

Education guide

*Dawit  
L. Petros*

8.30-  
12.20.24

*Prospetto a  
Mare*

Cover: *Istruzioni (Transits, Trajectories, Invisible Networks), Part III (detail)*, 2021; left: *Untitled (Epilogue X)*, 2023



### About the artist

Born in Asmara, Eritrea, Petros spent his early years in Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Kenya before ultimately settling in Saskatchewan, Canada, with his parents and then in Montreal and Chicago as an adult. His work investigates how photographs, propaganda, murals, and monuments often operate in relationship to the construction and transmission of cultural ideologies.

### Overview

Featuring photography, video, printmaking, and sculptures, *Prospetto a Mare* is a solo exhibition of work by Dawit L. Petros that not only examines the history of Italy's fascist government and its occupation of East Africa (especially Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Libya) in the 1930s, but also investigates the ways in which Chicago's visual culture and built environment has been shaped by this colonial history. Between 1965 and 1991, roughly one-quarter of Eritreans fled the Horn of Africa due to ensuing war, famine, political unrest, and persecution. By the year 2000, 30,000 Eritreans lived in the United States—many of them in Chicago.

This guide was written by Kristin Taylor, Curator of Academic Programs and Collections, and Judson Womack, Curatorial Assistant, with guidance provided by Dawit L. Petros, Curatorial Assistant Yuan-Chih (Sreddy) Yen, Karen Irvine, and 2024 MoCP Faculty Fellow Onur Öztürk, an Assistant Professor of Art History in the Art and Art History Department at Columbia College Chicago. *Prospetto A Mare* is curated by Karen Irvine, MoCP's Chief Curator and Deputy Director.

## What to know first

The title of the exhibition, *Prospetto A Mare*, is Italian for “sea view,” or more literally, “prospectus to the sea.” The title is a play on how advancements in aviation and water travel directly related to colonial conquests, as well as a visual play on the word “see,” as the artist calls for us to know and see unknown histories. “Prospetto a mare” is also the name of a significant area located in Ostia, Italy, which will be addressed later in this guide.

Before diving into this education guide, we recommend that you first review the timeline and maps, in the education room within the exhibition or on the exhibition website, that go over key historical moments informing the artist’s work. It may also be helpful to review the [glossary](#) at the end of this guide before you begin. MoCP is also a proud partner of the [Bloomberg Connects](#) app. We recommend you download and refer to the app for additional educational content and accessibility features for this exhibition.



## Table of contents

### 1. Key theme

Technologies and infrastructure in the advancement of colonialism and fascism

#### The cable car

Exhibition highlight: *Pre-occupations (Rivista I)*, 2021–2023

Deeper reading: The 1933 aerial tramway in Chicago

#### The airplane

Exhibition highlight: *Unseen Cartographies*, 2021

### 2. Key theme

Linking fascist and colonial histories to Chicago and its built environment

Deeper reading: Italo Balbo's transatlantic flight

Exhibition highlight: *Istruzioni (Transits, Trajectories, Invisible Networks)*, 2021–2023

### 3. Key theme

Notions of progress and the 1933 World's Fair

Exhibition highlight: *Between departures, returns and excesses of image, Part I*, 2021

Deeper reading: The Imperial Eagle

4. Glossary of terms, events, and people

5. Extended resources

6. Illinois learning standards addressed in this guide

1. Key theme

Technologies and infrastructure  
in the advancement of  
colonialism and fascism



Throughout the exhibition, you will see imagery of different modes of aerial transportation. This imagery highlights the pivotal role advancements in technology played in furthering Italian colonial ambitions in East Africa, particularly through two significant developments in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: the cable car and the airplane. The two enabled Italians to literally look down on and have a dominating view on the terrain and populations they sought to control.

## 1. Technologies and infrastructure

### The cable car

In the large piece titled *Spectre (Teleferica)* (2020), Petros highlights the significance of La Teleferica Massaua-Asmara, a 44.5-mile-long cableway that was completed by the Italian colonial regime in Eritrea in 1937 to connect the port city of Massawa to the country's capital, Asmara. Using Eritrean laborers and animals, the construction of the cableway required numerous perilous journeys through terrain lacking proper roads. Workers transported motors, control mechanisms, and lumber, and many workers were injured or died.

As the longest aerial three-wire cableway system in the world, La Teleferica Massaua-Asmara was celebrated as a technological marvel and victory for Italy. Facilitating transport across rugged landscapes, it reduced reliance on conventional railways, which was particularly valuable during war-time, and played a crucial role in supplying food, provisions, and weaponry to the imperial Italian army.

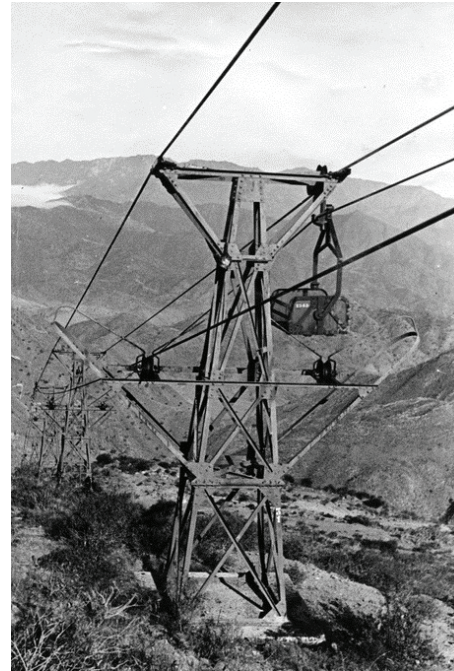
# 1. Technologies and infrastructure

## Deeper reading

### The 1933 aerial tramway in Chicago

Before the Italians constructed La Teleferica Massawa-Asmara in Eritrea, Chicago launched its own temporary cable car, called the Sky Ride, for the A Century of Progress International Exposition, also known as the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. Built to echo the magnitude of the Eiffel Tower at the 1889 Paris World Fair and the Ferris Wheel at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, the Sky Ride was composed of two 600-foot-tall steel towers—the tallest structures in the city at the time. One hundred miles of steel cable bridged the 1,850-foot watery gap between the Chicago lakefront and the fairgrounds on present-day Northerly Island, a gap that fairgoers could traverse in one of two rocket-shaped cars at two hundred feet above the ground.

For many attendees, the experience of being suspended in the air invoked not only terror, disbelief, and excitement but also power and an “eagle-eye” view over those below. This vantage point, higher than any building in Chicago at the time, also supported the theme of “progress” echoed throughout the exposition, as its creation required major technological developments to achieve.



You will see many more references to the 1933 Chicago World's Fair throughout this exhibition and later in this guide.

## 1. Technologies and infrastructure Questions for discussion

What visual similarities can you notice between the Sky Ride and La Teleferica? Why do you think the artist chose to juxtapose two cableway structures, built at a similar time, but in different parts of the world?

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Looking at *Spectre (Sky Ride)*, what do you notice about the artist's choices in scale, materials, color, and composition? How might these choices emphasize parallels between histories in Italy, Eritrea, and Chicago?

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To create this piece, Petros etched the image of the cable car in Eritrea onto the back of a large piece of Plexiglas that is then overlaid atop a photograph of mountains. Why might the artist have chosen to make the imagery so dark and difficult to see? Why might he have chosen for the surface to appear reflective, like a mirror?

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Previous spread, clockwise from upper left: La Teleferica Massawa-Asmara; Sky Ride postcard courtesy of the Newberry Library COP1709; one of the rocket-shaped cars of the Sky Ride seen above Chicago's downtown during the Chicago World's Fair of 1933-1934. Chicago Tribune Historical Photo/TCA.



# 1. Technologies and infrastructure

## The airplane

Advancements in aviation were another primary way that the Italian fascist regime advanced its colonial endeavors and global message of power. An Italian pilot, Giulio Gavotti identified the potential of the airplane for use in war, and Italy was the first country to employ aerial bombing, in Libya in 1911 just before World War I.

In 1926, the Italians introduced the Savoia-Marchetti S.55 — a landmark development in airplane design with its cantilevered metal wings, a double-hull, and tandem-engine. It was able to reliably carry up to twelve people, their gear, and all the fuel needed to cover long distances. This was previously impossible with the fragile, wooden and cloth wings of early planes.

This invention helped advance the Italian fascist regime in many ways, and the futuristic airplane became a symbol of their identity as a nation at the time. In fact, the Italian pavilion at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair was shaped as an abstract plane. The building, with its expansive wing structures, also echoes a building built in 1937 in Asmara.



Above: Italian Pavillion at 1933 World's Fair; below: Fiat Tagliero Building, Asmara. Both buildings were designed to look like airplanes as a way to further enforce the public image of Italy as a leader in aviation.

In her essay “A Counter-Aesthetics of  
Modernity,” found in the publication  
for this exhibition, Cristina Lombardi-  
Diop states:

*On the one hand, the theme of fly-  
ing and its technological futurity  
glorified the triumph of modernity,  
harkening back to the figure of  
Icarus, the mythology of ancient  
heroism, and the heralding of  
a new era rich with fresh myths.  
Flying, as a technology that was  
inspired by and yet challenged the  
natural elements, symbolized  
the triumph of ‘manly’ power over  
nature.*



## 1. Technologies and infrastructure Questions for discussion

Where else can you identify airplane imagery in the exhibition?  
What can you notice about how the artist is presenting airplanes visually?

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## 1. Technologies and infrastructure Exhibition highlight

Left: *Unseen Cartographies, Somalia (Study), 2021*

### *Unseen Cartographies, 2021*

Each sculptural work in the *Unseen Cartographies* series represents a different location where Italy expanded its empire via the airplane (Mekelle, Adwa, Libya, and Somaliland). The hollowed-out sections of the sculptures are in the shape of the tools that were used to repair the S.55 engines.



Of this series, the artist states:

*Unseen Cartographies consider how these tools in the service of aerial war are extensions of remote mapping processes that established boundaries of colonial entities. These acts of mapping have made deep incisions in the land, on the continent, leaving scars as one would on a vulnerable body. Here these cartographic questions are rendered in plastic. A material whose long-time span conveys and embodies the lasting impact of the power structures that asserted their authority over these territories.*

1. Technologies and infrastructure  
Questions for looking and discussion

Consider the title of the work, *Unseen Cartographies*. How might the act of being seen be a gesture towards progress? How might being unseen lead to repression or violence?

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Why might the artist choose to make these works and many other works in the exhibition in the color black?

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Notice how Petros highlights the natural contours of the land against the sharp forms of the tools. What effect does this contrast in form have on the way you interpret the piece?

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# 1. Technologies and infrastructure

## Deeper reading

### The imperial eagle

Italian fascists employed imagery of the eagle as a symbol of power, as the eagle has a long history connected to war and imperialism. In Greek and Roman mythologies, the eagle represented Jupiter, the god of the sky who held the most power.

Later, near 334 BCE, the Persian kings of the Achaemenid Empire and the legendary Alexander the Great would often use eagle symbolism to associate themselves with the gods. The eagle was further included in the military insignia of the Roman Republic from 509–27 BCE and was elevated to quasi-religious status during the Imperial period (27 BCE–c. 480 CE) as a small, gold statue that rode atop each legion's banner and represented the empire. When an emperor died, an eagle would be released to the sky as a symbol of that emperor securing his place among the gods.



*Bound (Study), 2021–2023*



From top to bottom, left to right: Exterior detail view of Illinois Host Pavilion Entrance, Century of Progress International Exposition. Photographed by Ken Hedrich; HB-01698-A, Chicago History Museum, Hedrich-Blessing Collection © Chicago Historical Society, published on or before 2015, all rights reserved; the Great Seal of the United States; eagle motif on the back of a US quarter; flag eagle, aluminium model, Michel-Ange Marion (founder), after Jean-Auguste Barre (1811–1896), 1860, gilded aluminum bronze, INV 262, Fondation Napoléon, Paris © Fondation Napoléon, Thomas Hennocque.

The global spread of Christianity caused the eagle to fade from overt usage for centuries until Charlemagne of the Holy Roman Empire (800–1806) revived it as the *Reichsadler* (German for “imperial eagle”) on their coat of arms. William Barton, one of the designers of the Great Seal of the United States released in 1782, cited the eagle as “the symbol of supreme power and authority.” In the early 17th century, Napoleon instituted the *Aigle de drapeau* (French for “flag eagle”) in the French army. Many more examples exist around the world and throughout history.

## 1. Technologies and infrastructure Questions for looking and discussion

What do you understand the eagle to represent in the United States? Besides the examples here, where else have you seen it in the built environment or visual culture?

How would you compare the representations of eagles you see in American culture to how Petros perceives it in *Bound*?

## 2. Key theme

Linking fascist and colonial histories to Chicago and its built environment



Although this exhibition illuminates many histories in East Africa, what exactly does it have to do with Chicago? The 1933 Chicago World's Fair was one vehicle that the Italian fascist regime used to promote their vision, and some of the structures from this time are still seen in Chicago's built environment.

Central to the exhibition is the Balbo Monument located in Grant Park, one mile southeast of the museum. The column, which is estimated to have been made between 117 and 38 BCE, was removed from its home at the ancient Italian port in Ostia, Rome. It was given to Chicago in 1934 by fascist dictator Benito Mussolini to commemorate the unprecedented transatlantic journey by air led by Italo Balbo, Mussolini's Minister of Aeronautics, for the World's Fair and the 10th anniversary of the Italian air force.

Balbo Monument, Chicago, established 1934. Photo by Judson Womack, 2024.

## 2. Chicago and its built environment

The name of this exhibition, *Prospetto A Mare*, is also the name of the original site where the column existed, and the source of the column is significant to the title of the exhibition. Teresa Fiore states in her essay for the exhibition publication, titled “Discovery, Display, and Destruction: Dawit L. Petros’s Re-Reading of the Fascist Flight”:

*Ironically taken from an ancient building named ‘Prospetto a mare’ (Prospect to the sea) in the very Ostia where Balbo landed on the return leg of the flight, the column was supposed to work as a memento of technological advancement and human ambition.*

The following words are inscribed into the monument in Italian and English:

*This column  
twenty centuries old  
erected on the beach of Ostia  
port of Imperial Rome  
to safeguard the fortunes and  
victories  
of the Roman triremes  
Fascist Italy, by command of  
Benito Mussolini,  
presents to Chicago  
exaltation, symbol, memorial  
of the Atlantic Squadron led by  
Balbo  
that with Roman daring flew  
across the ocean  
in the 11th year  
of the Fascist era*



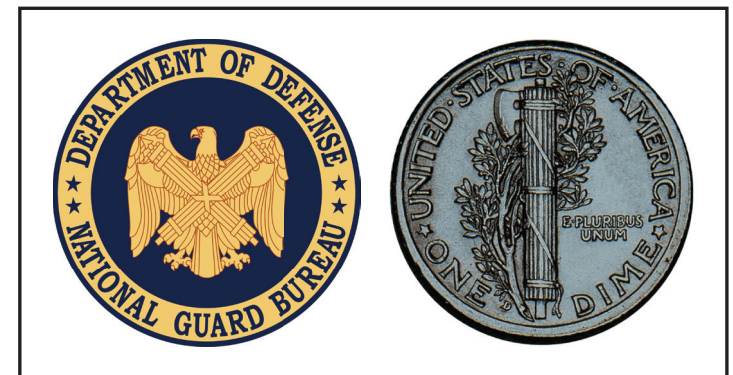
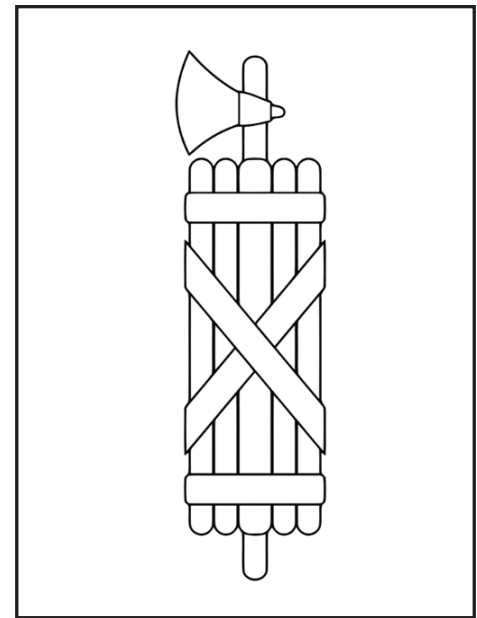
## 2. Chicago and its built environment

### Deeper reading

#### The fasces

At the base of the Balbo Monument you will see four partial fasces. The fasces typically have axe heads (as seen on the right), which have all been removed. The fasces is a symbol dating from pre-Roman Etruscan civilization, that originally represented the right of a ruler to punish their subjects. Its meaning evolved during Roman imperialism to represent someone holding jurisdiction over a place or people. The symbol was implemented broadly in fascist Italy as part of Mussolini's adoption of Roman imagery, and the word "fasces" is the linguistic basis for fascism. The Italian Pavilion at the 1933 World's Fair included abstract fasces in its design.

The fasces are still used today to represent power, hegemony, and the ability to create law. Most notably, the symbol is present in many Founding Fathers' depictions and in statehouses across the United States. For example, you can find it represented on the former US dime, and the current US seal of the National Guard Bureau, as seen on the right.



Left to right: Image of Balbo Monument by Sailko — own work, public domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=64752921>; illustration of the fasces

## 2. Chicago and its built environment Questions for discussion

Notice the appearance of two words in the text that is inscribed in Balbo Monument: *imperial* and *fascist*. These two terms are important to understand as a foundation for the whole exhibition. After reading their definitions here, do you think imperialism and fascism still exist today? If so, where might you see evidence of these systems of beliefs?

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Some people have proposed that the Balbo Monument should be returned to Italy in an effort of repatriation. Do you think this would be a movement in a positive direction? How do monuments evolve in their meaning and purpose?

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What monuments have you seen in Chicago or elsewhere? What do they usually commemorate? What do they typically look like?

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Does it surprise you that Chicago, established in 1833, has a monument made from materials from ancient Rome? Why might Chicago, or any city, have a monument that represents another country's history?

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Is it surprising to you that a democracy like the United States would have, and keep, a monument celebrating fascism?

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## 2. Chicago and its built environment Deeper reading



Balbo Monument opening ceremony with the Italian Pavilion visible in the background, July 1934. Kaufmann & Fabry Co., photographer. "Unveiling of a memorial pillar to Italo Balbo," Century of Progress digital image collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois Chicago.

## Italo Balbo and his transatlantic flight

At 6:00 pm on July 15, 1933, Italo Balbo and 96 aviators in 24 seaplanes landed on Lake Michigan for the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, accomplishing their ambitious goal of crossing the North Atlantic by plane. More than 100,000 people came to the lakeshore to welcome them to Chicago with a fascist salute.

Balbo's fleet's arrival represented an aviation milestone but, more importantly, a point of sociopolitical and cultural intersection. During the 1920s and 30s, many people were enamored with the prospect of air travel. Families anxiously huddled around home radios and pedestrians swarmed morning newsstands to receive updates on the most recent attempt to push the boundaries of this new frontier. Who were the aviators? Did they make it? Will they continue on? Where will they go next? Mussolini and his cabinet were in desperate need of programs that displayed the promise of Italian fascism on the international stage, and Balbo saw air travel as a way to achieve this.

In 1928, Balbo initially visited the United States and was greeted by the Italian American community, which conveyed to him a strong Italian cultural presence in the US. By this point, millions of Italians had immigrated to New England and the Midwest such that Balbo saw the United States as Italians' second home. After seeing American displays of aeronautical capability, he settled on the US as the perfect world ally and devised a North Atlantic crossing as Fascist Italy's next great challenge to conquer.

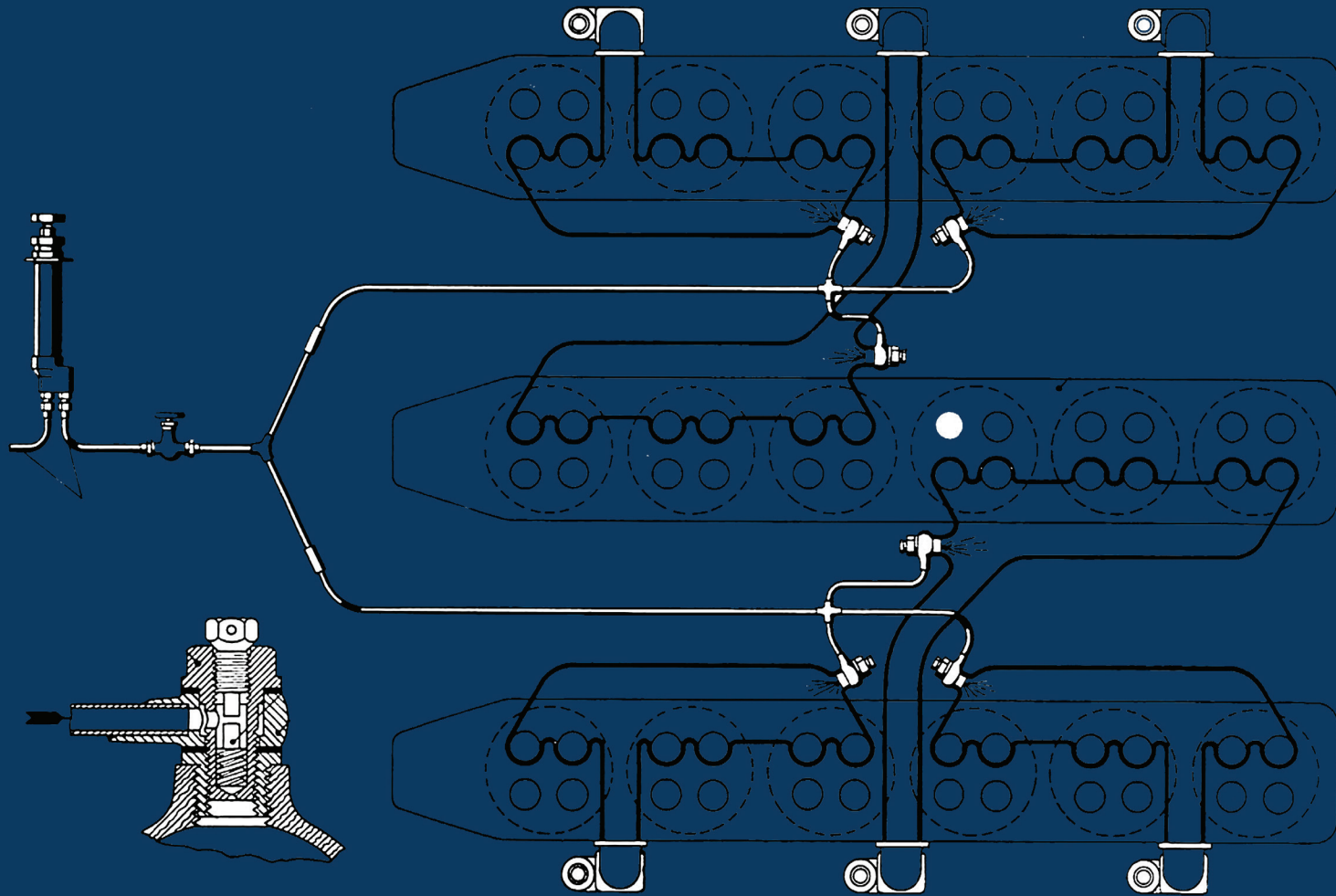
## 2. Chicago and its built environment

Upon the 1933 landing, Chicago held receptions all over the city including at the Steven Hotel (now Hilton hotel) right next to this museum. The city even renamed two streets — Balbo and Columbus avenues — during his visit and opened the Columbus Monument during “Italian Day” at the fair. Illustrating the connection between Balbo and Columbus, Teresa Fiore states in her essay, “Discovery, Display, and Destruction: Dawit L. Petros’s Re-Reading of the Fascist Flight,” which can be found in the publication for this exhibition:

*Openly described as a reenactment of the “discovery voyage of America” with Balbo cast as a “second Columbus,” the crossing recycled the epic narrative of the past journey by sea and repackaged it in its modern version in the clouds, highlighting the various stops of the flight’s trajectory (Netherlands, Ireland, Iceland, Canada, the United States).*

Seventh Street in Chicago was changed to Balbo Drive for Italo Balbo, fascist air force minister, c. 1935 (photographer unknown). Photo by Imagno/Getty Images.



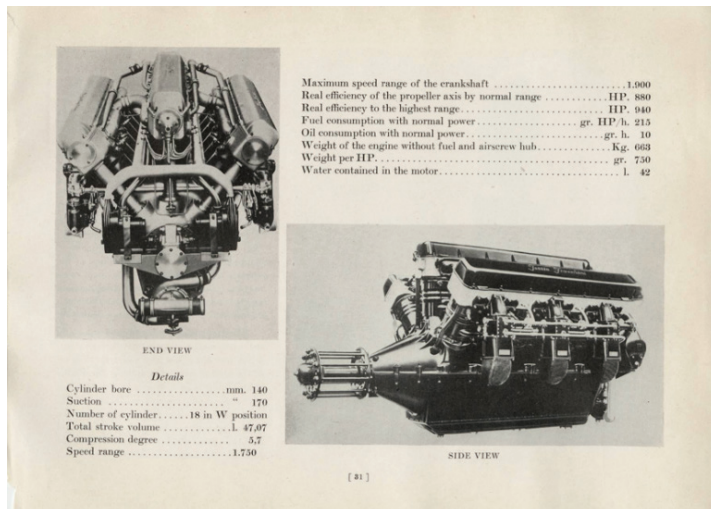


## 2. Chicago and its built environment Exhibition highlight

### Istruzioni (Transits, Trajectories, Invisible Networks), 2021–2023

Istruzioni means “instruction” in Italian. The prints in Petros’s *Istruzioni* series are adaptations of the in-depth technical manual Balbo used during his flight. You can see the full manual [here](#).

Petros made these works with a screenprinting process, which requires printing separate layers to create each color. The rich blue base layer, seen throughout each print, is meant to resemble both the color of the sky and sea. The skies were where the colonizers were able to act out their aggressive plans of domination and futurism.



Previous spread: *Istruzioni (Transits, Trajectories, Invisible Networks, Part IX)*, 2021–2023. Left: From the *Official Book of the Flight of Italo Balbo and his Italian Air Armada to A Century of Progress Chicago —1933*; image courtesy of <https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/ead/pdf/century0130.pdf>.

The seas represent, in the artist’s words:

*the sublime liquid space migrants travel in historical and contemporary displacements of physical geographies.*

### Questions for looking and discussion

Beyond using the color blue, why do you think Petros chose to use grey, black, white, and red in his palette for his *Istruzioni* works? What might these colors symbolize?

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### 3. Key theme

Notions of progress and the 1933 World's Fair



Poster, Glen C. Sheffer, not in exhibition, public domain

The 1933 A Century of Progress Exposition, more commonly known as the Chicago World's Fair, is a central focus in Petros's research. As indicated in the name, this exposition was held to celebrate the hundred-year anniversary of the founding of Chicago and highlighted the notion of "progress," particularly in relation to developments in transportation by car, train, and airplane. Of significance, the fair also featured an International Salon of Photography, including images of an ethnographic nature of people around the world and Indigenous nations. Petros sees the photographic portion of the fair as a critical way in which colonial propaganda was spread, as the images enforced a false narrative that non-Western lifestyles were crude or in need of saving.

### Questions for discussion

Look closely at the poster for the Chicago World's Fair. What central message do you think the poster conveys? Do you see any imagery that relates to parts of this exhibition?

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### 3. The 1933 World's Fair Exhibition highlight

#### *Between departures, returns and excesses of image, Part I, 2021*

In many of his works, Petros appropriates images he finds in archives. This screenprint is an example, as the artist has reworked photographs made between 1935 and 1936 by Italian photographers in Eritrea and Ethiopia. The artist states:

*I continue interrogating these images to understand how they constructed a representational logic and power that shaped relations between Italians and its colonial subjects, which still survives. The images show Ethiopian and Eritrean subjects as docile, despicable, and/or redeemed savages, fearsome, out of historical time. Simply put they produced a knowledge of their subjects that interprets them as social problems to be solved while affirming the prestige and soundness of the colonial project.*

*My process in transferring these images from the ground of the photograph to that of the canvas is to recontextualize such that the deliberate process by which the camera produces coded representations. The colonial camera interprets reality by selecting, framing, focusing, and determining what can and cannot be seen. I want to consider what repeated, careful acts of looking followed by extraction, re-selecting, reframing, enlarging, negating of information, background, changing the ground of the image, and changing the focus can achieve.*

Previous spread: *Between departures, returns and excesses of image, Part I (detail), 2021.*

### 3. The 1933 World's Fair Questions for looking and discussion



Connecting this concept back to Chicago, look closely at this photograph of one of the ethnographic booths, supposedly representing a Tunisian village, at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair and consider it in relation to Petros's appropriated images, using the following questions for looking and discussion.

Kaufmann & Fabry Co., "Bedouin family" sitting underneath a tent at the Foreign Villages exhibit. Century of Progress International Exposition (1933–1934: Chicago, Ill.), image courtesy of University of Illinois Chicago (for educational purposes only; not in exhibition)

Besides the example outlined above, how else can photography perpetuate dominant narratives?

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Consider the title of Petros's piece: *Between departures, returns and excesses of image*. How do you interpret this title?

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### 3. The 1933 World's Fair Questions for looking and discussion

The color bars in Petros's *Between departures, returns and excesses of image* series reference the colors used in Futurism, as demonstrated in this Italian propaganda poster that promoted fascism (see right). What emotions do the colors in both Petros's piece, and the propaganda poster express to you?

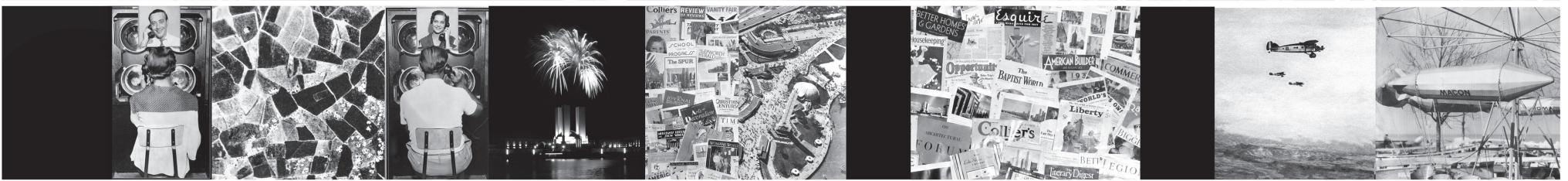
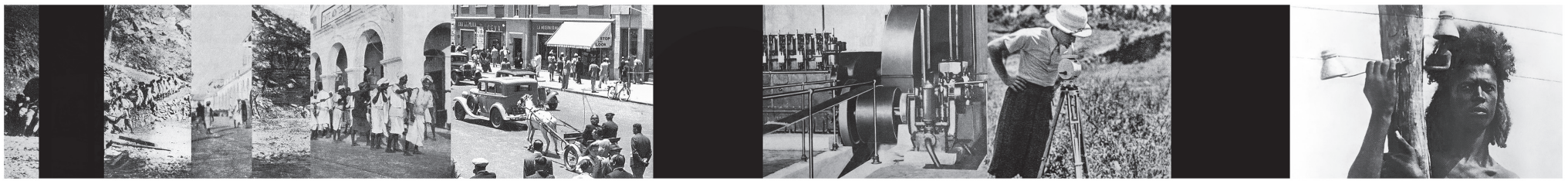
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Now compare this example of the propaganda poster for fascism (on right) to the advertisement for the 1933 World's Fair on page 23. What similarities do you see in text and imagery?

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*Gioventù Fascista* magazine cover  
#33, Italy, c. 1936



### 3. The 1933 World's Fair Exhibition highlight

#### *A Constant Re-telling of the Future in the Past, 2021–2023*

Continuing to probe the role of photography in the advancement of colonialism, Petros's large scale works titled *A Constant Re-telling of the Future in the Past* (2021–2023) features a grid of images found in archives and made between 1890 and 1937. The images were all made by Italians during their time occupying Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Libya. The images depict the construction of the capital city of Asmara juxtaposed with images depicting the construction of the 1933 Chicago World's Fair.

Collectively, the sequenced images appear as film stills that connect moments between geographies of East Africa, Italy, and North America to highlight how photographs shape our understanding of global histories, while the black sections serve as a visual reminder for perspectives not represented photographically.

On this series, the artist states:

*Thousands of these types of images reside within the Italian colonial archive. They are documents that bear witness to the radical transformation of the North African and Northeast African landscapes and environments due to the extensive modernization of these nations. The images depict the technological sublime — the infrastructural projects, demarcations of space, and cartographic endeavors with which the 'modern subject' and the nation-states of Italy's colonial empire were constructed. The emphasis here is both on the formation of the Indigenous African subjects as colonial subjects and that of Italians as colonizers in the same project.*

Previous spread, above: *A Constant Re-telling of the Future in the Past (Part 1)*, 2021–2023; below: *A Constant Re-telling of the Future in the Past (Part 3)*, 2021–2023

### 3. The 1933 World's Fair Questions for looking and discussion

What can we learn from images like these that were made with a “colonial camera,” and showing a limited view of a moment in history? In your opinion, should these types of images continue to circulate, or would it be better to keep them from view?

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Notice how Petros has sequenced the photographs and where he has created pauses in the sequencing with black bars. What story do the images tell when they are side by side that they perhaps cannot tell individually?

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## 4. Glossary of terms, events, and people

### Italo Balbo

Italo Balbo [6 June 1896–28 June 1940] was a fascist political organizer and later world-famous aviator who played a major part in Mussolini's rise to power and fascist Italy's presence on the world's stage afterwards. As a teenager, Balbo supported Italian entry into World War I and enlisted to relative success. Post-war, he became involved in local politics and was heavily active in the burgeoning National Fascist Party by 1921. Balbo rose through the ranks as an effective "blackshirts" or *squadisti* organizer. These paramilitary gangs, similar to the Nazi Sturmabteilung (SA), would antagonize and attack Party opposition, provide security for Party events, and break "socialist" strikes for local businesses." As one of the four *quadrumviri*, principal leaders of the Fascist Party under Mussolini, Balbo helped organize and lead the March on Rome, a successful attempt to intimidate the Italian monarchy into transferring power to Mussolini under threat of civil war. Balbo was viewed as the most likely successor to Mussolini.

While helping lead the fascist state, Balbo became enamored with flight as a cutting-edge and powerful technology. He first overhauled and modernized the Italian Air Force, then led a series of air expeditions culminating in his flight to Chicago that brought international attention and admiration to himself and the Italian Fascist state. To a roaring audience of Italian Americans at Madison Square Garden in 1933, Balbo said, "Be proud that you are Italians. Mussolini has ended the era of humiliations."



Above, from left: Emilio De Bono, Benito Mussolini, Italo Balbo, and Cesare Maria De Vecchi in Naples preceding the March on Rome. Though pictured here, Mussolini would not participate in the March due to the risks associated with a coup d'etat. Public domain.

## Colonialism

The government practice of imposing and maintaining political, economic, and or military control over a foreign land or people. Merriam-Webster dictionary provides an important usage note about the distinction between colonialism and imperialism: “In contexts dealing with the domination of a people or area by a foreign power, *colonialism* and *imperialism* are often used together with no real distinction in meaning. Used separately, however, each of these words can take on a slightly different emphasis. *Colonialism* comes from colony and tends to be applied in contexts addressing the effects that colonialism has on the lives of those living in colonies. *Imperialism* is closely related to empire and therefore tends to place more emphasis on the ruling power and its intent to expand its dominion, as well as on the expanded empire itself, with its distinct parts subsumed under the banner of the dominating force.”

## Fascism

The political belief that the nation and a correlating race of people in that nation is superior to all other nations.

## Imperialism

The political belief of using military force to increase a country’s power over another country. See the usage note under “colonialism” for more details.

## Italian Futurism

A social and artistic movement originating in Italy during the early 20th century in response to the Industrial Revolution of the prior century. Slow to follow its neighbors, Italy and Italian culture were seen by the Futurists as lagging behind a fast-modernizing Western society. The Futurists exalted energy, audacity, innovation, and industry, believing their movement would revive an Italian reputation that had become stale and rooted in the past. In the 1908 document, “Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism,” Filippo Tommaso Marinetti wrote: “for we will free Italy from her numberless museums which cover her with countless cemeteries.”

However, unlike other Modernist “progress” movements of this time, the Futurists encouraged and idolized violence as part of progress. Instead of seeing modernity as a path beyond violence, Futurists conceptualized violence as the “beautiful” mechanisms of speed and technology, by which change is made.

## Benito Mussolini

Benito Mussolini was the Prime Minister of fascist Italy and self-styled *Duce* (from Latin *dux*, “leader”) of the fascist party from 1922 until his execution by Italian partisans in 1945. Mussolini spent much of his early life as a journalist and organizer for the Italian Socialist Party. In 1914, he was kicked out of the party for advocating entrance into World War I. He later served in the conflict, initiating a political shift his views on abandoning class conflict for nationalist revolution as the force by which he would create change. He espoused ideals of obedience, discipline, collective dedication to Italian identity, and a return to the glory and greatness of the Roman Empire.



## Repatriation

The political process of returning something to its origin or most approximate representative of its original lineage. The term can refer to objects and wealth removed illegally or under duress, to people displaced by catastrophe, or even to human remains from current or past conflict.

## Roman Empire

The Roman Empire, initially the Roman Republic, was a Mediterranean polity traditionally dated from 509 BCE to 476 CE. Starting as a city-state on the Italian peninsula, Rome grew to represent the largest European state by both territorial extent and population until the 19th century colonial period. At its height, Roman borders stretched from the British Isles and the river Rhine to North Africa and Mesopotamia. The Roman cultural sphere paired with the Ancient Greek Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic periods form the classical tradition, which is frequently seen as Western culture.

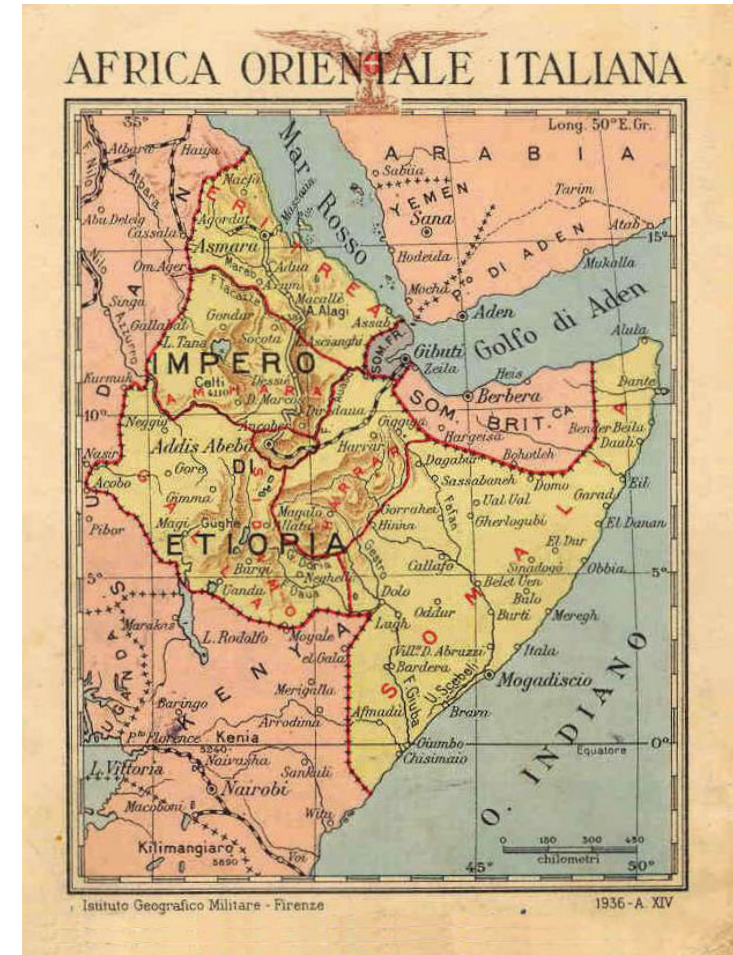
Benito Mussolini, on the wall of the Italian Pavilion at the 1933 World's Fair:

*To leave out the pages of Roman history would be a terrible mutilation of universal history and would render the greatest part of the contemporary world incomprehensible. Rome is a source of life without which it would not be worthwhile to live.*

Right: courtesy Istituto Geografico Militare, Firenze – <http://www.edmaps.com/html/italy.html>, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=50729895>

## “Scramble for Africa”

From 1833 until 1914, only Liberia and Ethiopia remained independent African countries, while the remaining 90 percent of the African continent was under European rule. Fourteen European countries and the United States met during the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 to prevent warring over African countries. The colonizers each divided how they would pillage resources like gold, silver, rubber, palm oil, and later, cotton. Most of Africa was decolonized from the mid-1950s through the 1970s during the Cold War, but the presence of colonialism lingers.



## 5. Extended resources

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Books, fiction

Addonia, Sulaiman, *The Seers*. 2023.

Mengiste, Maaza, *Addis Ababa Noir*. 2020.

Mengiste, Maaza, *The Shadow King*. 2019.

Mengiste, Maaza, *Beneath the Lion's Gate*. 2010.

Scego, Igiaba, *Adua*. 2017.

Archives

1933 Century of Progress Archives at the University of Illinois Chicago, [https://collections.carli.illinois.edu/digital/collection/uic\\_cop/search](https://collections.carli.illinois.edu/digital/collection/uic_cop/search)

The Chicago History Museum Image Archives of the 1893 and 1933 World's Fairs, <https://images.chicagohistory.org/search/?searchQuery=century+of+progress>

A Century of Progress Exposition: Official Book of Views, <https://digitalcommons.colum.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=rarebooks>

Video

*A Roman Column in Chicago: An Intertwined History of a Conglomerate Monument* by Onur Öztürk, Assistant Professor of Art History in the Art and Art History Department at Columbia College Chicago, <https://youtu.be/sD9bqsDzMLo>

## 6. Illinois Learning Standards addressed in this guide

### Visual Arts Standards

VA:Re7.2 Perceive and analyze artistic work. Visual imagery influences understanding of, and responses to, the world.

VA:Re8 Construct meaningful interpretations of artistic work. People gain insights into meanings of artworks by engaging in the process of art criticism.

VA:Re9 Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. People evaluate art based on various criteria.

VA:Cn11 Relate artistic ideas and works with social, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding. People develop ideas and understandings of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.

### Media Arts Standards

MA:Re7.1 Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work. Media artworks can be appreciated and interpreted through analyzing their components.

MA:Re8.1 Anchor Standard 8: Construct meaningful interpretations of artistic work. Interpretation and appreciation require engagement with the content, form, and context of media artworks.

MA:Re9.1 Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. Skillful evaluation and critique are critical components of experiencing, appreciating, and producing media artworks.

### Social Sciences Standards

SS.CV.1 Distinguish the rights, roles, powers, and responsibilities of individuals and institutions in the political system.

SS.CV.3.5 Compare the origins, functions, and structure of different systems of government.

SS.CV.6 Describe how political parties, the media, and public interest groups both influence and reflect social and political interests.

SS.H.8 Analyze key historical events and contributions of individuals through a variety of perspectives, including those of historically under-represented groups.

SS.H.11 Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

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