

Giuseppe Terragni

The Casa del Fascio, 1932-1936



Fig. 1
Giuseppe Terragni,
The Casa del Fascio,
 1932-1936. Structure
 in reinforced concrete,
 finished in plaster and
 varieties of marble.
 Como.

The *Casa del Fascio* is a **perfect prism without any symmetry among the façades**; that is to say that there is no symbolic centre that alludes to power, no balcony for speeches jutting out from the building, nor any propagandistic qualities inherent in the project. It is a pure and rigorous form which, according to Terragni, «*changes constantly, in the balance of its composition and in the diversity of its layouts around the building, in "dynamic asymmetry"*».

It was probably the only **National Fascist Party headquarters** in Italy to dare such removal from explicitly Fascist composition. Terragni's plan and proportions recall the purity of Le Corbusier's *Villa Savoye* but it is also natural to associate his project with the experiments of the Russian Constructivists and with Malevič's *Red Square on a White Background*. With the latter, Terragni's building shares the chosen form of **the square as a place of interpenetration for mystic creed and logic**.

The height of the building is exactly half the width of the base. The four façades are treated in the same way so that none of them is pre-eminent with respect to the others. All sides are marked by an alternating play of empty and full spaces and careful analysis reveals that at the basis of their design there

is the composition of similar triangles generated by a diagonal bisecting rectangle shapes.

Facing the city cathedral **the entrance façade** shows four rows of five rectangles which draw a slight grid. The open-box arrangement seems even more fragile when juxtaposed to the unperforated space, on the right, where the light brightly catches the white marble chosen to face the building. Giving the *Casa* its asymmetrical character, that same empty flat surface was originally conceived to host contemporary art works. Terragni wrote, «*What predominates in this Casa del Fascio project is the concept of visibility, the instinctive control established between the public and the Party employees*». Even Mussolini himself proposed the image of a public building as a "house of glass", transparent and easily legible by all observers.

The interior central hall is covered and illuminated by a skylight. Similarly to ancient Roman villas or Venetian aristocratic palaces, the upper floors face on to its great void.

The roof is made up of a fascinating series of terrace paths, just as we see in most of Terragni's buildings. A good example can be found in the *Casa Rustici* in Milan, designed with Pietro Lingeri in 1933, in which the balcony and the terraces are used as a *leit-motiv* to join the various parts.

Fig. 2 Giuseppe Terragni, *The Casa del Fascio*, 1932-1936. Plan of the ground floor and a view of the Hall of the Assemblies.

