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## **Vertical design: a view of the city centre Architecture, art and design in “Il Mercato del Duomo”**

### **The philosophy of Michele De Lucchi's architectural project**

The architectural design of Autogrill's Il Mercato del Duomo is by Michele De Lucchi and is characterized by a deeply conservative approach working within the original plan of the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, built between 1865 and 1878 to plans by Giuseppe Mengoni. De Lucchi's strong commitment to maintaining the identity of the Galleria enabled Autogrill to highlight its distinctive elements and restore to the city of Milan a building of great historical and cultural value, a fine example, recognized at international level, of the eclectic Milanese architecture of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This conservative approach is immediately evident in the entrance court, which has rescued the original framework of full and empty spaces heavily altered over the years. The atmosphere of this originally open courtyard has been restored by replacing the skylight in the roof with a new transparent covering allowing natural light to penetrate.

Conservation and upgrading but also verticality. Autogrill's new food & beverage offering is organized on four levels, calling for a new system of vertical distribution to give visitors an immediate point of reference and thus enhance their appreciation of the space.

To link the various levels a moving staircase was placed against the wall at the back of the entrance court, a solution providing maximum space for an empty central space allowing people to admire the vertical dimension. Perception of the space's size is also heightened by the use of mirrors in the doors and windows. All these solutions create a spectacular vertical telescope around which access to the various levels is organized.

The rebuilding and restoration project also guided the choice of materials, colours and finishes, as seen in the use of *botticino* limestone, already present in the Galleria's original flooring, and spatula finish plastering to upgrade the internal spaces. All the interiors, starting with the entrance court, reflect the philosophy of an architectural project that restores to the west façade of the Galleria occupied by the new Autogrill locations a style decidedly more faithful to Mengoni's original design.

The Mercato del Duomo is the outcome of three years of design and development activity, while works on site will be completed on 30 April, in the record time of just eight months.

### **Art enters the Galleria: Adam Lowe's centuries-old olive tree**

Autogrill's new location welcomes visitors with a bronze sculpture suspended in the entrance reproducing a centuries-old olive tree in real life size. A symbol rich in universal, positive connotations and references to the Group's history and values.

Above all, the olive tree represents Mediterranean food and wine culture, and that of Italy in particular. But it's above all a symbol of contact with the land, as underscored by the massive roots that greet visitors and invite them to look upwards.

The olive tree fits with perfect harmony in the environment of Il Mercato del Duomo, which celebrates the wealth and freshness of raw materials in a typically urban context like piazza Duomo, thus strengthening the identity of the prestigious flagship store.

The sculpture is by Adam Lowe, an artist of international renown with work in some of the world's most prestigious galleries, including the National Gallery in London, the Prado in Madrid, the Louvre in Paris and the



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Vatican museums. To produce the work the British artist had a team of 14 people (artists, engineers and sculptors) from Factum Arte ([www.factum-arte.com](http://www.factum-arte.com)), an interdisciplinary atelier founded by Lowe himself in Madrid in 2000.

In addition to its important semantic contribution to the identity of the Il Mercato del Duomo, the sculpture plays a vital role in accompanying the visitor in the vertical experiential path through the place: thanks to its real life size (6.5 m: roots 3 m, trunk and foliage 3.5 m), Adam Lowe's work rises through all four levels.

The sculpture is made of a special alloy of brass characterized by its high flexibility, a property making it easier to work and render lines and shapes even more realistically natural. The two sections of the work, which weighs around 2,000 kg, are intercepted by a semi-transparent platform reproducing the natural lines of the ground. The production of the sculpture, still in progress, will occupy the artists for around three months overall, including the phases of selection, uprooting and cleaning of the tree, the preparation and filling of the bronze moulds and the welding and polishing of the parts making up the sculpture.

The sensibility to sustainability issues and deep respect for nature shared by the Factum Arte team and Autogrill were at the heart of the production process of this sculpture from the very start. Thanks to this sculpture, in fact, four centuries-old olive trees destined to be felled were acquired by the project and three of them will now be replanted on completion of the work.

### Lighting design

The lighting design by Dean Skira ([www.skira.hr](http://www.skira.hr)) is another of the innovations to be admired in the Il Mercato del Duomo. The light sources in his design play a decisive role in characterizing the vertical flow of visitors within the point of sale.

Based on dynamic solutions employing LED technology implemented by the Italian Guzzini Illuminazione, the lighting design provides for modulation of light intensity and chromatic tones at different times of the day.

In particular, the horizontal arrangement of light sources points up the forms and lines of Adam Lowe's sculpture, with plays of light and shade that enhance the natural atmosphere the work is designed to create.

### Materials

The criteria applied in choosing materials privileged solutions that combine functionality, aesthetics and sustainability whilst enhancing the different dimensions that characterize the Il Mercato del Duomo: natural wood and mirrors and stone and marble evoking the piazza in which it is located.

### Work team

The Mercato del Duomo represents a traditional Milanese market - a covered market for ordinary consumers – overlooking one of Italy's most "international" places, Piazza Duomo, a square loved by both local people and tourists from all over the world visiting the *Belpaese*.

The team too reflects the dual identity of this prestige location, which is profoundly Italian but at the same time international and open to the world. In addition to the architect Michele De Lucchi, in fact, it includes some of the most highly rated firms and artists at international level, such as the above mentioned Adam Lowe and Dean Skira, whose architectural and design solutions have helped make Il Mercato Del Duomo a unique location.

### Wayfinding

Wayfinding – the principles and solutions enabling user orientation in public spaces – is one of the most noticeable novelties in the Il Mercato del Duomo, given this aspect of architecture is relatively undeveloped in Italy. In the new flagship store, on the other hand, customers are constantly accompanied and guided by



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Autogrill by means of informative touchpoints made of materials such as mirrors, wood, glass and slate that blend naturally with the interiors and heighten visitors' emotional response to the location.

The wayfinding solutions of evocation, guidance, information and explanation were produced in collaboration with Pomo, an agency, and Politecnico di Milano. As well as their explanatory and directional functions and strategic positioning in the main intersections along the vertical experiential path, such solutions help promote the content of Autogrill's offering in a convivial atmosphere typical of the piazza that the Mercato del Duomo itself evokes.

### Logo

The logo was designed by Michele De Lucchi and Pomo Design on the basis of artwork by De Lucchi himself. It represents the façade of the cathedral, emblem of the Milan square in which the Il Mercato del Duomo is located. It is a universally recognizable silhouette drawn in a style that communicates the values of simplicity and genuineness that characterize the offering in Autogrill's new point of sale.

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