



### MARTIRI DELLA LIBERTÀ SQUARE AND MUNICIPAL BUILDING

Recently restored and unveiled on June, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010 on the occasion of the Italian Republic Day, the project of Martiri della Libertà Square was studied by the professional studio SGB of Milan and it presents a structure with the design of a chessboard in cobbles (a material suggesting the others similar present in town) and some rows of trees which make a connection between the open space and the houses beside.

Since 1958, to the right of the Square is placed a War Memorial dedicated to the fallen soldiers of First World War. Previously, from 1921, it was placed in the Camperio Public Gardens, just at the borderline between La Santa and Villa San Fiorano, on a plot which Camperio family gave to the Municipality, in addition to the area to build the new Town Hall (3500 mt for a price of *Lire* 87500).

The War Memorial was made by the sculptor Eugenio Baroni. Born in 1888 in Taranto with a Lombard family, he studies in Genoa to be an engineer but he leaves to become a sculptor choosing to be Scanzi's pupil (who was Vela's pupil in his turn) and following some courses at the "Accademia Ligustica di Belle Arti" whose methods are still too far from him who prefers to follow a model such as Rodin, very important for his first works. Among them, we must remember the Monument placed in Genoa Quarto dedicated to Expedition of the Thousand, unveiled by D'Annunzio (1910).

He takes part to the First World War as Official of the Italian Alpine troops so starting a new artistic period proved by the never realized project of a monument-ossuary in San Michele del Carso whose sketches have been later used as inspiration for the monument of the Mother's Farewell, called by the citizens of Villasanta "*Pora dona*". Baroni exposes his works at the Venice Biennale, too. He realizes also some statues for the "Foro Italico" and several memorials for the Monumental Cemetery of Staglieno. He dies in 1935.

The new municipality of Villasanta was born thanks to the royal decree of July, 2<sup>nd</sup> 1929. It had 6300 inhabitants and a Town Hall which was inadequate for the new needs of the city. On December 1932 the architect Piero Borradori started working on the project of a new edifice to

build on the plot previously given from Camperio family. The final project was ready in 1933 and consisted of a building with a central tower which "recalls the golden age of Italian municipalities; built with simple architectural lines typical of the Lombard style, inspired from the Roman Greatness for its dimensions and dominated by the emblem of the fasces".

The front side is 40 meters large and its peculiarity is the central tower 36 meters high and the entrance staircase with a portico dominated by a loggia which was thought to recall those of the Lombard *Arengari*. The walls are regularly spaced out by jutting pilasters in giant order; the cladding of the base is in log of Poltragno and exposed bricks. On the tower there is the name of Villasanta and on the central balcony, once beside the two fasces, there was the epigraphy dedicated to both the duce and the king.

The entrance lead to the gallery for the public which is 34 meters long and 3,5 meters large; in it, there are the help desks. The main staircase allows to get to the basement and to the first floor: here there is the town council chamber (once the reception room with walls 6 meters high) characterized by a wall painting, made, in the original intentions, "to recover the spirituality of the first period of Renaissance" through the fresco qualified as "social art with enough communicative strength to make the approval for the regime grow".

In 1933 the manifesto of the wall painting (Campigli, Carrà, Sironi, Funi) said "from the wall painting will rise the fascist style in which the new civilization will identify herself. The educating purpose of the painting is first of all a matter of style. More than through the subject or through the suggestion of the framework, is through the style that the art will rebuild a new community soul".

The fresco represents the triumph of modernity and progress occurred thanks to Fascism in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors.

During the postwar period this fresco was "censored" and partially restored above all on the right side where details of the skyline of the "postwar Villasanta" were then visible.

The fresco is by ERME RIPA (Ermete Ripamonti) born in Castel S. Giovanni (PC) in 1900 and died in Milan in 1973. He moves to Monza in 1907 attending Brera and graduating in 1922. He is active in the political life but he also teaches at the "ISIA" of Monza. Excellent landscape painter, in 1936 he moves to Venice because of his interest in the art of glass so becoming director of a glassmaker in Murano. He comes back to Monza in 1940.

The construction site of the Town Hall building starts in October 1933 with the set up on November, 4, finishing it on March 1935 with 20 days late on the expected due date.

On May 12, 1935 the municipal building is open with a ceremony held by Achille Starace, secretary of the "PNF" (National Fascist Party), element which makes it an important event for the local press.

During war, the basement becomes an air-raid shelter.

From the postwar period until the 90s, there is any remarkable event.

In 1993, the municipality decides for the restoration of the building (that will be directed by architect Raffaele Selleri) with the elimination of the town council chamber and the realization of some mezzanine to make the best use of the dimensions of the structure. Nevertheless, this project won't be realized because of another one which, keeping the town council chamber, will effectively complete the building with the construction of an architectonic "L" appendix along the perimeter of the courtyard beside the town hall, allowing to enter the building from the basement and the backyard, too. The approval for this project is from 1997 and it allows to build the new area and the new courtyard characterized by the presence of a *cedrus deodara* and by an internal square of 9 meters per side with a "*sampietrini*" flooring and seats in concrete with a central basin.

Nothing is left from the original decors, but we know that they were of rationalist inspiration, since it was the style followed at the time.

Eventually, the architect Piero Borradori realized other public works such as the Lux Cinema, the Police Station in Garibaldi Road and the votive chapel located in the cemetery dedicated to the soldiers fallen during the war.