

Extracted from:

Sandra Costa, Alessandro Paolo Lena e Anna Rosellini (a cura di) 2025. *Lo sguardo rinnovato*. Vol. 2. Pensiero Radicale Esibito. Bologna: Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna. ISBN 9788854972285. <https://doi.org/10.60923/books/30>.

## **Revisiting Pro Cultura Femminile's Exhibitions on Domestic Culture (1932–1935)**

Gerlinde Verhaeghe<sup>a,b,c</sup>

- a Politecnico di Milano
- b Politecnico di Torino
- c SNF Postdoc.Mobility

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60923/books/30.337>

Pages: 232-269

Copyright 2025, The Author(s)  
This work is licensed under the Creative Commons BY-NC License  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

**Alma  
Diamond**  
open scholarly  
communication

AlmaDL University of Bologna

# Revisiting Pro Cultura Femminile's Exhibitions on Domestic Culture (1932–1935)

Gerlinde Verhaeghe

Politecnico di Milano; Politecnico di Torino;  
SNF Postdoc.Mobility

## Introduction: Woman – Home – Exhibitions

In late 1920s and 1930s Italy, the home was at the core of a vibrant architectural debate, conducted on the pages of newly established architectural magazines and at institutional exhibitions alike.<sup>1</sup> Both founded in 1928, the magazines *Domus* and *La Casa Bella* (renamed *Casabella* in 1933) already signal in their very titles a growing interest in the domestic sphere.<sup>2</sup> In the first issue of *Domus*, founding editor Gio Ponti outlined the magazine's program in a piece titled "La casa all'italiana".<sup>3</sup> The search for specifically Italian notions of the home emerged as a reaction to the international debate on rational, modern housing, prompted by modernist architectural experiments in Germany and by numerous European housing exhibitions.<sup>4</sup> In Italy, the debate around the modern home became increasingly heated in the 1930s, reaching a peak at the fifth Milan Triennale of 1933, when 25 pavilions were constructed in Parco Sempione for the *Mostra dell'abitazione*.<sup>5</sup>

Founded in 1911, Turin's emancipatory women's organization Pro Cultura Femminile formulated its goal as "to do culture the feminine way". To this end, Pro Cultura Femminile staged a series of exhibitions dedicated to female domestic culture. This chapter revisits two of these exhibitions: *Mostra Femminile d'Arte Decorativa Moderna* (1932) and *L'Ora del The nella Casa Italiana* (1935). Having taken place in the first half of the 1930s, the exhibitions testify to their changing societal, political, and cultural context. The chapter explores how the two exhibitions aim to make statements on domesticity from a female point of view, while increasingly becoming aligned with Fascist propaganda. It shows how women's curatorial work engaged with and was shaped by the domestic ideology of Italian Fascism.

The debate on the modern home intensified at a time of great socio-political change. While there was a strong movement for the emancipation of women, there was also a marked return to traditional gender roles in the aftermath of the First World War and during the Great Depression of the 1930s.<sup>6</sup> The levelling of social classes, the restriction of the number of women entering the workplace (mainly affecting the middle classes) and the emphasis on the nuclear family

model radically transformed the household organism in the defining period between the two world wars.<sup>7</sup> Fascist rhetoric propagated traditional role models, casting women at home in the role of *massaia*, or housewife,<sup>8</sup> even though, as several scholars have pointed out, there was a discrepancy between Fascist propaganda and women's lived reality.<sup>9</sup> Still, for many women the home formed the main site of creativity and critical reflection, as can be judged from the surge in female critics reporting for *Domus*, *Stile*, and *La Casa Bella*, authoring *lavori femminili* (women's work) sections and domestic manuals.<sup>10</sup> Women played an important role in Fascist propaganda campaigns, from the battle to increase birth rates to ruralization, autarky, and colonial initiatives.<sup>11</sup> This chapter focuses on a series of exhibitions on the domestic sphere organized by Pro Cultura Femminile and examines how women negotiated their roles within the regime's framework, in dialogue with Fascist policies and propaganda. These exhibitions complicate the standard narrative of 20th-century domestic displays. Staged by women and situated within their historical context, they mediated between emancipatory initiatives and traditionalist gender policies, between avant-garde design and Fascist ideology. The chapter explores women's curatorial contributions to architectural discourse, reading them both as instruments of propaganda and as reflections of women's lived realities. It considers the historical contingencies of organizing exhibitions, the role of female patronage as cultural mediation, and the intricacies of domesticity rendered public through display. In short, these exhibitions on women's cultural production in the domestic realm—for women, by women, and about women—struck a balance between continuity and experimentation, tradition and innovation.

Pro Cultura Femminile's exhibitions on domesticity were radical precisely because they were organized by and for women, and because they focused on topics central to women's lives. While this chapter performs a feminist recovery, it also highlights the importance of patronage, mediation, local networks, and

interdisciplinary approaches to the domestic sphere. The analysis builds on recent feminist scholarship that expands the conception of architecture as cultural production, in order to valorize women's contributions to the field in the first half of the 20th century as a form of architectural agency.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in studying women's contributions to design, scholars have developed new paradigms in order to move beyond cataloguing design objects and their (female) designers, towards examining design consumption and mediation—where exhibition design itself functions as an instrument of mediation.<sup>13</sup> Spanning the neighbouring fields of interior studies, art, and design history, the chapter sheds light on Pro Cultura Femminile's organizational role in shaping visual and spatial narratives of domestic femininity through exhibition making. These exhibitions not only educated women in matters of taste, design, and decoration, but also addressed the ideological and practical facets of home-making.

### **Pro Cultura Femminile**

In 1911, Lisetta Motta Ciaccio led a group of female teachers and writers to found Società Pro Cultura Femminile di Torino, allowing them “to do culture the feminine way”.<sup>14</sup> It was their aim to provide women with a continued access to books and an environment for intellectual exchange and cultural activities after their graduation, as most young women did not have the opportunity to continue studying after high school while access to public libraries remained restricted.<sup>15</sup> Founded in Turin in 1911, in the year of the Great Exposition, the women's association emerged at the moment when Turin was transforming into an important industrial city, and underwent great societal and cultural changes shaping a unique cultural climate.<sup>16</sup> In the early 1920s, writers, art critics, painters, and architects from around Italy and beyond flocked to Turin.<sup>17</sup> While the influence of these (predominantly) male artistic and intellectual circles has been studied, it is only recently that female circles, patrons, and spaces have gained (renewed) scholarly attention.<sup>18</sup>

Società Pro Cultura Femminile has been perceived as the female counterpart of the older Turinese Società di Cultura.<sup>19</sup> However, its more “marginal” position compared to the established Società di Cultura arguably afforded it more freedom to pursue its own agenda, promoting both female and avant-garde culture, while the Società di Cultura was perceived as falling out of step with a rapidly changing society.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, with the loss of civil and political freedoms under the Fascist regime, many male members of the Società di Cultura found themselves isolated at home, exiled, or imprisoned. Women, by contrast, enjoyed more freedom: because of their gender, they were not subjected to the same level of scrutiny by the regime. By 1933, Pro Cultura Femminile counted 1,700 to 1,800 members,<sup>21</sup> while the *Società di Cultura* was forced to cease its activities because of the hostile political climate.

Pro Cultura Femminile continued its work under the Fascist Institute of Culture, negotiating political alignment and policies with its own emancipatory agenda.<sup>22</sup> It was in this politically turbulent context that its Artistic Section flourished, moving beyond art talks and exhibition visits to hosting and curating full-fledged exhibitions, predominantly dedicated to female cultural production and participatory and pedagogical initiatives. Though the women’s organization had a grassroots beginning, by the 1930s, Pro Cultura Femminile had become one of Turin’s leading cultural associations. In 1933, *Almanacco della donna italiana* commented: “In Turin, we have the Società Pro Cultura Femminile, which leads a particularly fervent life under the presidency of Professor Lea Mei. This society is of truly exceptional importance and is now the liveliest intellectual centre in the city.”<sup>23</sup> Pro Cultura Femminile counted among its associates renowned members of the Turinese intellectual and cultural elite, including the Levi-Montalcini family, architect Ada Bursi (the first female architect to register with the Turin Order of Architects in 1940), and painter and writer Lalla Romana (who, while based in Turin, was still mainly active as painter). As a non-denominational organization, it counted many Jewish members.

At the time, Pro Cultura Femminile enjoyed both royal patronage—under the Princesses of Piemonte, Maria Adelaide and Bona of Savoy-Genoa—and bourgeois patronage, from industrialist Riccardo Gualino and his wife Cesarina.<sup>24</sup> *Almanacco della donna italiana* lauded the exceptional nature of Pro Cultura Femminile, describing it as “unique in its genre”, and specifically praising its organizational structure as being “the most robustly organized, the most evolved and complex, in short, one that can serve as an ideal for many others”.<sup>25</sup> As the association grew, it developed an intricate organizational system with subsections for its different activities. Pro Cultura Femminile came to be best known for its extensive library and its music events.<sup>26</sup>

In April 1930, the *Prima Mostra d'Arte Femminile* enjoyed a Royal inauguration at Pro Cultura Femminile's new headquarters at Via Mercantini 3.<sup>27</sup> Princess Bona of Bavaria Savoy-Genoa, patron of the exhibition and herself participating with sculptural works, attended the vernissage accompanied by her husband Prince Konrad of Bavaria and her sister, Princess Maria Adelaide of Savoy-Genoa. The novelty of the exhibition was not just that it was organized by women, but, above all, that it was entirely dedicated to art made by women. Until then, work by women artists was mostly exhibited as part of bigger thematic exhibitions, and women artists tended to be presented as students of a male master.<sup>28</sup> A journalist reporting on Pro Cultura Femminile's exhibition in an issue of *Attività Femminile Sociale*, signalled the rising trend of women's solo and group exhibitions: “solo exhibitions as well as fundamentally female exhibitions make their way”, following a recent *esposizione d'arte femminile* at Milan's Castello Sforzesco.<sup>29</sup> Pro Cultura Femminile also organized solo exhibitions of female artists, such as *Manon Michels, Impressioni di un viaggio in Polonia* in February 1933, and Mabel Maugham, known as “Beldy” in April 1937.

The 1930 *Mostra d'Arte Femminile* showcased the work of 64 female artists from, or residing in, Turin. It displayed paintings by Tina Mennyey, Jessie Boswell (member of the Sei di Torino),

Marissa Mori, and Angelina Alciati (the first female student admitted to Turin's Accademia Albertina). Two rooms were almost entirely dedicated to the Casorati school, with paintings by Nella Marchesini, Paola Levi-Montalcino, Giorgina Lattes, Lalla Romano, and Daphne Maugham-Casorati. The success of the *Mostra d'Arte Femminile* prompted a series of exhibitions celebrating and promoting female culture. From 1930 to 1935, the Artistic Section, led by Rosetta Fano Cassin, staged a number of avant-garde exhibitions on fine arts and decorative arts that served as a platform for emerging female artists, architects, decorators, craftswomen and interior and textile designers active in Turin and beyond. Pro Cultura Femminile offered a place of creative production and formation where its female members could participate and directly engage with artistic languages. While the subject matter, scale, visitor numbers, and public reception of the shows differed—as they gradually came to serve more and more as propaganda in a tense political climate—, they did retain an emancipatory and pedagogical impetus.<sup>30</sup> The following sections will discuss in detail two of these exhibitions and explore the conditions under which the women organized them: the 1932 *Mostra Femminile d'Arte Decorativa Moderna* and the 1935 *L'Ora del The nella Casa Italiana*.<sup>31</sup>

### **1932 *Mostra Femminile d'Arte Decorativa Moderna***

In January 1932, Pro Cultura Femminile's president Lea Mei launched the call for contributions to the *Mostra Femminile d'Arte Decorativa Moderna*.<sup>32</sup> The call and announcement of the exhibition were subsequently published in the February issue of the association's bulletin, setting the scope:

The aim of our exhibition is to encourage women artists to study and solve the problem of the interior design and decoration of the modern home in an aesthetic and practical manner. Therefore, the exhibition will include projects for the creation of interior settings and details that contribute to the embellishment

of the home, as well as single implementations, such as furniture, carpets, curtains, fabrics, furnishings, small decorative sculptures, ceramics, lighting systems, and even paintings, provided that they serve a specific decorative purpose. Artist-members who wish to be among the exhibitors can pick up the Exhibition leaflet at the Secretariat.<sup>33</sup>

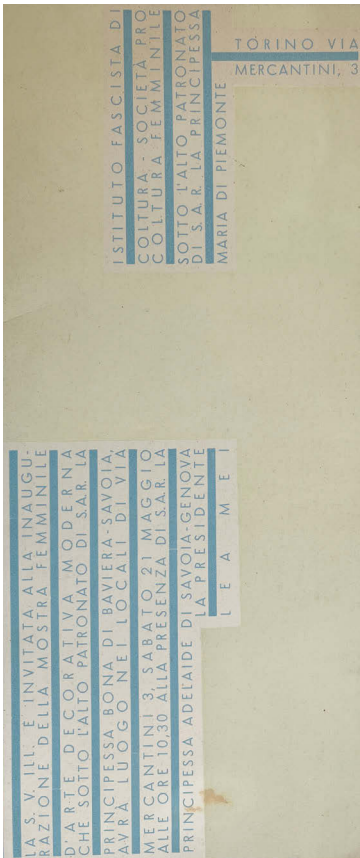
Candidates could apply by paying an inscription fee and submitting a form listing their proposed works to the secretariat of Pro Cultura Femminile by the end of February. In addition, they could indicate if they were interested in creating a room or part of an interior setting, to verify space availability and help with the setup.<sup>34</sup> Of the 55 candidatures, 44 were selected to take part in the exhibition, amounting to 130 exhibited works.<sup>35</sup> While most participants were based in Turin, a small number of invited participants came from across Italy.

Thanks to its strong organizational structure and the expertise gained at the previous *Mostra d'Arte Femminile* of 1930, Pro Cultura Femminile was well-equipped to organize such an open call exhibition. Alongside the directing council of the Artistic Section led by Rosetta Fano Cassin, an executive committee was set up specifically for the exhibition. The experts invited to take part in the executive committee, predominantly men, were “among the leading artists of our city, who are most keenly interested in the problems of modern decorative art, as well as representatives of art journalism”.<sup>36</sup> Three categories of prizes were formulated: 1) the best drawing or room model, 2) the best design or model, 3) the best work produced.<sup>37</sup>

To finance the exhibition, an intricate fee system was implemented according to several categories of membership, patronage, and participation, as well as a commission on sales. Already in 1930, to sponsor the *Mostra d'Arte Femminile*, a new category of Pro Cultura Femminile associates was created, the so-called *amiche dell'arte* (friends of the arts). Members would pay an additional yearly contribution of 5 lire, with which exhibited artworks would be bought and distributed between

them.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore a committee of *patronesse della mostra*—or female patrons of the exhibition—was formed, counting 73 names, whose donations covered the prize money. Participants in the exhibition were asked to pay an inscription fee: 10 lire for members of Pro Cultura Femminile and Associazione delle Donne Professioniste e Artiste, 15 lire for non-members. Additionally, Pro Cultura Femminile took a 10% commission on the sale of works.<sup>39</sup>

From 21 May to 11 June 1932, Pro Cultura Femminile staged its *Mostra Femminile d'Arte Decorativa Moderna* at its headquarters in Via Mercantini 3 (fig. 1). The overall scenography



1 Leaflet for the *Mostra Femminile d'Arte Decorativa Moderna*, 1932, Archivio di Stato di Torino, section 334 Pro Cultura Femminile, mazzo 59, fasc. 66.2

and set-up of the main exhibition space was organized by three associates: Paola Levi-Montalcini, Ada Bursi, and Paola Cometti. Like the 1930 exhibition, the decorative art show enjoyed the high patronage and participation of Princess Bona of Bavaria Savoy-Genoa. The vernissage was given political attention as it was attended by the secretary general and the *podestà*, the head of the municipal administration under the Fascist regime. Several of the exhibiting female artists of the 1930 fine art show participated again. Paola Levi-Montalcini now showed painted ceramics, table linen, sketches for carpets, and graphic works,<sup>40</sup> Marisa Mori showed two futurist decorative works,<sup>41</sup> Jessie Boswell exhibited a carpet, a patchwork pillow, and an oil painting depicting flowers,<sup>42</sup> and Giorgina Lattes showed a set of ceramics, including a blue vase, a flowerpot, orange cups, and a yellow bowl.<sup>43</sup> Participating for the first time, Dancer Bella Hutter was applauded for the salon she decorated with “her paintings, ceramics, trinkets, carpets and various fabrics that she personally had woven”.<sup>44</sup> Paola Cometti presented “an ingenious divan that can also serve as bookcase and, if needed, also as small tea table”.<sup>45</sup> This time, not only artists took part but also interior decorators, designers, and craftswomen. Ada Bursi (the only participating architect, as she was one of the first women to practice architecture in Turin) and Renata Ponti both showed sketches of interiors for children’s bedrooms, the latter described by a journalist as “a small paradise of dreams, fantasies and play”.<sup>46</sup> Lidia Morelli, an authority on the topic of home decoration and textile crafts, exhibited and sold embroidery, handwoven tapestry, a teapot, and a tea cozy.<sup>47</sup> Rome-based textile designers Caterina Rampolla and Fides Testi recommended to the organization committee by Lidia Morelli, exhibited textile panels.<sup>48</sup> In the same year, their textile designs were featured in Morelli’s interior design column for *La Casa Bella*,<sup>49</sup> and in her manual *Mani Alacri* (1933).<sup>50</sup> Morelli praised Rampolla’s impressive wall panel *L’Albero* (fig. 2):

for the female visitors to a small but good women's decorative arts exhibition recently held in Turin, of which *Casa Bella* will give more extensive news, it was a revelation. It is a pity that the large panel "The Tree" needed more background and more space. If these are not lacking elsewhere, Rampolla's panels are destined to decorate the modern home as much as a fine piece of painting: the smooth, scaly, and wrinkled fabrics, varied in hues and motifs, combined with such a rich sense of colour, achieve the effect of true painting.<sup>51</sup>

The female designers and craftswomen featured in *La Casa Bella*, *Domus*, and *Stile* intersected with those exhibiting at Pro Cultura Femminile.<sup>52</sup> In its early years of publication, *La Casa Bella* can be considered a women's magazine in the more popular sense of the term, before it changed direction, along with its name—now *Casabella*—in 1933. In those early years, it featured themes such as crafts by women, plants for interior decoration, decoration of the children's room, and coffee and tea settings, also spotlighted by Pro Cultura Femminile's exhibitions on domestic culture.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, the archives of Pro Cultura Femminile hold letters from *La Casa Bella* as well as from the nationalist women's lifestyle magazine *Lidel*, discussing how they would help publicize and promote the *Mostra Femminile d'Arte Decorativa Moderna*.<sup>54</sup>

Several prizes were awarded at the closure of the 1932 exhibition. The prize for the best drawing or room model was shared between Alda Besso, Renata Ponti, and Emma Chainz, each of whom received 200 lire. Bella Hutter won 300 lire for the best realized interior. A prize of 900 lire went to the team responsible for the scenography of the main room: Levi-Montalcini, Bursi, and Cometti, "who succeeded in designing a harmonious whole marked by an exquisitely modern taste, thus creating a suitable atmosphere to accommodate the various works on display—a contribution that played no small part in the success of this second art exhibition".<sup>55</sup>



Ognuno di noi, conoscerà per averli veduti alle esposizioni d'arte regionale — o, come dir si voglia, folcloristica — quei tessuti di cotone, dei quali innumerevoli telai a mano calabresi ripetono, nei secoli, tipici disegni e tipici colori: tessuti di cotone morbidi e solidi, rustici e delicati al tempo stesso, detti alcuni « a trippa di pecora » per una loro rugosità, con disegni rilevati a damasco, a mandorline, a quadri, a esagoni, a greche, ricchi di tinte e svariatissimi di combinazioni, tutti d'un sapore paesano aspro, rude e fine insieme.

Orbene, sia per quella sarietà che viene dal troppo visto, sia per quella transitoria e forse providenziale trascuranza che varrà a fare dell'oblio d'oggi il trionfo di domani, sia per nuove direttive nella decorazione della casa, i tessuti calabresi s'erano ridotti ultimamente a soffrire il malinconico periodo delle cose sorpassate. Ma, a costo di fare un paragone volgare, sta anche nei tessuti calabresi la verità che « una salsa nuova ringiovanisce il piatto vecchio ».

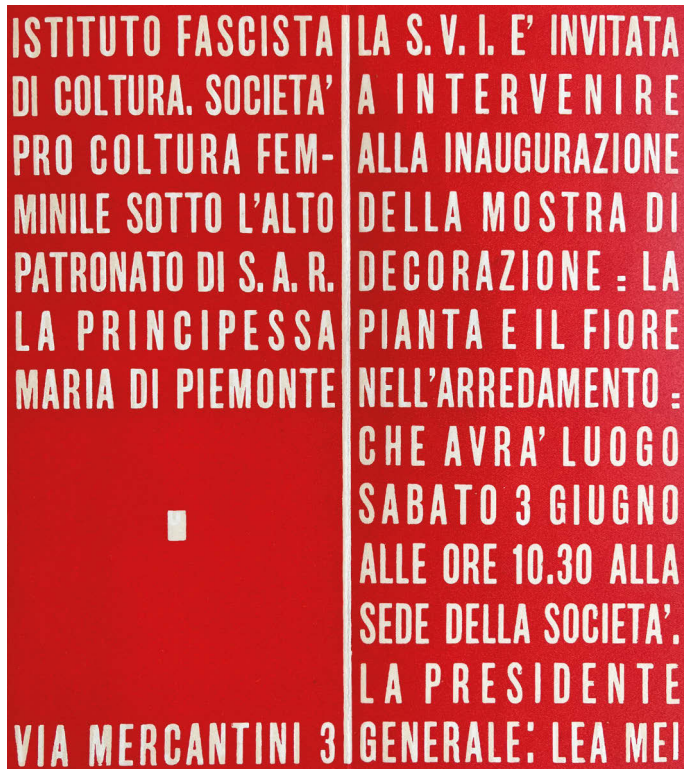
Il ringiovanimento dei secolari tessuti escogitato da Caterina Rampolla del Tindaro è stato tale, che lo stesso « vecchio piatto » è apparso quale sostanzialmente nuovo, interessante, ricco di elementi plastici e pittorici forse mai prima valutati, certo non prima sfruttati.

2 *L'Albero* by Caterina Rampolla,  
published in Lidia Morelli's article,  
"Nuovi arazzi Italiani di Caterina  
Rampolla", taken from *La Casa Bella*  
no. 54, June 1932, p. 43

In addition to monetary awards, a symbolic *diploma d'onore* was presented to Maria Calvi Rigotti for her decorative textile panel, to Fides Testi for her decorative textiles, to Lidia Morelli for her cushion, and to Paola Malvano for her woolen figurines.<sup>56</sup>

Maria Calvi Rigotti's decorative panel *Primavera* would remain at Pro Cultura Femminile's headquarters, serving as a decorative element covering the white projection wall when the room was used for other social events (fig. 3). Finally, by referendum, a series of objects was bought by the *amiche dell'arte*, including works by Princess Bona of Bavaria Savoy-Genoa, Bella Hutter, Emergilda Crudo, Nora Benedetti, and Vittorina Bellacomba. Furthermore, Pro Cultura Femminile's bulletin listed works that specifically enjoyed admiration by the public: "the sculptures of *Mrs Formica* and *Mrs Grande*, *Rosy Sacerdote's* glass paintings, *Mrs Rampolla's* decorative panels, *Countess Pia di Valmarana's* embroideries, and *Mrs Buratti Cocito's* creations".<sup>57</sup>





3 Group portrait in front of Maria Calvi Rigotti's *Primavera*, 1933. On the far left is Maria Calvi Rigotti. Lea Mei, president of Pro Cultura Femminile is the sixth person from the left. Paola and Rita Levi-Montalcini are believed to be the two individuals on the far right. Archivio di Stato di Torino, section 334 Pro Cultura Femminile, mazzo 74, fasc. 108.2

4 Exhibition flyer for the *Mostra di Decorazione: la Pianta e il Fiore nell'Arredamento*, 1933, Archivio di Stato di Torino, section 334 Pro Cultura Femminile, mazzo 59, fasc. 65.4

LA CRONACA DELLA CITTA'
Fra tavoli, frutta e fiori



Tra bei tavoli appiati alla Mostra della Pro Cultura Femminile

(Fot. Ottolenghi)

Si avvicina l'ora in cui le amiche giungeranno insieme di briva e grana...

ai mazzi di fiori disposti con noncuranza ai lati. Non gli si può imputare...

non appoggiarvi sopra con disinvoltura come ad un volgare tavolo di legno...

prenderà mai, più severi di esso l'aspetto di ogni fantasia. L'idea...

aiiderlo; renderla bella ed attraente. Preoccupazioni, dispiaceri, non...

Gli spettacoli del giorno

STADIUM - Compagnia piemontese di Opera Palcoscenico di A. V. Zucchi...

Oggi, ore 15, al CINEPALAZZO

una grande novità: comica: la "premiere" di "IL PIPIRELLO"...

Cinematografi

ONBARI: L'ultima scena di W. Kraus. VITTORIO: Gli ultimi martiri di Cooper...

PARLAMI D'AMORE...

A il sospetto di ogni fantasia. L'idea di ogni cosa...

Gine IDEAL e ALPI

La bella meravigliosa edizione italiana della "Cines" e, fra i furori di questo...

Oggetti ufime allo STATUTO

di RODOLFO VALENTINO nel suo film italiano, e di Armando Pajani...

La solenne processione Na chi è stato inventato il telefono? Dirigenti dell'O. N. B. a rapporto con il Barone...

5 A. Richetti, Fra tavolino frutta e fiori, illustrated with Silvio Ottolenghi's photograph of the decorated tables, in Gazzetta del Popolo della Sera, 15 June 1933, Archivio di Stato di Torino, section 334 Pro Cultura Femminile, mazzo 72, fasc. 104.1

A contemporary newspaper reporter noted how “the crowd of visitors and particularly female visitors did not tire of admiring, commenting and even... desiring”.<sup>58</sup>

Also during the 1932 exhibition, a competition was organized for the best prepared tea table, won by Sana Misrà for her pink and light blue table setting. Tea time and *tavole preparate* (prepared or well-laid tables) would become a recurring theme in Pro Cultura Femminile’s events, giving rise to a series of competitions and exhibitions on the topic.<sup>59</sup> In June 1933, Turin-based newspapers *La Stampa* and *Gazzetta del Popolo* reported on the *Mostra di Decorazione: la Pianta e il Fiore nell’Arredamento* (fig. 4) dedicated to “plants and flowers in interior design”.<sup>60</sup> The exhibition formed the closing event to an agrarian course for women (Corso di Cultura Agricola), which was organized by Pro Cultura Femminile in support of the Fascist government’s efforts to strengthen national agriculture.<sup>61</sup>

Tables adorned with flowers and fruits were displayed at the headquarters of Pro Cultura Femminile, decorated by members as well as professional florists (fig. 5).<sup>62</sup> Pro Cultura Femminile no longer foregrounded the artistic production of its female associates, nor did it restrict itself to showcasing only women, as it now also invited men to take part. One could admire an “atrium of a seaside villa” consisting of architectural elements and a diorama by painter Giuseppe Maria Talucchi and large canvases by painter Tina Mennyey; a “bar” serving strawberry and cherry baskets by sculptor and furniture maker Angelo Cometti; a “white room” by painter Daphne Maugham-Casorati, with drawings by her husband, painter Felice Casorati, and painter Luigi Spazzapan; and the entrance hall decorated by painter Paola Levi-Montalcini.<sup>63</sup> Several medals were allocated by a jury, including some offered by the Istituto di Cultura e di Propaganda Agraria and the Istituto Fascista di Cultura. By now, the yearly exhibition and accompanying competition for best prepared table had become a tradition, chronicled in 1934 by *Gazzetta del Popolo*:

Every year, in late spring, the Società di Cultura Femminile stages small exhibitions in its welcoming rooms. In these shows, the exquisite charms and poetic or delicious intimacy of the dining rooms are expressed through diverse, colourful, fragrant and flavoursome works of art. We remember certain charming little tables with coffee and milk service, flower-filled corners of rooms, bright white antechambers for bachelors decorated with slightly risqué panels—elegantly Casorati-esque nudes—and very prim living rooms for lovable, cheerful, and cordial grandmothers and their boisterous grandchildren...<sup>64</sup>

In 1934, Pro Cultura Femminile organized *La Mostra di Tavole Imbandite* as well as pioneering the first *Mostra Femminile Italiana di Fotografia*.<sup>65</sup> In the context of increasing austerity, members of Pro Cultura Femminile were encouraged to take part in the springtime table setting and interior decoration exhibition to demonstrate their “instinctive” sense for decoration as *padrona di casa* (mistress of the house). The call for participation stressed that members should not “be deterred by the fear that they may not have luxurious glassware and silverware to show off, for our contest must be one of good taste, not of ostentation”.<sup>66</sup> Participating female members of Pro Cultura Femminile were joined by the Associazione Nazionale Donne Professioniste ed Artiste as well as a number of male artists and architects. The *Gazzetta del Popolo*’s headline covering the exhibition underscored traditional gender roles: “Tavole signorilmente imbandite da dame gentili ed artisti geniali”. The article was illustrated with a still life photograph by photo-reporter Silvio Ottolenghi showing Paola Levi-Montalcini’s *Marzo* table setting.<sup>67</sup> The exhibition remained open for three days, concluding with the traditional vote for the best prepared table, won by Laura Galeazzi Bertoldo, and the best setting, won by Aldo Lanteri.

The 1933 *Mostra di Decorazione: la Pianta e il Fiore nell’Arredamento* and the 1934 *Mostra di Tavole Imbandite* demonstrate that the *Mostra Femminile d’Arte Decorativa*

*Moderna* of 1932 and its tea table competition had set the trend for a series of table-setting and interior decoration exhibitions, culminating in the 1935 exhibition dedicated to *L'Ora del The nella Casa Italiana*.

### **1935 *L'Ora del The nella Casa Italiana***

At the *Mostra di Ambientazione e Tavole Preparate* of 1935, tea time in the Italian home had become a theme with a myriad of settings and artistic interpretations. The bulletin of June to September 1935, which announced the springtime exhibition to the associates, already indicated the wide scope of the tea-time topic:

The chosen theme is very broad and lends itself to the presentation of tables as well as interiors, sections of living rooms, dining rooms, gardens, verandas, terraces, etc.<sup>68</sup>

Members of Pro Cultura Femminile who wished to take part were invited to give notice to the association's secretariat. Judging from the exhibition leaflet, there were single contributions by female participants while male participants were (in all but one case) joined up with female members (fig. 6).<sup>69</sup> The exhibition had an entrance fee of 3 lire for non-members, 2 lire for members, and a reduced prize of 1 lire during the final three days as it was prolonged on request of the secretary general. Besides well-laid tea tables and interior settings, the exhibition of June 1935 included artistic interpretations of the afternoon tea ritual.

The architect and engineer Dado Bonicelli is overseeing the transformation of the club rooms, so that the exhibition can be held in an entirely new and highly original setting. The courtyard giving access to the hall at Via Cernaia 11, will also be turned into a delightful garden, allowing visitors, upon entering the exhibition, to linger in a flowery and festive atmosphere.<sup>70</sup>

A photograph shot in the courtyard of Pro Cultura Femminile's seat shows its female members rubbing shoulders with black shirts. *L'Orsa del Tè nella Casa Italiana* was well covered by the local press. *La Stampa* reported regularly on it in its regional news section, giving information on opening times, prominent visitors and events for the span of the exhibition, from 8 to 19 June 1935. Longer articles covering the exhibition generally applauded the initiative, sketching the different contexts for which the tables are prepared, and describing a selection of table settings that stand out. Writing for *La Stampa*, journalist M. Bernardi emphasized the Italian aspect of the exhibition:

'L'ora del tè nella casa italiana'—a well-chosen title... The *Casa all'Italiana*, as Gio Ponti once wrote, wants with its simplicity to salute us for our customs, wants to offer our spirit restful visions of peace.<sup>71</sup>

Thus, focusing on the idea of a “*casa all'italiana*”, or the home as locus of “Italianness”, he continued:

If the act of sipping a cup of tea is undeniably the same in Los Angeles as in Tokyo, the way of enjoying this moment in our home is more uniquely our own.<sup>72</sup>

Bernardi presented the exhibition as a search for and manifestation of “Italianness” in the tradition of drinking tea as it is savoured in the Italian home. Bernardi popularized tea time in describing it as the time of “*ritorno a casa*” or homecoming. The nationalist agenda is overt and reads as propaganda. “Tea is a pretext”, we read a week later in *La Stampa*, “the justification for a pause and refreshment that once had no qualms about calling itself a *merenda* [snack].” Questioning the anglicization and renaming of the afternoon snack tradition after “the exoticism of the fashionable drink”, the reporter reclaims tea time as Italian custom: “All you hear about here are *merende* and *spuntini*.”<sup>73</sup> The nationalist agenda is

ISTITUTO FASCISTA DI CULTURA  
SOCIETA' PRO CULTURA FEMMINILE  
SOTTO L'ALTO PATRONATO DI S. A. R.  
LA PRINCIPESSA MARIA DI PIEMONTE

« L'ORA DEL THE » NELLA CASA ITALIANA  
MOSTRA DI AMBIENTAZIONE E DI TAVOLE PREPARATE

ESTERNO - 1 San Maurizio (Aldo Morbelli, architetto -  
Nino Madon, Dott. Giuseppina Jona)

VESTIBOLO - 2 Estate - Merenda dei grandi (Teonesto  
Deabate, pittore - Roberto Terracini,  
scultore - Nora Tedeschi, Maria Guerrisi)

3 Estate - Merenda dei piccoli (Roberto  
Terracini, scultore - Teonesto Deabate,  
pittore - Maria Guerrisi, Nora Tedeschi)

4 Infrangibile (Ing. Ezio Magnenelli, Laura  
Galeazzi Bertoldo)

S A L A - 5 Sala di ritrovo - 8-16 Giugno 1935-XIII  
(Francesco Destefanis, ambientatore - Aldo  
Besso, pittrice - Laura Galeazzi Bertoldo)

6 Nella baracca del concessionario  
Italiano in Somalia (Lidio Ajmone,  
pittore - Rosa Quadrono, Giulietta Soria)

7 La merenda dei miei figli (Bella Hüfner)

8 Una sosta nel tempo (Bianca Tavella)

SALONE - 9 Aranci limoni (Ettore Sot-Sas, architetto -  
Emilia Tedeschi)

10 The dei musicista (Lalla Montù Romano)

11 Invito al the (Gianni Tribaudino, pittore -  
Francesca Borione)

12 The numero due (cenni di architettura  
interna) Italo Cremona, pittore - Carlo  
Mollino, architetto - Signorine Enne-Enno

13 Accogliendo pochi amici (Enrico  
Pellegrini, architetto - Cesarina Bianchi)

14 Invito platonico (Maria de Benedetti Bignami)

15 Composizione (Paola Levi Montalcini,  
pittrice)

16 La merenda della cugina Argia  
(Enrico Paulucci delle Roncole, pittore -  
Deda Rollino)

17 Argenti (Carlo Turina, pittore - Nellina  
Dogliotti Turina)

Il pubblico deve votare due premi:

uno per il miglior ambiente,  
uno per la migliore tavola  
sia essa isolata o in ambiente.

L'ambientazione generale della Mostra è dovuta all'Architetto Ing. Dado Bonicelli.

Stampato e distribuito nel S. 1935 (N. 1935)

6 Leaflet for the *L'Ora del The*  
nella Casa Italiana exhibition, 1935,  
Archivio di Stato di Torino, section  
334 Pro Cultura Femminile, mazzo  
59, fasc. 66.10



7 Carlo Gherlone, Members of Pro Cultura Femminile and blackshirts posing in the inner courtyard of their Via Cernaia 11 headquarters. Lea Mei, president of Pro Cultura Femminile, is the sixth person from the right. Archivio di Stato di Torino, section 334 Pro Cultura Femminile, mazzo 74, fasc. 108.2

furthered by a colonialist one as tea is subsequently substituted by *karkadé* (hibiscus tea): “Tea was a pretext, we said, so much so that here we are talking about none other than ‘karkadé’, the drink of our Somalia, which has many things in common with tea.”<sup>74</sup> This emphasis on Italy’s new colony is symptomatic of an unfolding nationalist–colonial drive that would intensify rapidly in the events organized by Pro Cultura Femminile following *L’Ora del The nella Casa Italiana*, after Italy invaded Ethiopia in October 1935.

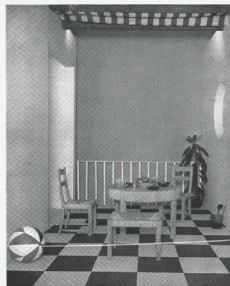
It is striking to see that contemporary perceptions of *l’ora del tè* were gendered. While Bernardi framed tea time as the welcoming home of an out-of-the-picture but very present, implied husband, prepared by the *massaia* or housewife, Lidia Morelli—writing for the *Gazzetta del Popolo*—presented it from the perspective of a *donna-madre* role model. Morelli’s focus was on the *sensazione di “invitante”* (the inviting feeling) tea tables evoke for both *grandi e piccini* or, more precisely, for “intimate friends” and for children. Morelli describes the scene that a wicker furniture set on show evokes for her:

that sturdy round table with its wide straw band, which, surrounded by straw benches, looks as if it might be home to a group of little, half-naked bathers, tanned by the sun and as hungry as bathing can make you...<sup>75</sup>

At once very practical and imaginative, Morelli imagined what the actual use of the tea settings might look like, moving beyond the aesthetic pleasures of their materializations. Both Bernardi and Morelli listed the different contexts, and the associated styles, for which the tea settings were designed, from the *campagnolo* or *paesano*, to the *salotto*, to the *coloniale*. They also recognized the anachronistic exercise of marrying tradition with innovative new materials (such as security glass and steel tube furniture).

The exhibition was also featured in the architectural press. *L’Architettura Italiana* devoted a three-page illustrated article

to what they titled “L’ora della merenda nella casa italiana”, featuring five exhibits (fig. 8). Among the celebrated pieces was *Estate – Merenda dei piccoli* by painter Teoneste Deabate, sculptor Roberto Terracini, and painter Nora Tedeschi Levi and Marta Guerrisi (fig. 8). The article lauded it as one of the most “joyous”, “colourful”, “peaceful” and “sunny” exhibits. Similarly, *Aranci limoni* by architect Ettore Sottsass Sr. and Emilia Tedeschi (fig. 8) was praised for its refined colour scheme of white, green and rose-violet tones. Painter Paola Levi-Montalcini’s *Composizione* (fig. 8) was commended, while *Invito al the* by painter Gianni Tribaudino and Francesca Borione was judged a “bit decadent”. However, the most detailed coverage in the article went to *Tè numero 2*, a contribution by architect Carlo Mollino and painter Italo Cremona (fig. 9). A closer look at this piece, which was conceived as a surrealist installation of a tea-ceremony, shows that the exhibits sometimes defied conventional domestic representations of Italianness and gender roles.<sup>76</sup> The installation was composed of fragmentary representations of the female form, offering a clear contrast to the traditional imagery celebrated elsewhere. The public vote for both best table setting and best interior was—likely politically motivated—won by *La baracca del concessionario in Italia* by painter Lidio Ajmone, Rosa Quadrone, and Giulietta Soria. The vote of the 47 patronesses then, was won (with 17 votes) by *Estate – Merende dei grandi* and *Estate – Merenda dei piccoli*, both a collaboration between painter Teoneste Debate, sculptor Roberto Terracini, and painter Nora Tedeschi Levi and Marta Guerrisi. The ballot of the female patrons further shows that architect Ettore Sottsass Sr. and Emilia Tedeschi came second (with eight votes) with *Aranci limoni*. While the June 1935 exhibition was already much under the spell of an increasing patriotism, this influence would only increase in the following months as the second Italo-Ethiopian crisis unfolded. On 3 October 1935, Italian forces invaded Ethiopia. In response, the League of Nations implemented economic sanctions on Italy in November 1935, that would



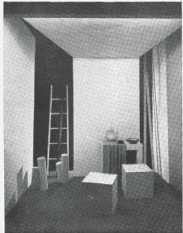
ESTATE / MERENDA  
DEI PICCOLI  
T. DEBARTE, FITTORE  
& TERRACINI, SCULTORE  
MORA, TERSICHI  
MARTA GUERRISI

**"L'ORA DELLA MERENDA" NELLA CASA ITALIANA  
MOSTRA ORGANIZZATA DALLA SOCIETÀ PRO CULTURA  
FEMMINILE DELL'ISTITUTO FASCISTA DI CULTURA / TORINO**

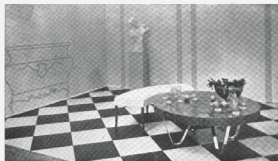
Non tutti i partecipanti a questo mostra, svolgendo il tema proposto partirono da intenzioni e pre-  
supposizioni egredienti, quasi tutti però realizzarono delle composizioni interessanti.  
La maggioranza di essi creò degli spazi di ambiente con intenzioni realistiche e praticamente rea-  
lizzabili: fra questi uno dei più felici è quello intitolato "La merenda dei piccoli" stesso, ordinato,  
semplice, buono quale doveva all'Architettura SotSoc con la collaborazione di Emilio Tedeschi, di uno

258 L'ARCHITETTURA ITALIANA 1935

**"L'ORA DELLA MERENDA" NELLA CASA ITALIANA  
COMPOSIZIONE**



sull'atmosfera coloristica (nei toni ver-  
di, rosso-violaceo e bianco) pensò un  
più "decadente" "Ilavito al lha" di  
G. Tiburdi e Francesco Barone.  
La "Composizione" di Paola Levi-  
Montalcini mostra evidenti le forti  
qualità della giovane dottoressa.  
Alla rivelazione del "Numero 2"  
occorrenza il vivo commento degli  
autori. Ad essi la certezza del  
lha, dalla considerazione degli indi-  
vi e orientati e da alcune reazioni  
psichiche, oppure, / insieme la loro  
parole / con i lineamenti della espe-



ARANCI  
LIMONI  
& SOTTI SAS  
ARCHITETTO  
& TERSICHI

L'ARCHITETTURA ITALIANA 1935 259

8 "L'ora della merenda nella casa italiana", in *L'Architettura Italiana*, July 1935, pp. 258-259, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma

9 Augusto Pedrini, *Tè numero 2*, Italo Cremona, artist, Carlo Mollino, architect, at *L'Or del The nella Casa Italiana*, Politecnico di Torino, Sezione Archivi Biblioteca Roberto Gabetti, Fondo Carlo Mollino, ACM 3.3.61.2



# Il successo della prima "merenda," italiana organizzata dalla Pro Cultura

## L'infuso dei fiori d'arancio ha sostituito vantaggiosamente il tè - Torte, castagnacci e tramezzini - Una «merenda geor- gica» in preparazione per giovedì 8 gennaio

Non stoppie di valore. Non to-  
paglie di lusso. Una sola divisa  
per tutti i tavolini: tovaglietta in  
tela greggia di Deruta a semplici  
trafori e impunture eseguite a  
mano. E sulla tovaglietta, al cen-  
tro, la guaiacca d'un cestino di  
frutta freschissima: aranci, man-  
darini, cedri, banane, limoni... Un  
calice colorato di Empoli, un piat-

o meglio, dell'infuso di fiori d'a-  
rancio, non è che uno dei parti-  
colari per quanto di notevole im-  
portanza, dell'insieme di bibite,  
bevande e sostanze nutritive a ba-  
se di agrumi e castagne», pas-  
sate ieri all'ordine del giorno nel-  
la lista a scelta della prima «me-  
renda italiana». Le voci sono  
tante e in parte sufficientemen-

rina di castagne e aranci o man-  
darini.

Pomeriggio d'eccezione ieri alla  
«Pro Cultura». Verso sera la fol-  
la che alle 16 appena faceva cap-  
polino, gremiva le sale di via Cer-  
nina 11; un posto ai tavolini non  
si sarebbe potuto trovare. Tutto  
occupato. Tutto esaurito.

L'intervento della consorte di



to da frutta a colori, due minu-  
scole posate. Poi frutta secca, bi-  
scotti di noci, olive verdi, tramez-  
zini di pane imburato e... una  
tazza fumante di fiori d'arancio.

Il procedimento per prepararla  
è semplicissimo. Si mette in una  
tezza una fetta di arancio insieme  
a un cucchiaino di fiori d'a-  
rancio secchi. Si rovescia sopra  
dell'acqua bollente e si lasciano  
in fusione un po' più a lungo del  
tè, prima di colare e servire con  
o senza zucchero. Questo infuso  
è calmanete, di gusto squisito e i  
risultati che se ne ricavano sono  
eccellenti.

Ma anche la questione del tè,

te spiegate. Così, ad esem-  
pi: «Tartufi di castagne», «Coppa  
Monte Bianco», «Coppa  
na montata, meringhe, castagne,  
sciropo di mandarino, Moscato  
e melassa di Rodi, vino sardo Mo-  
nica, Terlan, di Tolosano...  
dei sandwiches troviamo i «tra-  
mezzini», ossia fette di pane spalmate  
di burro o di altro, preparate  
in svariatissime e appetitose  
combinazioni. Infine tante altre  
buone e dolci cose, che abbiamo  
visto passare ripetutamente sotto  
i nostri occhi da un tavolino all'  
altro: dalle caldarrose ai mar-  
roni, dal più modesto castagnaccio  
alla più raffinata torta di la-

S. E. il Prefetto, della consorte del  
Segretario federale, della signora  
Giordano, in rappresentanza della  
Fiduciaria provinciale dei Fasci  
femminili, della Presidente della  
Associazione Madri e Vedove del  
distretto di Catania, della se-

numerose stuoie di signore e  
signorine, le quali con tanto en-  
tusiasmo hanno prestato l'opera  
per il secondo successo della manifestazione.  
Per il secondo successo della manifestazione,  
è valso ad assicurare il pie-  
no successo della manifestazione.  
Per il secondo successo della manifestazione,  
possiamo pertanto annunciarne  
un nuovo trattamento del ge-  
nere. Esso prenderà nome di  
merenda georgica».

(Fot. Ottolenghi).

10 Il successo della prima "merenda"  
italiana organizzata dalla Pro  
Cultura with a photograph by Silvio  
Ottolenghi, in Gazzetta del Popolo,  
20 December 1935, p. 2, Archivio  
di Stato di Torino, section 334  
Pro Cultura Femminile, mazzo 72,  
fasc. 104.1

set off an autarky campaign in Italy. On 18 November, the day that the League of Nations imposed sanctions on Italy, *Gazzetta del Popolo della Sera* invited Lea Mei to lay out the propaganda campaign she planned to conduct. Mei echoed Mussolini's anti-sanctions rallying cry: "To economic sanctions we will oppose our discipline, our sobriety, our spirit of sacrifice", which Pro Cultura Femminile intended to print and disseminate on postcards.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, Mei proposed three minutes of daily radio propaganda and to host a series of exhibitions on Italian products ("settimana di prodotti Italiani") at their headquarters, which would come to replace the tea time events rebranded as *merende*. As president of Pro Cultura Femminile, Mei formally subscribed to Fascist policy, which called on women "to be in the service of the nation in response to the League of Nations sanctions".<sup>78</sup> On 19 December, Pro Cultura Femminile would organize its first *Merenda Italiana*, dropping tea—and not only—from its title. Reporting on the day of the event, *La Stampa della Sera*'s headline is unforgiving of Pro Cultura's previous "foreign praxis": "The Insipid Five O'Clock Tea. The initiative of Pro Cultura Femminile to replace with fruits, pastries and golden wines the apish custom of old."<sup>79</sup> In line with Fascist nationalist rhetoric, the article criticizes five o'clock tea for being both a foreign and a bourgeois habit. Its tradition of tea time tables and settings had transitioned from an avant-garde event to anti-sanction propaganda.<sup>80</sup> *Gazzetta del Popolo* further celebrated this new Italian *merenda* with a photograph of the event and announced the following "agrarian *merenda*" planned for January 1936 (fig. 10). As usual, the photograph was taken by Silvio Ottolenghi, a photo-reporter for the *Gazzetta del Popolo*. As is typical for Ottolenghi's crowd scenes, his photograph shows a big room crammed with people. Interestingly, once again all of them are women, seated in small groups around tables or standing in line along a long buffet table. As if caught by surprise, they look up for a moment, briefly interrupting their activities for the picture

to be taken. The photographer's message is clear: he records a shared meal as a social event organized by women. As such, it follows the standard visual formula used by the local press to depict social events, presenting the occasion as well attended and successful. It also propagates Pro Cultura Femminile's new-found role in organizing anti-sanction initiatives, illustrating "the contribution each woman can make, at this time, to the great endeavour of our nation", as a special edition of *Gazzetta del Popolo della Sera* on the twentieth day of the "economic siege" put it. Over the course of a few months, Pro Cultura Femminile moved to the frontline of the Fascist regime's anti-sanction propaganda. From January to March 1936, the association organized four more *merende*, no longer exhibitions but rather overtly conformist political demonstrations.

## Conclusion

Revisiting Pro Cultura Femminile's *Mostra Femminile d'Arte Decorativa Moderna* of 1932 and *L'Ora del The nella Casa Italiana* of 1935, has brought to light the instrumental role played by women in shaping the narrative of architecture in interwar Italy through their curatorial work on domestic spaces and customs. For a number of emancipated women, in a surprising turn, it was precisely the discourse on the modern home that offered an opportunity to "leave the home" to apply their curatorial, organizational, editorial, creative, and craft skills. Pro Cultura Femminile offered them a meeting point and a platform as its exhibitions and the discourse on the home gained momentum in the first half of the 1930s.

Exhibition making offered women a way to contribute to the modern home in Italy, both in discourse and in practice. By curating domesticity, Pro Cultura Femminile rendered the domestic public. In so doing, its members engaged with avant-garde culture and navigated increasing societal, economic and political pressures. It is not easy to gauge emancipatory activities of this period to determine whether they were conforming or subversive in relation to the Fascist

regime. The female cultural production stimulated by Pro Cultura Femminile gave women architectural agency, either independently or in collaboration with men. This agency, however, unfolded within the context of the Fascist regime's increasing colonial expansionism and autarky campaigns, and as a result, their exhibitions on the domestic were transformed into patriotic demonstrations.

The impact of these curatorial experiences from the 1930s became palpable after the fall of the Fascist regime. In 1946, a familiar group of artists and designers reconvened at Pro Cultura Femminile for the *Mostra di Arredamento "Il mobile standard"*. While no longer focused on female domestic culture, it was a leading exhibition dedicated to postwar reconstruction in Italy, seeking to address a pressing need: that of habitable homes and the furnishings they required.<sup>81</sup>

The exhibition, curated by Felice Casorati and organized by siblings Paola and Gino Levi-Montalcini, showcased design pieces by exhibitors from the 1930s shows, including Ada Bursi, Ettore Sottsass, and Carlo Mollino, as well as by new names. Pro Cultura Femminile played an important role in shaping visual and spatial narratives of domestic femininity.

Its pioneering 1930s exhibitions served as vital interfaces between creators, stimulating exchange and learning.

By revisiting these exhibitions, this chapter has uncovered the intersecting histories of the participating women artists, designers, craftswomen, and architects. Several of these women would go on to become important figures in the histories of art, design, and architecture. Even when no longer based in Turin, they often maintained a connection with Pro Cultura Femminile, returning to give talks on their work and feminist topics.<sup>82</sup>

- 1 Avon 1988, p. 47.
- 2 Dellapiana 2022, p. 73 note 72.
- 3 Ponti 1928, p. 7, In their subsequent leading positions as directors of the Triennale and editors in chief of *Domus*, Giuseppe Pagano advocated abolishing the distinction between so-called “high art” and decorative art, while Gio Ponti envisaged “a virtuous union between art, craftsmanship and industry” through the notion of *casa all’Italiana* (see also Avon 1988).
- 4 Avon 1988, p. 47; Cossetta 2000, p. 13.
- 5 Pansera 1978; Savorra 2005.
- 6 Noether 1982; De Grand 1976; De Grazia 1992.
- 7 Cossetta, 2000, pp. 13-14.
- 8 Meldini 1975.
- 9 For scholarship examining the often limited impact of restrictive policies towards women, see De Grand 1976, p. 947 and Noether 1982. In her article “Italian Women and Fascism: a Reevaluation”, Emiliana P. Noether questions how far Fascism, except for its propaganda, pursued a policy toward women that could be labeled uniquely “Fascist” considering traditional bias and economic pressures across Western Europe. Furthermore, Noether suggests that Fascist policies towards women found in reality little impact.
- 10 Cossetta 2000, p. 15. Katrin Cossetta gives an overview of the different genres of writing on the modern house and emerging types. Lidia Morelli, one of the most influential and prolific authors on the topic of the home, published a.o. *La casa che vorrei avere* (1931), *Come sistemare e governare la mia casa* (1932), *Mani alacri* (1933), *Per voi massaie d’Italia* (1938).
- 11 De Grand 1976, p. 948; Willson 2003, p. 19.
- 12 Arnold 2025; Bissett, Montealegre Beach 2025.
- 13 Dalla Mura 2017.
- 14 Article two of the organization’s statutes of 1916 stipulated its goal as follows: “Essa ha lo scopo di compiere e tener viva la coltura della donna, ed insieme di educarne la coscienza morale e civile a retti ed elevati ideali.” [Its purpose is to fulfill and keep alive women’s culture, and at the same time to educate their moral and civil conscience to upright and lofty ideals.] Archivio di Stato di Torino, section 334 Pro Cultura Femminile (PCF), mazzo (m) 1 fascicolo (f) 2.
- 15 For a report of the needs and discrimination of (young) women that sparked the founding of Pro Cultura Femminile, including limited educational and cultural opportunities for women and restricted access to public libraries, see Bersano Begey 1981.
- 16 Ciucci 1982, pp. 287–291; Rosso 1998. Michela Rosso describes how in a rapidly industrializing Turin, the aspiration of social advancement played out across informal local networks (tavern, café, or pub) as well as in “institutionalized” forms of socializing according to different callings, ranging from religious, political, sports associations to artistic ones. Rosso 1998, pp. 428–429.

- 17 Ciucci 1982, p. 288; D’Orsi 1998; Rosso 1998, p. 456.
- 18 See Baglione, Pace, 2023; Hecker, Ramsey-Portolano 2023; Bassanelli, Forino 2024.
- 19 Bergami 1979.
- 20 The library of the Società di Cultura was absorbed by the Circolo di cultura del Comitato provinciale torinese dei Sindacati fascisti professionisti ed artisti and the former members of the Società di Cultura were offered the possibility to join the Fascist Circolo di cultura in 1933, but there was little interest. Bergami 1979, p. 353.
- 21 Editorial 1933a, p. 327.
- 22 While operating under the Istituto di Coltura, the women organization’s name was aligned to Pro Coltura Femminile. The heading on the cover of the *Bollettino* changed to “Istituto Fascista di Coltura” in the last issue of 1929.
- 23 “A Torino abbiamo la ‘Società Pro Cultura Femminile’ che vive di vita particolarmente fervida sotto la presidenza della professoressa Lea Mei. Questa società ha importanza veramente eccezionale, e costituisce ormai il centro intellettuale più vivo della città”, in *Almanacco della donna Italiana* 1933, pp. 326–327.
- 24 See *Diploma di benemerenzza concesso al socie protettore sig. Cesarina Gualino*, Archivio di Stato di Torino, 334 PCF m15 f 25.
- 25 “Il più robustamente organizzato, il più evoluto e complesso, quello, insomma, che può servire di norma di ideale a molti altri”, in Editorial 1933a, p. 328.
- 26 For an overview of its library through the years see Pichetto 1995 and Maurin Farelle 1997, and for the activities by its music section, see D’Orsi 1987, p. 572.
- 27 In 1926, Pro Cultura Femminile moved to its new seat at Via Mercantini 3, providing them with enough space to organize public lecture and stage exhibitions.
- 28 Blonandin 2015, p. 18.
- 29 “Le singole mostre come le mostre essenzialmente femminili si fanno strada”, in Editorial 1930a, p. 1.
- 30 Blonandin 2015, p. 25.
- 31 For a detailed overview of Pro Cultura Femminile’s art exhibitions from 1930 to 1935, see Blonandin 2015, and from 1935 to 1945 see De Bernardis 2015.
- 32 “La Sezione artistica della Pro Coltura Femminile, allo scopo di far convergere lo studio e l’interesse della donna verso le nuove tendenze nel campo della decorazione e dell’ambientamento della casa, bandisce per il Maggio 1932 una Mostra Femminile per la decorazione della casa moderna.” Informational report signed by president Lea Mei, Archivio Pro Cultura Femminile, January 1930, Archivio di Stato di Torino, 334 PCF m59 f66.2.
- 33 “Questa nostra Mostra ha per scopo di incoraggiare la donna artista a studiare e risolvere in modo estetico e pratico il problema dell’ambientamento e della decorazione della casa moderna. Pertanto figureranno nella Mostra progetti di creazione d’ambiente e di particolari che concorrano all’abbellimento della casa, nonchè single attuazioni, quali mobile, tappeti, tende, stoffe, sopramobili,

piccolo sculture decorative, ceramiche, sistemi d'illuminazione ed anche quadri, purché adatti ad un determinate scopo decorative. Le Socie artiste che desiderano figurare tra le espositrici potranno ritirare in Segreteria la circolare-programma della Mostra", in Editorial 1932, p. 4.

34 "Per stabilire l'opportunità o mano di questa iniziativa in relazione allo spazio di cui dispone la Società", in Informational report signed by president Lea Mei, January 1930, Archivio di Stato di Torino, 334 PCF m59 f66.2.

35 See application forms and exhibition leaflet *Mostra d'Arte Decorativa Moderna*, 1932, Archivio di Stato di Torino, 334 PCF, m59 f66.2.

36 "Fra i maggiori artisti della città nostra, che più vivamente si interessano ai problemi dell'arte decorativa moderna, come pure i rappresentanti del giornalismo artistico", in Editorial 1932, p. 4.

37 Informational report signed by association president Lea Mei, January 1930, Archivio di Stato di Torino, 334 PCF, m59 f 66.2.

38 Editorial 1930b, p. 2.

39 Informational report signed by association president Lea Mei, January 1930, Archivio di Stato di Torino, 334 PCF, m59 f66.2.

40 Paola Levi-Montalcini, scheda di adesione n° 24, 1932, Archivio di Stato di Torino, 334 PCF m59 f66.2.

41 Marisa Mori, scheda di adesione n° 57, 1932, Archivio di Stato di Torino, 334 PCF, m59 f66.2. The archives also hold four promotional graphic works on paper in the Futurist style, on the theme of wine.

42 Jessie Boswell, scheda di adesione n° 30, 1932, Archivio di Stato di Torino, 334 PCF m59 f66.2.

43 Giorgina Lattes, scheda di adesione n° 5, 1932, Archivio di Stato di Torino, 334 PCF m59 f66.2.

44 "Che assomma in sè tanto buon gusto espresso nei modo più sobrio, elegante ed espressivo. Suoi i quadri, le ceramiche, i vari gingili e i tappeti e le diverse stoffe tessute da lei stessa e che hanno valso il plauso dei presenti", in *Una manifestazione artistica femminile – Il Segretario federale e il Podestà inaugurano la Mostra di arte decorativa moderna – Il successo e la quantità delle opere esposte*, 21 May 1932, newspaper clipping found in Archivio di Stato, 334 PCF m72, envelope 1931–32, newspaper and author not known.

45 "Un ingegnoso divano della Cometti che può servire anche come libreria e all'occorrenza anche da tavolino da tè", in *Una manifestazione artistica femminile – Il Segretario federale e il Podestà inaugurano la Mostra di arte decorativa moderna – Il successo e la quantità delle opere esposte*, 21 May 1932, newspaper clipping found in Archivio di Stato, 334 PCF m72, envelope 1931–32, newspaper and author not known. With a price tag of 1700 Lire, this intricate piece of furniture was the most expensive piece exhibited. See Paola Cometti, scheda di adesione n° 7, 1932, Archivio di Stato di Torino, 334 PCF m59 f66.2, also listing a work in textile (830 lire), a cushion (140 lire), drapes, and various drawings.

- 46 “Piccolo paradiso di sogni, di fantasticherie, di giochi”, in *Una manifestazione artistica femminile – Il Segretario federale e il Podestà inaugurano la Mostra di arte decorativa moderna – Il successo e la quantità delle opere esposte*, 21 May 1932, newspaper clipping found in Archivio di Stato, 334 PCF m72, envelope 1931–32, newspaper and author not known.
- 47 Lidia Morelli, scheda di adesione n° 9 and extra handwritten list of woven clutches and pouches, and embroidered napkins, 1932, Archivio di Stato di Torino, 334 PCF, m59 f66.2.
- 48 Fides Testi, letter with personal letterhead dated 11 May 1932 and postcard from Rome to *Pro Cultura Femminile*, 11 May 1932, Archivio di Stato di Torino, 334 PCF m59 f 66.2.
- 49 On Testi see a.o. Morelli 1932a; 1932c; 1932d; 1932e and on Rampolla see Morelli 1932b.
- 50 On Rampolla see Morelli 1933, p. 192; on Testi see Morelli 1933, p. 194.
- 51 “Una rivelazione sono stati per le visitatrici d’una piccola ma buona mostra femminile d’arte decorative tenutasi recentemente in Torino, di cui ‘Casa Bella’ darà più ampia notizia. Peccato che al grande pannello ‘L’Albero’ occorressero più sfondo e più spazio. Se l’uno e l’altro non mancheranno altrove, i pannelli della Rampolla saranno destinati a decorare la casa moderna quanto un bel pezzo di pittura: tanto i tessuti lisci, squamosi, rugose, vari di tinte e motivi, combinati con sì ricco senso coloristico raggiungono in effetto la pittura vera”, in Morelli 1932b, p. 44.
- 52 Textile designers and craftswomen exhibiting at the 1932 *Mostra Femminile d’Arte Decorativa Moderna* also featured in Morelli’s *Mani Alacri* (1933), among them Alda Besso (later known as Gio Golia), Pia di Valmarana, and Albertina Sampietro.
- 53 See also *La Casa Bella*’s special edition *Ricami d’Italia* 1931.
- 54 Letters from *La Casa Bella* dated 27 January 1932 and *Lidel* dated 13 February 1932, signed by Anna Gaggiotti del Pozzo, former member of *Pro Cultura Femminile*, Archivio di Stato di Torino, 334 PCF m59 f66.2.
- 55 “Le quali seppero creare un insieme armonicamente improntato ad un gusto squisitamente moderno, attuando così un’atmosfera adatta ad accogliere le varie opere esposte; il che contribuì non piccolo misura al buon esito di questa nostra seconda mostra d’arte”, *Notizie, la nostra mostra femminile d’arte decorativa moderna*, in Editorial 1932–1933, p. 6. For an overview of the prizes see *Verbale della seduta per l’assegnazione dei premi delle Patronesse*, Archivio di Stato, 334 PCF m59, f66.2
- 56 Editorial 1932–1933, p. 7.
- 57 “Le sculture delle signore *Formica e Grande*, le vetrografie di *Rosy Sacerdote*, i pannelli decorativi della signora *Rampolla*, i ricami della contessa *Pia di Valmarana* e i lavori della sig.ra *Buratti Cocito*”, *Notizie, la nostra mostra femminile d’arte decorativa moderna*, in Editorial 1932–1933, p. 7.
- 58 “La folla dei visitatori e particolarmente delle visitatrici non si stancava di ammirare, commentare e anche... desiderare”, *Una manifestazione artistica*

*femminile – Il Segretario federale e il Podestà inaugurano la Mostra di arte decorativa moderna – Il successo e la quantità delle opere esposte*, newspaper clipping found in Archivio di Stato, 334 PCF m72, envelope 1931–32, newspaper and date of publication not known.

59 Mussatti 2019.

60 See “Mostra decorativa dei fiori e della frutta inaugurata da S.E. il Prefetto. La fervida adesione del Segretario federale”, in *Gazzetta del Popolo della Sera*, 3 June 1933; “Fiori e frutta: ornamenti della casa. La Mostra decorativa inaugurata da S.E. il Prefetto”, in *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 4 June 1933; A. Richetti, “Fra tavolino frutta e fiori”, in *Gazzetta del Popolo della Sera*, 15 June 1933; “Una Mostra di decorazione inaugurata da S.E. Il Prefetto”, in *La Stampa*, 4 June 1933, original citation: *La pianta e il fiore nell’arredamento*.

61 Editorial 1933b, p. 51. The course had 160 participants.

62 The protocol “Chiusura della mostra: La Pianta e I Fiori nell’Arredamento” lists 8 medals offered by different institutions, Archivio di Stato, 334 PCF, m59 f66.4.

63 The newspapers covering opening events at Pro Cultura Femminile often start by listing all important guests attending, from royals, to nobility, to politicians, and generally important or representative members of society. Interestingly, one newspaper lists the presence of two architects: Gino Levi-Montalcini, brother of participating Society member Paola Levi-Montalcini, and Arturo Midana as attendees. See “Una Mostra di decorazione inaugurata da S.E. Il Prefetto”, in *La Stampa*, 4 June 1933.

64 “Tutti gli anni, a fine primavera, la Società di Coltura Femminile improvvisa nelle accoglienti sale piccole mostre di ambientazione nelle quali le grazie squisite e le più poetiche o insieme golose intimità delle mense hanno diverse, colorite, profumate e saporite espressioni d’arte. Ricordiamo certi graziosi tavolinetti con servizio di caffè e latte, angoli di stanza fioriti, candide e splendenti anticamere per scapoli ornate di panelli un po’ peccaminosi – nudità elegantemente casoratiane – e salotti costumatissimi per le nonnine amabili, ilari e cordiali per i nipotini fracassosi...”, “Tavole signorilmente imbandite da dame gentili ed artisti geniali”, in *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 17 June 1934, p. 8.

65 On the *Mostra Femminile Italiana di Fotografia*, see Sorrentino 2023.

66 “Né siano eventualmente trattenute le socie dal timore di non avere da sfoggiare gran lusso di cristallerie e die argenterie, ché il nostro concorso dev’essere una gara di buon gusto, non di sfarzo,” in Editorial 1934, p. 2.

67 “Tavole signorilmente imbandite da dame gentili ed artisti geniali”, in *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 17 June 1934, p. 8.

68 “Il tema prescelto è molto ampio e si presta alla presentazione così di soli tavolini, come di ambienti, angoli di salotto, di sala da pranzo, di giardino, di veranda, di terrazza, ecc.,” in Editorial 1935, pp. 1–2.

69 The exhibition leaflet shows the following entry for *Tè numero 2 (cenni d’architettura interna)*: “Italo Cremona, pittore – Carlo Mollino, architetto – Signorine

Enne-Enne.” At first sight, the team has, like all other participating teams, female members. “Signorine Enne-Enne” is however not a name. Punning on the abbreviation N.N., which stands for the Latin *nomen nescio*, or name not known, Cremona and Mollino denote the female part of their team as anonymous. There were single contributions by Paola Levi Montalcini, Bianca Tavella, and Lalla Romano. For a photograph of Romano’s *The del musicista*, see Ria 1993, p. 292, although here attributed to the 1940s.

70 “L’architetto ing. Dado Bonicelli sta concentrando la trasformazione delle sale sociali, così che la Mostra stessa possa essere accolta in ambiente del tutto Nuovo, della massima originalità. Anche il cortile che dà accesso alla sala di via Cernaia 11 sarà mutato in un ridente giardino, per modo che i visitatori potranno, accedendo alla Mostra, sostare in ambiente fiorito e gaio”, *L’ora del tè nella casa Italiana, Mostra di ambientazione e di tavole decorate*, in Editorial 1935, p. 2.

71 M. Bernardi, “La Mostra dell’ambientazione alla Pro Cultura Femminile”, in *La Stampa*, 8 June 1935, p. 8. “‘L’ora del tè nella casa italiana’ Well-chosen title [...]. The *Casa all’Italiana*, as Gio Ponti once wrote, wants with its simplicity to salute us for our customs, wants to offer our spirit restful visions of peace.”

72 “Se dunque l’atto di sorbire una tazza di tè è innegabilmente identico a Los Angeles come a Tokio, il modo, viceversa, di godere di quest’attimo, nella nostra casa può essere unicamente nostro”, M. Bernardi, “La Mostra dell’ambientazione alla Pro Cultura Femminile”, in *La Stampa*, 8 June 1935, p. 8.

73 “Il tè è un pretesto, la giustificazione di una sosta e di un ristoro che un tempo non paventava di chiamarsi merenda e che l’esotismo della bevanda di moda aveva relegato fra le anticaglie, lasciandola tutt’al più a retaggio dei più piccini. Qui non si sente parlare che di merende e di spuntini”, M.D., “L’ora del tè nella casa Italiana”, in *La Stampa*, 14 June 1935, p. 2.

74 “Un pretesto il tè, l’abbiamo detto, tanto è vero che qui si parla nientemeno che di ‘karkadé’, la bevanda della nostra Somalia che coi tè ha molti punti di contatto. E certamente per omaggio a questa nuova bevanda e più ancora alla nostra bella colonia”, M.D., “L’ora del tè nella casa Italiana”, in *La Stampa*, 14 June 1935, p. 2.

75 “Quella solidissima tavola tonda dalla larga fascia di paglia, che, circondata di panchetti di paglia, si direbbe ospitare una comitiva di minuscoli bagnanti, seminudi, abbronzati dal sole e affamati come sa affamare il bagno...”, L. Morelli, “Tavole preparate per la merenda di grandi e piccini”, in *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 17 June 1935.

76 For a detailed analysis of Mollino’s and Cremona’s installation, see Verhaeghe 2024, pp. 112, 123–134.

77 Lea Mei, president of Pro Cultura Femminile, echoes Mussolini’s words “Alle sanzioni economiche opporremo la nostra disciplina, la nostra sobrietà, il nostro spirito di sacrificio” on a number of occasions, proposing Pro Cultura’s initiatives as their practical translation. See “Il Gerarca alle donne”, in *La Stampa della Sera*, 25 October 1935, p. 4, and “Propaganda attraverso la radio – Mostra di oggetti –

“Settimana di prodotti italiani”, in *Gazzetta del Popolo della Sera*, 18 November 1935, p. 1; see also “I doveri della donna italiana illustrati dal Segretario federale alla ‘Pro Coltura Femminile’”, in *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 25 October 1935.

78 Willson 2003, p. 19.

79 “L’insulso tè delle cinque. L’iniziativa della Pro Coltura Femminile per sostituire, con frutta, pasticcini e vini dorati, la scimmiottesca abitudine di una volta”, in *La Stampa della Sera*, 20 December 1935, p. 2.

80 Verhaeghe 2025.

81 Alaimo 2018, pp. 7–8.

82 See the “Risveglio Femminile” talk delivered by Rita Levi-Montalcini on 21 April 1971, and Lalla Romano’s presentations of her written work in 1952 and 1992 at Pro Cultura Femminile.

## Bibliography

- D. Alaimo, *Mobili di architetti e progettisti torinesi 1945-1965*, Turin, Deposito Culturale, 2018, pp. 7-21.
- D. Arnold (ed.), *Women and architectural history: the monstrous regiment then and now*, London, Routledge, 2025.
- A. Avon, "La casa all'italiana": moderno, ragione e tradizione nell'organizzazione dello spazio domestico dal 1927 al 1930, in G. Ernesti, *La costruzione dell'utopia: architetti e urbanisti nell'Italia Fascista*, Rome, Edizioni Lavoro, 1988, pp. 47-66.
- C. Baglione, S. Pace (eds.), *Al femminile: l'architettura, le arti e la storia*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2023.
- M. Bassanelli, I. Forino (eds.), *Gli spazi delle donne. Casa, lavoro, società*, Bologna, Derive Approdi, 2024.
- G. Bergami, "La 'Società di Cultura' nella vita civile e intellettuale torinese", in *Studi Piemontese*, 1979, vol. VIII no. 2, pp. 345-357.
- M. Bersano Begey, *I settant'anni della Pro Cultura Femminile, 1911-1981*, Turin, 1981, pp. 1-2.
- T. Bissett, M. P. Montealegre Beach, *Women, Welfare, Labor: The Architecture of Philanthropy* [Call for papers], Society of Architectural Historians 2026 Annual International Conference, 2025.
- A. Blonandin, *Le Mostre d'Arte della Pro Cultura Femminile a Torino 1930-1935*, [Master's thesis], Università degli Studi di Torino, 2015.
- G. Ciucci, "Torino negli anni venti: qualità dei 'frammenti di vita' e razionalità della società Anonima", in F. Zeri (ed.), *Storia dell'arte italiana: Dal Medioevo al Novecento*, Turin, Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1982, pp. 287-299.
- K. Cosseta, *Ragione e sentiment dell'abitare. La casa e l'architettura nel pensiero femminile tra le due guerre*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2000.
- M. Dalla Mura, "Storie di mediazione: le donne e la cultura del design in Italia", in R. Riccini (ed.), *Angelica e Bradamante le Donne del Design*, Padova, Il Poligrafo, 2017, pp. 91-94.
- A. De Bernardis, *Le Mostre d'Arte della Pro Cultura Femminile di Torino 1935-1945*, [Master's thesis], Università degli Studi di Torino, 2015.
- A. De Grand, "Women under Italian Fascism", in *The Historical Journal*, 1976, 19, pp. 947-968.
- V. De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1992.
- E. Dellapiana, *Il design e l'invenzione del Made in Italy*, Turin, Einaudi, 2022.
- A. D'Orsi, "Profilo", in V. Castronovo (ed.), *Torino*, Bari, Laterza, 1987.
- A. D'Orsi, "La vita culturale e i gruppi intellettuali", in N. Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino VIII Dalla Grande Guerra alla Liberazione (1915-1945)*, Turin, Giulio Einaudi editore, 1998, pp. 501-622.
- Editorial, "Esposizioni d'Arte Femminile", in *Attività Femminile Sociale*, April 1930a, 8, p. 1.

- Editorial, "Amiche dell'arte", in *Bollettino della Società Pro Cultura Femminile*, 1930b, 2, Torino, Stabilimento Tipografico Nazionale, p. 2.
- Editorial, "La nostra II° mostra d'arte", in *Bollettino della Società Pro Cultura Femminile*, 1932, 5, Turin, Tipografia Graziano e Borsatino, p. 4.
- Editorial, "Notizie, la nostra mostra femminile d'arte decorativa moderna", in *Bollettino della Società Pro Cultura Femminile*, 1932-1933, 4, Turin, Tipografia Graziano e Borsatino, pp. 6-7.
- Editorial, *Almanacco della donna italiana*, Florence, Bemporad, 1933a, pp. 326-328.
- Editorial, *La Società "Pro Cultura Femminile" di Torino*, 1933b, p. 51, [https://bct.comune.torino.it/sites/default/files/articoli/2020-02/procultura\\_1933.pdf](https://bct.comune.torino.it/sites/default/files/articoli/2020-02/procultura_1933.pdf)
- Editorial, "Il nostro concorso di quest'anno", in *Bollettino della Società Pro Cultura Femminile*, 1934, 9-12, Turin, Tipografia Graziano e Borsatino, p. 2.
- Editorial, "L'ora del the nella casa Italiana, Mostra di ambientazione e di tavole decorate", in *Bollettino della Società Pro Cultura Femminile*, 1935, 9-12, Turin, Stabilimento Tipografico Nazionale, pp. 1-2.
- S. Hecker, C. Ramsey-Portolano (eds.), *Female Cultural Production in Modern Italy. Literature, Art and Intellectual History*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.
- B. Maurin Farelle, "La Pro Cultura Femminile (Turin, 1911)", in *Chroniques Italiennes*, 1997, 50/51, pp. 145-174.
- P. Meldini, *Sposa e madre esemplare. Ideologia e politica della donna e della famiglia durante il fascismo*, Florence, Guaraldi Editore, 1975.
- L. Morelli, "Interpretazione di due disegni", in *La Casa Bella*, 52, 1932a, pp. 39-41.
- L. Morelli, "Nuovi arazzi Italiani di Caterina Rampolla", in *La Casa Bella*, 1932b, 54, pp. 43-45.
- L. Morelli, "Cinque modelli di trine", in *La Casa Bella*, 55, 1932c, pp. 41-43.
- L. Morelli, "Ancora: le belle trine", in *La Casa Bella*, 56, 1932d, pp. 43-46.
- L. Morelli, "Il ricamo sulla tavola", in *La Casa Bella*, 58, 1932e, pp. 40-44.
- L. Morelli, "Arte femminile (due progetti per tenda del pittore Giorgio Peri - due progetti per cuscino di Fides Testi, con una tavola a colori)", in *La Casa Bella*, 59, 1932f, pp. 42-45.
- L. Morelli, *Mani Alacri Libro di Lavori Femminile*, Turin, S. Lattes & C., 1933.
- M. Mussatti, *L'ora del the nella casa Italiana*, [unito.academia.edu](http://unito.academia.edu), 2019.
- E.P. Noether, "Italian Women and Fascism: a Reevaluation", in *Italian Quarterly*, 1982, 22, pp. 68-80.
- A. Pansera, "Le Triennali del Regime: 1930-1940", in A. Pansera, *Storia e cronaca della Triennale*, Milan, Longanesi, 1978, pp. 34-59.
- M.T. Pichetto, "Donne e cultura attraverso il Novecento: la Società Pro Cultura Femminile", in C. De Benedetti (ed.), *Accademie, Salotti, Circoli nell'Arco Alpino Occidentale. Il loro contributo alla formazione di una nuova cultura tra Ottocento e Novecento*, proceedings of the 18th Colloque franco-italien, Turin, Centro Studi Piemontesi, 1995, pp. 175-188.
- G. Ponti, "La casa all'italiana", in *Domus*, 1, 1928, p. 7.

- A. Ria (ed.), *Lalla Romano pittrice*, Turin, Giulio Einaudi, 1993, p. 292.
- Ricami d'Italia*, Milan, Gustavo Modiano, 1931.
- M. Rosso, "La crescita della città", in N. Tranfaglia (ed.), *Storia di Torino VIII Dalla Grande Guerra alla Liberazione (1915-1945)*, Turin, Giulio Einaudi editore, 1998, pp. 427-471.
- M. Savorra, "“Perfetti modelli di dimore’: la casa alle Triennale”, in G. L. Ciaga, G. Tonon (eds.), *Le case nella Triennale: dal Parco al QT8*, Milan, Electa, 2005, pp. 106-125.
- C. Sorrentino, "La I Mostra femminile italiana di fotografia (1934): contesti di un’iniziativa pionieristica", in *piano b*, 8, 1, 2023, pp. 45-64, DOI:10.6092/issn.2531-9876/19575.
- G. Verhaeghe, *Carlo Mollino’s male Cabinet: Staging interior Masculinities (1935-1945)*, doctoral dissertation, ETH Zurich, 2024.
- G. Verhaeghe, *Italian Domesticity Under Siege: Economic Sanctions and the Ritual of Afternoon Tea in the Italian Home (1935)* in *Domesticity Under Siege* book of abstracts International Architectural Conference, 2-4 April 2025, p. 28, ISBN: 978-1-0369-1432-5, <https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/domesticityundersiege/publications/>.
- P. Willson, "Italy", in K. Passmore (ed.), *Women, Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919-45*, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 2003, pp. 11-32.