



CANTIERI DA ETERNARE

IMMAGINI
DEL COSTRUIRE
DALL'INCHIOSTRO
ALLA CELLULOIDE

CALL FOR PAPERS
ENGLISH

CANTIERI DA ETERNARE

IMMAGINI
DEL COSTRUIRE
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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

26-27 March 2025

Scientific Direction

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Call for papers

The iconography of the construction site lends a solemn aura to the making of the workers, perpetuating the act of building, by its nature, limited in time. Only by recording with images (in each medium) and words (the work diaries) is the perishable time of the construction site immortalized.

The representations of construction sites demonstrate a continuity of intent and purpose among construction companies throughout the ages. In them, the time of building is fixed, albeit in heterogeneous media, whose diversity corresponds not only to the evolution of techniques, from engraving to photography to film, but also to different economic, propagandistic and artistic instances.

For example, the material effort to engrave the image of a building site in stone matches the desire to eternalize the technology of construction processes, from the ingenious transfer of large monolithic blocks, as in the case of the Assyrian reliefs described in the nineteenth century by Paul Emile Botta and Felix Thomas, to the celerity and efficiency of construction, as suggested by the reliefs of military works on Trajan's Column. The industriousness of the construction site, packed with man and machine, celebrates prestige and economic soundness and technological pre-eminence. The use of photography is also valuable in documenting archaeological excavation campaigns, such as those in the 1930s conducted in Pompeii.

Born in a period of fervent urban modernization, photography helped perpetuate the memory of the construction of new buildings and those of the destruction of old structures, as Charles Marville's shots of demolitions in the historic fabric of Paris or Rome, attest. At the same time, they also depict the great infrastructural works carried out in the metropolises of the nineteenth century, from the bridges and sewers of Paris to the London Underground, to the Tiber embankments and the great new railway stations that began to serve the major cities of Europe. Extraordinary in number, level of detail, and scale of subjects, the famous photographic reports on the construction of great monuments, from the Crystal Palace portrayed by Philip Henry Delamotte to the New Louvre immortalized by Baldus, to the Paris Opera House by Delmaet and Durandelle, prove a conscious use of the power of photographic images in attesting to major government commissions.

But site photography is also useful to designers, contractors, and private clients for the effective management of the building process and for control of the official image to be conveyed. So much so that as early as the late nineteenth century photography studios specializing in photographing buildings and infrastructure sprang up all over Europe. In the twentieth century, the advent of moving images promoted a new way of understanding construction sites, often reproduced for documentary-propaganda purposes (in Italy, the *Luce* newsreels or film frames). All the way to postwar reconstruction, with scaffolding and construction sites serving as the backdrop for the epic urban and social transformations of neorealist cinema.

These different types of construction site representation are indispensable sources for historical and technical knowledge of the artifacts. At the same time, at a broader look, they offer insights into their nature and purpose. Considering the various implications that site representation can have, the conference questions the artistic, symbolic and ideological substrate that promoted (and continues to promote) the depiction of the act of building. To answer these questions, it calls on scholars from different disciplines to trace, through a multidisciplinary approach, the multiple aspects that accompany the phenomenon.

Thematic:

Session I - Immortalizing the building site (introductory session)

Session II - Theatrical building sites: major works in European cities (18th-19th centuries) and archaeological excavation campaigns

Session III - Ink and celluloid construction sites as sources of knowledge

Session IV - Representation of political power and technological prominence

Session V - Urban building sites and filmography

Session VI - Photographic posters exhibition.

Authors are invited to submit their contribution on these aspects and any others not covered herein. Proposals must be sent via the cantieridaeternare@gmail.com email address and must contain: title of the speech; abstract of the speech (maximum 500 words); an image relating to the content of the proposal (.jpg format, 1024 x 768 pixels); brief scientific biography of the proposer (maximum 150 words). The deadline for submission of proposals is 15 November 2024. The outcome of the evaluation will be communicated by 10 December 2024. The languages of the conference are: Italian, Spanish, English and French.

The conference will take place in Rome on 26 and 27 March 2025, at the Embassy of Spain to the Holy See and at the EEHAR-CSIC Rome. Online participation is planned. Accommodation expenses will be covered by the conference organizers. Publication is expected after refereeing.

INFO

Cantieri da eternare. Immagini del costruire dall'inchiestro alla celluloid

International Conference, 26-27 March 2025

Roma, Ambasciata di Spagna presso la Santa Sede

EEHAR-CSIC Roma (Escuela Española de Historia y Arqueología en Roma)

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