Rome, the ‘I Fori Imperiali’, the ‘Il Quartiere Alessandrina’, and the ‘Via dei Fori Imperiali’:


‘...Knowledge and documentation are indispensable practices for efficiently dealing with problems related to the preservation and safeguard of a historical building: the process of understanding a monument is not only achieved through historical and bibliographical documentation but also through the acquisition of information obtained through direct observations, which is the primary source of discoveries and also an essential method of verification. Last, but not least, is the importance of the geographical area in which the building was constructed, without which it would not even had a reason to exist. The in-depth study of a building under the historic-graphic and critical aspects and interpretation of architectural concepts can all be summarized in the “giudizio di valore = evaluation”, which must be made by taking into account the historical period in which the building, the object of the present study, was constructed.’

Dr. Arch. Barbara Baldrati,
“Il quartiere sallustiano nella sua evoluzione storica,”
in: AA.VV., ‘Il Palazzo di Via Boncompagni,’

‘...The study of ancient monuments is still the Cinderella of archaeology: in an archaeological context the value attributed to moveable finds such as statues, mosaics, and vessels, is often considered much more relevant than the remains of a building, which is usually regarded just as a ‘container’ for the exhibits that really matter. Moreover, it is not really clear who should study the buildings: an engineer? Or an architect? Or a particular kind of archaeologist? Of course, cooperation is always welcomed, but the results are valuable only if each specific field of work is well defined, the risk being that only some aspects will be examined, while the overall understanding of the construction will be missed.’

Dr. Carla Maria Amici,
“Survey and Technical Analysis: a Must for Understanding Monuments,” pp. 27-38,
in: Nicolò Marchetti and Ingolf Thuesen (edd.),
A well-constructed method is of the highest importance in all archaeological explorations, and in the case of the [Roman] Forum, it is more than ordinarily necessary, on the complex character of the excavations. Many strata are represented in the twenty-centuries of eventual life demanding investigation, strata often complicated by natural irregularity of the ground.’ (…) ‘The excavations have gone far enough to show us that the ruined buildings above the ground are but the last chapter of a long period of human history.’


‘[Early 20th century] Rome became one of the most important places in the world for the development of archaeology. It was an international gathering place for scholars and a site of ongoing excavation. In time, the evolution of the science led to more exacting methods of preserving all historic structures, and the analytic tools that explained the riddles of ancient Rome were used to gain a more accurate understanding of the construction of buildings from subsequent eras. Gradually, the theory, technical disciplines, and practice of architectural conservation became a specialized study, with Rome as its center. The intellectual conflicts of the Renaissance had given birth to a new urban consciousness in which architectural preservation was regarded as a principal determinant of the city’s welfare.”


‘...Despite the losses to Rome’s archaeological record, [Rodolfo] Lanciani (1845-1929) was, with Giacomo Boni (1859–1925), one of the most important figures in Roman archaeology in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Lanciani’s studies were concerned primarily with the ancient city’s topography, and the construction in the capital enabled him to further these investigations. It was Giacomo Boni who first practiced diligently in the field the exacting documentation of every aspect of an excavation. Working in the Forum and on the Palatine hill where construction was forbidden, Boni developed a methodology using stratigraphy and documentation of everything in situ. Lanciani and Boni, in addition to their important contributions to archaeological practice, also contributed to museological practice in Rome …’

INTRODUCTION.

The ‘I Fori Imperiali,’ the ‘Il Quartiere Alessandrina,’ and the ‘Via dei Fori Imperial’ - “Restauri di innovazione” 1913 to “Ininterrottamente” 2013

http://www.architettroma.it/architettura/notizie/15607.aspx

‘…To expose and exploit this heritage remained the urban policy through the early decades of Roma Capitale, and most emphatically so under the Fascist regime. “Surely, among the great expedients of Mussolini,” commented Baldini in 1932, “that of showing Rome to the Romans will remain one of the most memorable.” To the Romans … and to us. We do not recall enough that what we see and study the architectural history of Rome has been selected, cleaned up and staged for us by the planners and rulers of Third Rome. They were the ones who decided which past buildings were worth of preservation, and which expendable for the sake of progress; how much of excavated antiquity would be retained for show, and how much quickly buried again under paving or new construction. To be a creditable student of Roman antiquity or the Middle Ages, or the Renaissance and Baroque, should presuppose solid familiarity with modern Rome, its city archives, contemporary newspapers, journals.’

Prof. Arch. Spiro Kostof,
“The Third Rome: The Polemics of Architectural History,”

‘…The modern history of the Imperial Fora is above all one of shifting mentalities and conflicts of interest; if we fail to consider the rapid ideological transformations of our century, we cannot comprehend the problems involved archaeological research. (...) With new excavations, projects for museums, new circulation plans, after more than sixty years the problem of the Imperial Fora is once being confronted with different mentality and, above all, with maturity necessary to avoid underestimating the archaeological delicacy of the historical site and the strategic importance of relation between the environment and the functioning city, touching on a crucial node of the contemporary urban system.’

Dr. Silvana Rizzo,
“Archeologia dei Fori Imperiali | Archaeology of the Imperial Fora,” in:
‘...The earth conquers all and it is with the earth that the archaeologist primarily has to deal with, as if he were a farmer of history ... usually we go forward, which is the direction of life to which we are accustomed. It is indeed arduous to follow the opposite direction...so the inquirer is forced to go back naturally into the unknown. But in order to use destruction to the benefit of reconstruction we must sharpen our wits, like someone who has lost something and must retrace the day at reversed times and places.’

Prof. Andrea Carandini,
“The evolution of the residential block”
[The Palazzo delle Assicurazioni Generali of Rome = from the Via Lata in antiquity to the Piazza Venezia of the modern era], in: ‘ROMA - RADICI DEL PRESENTE - COLLEZIONE ARCHEOLOGICA ASSICURAZIONI GENERALI’
http://www.radicidelpresente.it/en/il-museo/scenografie-abitabili/il-tavolo-radici-del-presente

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During the last decade of the 19th and first decade of the 20th centuries (1891-1911), the important work conducted by Prof. Arch. Gustavo Giovannoni, Prof. Giacomo Boni & Prof. Corrado Ricci within the historic center of Rome had a tremendous impact roughly a century later on the City of Rome’s planning, design, and development of the new educational and museum support system for the Imperial Fora between 1998 and 2008.

For contemporary scholars, university students and the independent researchers interested in the recent scholarly research and related studies conducted within the Roman and Imperial Fora over the last two-decades (1995-2015); one of the more important aspects of the City of Rome’s ‘I Fori Imperiali Progetto’ (1998-2001), besides the large-scale archaeological investigations of the Forums of Caesar, Vespasian, and Trajan during the Vatican’s Jubilee Year 2000 Celebration (Dec. 1999 – Jan. 2001), was the City of Rome’s planning and implementation of the new educational and museum support system for the (then) ongoing excavations in the Imperial Fora and the restoration of the Markets of Trajan.

Surprisingly today (as of mid-2015), with the exception of the news of the City of Rome’s new architectural museum of the Imperial Fora, officially opened in the various levels of the Markets of Trajan in late October 2007. Two other significant initiatives, the small Visitor Center of the Imperial Fora, which opened in 1999, and the former website of Capitolium.org – the former official websites of the ‘I Fori Imperiali Progetto’ (1998-2001). Both of these innovative projects by the City of Rome has been largely ignored by official English language scholarly publications (2007 onwards) reporting on the earlier progress of the early archaeological phases of the ‘I Fori Imperiali Progetto’ (1998-2001).

This is difficult to imagine, when considering the small Visitor Center after 2001-02, housed the new scale model (in 1:200) reconstruction of the ancient Imperial Fora designed and created after the recently completed excavations between 1998-2001. In 2002, the small center was transferred to its present location along the Via dei Fori Imperiali next to the Belvedere Antonio Cederna, directly across from the Forum | Temple of Peace excavations (2002 onwards). The new center, with the new bookstore and other onsite educational resources for the Imperial Fora, the center also has an array of important artifacts dating from antiquity and the later medieval period unearthed in the nearby T. of Peace excavations, etc., including the one-of-a-kind engraved marble fragment showing the section of the portico of Forum of Augustus in the early 1st century A.D.

Although, the small Visitor Center of the Imperial Fora, and the later new Museum of the Imperial Fora are very interesting innovative ideas for the continuing development of the educational and museum support system for the monuments and ruins of the Imperial Fora, it is interesting to note that these innovative projects, where actually first proposed and implemented for the adjoining Roman Forum at the start of 20th century by prof. Arch. Giacomo Boni, the Archaeological Director of the Rome Forum (1898-1925), and the later Director of the adjoining Palatine Hill (1907-1925).
“When in the autumn of 1898 opportunity offered to begin serious examination of the Forum, the problem arose in my mind was less how to discover new archaeological remains than how to evoke the genius of the place and make its dry bones live.”


In terms of the modern history of archaeology in Rome of the early 20th century while Prof. Boni is best known for his meticulous and detailed archaeological investigations conducted throughout the Roman Forum, which were accompanied by some of the most important archaeological discoveries ever made in the center of Rome. Unfortunately, the precise methodology of Boni archaeological investigations and coinciding sensational discoveries have long overshadowed Prof. Boni’s equally significant work in the Roman Forum and the Palatine Hill as a restoration architect, a museum director and archive curator, as well as his ambiguous plans to create (then) the new archaeological & architectural itinerary of the Roman Forum extending from the Roman Arch of Septimius Severus to the Arch of Titus.