ROMA" ["Rome, having started from small and humble beginnings"].<sup>11</sup> This mosaic is the epitome of the use of mythic Rome to expound Fascist propaganda. In the center of the triptych are images relating to the founding of the ancient city, but the figures in the narrow side panel represent the Fascist ideal of laborers working for the good of the state. This ideology is emphasized through the use of stylized, heroic figures which exemplify Fascist art. The inscription, mentioned above, further emphasizes the glorification of Rome in the mosaic. It is a paraphrase from Livy's preface to *Ab urbe condita* [The History of Rome], "Res est praeterea et immensi operis, ut quae supra septingentesimum annum repetatur et quae ab exiguis profecta initiis eo creverit ut iam magnitudine laboret sua;..." (Book 1 preface.4). ["The subject, moreover, is one that demands immense labor. It goes back beyond 700 years and, **after starting from small and humble beginnings**, it has so grown that it strains under its greatness."] (trans. 1912).

Below this mosaic is a Latin inscription in raised letters that reads:

HUNC LOCUM UBI AUGUSTI MANES VOLITANT PER AURAS/ POSTQUAM IMPERATORIS  
MAUSOLEUM EX SAECULORUM TENEBRIS/ EST EXTRACTUM ARAEQUE PACIS DISIECTA  
MEMBRA REFECTA/ MUSSOLINI DUX VETERIBUS ANGUSTIIS DELETIS SPLENDIDIORIBUS/ VII  
AEDIFICIIS AEDIBUS AD HUMANITATIS MORES APTIS/ ORNANDUM CENSUIT ANNO MDCCCXXL  
[AE. F. XVIII].

[In 1940, Mussolini, il Duce, ordered this place, where the spirits of Augustus flit about in the air, after the Mausoleum of the Emperor was delivered from the darkness of the centuries, and once the scattered pieces of the Ara Pacis were restored and the old confining buildings were torn down, to be adorned by seven more magnificent buildings suited to the current taste of Humanity.]<sup>12</sup>

This inscription is flanked by two winged victories each holding fasces, a bundle of wooden rods that were the Roman symbol of authority that became the emblem of the Fascist party (Figure 7). The façade of this building, then, becomes a combination of warfare (the military reliefs) and labor (the mosaic). It was the combination of these two strengths that made ancient Rome great and that Mussolini wanted to emulate in his New Italy.

This theme is carried over onto the building on the eastern side of the piazza which was also constructed to hold offices of the National Social Security Administration (Figure 8). Above the entrance to the building is a frieze depicting forty-two almost life-size figures in sculptural relief (Figure 9). These figures are engaged in the labors of the countryside, such as tending sheep, pressing grapes, working the land, or caring for young children. In the middle of this frieze (Figure 10) is an inscription that reads:

IL POPOLO ITALIANO E IL POPOLO IMMORTALE  
CHE TROVA SEMPRE VNA PRIMAVERA  
PER LE SVE SPERANZE PER LA SVA PASSIONE  
PER LA SVA GRANDEZZA

[The Italian people and the people immortal  
who always find a Spring  
for their hopes, for their passion,  
for their greatness]<sup>13</sup>

This frieze and inscription promote the common person, the worker of the land, and the mother. The combination of the relief and text once again illustrates Mussolini's attempt to associate himself with Augustus. This association with Augustus is most clearly illustrated by the depictions of motherhood on either side of the inscription. The scenes of mothers holding their infants reference the Tellus relief from the Ara Pacis (Figure 11).

<sup>11</sup> My translation; emphasis mine.

<sup>12</sup> My translation.

<sup>13</sup> My translation.

The Augustan and Fascist reliefs both celebrate fecundity, but the modern reliefs suffer from comparison with the ancient relief. The Fascist simplification of the human figure appears awkward and clumsy next to the grace and beauty of the Tellus relief. Across the piazza from this building, between the Mausoleum and the Tiber, was an addition proposed by Mussolini, himself. It was a small building of travertine and glass designed by Morpurgo to house the reconstructed Ara Pacis Augustae.<sup>14</sup> Fragments of the Ara Pacis had been discovered in 1568 and were scattered among museum collections in Italy, Germany, and France. In the early 1930s, other portions of the Ara Pacis remained under a section of the Palazzo Fiano, located along the Via del Corso. In order to uncover these remaining pieces of the altar, an excavation led by Giovanni Rodio, an hydraulic engineer, was conducted between 1937 and 1938. This ambitious project and amazing feat of engineering involved freezing the moist soil and supporting a section of the Palazzo while the remains of the altar were removed (Nolan, 2005).

The translation of the Ara Pacis to a site next to the Mausoleum perfectly completed Mussolini's quest of creating a piazza dedicated to Augustus and, by association, to himself.<sup>15</sup> Morpurgo designed a very simple structure for the altar that would not compete with its beauty and design. The high podium of the building was inscribed with the *Res Gestae* of Augustus, an account of his accomplishments, which was once inscribed on bronze plaques and mounted on pillars located near the entrance of the Mausoleum. The inscription is an accurate copy of antique lettering that offers a striking contrast to the heavy, masculine quality of the Fascist inscriptions on both the northern and eastern buildings. The large, stone letters of the Fascist inscriptions are set in high relief casting strong, sharp shadows. As a result, the inscriptions appear forceful and lack the elegance of the antique lettering used for the inscription of the *Res Gestae* (Benton, 2000). Once again Fascist design suffers from comparison with the antique. The only new building to be constructed of brick, the Collegio degli Illirici (the College of Croatia) was built along the third side of the piazza (Figure 12). The back of the building faced the Via Tomacelli. Brick was used so that the structure would blend with the older buildings that also lined the street. The decoration of this building also differs from those previously discussed. Along the top story of the building are three mosaics. The central mosaic depicts Christ as the Prince of Peace (Painter, 2005, p. 74) while the two side mosaics depict scenes from the religious history of Croatia. The two historical side panels directly relate to the population of Croatians at the college and whose national church, San Girolamo degli Illirici, is located across the street.

In many ways the Piazza Augusto Imperatore did not succeed in meeting its grand expectations. While it is one of the largest, if not the largest, piazzas in Rome, it is also its least well known. The design of the piazza in many ways discourages visitors from lingering and exploring its space and monuments. While the piazza was originally intended to be part of a major traffic system that would link it with Piazza del Popolo, the roadways were never constructed presumably due to Italy's involvement in the Second World War. As a result, the approach to the monument is encumbered on three sides by fast-moving traffic while the south side of the piazza is a parking lot for the surrounding businesses and restaurants which prevents easy access to the main entrance of the Mausoleum. The two levels of the piazza, that of the Mausoleum and of the modern street level, create, in effect, the sense of a piazza within a piazza. The traffic and parked cars further enhance this separation and prevent any interaction between the two areas. The height of the buildings designed by Morpurgo prevents a full appreciation of the expanse of the piazza. If the buildings were lower, a visitor would be able to see the surrounding cityscape. This extended view would enhance, rather than disguise, the size of the piazza. If the buildings were constructed to be taller than the Mausoleum's central core, which is not the case today, they would then effectively frame the piazza unifying the area and allowing a visitor to comprehend its expanse (Kostof, 1978).

The characteristic Fascist design of the Morpurgo buildings combines plain, flat architectural surfaces with simplified colonnades reminiscent of ancient Roman construction. The upper three stories of the buildings appear too heavy for the squat, unfluted columns that support them. The weightiness of the structures overburdens the space of the piazza causing it to feel tight and closed-in. This tightness is further enhanced by the fact that the building fronts are set hard against the streets without pedestrian areas between them. A visitor to the piazza, therefore, is unable to move freely about the space and view either the modern buildings or the ancient monument in the center.

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<sup>14</sup> This building was demolished in 2000 to make room for a new, larger building designed by American architect Richard Meier to house the Ara Pacis as well as contain exhibit spaces and lecture halls. This new building opened to the public in 2006.

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of the reconstruction of the Ara Pacis and possible inaccuracies in the altar's reconstruction refer to Andersen, W. (2003).

The success of the excavation of the Mausoleum of Augustus is debatable. It can be argued that without the complete isolation and excavation of the monument its plan would never have been fully known. As Muñoz noted, however, it has not resolved the issue of its original appearance. The current appearance of the Mausoleum is also uninspiring both because of its poor state of preservation and because of the overpowering presence of the buildings that surround it. The difference in ground level between that of the Piazza and that of the Mausoleum, nearly five meters lower, contributes to the fact that the monument seems to be lost in its urban setting. Finally, since the time of its construction, the tomb had been part of the culture and life of the city of Rome, whether it was as a monument to the first emperor surrounded by a public park, a medieval fortress of prominent Roman family, a late Renaissance statuary garden visited by artists and tourists alike, a popular site for spectacles and bullfights, or Rome's concert hall. When Mussolini had the Mausoleum isolated from its surroundings, he, in effect, isolated it from the life of the city.

The history of the Mausoleum of Augustus during the Fascist era reveals the dangers of using archaeology and ancient monuments in the service of political propaganda. When one person's, or one party's, view dictates archaeological investigations and excavations, other interests and historical accuracy are often put aside. Mussolini was only interested in the Roman history of the Mausoleum with blatant disregard for the subsequent layers of history built upon and around the monument. No records of these layers were kept, artifacts were disregarded, and centuries of history were lost (Olariu, 2012). The loss of this history makes the Mausoleum of Augustus seem even more remote, obscure, and cold to those who would pass by.

### **The State of the Mausoleum Today**

After much controversy, the new building for the Ara Pacis opened to the public on April 21, 2006, Rome's legendary birthday. Richard Meier, an American architect noted for his cool, monochromatic modernism, was granted the commission to construct this new building, which was to include space not only for the ancient altar but also an auditorium, extra exhibition space, offices, and a bookstore (Riding 2006). Plans for the project began in 1996 and the original Fascist building was demolished in 2000. Meier used large slabs of travertine on the exterior and interior of the building, reflecting an architectural tradition that dates back to ancient Rome. By creating walls of windows that overlook the Piazza Imperatore Augusto with the Mausoleum and the Tiber River, he connects the Ara Pacis with the surrounding cityscape. This connection was essential to the element of the design, for Meier recognized the deteriorated and neglected state of the Piazza and attempts, through his new building, to revitalize the area. As he explains, "It kind of embraces everything around it... I wanted to make it a public destination, a new piazza space in Rome that people can come to whether they're going to the museum or not, and just sit in the sun—that's what Romans like to do. It's bringing life to what was not a vital or active area before" (Rose, 2006).

In 2006 and 2007 there was hope there would be a revitalization of the Piazza Imperatore Augusto with the announcement of the international competition, *Urbs et Civitas*, for the redevelopment of the piazza conducted by the Commune di Roma (Meadows, 2006 and Macchioni, 2006).<sup>16</sup> The winning design team, led by Francesco Cellini, proposed to convert the paved area of the Piazza into a green garden space to harmonize with the grassy earthen mound of the Mausoleum. The structure of the tomb would undergo renovation to restore some of its ancient qualities, while portions of the Mausoleum's supporting walls would remain visible so that one could gain a better understanding of the monument's structure. A final benefit of this project would be that it would offer an opportunity for the first archaeological excavations of the area since the 1930s. The original plan had an expected completion date of 2009 and a promise that once again the Mausoleum of Augustus would become an integral part of the life of Rome.

The re-excavation of the Mausoleum of Augustus began as planned after the conclusion of the competition. The area around the monument was fenced off and a new examination of the structure began. The conclusion of this work and the redevelopment of the piazza is still an unfulfilled promise due, in large part, to the financial difficulties Italy, and Rome, experienced with the recession that began in 2008. As of the date of this article (2013), the Mausoleum is surrounded not only by the Fascist buildings of Mussolini but by metal fencing and material, construction vehicles, and miscellaneous items discarded by passersby.<sup>17</sup> Now, more than ever, the Mausoleum of Augustus is separated from the life and energy of the city that surrounds it.

<sup>16</sup> Images of the winning proposal, "Urbs et Civitas," can be seen by accessing Macchioni's (2006) article on the project.

<sup>17</sup> Online articles, blogs, and posting attest to the current state of the Mausoleum, see Lilli, M. (2013, August 7).

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## Figures



Figure 1. Exterior View of the Mausoleum of Augustus. Photo by author.





**Figure 2. Interior view of the Mausoleum of Augustus. Photo by author.**



**Figure 3. View of National Social Security Administration Building. Photo by author.**



**Figure 4. Western tableau window from National Social Security Administration Building. Photo by author**



Figure 5. Eastern tableau window from National Social Security Administration Building. Photo by author



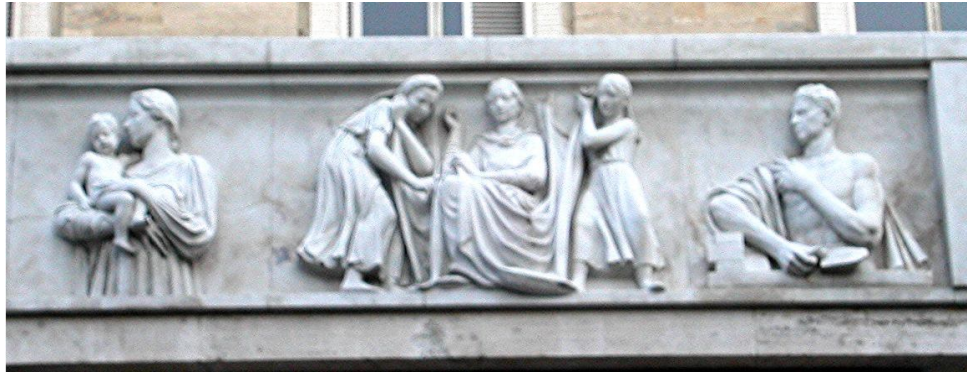
Figure 6. Mosaic triptych from National Social Security Administration Building. Photo by author.



Figure 7. Latin inscription from National Social Security Administration Building. Photo by author.



Figure 8. View of the eastern building for the National Social Security Administration. Photo by author.



**Figure 9. Detail of frieze from the eastern building for The National Social Security Administration. Photo by author.**



**Figure 10. Latin Inscription from the front of the eastern building for the National Social Security Administration. Photo by author.**



**Figure 11. Tellus panel from the Ara Pacis. Image taken from the public domain.**



**Figure 12. View of the Collegio degli Illirici. Photo by author.**