



THE ARCHITECTURAL PROJECT

More than just a museum, albeit one featuring a store, a café and an archive, but rather a veritable brand centre complete with Centro Documentazione, test track, event spaces, showrooms and a delivery area where recently purchased cars may be handed over to clients.

The redevelopment of the Alfa Romeo administration complex at Arese was born out of the need to rethink the nature of the exhibition layout in terms of requirements very different to those that inspired the original museum designed by the brothers Vito and Gustavo Latis and inaugurated on the 18th of December 1976.

The original museum structure – a building divided into six mezzanines on staggered levels – had been constructed alongside the Arese administration complex in an area adjacent to the Arese production facilities inaugurated a few years earlier. The museum, linked to the three buildings of the company’s management and administration complex via basement levels, displayed the historical collection that had been assembled in the first half of the 1960s. Given its position within the factory, access to the collection was naturally restricted by regulations governing access to the company in general.

Once production on the site had ceased, the museum was closed to visitors in 2011 and placed under the protection of the Ministry for Cultural Heritage.

Starting out from the need to conserve the original structure, Camerana&Partners reconsidered the architecture of the complex on the basis of the new functions. In agreement with the Cultural Heritage authorities the implant principle was adopted: the new forms and functions became signs of the contemporary, embedded in the Sixties architecture. Signs that used the “new” Alfa red – for example the canopy welcoming visitors in the car park and guiding them through to the exposition, or the new external body rising to the museum building – and an architectural design that embodied the continuity of the marque, resolving the necessary relationship between the historical and the contemporary.

Out of this context arose the most striking architectural decisions: moving the entrances to the north side of the complex, the upgrading of the basement as an entrance and pre-museum, the unequivocal continuity of the exhibition itinerary, the insertion of new contemporary through-ways between floors, the opening of a level in the central void of the museum, the dropped ceiling of seen as a “technological machine” and the



“colonisation” of the administration centre spaces with new functions. Moreover, set at the heart of the museum itinerary, a transparent cylinder traverses all the floors and presents, in an explosion of lights and images, the Alfa Romeo DNA. That genetic code that has accompanied the first 105 years of the company’s life.

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