

The “Committee for the Monument to the Artillery Corps” was established in January 1926 under the high patronage of the Duke and Duchess of Aosta and headquartered in Turin, Via Verdi 1. Its purpose was to build and donate to the city a monument to celebrate the Artillery Corps. The Committee was chaired by General Alessandro Gorla.

The reason behind the choice of the city was apparent: Piedmont was the cradle of the Artillery Corps and the place witnessing their first achievements; also, Piedmont headquartered some major metalworking industries, highly contributing to the production and technological development of weaponry.

Celebrating the deeds of the glorious Corps worthily, the hard work of the heavy industry workers, and the bravery of the Gunners were the inspiring principles and values underlying the monument erection and the promoting Committee’s intentions. Sculptor Pietro Canonica (Moncalieri 1869-Rome 1959) was awarded the contract: he was a former Tabacchi’s pupil and a graduate from the Turin’s Academy of Fine Arts, a Senator of the Kingdom, and an internationally renowned artist who also crafted the Monument to the Italian Cavalry Soldier (1923), currently located in Piazza Castello, Turin.

The estimated date for the unveiling was April 1928 to coincide with the celebrations for the 400th anniversary of Emanuele Filiberto’s birth and the tenth anniversary of the Victory. Sculptor Canonica and Gen. Gorla agreed that the ideal location for the work was Piazzale Duca d’Aosta, an area of scenic beauty where three major avenues converged: Corso Trieste, Corso Trento, and Corso Duca d’Aosta. The monument was meant to face the entrance of the National Stadium (today replaced by the Polytechnic building) in Corso Vinzaglio (now Corso Duca degli Abruzzi). In the Prince of Piedmont’s opinion, instead, the area defined by the Committee was too decentralized; he considered the city center a much more suitable location for the monument, as he repeatedly stressed through his adjutant and collaborator Ambrogio Clerici, insisting on the need to have it erected in Piazza Solferino.

When asked, the Municipality warmly welcomed the initiative. The Committee then sent a sketch of the monument to the local authorities. In February 1926, the Hygiene & Building Commission asked for further details like a plaster model or a scale drawing of the project to properly assess the suitability of the sites recommended.

Canonica started working. He first conceived the plaster model of a rectangular plan arch, which later changed into an octagonal plan. The model is today on display at the Piero Canonica Museum in Rome. The Commission approved the work also “in consideration of the trustworthy and renowned artist and his valuable work.” However, a different location was identified to the one initially envisaged: this was at the intersection of Corso Vittorio and Corso Massimo d’Azeglio, close to an elevated portion of Valentino Park. Yet, this site required massive and expensive work to flatten the area and cut some trees.

Later the Commission opted for the area at the intersection of Corso Cairoli and Corso Vittorio Emanuele, which was considered more suitable, both in terms of costs and scenic beauty. The place was framed by the greenery of the park and close to the Monumental Bridge Re Umberto. Within walking distance of the monument site, one of the first examples of Italian Rationalism was being built: “Palazzo Gualino” by architects Levi Montalcini and G. Pagano

The project submitted to the Commission for assessment consisted of a votive arch with an octagonal plan, more extensive than the one eventually erected. Decorations were also simplified to cut costs. Two large cannons originally envisaged on top were removed, and a bombard replaced the giant central statue in front of the crownwork. The two sides were also modified: soon after the unveiling, two fountains replaced the high-relief decors, even though they were never operated. The general prefectural commissioner C.A. Donato Etna approved the project and the new location by a decree dated 23 September 1926. Works started at the end of May 1926 with the earthwork needed to lay the foundations; Canonica intended to complete them by mid-April of the following year. The firm Cavagnino from Rezzato, Brescia, was

commissioned for the stonework; the firm was headquartered in the vicinity of Botticino, an area famous for its limestone yards bearing the same name. The Firm Albino Guilizoni was instead commissioned for the building work.

From the very beginning, the erection works were slow. After just one month, the municipality engineering department reported a substantial lack of activity on the site that was then considered a “useless encumbrance on the public land.” And it could not have been otherwise: when the police officers sent by the Municipality visited the Sculptor’s workshop in Via Santa Giulia no. 52 to understand the reason for such inactivity, they found nobody. Canonica had left for Turkey 3 weeks before for “professional reasons” and asked Sculptor Luigi Squarzini to replace him. In July 1927, Canonica hastened to explain to the *Podestà* (i.e., the principal authority of the City) to have instructed the foreman to start the erection works quickly; he apologized for the delay, apparently due to a misunderstanding between the building firm and the foreman himself. Canonica then reassured the city authorities and stated that he would complete the main architectural work by March of the following year. Actually, the works started the following autumn. However, the *Podestà*, who was not fully convinced about the sculptor’s promises, while positively assessing the work progress, reminded Canonica about the schedule agreed upon.

The Podestà’s concerns were legitimate, considering that in April 1928, he restated with the Committee the very slow rate of progress of the site. As the inauguration of the International Exhibition was approaching (1 May 1928) and several foreigners would have visited the place, the authorities asked if the fencing surrounding the monument might have been removed. After seven months, the main structures and decor were already completed but the statues were still lacking. Concerns were raised not only by the technical difficulties. The massive work drained the coffers of the Committee. To face the expenditures, the Podestà, Admiral Count Luigi Balbo Bertone di Sambuy was asked to fulfill the promise he made in the spring 1927 to support the project financially. The emerging financial difficulties were delaying the completion of the work: the unveiling ceremony had to be postponed by a date to be determined. A solution had to be found to break the deadlock. In November 1928, the Committee Vice-President, the Commander of the Royal Military Academy and the School of Applied Military Studies, submitted again a funding request to the Prefectorial Commissioner of Turin, Umberto Ricci: the amount required was 100,000.00 ITL and would cover the costs of the earthwork and foundations. The answer by the Commissioner was vague, and he denied having learned about previous promises; despite acknowledging the relevance of the patriotic project, he stated that the Administration had already made available the erection site without providing any funding for the project.

After replying with such a disappointing answer to the Committee, the Commissioner wanted to investigate the awkward situation and asked Sambuy for clear explanations on the promises made, if any. However, this was no solution to the problem.

In the meantime, Sculptor Canonica continued with his work. In November 1928, as instructed by the Ministry of War, the Municipality’s Engineering Department delivered 7000 kgs of bronze for forging cannons. The metal was taken from the Military Arsenal and was meant to be used for the castings. In the run-up to Christmas 1928, the Committee again insisted on their funding request.

In March 1929, the Municipality informed a grateful Gen. Sasso that following a budget-balancing, the required funds would have been provided. The funding, however, could not be as substantial as initially envisaged. In fact, a “a large amount of money had already been invested in a monument for the Victims of War of Turin” (i.e., the Lighthouse of Victory - *Faro della Vittoria* -, a statue donated by Giovanni Agnelli, located on Maddalena hill and unveiled in May 1928).

In November 1929, the *Podestà* assured that the amount of 50,000.00 ITL was already in payment; an additional 50,000.00 ITL would be available to the Committee before June 1930. In December 1929, General Sasso thanked the mayor for his generous contribution. As a president of the Committee, he will receive the additional 50,000.00 ITL directly from the newly elected *Podestà* Paolo di Thaon di Revel on 15 April 1930.

In the meantime, Canonica completed and placed all the statues and decorations planned, albeit in a reduced and simplified number compared to the plaster model approved four years earlier. Some essential building finishings were still to be made to complete the work: the asphaltting of the terrace, which is not visible from the outside, located on the extrados of the arch, the rainwater drainage works, and the wooden doors for the two symmetrical rooms built inside the monument; an additional expenditure of 11,200.00 ITL was necessary. Less than one month after the inauguration, given the persistent lack of funds by the Committee, the municipality quickly covered the additional costs again (Resolution of May 17, 1930).

Everything was then ready for the fateful day of the unveiling on June 15, 1930. The solemn ceremony would be held in the presence of the Sovereigns. The day coincides with the 12th anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of the river Piave when a massive and devastating use of artillery weapons determined the successful outcome of the fight. Turin was thus enriched with its own votive arch: although modest in size and a casual combination of styles and variety of memorabilia, the monument was well framed in that evocative glimpse of *Valentino*. The work was erected in a rapidly changing city that had recently housed the last prestigious International Exhibition from May to September 1928.

As the regime's propaganda encouraged physical exercise, new sports facilities were constructed in record time. A new Stadium, and indoor and outdoor swimming pools were meant to partially replace the old 1911 Stadium in Corso Montevecchio, in front of which the Committee originally suggested erecting the Arch.

On a project signed by architect Piacentini, whole districts were demolished along the axis of a "new road" - via Roma - wanted by Charles Emmanuel to enlarge the Savoy dukedom's Capital southwards. Piazza Castello thus lost its unique baroque character when the "Torre Littoria" skyscraper by Melis de Villa was erected. Another important city monument was almost completed, the Angelica fountain in Piazza Solferino, to be inaugurated in October of the same year.

The arch had recently been inaugurated, but already in April of the following year, the company executing the stone works submitted a 38,000.00 ITL estimate to the *Podestà* for the construction of two decorative fountains to be installed on the two sides. However, Canonica still did not consider his work completed and insisted on the realization of the fountains to give his monument "life and color in such a wonderful green corner." Canonica made a drawing and a plaster model of the fountains shaped as a Roman ship prow and to be built in polished porphyry with water-jets from bronze Medusa decorations. The water from the fountains is collected in two polished syenite basins. a full-scale model of the fountains would be made by Cavagnino under the direction of Canonica before actually building them: this shall be the last modification of the monument.

Leonardo Mastrippolito

## THE RESTORATION WORKS

Since the 1930s, to most city inhabitants strolling along the river banks, the Arch at the entrance of the beloved city park was simply known as the "Valentino Arch." Even today, not many people know that the access door from Corso Vittorio to the city's green heart is a Tribute to the Artillery Corps.

As many other historical snapshots gradually consigned to oblivion despite having been in full sight for over seventy years, the Arch inevitably started showing the signs of aging. This lasted until some years ago, when the precious intervention by the *Associazione Amici dei Beni Culturali Piemontesi* (the Piedmontese Association of Cultural Heritage Supporters) gave him a second youth, returning him to the original splendor of its unveiling on June 15, 1930.

The restoration of the Monument to the Artillery Corps was a project framed within the patronage project aimed at the protection and enhancement of the regional cultural heritage. The initiative was developed by the Association chaired by Mr. Fabrizio Benintendi, a lawyer, and based on previous and similar restoration activities implemented in the city, among which the Corpus Domini Cathedral and the Gobetti Theater are outstanding. In 2004 the Association signed an agreement with the Municipality to raise the required funds and commission the works.

Within the frame of the fund-raising campaign, the contribution by FIAT was vital since the very preliminary stage. The Group agreed to finance the restoration works and, in change, asked for having their advertising boards displayed on the scaffoldings. Besides being an important advertising opportunity for the Corporate, the city could take advantage of the occasion to renovate a symbol of its cultural heritage at no cost to the community.

A third party, the *Compagnia Italiana di Conservazione* (Italian Association for Conservation) was commissioned to carry out the works. The association had long been identified as an expert for partnership by the *Associazione Amici dei Beni Culturali Piemontesi* (Piedmontese Association of Cultural Heritage Supporters) and was commissioned to carry out the first surveys on the monument at the beginning of 2004; several damages were highlighted in the structure and works of art. All sculptures revealed heavy signs of wear and corrosion from urban pollution. The color of the outer surfaces exposed to weathering changed to green; on the inside, there was an accumulation of black residuals generated by decay over all the surfaces not exposed to rain and within the crevices.

The Arch also suffered numerous acts of vandalism over the years. Some bronze elements were damaged, in particular, the sculptures at a street level. The stone of the base was strongly compromised, with serious disintegration of the material, and a dark coat of dust and pollutants covered almost the entire monument.

The restoration works were carried out by the *Compagnia Italiana di Conservazione* (Italian Association for Conservation). The restorers used special techniques and modern equipment for the cleaning and restoration to maintain the project's original features of the and the materials' characteristics. The works started after a scrupulous collection of project papers, historical literature, and photographs and were completed in spring 2005 thus revealing the original beauty of the Monument to the Artillery Corps. Although the monument will probably continue to be known as the "Valentino Arch," the city's inhabitants will hardly be able to walk by ignoring its magnificence.

#### RESTAURATION WORKS OF THE MONUMENTO TO THE ARTILLERY CORPS

**Commissioned by:** Associazione Amici dei Beni Culturali Piemontesi

**Works by:** Compagnia Italiana di Conservazione

**Sponsor:** FIAT, with advertising rights

**Project by:** Compagnia Italiana di Conservazione, Studio Zanetta

**Authorization and supervision by:**

- Soprintendenza per i beni Architettonici e per i Paesaggio del

Piemonte - Daniela Biancolini

- Soprintendenza per il patrimonio Storico, Artistico e

Etnoantropologico per il Piemonte - Bruno Ciliento

**Site Manager:** Riccardo Zanetta

**Diagnosis:** CSG Palladio di Paolo Cornale

**Restorer:** Gianguido Dragoni

**Geology Consultant:** Ursula Perrone

The ARTILLERY CORPS, the Monument, and Turin

In May 1923, some Artillery officers decided to set up some initiatives to celebrate the history and deeds of their Corps. The memories of World War I - still highly vivid in their minds - inspired their project: the final victory was also achieved thanks to the substantial contribution of the Artillery Corps. Two proposals were put forward:

- releasing a general history of the Italian Artillery, which started being written in 1930 under the supervision of Gen. Carlo Montù and was published on August 2, 1934;
- having a commemorative plaque attached to a wall of the Palace of Venaria, the place giving birth to the first Artillery Units – which soon seemed inadequate and was replaced by the monument's project.

A Committee was thus set up to commission the work and to define the monument location.

The Committee awarded the contract to Pietro Canonica, a sculptor from Turin and internationally renowned for his works. He crafted numerous works in Italy and abroad, including the monument to the Italian Cavalry Soldier located in Piazza Castello. Canonica made a plaster model inspired by the architecture of triumphal arches, with an octagonal plan and enriched by statues, allegorical decorations and gunnery reproductions to represent all the Corps' specialties. The location was undisputed: the monument had to be erected in Turin for the many history events closely linked to the Artillery Corps, as detailed below.

Until 1600 the Artillery Corps did not exist as a separate fighting unit, and bombardiers were not considered an integral part of the war community. The Corps started to officially become part of the Army in Piedmont with the Royal Decree of 20 July 1625, by which Duke Charles Emmanuel I established the first Bombardier Company. Later, in 1697 Victor Amadeus II constituted the Gunners Battalion. The first date is carved on the monument cornice, while the second is engraved on the "arrow" of the current Artillery coat of arms. In 1734, a Royal Decree by Charles Emmanuel III raised the battalion to a regiment. In 1739 Artillery was granted their first two coats of arms: one as a "battalion" and one as a "*Colonnella*" - i.e., the word used in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in France and Piedmont to define the first company of a regiment led by a Colonel. However, the most significant event was the establishment of the "Regie Scuole Teoriche e Pratiche di Artiglieria e Fortificazione" (The Royal School of Theoretical and Practical Studies in Artillery and Fortification) of Turin in 1739 for the professional training of the Artillery Officers. In 1775, King Victor Amadeus III constituted the Royal Artillery Corps, which in 1784 became a brigade with its own "orderly coat of arms."

When Piedmont had to face the Napoleonic storm, this was its military establishment; at the end of the war the "Royal Artillery Corps" was reconstituted under the guidance of Prince Charles Albert - "Grand Master of Artillery" - and new equipment adopted. In March 1848, the Artillery Corps received the first tricolor flag

and took part in all the following Wars of Independence. The Unification of Italy was achieved by decree of May 4, 1861, which led to the constitution of the first Italian Army; the Artillery Corps - besides the inclusion of the pre-existing Sardinian Army regiments - was expanded with new units consisting of batteries from the pre-unitary States.

Between 1840 and 1870, the most significant progress in weapon technology was made, such as the invention of the breechloading cannons and the rifling of the barrels. Such advances resulted in the adoption of bursting nose-coned shells that revolutionized the Corps' technology. The inventor was General Cavalli, an Artillery Officer from the Royal Artillery and Engineers Corps Academy.

No other city in Italy like Turin might boast of having witnessed the most significant national history events, all closely linked to the Artillery Corps. Most of such events took place in Turin. The city thus became a prime candidate for hosting the monument inspired by the historical tradition and the glorious deeds of the Corps. The motives were twofold, both historical and ethical. After consultation, the city administration warmly welcomed the initiative; in 1926, the Building Commission approved Canonica's plaster model. The location was at the entrance of Valentino Park, close to the Re Umberto monumental bridge at the intersection of Corso Vittorio and Corso Cairoli. Works started in May 1927 and should have been completed by 15 June of the following year to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the end of war. The erection of the monument was delayed by several issues, including its financing, and was completed only at the end of May 1930.

At the beginning of June, everything was ready for the unveiling ceremony, which was solemnly celebrated on June 15 in the presence of Their Royal Majesties.

Edmondo Paganelli

#### A Chronology of the Artillery Corps

- 30 July 1625 – A decree by Charles Emmanuel of Savoy states that the Bombardiers will be part of the Militia as a separate Corps. This is officially considered the date of the Corps constitution.
- 27 August 1774 – Constitution of the Royal Artillery Corps.
- 6 January 1815 – The Corps is divided into five units: Corps Artillery (HQ, General Battalions/Schools/Factories Staff), Local Artillery (mobilization), Detachable Artillery (quick field response), Royal Artillery of Sardinia, Administration Artillery (office staff). The towing of weapons and materiel became a Service of the Corps, known as "*Treno d'Artiglieria*."
- 8 April 1831 – Constitution of the Horse-mounted Batteries, known as "*Voloire*".
- 1849 – The Corps is constantly evolving. During the *Risorgimento*, additional artillery units from the pre-unification States, such as Lombardy, are incorporated.
- 1855 – Three groups take part in the Crimea Campaign.
- 17 June 1860 – The Corps structure was reorganized to include batteries from Tuscany and Emilia. The original Artillery Corps of the Italian Army consists of eight regiments: 1st – Workers; 2nd, 3rd and 4th – Place-of-Arms; 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> – Field regiments. The participation in numerous *Risorgimento* Campaigns and the adoption of new means lead to the creation of new branches and regiments, such as the Coastal Artillery, the Mountain Artillery, the Heavy Field Artillery and the Fortification Artillery
- 1° November 1887 – Constitution of the Mountain Artillery Regiment
- 23 December 1909 – The Corps is entrusted with the War Flag by Royal Decree.

- 1915 – The Artillery Corps takes part in World War I with 49 field artillery regiments, 1 horse-mounted regiment, 3 mountain regiments, 2 heavy field regiments, 10 fortification regiments, 18 batteries transported by pack-animals, and three anti-aircraft units. The constant evolution during the conflict, led to the development of the specialized anti-aircraft unit and the reassessment of the bombardiers.
- 15 June 1918 – The Artillery Corps fights in the “Battle of the Solstice,” the second battle on the Piave river.
- 1918 –1920 – Most of the units constituted for World War I are disbanded at the end of the conflict.
- June 1940 – At the break out of World War II, the Corps consisted of 54 field regiments: 3 Quick Response Regiments, 5 Mountain Divisions, 18 Army Corps, 5 Army artillery, 6 Frontier Guards, 2 Armored divisions, 5 Anti-aircraft Divisions, and 2 Motorized Units. During the conflict, 2 additional units are constituted, i.e., the Self-propelled Unit and the Paratroopers.
- 8 September 1943 – 1945 – Only the following regiments are still operational, i.e., 11th "Legnano," 184th "Nembo," 7th "Cremona," 35th "Friuli," 152nd "Piceno," and 155th "Mantova" and are conveyed either in the 1st Motorized Unit or the Italian Liberation and Combat Units.
- 1946 – The regiments start being reconstituted and enlarged, a process that lasted until the mid- '70s.
- 1975 – The first major rearrangement of the Italian Army leads to the constitution of independent units.
- 1999 – The Artillery Corps is divided into two main specialties, i.e., Land Artillery and Anti-aircraft Artillery.
- 2005 – The land specialty is currently part of most Brigades, except for "Friuli," "Sassari," and “Folgore.” A typical regiment is organized in a Command, a Target Surveillance and Target Acquisition Battery, a Command and logistic Support Battery, and a Group including three Howitzer Batteries, a Gunnery Battery, and a Technical Support Battery. Three additional regiments are part of the Artillery Brigade under the command of the Operational Land. A specialized regiment is part of the Electronic War Group Command C4IEW of Anzio, while the Artillery School is under the Training and Specialization Department and in charge of the Anti-aircraft Training and Experimentation Center. The 185th Target Reconnaissance and Acquisition Paratrooper Regiment "Folgore," previously an Artillery Unit, has now become a highly specialized unit for special operations.

#### 15 June 1918 – The Battle of the Solstice

After the defeat of Caporetto in 1917, the battle carried on with an offensive by the Austro-Hungarian Army along the Piave river (10-26 November 1917), on the Asiago Plateau and in the area of Monte Grappa (4-23 December). To fill the gaps in the Italian divisions, the eighteen-year-old recruits, army class 1899, were employed for the first time; the young soldiers went down in history as “Army Class ‘99”. In December 1917, the Austro-Hungarian Army, despite the initial success of its attack, withdrew its forces to prepare for a new offensive the following spring. The assault was launched overnight on 15 June 1918 by 66 Austro-Hungarian and German divisions aiming at invading the Venetian plain. The battle is known as “the Battle of the Solstice.” The attack did not succeed in achieving the target. Some portions of the territory were conquered; however, the offensive was stopped in the area of the Asiago Plateau and Monte Grappa. Three bridgeheads were created along the right bank of the Piave river, one on the Montello hill, another towards Treviso, and the third one at San Donà. All the assaults were stopped and repelled by 18 June.

The role played by the Artillery Corps in the "Battle of the Solstice" was paramount. The offensive started overnight, and despite the speed at which it was launched, the Italian Army Staff was not taken by surprise. The massive preparation fire by the Austro-Hungarian artillery came upon stiff resistance from an impressive and unexpected artillery barrage by the Italian army, which threw the enemy forces into

turmoil. The Corps motto “always and everywhere” had never been more appropriate. The river Piave became the symbol of supreme sacrifice in the name of the Homeland: the successful outcome of such a fierce and heroic battle resulted from the tens of thousands of casualties’ bravery. The poor ground gained by the Austro-Hungarian forces completely altered the course of the war; since then, Austria was never able to retake the lead. The 15-23 June battle was not a final Italian victory; however, it was the major and final defeat of the Austrian plan, only seven months after Caporetto. The defensive battle boosted the troops’ morale and helped prepare the final offensive. The successful outcome was pinpointed by the awarding of 640 medals of military valor, 486 of which to soldiers; it was also a prelude to the Battle of Vittorio Veneto, leading to the final defeat of the Austro-Hungarian Army.

## Artillery Corps Medals

### Rewards to Military Valor to the Artillery Corps’ Colors

- Bronze Medal of Military Value:

Awarded as Battle Honors – Goito 30 May 1848.

- Gold Medal of Military Value:

Awarded to the Corps’ Color for the conduct shown “*always and everywhere*” by Artillery – 1849 Campaign.

- Silver Medal of Military Value:

Awarded for serving in the 1859 Campaign.

- Gold Medal of Military Value:

Awarded for the bravery, expertise, and readiness shown “*always and everywhere*” by the Artillery Corps in the Libya war campaign, 1911– 1912.

- Gold Medal of Military Value:

Awarded for the valor and expertise displayed “*always and everywhere*”, and for the bloodshed to heroically support Infantry in their fight for victory for the glory of the Homeland 1915 – 1918.

- Knight’s Cross of the Military Order of Italy:

Awarded for the decisive contribution to victory given “*always and everywhere*” in the African war through its commitment, expertise, and valor, as in the Corps tradition. Together with the heroic legions of the Infantry, the Corps marched on their path to victory for the glory of Imperial Italy.

Italo–Ethiopic War, 3 October 1935 – 5 May 1936.

- *Awards for the Military Value to the regimental colors and units:*

*14 Gold Medals*

- *Gunners awarded with Gold Medals and Military Order of Italy*

*228 Gold Medals*

*298 Military Orders of Italy*

## The Artillery’s Coat of Arms

The current Coat of Arms was designed after World War II, following the Government institutional change. The devices used in the shield represent:

- the historical background of the Corps symbolized by the Colors of the pre-unitary states (1750 - 1800);
- the military valor symbolized by the medals awarded to the Colors of the Corps;
- the strong bond with the Artillery Association symbolized by the predominant badge of the Corps.

The Samnitic SHIELD is divided into two sides to represent: on the top section the Colors of the Royal Artillery Corps Battalion and the 1700's *Colonnella*. The bottom side displays the Colors of the Royal Artillery Battalion (1739). The *Colonnella* symbols were later changed under the reign of Victor Amadeus III (1773 - 96) into "*Colonnella del Corpo Reale di Artiglieria*" by adding to the flying black eagle four tongues converging to center with the same color of the uniform lining, and the eagle feet resting on two crossed cannons.

The Artillery Corps' BADGE is predominant: two intersecting gun tubes behind a Medusa and a grenade on top projecting right-oriented flames.

THREE RIBBONS PER SIDE depart from the shield, five of which are azure and one red/azure, to symbolize the awards to Military Valor granted to the Corps.

#### The Artillery Corps Today and in the Future

The Artillery Corps is the combat support par excellence in today's Army. With its weapons, cannons, and howitzers on wheeled mounts or tracked vehicles, the gunfire range can achieve 40km. Artillery's deployment has changed considerably over time due to the increasingly sophisticated and effective materials employed. Unlike in the past, when the firing range had to be adjusted from the deployment area, today's farther-reaching weaponry requires agile units capable of infiltrating for in-depth target control and acquisition. The new war scenarios have led to the development of new weapons, such as chemical and nuclear ones. Therefore, the Corps has taken up the challenge by changing one of its units into a Regiment for Nuclear, Bacteriological, and Chemical Defense. The specific skills of the Corps in terms of technical capability and tactics - i.e., surveillance, target search and acquisition, and detection of contaminated areas - have made it possible to face tasks apparently far from its nature, like Peace Support Operations. The Artillery Regiments have been active in the Balkans, where they take part in territory control operations.

*The Artillery Corps, known as the "learned" Corps, has always looked to the future by combining technology, smart action, bravery, and valor: always and everywhere.*

#### DUPONT

70 years after the erection of the Monument, 180 photos by Armando Dupont were found in the Artillery Arch inner rooms at Valentino Park. The pictures are a fascinating "message in a bottle" from the past century; the 90 better preserved and most significant images are on display at the Exhibition.

Studying the photos is a further discovery itself! They are all snapshots of everyday life in Turin and Piedmont in the 1920s. The life framed in the pictures shows vivid scenes from a past age that still arouse emotions that challenge popular stereotypes. Whoever is familiar with the historical, political, and social context of the period and has heard tales from their fathers or grandfathers will be able to evoke a clear picture of Turin in the mid-1920s under the Fascist regime.

None of the symbols or scenarios usually associated to the Fascist era can be found in the photos. The only exceptions are an austere gentleman with the badge of the fascist party on his lapel, a fascist emblem known as "*cicca*" or "*fascio Littorio*" on the monument to the Artillery (later removed in 1943), and two shy, hardly martial young ladies wearing their uniforms of the *Giovani Italiane*, side by side with two bold and slightly bony athletes. Curiously, not much of what we see reminds us of the well-consolidated Fascist regime.

The images of soldiers, civilians, and sportspeople tell us about a city whose traditions were partially still profoundly linked to the Royal Family and the *Partito Liberale*, and partially supported socialism. A city that had not yet become anti-fascist could thus be labelled as almost ignoring fascism. This is an accurate picture of a town Mussolini will never like, far from being enthusiastic about the regime and its rituals. A city where even the fascist party officials like Cesare De Vecchi di Val Cismon or Paolo Thaon De Revel remained loyal to the monarchy, first and then to the regime.

The photographs were all shot between 1926 and 1932 (except one, dated 1924): the regime had taken office, Piero Gobetti died in exile, and Antonio Gramsci was in prison. However, the liberal and the socialist sides of the city were well alive beneath the ashes, silently waiting until the Resistance to rise again. Against the walls of the Martinetto shooting range (that appears in some of the photos by Dupont), the monarchist and liberal soldiers like Giuseppe Perotti and socialist workers like Errico Giachino, will die side by side. The Golden Medals for Military Bravery and Resistance will be awarded to noblemen like the artillery Tenant, Marquis Felice Cordero di Pamparato and workers like Dante Di Nanni.

The military scenes by Dupont show an Army profoundly linked to the monarchy, still proud of the victory achieved in the battle of Vittorio Veneto, never adopting the fascist salute or its emblems. The Royal Army is still alive within the spartan old barracks from the Sardinian kingdom. The soldiers' square faces are those of the honest and brave Piedmontese farmers and workers, proud to serve in the same units where their ancestors had served and won historical battles. The lean and proud Army Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers were mostly from Veneto and forged by the trench mud and the mountain snow. They still wear the 1915-18 war uniforms and the "Adrian" helmet, a symbol of World War I, later replaced in the mid-1930s.

The scenes from the civil life show muscular and gritty athletes and young ladies in demure gymnastics clothing competing for the historical sports clubs founded in the late nineteenth century. The feelings conveyed are happiness and sportsmanship, nothing like the unnatural, stiff "heroic" postures of the "fascist Saturdays' sports activities." The award ceremonies offer proud, spontaneous, and smiling athletes, well far away from the bombastic postures of the fascist imagery.

An unusual group of photographs refers to the Colony's Exhibit celebrating the Italian territories of Africa. The exhibition was held within the frame of the great National Italian Exhibition of 1928 in the district of Pilonetto, currently the area of Corso Sicilia and Viale Dogali. A broad African market was set up to give visitors the illusion of being in the African colonies, with exotic animals, canoes, and people of the local ethnic groups. Among the transplanted palm trees, dromedaries, fake huts, and papier-maché minarets, the visitors are amiably and informally chatting with Arabs and black people. The Italian soldiers and Carabinieri are alongside with their Askari and Zaptiè comrades, the local soldiers serving in the armies of the European colonial powers in Africa. Racial laws are still far away, as well as the forceful separation from the loyal comrades of the colonial wars.

Other pictures witness simple and spartan hobbies, boat tours, rustic picnics on wooden planks, people strolling in the city's parks, group trips in the mountains or to the Cathedral of Superga. These photographs offer a poor but upstanding city life. Its inhabitants have just left behind the grief of the massacre of World War I but are still unaware of the forthcoming horrors of the next decade.

The images we were delivered by Dupont tell us a more intimate History, where public events unfold alongside the activities of ordinary people who are the actual protagonists, too often forgotten. These pictures are scenes of everyday life and should be read as such to try and understand the feeling of the age, not to draw hasty conclusions. History has too often been ignored: the lessons it can teach do deserve more attentive students...

Pier Carlo Sommo

## DUPONT

At the beginning of the restoration works, some forgotten photographic plates were found in the dusty recesses of the inner rooms. Although the plates were partially damaged, some clear black and white images were still available.

The photos are snapshots of everyday life in the late 1920s and early 1930s. But... who was the photographer, and why were the pictures left inside the monument?

The unknown artist was Armando Dupont, and a quick search in the city's archive revealed that the man, a street photographer, was born in Turin on 28 February 1891, married to Margherita Quattrococo on 1 May 1914, and deceased on 28 April 1952. His last address was Corso XI Febbraio no. 1.

Mr. Dupont's story is told by the archive documents: it is an unknown and unofficial tale from the past unfolding in the background of the Artillery Monument erection.

While the erection works were in progress at Valentino Park, sculptor Canonica appointed an Armando Dupont to protect the site overnight and "prevent the covered area where the St. Barbara statue was located from becoming home to beggars, rogues, and vagabonds". The person in charge also had to switch on the monument lights at night and switch them off in the morning. In return for such simple and humble service, Canonica authorized Dupont to stay overnight in the unwelcoming and narrow rooms at the back of the Arch.

The two tiny dark rooms became where the photographer kept his equipment at the end of the days spent taking pictures of the people in Turin and his laboratory to develop the photographic plates.

However, such a fortuitous and modest accommodation was at risk.

With the solemn unveiling Ceremony, the Committee officially donated the monument to the municipality to become part of its cultural heritage. For the unlucky Dupont, this meant being evicted from his improvised "accommodation and photographic laboratory."

Instead, Canonica, who evidently trusted such a humble artisan, asked the municipality to let Dupont carry on with his work and use the same rooms.

Due to the relevance of the advocate, the city's *Podestà* agreed to do so. Since 1 July 1930, Dupont thus became the Monument janitor and was paid 150.00 ITL per year for his work, a solution that must have made him happy! Had it not been for his forgotten plates, this street photographer of the 1930s was destined for oblivion.

Leonardo Mastrippolito

DIDASCALIE FIGURE:

Pag 3 – The Monument to the Artillery Corps before its Unveiling – June 1930

Pag. 5 – Postcard by the National Promoting Committee – Plaster Model of the Monument

Pag. 6 – The Restoration Site

Pag. 7:

Progetti originali – Monument Blueprints 1927)

Il Cantiere.... - The Restoration Site

Pag 8:

... lato Cso Vittorio – The Monument before the Restoration, View from c.so Vittorio

...lato Valentino – The Monument before the Restoration, View from Valentino Park

I segni... - Signs of Decay

Il mortaio – The Mortar

Particolari – Details of Decay

Bassorilievo.... – Marble Bas-Relief before the Restoration

Interventi...\_ Works on the inside of the Arch

Fontana... - The Fountain before the Restoration

Restauratore .... – A Restorer at Work

Particolare... - Bronze Décor during the Restoration

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Statua... - Statue of Saint Barbara after the Restoration

Lato....- View form River Po after the Restoration

Gruppo.....- Bronze statue after the Restoration

Basorilievo... - Marble Bas-Relief after the Restoration

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Alessandro.... – Alessandro Vittorio Papacino d’Antony, Grand Master of Artillery, Headmaster of The Royal School of Theoretical and Practical Studies in Artillery and Fortification, 1755 to 1786

Pag. 11

Palazzo dell’Arsenale – Main Entrance

Torre dell’Arsenale in Borgo Dora

Regio..... – The Royal Arsenal of Turin – A Vintage Postcard

Pag. 12

Torino... - Turin – The Arsenal in Borgo Dora – Vintage Postcard

Cannone - a Cannon, 1846

... - 149/35 Cannon

.... – 75/27 Rapid Discharge Cannon – World War I

Pag. 13 -

Turin – 1919 - A parade of 149 Cannons in Piazza Vittorio

Pag. 14

The 1930s – Mountain Artillery with 75/13 Howitzer

1940 – 75/27 Cannons

Postcard of the Artillery Border Guard (GAF)

Late 1930s – Chaberton Fortress – Border Guard 149/35 Cannons

Pag. 15

A Commemoration Postcard issued for the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the School of Artillery and Engineering Applied Studies - 1739-1939

1941 – 75/18 Self-Propelled Weapon

1943 - 90/53 Self-Propelled Weapon

1943 – 90/53 Anti- Aircraft Gun

1943 - 105/25 Self-Propelled Weapon at the Factory

1948-1950 – 7<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment – Turin - Vintage Postcard

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1957 – OTO Melara Weapon, Model 56

The 1960s-1990s 155/23 Howitzer

Weaponry on the Ground - FH 70 – 155 Howitzer

Self-Propelled Anti-Aircraft Vehicle SIDAM

Weaponry on the Ground – M 109L 155 Self-Propelled Howitzer

Weaponry on the Ground – MLR5 Field Rocket Launcher

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Gunner

Vehicle Mounted Piece of Ordnance

Pag. 18

Mountain Troops – Regiment Factory/Barracks in Turin

“Pisa” 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment Band – Asti – Carlo Alberto Barracks

1928 National Italian Exhibition of Turin – Colonial Section – Pilonetto District – Woman with Zaptiè

1928 National Italian Exhibition of Turin – Colonial Section – Pilonetto District – Man with City Police Officer

1928 National Italian Exhibition of Turin – Colonial Section – Pilonetto District – Carabinieri and City Police Officers

1928 National Italian Exhibition of Turin – Colonial Section – Pilonetto District – Children

Pag. 19

A Procession in Piazza Castello, the Prefecture, the Royal Opera House on the Background

Turin, the River Banks, a Boat Trip

Ancient Bicycle (*Draisina*)

Turin, Rowing Club, Awarding Ceremony

City Police Officer at Superga (Turin)