

INTERNATIONAL MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

Newsreels and photographs of Istituto Nazionale L.U.C.E.

(Italy)

2012-64

1 SUMMARY

Istituto Nazionale L.U.C.E. (acronym for L'Unione Cinematografica Educativa), founded in 1925, was the main source of information, education and mass propaganda in Italy during fascism. Its heritage is made up of about 3.000 newsreels, 3.000 documentaries and 300.000 photographs. Following the institutional changes determined by the founding of the Italian Republic in 1946, Istituto Luce radically changed its nature. However, as a "legitimate successor" of the previous company, it inherited the entire cultural heritage produced in the 1920s and 1930s, and has maintained it in an unbroken chain of custody to this day. The cultural heritage here nominated consists of newsreels produced between 1928 and 1946 and photographs produced between 1927 and 1956; however, the most significant portion is the fonds relating to the 1920s and 1930s. 1956 is the date of the formal termination of Istituto Luce's mandate.

This cultural heritage as a whole is an indispensable and unique resource for understanding the Italian and European political, economic, cultural and social context of the time. Its nomination is also motivated by the fact that these materials are still requested and used today by scholars from a variety of disciplines: contemporary history, history of cinema and photography, anthropology, art history, cultural studies and visual studies, history of technology, architecture and urbanism, etc.

In brief, the fonds of Istituto Nazionale L.U.C.E. are a unique source for information about Italy in the years of the fascist regime, about the international context of fascism (including East Africa and Albania, but also well beyond the areas occupied by Italy during fascism, especially as regards the period of the Second World War), and about mass society in the 1920s and 1930s.

2 DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR

2-1 name of the organization: Cinecittà Luce Spa

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2-2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

The Director of the Historical Archive Luce manages the documentary heritage nominated.

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3 IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

3-1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

**The series candidate for the MoW international register are:
newsreels and photographs of Istituto Nazionale L.U.C.E.**

Istituto Nazionale L.U.C.E. was founded by royal decree n.1985 on November 5th 1925 and, it ceased its activity as a public body dependent on the Council of Ministers on August 1st 1962.

In 1927, inside the production structure, the photo-cinematographic service was established, divided in two offices: "Giornali L.U.C.E" and "Attualità fotografiche." The first office was active from 1928 to 1946, and the second from 1927 to 1956.

The two fonds are the property of Istituto Luce Cinecittà srl, while the Historical Archives L.U.C.E. is the custodian of all L.U.C.E's productions as the natural successor of the first Istituto Nazionale L.U.C.E.

3-1 A) Cinematographic heritage

The *Giornali Luce (Luce newsreels)* follow an alphanumeric organization assigned for purposes of archival preservation in the 1960s. They are divided into three groups: *Giornali Luce A* consists of 941 mute newsreels, produced between 1927 and 1932. It includes 933 original flammable negatives on 35mm films;

Giornali Luce B consists of 1654 soundtracks produced between 1931 and 1939, and the first items are on live recording. It includes 1589 negatives and 257 original flammable negatives Colonna on 35 mm films; *Giornali Luce C* consists of 346 newsreels, created during the war period, among which there are 9 items

made during the 45 days of the Badoglio Government, after July 25 1943, and 53 items edited during the social Republic. They include 150 negatives and 190 original flammable negatives Colonna on 35 mm films.

The *Rivista Luce* are newsreels produced between 1934 and 1935 under the direction of Corrado d'Errico. They are an extraordinary supplement to the *Giornali Luce*. They consist of 5 items, one of which is in French. The original supports, made of flammable 35mm film are: 5 negatives, 1 Colonna negative, 2 positives and 1 Lavander.

Cronache dell'Impero are newsreels, produced in 1937, that were subsequently placed within *Giornali Luce*. This material consists of 4 items. The original supports, made of flammable 35mm film, are: 5 positives, 1 negative, 1 Colonna negative, 1 Lavander.

Cine G.I.L. are newsreels produced between 1940 and 1943 for the Gioventù Italiana del Littorio (G.I.L.), the youth fascist organization. The production consists of 26 items, but only 23 are preserved in the archives. They were distributed, above all, to schools and to all the sections of the G.I.L. The original supports, made of flammable 35mm film, are: 19 negatives.

Notiziario Nuova Luce are news produced by Istituto Nazionale Nuova Luce between July 26th 1945 and October 1946. This material consists of 22 items. The original supports, made of flammable 35mm film, are: 21 negatives, 18 negatives Colonna, 28 positives, 1 lavander.

3-1 B) Photographic Heritage:

The series *Attualità* is composed of the photographic documents produced between 1927 and 1956. It comprises negatives from inventory number A3 to number A184450. The negatives are on silver bromide glass plate, nitrate cellulose films, and acetate cellulose films; their format ranges from 24x36mm to 13x18cm. Each documented event is accompanied by an album of black and white prints on paper with silver bromide gelatine, in a format 10x15cm or 18x24cm.

The series *Serie L* was produced between 1928 and 1933, subsequent to an agreement between the Ministry of Public Education and Istituto Nazionale L.U.C.E, to gather a vast documentary collection of works of art and images of Italian landscape. The content of the series extends from inventory number of L1 to number L8360. It comprises silver bromide glass plate negatives, cellulose nitrate films, and cellulose acetate films, in a format of 13x18cm. Every event is accompanied by an album of black and white prints on paper of silver bromide gelatine, in a format of 18x24cm.

The series *A.O.I* (Africa Orientale Italiana) was produced between 1935 and 1938 to document the war between Italy and Ethiopia, and its contents extends from inventory number A01 to number A010135. The series comprises cellulose nitrate films and cellulose acetate films, with formats that range from 24x36mm to 9x12cm.

The series *Albania* was produced between 1939 and 1943, the years of the Italian occupation of the Balkans. Its contents extend from inventory number AL1 to number AL7698, and it is composed of nitrate cellulose films and acetate cellulose films, with formats that range from 24x36mm to 9x12cm.

The series *Teatro* covers a period of time from 1935 to 1942, and documents

the theatrical activity in Italy under different circumstances. Its contents extend from inventory number T1 to number T7012, and it is composed of cellulose nitrate films and cellulose acetate films, with formats that range from 6x9cm to 18x24cm.

The series *Reperto Guerra* documents Italy's participation in the world conflict and the principal military actions from June 1940 up to January 1944. Its contents extend from inventory number RG1 to number RG71648. The series consists of silver bromide glass plate negatives, cellulose nitrate films, cellulose acetate films and cinema film frames, with formats that range from 24x36mm to 13x18cm. Each event is accompanied by an album of black and white prints on paper on silver bromide gelatine, in formats of 10x15cm and 18x24cm.

The series *Grazia e Giustizia* was created by three photographers of the National Institute LUCE, on commission of the Department of Justice in 1951. The purpose was to document the reality of the Italian institutes of prevention and punishment, with particular attention to institutes for juveniles. The series is composed of 2.742 negatives, with formats of 6x6s and 9x12.

3.2.1 Link to the website: fondoluce.archivioluce.com

3.2.2 History and provenance

Thanks to a complex productive apparatus, in the early years of fascism, Istituto L.U.C.E. developed an integrated "media system". On the one hand, it offered documentary films as instruments of education, and on the other it produced newsreels of news footage and propaganda with a frequency that, in the years of maximum consent (1930s), reached the 5 weekly editions. In Europe, in the mid-1920s, this system was an absolute novelty. All the cinemas in the Italian Kingdom were obliged to show the films of L.U.C.E. (decree n. 1000 of April 3rd 1926 made "mandatory in all the cinema rooms open to the public the projection of films of propaganda edited by Istituto Nazionale L.U.C.E."). They become the principal vehicle of knowledge for the Italian people, who were in large part illiterate. Moreover, all the photos of news footage had to be purchased and obligatorily published by the Italian press.

For the whole period, Istituto L.U.C.E. often produced in parallel newsreels and photos (the types of documents that are proposed for candidacy) on the same subjects, and these constitutes an important ground for comparison among the principals sources of visual documentation from 1900s.

In the difficult years of the second world war, ISTITUTO L.U.C.E., situated in Rome, suffered the requisition of some archival series: at first from the German occupants (in 1943), and later from the American army during their transfer to Venice with the Italian Social Republic (between 1944 and the 1945). However, thanks to a careful policy of recovery, in the following decades, it was possible to recover almost the entirety of this heritage.

4.0 Legal information

4.1 Owner of the documentary heritage

CINECITTA' LUCE SPA

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4.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage

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4.3 Legal status: Public Institution

(accessibility): www.archiviolute.com and Historical Archive

(copyright status): having rights on documentary materials

(Responsible administration): Mr. Edoardo Ceccuti
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4.4 Accessibility

For decades, the Institute has invested every possible resource in the safeguarding of a documentary heritage that, because of the fragility of its medium, requires a high level of professionalism and financial investment. At the same time, since 1996, it has devoted great attention to the development of a free online database through the digitization of the entire audiovisual heritage, and a large part of the photographic one, as well as through the philological reconstruction of images' contents and authorship.

Today, the database, accessible at www.archiviolute.com, is the principal instrument of consultation for the greatest part of the world's users: it has made the material available and well known to whomever studies and works with images. Users also have the ability to access both digital and original documents at the Historical Archives L.U.C.E. in Rome. Furthermore, the Institute has started a policy of constant promotion and valorization of its documentary heritage. Through historical audiovisual productions, publications, conferences, and with

the collaboration of schools, universities and Italian and international institutions, the L.U.C.E. aims to foster the knowledge and study of its history and materials.

4.5 Copyright status:

Cinecittà Luce Spa owns the rights of the documentary materials.

5.0 Assessment against selection criteria

5.1 Authenticity

The cultural heritage here nominated was produced between 1927 and 1956 by Istituto Nazionale L.U.C.E., which at that time was an agency of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, and has been preserved in dedicated repositories. With the end of the World War II and of fascism, L.U.C.E. changed its juridical form, but continued to conduct its conservation and preservation activities on its own and other materials remaining the sole owner of the whole heritage. In fact, in 1962, L.U.C.E., was transformed into a private corporation, but, at the same time, it was put under the control of the Ministero delle Partecipazioni Statali (the ministry in charge of the government economic initiatives in the private sector), which entrusted it with the management and custody of the whole heritage. All the original supports (i.e., original flammable films and photographs plates) are preserved in accordance with the law, and are deposited in special repositories. In order to guarantee their consultation and to protect them from the natural deterioration of their medium, all the films were periodically transferred onto new media and all the photographs are now available in digital and print format. Regarding their content, the visual documents have not suffered any deterioration in comparison to their original state. Careful analog and digital restoration has made possible the recovery both of the deteriorated supports and of images of many documents. The authenticity of the heritage is guaranteed by its "integrity" and its "identity", the latter of which is confirmed by the intrinsic relationships among the different types of documents and by the information about them (dates, author, title, etc.) which the Institute has either preserved in its archives or subsequently reconstructed.

5.2 World meaning

The importance of Istituto L.U.C.E.'s documentary heritage to world culture arises from a series of factors, among which are its nature and uniqueness. It is not long since the so-called "images of reality" have become the object of study of many disciplines. However, since the origin of photography and cinema, careful observers, such as Boleslaw Matuszewski (who, at the end of XIX century, wanted to create a visual historical archive), and the historians of the French school *Annales* (e.g. Marc Ferro), have emphasized their cultural importance. The studies on optic images in relation to the representation and auto-representation of society and their use in propaganda, involve a variety of disciplines, from history to sociology, to psychology. For these and other disciplines, the L.U.C.E.'s heritage constitutes an inimitable documentary corpus for understanding the formation

process of totalitarian regimes, the mechanisms of creation and development of visual material, and the life conditions in Italian society. These are themes that could be comprehensively depicted only by images. In the 1920s and 1930s, L.U.C.E. took an international role because it distributed its images abroad (agencies in Paris, London and Berlin insured commercial distribution in Europe). Moreover, in the 1920s, its creator, the journalist Luciano De Feo, became responsible for the International institute of educational cinematography, an organism promoted by the Society of Nations to develop cooperation in the field of didactic, educational and scientific film. This institute, together with the International Institute of intellectual cooperation, founded in 1924, was one of the "special institutes" from which UNESCO originated.

This is also an irreplaceable heritage because it constituted, between 1920s and 1930s, the principal vehicle of information in the world, not only about Italy, but also about the Italian fascism. Fascism was a political experience that, until the 1930s, was viewed with indulgence by democratic regimes, resulting in the rise

(even through the images of L.U.C.E.) of an antidemocratic political model in different parts of Europe. In addition, L.U.C.E.'s heritage is nominated as a complete and intact documentary corpus, and this increases its value. In Italy, films and photos were formally recognized as cultural heritage in 1999; however, in 1997, after having been declared to be of national interest for the value and completeness of its fonds, Istituto L.U.C.E. was put under the supervision of the Archival Superintendence of the Ministry of Cultural Properties and Activities. Therefore, the loss or the damage of a documentary heritage like that of Istituto L.U.C.E. would deprive the international community of a fundamental part of its shared memory. It is also important to emphasize the high educational value of the visual documents submitted for candidacy. Working with schools and universities has demonstrated that the descriptive and evocative strength of the images are the best means of explaining to young generations a complex phenomenon as the Italian fascism and its capillary organization, which, for twenty years, controlled and limited the civil liberties of a whole country.

Comparison criteria

5.3 Time.

Istituto L.U.C.E.'s heritage reveals a particular "period of time": it was an Institute created by Italian fascism (1922-1945), and it shared the movement's history and destiny, concluding its most meaningful activity at the end of the World War II. In particular, the heritage nominated for the MOW covers a chronological period that ranges from 1927 to 1956; however, the most significant portion is that relating to 1927-to the end of the conflict. For its extent, meaning and uniqueness, the patrimony of the Istituto Nazionale L.U.C.E. can be compared with the principal public archival fonds preserved in the national archives of the world, with the fundamental difference of being exclusively an audiovisual archives. In fact, in Europe and in America (from the Ufa, the Nazi regime's society of production, to the various American newsreels) the making of films and photos was normally entrusted to private institutions. This explains why the public nature of the Farm Security Administration's photographic fonds, (contemporary to L.U.C.E., having been created during the New Deal, and preserved at the Library of Congress in

Washington) is an exceptional case in the international context.

Together with the Soviet experience, L.U.C.E. constituted the first experimentation in the world of government visual propaganda. In fact, after 1922, when the young Dziga Vertov created the first newsreels for Narkompros, the Commissariat for Education established that film production had to balance entertainment and education, giving great importance to the latter. Like the Soviet State, and contrary to all the democratic nations of the western world, Italy needed to impose a new political view on a population that was in large part illiterate, and the best way to do that was through "educational" films. Consequently, cinema became, for both States, "the strongest weapon."

L.U.C.E. was an expression of an "institutional" wish of control of information in Italy: this increases its enormous historical interest as object of study. It is also important to consider that Italian fascism (a sort of State-party) had a crucial historical function in the European context. It became a totalitarian model, imitated in Germany, Spain and in other Eastern European countries, and it developed a destabilizing role in international relationships that finally opened the way to war. For these reasons, the custody of this patrimony is necessary for the reconstruction of and reflection on the history of the Twentieth Century. Because of its quantitative richness, L.U.C.E.'s heritage is able to depict in detail the political, social, economic and cultural life of Italy in the fundamental period from the 1920s to 1930s. During this period the bases for a largely incomplete modernization process were laid, as it is visible in the different degree of development between the North and the South of the country, which the images represent in very different ways.

5.4 Place.

Approximately 80% of L.U.C.E.'s films and photographs describe Italy, while the remaining 20% illustrate other countries with which the Institute exchanged visual materials (these material was reassembled by the Institute's employees and, today, they depict the regime's view of the external world). The images held by L.U.C.E. show a country that had been united for only a few decades, emphasize evocative differences between Italy's diverse regions, and document realities that vary from the attenuate atmospheres in Venice to the archaeological discoveries in Pompeii, from the mysterious religious festivals in South Italy, to the aggressive development of the big cities. Furthermore, it is important to draw attention to the existence of visual documentation from Italian ethnographic expeditions in India, Tibet, central Africa and other places that, during the 1920s, had begun to receive the attention of researchers. One example is Umberto Nobile's extraordinary and unlucky expedition to the North Pole in 1928, which received the attention of the whole world. The images of L.U.C.E. constitute also an irreplaceable testimony regarding places that today have disappeared or been entirely changed by the alteration of the Italian territory and cities due to drainage, industrialization, building explosion, etc., during and after the postwar period. L.U.C.E.'s heritage demonstrates also a modern interest for the promotion of the landscape. In fact, in the 1930s, L.U.C.E. conducted an extensive photographic campaign documenting Italian environmental and artistic works (the Series L); in the same years, in 1939, Giuseppe Bottai, Minister of National Education, was the first person in the history of Italy to promote a law for the preservation of the landscape.

Regarding foreign countries, the films and the photos of Istituto L.U.C.E. depict the crucial events of Weimar and Nazi Germany, of the New Deal in the United States, and of the Balkans, where fascism had a deep influence.

5.6 People.

In this area the images of L.U.C.E. have a high historical and anthropological value. Italian fascism had, as main objective, the anthropological transformation of Italians, to fit the idea of the so called "new fascist man" who would have the characteristics of ancient Rome's citizen-warriors. Therefore, L.U.C.E. was entrusted with the task of disseminating the image of the new Italian during the regime's activities and the war. This social policy also included giving assistance to mothers and children and to youth and elderly organizations, which were extraordinary tools for generating approval. Nevertheless, even though these images were cleverly manipulated for propaganda purposes, they are not able to lie, and today we can observe the failure of the project. In fact, the reality was that Italian people were hard-working, but lived, to a large extent, in a state of regress, and were generally peaceful. However, besides ordinary Italians, L.U.C.E.'s heritage depicts all the protagonists of Italian history (Marconi, Pirandello, Toscanini, D'Annunzio, etc.), through special documentaries. L.U.C.E.'s heritage is an expression of the image that Italy and the fascism wanted to show to the world in order to accredit their political project; but, today, its images reveal to researchers the "real" Italy between the two World Wars.

5.7 Subject and Theme. Istituto L.U.C.E. never abandoned its vocation of being an educational and propagandistic agency, so the subjects that it documented were extremely varied. It is possible to go from themes such as hygiene, social services, religious culture, military formation, agricultural practices and tourism, to subjects such as the exaltation of the regime, the drainage of malarial waters around Lazio, and colonial conquests. Newsreels and photographs portray a detailed chronicle of Italian life and document with the same attention both the State activities and the daily life of the provinces. L.U.C.E. established specific departments related to strategic subjects. Examples are: the Italian Oriental Africa Department (1935 - 1938), which supported the attack to Ethiopia, and produced a corpus of images larger than any produced before by any other European countries in Africa; and the Albania Department (1939 -1943), which documented the occupation of the Balkans. Finally, images about some apparently less important, but well documented subjects, such as architecture, city planning and art expositions, have now become an irreplaceable source of study and research. Therefore, these are documents the historical and cultural importance of which is verified and promoted every day by the different groups of users and researchers.

5.8 Form and Style.

L.U.C.E. was one of the first institutions in the world to experiment with audiovisual and photographic materials in different ways. For instances, regarding film, it used different stylistic registers: one, pedagogic and journalistic, disseminated specific information in order to attract the attention of the public; another, propagandist and "imperial", strengthened the image of a militarily strong

Italy and spread the myth of "civilizing mission " in coverage of Italian colonialist aggressions. However, leaving aside L.U.C.E.'s executives intentions, today it is possible to identify a substantial distinction in the audiovisual documents between the scenes and the voice that speaks to them: while the speaker exalts the public works and the conquests of the regime, the images show a more prosaic reality in an anticipation of what researchers call neorealist style. Moreover, the practice of reassembling foreign materials, in order to fulfill the regime's propagandist objectives, modified and created new meaning for the messages of democratic countries. Different styles were experimented in photography too: from a "neutral" to a "warmongering" style; from "pictorial" and modernist style to the "scientific" style of the precious "series L", which preserves the photographic census of the whole Italian artistic patrimony, documented by the Institute since 1928.

5.9 Social, spiritual and community significance. It is important to remember that in the law passed on November 5th 1925 Istituto L.U.C.E. was defined as a technical cinematographic agency of the Council of Ministries, and put under the control and the State authority. Therefore, the State obtained a monopoly on non-fiction cinematography, leaving the production of entertainment films to the private sector. This means that L.U.C.E. was created as an organ of the State, more than as an agency of a political party. However, during the 1920s and the 1930s, with the identification of the fascist party with the State, L.U.C.E.'s propagandistic nature prevailed. This process is testified by the whole body of L.U.C.E.'s images, which represent, for the researchers and for the whole national community, a fundamental basis for reflection on our common history and on the possible risks of a political use of information tools. In 1948 Italians wanted to have an advanced republican Constitution to protect themselves and to settle the score with the dictatorship of which L.U.C.E. was an extraordinary "weapon". Finally, L.U.C.E.'s heritage is a living heritage for everybody: not only do many people research and discover their history among the L.U.C.E.'s images, but also many people who were witnesses of specific events, helped with the philological reconstruction of the images' contents.

6.0 Contextual information

6.1 Rarity.

Considering that a large portion of Italy's silent-era film has definitely been lost, and so has a large part of the subsequent sound era film productions, L.U.C.E.'s heritage, which negatives and prints assets are concentrated almost exclusively at L.U.C.E., is a rare corpus as much as it is unique. Its uniqueness is also due to its completeness as a documentary corpus, the integrity of which, except for a few exceptions, has been guaranteed over the years. It is important to remember that the recent development of digital technologies has, in many cases, made traditional supports such as film and photographic plates of secondary importance and has made the professionals devoted to their restoration rare. This means that their preservation is a more complex activity today than in the past. However, Istituto L.U.C.E. has all the technologies and competences necessary for the correct preservation and restoration of its holdings.

6.2 Integrity.

The uninterrupted custody of the archival materials by the different legal entities which Istituto L.U.C.E. has become over the years guarantees the integrity of nominated heritage, which is attested through the maintenance of the original supports and contents without any manipulation. The existence of an uninterrupted "chain of custody" in the history of L.U.C.E.'s heritage has been attested by experts in the conservation of visual materials and by many researchers.