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Research

Triennial 1951: Post-War Reconstruction and “Divine Proportion”

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Abstract. This research centres on the conference dedicated to the theme “Divina Proporzione” organised on the occasion of the 1951 Milano Triennale. Participating in the meeting were some of the most important art historians, architects, engineers, mathematicians and artists of the day: from a very young James Ackerman to Pier Luigi Nervi, from Le Corbusier to Carlo Mollino, from Lucio Fontana to Ernesto Rogers. That historic moment, even given the plurality of voices and approaches, represented the synthesis of a reflection that was as urgent as it was rich in implications, since it brought the concept of “proportion” into the very heart of post-war reconstruction.

Introduction

Sixty years have passed since the First International Congress on Proportions promoted by the Triennale di Milano, and it is very moving to go back to that day and talk about it now, in the same city, if not even on the same platform in the Theatre of Art. There, in 1951, the main representatives of twentieth-century artistic, historical and critical culture took to the stage. Today, the same thing is done – more modestly – by those who have inherited that culture, and indeed by the still anonymous forgers of a new culture. It is also interesting to note how, at that time, the Congress represented a message of hope in the wake of the greatest catastrophe of the century and today, at the time this paper was presented at the 2012 Nexus conference, it coincides with another catastrophe – the earthquake in Emilia – certainly not comparable with that of the Second World War, but which for us has been equally destructive of the welfare and cultural identity values in which we were reared.

In September 1951, the Triennial devoted three days to a congress which, until a few years ago, escaped the attention of most historians but which today can be seen in retrospect as a key critical juncture.¹ Those three days in Milan brought together the leading architects, scholars, historians and artists of the time who were interested in the issue of proportion, and placed them side by side in a confrontation that occasionally proved uncomfortable, but was nevertheless fruitful in that it enabled new approaches to emerge and consigned increasingly sterile practices to the shadows. The result was anything but harmonious. Instead of a symphony, what emerged was continuing friction between the old and new worlds, a clean break between past and present.

Documents relating to that congress emerged a few years ago from the archives of the Triennial, and were studied by the present authors with great enthusiasm, also because, as in the case of a *matryoshka* – or an episode of Mad Man – as one went deeper new

interpretations emerged that lent alternative meanings to the story. In the same way, when placed under the microscope what seemed like a small episode was shown for what it really was: a rite of passage, with all its areas of shadow and light, with all the reserve and the provocation, the alignments and tensions.

Curiously, but as often occurs when one studies history, it all began with a lucky encounter with an architect who is still alive, Francesco Gneccchi-Ruscone, the curator of a small exhibition on treatises devoted to the theme of proportion. This exhibition, held for the Triennial of 1951, was in fact the spark that ignited the planned congress.

Let's go back a little, therefore, and tell the story in order. First I will talk about the exhibition, then about the congress that came into being subsequently, and in particular the role of Le Corbusier within it. Finally we will mention the outcome of the conference, which in a roundabout manner will shed new light on the whole process.

Wittkower versus Le Corbusier: The "Mostra di Studi sulle Proporzioni"

In the aftermath of World War II, two key texts were published on the concept of proportion: *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* by Rudolf Wittkower [1949] and *Le Modulor* by Le Corbusier [1954 (2000)].

The topical message of Wittkower's book was not lost in an Italy that was completely absorbed with the urgent task of reconstruction: namely the idea of relationship, measurement, rule which lies at the basis of modular coordination. Meanwhile Le Corbusier expressed – from a different point of view – a principle of contemporaneity, represented by the imperious figure of the *Modulor*: this man, who embraced technology while speaking a cultured language, represented the counterpart to Wittkower's text in design terms.

In addition to these two fundamental points, one should not forget the essay by James S. Ackerman "Ars Sine Scientia Nihil Est: Gothic Theory of Architecture at the Cathedral of Milan" [1949], and those of Colin Rowe, "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" [1947] and "Mannerism in Modern Architecture" [1950]. This flowering of studies was rooted in the interwar years, when the literary output on the theme of proportions and the measurability of the cosmos had been marked by significant contributions: one only has to think of the texts by Fredrik Macody Lund, Charles Funck-Hellet, Matila Ghyka, Hans Kayser, Miloutine Borissavliévitch, Andreas Speiser, Jay Hambidge, and many others.

The Milan of the 1930s was particularly cognisant of all these various stimuli: here rationalism in architecture and abstraction in painting combined to create an environment that was more receptive than ever to this harmonic tension, which the war was to violently uproot.

The cultural climate of the post-war period was also a receptive one, based on different premises, and the Triennial represented one of the most esteemed places for the symbolic reconstruction of a future direction, the search for a harmonic foundation, reflection on an alliance between science and humanism in the context of growing industrialisation. The first post-war Triennial of 1947 saw the creation of the experimental QT8 quarter designed by Pietro Bottoni as a possible model for an architectural and urban planning renaissance. The following edition of the event disregarded the note of urgency, but nevertheless gave central prominence to the theme of prefabrication, mass production and standardisation.

A small exhibition was held for the 1951 edition, during the summer: the *Mostra di Studi sulle Proporzioni* (“exhibition of studies on proportions”) curated by Carla Marzoli, the owner of an antiquarian bookshop in the centre of Milan, and designed by the young architect Francesco Gnechchi-Ruscone.²



Fig. 1. View of the *Mostra di Studi sulle Proporzioni*.
Courtesy Archivio Fotografico © La Triennale di Milano

As soon as the general exhibition plan was decided, Marzoli set off for London. Destination: Rudolf Wittkower’s office. Objective (fully met): to involve him actively at the level of scientific supervision and to obtain his endorsement. Immediately, the curator delivered an attack on Le Corbusier, the architectural star of the firmament in those years. She didn’t get a chance to meet him in person, but she spoke with André Wogensky, his right hand man, whom she won over to the project. Quoting from the letter Gnechchi sent Le Corbusier, presenting the general plan of the exhibition:

With regard to the modern treatises on the subject, we wish to give the writings on the Modulor the prominence they deserve; we also wish to exhibit a large-size panel Following the advice of the architect Wogensky, we would like to ask you if you would be kind enough to see to the design of this panel.³

In the meantime, Wittkower had suggested to Marzoli to exhibit panels realised by his own students but the curator, possibly unnerved by an overly pedantic approach, declined the offer. It was small gaffe that, although it didn’t quite undermine Wittkower’s interest in the exhibition, had a certain distancing effect that did not exclude a somewhat sardonic tone. Thus he wrote:

The program for the exhibition looks interesting, and since you have the support of our friend John Voelcker, and even of Le Corbusier, I'm sure that my help or that of my students would not be overly useful.⁴

Wittkower versus Le Corbusier: the two leading electric poles of the whole affair

So the day of inauguration of the exhibition arrived. In its simplicity, the staging was a work of artistry created from black iron pipes and white joints of industrial production, based on the concept of the golden section, in a continuous cross-play of references between content and container. The canonical texts were showcased in display cases – it was after all a bibliographical exhibition – divided into two major sections: “Studies on proportions from antiquity to the eighteenth century”, and “Studies on proportions in modernity.” It sought to avoid an excessively linear approach, while remaining true to the general chronological framework: in the showcase dedicated to the Renaissance, for example, Vitruvius, Dürer, Vesalius and Le Corbusier were displayed side by side (and this represents another sign placed on the line leading from Vitruvius to Le Corbusier, which we will often encounter in this story). Photographs were hung around the displays depicting, inter alia, drawings by Luca Pacioli, Leonardo, Scamozzi, Kandinsky, an orthogonal Cartesian response to the poetic “throw of the dice” of another exhibition in the same Triennial, *Architettura misura dell'uomo* (“architecture the measure of man”), designed by Ernesto Rogers, Vittorio Gregotti and Giotto Stoppino.

The panel with the Modulor represented the grand finale: the Modulor's hand is raised in a gesture that appears initially to be barring visitor's way, and then to be wishing him a pleasant journey into the future. The panel, alongside various images of designs by Le Corbusier sized in harmonic proportions, is the high point of an itinerary which began its trajectory with the photograph of Senmuth's tomb in Luxor, according to a logic of continuity sufficient in itself to justify it. To set it up, Le Corbusier assigned the Sri Lankan architect Minnette de Silva from his studio.

Disharmonic proportions

The theme was highly topical, the approach of Le Corbusier (thanks to the presence of the Modulor) strategic, and the scientific endorsement of the likes of Wittkower of significant value. And so, striking while the iron was hot, the Triennial hastily decided to convene an international congress. Wittkower, in July 1951, rushed to Milan to have discussions with the Triennial directors. Meanwhile, Ivan Matteo Lombardo, chairman of the Triennial, wrote to Le Corbusier as follows:

Your Modulor is the pivot around which all the problems of proportion in modern architecture revolve. Since you have done us the honour of sending us your Modulor panel for our exhibition, you must now honour us by your participation in this event. I only use the expression ‘you must’ because it is impossible to imagine a day such as this, devoted to architecture, without your presence.⁵

In the eyes of its organisers, the presence of Le Corbusier was the condition *sine qua non* of the event. Wittkower, however, was not overly excited by the architect's presence:

I think his presence is mainly of propaganda value. Between you and me, he is a very bad speaker and hasn't a lot to say. With so many excellent *relazioni* [presentations] on the program, we could easily do without him.⁶

Obviously, this challenge was dropped.

Meanwhile, the organisers proceeded at full pace. Benedetto Croce agreed to sit on the Committee of Honour, and the President of the Republic Luigi Einaudi as well as the Ministers Antonio Segni and Carlo Sforza also gave their patronage. Virtuous circles were created: Wittkower invited Ackerman; Sigfried Giedion personally wrote to Le Corbusier;⁷ Max Bill requested the invitation of Gerbrand Dekker and procured an agreement ensuring that Adrien Turel would receive expenses.

While the program was being developed, a number of controversial voices made themselves heard. The best-argued contribution was that of Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, who spoke of “the irremediable anachronism and insubstantiality of the issue dealt with at the Congress.”⁸ Others, by contrast, insisted on taking the floor, if only to declare the rupture line with the “historic” concept of proportion. Among these was Lucio Fontana:

It is my intention (as I in fact requested) to contribute to the Congress with a brief lecture on the topic of spatial art in contemporary architecture. ... During the conference I wish to persuade you that “divine proportion” has in fact detached itself from the modern and future concept of architecture.⁹

Carlo Mollino, who also accepted the invitation “with great pleasure and interest,” anticipated his own position:

I intend to make it clear that, whatever the aesthetic presuppositions, there is nothing ‘divine’ about ‘proportion’ and that, *a priori*, all the very valuable research in this field – including alleged research into ‘secrets’ and even more alleged ‘discoveries’ – is of purely philological value.¹⁰

And so, the various formations and alliances that animated the congress were engendered. What occurred was a convergence of art and science within the perimeter of a “spiritual unity” of different spheres of knowledge, a bringing together of the margins of poetry and mathematics, music and physics. We are at the heart of that culture founded on the search for a methodological essence common to the various disciplines characterising Italian post-war culture.

The Triennial was the place – at that time the only one in Italy and possibly in Europe – assigned to this task of unification, which in that ninth edition expressed matters of fundamental importance, summarised by the areas of representation coordinated by Luciano Baldessari and Marcello Grisotti under the banner of the “unity of the arts.” Besides this, clearly, there was also the more delicate issue of how to legitimate the modern, reproduced by the trajectory of the exhibition in a kind of live performance: from Vitruvius to Le Corbusier.

The days of the Congress were organised according to three themes. The first day, “Studies on proportions in the history of thought and art”, was chaired by Sigfried Giedion and was devoted to the talks given by Matila Ghyka, James Ackerman and Charles Funck-Hellet and the papers of Cesare Bairati, Piero Sanpaolesi, Giusta Nicco Fasola and Roberto Papini.

The second, “Mathematical fundamentals of the studies on proportions. Proportions in architecture. Proportions in technics. Proportions in music”, was chaired in the morning by Rudolf Wittkower and afternoon by Giuseppe Samonà, and moderated the contributions of Andreas Speiser, Hans Kayser, Sigfried Giedion, Pier Luigi Nervi, Ernesto N. Rogers, and the papers of Gillo Dorfles, Giovanni Ricci, Adrien Turel, Salvatore Caronia Roberti, Alfred Roth, Mario Labò and Bruno Zevi. The evening was assigned to the paper of Le Corbusier.



Fig. 2. James Ackerman speaking at the congress.
Courtesy Archivio Fotografico © La Triennale di Milano



Fig. 3. Ernesto Rogers speaking at the congress.
Courtesy Archivio Fotografico © La Triennale di Milano

The final day was devoted to “Of proportion and intuition in the arts.” Papers were given by Gino Severini, Max Bill and Georges Vantongerloo; as well as by Lucio Fontana, Carlo Mollino, Carola Giedion-Welcker, Gerbrand Dekker, Ignazio Gardella. The final synthesis was entrusted to Giedion.

This represented a diverse, high-level chorus which threw up challenges and problems from different points of view. Too different, perhaps: hence the feeling of a lack of conclusiveness and a sense of incommunicability which left many participants perplexed. Wittkower himself seemed to be the most perplexed of all, and was to write a few years later:

The urgency of having everyone confront an issue that was so keenly felt in the early postwar years resulted in bringing together philosophers, painters, architects, music historians, art historians, engineers and critics from such a wide variety of countries. All came together because they were agreed on one thing alone: that it was desirable to establish some form of control or regulatory system for proportions. But although the Milan congress had vast repercussions, including the *Modulor 2* by Le Corbusier, ... it nevertheless failed to achieve satisfactory conclusions or to make an appreciable impact on the younger generations [Wittkower 1960: 214].

But what was actually said in those three days? Given the challenges of space-time and of the fourth dimension, some voices seemed to come from the past, as in the case of Gino Severini, Roberto Papini or historians such as Piero Sanpaolei and Giovanni Ricci.

Those most inclined to take up positions were *hommes de métier*. While Pier Luigi Nervi discussed the concept of “form-type”, stating that modern proportion is the incarnation of the most functional form for solving a given problem, Carlo Mollino took his distance from this theme and spoke instead about “rhetorics” of proportion [Comba 2007]. Equally, Lucio Fontana, immersed in spatial research, urged: “Let us abandon the practice of known art forms and approach the development of an art based on the unity of time and space.” Vantongerloo, a “heretic” member of the pre-war De Stijl movement, insisted on incommensurability as a positive value: “Art like time and space, and like life, is infinite. We ascribe ‘energy’ not to the objective life, but the creative life, the transformation of matter”.¹¹

If Ernesto N. Rogers was anxious above all to assent to the position of Le Corbusier, Bruno Zevi, who was focused entirely on the fourth dimension, did not eschew open debate on the choices facing the congress. Ghyka, for his part, stated:

What brought me here is the fact that until now, at this meeting devoted to proportion, the word “beauty” was not once uttered, and I confess that this has surprised and amused me ... Le Corbusier himself, speaking of his elements, his components, his cities, did not once utter the word “beauty”. He spoke of utility, efficiency [ASFTM: “IX Triennial” Series, envelope “Convegno De Divina Proportione”, folder 1].

The task of a final synthesis of the congress, entrusted to Giedion, was far from simple. His response to Ghyka sounded reminiscent of Solomon: “We will get to the beautiful, you can be assured of that, but it will require a little patience.” The path is one of collaboration and dialogue, since “it is for us alone to break down the walls that separate us.” This ecumenical message was aimed at the historians, who were asked to “envision in the past the problems of contemporary man”, and at the natural scientists

who were invited to step outside their various specialisations and, finally, at the artists. The critical issue was to identify a modern – i.e., dynamic – proportion that no longer defined the man of Leonardo but that of Le Corbusier, in motion, now standing, now sitting, now resting on the balconies of the Unité de Marseille. “The ‘Modulor’, a working tool, sweeps the track clean: it is you, not it, who are the runners! There’s the answer in a nutshell for you: it’s *you who has got to do the running*” [Le Corbusier 1948 (2000): 181].

Le Corbusier’s paper was the only one to be given that evening – a spectacular event.¹² His contribution as *homme de métier* referred to projects realised and in exhibitions; it indicated possibilities, presented more certainties than doubts. Le Corbusier avoided controversy, refused to take up positions for or against the papers given and contributions made: contemporary photographs of him resurrect him in the act of frenetically drawing diagrams and regulatory schemes in front of a packed audience, alone under the artificial light.

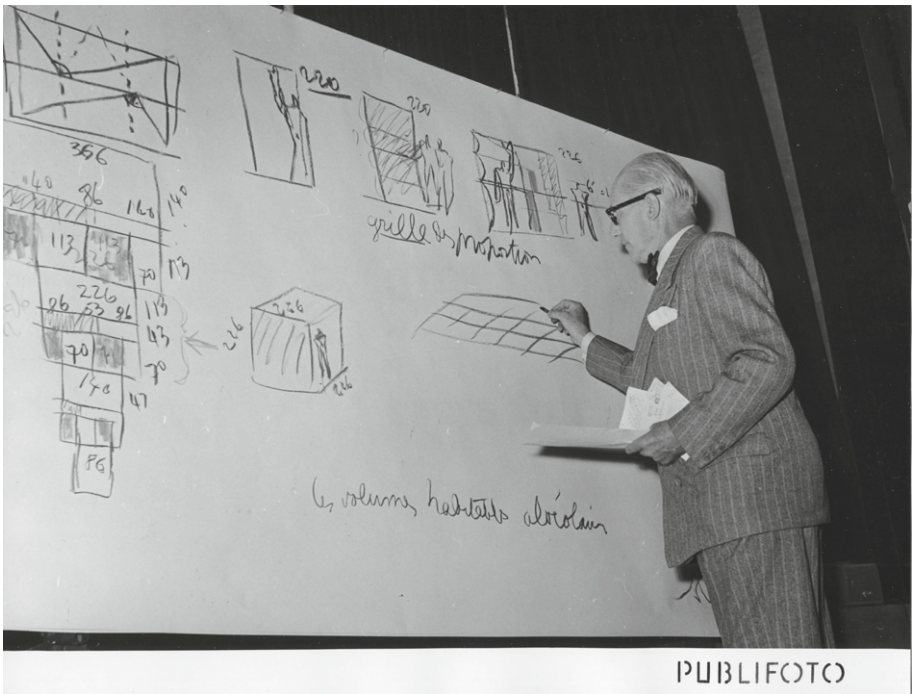


Fig. 4. Le Corbusier at the congress. Courtesy Archivio Fotografico © La Triennale di Milano

After the congress: the “hidden agenda” of Le Corbusier and the Groupe Symetrie

We now open another *matryoshka*. Archival records actually tell us that such generous participation on the part of Le Corbusier was dictated not only by his interest in the subject, but by his need for self-promotion. The architect, in fact, needed to present his “human face” on the eve of the competition for the United Nations building in Paris. As soon as the congress was over, he lost no time in asking Carla Marzoli to compile a dossier of his participation:

Dear Madam,

I have returned home with an excellent impression of my stay in Milan.

... Taking up the tireless fight once more, I was wondering if you could provide me with a handy little weapon for a number of people whose names I list for you, by sending them a “necessary and sufficient” account encapsulating the Milan International Congress on Proportion in the Arts.

If you could do this for the following persons, in the manner detailed below:

- 1) M. Marie, Minister of National Education, Paris, 110 Rue de Grenelle,
- 2) M. Claudius Petit, Minister of Reconstruction and Town Planning, Avenue du Parc de Passy, Paris,
- 3) M. Joxe, Director of Cultural Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 37 Quai d’Orsay, Paris.

These three people have the duty to make decisions that are critical from the point of view of modern architecture. It is the case that I am the most serious and undisputed candidate, however I am portrayed from various quarters (in academia) as a soulless person devoid of art and of sensibility.

The welcome afforded me by the sponsors of the Divine Proportion proves otherwise.

Would it be possible for you to assemble three very clear dossiers? ... Dear Ms. Marzoli, you understand what this involves, and I trust that by my request I do not appear to be taking liberties in any way.

It would be helpful, too, to highlight the important place reserved to the Modular alongside the artists of antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, by means of duly concise documentation. This could be done through discerningly-selected press cuttings, where the useful sections are underlined in red pencil.¹³

Ms. Marzoli carried out the request, but we don’t know if she was irritated or flattered. And after that, reinforced by this new complicity, she continued to write to the architect, to the extent of taking him into her confidence:

I have in my hands most of the papers from the conference, and – I say this without presumption – it seems to me that it is of little avail, as well as a little sad, to continue to speak of the Greeks and the Latins, or of the pentagon, or of Vitruvius, using a language that is dead or theoretical. So I ask you: don’t you think it should be made clear to these gentlemen that such a cold position ought to be abandoned, so that their culture can become a living instrument operating in the service of the artist?¹⁴

The response was instant: “Gather those who seek of their own accord to be with you, and let the gentlemen of ‘Divine Proportion’ go to sleep and snore peacefully.”¹⁵ And the invitation was, again, accepted.

Even prior to the opening of the congress, Carla Marzoli had suggested to José Luís Sert and Philip Johnson that they attend the conference. Since they were unable to accept the invitation, the organiser suggested that a second edition be held in the United States. Ms. Marzoli also supported the possibility of an American stage of the event, and said that this plan could be announced during the course of the congress by Le Corbusier himself.

The *Comité International d'Études sur les Proportions dans les Arts* was established on 29 September 1951 and brought together Bill, Giedion, Rogers, Speiser, Zevi, Melino and Lardera under the chairmanship of Le Corbusier.¹⁶ Johnson, Sert and Wittkower, not present at the founding, agreed to join the committee. Ms. Marzoli was entrusted with the task of handling relations with the Museum of Modern Art with a view to the second conference – which in fact never saw the light of day: on 11 March 1952, however, the round table took place, entitled *De divina proportione. A discussion of the Theories of Proportion in Art*, moderated by Sert and with the participation of Eero Saarinen, George Howe, William Bell Dinsmoor and Enrico Peressutti.

The rest of the story is to be found in the documents of Le Corbusier, with whom Ms. Marzoli continued to correspond in an attempt to give a second chance to proportion. Increasingly isolated, the Le Corbusier-Marzoli pair were the only people remaining to crusade – albeit with different objectives – for a second act of the drama. There is little point, here, in going into the details of their long correspondence, which take on an increasingly weary tone. Even the documentary proceedings of the conference, the subject of long negotiations with various publishers (Einaudi and Hoepli), were destined to remain in a drawer for fifty years. It is a pity, since the graphics would have been by Max Bill, and the result would undoubtedly have been beautiful.

It was already 1953. After a meeting in Milan between Marzoli, Speiser, Bill Rogers and Le Corbusier, the latter wrote a record outlining two potential lines of action for what was to be called *Groupe Symétrie*: on the one hand “to follow the road opened by the first congress on Divine Proportion and go in the direction of increasingly scientific mathematical truths, moving away from instant applications in the arts”, and on the other hand “to move towards the objectives which this type of research should aim at, i.e., to bring harmony into the modern era, thus abandoning the exclusive study of the past”.

Thus it was decided to replace the word *Proportion* with the word *Symmetry*. And so it was, that the newborn *Groupe Symétrie* set a date to meet at the future congress in Siena. However, as the months passed, enthusiasm waned and increasing disillusionment set in. In the absence of any genuine collaboration on the part of her fellow adventurers, Ms. Marzoli realized that the Committee had lost its *raison d'être*. Embittered by the thought, perhaps, that she had facilitated other members of the group sitting in a committee chaired by Le Corbusier, she concluded that her strongest motive had been the “desire to escape from idiotic life I feel compelled to lead.”

Proportion, therefore, was by now a long way away: by the middle of the decade Reyner Banham had announced that it was in crisis,¹⁷ and by the end of the fifties, fewer and fewer theorists and architects could be found who would defend it. Bruno Zevi gave a review of the meeting that took place at the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1957; it was a genuine elegy for proportion in the age of brutalism and *art brut*:

British architects showed wisdom and courage in their rejection of ... the motion on the utility of proportional systems, at a time when they are particularly in vogue in the U.S. Rejecting the motion, the architects of R.I.B.A. were well aware that they lacked simplistic formulas that could replace the simplistic formula of proportional systems. And this approach of theirs is an honourable one, because it accepts that in order to clarify the language of contemporary architecture, the first task is to reject the traditionalist evasions and to have the courage to face the problems in the knowledge that consistent logical solutions have not yet been worked out [Zevi 1957].

Authors' note

Fulvio Irace is the author of the Introduction and of the first paragraph (Wittkower versus Le Corbusier: The “Mostra di Studi sulle Proporzioni”), while Anna Chiara Cimoli is the author of the second part of the article.

Notes

1. On the congress, see [Cimoli and Irace 2007, 2010].
2. The exhibition ran from May 12 to November 4, 1951. See [Cimoli 2004, 2005, 2007].
3. Letter of April 4, 1951 [ASFTM: “IX Triennial” series, “Veline azzurre” section, file no. 09396].
4. Letter of April 9, 1951 [AFGR, fascicle. “Exhibition on Proportion, IX Triennial – Milan – 1951”].
5. Letter of 20 August 1951 [ASFTM: “IX Triennial” Series, envelope “Convegno De Divina Proportione”, fascicle untitled]. The letter is published, in image form, in [Le Corbusier 1958 (2000): 143].
6. Letter to Marzoli, September 19, 1951 [ASFTM: folder 1, fascicle “Copies of letters and telegrams”].
7. See letter from Marzoli to Wittkower, August 9, 1951 [ASFTM: “IX Triennial” Series, envelope “Convegno De Divina Proportione”, folder 2, fascicle “Comité International d'Etudes sur les Proportions dans les Arts”] and letter from Giedion to Marzoli, September 7, 1951 [ibid, fascicle “Originals of letters and telegrams”].
8. Letter of 29 August 1951 [ASFTM: “IX Triennial” Series, envelope “Convegno De Divina Proportione”, folder 1, fascicle “Copies of letters and telegrams”].
9. Letter to Marzoli of September 12, 1951 [ASFTM: “IX Triennial” Series, envelope “Convegno De Divina Proportione”, folder 1, fascicle “Copies of letters and telegrams”].
10. Letter to Mario Melino, 13 September 1951 [ASFTM: “IX Triennial” Series, envelope “Convegno De Divina Proportione”, folder 1, fascicle “Copies of letters and telegrams”].
11. The quotation is from the extract of the statement. For the full text see [Vantongerloo 1968].
12. See telegram from Marzoli to Le Corbusier dated 23 September 1951: “Huge interest in your paper, change is recommended, confirm if you agree only your conference for the evening of 26th discussion to follow stop” (translation by the authors) [FLC: U3-10-51].
13. Letter of October 4, 1951 [ASFTM: “IX Triennial” Series, folder 1, fascicle “Copies of letters and telegrams”].
14. Letter of 10 October 1951 [FLC: U3-10-58].
15. Letter of 16 October 1951 [FLC: U3-10-64].
16. [ASFTM: “IX Triennial” Series, envelope “Convegno De divina proportione”, fascicle “Comité International d'études sur les proportions dans les arts”].
17. Letter of 16 October 1951 [FLC: U3-10-64].

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[AFGR] Archivio Francesco Gneccchi-Ruscone, CASVA, Milan

[ASFTM] Archivio Storico Fondazione Triennale di Milano, Milan

[FLC] Archives of the Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris

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About the authors

Anna Chiara Cimoli graduated in History of Art from Università Statale in Milan, and specialized in Museology at the Ecole du Louvre in Paris. She holds a Ph.D. in History of Architecture and Town Planning from Politecnico di Torino. Besides collaborating with the Politecnico di Milano, she was assistant curator at Arnaldo Pomodoro Foundation and editorial coordinator at FMR-Art'è, where she cooperated in the publication of the *FMR Journal*. She has been collaborating for many years with CASVA (Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive), Milan, where she studied and inventoried a number of contemporary architecture archives. Her research work focuses mainly on the history of museums and exhibitions. At the moment she is teaching History of Art and collaborating as a freelance researcher in the MeLa Project, a European research project about the role of museums in multicultural societies. Her publications include *Musei effimeri. Allestimenti di mostre in Italia 1949-1963* (Milan, il Saggiatore 2007) and, with Fulvio Irace, *La divina proporzione. Triennale 1951* (Milan, Electa 2007).

Fulvio Irace is full professor at the Politecnico di Milano where he holds the chair of Contemporary History and Criticism at the School of Design, visiting professor at the Mendrisio Academy of Architecture, and member of the academic board of the doctorate course in Architectural History at the Politecnico di Torino. He is a member of the scientific committee of Vico Magistretti Foundation (Milano), is on the board of trustees of the Renzo Piano Foundation (Genova). From 2008-2009 he was on the jury of Mies van der Rohe European Prize. From 2005 to 2009 he served as Curator in Chief for Architecture at the Triennale di Milano, Italy's national design museum. Among the founders of the National association AAI (Archivi di Architettura Italia) – and director of associated magazine since 2007 – Fulvio Irace was one of the promoters of the National center for Advanced Studies in Art, Architecture and Design (Milano) for which he has edited several publications. Senior editor for architecture for *Domus* (1980-86) and *Abitare* (1987- 2007), he has contributed regularly to magazines such as *A+U*, *Architectural Review*, *Casabella*, *Lotus*, *Ottagono* and *Op.Cit.*, for which in 2005 he was awarded the Prize “Inarch Bruno Zevi”. Since 1986 he has been the architectural commentator for the Sunday cultural supplement of the Italian newspaper *Il Sole 24 Ore*. His commitment to the history of architecture as a scholar dates back to the first contributions to the study of architecture in Italy between the wars to which he contributed with essays, books and exhibitions (“La Metafisica: gli Anni Venti”, 1980; “GliAnniTrenta”, 1982; “Architetture del Novecento”, 1988; “Carlo Mollino”, 1989; “Gigiotti Zanini”, 1992; “L’architetto del Lago”, 1993) and books such as: *Aldo Andreani*; *Gio Ponti: la casa all’italiana*; *Carlo Mollino*; *Giovanni Muzio*; *Milano Moderna*, etc.) that have been regarded as seminal to the writing of contemporary history.