

Between Arts and Politics: The "Cultural" Background of the Trevi Fountain Attack in Rome

From Italy (October 22, 2007)



From behind the attack an old Italian artistic-political movement resurfaces. Who were the "Futurists" and what was their relation to the revolutionary Fascist culture of the 1920s?

The Italian police arrested the man who allegedly turned the Trevi Fountain red last Friday. Graziano Cecchini, 54, active member of the extreme-right Roman political community. Mr Cecchini denies all charges and states that he was arrested and his house was searched for a mere similarity to the man recorded by security cameras pouring red paint into the baroque fountain.

The act was perpetrated by a movement – never heard of before – called "FTM Futurist Action 2007". This group and their colorful protest recalls explicitly the early 20 th century Futurist Movement. "Futurism" was an avant-garde artistic movement officially born on February 20th 1909 thanks to a manifesto published by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti on the famous French newspaper "Le Figaro". The movement was born as a mainly Italian artistic phenomenon carried out by Italian artists living in Paris. Its influence spread throughout Europe, reaching Russia before the bolshevik Revolution of 1917, where Vladimir Mayakovsky founded the Russian Futurist Movement.

Futurism thrived in Italy during the first half of the 20th Century. Its followers were against the static contemplation of the art of the past. Excited by technological progress, in particular by the invention of the automobile, they exalted what they called "the wheel", speed, progress.

The movement had a very tumultuous relation with Fascism. On the one hand, futurist exaltation of revolution, nationalism, and even militarism and war – considered by its founder Marinetti "the only hygiene of the world" – made it a cultural pillar of the Fascist movement. On the other hand, however, the lack of a consistent ideological framework made its relations with Mussolini rather unstable.

Clearly, the "attack" against the Trevi Fountain is something in perfect Futurist style: an attack against a symbol of the past that creates instantaneous amusement. It makes breaking news and forces people to notice. In this case, it seems that those who planned the attack intended to protest against Rome's Festa del Cinema, although the relation with the Trevi Fountain remains ambiguous... something that is, again, very "Futuristic".

To know more about Italian Futurism, see the following links:

- [Futurism: historical documents](#) [2]
- [Mark Harden's Artchive](#) [3]
- [Guggenheim Collection](#) [4]
- [Google images search results](#) [5]
- [Wikipedia](#) [6]

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Links

[1] <http://iitaly.org/files/marinetti021193099484jpg>

[2] <http://www.unknown.nu/futurism/>

[3] <http://artchive.com/artchive/futurism.html>

[4] http://www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/movement_works_Futurism_0.html

[5] [http://images.google.it/images?q=futurism&hl=en&newwindow=1&client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla:en-](http://images.google.it/images?q=futurism&hl=en&newwindow=1&client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&hs=ALS&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&oi=images&ct=title)

[US:official&hs=ALS&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&oi=images&ct=title](http://images.google.it/images?q=futurism&hl=en&newwindow=1&client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&hs=ALS&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=X&oi=images&ct=title)

[6] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_\(art\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurism_(art))