

A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of a modern building's facade. The facade is characterized by strong diagonal lines created by alternating bands of gold-colored metallic cladding and dark blue or black panels. The perspective makes these lines converge towards the top right corner of the frame. The background is a clear, vibrant blue sky. The overall composition is dynamic and emphasizes architectural geometry and color contrast.

Gioiaotto



Gioiaotto

by Park Associati

Client
Hines Italia

Address
Via Melchiorre Gioia 6-8, Milan

Year
Competition: 2012
On Site: 2013
Realization: 2014

Area
sqm 6.700

Professional Service
Concept
Architectural Project
Artistic Site Supervision

Civil Engineering, M&E, Health & Safety
General Planning Srl

Landscape Project
Land Srl

Project Management
Coima Srl

Fire Consultancy
GAE Engineering

General Contractor
C.E.S.I. Società Cooperativa

LEED Certification
Greenwich Srl

Comparing the masters: an alternative route

The respect for the masters of twentieth century architecture is such that, for today's professional architects, just thinking of an intervention on one of their works is tantamount to sacrilege.



This is precisely why, when the need to restore iconic works such as Casa Kaufmann or Villa Savoy emerged in the last century's decade, a philological conservative attitude was favoured, which brought back the motto 'as it was, where it was'.

If this attitude has its own *raison d'être* with respect to the buildings already raised to the status of 'monument', when applied to all the works of 'master' authorship, it runs the risk of historicising and musealising them, thus also going against their designers' thinking. A possible alternative is the one proposed by Park Associati: while trying to apply Brandi's theories of critical restoration to the contemporary, the practice also lends an ear to the work that is the object of redevelopment and proposes a personal 'reading' of it. The result is a dialogue between interpretation and conservation, between the language of the original author, of the 'master', and that of the designer who was called upon to give new life to the work.



It is with this approach that in 2012 Park Associati wins the competition for the restoration of the former Residence Porta Nuova in Via Melchiorre Gioia, Milan; originally created in 1973 by Marco Zanuso and Pietro Crescini, a wonderful example of Italian Brutalist architecture. The solution realised by the studio is based on an understanding of the building, which is characterized by a strong horizontality - and on a comparison with the Milanese master, by combining

and balancing the themes of sustainability, energy saving and technological and expressive innovation with those concerning conservation and memory. With their project comprised of micro-insertions on the façade, on the base plate and on the roof, in 2014 Park Associati created the GioiaOtto building, which - thanks to a strengthened image and a new green soul - challenges Porta Nuova's sparkling architecture, at the same time reminding it of Milan's history.



The new face of Milan



Few remember that, when the new Garibaldi rail station was built in 1963, via Melchiorre Gioia should have been the epicentre of Milan's new business hub - a kind of metropolis made of offices and buildings for work on the edge of the historic city.

The redevelopment of the former Residence Porta Nuova, originally designed by Marco Zanuso and Pietro Crescini (1973) and restored by Park Associati, provided the impetus for the fourth planning stage of the whole Porta Nuova area, which revived the idea of a management centre along Melchiorre Gioia.

For the new generations of Milanese, both by birth and adopted, Via Melchiorre Gioia is simply the long avenue that links the northern suburbs to the sparkling new Porta Nuova district. However, as only those who still have a memory of place know, the Naviglio Martesana used to flow here until the 60s, when it was sacrificed in pursuit of progress and speed.

Some may remember the Luna Park Varesine that livened up the childhood and adolescence of many Milanese in the 70s. The intentions of the 1953 town planning regulations were permanently set aside in 1978, when real estate interests moved elsewhere, leading to the areas around Melchiorre Gioia being given the generic definition of 'public interest', which decreed its abandonment and degradation.

Yet, this forgotten past may be destined to come back to life. The Porta Nuova development, with the construction of new skyscrapers, arose new interest

in this urban area, and it was here that twentieth-century Milan's modernity gave its very best. Starting from the 'cleaning' of Pietro Lingeri's residential and office tower (1951) at the street's entrance, in very recent times the existing skyscrapers have become objects of restoration - as is the case with the building that houses the Municipality's technical offices (Gandolfi, Bazzoni, Fratino and Putelli, 1966), or of complete restyling - such as the Inps Tower (Giordani, Susini and Vincenti), which has been given its new identity by Cesar Pelli. While real estate interests focus on the street's architectural appearance, public interests are proposing the idea of bringing back the stretch of the Martesana canal up to the former San Marco basin.

The next few years will see the new face of Via Melchiorre Gioia being designed, with an eye to the past and a look to the future.

Marco Zanuso



Marco Zanuso
portrait

Known as one of the great masters of twentieth century design, Marco Zanuso was also one of the leading figures of Italian post-war architecture. Inexplicably, he was not included among the ‘ambitious big shots’ of post-war Milanese architecture - Caccia Dominioni, Gardella, Magistretti and BBPR - even though, given his training and social background, he could have been part of this group. Instead, he started on his own design path, right alongside the legendary architects of the Velasca Tower.

Radio Cubo ts522
1962



Zanuso was actually the one who supported BBPR practice together with Peressutti, when Banfi and Belgiojoso were arrested under the charge of anti-fascism and Rogers fled to Switzerland. It was in the post-war period that his interest in the industrialisation of construction increased, alongside the in-depth studies on materials and the production process he undertook in the field of design. In terms of architecture, from that moment on, Zanuso focused particularly on prefabrication (with a few diversions for the various editions of the Triennale between the fifties and sixties). While differing one from the other, his creations shared a similar idea: from the structures for the QT8 district popular housing, through the very high-level IBM headquarters in Segrate, to the private villas for Lombardy's upper-middle class, designed with the FEAL prefabrication system. The Residence Porta Nuova - now Gioiaotto - was designed between 1970

and 1973 in collaboration with Pietro Crescini, with the idea of experimenting with the use of exposed pre-fabricated reinforced concrete. The structural framework of the building was expressed on the façade through an ‘infinite’ number of exposed beams becoming a compositional theme characterised by a strong horizontality, in a piece of work that gives an unhesitating nod to the English Brutalism of those years.

A modern spaceship landed among the rare nineteenth-century traces of that area, this building was destined to become - along with the first skyscrapers that had already been built - the new Milanese metropolis. Overlooking a heavily busy street, separate from the nearby densely-textured historical centre, with the soft, clean mass that defines its volume, this building was devised as a freestanding organism.



Collegio di Milano
1972



A LEED Platinum Building



- 32% reduction in total energy costs
- 48% decrease in water consumption for internal use
- 56% for irrigation purposes
- 85% reduction in waste production during construction
- 25% recycled materials
- 20% regional materials and 70% FSC certified wood



Park Associati's project was divided into four parts: the basement, where a new overhanging cantilever roof was designed to mark the entrance, the pre-existing door and window frames were replaced with continuous Schuco window panels to ensure maximum connection between inside and outside, and the structural elements were covered with screen printed frames; the interiors, which were given new flexibility and greater brightness; the roof, which was enhanced with greenhouses, green areas and new cantilever roofing, and finally the façade.



Park Associati's main objective of the redevelopment of Gioiaotto, was to adapt it to contemporary quality and energy standards. This was achieved by tailoring the need for sustainability to the desire to strengthen the language of Zanuso and Crescini's original building. The window frames were completely replaced with new three-part frames characterised by high insulation and energy performance (thermal transmittance $U_w = 1,3 \text{ W/m}^2\text{K}$), with a new width to enhance the flexibility of the interior and with vertical elements and boxes at regular intervals as pillar covers. The fixture replacement was part of a wider programme related to

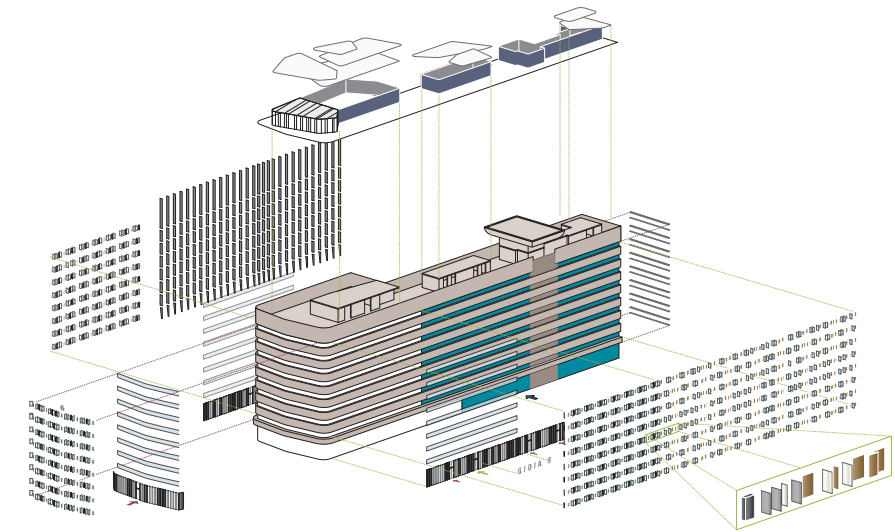


the building's consumption and cost management. The redevelopment envisaged the modernisation of the heating and air conditioning system, and whereas Zanuso's original concept of a horizontal system with internal housing at the level of the belt courses was kept, a better performing system with automated regulation was envisaged. With reference to its Core & Shell protocol, the Green Building Certification Institute awarded the Gioiaotto building the LEED Platinum certification with a score of 88/110 points.



To fully understand the project that brought new life to the Gioiaotto complex you have to climb to its beautiful terrace.

Gioiaotto's terrace: a balance between sustainability and panorama



It is on the roof of Zanuso and Crescini's former residence, which Park Associati left behind with the prudence and discretion that is usual when confronting oneself with a master and deciding decided to start from scratch by transforming what used to be a simple technical area of plants and services into a small secret oasis for socialisation, meetings and sustainability.

Hidden behind the large precast concrete wall surface is a new green parterre with privileged views over the Porta Nuova district, alternating with a wooden slatted floating floor that hides the technological systems and the rainwater collection system. Just visible from road level, a multifunctional room enveloped in glass offers an unusual meeting space with panoramic

views over the Porta Nuova towers, while opaque screen-printed panels cover the technical rooms. Consistent with the ground floor's theme, at night-time the pre-existing volumes are transformed into bright lanterns, thus echoing the lighting system that emphasises the complex's curves and its horizontal course. The whole structure is protected by a metallic construction that, as well as acting as brise soleil, also supports 44 240-W photovoltaic panels (for a total power of 10kWp). With its textural and structural lightness, the screening system interacts with the large concrete 'tank' overhanging Via Melchiorre Gioia - the iconic element of Zanuso's building - rebalancing its presence through the entire length of the complex.

Park Associati created a veritable fifth façade made of greenery and pergolas, thus bringing to mind the words of Giò Ponti, who wished that - sooner or later - all roofs in Milan would be enriched with these two very elements.

Manfredi Catella, CEO of Coima



ADV: Coima is the director behind the redevelopment of Porta Nuova, one of the most significant real estate operations carried out in Milan in recent years. Thanks to the area's towers and buildings designed by the most illustrious Italian and international names, Milan's image was re-launched and the city proposed as the new capital of European architecture. To me, the most interesting aspect of the whole intervention was its ability to spread quality to the surrounding area. Is this process to be considered a casual side effect or the result of an intentional and considered strategy?

MC: It is certainly the result of a general vision that has always conceived Porta Nuova as an urban element rather than an isolated architectural project. The entire masterplan began as an answer to the problematic past of this area, where historically, due to the presence of the railway station, the city frayed into pockets of decay. Bearing in mind the complexity of the infrastructural system – with the rail link tracks, the railway tunnel, the difference in height between the station and the road and the high traffic volume of the latter – the masterplan raised the whole district, transforming this elevated surface into a sort of pedestrian bridge connecting the districts Isola, Garibaldi and Varesine. A bridge that runs above the underlying infrastructure and connects smoothly to the city. Not only did the designers work on the routes, the stairs, the ramps and all those connecting elements, but the choice of bringing the façades of the buildings up to street level was a deliberate move to avoid disconnection between the different levels. This opening-up strategy resulted in Porta Nuova's architectural value spreading far beyond its perimeter, generating a much more widespread demand for quality.

ADV: Was this demand the reason behind your investment in the transformation of the former residence by Marco Zanuso?

MC: The fact that there is a demand, naturally encourages the processes of metamorphosis, although, as Coima, we decided to invest in the buildings on the edge even before this demand arose. The decision to invest in Gioiaotto, but also in the INPS building or the Bonnet Tower, arose in conjunction with the district's masterplan, specifically from the belief in the transformative power that this ambitious project would generate.

ADV: In this respect, your investment strategy fits in perfectly with the latest trend of contemporary architecture, which aims at redeveloping twentieth-century building heritage. Very often this tendency forces designers to measure up to their masters, as was in fact the case with the Gioiaotto project. What of the Park Associati project at competition stage convinced you so much that you decided to entrust them with this responsibility?

MC: The project shows a respectful approach to the building, to its aesthetics and its language, without avoiding the introduction of some distinctive, precise interventions. As well as on the plant engineering side of things, we worked with Park Associati Filippo Pagliani and Michele Rossi on the roofing and on the earth connection, leaving on the façade a few sober marks that, while being characterised by a clearly contemporary identity, do not prevail over or overwrite the pre-existing ones.

ADV: Don't you think that such an approach carries the risk of being too respectful, to the point of cancelling itself out?

MC: I believe that the Park Associati project has shown a great balance between the need for renewal and conservation, and this is where the success of this intervention lies.

ADV: Park Associati's project transformed an energy-consuming building into a new energy-saving, sustainable complex. Reading about the various interventions on Porta Nuova, the word "sustainability" always recurs very strongly.

MC: It forms an integral part of our economic and industrial strategies. The topic of sustainability is at the heart of all our interventions, both from a technical point of view, in terms of energy-saving plants and reduction of management and maintenance costs, and from a social point of view. In fact, we believe that building and intervening on a city is a great responsibility, and it must be done with great ethical consciousness. Architecture marks the space, leaves a lasting trace for generations to come, and if its quality is high, it will also raise the quality of its context, otherwise it will inevitably lower it. For many decades in our country we have been witnessing the latter and I believe that architecture must go back to claiming and producing quality.

ADV: What economic return does quality have for those who, like you, invest in the city's transformation?

MC: Monetising quality is difficult and complex. I am sure there are parameters that allow you measure it, but calculating the return on an investment with precision or certainty is not simple. In my opinion, investing in quality is a choice. It's about choosing on which side of the world you want to stand.

For us, producing quality is a genetic choice; it is an approach linked to passion, to a strong belief in the ethical and social value of one's work, in what one does. Porta Nuova as a whole is the result of all this. It is an intervention that marks a break from our recent past. The operation's success will be measured in the coming years through its ability to spread quality like wildfire, raising the bar of urban interventions.



Courtesy Hines Italia

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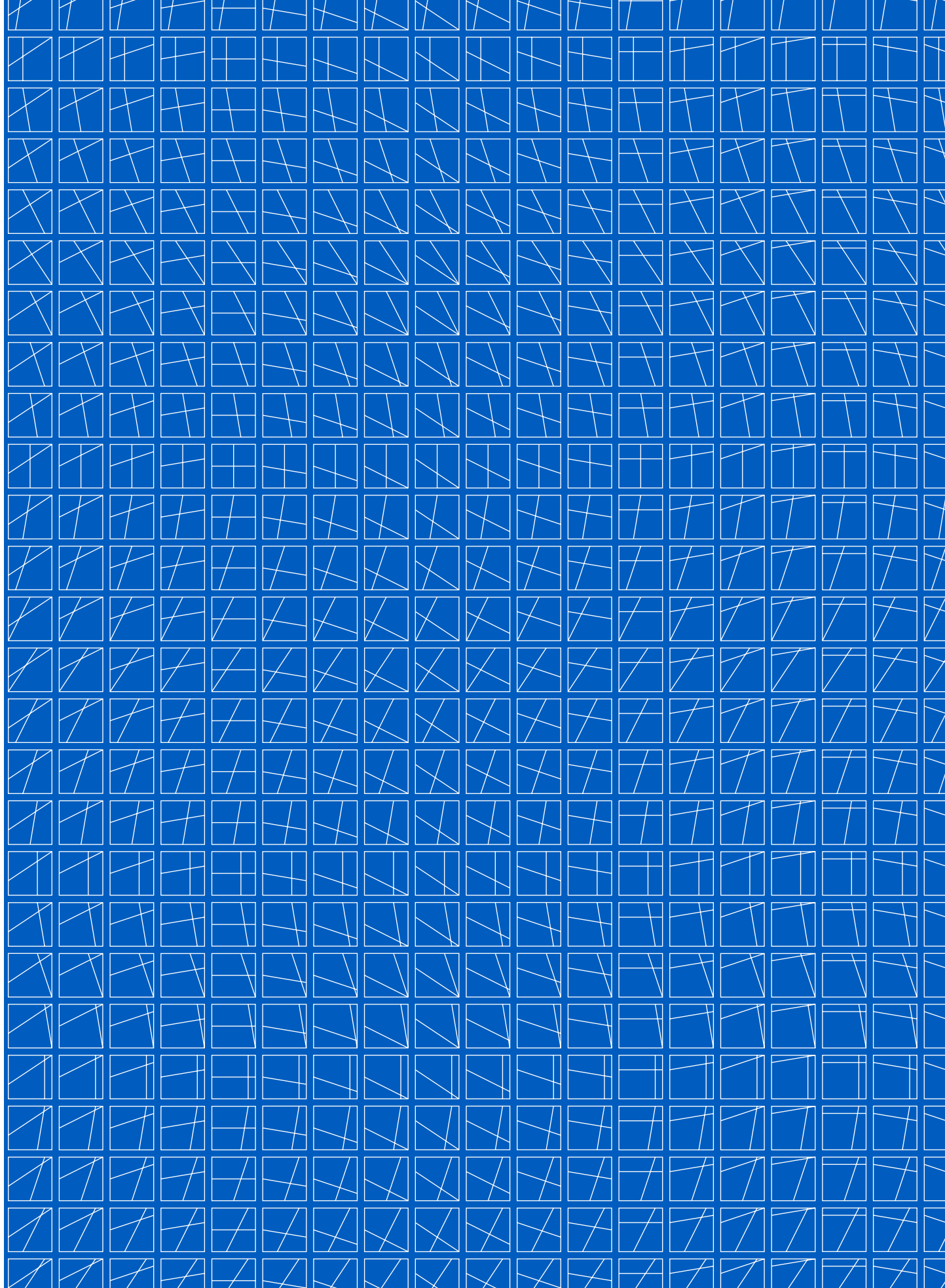
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