



Vincenzo Jerace ,  
Bust of Guglielmo Marconi. 1940.  
Plaster cast executed by Cesare Gariboldi in 1956  
Inv. IGB 2135

The bust is a plaster cast commissioned in 1956 for the exhibition held in the Sala Marconi at the Museo Nazionale Scienza e Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci. It was created by the Milanese plaster cast artist Cesare Gariboldi, based on the original, which is owned by the CNR (National Research Council) and modelled by the Calabrian sculptor Vincenzo Jerace. At the current stage of research, it is not known how the original work was commissioned. It is interesting that the request for such a commemorative bust was made to an artist at the end of his career, at almost eighty years of age. However, on the other hand, Jerace in his later years had dedicated himself to portraits of Roman high society, using a dynamic style of sculpting still linked to his roots in Verismo and Art Nouveau. The same applies to the portrait of Marconi, depicted in the dress uniform of the Accademia d'Italia, of which he was president, rising from a rough block of stone. Textured corrugations full of light and shade contribute to create a decidedly more intimate tone, in contrast to the works of artists linked to regime commissions, such as Arturo Dazzi, who by means of their apologetic style contributed to constructing the myth of Marconi on the national and international scenes. Over time, in fact, public commissions in the artistic domain have marked important milestones in the foundation of a rhetorical and ritualistic discourse surrounding the figure of Guglielmo Marconi.

# The Commemorative Bust by Vincenzo Jerace

## The Representation of Marconi *Post Mortem* (1937-59)

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Shortly after the opening of the Sala Marconi at the Museum on 10 October 1956, the exhibition dedicated to the artefacts from the ship *Elettra* was documented by a curious photomontage that includes, in the centre, the plaster cast bust of Guglielmo Marconi [fig.1]. Commissioned by the Museum to a trusted plaster cast artist, Cesare Gariboldi,<sup>1</sup> the work documents how the iconographic legacy developed after Marconi's death leading to the commission of numerous works of art.

A starting point for retracing some important examples in this regard is the version of the same bust also in plaster at the Guglielmo Marconi Library of the CNR, created by the Calabrian sculptor Vincenzo Jerace at the end of a long career that had seen him a leader in sculpture ranging from Verismo to Art Deco.<sup>2</sup>

It was precisely the CNR, of which Marconi was president from 1928 until his death on 20 July 1937, that was an early promoter of the cult of Marconi, within a rhetoric that

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<sup>1</sup> Cesare Gariboldi (Milan, 1881-1971), plaster cast artist, worked at the Gipsoteca Vallardi, which had previously acquired the Carlo Campi Museum. In 1927, on the closure of the Vallardi, he and his partner Cesare Bertolazzi acquired a large portion of the materials and went on to work independently. For many decades he was the official plaster cast specialist at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera, where he had his own workshop. His work was later carried on by the mould casters Fumagalli and Dossi in 1974. In Milan he worked for the Musei Civici (Cast of the Pietà Rondanini) and for the Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnica (among his casts were busts of Alessandro Volta and Guglielmo Marconi, a bas-relief by Giovanni Balduccio, and most likely the Nike of Samotracia). See Spalla Gandola 1990; Mori, Piraina, Salsi 2022, 21-7.

<sup>2</sup> Vincenzo Jerace (Polistena, 1862-Rome, 1947), trained at the Istituto di Belle Arti in Naples, beginning in the tradition of Napolitan Verismo, then subsequently embracing Art Nouveau. He later dedicated himself to the sculpture of monuments. See Valente 2019.



**Figure 1** Sala Marconi: at the centre, the bust of Guglielmo Marconi (photomontage). 1956. Milano, Archivio Museo Nazionale Scienza e Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci, AS 530. Foto Sella



**Figure 2**

Guarino Roscioli, *Busto di Guglielmo Marconi*. 1932-37.  
Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche. © Author

had already been established in the previous years. The *Documentario dei Primati Italiani*, created for the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, already presented Marconi relics as a landmark in the glorious destiny of Italian genius,<sup>3</sup> while the successful propaganda book by Francesco Savorgnan, *Da Leonardo a Marconi*, saw Marconi, long before his

death, as the contemporary alter ego of the Da Vinci genius, creating a short circuit at the root of the creation of the myth portraying Leonardo as the forerunner of modernity.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore it was not surprising that, when Mussolini officially opened the new CNR headquarters on

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<sup>3</sup> In relation to the *Century of Progress* Chicago World's Fair, the CNR and the *Documentario dei Primati Italiani*, see Giorgione 2019a and Paoloni, Reali, Ronzon 2018 and the relevant bibliography.

<sup>4</sup> Regarding the creation of Leonardo's myth, and also its intertwining with the Marconian myth – see Beretta, Canadelli, Giorgione 2019. One of Leonardo da Vinci's 'prophecies', much used by fascist propaganda and almost foreshadowing the invention of radio, was: "Men from very distant lands will speak to one another and answer" (Codice Atlantico, f. 1033v).





**Figure 3** Antonio Achilli, *Da Palazzo Venezia, attraverso la radio, il Duce parla al popolo italiano*. 1937. Roma, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (destroyed fresco). In *Il Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche nella sua Nuova Sede* 2014

20 November 1937, only four months after Marconi's death, a marble portrait of him [fig. 2] was already triumphantly displayed in the board room (*Il Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche nella sua nuova sede* 2014, 47-9).<sup>5</sup> It was sculpted by Guarino Roscioli,<sup>6</sup> who was also commissioned to realise the portraits of other eminent men such as Colombo, Leonardo, Galileo, Spallanzani, Galvani, Volta and Avogadro. Marconi, portrayed with bare shoulders like an epic hero, had already earned his place among the ranks of the great Italians, according to a sequence

which is reiterated by the iconographic theme in the Salone del Gran Consiglio (today Sala Marconi). The theme was conceived by Edoardo Lombardi in 1936 and was inspired by the frescoes of Antonio Achilli,<sup>7</sup> drawing on the solid compositions of the great Renaissance fresco cycles, featuring statuary and monumental figures:

On the wall upon which Science and Technology are depicted serving the country, the immense structure of Palazzo Venezia stands to the right, from where Man

<sup>5</sup> There were two bronze busts displayed in the Salone del Consiglio, one of Mussolini himself and the other of King Vittorio Emanuele III, created by Domenico Ponzi (1891-1973). Regarding his role, see Iezzi, Sgarbi 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Guarino Roscioli (Montottone, 1895-Rome, 1978) trained in Rome and worked in the Vatican on numerous public commissions in the period between the two world wars. Another of his busts of Marconi is exhibited in a hall dedicated to him at the Telecommunications Museum in Rome. Roscioli was already working on a portrait of Marconi in 1932, at least according to the correspondence between Umberto Marconi (Di Marco), special secretary to Guglielmo Marconi from 1930 to 1937, and George H. Clark, Radio Corporation of America (RCA): see Archivio Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Archivio Guglielmo Marconi, b. 2 fasc. 82 - Clark George H.

<sup>7</sup> Antonio Achilli (Rome, 1903-1993), painter and mosaic artist, specialized in large wall decoration.

guides the entire Nation, speaking to the disciplined and united people, who are industrious and fertile. His voice is not only heard by those crowding the square, but at the same time reaches the cities, the countryside, the docks and the construction sites, the men working with shovels and the men reading books, across the mountains and the sea, in war and in peace. This miracle is due to Technology, a new Technology which germinated from the brilliant insight of Guglielmo Marconi, supported by complex and challenging Science into which Mathematics and Physics are intricately interwoven. From this union sprang the awe-inspiring medium of radio broadcasting. The building of the National Research Council is depicted on the left, not an archive of outdated papers, but the driving life force of the Nation. (G.B. 1937)

The final scene of the cycle [fig. 3] explicitly referred to the invention of radio as a political instrument of the fascist regime, with Mussolini portrayed in Piazza Venezia on the occasion of the call to arms for the Ethiopian War on 2 October 1935.<sup>8</sup> In 1947, with the intention of eliminating references to the fascist regime, the scene was replaced with a new composition created by Antonio Achilli dedicated to the scientists of the 1800s, with four young maidens, as an allegory for the four elements, surrounded by Galileo Ferraris, Antonio Pacinotti, Augusto Righi and Guglielmo Marconi [fig. 4].

The myth of Marconi, shaped by many of the episodes that would become recurrent themes in the narrative of

his life (the rifle shot, the first patent, the first S.O.S.), had already become so widespread that an idealized biography was published as early as April 1938, authored by the historian and pedagogue Pietro Caccialupi, with the indicative title *Il dominatore dell'infinito* (Master of the Infinite). At the end of the book the author remembers of Marconi that

He has passed into immortality, alive and present in the daily lives of the men united in gratitude towards this generous son of our earth, unsurpassed and unsurpassable giver of joy, master of space, time and even death. (Caccialupi 1938, 211)<sup>9</sup>

The political, literary and artistic celebration of Marconi continued at the same pace, and the same enthusiasm expressed in Caccialupi's words can be found in the works of art produced the following year. Beyond national borders, the most important monument to celebrate Marconi after his death was created on the occasion of the New York World's Fair, *The World of Tomorrow* in 1939.<sup>10</sup> On the brink of war and following the 1938 racial laws and its further alignment with Nazi Germany, Italy appeared with a show of force in an effort to regain international standing, by designing a sumptuous pavilion in clear architectural competition with the other totalitarian government present at the Fair, the Soviet Union. The Italian Pavilion [fig. 5] was described in this way, just a few weeks after its unveiling:

<sup>8</sup> It was celebrated thus: "The allegory of Science and Technology at the service of Political Unity. From Palazzo Venezia, over the radio, the Duce speaks to the Italian people" (*Il Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche nella sua nuova sede* 2014, 66).

<sup>9</sup> Caccialupi's book must have enjoyed great success, to such an extent that it was reprinted the following year. As well as having written educational textbooks for schools, Caccialupi had already penned a "Fior da fiore", a glowing critique, of Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi* and other biographies of Italian heroes, such as Guglielmo Oberdan and Giosuè Carducci. Another biography, less rhetorical in tone, was published by Giuseppe Pession in 1941 in UTET's series *I grandi italiani*.

<sup>10</sup> Regarding the Fair and his link to fascism, see Fortuna 2019. For a detailed description of the Italian Pavilion see *Italy at the New York World's Fair* 1939.





**Figure 4** Antonio Achilli, *Allegoria dei Quattro Elementi tra Galileo Ferraris, Antonio Pacinotti, Augusto Righi e Guglielmo Marconi* (detail of the right side). 1947. Roma, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche. © Author

The national pavilion, approximately 40 metres wide and 150 metres long, was conceived according to a new and majestic, modernistic vision, without however excluding Latin tradition. A magnificent vestibule adorned with polychrome marble motifs provides entry to the main floor of the building, formed by a succession of vast spaces within which the majority of the exhibitions will be installed, ranging from industry to fine arts. [...] A large symbolic statue in honour of Guglielmo Marconi, the work of the academician Dazzi, will be erected in front of the pavilion façade.<sup>11</sup>

According to the design of the architect Michele Busiri Vici,<sup>12</sup> the architecture re-envisioned an ancient temple from a modern perspective, showcasing two wings of porticos and an extremely high tower, from which rose a sculpture of the *Goddess Roma* [fig. 6]. The entrance was decorated with a double sculpture created by the Carrara sculptor Arturo Dazzi (1881-1966), who had already received numerous official commissions from the fascist government in that very period.<sup>13</sup> The work, entitled *La Radio*

*col cuore in mano* (Radio with Heart in Hand), depicted a slender young woman holding a heart in her right hand, symbolizing the benefits that the invention of radio had bestowed on society. Worked from a single block of marble from the Apuane Alps, it was 5 metres tall.<sup>14</sup> At the base of the sculpture was a bas-relief portrait of Marconi, in which the inventor's face with its hieratic, almost post-Byzantine fixed expression and large, protruding eyes established an aesthetic standard that would endure over time [fig. 7]; the portrait seemed to emerge from the mirror of water formed by the waterfall alluding to the fascist *mare nostrum*. This is how it was described by Michele Biancale in his enthusiastic review in *L'illustrazione italiana*, after having praised Dazzi's ability to express an abstract concept such as radio using the female form:

On the plinth of the statue, Dazzi sculpted the head of Marconi, four times its actual size, in bas-relief. It is natural that the artist now spiritually dwells within the orbit of Marconi's genius, especially considering that he was preparing to erect, for the E. 42 Exhibition, a

<sup>11</sup> "La partecipazione italiana all'Esposizione di Nuova York". *Corriere della Sera*, 3 April 1938. Similar but more detailed words describe the Pavilion in the official presentation brochure of the World's Fair in Italy: "The bulk of the building, following the natural contours of the terrain is approximately 40 metres wide, 144 metres long, and 20 metres high, except for the façade, which rises to 45 metres. Its main façade, on one of the short sides, creates a vista toward one of the Fair's entrances. A statue of the Goddess Roma dominates the centre (an enlarged reproduction of the one found in Piazza del Campidoglio), set among bundles of stylized *lictor fasces* that elevate it to a height of 45 meters above street level. Beneath the level of the statue, a stream of water flows along a staircase 11 meters wide, until it cascades into a large mirror-like pool framed by two portico wings, that lead to the Pavilion's entrance via two flights of stairs. In front of the pool stands the grand monument to Guglielmo Marconi, conceived and executed by Academician Dazzi, which in its entirety must measure over 8 meters in height". *L'Italia alla Esposizione Universale di New York 1939* (1938).

<sup>12</sup> Michele Busiri Vici (Rome, 1894-1981), engineer and architect, after graduating from the Rome Higher Institute of Engineering, dedicated himself to both architectural design and urban planning (urban coastal plan for Sabaudia). See Muntoni, Neri 2017.

<sup>13</sup> For further information, see Laghi 2012, 109-24, which draws extensively from the Donazione Dazzi to the Comune di Forte dei Marmi. The legacy and reflections resulting from the commissions of Dazzi's era are still partially unresolved. While the 1923 Vittoria ai Caduti arch in Genoa was largely restored in the post-war period, the colossal structure *L'Era Fascista* (Il Bigio) created in 1932 for Piazza della Vittoria in Brescia was accepted, and the proposal for its removal after the 2013 relocation caused such a controversy that the authorities discontinued the project. For further reading on the issue, see the interesting contribution by Carter 2024.

<sup>14</sup> Initially Marconi should also have been commemorated with an exhibition of his artefacts and inventions, in a hall on the first floor. The exhibition did not later take place, perhaps due to the simultaneous presence of the Marconi relics at the *Mostra di Leonardo da Vinci e degli inventori italiani* organised at the Palazzo dell'Arte in Milan from May to October 1939. See *L'Italia alla Esposizione Universale di New York 1939* (1938), 33.



monument of such grandeur that all of the Egyptian and Roman columns that rise up in the squares and forums of Rome would, in terms of proportions, recall the vision that he had conceived and that the Duce had already approved. While the plinth of the Marconi *Radio* statue is very similar, Marconi is portrayed in a more heroic manner. Given that the symbolic statue towers above the plinth, it would have been impossible to adopt a more realistic, portrait-like form below without generating a conflict in style. Marconi, with his Herculean, youthful neck, focused and steadfast, is truly the symbol of an almost natural strength placed at the service of all humanity. (Biancale 1939, 775; italics in original)

Regarding the commission and the meaning of the work itself Dazzi wrote:

My idea is to honour Marconi's genius, not with a personal monument to him, but with a monument to his invention, his works – alive, true and everlasting. My monument does not seek to be a commemoration, but an anthem to life that is always present, current, the essence of humanity. The heart which is the symbol of reality and hope combined; the heart which signifies joy and pain, love and hate, peace and war. The shapes of a man and the signs of his spirit, but the whole of his spirit. Glorifying the work of art therefore means making a monument to the personal and immortal aspects of Marconi. Here is my plastic figurine. The young maiden around the world holding a heart in her hand; that of humanity. (Dazzi 1979, 68-9)

Dazzi's admiration for Marconi was evident in the words he expressed after Marconi's death:

Just returned from Paris in the summer of 1937, Marconi had died and I was far from Rome meaning I could not attend the honours paid to the illustrious scientist... how young I was at the station in Rome, among the crowd of admirers pushing the carriage that carried him to the glory of Campidoglio.<sup>15</sup>

The spiritual zeal expressed by Dazzi seems to predict the subsequent endeavour of the monumental Marconian obelisk, commissioned by Mussolini in person for the Rome World's Fair in 1942. The Fair never took place and the creation of the obelisk was dragged out until 1959.

In the meantime, the fame of Marconi and also of the places connected to him was sealed with the help of a new law enacted on 20 June 1939 to protect places of natural beauty which also extended to Villa Griffone in Pontecchio, which two years later would house the remains of the inventor.<sup>16</sup>

1939 offered another chance to celebrate and represent Marconi, by now in the Pantheon degli Scienziati Italiani, on the occasion of the exhibition *Mostra di Leonardo da Vinci e delle invenzioni italiane*, which took place in the Palazzo dell'Arte in Milan from May to October. In fact, they were two closely connected propaganda exhibitions; the *Leonardesca*, curated by Giorgio Nicodemi, indeed created the national-popular myth of the predecessor genius of Leonardo, later passing the baton to the *Mostra delle invenzioni*, directly coordinated by the CNR (Gior-gione 2019b). The connection point was the Sala della Celebrazioni, set up by the painter Francesco del Pozzo, "to honour the Greats with the recognition they deserve from their country, through the exhibition of their arte-facts which, from Leonardo to Galileo, to Volta, to Marconi, have irradiated the immortal name of Italy throughout

<sup>15</sup> It was actually Marconi, as President of the Accademia d'Italia, who accepted Dazzi's oath on the occasion of his nomination and swearing in.

<sup>16</sup> Regarding the new laws on protection of cultural and landscape heritage, see Grisolia 1939, 213-26.





**Figure 5**  
Anonymous illustrator, *L'Italia alla Esposizione Universale di New York*. 1938. Milano, Archivio Museo Nazionale Scienza e Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci

**Figure 6**  
Gottsch-Schleisner, Inc., *New York World's Fair: Il Padiglione Italiano con la cascata e le due sculture di Arturo Dazzi: la Radio col cuore in mano e il ritratto di Guglielmo Marconi*. 1939. Washington, D.C., Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Gottsch-Schleisner Collection [LC-G605-CT-00416-1/2]

**Figure 7**  
Fay Sturtevant Lincoln, *New York World's Fair. Veduta generale del Padiglione Italiano*. 1939. Fay S. Lincoln Photograph collection, 1920-68, HCLA 1628, Special Collections Library, University Libraries, Pennsylvania State University, b. 881, no. 30





**Figure 8** *La Radio col cuore in mano* (life-size model) together with plaster models of the Marconian stela in the studio of Arturo Dazzi. 1939-40. Forte dei Marmi, Donazione Dazzi

**Figure 9** Arturo Dazzi in his studio with the portrait of Marconi for the shrine of Pontecchio. 1940-41. Forte dei Marmi, Donazione Dazzi

**Figure 10** Benito Mussolini pays tribute to the bust of Guglielmo Marconi. 1941. Istituto Luce/Gestione Archivi Alinari, Firenze

the world" (*Mostra di Leonardo da Vinci e delle invenzioni italiane* 1939, 11-19). The Hall showcased a historical exhibition of the artefacts and replicas which made up the *Documentario dei Primati Italiani* that the CNR had created for the previously mentioned Chicago World's Fair in 1933 and which from 1937 had been housed in the Institute's new Rome subsidiary: among these were the Marconi relics,<sup>17</sup> beginning with the famous replica of the Detector in a cigar box.<sup>18</sup> The installation design included a giant-scale reproduction of Alessandro Volta's battery and at the end of the hall, in a sort of apse, the

shrine dedicated to Guglielmo Marconi, capped with a dome upon which, at intervals, there appears a luminous S.O.S. on the waves of a stormy sea. The mask of the supreme inventor is positioned on a stele in the middle of the semi-circular space amplifying the sense of emotion that pervades the entire intimate and evocative atmosphere of the shrine. (*Mostra di Leonardo da Vinci e delle invenzioni italiane* 1939, 12)

There are no photographs documenting this installation, nor do we know who created the mask, but the use of the term shrine (*sacrario*) no less than twice in a few lines and the alignment to figures such as Leonardo, Galileo and Volta, had clearly transformed Marconi's public image, less than two years after his death.

Let's return to the commission of Arturo Dazzi's commission for the monument to be showcased at the World Trade Fair in 1942,<sup>19</sup> an obelisk to be erected in what would have been named Piazza dell'Impero. Planning began for the masterpiece, with preparatory casts, in conjunction with the New York monument, as shown in a photograph<sup>20</sup> where the sculpture can be made out under a canopy [fig. 8], either a model or the actual work, of *La Radio col cuore in mano*, along with a series of plaster cast elements that can be identified by some of the obelisk panels or by the Marconian stele (Laghi 2012, 125-38).

This monument should have completed the recognition of Marconi's genius together with the conquests and achievement of fascist Italy, and the shape of the obelisk integrated, as clearly highlighted by the artist, an ancient form with the modern concept of the antenna, executing the actualisation of 'Roman culture' which was one of the foundations of the regime's propaganda. In 1940, before Dazzi had suspended the project,<sup>21</sup> many plaster reliefs had already been completed and were described in an article by Biancale entitled *Nel cantiere di Arturo Dazzi*,<sup>22</sup> in which he praised Dazzi's "sculptural titanism".

At the same time, Dazzi had the opportunity to work on another important commission for an official monument that depicted Marconi, on the occasion of the construction of the shrine dedicated to him at Villa Griffone, designed by Marcello Piacentini and unveiled by Mussolini in the

<sup>17</sup> These are the same artefacts that were later donated to the Museum in 1956 for the set-up of the Sala Marconi, and which are covered in the essays in this publication, see ASMUST, Allestimento Sezioni Museali, Telecomunicazioni, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Regarding this matter, see the essay by Roberta Spada, *infra*.

<sup>19</sup> For further discussion, see Canadelli 2019 and related bibliography.

<sup>20</sup> Forte dei Marmi, Donazione Dazzi.

<sup>21</sup> The works were suspended in August 1943 due to "unanticipated causes of war", nullifying the work of four years.

<sup>22</sup> "One moves from the ethereal song of the Italic virgins, positioned in the interplay of suspended bodies and in an almost sonorous tapering, like the pipes of an immense organ, to the life of the oceanic creatures, to their dances, which shield the splashing from their polished bellies in the shadow of camels and elephants" (Biancale 1939).



middle of the War, on 7 October 1941. The plinth of the Marconi bust, which Dazzi sculpted<sup>23</sup> in Carrara marble [fig. 9] was positioned in perfect alignment between the Mausoleum and the Villa, with a hieratic tone of a modern prophet, to which Mussolini paid homage, as documented in the photographic report by Luce [figs 10-11]. When reviewing the monument in *Emporium*, Attilio Crespi wrote a few succinct phrases:

The bust looks towards the Reno valley. With the skill of a master, Arturo Dazzi has sculpted the features of the deceased, pouring the light of his poetic soul into his materials: a physical and moral portrait, likeness and transfiguration. (Crespi 1941)

With the fall of fascism and the final stages of the war, Dazzi's position, which had been so closely linked to the regime's<sup>24</sup> commissions, plummeted. On his return to Forte dei Marmi, Dazzi found his studio destroyed, "a contract no longer valid and souls that were too desperate to care about Guglielmo Marconi and his monument" (Laghi 2012, 129).<sup>25</sup> From as early as 1947 the sculptor, acting entirely independently, resumed work on the obelisk, and it was only in 1954 that the Consiglio Superiore dei Lavori Pubblici approved its completion as part of the urban planning programme for the EUR district. The Carrara sculptor was therefore able to see his most troubled work come to fruition and, 20 years after its commission, the *Marconian Stele* (or antenna, as the artist preferred to call it) was unveiled on 11 December 1959 in the presence of government representatives and members of the Marconi family [fig. 12].

Having abandoned the rhetoric of fascist representation, the project brought to light the 'symphonic poem', which in reality had already existed since its conception. The figures are immobile and suspended, almost symbolists, carriers of a message of peace and brotherhood, as is evident from the artist's words at the official presentation of the monument, reported by his friend Carlo Carrà:

It is in the marble of these panels that, with the emotion of an artist engaged in the spirit of his times, I wanted to sculpt the magnificent poem of radio, in all its social and civil aspects, in all its great moral, practical and humanitarian dimensions. I wanted to express, demonstrating its countless benefits, the richness of human content that almost renders this scientific invention divine; because if it's through radio that words and melodies have gained wings to spread human thoughts and the harmonies of their musical spirit around the world, it's also thanks to radio which, in seas and deserts, in Arctic solitude, in floods, plagues, earthquakes and wars, provides shelter for desperate lives under the wings of a continuous diligent protection. An invisible guardian Angel now watches over the world, and it was Marconi who gave it to us. (Dazzi, Carrà, De Lorenzi 1993, 5)

The piece, which is made up of 92 marble panels [fig. 13], measures 45 metres in height with a square base of 5 metres per side: the themes, as mentioned, are all of spiritual and symbolist evocation, such as – *the Love Songs, the Dances, the Voices of the Radio, the Hunt, the Flood, Holy Saturday* – culminating, at the pinnacle,

<sup>23</sup> At the Donazione Dazzi in Forte dei Marmi the model is preserved in plaster.

<sup>24</sup> In 1941 he again collaborated with Piacentini on the relief *La giustizia biblica* in the Palazzo di Giustizia in Milan.

<sup>25</sup> The scholar reconstructs in detail the events surrounding the completion of the work, citing extensive passages in the correspondence between Dazzi and Marcello Piacentini, the friend and colleague who made a substantial contribution to getting legal approval for the completion and location of the work at the EUR. On the relationship between the two artists, see Di Trapani 2020.



**Figure 11**  
Mussolini, other fascist authorities and the Marconi family leave the shrine after paying their tribute. 1941. Istituto Luce/Gestione Archivi Alinari, Firenze

**Figure 12**  
Arturo Dazzi with his wife Andreina 'Gri', Marconi's widow, and their daughter Elettra at the inauguration of the Marconi stele. 1959. Istituto Luce/Gestione Archivi Alinari, Firenze





**Figure 14** Vincenzo Jerace, *Busto di Guglielmo Marconi*. 1940.  
Roma, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche. © Author

**Figure 13** Arturo Dazzi, *La stele o obelisco marconiano nella piazza a lui dedicata* (dedicatory inscription on north-east face). 1937-59. © Author

in the figures of *Christ resurrected* and Marconi himself, depicted as a sort of lay priest. Dazzi's sincere affection and empathy for Marconi go hand in hand with his liberation from the post-war burden of his ties to fascism, and the myth of the inventor, now emptied of autarchic rhetoric, adapts by transforming itself into a kind of manifesto for peace and brotherhood through radio.

To conclude this essay, we return to the bust sculpted by Vincenzo Jerace in 1940. The Museum cast, repainted at an unknown time in a dull, greyish patina that has covered the original polish, does not reveal the fullness of the undulations and the values of light and darkness in the work, which sets it apart both in composition and style, from the heroic portraits of Dazzi and Roscioli. The clumsy intervention was probably carried out following damage that also altered some details, as is evident when we compare the work to the original preserved at the CNR [fig. 14]. The modelling not only seems more confused, but also lacks the detail on the right hand resting on a globe.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the front of the plinth was carved with a scene depicting a row of antennas in perspective, crowned by an arch of waves which, like a rainbow, flows directly from the Lupa capitolina on the bottom left, according to the idea already portrayed by Dazzi, although in a completely different style, of the capability of radio to transmit messages from Rome to the rest of the world.

In planning a hall dedicated to Marconi,<sup>27</sup> Guido Ucelli intended to represent the scientist, as shown by a letter he wrote to Vincenzo Rolla, secretary of the CNR, on 21 March 1956, in which he stated, "in this respect I would like to know if it is possible, to procure the bust of Guglielmo Marconi for the Museum that was displayed in Genoa for a permanent installation".<sup>28</sup> Ucelli was referring to the *Mostra dei cimeli marconiani* that had been held in Genoa in 1955, at the Teatro del Falcone,<sup>29</sup> curated by Gino Montefinale, who had collaborated with Marconi regarding the experiments on board the *Elettra*. The bust of Marconi arrived in Milan on 7 June 1956 along with the *Elettra artefacts*, which were the property of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, and both were granted on temporary loan.<sup>30</sup> The work was recorded at the end of the list as "Busto di Marconi in gesso, proprietà del CNR, donato dal prof. Jerace" (Bust of Marconi in plaster, property of the CNR, donated by Prof. Jerace). For this reason, Ucelli decided to have a cast made before it was returned to Rome, calling Cesare Gariboldi whom he knew well because of his work at Brera. Gariboldi created the casts in August 1956,<sup>31</sup> in time for the installation of the Marconi Exhibition Hall which was inaugurated on 10 October the same year. In the inauguration speech, Gustavo Colonnetti, president of the CNR, recalled that "Italy occupies

<sup>26</sup> The future restoration of the cast will aim to eliminate the repainting and bring out the original engravings and patinas of the cast.

<sup>27</sup> For matters related to the composition of the collection of Marconi relics and their exhibition, refer to the other essays in this volume.

<sup>28</sup> ASMUST, Allestimento Sezioni Museali, Telecomunicazioni, Sala Marconi 5 and again in Corrispondenza II Serie, busta 76, letter from Guido Ucelli to Francesco Rolla.

<sup>29</sup> In relation to this, see Montefinale 1955. The CNR had loaned its artefacts, already exhibited at the seat of the Presidency. In the catalogue there is however no mention of the bust.

<sup>30</sup> ASMUST, Museo Industriale, Esposizioni, 17 (Materiali ex documentario CNR), 7 June 1956, List of Marconi relics already belonging to the yacht *Elettra* and temporarily delivered to the Museum, countersigned by Federico Morelli, general secretary of the Museum, and by Vincenzo Rolla for the CNR.

<sup>31</sup> ASMUST, Mandati di pagamento, b. 33, 1956. The orders were signed on 8 August, for a total cost of 42,000 lire (20,000 lire for the Marconi bust, 7,000 lire for the relative bracket, 15,000 lire for the bust of Volta). The work was paid for on 20 August, a date prior to the execution and delivery.

an unmistakable position in the history of culture and thought; a position that Marconi has widely and worthily contributed to highlight before men of all countries and all times".<sup>32</sup> It is not known how long Jerace's bust was displayed in the artefact exhibition room on the *Elettra*, but with the return of those artefacts to the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications and the rearrangement of the Section, it is probable that it had already been moved to the entrance, at the end of the long corridor of the

Gallerie Leonardo, where it was still located in 2000, before the last reorganisation. Perhaps it was no longer the time to represent Marconi with a work connected to different times, narratives and contexts. Nevertheless, within the collection, Vincenzo Jerace's bust can still serve as a fine testament to this type of representative instrument for the portrayal of the scientist-hero who played a fundamental role in the representation of his own myth beyond his death.

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<sup>32</sup> Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci. *La Sala Marconi. Le sezioni Radio e Telecomunicazioni* 1956, 16. The cast of Jerace's bust opens the small publication on p. 3, next to a photograph of the first cloister of the Museum.



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